The Cool Other:A Study on Mexico's Harajuku and Its Connection with Japan's Oaxaca

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Abstract

The present research is an analysis of Cool Japan as the diffusion of Japanese visual and material culture that (re)shapes Japan's contemporary national cultural identity, with otherization at its core. The main aim of this study is to understand the dynamics and patterns that led to the achievement of a cultural cool status of Japanese culture, in order to take initial steps towards understanding and even stimulating similar processes within other cultures.

I frame said diffusion and application by taking Mexico as a theorizing ground for the conditions that enable the appropriation of a foreign culture. This way, I take a look at the role of Mexico as an active receptor and appropriator of the othering discourse that is Cool Japan, and as an appropriated and diffused Other as Warm Mexico.

The two case studies around which this dissertation gravitates are two fandoms of foreign cultures: The Mexican community of fans of Japanese fashion, Mexijuku; and the Japanese community of fans of Mexican arts and crafts.

Through the construction of a theoretical framework and content analysis, in this dissertation I explore the relationship between cool identities and otherization, as enacted within the aforementioned communities to shed light on the process of constructing perceptions of coolness.

Keywords: Cool Japan, bounded autonomy, Japaneseness, Mexicanness, Harajuku fashion.

Dedication

I dedicate the present work to Dr. Elin Silvia Luque Agraz, to whom I will be forever grateful.

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Translation and Style Notes

The present dissertation follows the formatting of academic texts as dictated by the American Psychological Association (APA) in its 6th edition of the "Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association". However, due to the inclusion of sources and interviews in Japanese and Spanish, it became necessary to complement the guidelines in the Manual with suggestions laid in the official blog of the Association (http://blog.apastyle.org/). Consequently, certain conventions regarding foreign-language terms have been followed to assist the reader and to keep a balance between the fidelity to words in their original language and the continuity of the ideas expressed in English. The details of said conditions are described below.

Short phrases or single words in either Spanish or Japanese have been transcribed from their original language, italicized, followed by their translation to English in between square brackets. Nonetheless, the words 'cool' and '*kawaii*' are exceptions since both are used across the Spanish, Japanese and English languages, therefore are concepts with a complex cultural and historical background and as such their translation have given rise to rich theoretical discussions.

In the case of full paragraphs in Spanish or Japanese, they have been translated to English directly, and the texts in the original language have been gathered and made available for consultation as appendices that contain both the English translation and the original-language text. Also, names of Japanese nationals and non-nationals with Japanese names are written in the order of first name followed by the last name.

Regarding other formatting conditions, double quotation marks are used for invented or coined expression, as well as references to jargon or slogans, when they are first introduced in the text. Also, in-text quotations are enclosed within double quotation marks, but single ones are used to set off references cited in the original text. Single quotation marks are used for words or letters cited as linguistic examples.

Theoretical concepts such as "Other" are capitalized in the text, but terms deriving from them are rendered in lowercase letters (i.e., otherization). When such concepts are used in phrases, they are also capitalized. The case of the concept 'Cool Japan' will be treated mainly as a theoretical concept and will not appear in between double quotation marks because, even if nowadays the phrase has become a kind of slogan to promote Japanese creative industries, the focus of the present dissertation is on stages prior to that usage.

Finally, regarding the names of the interviewees, the real names were used when provided, and nicknames when he or she preferred to do so. Consequently, the citations of the interviews reflected those choices as well.

List of tables and figures

Tables

Figures

Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction

Ever since the popularization of the term in 2002 (McGray, 2002), Cool Japan has taken different shapes, and has been described through different approaches. The most recent definition by the Japanese government defines Cool Japan as a support strategy of creative industries (METI, 2012a; METI, 2012b) that helps the generation of a national brand (Dailot-Bul, 2009). In a broader sense, Cool Japan has been defined as well as the phenomenon of Japanese cultural influence based on the distribution of its products, from gadgets to fashion, and that has been on the grow since the end of the 21st century. Both definitions describe two different phases and scope of Cool Japan. The first assumes control of the distribution of Japanese visual and material culture in accordance with the development and enhancement of Japan as a brand. The second includes not only the official practices, but also those subversive ones that, like Japanese studies specialist Michal Dailot-Bul (2009: 248) has mentioned, take place outside of institutional control. In between these two extremes lay other approaches that have contributed to the diversification of Cool Japan as an object of study. As a result, nowadays Cool Japan is a complex and multidimensional concept that involves a wide range of cultural expressions, specialized approaches to it, as well as interpretations about why is Japan cool.

The present research is an analysis of Cool Japan as the diffusion of Japanese visual and material culture that (re)shapes Japan's contemporary national cultural identity, but also reinforces and re-signifies old colonial power relations. I hypothesized that the notion of Japan as an Other that displays cultural deviance in levels that are deemed appropriate under Orientalist conditions, a "bounded Other",

lies at the core of consuming and constructing Japanese visual and material culture as cool. At the same time, different territories, some that have not participated directly in the inception of the discourse of Japan as cool (i.e. Mexico), have started to show signs of starting their own conversations on Japanese identity. I have taken a look at these areas of Cool Japan that have fallen through the cracks of academia and other institutions to reveal the particular dynamics of said communities, with the aim of exploring the practical reception of othering and its entanglement with modes of constructing coolness. I expected that standing in areas that have remained in relative obscurity could help us target the process of bringing light to certain under-researched aspects of Cool Japan in order to have a clearer understanding of the process to make a country cool. Finally, this dissertation investigated the lessons that could be learned from the Japan's "cooling" to draw guidelines that could hint at the possibility of reproducing the process with Mexican culture.

