



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

‘Echo of Truth’? The Repositioning of North Korean Soft Power

Swildens, Renske

Citation

Swildens, R. (2022). *‘Echo of Truth’? The Repositioning of North Korean Soft Power*.

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [License to inclusion and publication of a Bachelor or Master thesis in the Leiden University Student Repository](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3485656>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

‘Echo of Truth’? The Repositioning of North Korean Soft Power

Renske Hannah Swildens

MA Asian Thesis

Dr. C.K. Green

01/07/2021

Wordcount: 14944 (excluding the abstract)

Abstract

Social media and videoblogging, or *vlogging*, are taking over the internet and North Korea joined this trend. While doing so, North Korea is reaching out to the international community through relatable media content and soft power tools. One of the examples, in which North Korea reached out to the international viewer, is the Youtube channel 'Echo of Truth'. This research aims to answer the question as to how soft power is applied in the videos of 'Echo of Truth'. By using a qualitative visual discourse analysis, it analyzes the videos of 'Echo of Truth' to answer this question. This thesis argues that soft power tools, such as cultural and culinary diplomacy, are applied in the videos in order to make these videos more relatable to the international audience. However, not all the videos were found to have used these soft power techniques as traditional propaganda videos were still uploaded to the channel. The sheer differences found in the channel's videos raised the question of a power dilemma the channel seemed to be facing.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Chapter 1: Theoretical Background	6
1.1 Soft Power	6
1.1.1 The Concept	6
1.1.2 Cultural Diplomacy	8
1.1.3 Culinary Diplomacy	9
1.2 Propaganda and Soft Power.....	10
1.3 Soft Power in Korea	12
Chapter 2: Methodology and Data Collection.....	15
Chapter 3: Results	17
3.1 The Influence of Vlogs for ‘Echo of Truth’	17
3.1.1 Vlogging.....	17
3.1.2 Hosting a Vlog: Un A and Sogwang Media Corporation.....	18
3.1.3 The Editing of the Vlogs	20
3.2 Pyongyang Through the Eyes of Un A.....	22
3.2.1 The ‘Echo of Truth’ of the North Korean Educational System.....	22
3.2.2 Culture as a Thread through the Videos	24
3.3 Socialist Propaganda in ‘Echo of Truth’	28
3.3.1 A Technologically Advanced Country	28
3.3.2 North Korea as a Military Power.....	31
3.4 The Hard Face of Soft Power	31
Conclusion.....	34
Bibliography.....	36

Introduction

North Korea and soft power are generally not associated with one another, but the country is making efforts to utilize this power strategy in domestic and foreign policies. North Korean soft power is a topic in both media and academic works that is regularly left unmentioned, most often than not the academics being skeptical about soft power in North Korea. This is to be expected as Kim Jong-un has been vocal about the continuous need of being a military powerhouse in the last couple of years. This does not necessitate, however, that North Korean soft power is non-existent. Although it is certainly not as prevalent as North Korean hard power, it is worthy of examining more extensively.

The most prominent example of North Korea's shift in political strategies towards a soft power approach concerns the image of the leader, Kim Jong Un. The Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Workers' Party of Korea (KWP) has been changing the leader's image into being a "charming, funny and confident"¹ leader during domestic and international settings,² which contributes to gain more attraction and interest from the international community in both diplomatic and non-diplomatic situations. This has not gone unnoticed as international media has picked up the charm offense of the leader in public and foreign events.³ Nevertheless, other instances of North Korean soft power have been less explored. In the last couple of years, for example, several North Korean social media accounts have been appearing to create discourse about the country. This focus on North Korean social media accounts are in line with the steady growth of the North Korean electronics and telecommunication sector,⁴ which explains the interest North Korea has in order to keep up with the world in technology and to gain engagement from abroad by using propaganda and soft power. The Youtube channel 'Echo of Truth' made headlines in the media because North Korea posted videos in a more relatable approach to North Korea through Youtube videos. 'Echo of Truth' is not the only example of

¹ Robin Wright, "Kim Jong Un Was Funny, Charming, and Confident but Brought His Own Toilet," *The New Yorker*, May 3, 2018 [Accessed May 11, 2021], <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/north-koreas-leader-was-funny-charming-and-confident-but-brought-his-own-toilet>.

² David Kang, "The Soft and Hard Power Politics of North Korea in 2019," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 31, no. 2 (2019): 203.

³ Jun-Suk Yeo, "[Feature] Kim Jong-Un's Charm Offensive Enthralls Some, Angers Others," *The Korea Herald*, December 2, 2018 [Accessed May 11, 2021], <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20181202000172>.

⁴ Pak Han U, "북한 유튜브 채널 분석: '조선의 오늘'에 대한 이용자 반응과 텍스트 분석," "Pukhan yut'yube ch'aenöl punsök: 'chosönüi onül'e taehan iyongja panünggwa t'eksüt'ü punsök," [Examining YouTube Channel in North Korea: A Case of 'North Korea Today' using User Response and Text Analyses] *Journal of The Korean Data Analysis Society* 20, no. 5 (2018): 2582.

this new approach as channels such as ‘Echo of Truth’, ‘DPRK Today’, and ‘New DPRK’, began to post videos about North Korean ‘daily life’.

Taking in account the increase of North Korean social media accounts in the last years, it is relevant to do more research on the developments of these accounts and how these developments relate to North Korean power strategies. Not only is this thought-provoking because social media and its influence are growing fast and gradually, it is also important to perceive North Korea as a country consisting of more than only a military force and to realize its potential in soft power strategies. This research aims to add another perspective to the research area of North Korean soft power.

The main research question this thesis attempts to answer is: “How is soft power applied in the videos of the North Korean Youtube channel ‘Echo of Truth’?”. The research is done in the following structure. First, chapter 1 focuses on the theoretical background of this study as it addresses and explores four main definitions to support this study; soft power, cultural diplomacy, culinary diplomacy and propaganda. Additionally, chapter 1 gives a brief overview of examples of soft power used on the Korean peninsula. Chapter 2 lays out the methodology and the data collection, which is followed by the results in chapter 3. Chapter 3 breaks down the main analysis of this study. This first section explores the people behind the channel and explains the implication of the North Korean usage of Youtube as a medium for soft power and how this has been done (which techniques, who are shown, what is shown, etc.). The second part of the chapter dives deeper into the particular topics of the videos and how they relate to North Korean soft power in the first place.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Background

1.1 Soft Power

1.1.1 The Concept

Joseph S. Nye introduced a power strategy with the term ‘soft power’ in the 1980s. This soft power is “attractive power”,⁵ and explains the act of co-opting to gain whatever it is one desires, instead of coercing (which is utilized in hard power⁶). Nye explained that the act of soft power involves attraction to achieve whatever it is you want rather than coercing them to do it.⁷ A country using soft power in international affairs makes use of preferences of the other country involved, utilizing their own culture in a way to lure the other in, their own values (political or cultural) and policies towards other countries.⁸ Soft power is unrelated to one particular power institution as soft power can come in many shapes and forms, making it a complex strategy to explain the trust-building between countries or individuals and an effective way to develop an understanding for one’s cultural and political beliefs. It relies on three central resources: cultural and political values and foreign policies.¹⁰

Nye is often criticized because of the US-centricity in his academic works about power strategies. It has been argued that Nye’s soft power construction is seen as ‘American-originated’¹¹ and inappropriate because it deems soft power only relevant if actors obey the diplomatic rules the US laid out.¹² This problem, however, can be solved by appropriately addressing and examining the different institutions in a country and the culture involved in this institution in relation to the power strategies.¹³ Although the definition of soft power may be created with the US in mind, the concepts are applicable in combination with other countries as

⁵ Joseph Nye and Youna Kim, “Soft Power and the Korean Wave,” in *South Korean Popular Culture and North Korea*, ed. Youna Kim (Routledge, 2019), 41.

⁶ Hard power, as opposed to soft power, involves coercion, military pressure and sanctions.

⁷ Joseph S. Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 95.

⁸ Ibid, 96.

⁹ Although soft power is often associated with positive influence, it is important to note that soft power is not only perceived positively. Nye and Youna Kim argued in *Soft Power and the Korean Wave* that soft power could be perceived as “hegemonic cultural imperialistic” or nationalistic (Nye and Kim, 51).

¹⁰ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 11.

¹¹ Ernest J. Wilson, “Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 115.

¹² Jeanne L. Wilson, “Russia and China Respond to Soft Power: Interpretation and Readaptation of a Western Construct,” *Politics* 35, no. 3–4 (November 1, 2015): 290.

¹³ Wilson, “Hard Power,” 118.

long as one understands the complex nature of this definition, and takes in consideration the cultural and political context in the countries.

Soft power and the factors involved in soft power are contextual, and can be changed accordingly to the actor that utilizes soft power.¹⁴ Nye, however, argued that soft power is only applicable by countries with Western and liberal values.¹⁵ Jeanne L. Wilson stated that Nye's concept of soft power seeks to respect "freedom, democracy, liberalism and pluralism. Much soft power discourse, both theoretical and applied, is US-centric in looking to America [...] as its primary point of reference."¹⁶ While Nye stressed that Russia and China are in need to reformation to be able to practice soft power,¹⁷ Wilson emphasized that although China and Russia are adopting soft power strategies because the countries see the benefits of adopting such strategies, there is still tension while doing so.¹⁸ She added that "in its widely understood interpretation, however, soft power is irrefutably a Western – indeed, largely an American – construct. Beijing and Moscow's rejection of Western-style civil society indicates the need to recast soft power to conform to alternative political values."¹⁹ This contributes to the notion that attraction depends on individuals or countries and is contextual. Vincent Charles Keating and Katarzyna Kaczmarek argued that the bias on liberal ideas and values portrays a blindness to see that other people could be attracted to non-liberal ideas and that Nye potentially is too focused on Western standards.²⁰

So, even if the definition of 'soft power' is based on American and European politics, it is possible to use the term in combination with non-liberal or non-democratic countries. What the West sees as attractive, does not mean every state would be attracted to the same political values, cultural aspects and foreign policies. In fact, (past) non-liberal countries such as the Soviet Union and China had and have a big following from other nations not only because of hard power, but also because of soft power, so the argument that a state has to be liberal and has to have a democracy in order to be able to utilize soft power is arguably incorrect.

¹⁴ Nye, *Soft Power*, 4-16.

¹⁵ Joseph S. Nye, "What China and Russia Don't Get About Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, April 29, 2013 [Accessed February 8, 2021], <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/04/29/what-china-and-russia-dont-get-about-soft-power/>.

¹⁶ Wilson, "Russia and China," 290.

¹⁷ Nye, "What China and Russia don't get."

¹⁸ Wilson, "Russia and China," 296.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Vincent Charles Keating and Katarzyna Kaczmarek, "Conservative Soft Power: Liberal Soft Power Bias and the 'Hidden' Attraction of Russia," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 22, no. 1 (March 1, 2019): 5.

1.1.2 Cultural Diplomacy

Soft power policies, which appear in many forms through the sharing of political and cultural values, are “implemented through public diplomacy activities including culture, values and foreign policy, exchange programs, cultural and informational activities.”²¹ The sharing of cultural values to attain attraction creates a factor in soft power called cultural diplomacy, and because of the adaptation of this concept in the videos it is important to touch upon this concept. This cultural diplomacy and soft power are intertwined as cultural diplomatic tools are able to create soft power in order to gain whatever it is that is desired.

Cultural diplomacy, which is part of public diplomacy, utilizes art and other cultural aspects as a medium to create diplomatic connections while shaping an understanding of a state’s political, cultural and social values and beliefs and supports political and economic goals.²² Whereas soft power was introduced by Nye in the 1990s, public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy are both theories said to be a tool used in a longer historical timeframe and particularly during the Cold War.²³

Academics do not have one mutual definition of cultural diplomacy. Simon L. Mark defined cultural diplomacy as “the deployment of a state’s culture in support of its foreign policy goals or diplomacy.”²⁴ Milton C. Cummings, however, defined it as “the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding.”²⁵ Taking in account these differences, the definition of cultural diplomacy is flexible and could be the base of security between countries as a tool to secure trust-building.²⁶ It should also be noted that, according these definitions, soft power is a broader concept than cultural diplomacy, it applies both cultural and non-cultural tools and it does not only concern diplomatic actors, such as states.²⁷

²¹ Muharrem Ekşi, “Turkey’s Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power Policy Toward the Balkans,” *Journal of Black Sea Studies* 55 (September 2017): 194.

²² Andrew Enaifoghe and Nthabiseng Makhutla, “Exploring Cultural Diplomacy as Soft Power through Cultural Communication Exports: A Model of Power for Promoting Peace and Security,” *African Journal of Gender, Society and Development* 9 (October 7, 2020): 84.

²³ Mariano Martín Zamorano, “Reframing Cultural Diplomacy: The Instrumentalization of Culture under the Soft Power Theory,” *Culture Unbound* 8, no. 2 (November 8, 2016): 166.

²⁴ Simon L. Mark, “Rethinking Cultural Diplomacy: The Cultural Diplomacy of New Zealand, the Canadian Federation and Quebec,” *Political Science* 62, no. 1 (June 1, 2010): 64.

²⁵ Milton C. Cummings, “Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey,” *Cultural Diplomacy Research Series* (June 26, 2009): 1.

²⁶ Enaifoghe and Makhutla, “Exploring Cultural Diplomacy,” 92.

²⁷ Jack T. Lee, “Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy: Emerging Education Hubs in Asia,” *Comparative Education* 51, no. 3 (July 3, 2015): 355-356.

1.1.3 Culinary Diplomacy

Culinary diplomacy, also referred to as gastrodiploamacy, is generally accepted as a more specified branch of cultural diplomacy and is, similarly to cultural diplomacy, adopted by the videos in this study's analysis. In culinary diplomacy, national cuisine is utilized as a resource by a government.²⁸ It is a strategy known to be used for decades by states' governments as it provided the world a look in their cuisine with well-known and loved dishes such as Italian pizza and pasta. Other countries have recently been putting more effort in creating more buzz surrounding their national cuisine as well. South Korea, for example, has been promoting the cuisine through pop culture and sponsored cultural events.²⁹

Sam Chapple-Sokol defined culinary diplomacy as "the use of food and cuisine as an instrument to create cross-cultural understanding in the hope of improving interactions and cooperation."³⁰ In addition, Noor Nirwandy and Ahmad Azran Awang argued that "when a nation-state decides to combine food with its Public Diplomacy strategy, the outcome is Gastro Diplomacy."³¹ In both senses, food is used as a tool to create a cross-cultural understanding among two players or parties.³²

Culinary and cultural diplomacy are both sub-categories in public diplomatic strategies and are used to share mutual cultural and gastronomic elements in order to gain trust between multiple parties. Although public diplomacy is often only associated with states, Wantanee Suntikul argued that culinary diplomacy is not only limited to states to utilize and it is "the realm of policies and practices by which both states and non-state actors seek to engender positive associations with a national brand among foreign publics, using the channels through which tourists or potential tourists come in contact with the national cuisine".³³ This makes it possible for anyone to utilize both cultural and culinary diplomacy.

²⁸ Noor Nirwandy and Ahmad Azran Awang, "Conceptualizing Public Diplomacy Social Convention Culinary: Engaging Gastro Diplomacy Warfare for Economic Branding," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 130 (May 15, 2014): 328.

²⁹ Ibid, 329.

³⁰ Sam Chapple-Sokol, "Culinary Diplomacy: Breaking Bread to Win Hearts and Minds," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 8, no. 2 (January 1, 2013): 162.

³¹ Nirwandy and Awang, "Conceptualizing Public Diplomacy," 328.

³² Chapple-Sokol, "Culinary Diplomacy," 162.

³³ Wantanee Suntikul, "Gastrodiploamacy in Tourism," *Current Issues in Tourism* 22, no. 9 (May 28, 2019): 1076–1077.

1.2 Propaganda and Soft Power

The relation between propaganda and soft power is complex as Nye explored the delicate line between the use of soft power and propaganda. He stated that propaganda often lacks credibility, whereas soft power and attraction are based on credibility.³⁴ This credibility is touched upon by Nancy Snow as she explained that public diplomacy and soft power “puts human interaction front and center in far less manipulative ways than propaganda. Ideally, the target audience is more like a prosumer (proactive consumer) consuming messages from the sender that ranges from a public affairs officer to the head of a nongovernmental organization, but also proactively responding and persuading back in a two-way exchange of ideas.”³⁵ Snow thus pointed out that the difference lies in the manipulative and direct nature of propaganda, whereas soft power depends on interaction and attraction.

This negative connotation of propaganda is an example as to why propaganda is not often noted to be a positive tool to gain attraction. Nor is it often used as a tool for cultural diplomacy, but it is noteworthy that propaganda does not necessarily has a negative connotation. Soft power can employ propaganda to gain positive attention, and this is not only done by corrupt governments to deceive the audience as it is often believed. Propaganda by Nazi Germany and Mao and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) are examples that often come to mind. Even with those negative connotations, propaganda actually a neutral definition as the American Heritage Dictionary defines it as “the systematic propagation of a doctrine or cause or of information reflecting the views and interests of those advocating such a doctrine or cause.”³⁶ Additionally, South and North Korean definitions are perceived as neutral. The South Korean Naver Dictionary defines it as “spreading awareness and opinions, and explaining the existing and efficacy of things so it is known and understood by many people.”³⁷ The North Korean dictionary defines it as “a form of ideological work that allows the public to understand

³⁴ Joseph S. Nye, “Propaganda Isn’t the Way: Soft Power,” *International Herald Tribune*, January 10, 2003, <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/propaganda-isnt-way-soft-power>.

³⁵ Nancy Snow, “Public Diplomacy and Propaganda: Rethinking Diplomacy in the Age of Persuasion,” *E-International Relations*, December 4, 2012, <https://www.e-ir.info/2012/12/04/public-diplomacy-and-propaganda-rethinking-diplomacy-in-the-age-of-persuasion/>.

³⁶ Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, “The American Heritage Dictionary Entry: Propaganda,” [Accessed May 8, 2021], <https://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=propaganda>.

³⁷ The original text “주의나 주장, 사물의 존재, 효능 따위를 많은 사람이 알고 이해하도록 잘 설명하여 널리 알리는 일” is found in the Naver Dictionary, “선전,” “Sŏnjŏn,” [Propaganda] [Accessed June 8, 2021], https://dict.naver.com/search.dict?dicQuery=%EC%84%A0%EC%A0%84&query=%EC%84%A0%EC%A0%84&target=dic&ie=utf8&query_utf=&isOnlyViewEE=.

and recognize certain ideas, theories, and policies in a logical and systematic manner.”³⁸ This definition is less broad as it focuses more on a political stance, but it shows the lack of positive or negative connotations and the acceptance of propaganda as a general tool in power strategies.

Despite this neutral connotation, the term has been redefined and changed according to the situation and goal in which it has been used. Propaganda has been often redefined as “closing off debate by bypassing the rational will”³⁹, or “biased speech”⁴⁰. It is sometimes argued to be used to “influence mass attitudes on controversial issues”⁴¹ and it is so embedded in the daily lives of everyone, we do not recognize it when we encounter it,⁴² so only the obviously deceiving messages are perceived as propaganda. Although dictionaries lack a negative or positive connotation, the reality is that most of the time propaganda is associated with fulfilling one’s goals through manipulative means.

Yang Mu Chin, professor at the University of North Korean Studies, emphasized the fact that propaganda is often only associated as exclusively used by dictators, and we need to stay away from these negative and critical preconceptions of propaganda as it would hinder academic research on propaganda.⁴³ He added that the North Korean regime utilizes propaganda to deliver the message of completing the socialist revolution to the public in a coherence and extensive way.⁴⁴

It is with all these aforementioned notions that, although propaganda is often misunderstood as being forced upon the targeted audiences and attaining a negative connotation in return, one should understand that propaganda is integrated in every aspect of life. Propaganda is, for example, put-to-use during election programs to form a politicians’ image and in what we call marketing to promote products or services to consumers – which could be seen as soft power in the private sector rather than public diplomacy. The media with its commercial content nowadays is deemed one of the main actors in propaganda nowadays and

³⁸ The original text “일정한 사상, 이론, 정책 등을 대중에게 논리적이며 체계적으로 해설해줌으로써 이론적으로 파악하고 인식하게 하는 사상사업의 한 형식” is found on DPRK Today, “선전,” “Sŏnjŏn,” [Propaganda] [Accessed May 26, 2021], https://dprktoday.com/kor_dic/index.php?page=1.

³⁹ Jason Stanley, *How Propaganda Works* (Princeton University Press, 2015), 48.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 49.

⁴¹ Bruce Lannes Smith and Harold D. Lasswell, *Propaganda, Communication and Public Opinion*, (Princeton University Press, 2015), 1.

⁴² M. J. Braun and Gae Lyn Henderson, *Propaganda and Rhetoric in Democracy History, Theory, Analysis* (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2016), 29-30.

⁴³ Yang Mu Chin, “선전선동 사례연구 :나치독일, 중국, 북한,” “Sŏnjŏnsŏndong saryeyŏngu: nach’idogil, ch’ungguk, pukhan,” [A Case Study of Propagandas: Nazi Germany, China and North Korea] *현대북한연구 Hyŏndaepukhanyŏngu* 14, no. 3 (December 2011): 7-9.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 27-30.

it has been debated that the media does not propagandize the ‘normal’ people’s interests, but supports the elites in enabling them to do whatever they have to do to hold onto their power.⁴⁵ It is, therefore, out of place to call propaganda a tool merely used by authoritarian systems, or to reject the fact that propaganda can be used in multiple situations as it is a tool to create power for all kinds of actors alike. Governments, institutions and individuals are all users and consumers of propaganda in order to gain one’s favor. The difference between most soft power tools and propaganda lies in the way a goal is fulfilled; whereas most soft power tools make use of attraction and two-way communication, propaganda can be utilized by approaching someone in a more direct and, sometimes, more aggressive way.

1.3 Soft Power in Korea

Soft power on the Korean peninsula is not a new nor small concept as the ‘Hallyu wave’ has been deemed a valuable tool for the South Korean soft power strategies. Although it is believed that South Korea could still grow its soft power influence to a larger scale with the help of widespread information and digital technologies,⁴⁶ the increase in popularity of South Korean pop culture internationally has already been a significant factor in South Korean external diplomacy.⁴⁷

The influence of the Hallyu wave is not only seen in the Western world, but it also set foot in North Korea as exposure to South Korean media is beginning to gain more grip onto the younger population in the country. Exposure to South Korean and American media is something said to happen more frequently in North Korea since Kim Jong Un has taken office, even as the regime has been attempting to suppress the illegal media distribution.⁴⁸ This is done through state’s pressure onto the population to report any suspicious behavior regarding cellphones and

⁴⁵ Alan MacLeod, *Propaganda in the Information Age: Still Manufacturing Consent* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2019), 1.