The main aim of the present dissertation is to understand the dynamics and patterns that led to the achievement of a cultural cool status of Japanese culture, in order to take initial steps to create a guide to adapt it to other countries. I hypothesized that one of the most important steps towards achieving this was opening the discussion to comparison with other cultures. I considered the Japanese case where Cool Japan has been instrumental in carving Japan's national cultural image internationally and even at some point restore its damaged portrayal after Fukushima's triple disaster[1]. I would put to use this investigation to assess the images of Mexican culture that could be diffused as cool or attractive and even potentially help in the relief of the current problem of Mexico's deteriorated image as a violent

[1] The triple disaster of Fukushima refers to the chain of events that happened on March 11th, 2011, when, after an earthquake of 9.0 magnitude hit the area of Tōhoku, a tsunami struck the area, affecting the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant and seriously damaging the area.

nation, resulting from the war on drugs started by former President Felipe Calderón Hinojosa. To fulfill these objectives, it became necessary to identify what are the specific traits and images that sparked the fascination with Japanese popular culture worldwide, and try to compare its diffusion dynamics with the current state of Mexican culture. Due to the wide variety of popular culture that has been diffused and appropriated under the umbrella of Cool Japan, this study centered its attention on the creative industry of fashion.

The choice of creative industry followed the principle of looking for relatively under-researched topics within the Cool Japan studies, and its potential to visibly reveal meaning and identity construction processes within innovators. Additionally, fashion is an object of study that brings together the realm of studies on Japanese identity, and of cool studies. Regarding the former, Japanese fashion is a domain of material culture that has taken part of the notion of Japan as cool almost since it inception. Regarding the latter, fashion represents a valuable piece of material culture that is commonly used to perform cool identities. This way, the creative industry of fashion allowed me to stand in an area that could dislocate previous tendencies in the Cool Japan literature, but also benefit from a rich corpus of studies about identities, coolness, and fandoms.

To achieve this work's objectives, I took two case studies as a way of entry to the values of the communities that first appropriated Japanese urban fashion, and that have started to do so with Mexican crafts. The focus was placed on a Latin American community, the Mexican innovators of Japanese fashion, Mexijuku. Later, I moved to another community of innovators, this time in Japan, that has started to create their discourses on Mexicanness and possible perceptions of coolness. In this sense,

Mexico provided a theorizing ground as both an active receptor and appropriator of othering discourses with the Mexijuku community, and an appropriated and diffused othered with the community of Japanese fans of Mexican culture.

Placing my objects of study in and around Mexico could bring a rich insight to notions of otherness and cool. This is mainly due to the status of Mexico as an othered territory. Mexico has been the subject of colonial othering, with a similar gaze as Orientalism. The differences of Latin America have also been imagined following Euro-American standards of culture that contrast one another, placing Europe and the United States at the highest end of the hierarchy (Mignolo, 2009). Just like Japan has been circumscribed to the systematic Orientalism of interpreting cultures in Asia, Mexico has found its place in colonial approaches to Latin America as a Third-World country, a label that explicitly highlights its perceived low hierarchical order. Therefore, through both case studies, I could take steps towards finding out how an Other receives the Other.

In a general sense, this dissertation approaches Cool Japan through the entranceways that have remained out of the spotlight in the hope of finding new conditions of the cultural phenomenon that could help reach my main objective of approaching a clearer understanding of the origin of Japan's coolness. I hope that this would lead not only to a clearer and even richer understanding of the contemporary cultural diffusion phenomenon, but also to open it for comparisons with other cultures at different levels; as an othering discourse that could be received by an Other, and as an othering discourse that could be applied to different othered cultures.

1.1 Theoretical assumptions

The present research intends to contribute to the widening of a panorama that while it has produced relevant historical and cultural studies about Japanese identity seen through the soft power of its products (Berger & Heath, 2010; Dailot-Bul, 2009; McGray, 2002; Allison, 2006), it has also assumed that the commercial success of Japanese popular culture can be equated to its coolness. My study recognized the complex transformation of an element from being perceived as merely good to cool (Warren & Campbell, 2010), and focused on the explanation of the creation and diffusion of cool to explain Cool Japan and its different layers. Although there have been approaches to Cool Japan that have focused on the construction of cool too as part of its theoretical framework (Abel, 2011; Botz-Bornstein, 2012), the present study differed in three ways: 1) the construction of cool is a focal point; 2) the methodology combined qualitative and quantitative methods and 3) the case study has not yet been considered by Cool Japan literature.

Cool and Cool Japan have a long trajectory inside the academia and the media in general. However, there are still areas that have remained blurry or unexplored. With cool, there are as many definitions as there are approaches, which results in a spectrum that goes from the most elusive ethereal illegal cool of the young urban kids, to the operationalized calculated cool crafted by the big companies. On the side of Cool Japan, the tendencies have not been so different. There are points of view that reproduce elements of discourses of Japanese uniqueness that treat Japanese cool as an ostensive definition that, when defining it, researchers have addressed more the question of what pieces of visual and material culture are cool from Japan, rather than why are they cool. On the other hand, there is the picture of Japan as painted by the

Japanese government and private industries, where surveys provide the answers about the diffusion of Japanese products in order to design and implement promotion initiatives that can exploit the potential market sparked by the foreign gaze of Japan as a cool country.