⁴⁶ Nye and Kim, “Soft Power and the Korean Wave”, 46.

⁴⁷ Kang Chun Su, “소프트파워로 본 한류로서의 방탄소년단 고찰,” “sop’üt’üp’awöro pon hallyurosöü pangt’ansonyöndan koch’al,” [A study on BTS as a Korean wave with soft power] *이벤트컨벤션연구, Ibent’ük’önpensyönyöngu* 35 (2019): 106.

⁴⁸ An Chi Ön and Ch’oe Hyön Chu, “북한사회 내 한류콘텐츠를 통한 남한사회 인식변화에 관한 탐색적 연구,” “Pukhansahüi nae hallyuk’ont’ench’ürül t’onghan namhansahüi insikpyönhwae kwanhan t’amsaekchök yöngu,” [An Exploratory Study on the Change of Perception on South Korea through the Korean Wave Content in North Korean society] *문화산업연구, Munhwasanöbyöngu* 18, no. 1 (March 2018): 108-109.

information sharing towards outsiders.⁴⁹ The exposure to this content leads to more curiosity about South Korean society, fashion and music. Soft power in the form of exposure to South Korean media is so efficient that it has been argued that this could lead to more people attempting (and partially succeeding) to defect the country.⁵⁰

Contrary to popular belief, North Korea is not only subjected to soft power nor does the country only use hard power and military manpower. North Korea has been attempting to use soft power more often in international relations and media contents.

One of the areas in which this is particularly evident is North Korean tourism policies. Tourism in North Korea can be defined as ‘socialist tourism’ as it is an actor in external propaganda. It contributes to the economic growth of the country and for the population, and the tourism is part of the ‘legacy business’⁵¹ that Kim Jong Un seems to boldly pursue.⁵² Kim Jong Un’s emphasis on this portraying the ‘humane’ side of North Korea, by allowing foreigners to participate in events such as the Pyongyang Marathon,⁵³ is combined with a drive to improve the economy by stimulating more tourism than during Kim Jong Il’s regime.⁵⁴ The difference between the tourism is not only evident in the amount of tourists in North Korea, but also in the change in nationalities of these tourists. Even though the majority of the tourists are still Chinese tourists as was the case during both Kim Il Sung’s and Kim Jong Il’s regime, North Korea is now arguably targeting more ‘Western’ tourists to visit North Korea.⁵⁵ It should be noted that, despite the fact that tourism is a bigger factor in North Korea’s soft power strategy than before, the attraction of tourists is, of course, used as a tool to create hard currency as well. Thus, it can be argued that soft power directly and indirectly generates money.

As much as people believe the country is still focusing on hard power, there are relatively big steps made by North Korea towards a more soft power approach as explored in

⁴⁹ Mun Dong Hui, “N. Korean Authorities Continue Efforts to Prevent Information Leaks,” *Daily NK*, May 14, 2021 [Accessed May 31, 2021], <https://www.dailynk.com/english/north-korean-authorities-continue-efforts-prevent-information-leaks/>.

⁵⁰ Ŏn and Chu, “북한사회,” 113.

⁵¹ Established by Kim Il Sung, it focuses on gaining money through foreign hard currency, and building up a well-working economy. This business underperformed when Kim Jong Il passed away, but Kim Jong Un is giving the business more opportunities (Ouellette, 425).

⁵² Dean J. Ouellette, “The Tourism of North Korea in the Kim Jong-Un Era: Propaganda, Profitmaking, and Possibilities for Engagement,” *Pacific Focus* 31, no. 3 (2016): 423-425.

⁵³ Ibid, 430.

⁵⁴ Pak Hyöng Chun, “북한의 수용성과 남북교류협력 방향: 김정은 시기 관광정책을 중심으로,” “Pukhanüi suyongsönggwa nambukkyoryuhyöpyökh banghyang: Kim Chöng Ŭn sigi kwangwangjöngch’aekül chungsimüro,” [North Korea’s Acceptance and Direction of Inter-Korean Exchange and Cooperation: Focusing on Tourism Policy during the Kim Jong-un Period] *한국동북아논총, Hanguktongbuganonch’ong* 26, no. 1 (March 2021): 112.

⁵⁵ Ouelette, “The Tourism of North Korea,” 430-431.

this section. One of these approaches is the Youtube channel 'Echo of Truth', which made use of more novel soft power tools in the videos to gain international attention. In order to study these soft power approaches more extensively, and add to the discourse of North Korean soft power, the third chapter of this study lays out the results of the analysis done on the channel's videos.

Chapter 2: Methodology and Data Collection

This thesis aims to answer the question as to how the North Korean Youtube channel ‘Echo of Truth’ utilized soft power strategies in the videos. The channel, which started in 2017 with several documentaries about North Korea and later switched to more modern vlogs about daily life events and places to go to in Pyongyang, was blocked on the website in December 2020 by Youtube for violating Google’s policies and Youtube’s Terms of Service. The channel came back online on December the 22nd, 2020 with the reuploading of the previously uploaded vlogs and an extra video called ‘Real Echo of Truth tells the truth!’. Before the channel was deleted and blocked by Youtube and Google for the second time, the channel had re-uploaded their content partially. Although the results show a focus on a small number of videos in particular, the study took in account every video that was reuploaded in December, 2020 in consideration.

This research has been done with the support of a qualitative visual discourse analysis of the videos on the Youtube channel ‘Echo of Truth’. A visual discourse analysis focuses on the combination of visual and textual messages by questioning as to how the presenter intended the messages and how the messages then are interpreted by the viewer. Gillian Rose introduces the different forms of discourse analyses in visual analyses, in which *Discourse Analysis I* is classified as a “form of discourse analysis [that] tends to pay rather more attention to the notion of discourse as articulated through various kinds of visual images and verbal texts than it does to the practices entailed by specific discourses”.⁵⁶ In order to analyze these specific videos to the best ability, a special emphasis was placed on the verbal and written text in these videos.

Discourse Analysis II is described as a “form of discourse analysis [that] tends to pay more attention to the practices of institutions than it does to the visual images and verbal texts. Its methodology is usually left implicit. It tends to be more explicitly concerned with issues of power, regimes of truth, institutions and technologies.”⁵⁷ Rose emphasizes the significance of text, the questions of power, intertextuality and context in *Discourse Analysis I*, but this misses the consideration of the power and influence of institutes behind the pictures and videos. So, in this thesis a combination of both forms of analyses is applied.

While using Rose’s visual discourse analysis method *Discourse Analysis I* and *Discourse Analysis II*, the study categorized the videos by theme. Rose emphasized the significance of identifying the data’s central themes or motives and recognizing differences in

⁵⁶ Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*, 1st ed. (London [etc.]: Sage, 2001), 140.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 140.

the execution of those themes, which helps to pinpoint the discourse on the themes within the content.⁵⁸ For this reason, the videos were able to be easily categorized in the following themes; art, food, healthcare, education and military videos.

Although discourse analysis is often associated with written or spoken text, Rose's visual discourse analysis applies intertextuality of text, images and/or videos to create an understanding of the discourse without the limitation of only able to analyze the spoken and written texts in the videos. Taking in account the importance of both imagery and text in the videos of the channel, this research studied both the videos' visual and textual discourses to create an understanding of the possible use of soft power in the videos. Additionally, attention was given to not only the content that was presented in the videos, but also the content that was (deliberately) left out of the videos as this provides significant information in visual discourse analyses.⁵⁹ One additional, important point of this research was made by Rose about the effect of truth. According to her, one should also raise the question what the effect is of the data's claims of truth on the audience of the content.⁶⁰ The notion of truth plays a significant role in this analysis in the sense that the Youtube channel claims to offer a new truth of North Korea. The analysis, however, does not attempt to specifically state whether the statements made in the content are right or wrong. The research rather studies the effect the claims have on the message the videos convey.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 149-150.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 157-158.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 154.

Chapter 3: Results

The videos of the Youtube channel ‘Echo of Truth’ were analyzed to answer the research question as to how soft power tools are applied. This chapter will lay out the results of the analysis and explain the utilization of both hard and soft power in the channel’s videos. Firstly, the study explores the significance of vlogging as a soft power method, which is followed by the analysis of the channel’s vlogs. Following this, the topics of videos with traditional propaganda-like editing are touched upon before finishing the chapter by explaining the dilemma the channel seemed to have faced.

3.1 The Influence of Vlogs for ‘Echo of Truth’

3.1.1 Vlogging

The channel used ‘vlogs’ as one of the tools to reach the foreign audiences, thus it is important to note the notion of *vlogging* on Youtube and how this effectively influences its consumers. Vlogging, or also referred as to *videoblogging*, are regularly uploaded videos with different themes including, but not limited to, daily life, food, make up and travelling. Vlogging can create a reality for the audience in order to achieve a goal or aim. The consumers may not be able to know what that particular goal or aim is, may it be a goal to gain more subscribers or the goal to gain more influence about a certain topic, but efficiency of the vlog ties along with how the vlog is presented and which topics are touched upon. It has also been argued that vlogs do not have to be edited to perfection to be efficient, and it goes as far as being able to state that viewers seem to prefer sincerity over perfect editing.⁶¹

The influence of the vlogs makes it attractive for North Korea to use this as a tool for soft power and it is unsurprising North Korea is, although relatively late, participating in this trend of vlogging like the rest of the world seem to be doing. The vlogs seem to want to reach out to the ‘normal’ foreign viewer and be a starting point to a newer, more positive narrative of North Korea than we are exposed to in other media.

⁶¹ Yun Chi Yǒng, Yu Chi Yun, and I Chang Sōk, “유투브 브이로그 이용 동기 및 이용자 특성이 이용 만족 및 지속이용의도에 미치는 영향,” “Yut’yubū pūirogū iyong tonggi mich’ iyongja t’ūksōngi iyong manjok mich’ chisogiyongūidoe mich’inūn yōnghyang,” [The Effect of Motivation and User Characteristics on Use Satisfaction and Continuous Use Intention in YouTube Vlog] *한국콘텐츠학회논문지*, *Hangukk’ont’ench’ūhakhoenonmunji* 20, no. 4 (April 2020): 190.

The videos reach out to a large audience as almost all videos are subtitled and spoken in English, but the channel also regularly uses Korean and Russian. Interestingly to note is the use of French and Chinese subtitles and spoken texts in several videos. The use of different languages in the videos by North Korea should not only be seen as an economic strategy as a tool to create more buzz and a larger audience, which in turn would cause a bigger interest in, for example, North Korean tourism.⁶² It is a rather political strategy too. North Korea is not new to social media accounts on websites such as Twitter and Facebook, but these accounts focused on Korean written texts in opposition to the amount of English used in ‘Echo of Truth’.

3.1.2 Hosting a Vlog: Un A and Sogwang Media Corporation

Whoever makes decisions during the process of editing and uploading a vlog is a determining factor as to what and how content is published. When an individual person uploads content on a topic, it will be executed differently than whenever a (state-run) company controls the content. This section explores the agency behind the videos as well as giving an explanation to who Un A, the one host associated most with the channel, is.

The channel has been linked to the North Korean Sogwang Media Corporation through a Twitter account named ‘coldnoodlefan’. This Twitter account and the media corporation, as well as several other social media accounts such as the Youtube account of ‘DPRK Today’, are found to have posted similar content in the same time frame.⁶³ These accounts are all seemingly connected to the Sogwang Media Corporation and also to the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) in Pyongyang.⁶⁴ Sogwang Media Corporation, which in theory is a state-run news agency, is most likely to some degree monitored and controlled by the government on what content is uploaded. Although the corporation is said to be state-run, NK News’ investigation showed that Sogwang owns a restaurant and technology company, and is likely able to be linked to other state-run media outlets, which raises questions about how state-run the corporation actually is.⁶⁵

⁶² Ha Sŭng Hŭi [Ha Seunghee] , “북한의 유튜브 대외 선전매체 활용 양상,” “Pukhanŭi yut’yubŭ taeye sŏnjŏnmaech’e hwaryong yangsang,” [North Korea’s use of YouTube propaganda media] *북한학연구*, *Pukhanhakyŏngu* 16, no. 2 (2020): 189.

⁶³ Colin Zwirko, “What’s up Pyongyang? North Korea Experiments with Vlogging to Fight ‘Fake News’,” NK News - North Korea News, May 18, 2020 [Accessed May 12, 2021], <https://www.nknews.org/2020/05/whats-up-pyongyang-north-korea-experiments-with-vlogging-to-fight-fake-news/>.

⁶⁴ Colin Zwirko, “North Korea Debuts New Propaganda ‘Vloggers’ to Attract Foreign Viewers,” NK News - North Korea News, October 21, 2020 [Accessed May 12, 2021], <https://www.nknews.org/2020/10/north-korea-debuts-new-propaganda-vloggers-to-attract-foreign-viewers/>.

⁶⁵ Zwirko “What’s up Pyongyang?.”

Sogwang is in all probability the decision-maker that decides on who appears in the videos. Un A, the main face of the channel, is the embodiment of the message the channel is conveying. She is a young, well-spoken woman with a modern sense of style and a welcoming expression, who undoubtedly oozes a friendlier atmosphere than most would have in mind when thinking about North Korean videos. This image is fitting for the image Kim Jong Un has been attempting to convey in his domestic and foreign policies; North Korea is a developed and modern country and a force to be reckoned with, without having to use its hard power strategies. Her technological savviness fits in this narrative perfectly, but her ordinary aura gives her the ability to create an unexpected and new twist to North Korean propaganda.⁶⁶ While Un A's real identity is left to be guessed, it has been speculated by both academics and North Koreans abroad that she has some direct ties to the North Korean elite.⁶⁷ This would make perfect sense with the ties Sogwang has to the state.

The goal of the channel seems to be to provide a new, North Korean insight of the existing discourse on North Korea. The videos offer awareness of the 'real' reality of the country and convey the desire to eliminate any misunderstandings about North Korea by showing all kinds of aspects of North Korean daily life. The title 'Echo of Truth' is only an affirmation of this aim, and this is confirmed in the last video the channel uploaded after it was blocked for the last time. The last video uploaded on 'Echo of Truth', called *Real Echo of Truth tells the truth!*, included an explanation why the channel should not be banned. Un A explicitly stated she does not understand why her channel violated Google's policies, and her words emphasized her belief that she did not spread any false news with her videos. "Everyone has the right to know the truth,"⁶⁸ she explained before expressing her desire of showing the world "what it is really like in [her] country."⁶⁹ The video stressed the importance of the world knowing the reality of the North Korean state, and to do so 'Echo of Truth' arguably has deliberate motives running like a thread through its videos; to present North Korea as a technologically advanced country and to introduce North Korean culture and traditions.

⁶⁶ Colin Zwirko, "Why Did North Korea's 'Ordinary Girl' YouTuber Disappear from the Web?," NK News - North Korea News, April 30, 2021 [Accessed May 18, 2021], <https://www.nknews.org/2021/04/why-did-north-koreas-ordinary-girl-youtuber-disappear-from-the-web/>.

⁶⁷ Zwirko "What's up Pyongyang?"

⁶⁸ Echo of Truth. "Real Echo of Truth tells the truth!," Youtube video, December 23, 2020.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

3.1.3 The Editing of the Vlogs

Vlogging is established as a medium to create personal content for an audience while making use of various speech and image methods and this medium is used for a significant amount of videos in the channel. Direct speech to the camera is one of the predominant ways to create discourses on North Korean topics for the international audience, and written texts, edited pictures and video clips all support these direct speeches.⁷⁰ One characteristic of vlogs is the presence of one ‘vlogger’ and the possibility of having people join this vlogger, but only for a smaller amount of time.⁷¹ The focus is on the vlogger and the viewer, making this a more intimate medium to convey different messages.

These aforementioned vlogging characteristics are also evident in the vlog-type videos of ‘Echo of Truth’. In, for example, *Shopping at Taesong Department Store* Un A walks through the supermarket to explain what the store has to offer. Fig. 1-3 shows her interaction with the camera to create the illusion as if she is talking directly to the viewer. She picks up a box with chocolates that is shaped like a pig, before holding it next to her face and then asks the viewer if she is prettier than the pig-shaped box. The moment that laughing sound effects are heard and the written text appears on screen, it is clear the video is intentionally making jokes and the producers of the video desire to make it as lighthearted as possible. “Well, no....” in English is a clear answer, whereas the Korean answer “사실은 꿀꿀이가 더 고운데...” [*sasirŭn kkulkkuriga tŏ kounde*] (“In fact, the pig(oink) is prettier”) is even more straightforward. It is evident that the channel knows how to attract the audience and how to make use of vlogging characteristics to only emphasize the humor that is being conveyed in this video, but still manages to convey the message of being a modern state with high-end supermarkets.

From an editing point of view, the vlogs create a more up-to-date and modern type of media, and through the more novel characteristics of vlogging, the channel is able provide the viewer another ‘truth’ of North Korea through different themes. The themes of the vlogs will be explored in detail in the results chapter.

⁷⁰ Marissa K. Wood, “What Makes a Vlog a Vlog?,” *Diggit Magazine*, March 8, 2019 [Accessed May 12, 2021], <https://www.diggitmagazine.com/academic-papers/what-makes-vlog-vlog>.

⁷¹ Wood, “What Makes a Vlog a Vlog?”



Fig. 1-3: Echo of Truth, "Shopping At Taesong Department Store," Youtube video, November 9, 2019.

3.2 Pyongyang Through the Eyes of Un A

With the help of the aforementioned vlogging characteristics, ‘Echo of Truth’ utilizes a novel and ‘softer’ approach to create attention from an international audience. The channel’s main focus of providing the hosts’ truth of what North Korea is really like leads to Un A (and the other hosts) to show the viewer this ‘real’ Pyongyang. The vlogs create discourse of North Korean technological advancement and North Korean culture as a world-culture, which is explained in the following sections.

3.2.1 The ‘Echo of Truth’ of the North Korean Educational System

Education and the advancement of the North Korean educational system are suggested to be an important topic in the visual and textual discourses created in the channel’s videos. The fact that education is chosen as a key component in the videos is unsurprising. Education is a significant factor in advancing the modernity of a country by increasing overall knowledge and giving everyone equal educational chances. It is also an important factor in self-identifying modern socialist states as it “promotes human capital acquisition and social cohesion, favoring economic development and expanding the tax base.”⁷² Additionally, education is the most efficient tool to push political agendas and expose groups of the population to propaganda,⁷³ making it an attractive medium for the North Korean regime to push its ideological agenda to the population from a young age. Thus, it is not only one of the most effective topics to introduce North Korea as a modern nation, but it is also a significant topic in North Korean domestic policies.

The visual and textual discourse created by the videos in this category suggests that the educational system is seen as a national pride. This was done with the help of different methods. Un A is found to be mentioning the twelve-year educational system in, for example, *I Missed You, My School*. She explains that the system is free and mandatory for all children, and that the state financially supports the children by providing free books and uniforms. Despite not mentioned in the videos, this is embedded in Korean law under the name of 교원법 (kyowōnbōp), or also referred to as ‘The Teacher Act’, since September 25th, 2012 to follow an

⁷² Patrick A. Testa, “Education and Propaganda: Tradeoffs to Public Education Provision in Nondemocracies,” *Journal of Public Economics* 160 (April 1, 2018): 66.

⁷³ Brittany Hunter, “Education Is the State’s Greatest Tool for Propaganda,” *FEE: Foundation for Economic Education* November 14, 2017 [Accessed April 25th, 2021], <https://fee.org/articles/education-is-the-states-greatest-tool-for-propaganda/>.

already existing eleven-year system.⁷⁴ This law requires the government to offer financial aid to improve the educational system, and give administrative guidance and have legal control over the educational system.⁷⁵ Kim Jong Un stresses the significance of the educational system continuously through law reformations and speeches, and the videos are conveying the same message; the North Korean educational system is something to be proud of.

This pride in the educational system is also evident in the conversations with students. Through interviews and conversations between the students and the vlogs' hosts, the viewer gains a sense of inclusion in which it is easier to convey a positive message. For example, when a student in *DPRK Universities resume lectures* is asked by the Korean speaking host (not Un A) if the time off campus because of Covid19 has affected his study, he admits that he did lose time to study, but he makes sure to emphasize the possibility of online lectures. This emphasis on online classes might be overlooked by most, but it is a noteworthy statement as it highlights North Korean digitization. The digitization of education is a topic Kim Jong Un has been pushing in the last years as a way to upgrade the methods of teaching.⁷⁶ This digitization is rooted in Kim Jong Un's focus to improve the information technology, which has been quite successful in the last years in improving the digital space and gaining knowledge in, for example, coding.⁷⁷ Because of the usage of conversation between students and the host, the discourse is not aggressively delivered, but it is rather able to make the viewer question their own, assumption-based understanding of North Korean digitization.

The interviews with the students in these videos are in Korean and English, illustrating the high level of English skills the students supposedly all have, despite English not being their native language. This is in alignment of Kim Jong Un's emphasis on the development of the North Korean state's economic and military power. English skills are believed to be crucial in advancing science and technology, and therefore necessary when improving the state's

⁷⁴ Ōm Hyŏn Suk, "2000 년대 이후 교육법제 정비를 통한 북한 교육의 현황," "2000 nyŏndae ihu kyoyukpŏpche chŏngbirŭl t'onghan pukhan kyoyukŭi hyŏnhwang," [A Study on the Status of North Korean Education through the Improvement of Education Legislation after 2000s] *현대북한연구, Hyŏndaebughanyŏngu* 20, no. 1 (April 2017): 109-110.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 110.

⁷⁶ Eun-Jeong Kim, "Changes in North Korea's Higher Education and Education Management System during the Kim Jong Un Era," *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* (April 27, 2020): 14.

⁷⁷ Kim Chi Yŏng, "김정은 시대 북한 정보기술 발전의 정치경제적 고찰," "Kim Ch'ŏng Ŭn sidae pukhan chŏngbogisul palchŏnŭi chŏngch'igyŏngjechŏk koch'al," [Political and Economic Implications on North Korea's Development of Information Technology in Kim Jong-Un Era] *아태연구, At'aeyŏngu* 26, no. 2 (June 2019): 127-131.

economy.⁷⁸ North Korea pushed the strengthening of English language acquisition in education under the new, educational system from 2012,⁷⁹ making it understandable that the videos are conveying the message of having high language skills in other languages apart from Korean. Again, this shows that the videos are found to have created discourse to show the academical advancement the country has.