By looking at related literature, it has become clear that, so far, Cool Japan has been approached first through the understanding of what contemporary Japan is, and how do Japanese products come to be based on these conditions. In this dissertation I proposed to approach Cool Japan through the other gateway, which was the understanding of cool first, and then how was that reflected on contemporary Japanese products and the image of Japan. The reason to do so was because I believed that there are nuances, catalyzers, that turn a successful or good product into a cool product, and they should be acknowledged. Therefore, if understanding how Japan became cool was a central topic of this dissertation, it was necessary to find out first what triggers cool.

The three main objectives of this dissertation are: 1) to identify the reason why foreign audiences consider Japan a cool culture, 2) discern the specific characteristics of Japan as a cool country at an unofficial grassroots level of innovators, 3) provide a reference for Mexico to assess its image, based on the findings about the Japanese case. The secondary objectives are: 1) proof how much of the appeal of Japan as a cool country helps to the formation and cohesion of online and offline communities and their identities, 2) find out the current image of Mexico in Japan through the community adopting Mexican culture, and 3) compare the characteristics of Japan as a cool country, and Mexico's appeal in Japan.

1.2 Research questions and scope

Using the case of the Mexican community of innovators of Japanese urban fashion, Mexijuku I aimed at replying three research questions that reflect the three aforementioned objectives. First I addressed the question "how is Japanese culture perceived and how do these traits relate to its coolness?". The objective of replying to this inquiry was to find out the general image of Japanese culture overseas through the creation of meanings around visual and material culture as seen through its adoption/appropriation. Next, "what are the characteristics and motives of the audiences that first appropriated Japanese urban fashion in Mexico?". Replying to this question was helpful to find out the set of values and priorities given to them by those who fist appropriated Japanese urban fashion in Mexico to find out the features of the audiences that have taken the role of spearheading the appreciation of Japan as cool. Finally, "what is the current status of Mexico's image in Japan?". I needed to make an exploratory diagnosis of the image of Mexico overseas to find out what was the current state of affairs, what could be enhanced, and what could be added by understanding the Japanese case.

I hypothesized that the image of Japan in Mexico is that of a free, unique and creative culture, mostly due to its bounded otherness, that provides innovators with references to visually and materially perform their subversion. The key concepts to evaluate for this hypothesis were the specific traits of Japanese culture and the possibility for a bounded otherness to arise as a factor for coolness. The second hypothesis was that the motivation for innovators to appropriate Japanese urban fashion was based on their subversive tendencies, hence their objective to integrate Japan's uniqueness and otherness to their own identity. At this stage, I expected

subversion, otherness, and knowledge acquisition to come up as important factors that determine Japan's coolness for this community. Finally, regarding the image of Mexico, the hypothesis was that Mexico would also be described as unique, creative and other, and would also follow the tendency to be seen as a bounded Other, but its trait as traditional would also emerge as a value for cool.

The scope of the present research moves geographically from Mexico to Japan. Chronologically, I identified the origin of the Mexijuku community on 2008, the earliest date of creation of a forum that was still traceable at the moment of writing (June 2017), My Lolita Style. But, when approaching Cool Japan as a discourse of national cultural identity, it was necessary to go back on the popularization of the term on 2002, with the article by Douglas McGray, *Japan's Gross National Cool*. Regarding the object of study in Japan, I situated its origins around the year 2006, when the actors that have now established the model of engagement with Mexican culture started building the basis for what would become later a network of Japanese fans of Mexican culture.

1.3 Definitions and methodology

The two main theoretical axes of this dissertation are cool, and national cultural identity. In Chapter 4, I provide a theoretical background that defines my approaches to both spheres. However, before delving into those specifics, it is necessary to describe in what kind of bigger theoretical system am I embedding these two main gravitational points.

Throughout the dissertation, the topic of identity has been taken as a concept that is in constant change, which is not singular, but embedded within political and social contexts that multiply constructed across different discourses and practices (Hall & Gay, 1996). I took the point of view of cultural theorist Stuart Hall when he defined identities as "questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented" (Hall & Gay, 1996: 4). As part of acknowledging this fragmented nature of identities, I have considered the possibilities of constructing Japanese identities outside Japan and Mexican identities outside Mexico. Also, a particular emphasis has been placed on the part about representation of the identities. In this dissertation the focus was put on the moments of crystallization of that process of becoming as embodied by representations in objects and discourses about those objects.

Within this dissertation I have talked about visual and material culture to refer to any visual image and material object produced, diffused and utilized within a social system. I took anthropologist Michel Dietler's (2010) methodological approach to consumption through material culture to look at the diffusion and appropriation of objects with cultural significance that impact the construction of identities at national and individual levels. Dietler framed consumption as significant domain of exertion of agency, entangled with negotiations of power. He said:

(…) (C)onsumption is *never* simply a satisfaction of utilitarian needs or an epiphenomenon of production. Rather, it is a process of symbolic construction of identity and political relations with important material consequences. (…) Consumption is always a culturally specific phenomenon and demand is always

socially constructed and historically changing. These features offer, therefore, a good potential starting point for launching an exploration of the role of material culture in colonialism and the operation of agency in colonial encounters. (Dietler, 2010: 217).

His acknowledgement of objects taking part of the representation and creation of representations within colonial systems was of particular relevance to this dissertation, given the hypothesized saliency of otherization as dictated by Orientalism and its impact on contemporary perceptions of countries like Japan and Mexico.