By making use of vlogs, and the fact that the videos includes, for example, Un A and the students themselves, makes the discourse more approachable and relatable for the international audience. It provides an image the international media is not known for showing, therefore offering the international audience an insight in the educational system from North Korean point of view.

3.2.2 Culture as a Thread through the Videos

Culture, similarly to the educational system, was found to be a significant theme in the videos of the channel, and is introduced extensively in these videos. Vlogs about food and art created both visual and textual discourse that show North Korean cultural sophistication. The videos about art and food utilized the more novel vlog characteristics perfectly by making use of cultural and culinary diplomacy tools. The usage of culture to attract attention and attraction are core elements of soft power. Thus, it is not out of place to call the following sections examples of the channel using soft power through the means of vlogging.

Art

All the art-related vlogs start off with the title ‘Experiencing the Wisdom of the Nation’, perhaps implying that art is the gateway to an advanced and wise nation. Considering the fact North Korean discourses in the videos continuously suggest North Korea to be a cultural powerhouse, it is a significant topic. Linking this to the former motive this analysis explored, ‘Echo of Truth’ presses the urgency for the audiences to experience the modernity and wisdom the nation has the offer. Soft power tools are applied here for the audience to provide an understanding that North Korea is nothing like the international community is trying to illustrate the country as.

Making the viewer experience ‘the Wisdom of the Nation’ is done in different videos that are shot in Mansudae Art Studio, an important art studio in Pyongyang, and is said to be

⁷⁸ Hyeon-Seok Kang, “Changes in English Language Policy in Kim Jong-Un’s North Korea: A Prelude to Reconciliation?,” *English Today* 36, no. 1 (March 2020): 4.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 5.

the place of origin of North Korean revolutionary art and hosts thousands of artists.⁸⁰ The videos cover several subjects of North Korean art as Un A tries different kinds of art techniques.

Enter the Mansude Art Studio in Pyongyang is an introduction to 조선화 (*Chōsōnhwa*), which is a traditional Korean art form and may be seen as the core of North Korean art. Although the video only directly mentions *Chōsōnhwa* in the introduction by the host to the viewer, the visual and textual discourse created in the video suggests the sophistication of *Chōsōnhwa*. This is seen in the usage of expressions such as “I really thought that [*Chōsōnhwa*] painting was so noble, powerful and beautiful”,⁸¹ and in the interaction between the host and the painter Ri Gyong Nam, who is an experienced and talented painter as stated by the video. Ri helps the host to paint and how to create real *Chōsōnhwa*. By showing this interaction, cultural diplomatic tools are applied to share cultural values with the international audience. The vlogging techniques that are used in this video work perfectly in combination with these tools, making the discourse of the sophistication of *Chōsōnhwa* less direct and more relatable.

The second part of the Mansudae Art Studio series, *How to make Koryo Celadon*, is only an addition to this discourse as it focuses on ceramic workmanship in North Korea. The green ceramics shown in the videos are reminiscent of the green celadon ceramics made during the Koryo era (918-1392), which has been described as the best period of time for “a distinctively Korean expression of taste and skill.”⁸² While highlighting these art forms, the viewer is shown the variety of other traditional and refined North Korean arts.

Art gallery at Mansudae Art Studio wraps up the series about North Korean art by exploring the art exhibition in the art studio, giving the viewer an overall view on all the art works North Korean artists create. This video explicitly stresses the importance of the tradition of North Korean art by showing a variety of art forms in Mansudae Art Studio, making the other videos the stepping stones to the last video in this series about art.

The videos do not push their ideological agenda to the viewer directly, and the messages behind the videos are arguably more effective with knowledge about North Korean art and its history. While propaganda encourages audiences to take any action with the influence of the messages,⁸³ Cummings defined cultural diplomacy as a trade-off of information and art,⁸⁴

⁸⁰ KBS News, “[클로즈업 북한] 60년 맞은 만수대 창작사,” “[k’ullochūöp pukhan] 60nyōn majun Mansudae ch’angjaks’a,” [[Close Up North Korea] The 60-years-old Mansudae Art Studio] December 7, 2019 [Accessed May 3, 2021], [//news.kbs.co.kr/news/view.do?ncd=4338679](http://news.kbs.co.kr/news/view.do?ncd=4338679).

⁸¹ Echo of Truth, “Enter the Mansude Art Studio in Pyongyang,” Youtube video, November 30, 2019.

⁸² F. S. K., “Korean Pottery,” *Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin* 9, no. 54 (1911): IX, 63.

⁸³ Henry X. Hong Sun, “Mao’s Art of Propaganda,” *Journal of Public Affairs* 20, no. 2 (2020): 1.

⁸⁴ Cummings, “Cultural Diplomacy,” 1.

therefore it would be more logical to dub these videos as a medium for diplomatic messages towards international audiences and these videos could also be deemed as an effective soft power approach.

Food

Similarly to cultural diplomacy, culinary diplomacy is a concept often linked to diplomacy situations, such as international leaders visiting each other's country and eating the country's cuisine. During the Inter-Korean summit in 2018, for example, Kim Jong Un and Moon Jae In ate 평양 냉면 (*P'yŏngyang naengmyŏn*) which is a well-known dish in both countries, but North Korea takes particular pride in. Sharing cuisines is not merely a common occurrence in diplomatic settings, but can also appear on social media as food vlogs are a popular method to create online buzz. Therefore, it might be unsurprising that food is a reoccurring theme in the videos of 'Echo of Truth'. Most of these food-related videos are reminiscent of the vlog-type videos Youtube is filled with as the North Korean food scene is explored. The chef in *Inside a Restaurant in Pyongyang* explains that all the food on the table was once only eaten by royalty, but now everyone can enjoy these dishes, emphasizing the pride in the national cuisine.

Food as a symbol of national pride is not a new concept, but relatively novel for North Korea.⁸⁵ The North Korean government avoided mentioning food until the 1990s, due to influence of the Soviet Union where gluttony was highly disapproved, only giving the subject more publicity in the 2000s in popular media such as films and music.⁸⁶ Additionally, the North Korean food shortages had significant influence in the decision not to give food attention in the 1990s. Interestingly enough, Tatiana Gabroussenko argued that North Korea uses culinary nationalism primarily domestically, with plain dishes shown to the North Korean population.⁸⁷ However, the moment culinary diplomacy targets international audiences, plain dishes are changed to an abundance of food with more luxurious dishes in the spotlight.⁸⁸ *Inside a Restaurant in Pyongyang* offers the viewer this abundance in a culinary and diplomatic image of all national and luxurious dishes for the audiences.

⁸⁵ Tatiana Gabroussenko, "Well-Nourished Beauty. Culinary Symbolism in the Mass Culture of North Korea, 1960-2014," *Tiempo Devorado* 2, no. 2 (2015): 233-235.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 245-246.

The first dish that is shown is called 신선로 (*sinsŏllo*), a dish with a long history in both North and South Korean culture as it is said to be eaten by gods. Although the origin from the dish has been disputed, the dish is important in Korean culinary history.⁸⁹ The dish is not frequently eaten by either North and South Korean people, but it is a national dish embedded in Korean culture. By pointing out that ordinary North Korean people do get to eat this dish often, the video seems to suggest that there are no food shortages among the population.

The video further highlights North Korean pine mushrooms from 칠보산 (*ch'ilbosan*). These mushrooms played a role in the 2018 inter-Korean summit when North Korea decided to send two tons of these mushrooms to South Korea as a 'gift'.⁹⁰ This was not the first time the mushrooms played a role in diplomatic relations between the country, as Kim Jong Il sent them before during the 2000 and 2007 inter-Korean summits.⁹¹ The role of the mushrooms in North Korean society is not only a diplomatic one, but it is also said to have made the North Korean government a significant amount of money through trading in China and North Korea itself, making the context in which these mushrooms are being shown even more interesting.⁹² This explains that, like mentioned before when touching upon tourism in section 1.3, that soft power strategies are able to go hand-in-hand with economical motivations such as hard currency.

Whereas the former video highlighted the national dishes, the video *Pizza Restaurant in Pyongyang* introduces the Ryongsong Italian Cuisine Restaurant which serves "world famous pizzas and pastas"⁹³ to domestic and foreign customers with a variety of 15 kinds of pizzas and 7 kinds of pastas. Gabroussenko explained this sudden emphasis on Western food by stating that North Korean tourism takes pride in being able to serve foreign tourists Western dishes, because it would be a testimony of their high civilization and advancement.⁹⁴ This shows us that even though culinary diplomacy is also used as a tool here, it is not to highlight the Korean culture but to emphasize the modernity and advancement this analysis explored in section 3.2.1.

⁸⁹ Tai Wei Lim, "Exporting North Korean Food Culture and Cuisines," *North Korean Review* 16, no. 2 (2020): 114-115.

⁹⁰ Tae-jun Kang, "What's Behind North Korea's Pine Mushroom Gift to South?," *The Diplomat*, [Accessed May 2, 2021], <https://thediplomat.com/2018/09/whats-behind-north-koreas-pine-mushroom-gift-to-south/>.

⁹¹ Mun Tong Hŭi [Mun Dong Hui], "北 최상급 송이버섯 평양으로...南北 정상회담 선물용?," "Ch'oesanggŭp songibŏsŏt p'yŏngyangŭro... chŏngsanghoedam sŏnmuryong?," [North Korea's finest pine mushrooms are going to Pyongyang, is this a gift during the inter-Korean summit?] *DailyNK*, September 13, 2019 [Accessed May 2, 2021], <https://www.dailynk.com/北-최상급-송이버섯-평양으로-南北-정상회담-선물용/>

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Echo of Truth, "Pizza Restaurant in Pyongyang," Youtube video, February 20, 2019.

⁹⁴ Gabroussenko, "Well-Nourished Beauty," 246.

It is apparent the videos took the ‘foodvlog’ genre on Youtube as a guideline for this theme in order to present the viewer with the rich culinary culture North Korea has to offer. The importance of the food culture has been extensively shared through the informative introductions by the people in the vlogs, and the videos also conveyed the message of having the means to offer Western food. In conclusion, these videos use both culinary diplomacy and vlogging to create soft power.

3.3 Socialist Propaganda in ‘Echo of Truth’

Although the relative novelty of the North Korean usage of vlogging makes it perhaps attractive to focus on the vlogs, the more traditional propaganda-like videos must not be disregarded. In order to not invalidate the rest of the content on the channel and to create a cohesive analysis of the use of soft and hard power in ‘Echo of Truth’, it is important to address the differences between these videos as these videos are in no way just a small portion of the videos. The themes mentioned in the following section may include fewer videos, nonetheless the discourse created by the videos is just as important to touch upon.

3.3.1 A Technologically Advanced Country

The discourse of North Korean technological advances is mentioned thoroughly in the propaganda-like videos. The notion of being a technologically advanced and well-developed, socialist country dates back to the Soviet Union, where socialist modernity played a significant role. Growth in technology was an important focus point in the 1960s for the Soviet Union as a means to keep up with the rest of the (Western) world in terms of economy and production values, and this was obtained by importing Western technology for different sectors.⁹⁵ North Korea’s emphasis on science and technology, which was pursued in a policy to strengthen both science and technology during Kim Jong Il’s regime, is based on the same desire; to be economically strong and independent.⁹⁶ In the last two decades North Korea has continuously been prioritizing the advancement of technology and science for the survival of the socialist

⁹⁵ Besnik Pula, *Globalization under and after Socialism: The Evolution of Transnational Capital in Central and Eastern Europe* (Redwood City, United States: Stanford University Press, 2018), 61-62.

⁹⁶ Jai S. Mah, “North Korea’s Science and Technology Policy and the Development of Technology-Intensive Industries,” *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 19, no. 4 (November 17, 2020): 504.

state.⁹⁷ This advancement also contributes to the message North Korea consistently conveys; to be an independent and modern state.

In order to introduce this discourse to the international community, the channel is the perfect medium. Kim Chin Yŏng argued that socialist countries often make use of propaganda in film as this is seen as the best tool for socialist ideological education and political propaganda.⁹⁸ So, it is unsurprising that the channel fell back into using propaganda in the videos to show North Korea as a technologically advanced country. ‘Echo of Truth’ explores the topic of technology several times in the form of healthcare, which is often noted as priority in Kim Jong Un’s domestic policies. A well-structured welfare system in a (socialist or capitalist) state benefits not only the people, but also the productivity and efficiency of the state’s economy and politics. The main goal of welfare in a socialist state is to increase economic power to expand production rather than to bridge the gap between incomes.⁹⁹ By providing more state services, such as public childcare and public healthcare socialism creates more job opportunities for a more equal society. Therefore, the videos about healthcare fit in Kim Jong Un’s course of action perfectly.

Both visual and textual discourse in the videos continuously suggest the advancement of the state through the free healthcare system and its benefits, which dates back to 1960 when the government expanded its public health project. North Korea’s healthcare system, which was formulated on the *Semashko* model, which resulted in a public-owned healthcare system, so it should in principle be accessible and free for everyone.¹⁰⁰ The healthcare system, although proven not to be working as properly,¹⁰¹ is a focus of attention to show the foreign audience both technical and social advancement. It is clear that the regime knows the healthcare system should be updated as Kim Jong Un has emphasized the needed improvements throughout the years.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Ibid, 504-505.

⁹⁸ Kim Chin Yŏng, “북한 애니메이션의 변화와 딜레마: 프로파간다와 시장화 사이에서,” “Pukhan aenimeisyŏnŭi pyŏnhwawa tillema: p’ŭrop’agandawa sijanghwa saiesŏ,” [Changes and Dilemmas in North Korean Animation : Between the propaganda and the market] *만화애니메이션 연구*, *manhwaaenimeisyŏn yŏngu* (June 2019): 2.

⁹⁹ Min Kichae and Ko Hyejin, “Changes in the North Korean Welfare System: A Comparison of the Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un Eras,” *North Korean Review* 14, no. 2 (2018): 48.

¹⁰⁰ Sung-Eun Cho, “North Korea’s Healthcare: Current State and Outlook” (KIHASA Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs, January 2019): 2-3.

¹⁰¹ Hayoung Lee et al., “Health and Healthcare in North Korea: A Retrospective Study among Defectors,” *Conflict and Health* 14, no. 1 (June 29, 2020): 3.

¹⁰² Cho, “North Korea’s Healthcare,” 2-3.

Although these more traditional propaganda-like videos do not bring up the particular need for improvement, the combination of visual and textual content suggest North Korea is modernizing technologies and facilities. The healthcare system has been highlighted as ever changing and technologically advancing to modern standards with videos like *New Hospitals Built in Pyongyang in Recent Years* and *Massive Pyongyang General Hospital is Under Construction*. The first video explores the existing facilities, services and employees of the hospitals and the latter shows the construction site of the new Pyongyang General Hospital. Although the hospital was not built yet, the video expressed the modern and glamorous picture of the building that would come. Expressions like “ground-breaking ceremony for Construction of Pyongyang General Hospital’ and “The Best Place” are deliberately used to convince the audience of the technological advancements the country has.

An even more propagandistic or commercial approach to the North Korean technologies and modernity is seen in the video *Kumdang 2 Injection and Royal Blood Fresh Instant Cure for All Diseases*. The video highlights the advancement in North Korean healthcare by presenting the story of an older North Korean man, who came back to North Korea without the ability to walk. The North Korean system helped him recover instantly by injecting the *Kumdang 2* injection, which would cure all kinds of severe diseases, such as hepatitis and heart diseases. This message is not only conveyed by the video, but also presented by several supposedly famous people from all around the world, only adding a commercial-like message to the video.

Cho argued that because of the crippling of the healthcare system, the regime is pushing its agenda to improve the situation, but without any real steps forward made in the last years.¹⁰³ One significant example is the aforementioned and still closed Pyongyang General Hospital. It has been said that the hospital, although plans for the opening was set in the end of 2020, was not yet opened in February 2021, and no updates have been made since then. This is arguably because of the impossibility to finish the interior design due to the lack of technology and medical equipment, which is necessary to come from abroad.¹⁰⁴ While Kim Jong Un lays out the improvements the country needs to make for the healthcare system, the Youtube channel is trying to convey the message of the already great status of the healthcare system with traditional propagandistic videos. ‘Echo of Truth’ provides a point of view of a well-developed country

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Colin Zwirko, “After Months of Delays, Kim Jong Un’s Premier Hospital Could Soon Open up,” NK PRO, February 19, 2021 [Accessed June 12, 2021], <https://www.nknews.org/pro/after-months-of-delays-kim-jong-uns-premier-hospital-could-soon-open-up/>.

with a strong healthcare system by utilizing the videos in a way to create this strong image of the country in a more traditional sense. The fact the channel opted to mainly use propaganda-style videos for this theme is showing us how important the healthcare system is, although the healthcare system is still not as developed as Kim Jong Un and the regime desire it to be.

3.3.2 North Korea as a Military Power

‘Echo of Truth’ utilized propaganda-like videos not only to convey the channel’s motive of technological advancement, but it occasionally pushed the agenda of North Korea as a strong military power. The videos, called *Fearsome Artillery Force of Korean People's Army*, *Korean People's Army Shows Off Its Military Strength* and *Military Parade in the DPRK* are the kind of videos anyone would expect the channel to have, but when looking at the other videos and the themes, the visual discourse on North Korean military power shows the viewer the more aggressive and direct message of North Korean being a force to be reckoned with.

Images about the army and the military parades are included with limited amount of written text, adding to the discourse of North Korean military power, the imagery is a lot more prominent than the texts, but both push the same agenda. The video *Fearsome Artillery Force of Korean People's Army*, for example, did not only provide images of the army, but it aggressively claimed the superiority of the North Korean army with expressions such as “Korean People’s Army under the Brilliant Commander.”¹⁰⁵ This is a topic people expect North Korea to upload videos about, something more in the line of the stereotypical image of the country, but also opposite from the strategy the channel has been adopted in the rest of the channel. These videos do not only contrast in content to the vlogs, these videos have the propaganda tropes everyone would expect from North Korea.

3.4 The Hard Face of Soft Power

It has been thoroughly established in this thesis that the regime adopted a softer approach while emphasizing some aspects of the welfare of the people and the growth of the economy in the videos of ‘Echo of Truth’. However, the channel must not be mistaken for a channel with only vlog-type videos. Although most media attention only focused on the more novel vlog-type videos, the other videos must not be disregarded.

¹⁰⁵ Echo of Truth, “Fearsome Artillery Force of Korean People's Army,” Youtube video, March 25, 2020.

Kim Jong Un is seen using soft power approaches more often in both international and domestic settings,¹⁰⁶ which would be a link to the novel, softer approach of some of the videos on the channel. David Kang argued that North Korea's soft power approach is not just a short term attempt because of the influence soft power has to uphold the regime through international settings.¹⁰⁷ The sanctions against North Korea are a possible factor in the choice to turn to soft power; a charm offensive may be helpful in lifting those sanctions. Chung Youngchul added to this by hinting that Kim Jong Un had no choice but to change the diplomatic course of direction to a softer approach in order to build a stronger state.¹⁰⁸ Although the soft power approach has been most evident in international settings, Chung argued that this softer approach has been seen in Kim Jong Un's domestic speeches since 2012 in which Kim stressed the importance of keeping peace for the country.¹⁰⁹ Despite the fact that economic development and improving the people's life are priorities for the state, which was emphasized regularly by Kim Jong Un during his speeches, the preservation of North Korean sovereignty is still the most important.¹¹⁰

The choice to use soft power more commonly does not mean that hard power has diminished. 선군정치 (*sŏngunchŏngch'i*), or the so-called "military-first" politics, is still deemed the core of domestic and foreign policies with military driven ideas influencing economic and political decisions to maintain this sovereignty.¹¹¹ This military-first politics leads to the upholding of the nuclear weapons programme, which is arguably the most significant tool in the North Korean hard power strategy. Kang states that North Korea is definitely using more soft power in the last years, but pressure to the nuclear weapons program only leads to more insecurity for North Korea, which, in turn, would result in more hard power tools being used.¹¹² The division between attempting a softer approach, but still remaining the focus on military manpower could be seen as the double-edged sword of recent North Korean power strategies. This double-edged sword is also suggested by the visual and textual discourse the videos created.

¹⁰⁶ Kang, "The Soft and Hard Power Politics," 202.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 195.

¹⁰⁸ Yŏng Ch'ŏl Chŏng [Youngchul Chung], "김정은 시대 북한의 전략적 선택: 21 세기 부국강병의 길," "Kim Chŏng Ŭn sidae pukhanŭi chŏllyakjŏk sŏnt'aek: 21 segi pugukkangbŏngŭi kil," [The North Korean Strategic Choices in Kim Jong-un Era: The way of national prosperity and military power] *한국과국제정치(KWP)*, *Hangukkwagukchejŏngch'i (KWP)* 36, no. 4 (2020): 231-233.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 205-208.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Steven Denney, Christopher Green, and Adam Cathcart, "Kim Jong-Un and the Practice of Songun Politics," in *Change and Continuity in North Korean Politics*, Routledge Advances in Korean Studies 36 (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017): 53.

¹¹² Kang, "The Soft and Hard Power Politics," 206.

The analysis showed that the videos created multiple visual discourses about life in North Korea. Firstly, the vlog-style videos, which touched upon the advancement of the North Korean educational system and the sophistication of North Korean culture, used a less aggressive and more relatable approach to gain the viewer's attention. Themes such as art and food were approached in the channel through the usage of cultural and culinary diplomacy. Secondly, the propaganda-like videos were pushing the agenda of North Korea as a technically and military power house through more propagandistic slogans and imagery.

These differences suggest the idea of the dilemma: On the one hand the regime wants to convey the message of being a modern, developed country with a high sense of tradition and culture through soft power tools like cultural and culinary diplomacy. On the other hand, the videos about the North Korean military manpower show the viewers that the regime are not willing to give up on that more stereotypical image of North Korea as a military dictatorship. The military-first politics are evident in this stereotypical image, and it is only emphasized by the stereotypical propaganda approach most people associate North Korea with, and is therefore very distinct from the vlogs with Un A on the channel.

This double-edged sword seems to be the embodiment of the dilemma North Korea is facing at the moment; is the state able and willing to continue this road to a more softer approach or is the state going to let the soft power strategy diminish? It is speculated that the latter choice is currently happening as propaganda policies have turned more traditional again after the removal of the Propaganda and Agitation Department Director Ri Il Hwan.¹¹³ However, one can only speculate about the course of action North Korean propaganda will take because of the lack of information.