Therefore, I referred to Japanese urban fashion, and Mexican crafts as material culture, to acknowledge their symbolic significance and their potential as analytical foci on "the use of objects in the construction of an identity and in the politics of daily life" (Dietler, 2010: 228).

Taking this framework into account, I have developed a methodology that satisfies both the search for construction of meanings and the practice of those constructions. Consequently, the analysis of Cool Japan through the appropriation of Japanese urban fashion would mix qualitative and quantitative approaches, aimed at processing cultural issues through interpretation (qualitative), and measuring the factors that dictate its construction (quantitative). The first method would be to trackback the innovators that first appropriated the so-called Harajuku fashion in Mexico. Through interviews I got to know more innovators, their communication channels, and took a first look look at their image of Japan and the values they saw reflected in it. Next, a content analysis was conducted, using R and Nvivo 11 with two coders that were also Mexican and Spanish native speakers and tested the 16

categories grouped in three different thematic sets. Finally, I did the same trackback of innovators but now with the case of Mexican culture fans in Tokyo. I interviewed them and got to get a first assessment of the current state of Mexico's image in Japan.

The aim of the quantitative and qualitative analysis is to study the process of diffusing and appropriating a culture, while providing categories that dictate the interpretation of Japanese culture and its perception as cool. In the quantitative part, I built a theoretical framework that maps the different definitions of cool, and its layers to create a basis to map the definitions of Cool Japan as well. I did it based on the diffusion of innovations theory by Everett M. Rogers. I took Rogers' categories of adopters to aid in the classification of the consumers as a way to help locate their motives for appropriation/adoption of culture, and their communication mechanisms.

Next, I focused my efforts in the innovators, the first in the chain of appropriation, as they showed characteristics that aligned with those who historically have been known to perform the form of cool that later gets diffused to other consumers. Their main characteristic that pointed out towards this assumption was that innovators tended to be subversive, therefore subversion also stood as an important concept to theorize about in this dissertation. As I explored the nuances of subversion and its different forms, I suggested the consideration of a bounded Other, as a ground of overlap between cool and exoticizing national cultural identities.

With the theoretical framework established, I proceeded to the second part, which is the quantitative one. I conducted first a content analysis to test the reception of the exoticizing discourse of Cool Japan within a community of innovators. I analyzed their main communication channels during their formative stage to

trackback what were their priorities and perceptions at the moment when they first got in touch with Japan's coolness as embodied in Japanese urban fashion. Next I did an exploratory text mining for word frequency and word correlation analysis to the interviews to another community of innovators, this time to find out how they are constructing their own identities and their perception on Mexican culture.

1.4 Chapter organization

This dissertation is comprised by 9 chapters, divided in two parts: the theoretical section and the data analysis. The first one includes the historical background (Chapter 2), literature review (Chapter 3), theoretical framework (Chapter 4), and methodology (Chapter 5). The second part is composed by the content analysis (Chapter 6), data interpretation (Chapter 7), and its application to the Mexican case (Chapter 8).

After the Introduction, I laid a general historical background about my two main theoretical axes: the national cultural identity of Cool Japan and cool. My approach to the former was through the analysis of national cultural identities of Japan vis-à-vis the West, constructed through different eras, while highlighting the pieces of visual and material culture that are chosen to represent them. The national cultural identity discourses presented in this chapter are arranged as references of Euro-American visions about Japan, and Japan's own discourse on itself. Chapter 2 also painted a general panorama of how cool arrived to its contemporary form, as I pointed out some contributions that different subcultures and authors that study them have made to the understanding of cool, and its modes of performance. By the end of

the chapter I arrived at the point of juxtaposition of both axes, with the emergence of the Cool Japan discourse at the beginning of the 21st century.

Chapter 3 is a literature review on the main issues that concern the two aforementioned theoretical axes. Following the principle of approaching Cool Japan through the understanding of cool first, the literature review started with this object of study. I identified two main tendencies within literature that has studied cool. The first one describes a subversive cool that eludes static definitions, and is rather recognized at sight (Gladwell, 1997; Pountain & Robins, 2000). The second typology of definitions portraits cool in an opposite way, where it is clearly defined by measurable variables and that can be manipulated in order to inhabit objects, from gadgets (Farnsworth, et. al. 2014), to music, clothes, food, etc. (Fitton, et al., 2012). Then, I proceeded to locate my objects of study within that corpus of research, thus looking at the place that Japanese urban fashion has had in the study of Cool Japan, as well as the presence that Mexico has had within the same area. Finally, I addressed the literature related to my second object of study by looking at the texts that have had a significant impact in the community of Japanese innovators.

Next, the theoretical framework is explained in Chapter 4. The chapter is divided in 3 sections; a mapping of cool and Cool Japan, cool and national cultural identity, and wearing Cool Japan. The first part is composed by the explanation and adaptation of the elements of the diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, 1983) that are relevant to this dissertation. First, the categories of adopters were explained based on Everett M. Rogers' theory, and the characteristics that he observed in each one of them. Then, I tackled the adaptations that need to be done in order to apply said categories to a system of cultural diffusion. For instance, the consideration of

decentralized diffusion, the specification of appropriation as a form of cultural adoption and subversion as a variable that can trigger coolness. The second section of Chapter 4 addresses the topic of cool and national cultural identity through the framework of complicit exoticism, explained by Koichi Iwabuchi (1994) and bounded autonomy, as defined by Warren and Campbell's study (2014), to explore subversion as an asset for cool. In this stage I proposed the concept of bounded Other as a notion of appropriate cultural deviance dictated by Euro-American standards. Finally, I addressed the issue of who wears Cool Japan by taking into account fashion studies and fandom studies.