¹¹³ Zwirko, ““Ordinary Girl””.

Conclusion

This research has analyzed the utilization of soft power tools in North Korean media content by examining the Youtube account 'Echo of Truth'. According to this study, the content of this channel can be associated with soft power tools, such as cultural diplomacy and culinary diplomacy, as well as more direct techniques, such as propaganda. The following conclusion could be drawn from the qualitative visual discourse analysis of this study.

Firstly, it was clear that the account understands the efficiency and influence vlogging has on internet-based audiences. By making use of vlogging techniques, which most viewers can recognize from other vlogs on the internet, the people behind the videos are able to create visual and textual discourse on North Korea. The vlogging techniques were found to be applied quite effectively, with the 'vlogger' more often than not reaching out to the viewer and making use of after filming editing with written texts and sound effects. By creating a more intimate setting between the vlogger and the viewer, 'Echo of Truth' could be perceived as sincere and relatable, thus more effective in pushing their soft power agenda.

Secondly, the analysis found that the videos seem to have several main motives; to present North Korea as a well-developed, modern and advanced state, and to introduce North Korean culture as a world culture and military powerhouse. These motives may have resulted from the negativity the country has faced throughout the last decades with statements of the country being underdeveloped and a 'hermit' country. As the account is conveniently titled 'Echo of Truth', its main focus was to offer the viewer a reality check on what the country really is. Its goal was to provide an insight of North Korea by an ordinary North Korean girl. By creating textual and visual discourse on topics such as education and culture, the audience was offered an alternative look into North Korean life, which contrasts the North Korean imagery from international media outlets one is normally subjected to. Of course, this comes with a disclaimer as the account is filmed in Pyongyang and a large part of the population does not have these opportunities of living in the capital city, but this research did not focus on highlighting if these videos are close to the truth. Rather, it analyzed how the Youtube account has used their portrayal of the reality to form it into soft power. The account was found to be successful in creating visual and textual discourse on topics such as art and food through cultural and culinary diplomacy tools while applying vlogging techniques.

However, while the account shows a definite understanding as to how vlogs work and how to attract the attention of the audience through soft power tools, the account seems to be dealing with some internal dilemmas about what topics are important and how to present them.

Whereas the vlogging videos all seem to be having a fairly consistent flow and editing style, a significant percentage of videos were standing out from the rest because of the lack of this style. It was found that the channel reached out to more traditional propaganda-like videos for topics such as military manpower and technical advancement. These videos could be seen as more ‘commercial’ or even reminiscent of the more propagandistic content international media often associates with North Korea. In addition, the topics of several videos seem to be unfitting the general tone the account was going for. The tone of some videos, such as the military videos, were more aggressive than the more lighthearted vlogs. Because of the sheer differences between the videos, one can argue that hard power has remained to be a significant factor in reaching out to the international community.

This study desires to raise the question for further future research of a possible link between the state’s usage of soft and hard power in social media accounts and the regime’s internal policy changes. While researching both soft and hard power, it was found that North Korean soft power is still a relatively untouched topic. Thus, it would be recommended to look into this topic in the future as this would be relevant to add to the research area about Kim Jong Un’s policies and regimes.

During the course of writing this thesis, several obstacles had to be faced as the videos were already deleted and then re-uploaded before the research took place, so it was lacking the additional information. However, with the data available, it is believed that this study is an addition to the slowly growing research done about North Korean social media accounts, and it could be a starting point to connect these researches to North Korean soft power strategies.

Bibliography

- An, Chi Ŏn, and Ch'oe Hyŏn Chu. “북한사회 내 한류콘텐츠를 통한 남한사회 인식변화에 관한 탐색적 연구.” “Pukhansahŭi nae hallyuk'ont'ench'ŭrŭl t'onghan namhansahŭi insikpyŏnhwae kwanhan t'amsaekchŏk yŏngu.” [An Exploratory Study on the Change of Perception on South Korea through the Korean Wave Content in North Korean society] *문화산업연구, Munhwasanŏbyŏngu* 18, no. 1 (March 2018): 107–14.
- Braun, M. J., and Gae Lyn Henderson. *Propaganda and Rhetoric in Democracy History, Theory, Analysis*. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2016.
- Chapple-Sokol, Sam. “Culinary Diplomacy: Breaking Bread to Win Hearts and Minds.” *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 8, no. 2 (January 1, 2013): 161–83.
- Cho, Sung-Eun. “North Korea’s Healthcare: Current State and Outlook.” KIHASA Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs, January 2019.
- Chŏng, Yŏng Ch'ŏl [Youngchul Chung]. “김정은 시대 북한의 전략적 선택: 21 세기 부국강병의 길.” “Kim Chŏng Ŭn sidae pukhanŭi chŏllyakchŏk sŏnt'aek: 21 segi pugukkangbŏngŭi kil.” [The North Korean Strategic Choices in Kim Jong-un Era: The way of national prosperity and military power] *한국과국제정치(KWP), Hangukkwagukchejŏngch'i (KWP)* 36, no. 4 (2020): 205–36.
- Cummings, Milton C. “Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey.” *Cultural Diplomacy Research Series*, June 26, 2009, 15.
- Denney, Steven, Christopher Green, and Adam Cathcart. “Kim Jong-Un and the Practice of Songun Politics.” In *Change and Continuity in North Korean Politics*. Routledge Advances in Korean Studies 36. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017.
- DPRK Today, “선전,” “Sŏnjŏn.” [Propaganda] [Accessed May 26, 2021]. https://dprktoday.com/kor_dic/index.php?page=1.
- Ekşi, Muharrem. “Turkey’s Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power Policy Toward the Balkans.” *Journal of Black Sea Studies* 55 (September 2017): 189–208.
- Enaifoghe, Andrew, and Nthabiseng Makhutla. “Exploring Cultural Diplomacy as Soft Power through Cultural Communication Exports: A Model of Power for Promoting Peace and Security.” *African Journal of Gender, Society and Development* 9 (October 7, 2020): 83–107.
- Gabroussenko, Tatiana. “Well-Nourished Beauty. Culinary Symbolism in the Mass Culture of North Korea, 1960-2014.” *Tiempo Devorado* 2, no. 2 (2015): 232–47.
- Ha, Sŭng Hŭi [Ha Seunghee]. “북한의 유튜브 대외 선전매체 활용 양상.” “Pukhanŭi yut'yubŭ taeoe sŏnjŏnmaech'e hwaryong yangsang.” [North Korea’s use of YouTube propaganda media] *북한학연구 Pughanhakyŏngu* 16, no. 2 (2020): 171–205.

- Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. "The American Heritage Dictionary Entry: Propaganda." [Accessed May 8, 2021]. <https://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=propaganda>.
- Hunter, Brittany. "Education Is the State's Greatest Tool for Propaganda," November 14, 2017 [Accessed April 12, 2021]. <https://fee.org/articles/education-is-the-states-greatest-tool-for-propaganda/>.
- K., F. S. "Korean Pottery." *Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin* 9, no. 54 (1911): 63–64.
- Kang, Chun Su. "소프트파워로 본 한류로서의 방탄소년단 고찰." "Sop'ūt'üp'awöro pon hallyurosöüi pangt'ansonyöndan koch'al." [A study on BTS as a Korean wave with soft power] *이벤트컨벤션연구, Ibent'ük'önpensyönyöngu* 35 (2019): 93–116.
- Kang, David. "The Soft and Hard Power Politics of North Korea in 2019." *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 31, no. 2 (2019): 193–210.
- Kang, Hyeon-Seok. "Changes in English Language Policy in Kim Jong-Un's North Korea: A Prelude to Reconciliation?" *English Today* 36, no. 1 (March 2020): 30–36.
- Kang, Tae-jun. "What's Behind North Korea's Pine Mushroom Gift to South?" *The Diplomat*, September 28, 2018 [Accessed May 2, 2021]. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/09/whats-behind-north-koreas-pine-mushroom-gift-to-south/>.
- KBS News. "[클로즈업 북한] 60 년 맞은 만수대 창작사." "[k'üllojüöp pukhan] 60nyön majün Mansudae ch'angjaksä." [[Close Up North Korea] The 60-years-old Mansudae Art Studio.] December 7, 2019 [Accessed May 3, 2021]. [//news.kbs.co.kr/news/view.do?ncd=4338679](http://news.kbs.co.kr/news/view.do?ncd=4338679).
- Keating, Vincent Charles, and Katarzyna Kaczmarek. "Conservative Soft Power: Liberal Soft Power Bias and the 'Hidden' Attraction of Russia." *Journal of International Relations and Development* 22, no. 1 (March 1, 2019): 1–27.
- Kichae, Min, and Ko Hyejin. "Changes in the North Korean Welfare System: A Comparison of the Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un Eras." *North Korean Review* 14, no. 2 (2018): 46–63.
- Kim, Chi Yöng. "김정은 시대 북한 정보기술 발전의 정치경제적 고찰." "Kim Ch'öng Ŭn sidae pukhan chöngbogisul palchönnüi chöngch'igyöngjejök koch'al." [Political and Economic Implications on North Korea's Development of Information Technology in Kim Jong-Un Era] *아태연구, At'aeyöngu* 26, no. 2 (June 2019): 127–70.
- Kim, Chin Yöng. "북한 애니메이션의 변화와 딜레마 : 프로파간다와 시장화 사이에서." "Pukhan aenimeisyönnüi pyönhwawa tillema: p'ürop'agandawa sijanghwa saiesö." [Changes and Dilemmas in North Korean Animation : Between the propaganda and the market] *만화애니메이션연구, Manhwaenimeisyönyöngu*. (June 2019): 1–30.
- Kim, Eun-Jeong. "Changes in North Korea's Higher Education and Education Management System during the Kim Jong Un Era." *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* (April 27, 2020): 1–18.

- Lee, Hayoung, Courtland Robinson, Jaeshin Kim, Martin McKee, and Jiho Cha. "Health and Healthcare in North Korea: A Retrospective Study among Defectors." *Conflict and Health* 14, no. 1 (June 29, 2020).
- Lee, Jack T. "Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy: Emerging Education Hubs in Asia." *Comparative Education* 51, no. 3 (July 3, 2015): 353–74.
- Lim, Tai Wei. "Exporting North Korean Food Culture and Cuisines." *North Korean Review* 16, no. 2 (2020): 111–20.
- MacLeod, Alan. *Propaganda in the Information Age: Still Manufacturing Consent*. London ; New York: Routledge, 2019.
- Mah, Jai S. "North Korea's Science and Technology Policy and the Development of Technology-Intensive Industries." *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 19, no. 4 (November 17, 2020): 503–24.
- Mark, Simon L. "Rethinking Cultural Diplomacy: The Cultural Diplomacy of New Zealand, the Canadian Federation and Quebec." *Political Science* 62, no. 1 (June 1, 2010): 62–83.
- Mun, Tong Hui [Mun Dong Hui]. "北 최상급 송이버섯 평양으로...南北 정상회담 선물용?" ?, "Ch'oesanggŭp songibösöt p'yöngyangŭro... chöngsanghoedam sönmyuryong?." [North Korea's finest pine mushrooms are going to Pyongyang, is this a gift during the inter-Korean summit?] DailyNK. September 13, 2019 [Accessed May 2, 2021] <https://www.dailynk.com/北-최상급-송이버섯-평양으로-南北-정상회담-선물용/>.
- . "N. Korean Authorities Continue Efforts to Prevent Information Leaks." *Daily NK*, May 14, 2021 [Accessed May 31, 2021]. <https://www.dailynk.com/english/north-korean-authorities-continue-efforts-prevent-information-leaks/>.
- Naver Dictionary, "'선전'," "Sŏnjŏn." [Propaganda] [Accessed June 8, 2021]. https://dict.naver.com/search.dict?dicQuery=%EC%84%A0%EC%A0%84&query=%EC%84%A0%EC%A0%84&target=dic&ie=utf8&query_utf=&isOnlyViewEE=.
- Nirwandy, Noor, and Ahmad Azran Awang. "Conceptualizing Public Diplomacy Social Convention Culinary: Engaging Gastro Diplomacy Warfare for Economic Branding." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 130 (May 15, 2014): 325–32.
- Nye, Joseph S. "Propaganda Isn't the Way: Soft Power." *International Herald Tribune*, January 10, 2003. <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/propaganda-isnt-way-soft-power>.
- . "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 94–109.
- . *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2004.
- . "What China and Russia Don't Get About Soft Power." *Foreign Policy*. April 29, 2013 [Accessed February 8, 2021]. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/04/29/what-china-and-russia-dont-get-about-soft-power/>.

- Nye, Joseph, and Youna Kim. "Soft Power and the Korean Wave." In *South Korean Popular Culture and North Korea*, edited by Youna Kim, 41-53. Routledge, 2019.
- Öm, Hyön Suk. "2000 년대 이후 교육법제 정비를 통한 북한 교육의 현황." "2000 nyöndae ihu kyoyukpöpch'e chöngbirül t'onghan pukhan kyoyuküi hyönhwang." [A Study on the Status of North Korean Education through the Improvement of Education Legislation after 2000s] *현대북한연구, Hyöndaebughanyöngu* 20, no. 1 (April 2017): 96-129.
- Ouellette, Dean J. "The Tourism of North Korea in the Kim Jong-Un Era: Propaganda, Profitmaking, and Possibilities for Engagement." *Pacific Focus* 31, no. 3 (2016): 421-51.
- Pak, Han U. "북한 유튜브 채널 분석: '조선의 오늘'에 대한 이용자 반응과 텍스트 분석." "Pukhan yut'yube ch'aenöl punsök: 'chosönüi onül'e taehan iyongja panünggwa t'eksüt'ü punsök." [Examining YouTube Channel in North Korea: A Case of 'North Korea Today' using User Response and Text Analyses] *Journal of The Korean Data Analysis Society* 20, no. 5 (2018): 2581-92.
- Pak, Hyöng Chun. "북한의 수용성과 남북교류협력 방향: 김정은 시기 관광정책을 중심으로." "Pukhanüi suyongsönggwa nambunggyoryuhyöpyöok banghyang: Kim Chöng Ŭn sigi kwangwangjöngch'aekül chungsimüro." [North Korea's Acceptance and Direction of Inter-Korean Exchange and Cooperation: Focusing on Tourism Policy during the Kim Jong-un Period] *한국동북아논총, Hanguktongbuganonch'ong* 26, no. 1 (March 2021): 111-30.
- Pula, Besnik. *Globalization under and after Socialism: The Evolution of Transnational Capital in Central and Eastern Europe*. Redwood City, United States: Stanford University Press, 2018.
- Rose, Gillian. *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*. 2nd ed. London [etc.]: Sage, 2007.
- Smith, Bruce Lannes, and Harold D. Lasswell. *Propaganda, Communication and Public Opinion*. Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Snow, Nancy. "Public Diplomacy and Propaganda: Rethinking Diplomacy in the Age of Persuasion." *E-International Relations* (blog), December 4, 2012 [Accessed May 1, 2021]. <https://www.e-ir.info/2012/12/04/public-diplomacy-and-propaganda-rethinking-diplomacy-in-the-age-of-persuasion/>.
- Stanley, Jason. *How Propaganda Works*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Sun, Henry X. Hong. "Mao's Art of Propaganda." *Journal of Public Affairs* 20, no. 2 (2020): 1-3.
- Suntikul, Wantanee. "Gastrodiplomacy in Tourism." *Current Issues in Tourism* 22, no. 9 (May 28, 2019): 1076-94.
- Testa, Patrick A. "Education and Propaganda: Tradeoffs to Public Education Provision in Nondemocracies." *Journal of Public Economics* 160 (April 1, 2018): 66-81.

- Wilson, Jeanne L. "Russia and China Respond to Soft Power: Interpretation and Readaptation of a Western Construct." *Politics* 35, no. 3–4 (November 1, 2015): 287–300.
- Wilson, Ernest J. "Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 110–24.
- Wood, Marissa K. "What Makes a Vlog a Vlog?" *Diggit Magazine*, March 8, 2019.
<https://www.diggitmagazine.com/academic-papers/what-makes-vlog-vlog>.
- Wright, Robin. "Kim Jong Un Was Funny, Charming, and Confident but Brought His Own Toilet." *The New Yorker*. May 3, 2018. [Accessed May 11, 2021].
<https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/north-koreas-leader-was-funny-charming-and-confident-but-brought-his-own-toilet>.
- Yang, Mu Chin. "선전선동 사례연구 : 나치독일, 중국, 북한," "Sŏnjŏnsŏndong saryeyŏngu: nach'idogil, ch'ungguk, pukhan." [A Case Study of Propagandas: Nazi Germany, China and North Korea] *현대북한연구 Hyŏndaebukhanyŏngu* 14, no. 3 (December 2011): 7–42.
- Yeo, Jun-Suk. "[Feature] Kim Jong-Un's Charm Offensive Enthralls Some, Angers Others," *The Korea Herald*. December 2, 2018. [Accessed May 11, 2021].
<http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20181202000172>.
- Yun, Chi Yŏng, Yu Chi Yun and I Chang Sŏk. "유투브 브이로그 이용 동기 및 이용자 특성이 이용 만족 및 지속이용의도에 미치는 영향." "Yut'yupŭ pŭirogŭ iyong tonggi mich' iyongja t'ŭksŏngi iyong manjok mich' chisogiyongŭido mich'inŭn yŏngnyang." [The Effect of Motivation and User Characteristics on Use Satisfaction and Continuous Use Intention in YouTube Vlog] *한국콘텐츠학회논문지, Hangukk'ont'ench'ŭhakhoenonmunji* 20, no. 4 (April 2020): 189–201.
- Zamorano, Mariano Martín. "Reframing Cultural Diplomacy: The Instrumentalization of Culture under the Soft Power Theory." *Culture Unbound* 8, no. 2 (November 8, 2016): 165–86.
- Zwirko, Colin. "After Months of Delays, Kim Jong Un's Premier Hospital Could Soon Open up." *NK PRO*, February 19, 2021. <https://www.nknews.org/pro/after-months-of-delays-kim-jong-uns-premier-hospital-could-soon-open-up/>.
- . "North Korea Debuts New Propaganda 'Vloggers' to Attract Foreign Viewers." *NK News - North Korea News*, October 21, 2020 [Accessed May 12, 2021].
<https://www.nknews.org/2020/10/north-korea-debuts-new-propaganda-vloggers-to-attract-foreign-viewers/>.
- . "North Korean Vlogger Slams YouTube for Deleted Channel, Calls out 'Impersonator'." *NK News - North Korea News*, December 23, 2020 [Accessed May 12, 2021].
<https://www.nknews.org/2020/12/north-korean-vlogger-slams-youtube-for-deleted-channel-calls-out-impersonator/>.
- . "What's up Pyongyang? North Korea Experiments with Vlogging to Fight 'Fake News'" *NK News - North Korea News*, May 18, 2020 [Accessed May 12, 2021].

<https://www.nknews.org/2020/05/whats-up-pyongyang-north-korea-experiments-with-vlogging-to-fight-fake-news/>.

- . "Why Did North Korea's 'Ordinary Girl' YouTuber Disappear from the Web." NK News - North Korea News, April 30, 2021 [Accessed May 18, 2021].
<https://www.nknews.org/2021/04/why-did-north-koreas-ordinary-girl-youtuber-disappear-from-the-web/>.

The Videos of 'Echo of Truth'

The following citations are not complete due to the removal of the videos from Youtube, but they include all the available information during the time of the research. The @coldnoodlefan Twitter account is found to have shared the majority the channel's videos to promote the videos, so the links to these tweets are added due to the absence of accessible Youtube links. If found, the original Youtube links and upload dates are included.

- Echo of Truth. "Art gallery at Mansudae Art Studio." Youtube video, January 16, 2020.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= UYSsxQvCaU&t=80s>
<https://twitter.com/coldnoodlefan/status/1217616069923201024?s=20>
- . "Back to Campus." Youtube video, April 21, 2020.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJ2bqO6nl0s>
<https://twitter.com/coldnoodlefan/status/1252587891928129537?s=20>
- . "DPRK Universities resume lectures." Youtube video, April 22, 2020.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzgSopId9ss&t=2s>
<https://twitter.com/coldnoodlefan/status/1252783319554514945>
- . "Enter the Mansude Art Studio in Pyongyang." Youtube video, November 30, 2019.
<https://twitter.com/coldnoodlefan/status/1200590800184213505?s=20>
- . "Fearsome Artillery Force of Korean People's Army." Youtube video, March 25, 2020.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Skj631fvT7U>
<https://twitter.com/coldnoodlefan/status/1242828217863397377?s=20>
- . "How to make Koryo Celadon." Youtube video, December 24, 2019.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFNuhoCzLvk&t=45s>
<https://twitter.com/coldnoodlefan/status/1209477934861303808?s=20>
- . "I am a Korean Girl." Youtube video, April 18, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-YKN5MXP6NQ&t=1s> <https://twitter.com/coldnoodlefan/status/1251500808878780416>
- . "I Missed You, My School." Youtube video, June 8, 2020.
<https://twitter.com/coldnoodlefan/status/1269870533035741184?s=20>
- . "I tried Calligraphy Enter the Mansudae Art Studio." Youtube video, date of upload unknown.
- . "Inside a Restaurant in Pyongyang." Youtube video, January 6, 2020.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3n-LfMXWoNQ>
<https://twitter.com/coldnoodlefan/status/1214208138666115073?s=20>

- . "Korean People's Army Shows Off Its Military Strength." Youtube video, March 10, 2020.
<https://twitter.com/coldnoodlefan/status/1237405956843008000?s=20>
- . "Kumdang 2 Injection and Royal Blood Fresh Instant Cure for All Diseases." Youtube video, April 13, 2020.
- . "Massive Pyongyang General Hospital is Under Construction." Youtube video, April 6, 2020.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2I7-4MIdcs>
<https://twitter.com/coldnoodlefan/status/1247195039349923840?s=20>
- . "New Hospitals Built in Pyongyang in Recent Years." Youtube video, March 26, 2020.
<https://twitter.com/coldnoodlefan/status/1243221928610942976?s=20>
- . "Pizza Restaurant in Pyongyang." Youtube video, February 20, 2019.
<https://twitter.com/coldnoodlefan/status/1098208942033915904?s=20>
- . "Real Echo of Truth tells the truth!." Youtube video, December 23, 2020.
- . "Shopping at Taesong Department Store." Youtube video, November 9, 2019.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FSMHf-rk5o>
<https://twitter.com/coldnoodlefan/status/1193207575245799424?s=20>