Chapter 5 explains the methodology that was followed throughout the present dissertation. Here I explained the qualitative and quantitative approaches and how they could help replying my research questions. First, the case studies were explained along a detailed analysis of the reasons why they were selected. I also explained their characteristics and their current state. Later, I focused on the innovators, and my initial approach to them. I provided a description of the exploratory interviews, their content, how I handled them and the insights I could get from them. After it, I divided the results of these interview's in two, on the one hand, they helped us locate the communication channels of the Mexijuku community, and on the other they provided us with helpful information about the perceptions of the community of Japanese innovators interested in Mexican culture.

After the Methodology is laid out, the first chapter of the data analysis section is the content analysis. First, the results of the exploratory word frequency query conducted with Nvivo 11 and R are presented. Later, the content analysis of online forums is conducted, first with the full forums manually and then with a sample to test

the resulting categories with two coders. The results were 16 categories, grouped in 3 thematic sets that would signal the discussion priorities of the community of innovators. Throughout Chapter 6 I pointed out patterns and observations regarding the data, but the most part of the interpretation was done in Chapter 7.

The seventh chapter tied in the theoretical framework with the quantitative content analysis to make sense of the results of the practical reception of Japanese urban fashion and the perception of Japan as cool. This is the chapter where the Mexijuku community's activities and visions were translated into contributions towards the understanding of Japanese coolness in particular and othering national cultural discourses in general. I found that there were practices that satisfied my hypotheses, but others that pointed at different levels of subversion and otherization that should be taken into account when approaching the implementation of Cool Japan's lessons to the Mexican needs.

Chapter 8 addresses the lessons that could be learned from Cool Japan in terms of assessing the exoticizing discourse and its theoretical construction and the gaps and bridges that exist when being practiced. This is also the chapter where I conducted an analysis of word frequency and co-occurrence to the interviews to opinion leaders in the innovators community of Japanese who are interested in Mexican culture. I found out what were the commonalities between the kind of discourse that is Cool Japan and the coolness it performs, and the attraction that these innovators feel towards Mexico.

Finally, in Chapter 9 I laid the conclusions of this dissertation, addressing the research questions, hypothesis and analysis results to try to achieve the objectives laid at the beginning of the dissertation.

I expect that this research will contribute to the clarification of the elements that trigger coolness, especially in the case of a foreign culture, while shedding light on that topics that have remained under-researched. I also aim at doing so critically, aware of the cultural implications that this relative obscurity entails, so that roads of discussion about the Self, the Other, and their constant relocation can be opened.

Section One. Theoretical Considerations.

Chapter 2. Historical Background

2.1 Introduction

The following historical background has covered the two main conceptual axes around which the present dissertation gravitated around; national cultural identity and cool. First, I have briefly explained the history of the construction of Japanese cultural identity as defined within and outside Japan. Next I have tackled the construction of cool and its components, following a chronological order, but also acknowledging its mobility in between contexts. That is to say, I have addressed cool based on the communities that adopted and performed cool attitudes, suggesting at times parallel historical processes in different parts of the world. Both conceptual axes' historical backgrounds have been done with the objective of highlighting tendencies that have remained constant through the passage of time. However, I did so acknowledging the complicated history and development of both cool and cultural identity. Therefore, I have not reduced their history or impact to a few tendencies, but aim at using them as references to understand each conceptual pillar individually first and then advance to shed light on their points of contact.

The main objective of the first part is to analyze the components and power relations that comprised the construction of Japan's national cultural identity vis-à-vis the West. I did so acknowledging that the characterization of Japan is done so selectively, in a way that the Japanese traits that are contrasted or emphasized depend also on the culture that is to be compared with (Befu, 2001: 5). This means that both the image of 'Japan' and 'the West' are constructs that serve a particular objective and respond to its historical, cultural and political environment. The identity

discourses here studied were those considered hegemonic. Sociologist Dick Hebdige defined hegemony as the state in which a consensual "provisional alliance of certain groups can exert 'total social authority' over the subordinate groups" (1979: 27). This idea of hegemony was useful to achieve my objective given that it acknowledged an unbalance between the actors involved in the creation of discourses, and the conscious selection of the components of said discourses, as well as the objects that represent them. Therefore, I also highlighted the role of material and visual culture as objects of meaning so as to shed light on concrete applications of the hegemonic identity discourses and their negotiations. This way, while I acknowledged that cultural identity can be performed and represented in various manners, this dissertation has concentrated on the hegemonic discourses of Japanese cultural identity (Befu, 2001: 3), and the negotiation of meanings that have accompanied the promotion and consumption of selected Japanese creative goods.

As this process is analyzed, I emphasized Japan's active role in the formation of its international cultural image, as opposed to being a passive receiver of external feedback, which is a view that has been constantly reproduced (Kawamura, 2013). As I explained the back and forth movement of defining Japan, I highlighted concepts and interpretation processes that have remained present in the face of defining Japan's national cultural identity. In this matter, I did not view the recurrent tendencies as a suggestion of cultural determinism, but as tools that have become discursively useful to maintain the power relationship between a superior West and an inferior but reckless Japan, even nowadays. Particularly, I have focused on the tendencies to use Orientalism, (self)otherization and discourses of uniqueness to define Japan's identity.

The second part is dedicated to tracing the historical background of coolness as it takes different shapes, molded by the hands of various subcultures throughout the decades. The background was done not only with the objective to explain how it arrived to the shape it has now, but also to shed light on its dynamic and fluid nature. Therefore, I mentioned its recontextualization to give a glimpse towards the way that cool can react to its surroundings and change the targets it opposes and the motives that drive said opposition.

Most of the literature regarding the history of cool has taken subcultures as a point of departure and elaborated on the anti-authority context where cool identities get constructed (Dar-Nimrod et al., 2012). This dissertation also took this starting point and, in a similar way as the first part, I addressed it looking for the shared features of cool among the different performing circuits (subcultures), and introducing the particularities that set them apart. I acknowledged each subculture's general process of identity formation and identity signaling mentioning the music they produce or consume, the media they create or oppose, as well as the looks they build. There is a particular emphasis on sartorial styles, given that, they function as visible examples of identity signaling (Hebdige, 2002, Berger & Heath, 2007), and have increasingly acquired a central role for expressing deviance and coolness.

By analyzing cool's historical background, its dynamic nature, and its components, I tried to establish cool as a cultural category (Pountain & Robins, 2000: 11) of oppositional behaviors that dictate creation of meanings (i.e. identity construction, community values, and motives for visual and material culture production/consumption) and physical and symbolical performances. This way, I saw

cool as a flexible concept with a constant presence in identity creation processes, but with a tendency to change the people and objects it inhabits (Sundar et al., 2014).

2.2 A brief history of Japanese national cultural identity

To take a look at the contemporary shape of Japanese national cultural identity, it became necessary to go back in time a few centuries to track the roots of the driving forces of exotization and Euro-centrism that still influence Japan's image today. The Orientalist system where colonizing countries would establish dominance over others, while regarding them as inferior and different has been active since almost the 16th century (Said, 2014). Territories labeled as Orient under Euro-centric standards, such as Japan, have been subject to romanticizing gazes, at best (Machart et al., 2015), and derogatory labels at worst (Said, 2014). Said system has continued to take new shapes, still affecting the process of identity formation of Japanese culture nowadays (Iwabuchi, 1994; Mouri, 2007).

For the purpose of analyzing the contemporary image of Japanese culture overseas, I acknowledged these exoticizing colonial gazes, and took them as a conducting thread across different eras of Japanese history. I presented the historical background of these gazes and the conversing discourses that stemmed from the two parties involved. As it was previously mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I focused on hegemonic discourses of identity, and the unbalanced relations of power that these entail. However, I also took on how this balance is contested and reconfigured through discursive negotiations via recontextualization of concepts and objects. The following historical account covered the period from the end of the so-called closed country period (*sakoku*) in the 19th century, until nowadays in the 21st

century. The establishment of the end of *sakoku* as a starting point obeys to two main guidelines; the first one is that it marks the development of Japan's reconfiguration of contemporary international relations, and second, because the very definition and discussion of *sakoku* served as an introduction to the nuances regarding the interpretation of Japan's image as a contemporary Other.

2.2.1 *Sakoku* and *kaikin*

The term *sakoku* [locked country], is of Japanese coinage, but has European roots. The word was coined in 1801 by Nagasaki interpreter Shizuki Tadao while translating the book *The History of Japan*, written by the German author Engelbert Kaempfer (Kazui & Videen, 1982). The word came to existence when translating Kaempfer's phrase "close the country" to Japanese, *kuni wo tozasu,* and using the characters to make one word (Nagazumi, 1999). The perception of Japan as a secluded country came from Europe, given that there were territories, like Portugal and Spain, that had restricted or non existent trade relations with Japan (Laver, 2011; 3). However, Japanese sources have proven that their country was not as isolated as the European discourse of *sakoku* makes it seem. Since the decade of 1980 Japanese scholars like Kazui Tashiro, and Yasunori Arano have argued that *sakoku* possesses a negative nuance that portrays the Edo period as a time of isolation, darkness (Kazui & Videen, 1982) or even irrationality (Laver, 2011; 3). Arano (1988) proposed a deconstruction of *sakoku,* and an establishment of a new vision of Japanese trade during the Edo period; *kaikin*, or maritime restrictions. The basis of the *kaikin* exchange system were four portals of contact (Nagasaki, Satsuma, Tsushima, and Matsumae), where Japan established different kinds of connections with China, Korea, Kyushu, Ezo, and Holland (Arano, 2015). Furthermore, China served as an

important intermediary that connected even more East Asian countries to the network (Arano, 2015). This way, even if Japan established restrictions to European countries, it remained active in the East Asian territory.

The contrasting discussions of Japan's international relations during the Edo period (1603-1868) served as an introduction to the systemic Orientalism that continues to sustain discourses on Japanese identity. Orientalist views have taken Europe and the United States as the main reference, thus influencing the construction of discourses based on Euro-American values. This essentialism obscures the complex reality of the exoticized Other, affecting the perception of Japan vis-à-vis the 'outside world'. Our main concern is not the unveiling of a reality, but the discernment of the elements that influence discourses of Japanese national cultural identity. In this case, the term *sakoku* imposes a veil of obscurantism, and isolation, while *kaikin* suggests a complex East Asian trade network where China and Japan played important roles.

2.2.2 Modernism and Japonism

With the arrival of Captain Perry came the Treaty of Amity and Commerce in 1854, which established the opening of Japanese ports to trade with the United States of America. This deal represented the first step in a chain of new treaties with Western countries. Along with the drastic change in Japan's foreign trade dynamic, the development of Japan's national image got itself entangled with the establishment of yet another Euro-centric term; modernism. In general terms, modernization is the process of scientific, industrial and socio-politic revolutions that introduced new technologies, forms of production and communication, and the mass commodification

of culture in the late 18th and 19th centuries in Europe (Starrs, 2011: 4; Lippit, 2012: 6). Culturally, these changes sparked a complex process of reconfiguration of identities and a rupture in representational practices. As a consequence, modernism marked a moment of self-criticism of European traditional cultural institutions, and a resulting emergence of new forms of expression, including avant-garde art movements (Lippit, 2012). While modernism is a wide topic on its own right, here I have seen it under the light of its relationship with Japan.

Japan had a role to play in the European avant-garde, in the form of an aesthetic trend. Within the reconfigurations of identities, Japan emerged as an imagined referent of a contrasting land where semi-barbarous inhabitants produced, with high skills, delicate crafts worth of admiration (Gruchy, 2003: 17). This ideal and romanticized image of Japan and its visual and material culture was called Japonism. In parallel, Europe also participated of the configuration of Japanese identity, since it also served as a cultural and political inspiration, which in turn enabled the creation of a Japanese imaginary of the West. The process of integrating or adapting these elements to Japan has been commonly called Westernization or modernization. Within this framework, Japan played two main roles, one was as an exporter of Japanese culture to a European modern context, and other as an importer of European modernism to a Japanese context. The two processes were almost simultaneous, thus Japanese cultural identity shifted as its concepts were negotiated internally and externally.

During the 19th century, and beginning of the 20th one of the stages for the display of modernity, its values, and the aforementioned commodification of culture was the World's Fair, or World Expo. Originally, the mega-event represented an

embodiment of the ideals of modernity by playing the role of an exhibition of progress, and of a stage for defining the elements of high culture for Western civilization: science, technology, architecture, and arts (Roche, 2002: 6). Under this premise, the events gathered different countries under one roof, where their cultural, natural and/or technological resources were displayed in thematic pavilions. World Fairs functioned as public stages for international scientific and cultural exchange, thus establishing a platform to build and display national identities (Smits & Jansen, 2012). These events reflected the time's desire for international trade, while enacting imperial supremacy, and reinforcing general national images to unify the new varied emerging classes (Smits & Jansen, 2012: 176). The identity playground, as understood by modernity and as enacted in World Fairs, was divided mainly between two teams, the "primitive" imperial subjects and the "advanced" imperializing civilizations (Smits & Jansen, 2012: p. 178). Japan was framed in the first category.

Japanese objects first found their way to World Fairs in the 1862 London edition, through the display of Sir Rutherford Alcock's collection. Sir Alcock served as the first British Minister to Japan, where he gathered, catalogued, and studied a wide variety of Japanese goods which he later exhibited in Europe. He played a pivotal role in the fabrication of Japan's cultural image during the last half of the 19th century, enabling the resulting admiration towards Japanese produce (Gruchy, 2003: 18; Checkland, 2003). In 1873, the fascination with these crafts grew with Japan's official debut in a World Fair at the Vienna International Exposition (National Diet Library, n.d.-a). This time, Japan had a more active participation, and responded to this attraction towards Japanese objects. The pavilion displayed items associated with

the image of mystical skilful crafts; pottery, religious items, a *shachihoko*[2] taken from the Nagoya castle, and paintings, all housed within a wooden structure reminiscent of a Shinto shrine, mixed with a Japanese garden. The Japanese government purposely decided on exploiting the "ultra-exotic manners" of showcasing Japanese culture in order to promote Japanese arts and expand their consumption throughout Europe. The strategy was a success, to the point that even the pavilion and the garden were fully purchased (Kondo, 2016: 99). Japanese participation in World Fairs during the first half of the 20th century continued along this line of self-exoticism, negotiating its image overseas, and acquiring a self-awareness on Japaneseness (Okada, 2009).

The Orientalist view casted over Japan, and the Japanese government's positive response to it further enabled the exoticizing admiration towards Japanese material and visual culture. As a result, Japonism was born. Japonism is an aesthetic idealization of Japan and its produce (Ono, 2013; Gruchy, 2003) that became a trend among European art promoters, writers, collectors, and artists like Vincent Van Gogh (Takahashi, 2010) and James Whistler (Ono, 2013). However rooted Japonism might have been in Western views towards the "Far East", that "half-legendary civilization with rich and ancient culture that was apparently closed off from Western science and industrialization" (Gruchy, 2003: 17), the aesthetic trend became a reference for Japanese audiences too (Okada, 2009).

Japonism went hand in hand with modernism given that the former portrayed an inferior uncivilized exotic culture, whereas the latter claimed the superiority of Western civilized values and methods, thus complementing each other. Japanese arts

[2] A Japanese mythical creature with the head of a tiger and the body of a carp. Wooden sculptures of *shachihoko* are used to crown some Japanese castles.

and crafts appreciation was "contingent upon an unshakeable Victorian confidence in the ultimate superiority of Western art and civilization" (Gruchy, 2003: 17). Consequently, the dyad of Western/non-Western came to be equated with Modern/non-Modern, hence labeling Japan's condition as pre-modern from the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century.

However, Japan's involvement with modernism did not end here. Japan's awareness of Japonism has been emphasized, as well as its active involvement with it as a practical strategy during the late 19th century to the early 20th century. But, parallel to the participation in the World Fairs, the Japanese government sent out diplomatic missions to explore the countries with whom new treaties were bound to be established. This way, Japan started creating its own image of the West as a reference to build its cultural identity. Japan started creating its own Other. Japanese historical sociologist Oguma Eiji states in his work *A Genealogy of 'Japanese' Self-Images* that the discourse on the Japanese in modern Japan was "inseparable from the discourse of the West and various Asian countries" (Oguma, 2002: xviii). In this period in history it seems to have been particularly relevant the myth of Japan as a homogeneous nation, which states that it is composed by a single, pure culture and lineage (Oguma, 2002: xxx). This notion would continue to impact discourses on Japaneseness and Japan's material culture in the following eras.

During Meiji (1868-1912), Japanese audiences consumed Western signifiers in a similar manner as European audiences were consuming Japonism. Japanese artists, writers, and cultural promoters started getting influenced too by the feedback and values that came from Europe (Lippit, 2012; Takahashi, 2010; Okada, 2009). Materially, in order to maintain the hype around Japanese produce, designers in Japan

had to find a balance between the adoption of Western production methods and standards, and expressing a traditional Japanese character (Kondo, 2016: 101). Discursively, modernism in Japan triggered discussions on Japaneseness, and adaptation of modern values. The imagined West was used as an Other to point out the traits that would be desirable or undesirable from modernism. For instance, modern technologies were being adopted, but the perceived individualism that was deemed integral to them was minimized in favor of a "Japanese" all-inclusive collectivism (Iwabuchi, 1994).

The Meiji Era visibly marked in its material culture, and hegemonic discourses on Japanese cultural identity, how the dyadic relationship between the imaginaries of Japan and the West was not necessarily one of conflict. There was a constant conversation and (re)adaptation of concepts and their signifiers. Modernism was a wide concept that in Europe was used to enhance the positive image of Western civilization, while in Japan its Western nature placed a reference from which to selectively diverge. This complicit relationship would continue during the 20th century, albeit taking new shapes.

2.2.3 The Yellow Peril and *Kokutai*

The Taisho government (1912-1926) received much of the consequences of the Meiji revolution on politics and culture. Japan continued to participate in World Fairs and engage with the values of modernity, but this state of affairs came to a crisis with the international political and economical tensions and armed conflicts. A disenchantment from the West might have started with perceptions of aggressiveness in the colonial subjugation that countries which were once models of change for Japan

were exerting in African and Asian countries at the end of the 19th century (Oguma, 2002: 10). This process of disenchantment was consolidated with World War I (1914-1918), and peaked with the economical crash of Wall Street on 1929 (Minichiello, 1998: 3). The Western values that the Japanese government and consumers came to know during Meiji fell into a crisis in Taisho. Furthermore, during the Taisho era Japan also consolidated itself as a world imperial power (Minichiello, 1998: 2), and formed a "heightened sense of nationalism" (Oguma, 2002: 10). During Meiji, Japan earned its first colony, and in Taisho they continued expanding in campaigns often funded by European powers (Dower, 2000: 21).

In spite of the shortness of the period, during Taisho, many seeds laid during Meiji germinated and manifested. For instance, Orientalist Japonism, joined with notions of barbaric colonial Western powers, led to Japan imagining itself as a land that provided an alternative reality from the conflicts of European modernism (Iida, 2002: 4). Additionally, as Japanese imperialist expansion in Asia occurred, the nationalism that started emerging in Meiji grew strong and diversified (Oguma, 2002). Scholar Yumiko Iida describes the Japanese national identity of this era the following way:

> 'Japan' was located in an ambiguous position between the West and Asia, both assuming itself to be a part of the spiritual virtue of Asia while equally playing the role of an imperial power attempting to put Asia under its control by reducing 'Asia' to a rhetorical site grounding Japan's countrer-hegemonic revolt against the modern West. (Iida, 2002: 4)

However, the idea to diverge from Western modes of behavior and search for Japaneseness is not something unique to this era. For instance, the governmental measures taken under the slogan of *wakon yōsai* ["Japanese spirit and Western technology"] emerged at the end of the 19th century, and expanded during the 20th century. This way, the discourses on Japanese racial purity and superiority, applied to an aggressive imperialism, started to permeate the construction of Japanese national identity beyond Taisho, and into Showa (Iwabuchi, 2002: 55).

During Showa (1926-1989), scholars and political leaders enhanced the discourse of Japan possessing a unique "talent" to assimilate foreign influences and maintain its core "pure" (Iwabuchi, 2002: 55). During the first half of the 20th century, this Japanese ability was put to use as a justification for imperial expansionism in Asia, and was disseminated in 1937 throughout the population with the publication *Kokutai no Hongi,* [*Cardinal principles of the national entity of Japan*] (Iwabuchi, 2002: 56).

The Japanese Ministry of Education's publication *Kokutai no Hongi* concluded with the claim that Japan's mission is to synthetize East and West to build a "new Japanese culture" (Iida, 2002: 20). Parallel to this agenda, *kokutai* [national polity] (Oguma, 2002) enhanced the search for uniqueness and a racial purity that would continuously fuel discourses on Japanese identity during World Wars (Dower, 2012). *Kokutai* was the foundation of the Japanese essence of the time, a result of the search of a Japaneseness that was deemed lost after the contact with the perceived decaying Western values of modernization. It was an attempt to define Japan in "its own terms" (Iida, 2002: 64). Additionally, *kokutai* also served, or was modified to serve, these ideas of racial purity that had a strong presence during Meiji in the form

of discourse of Japanese homogeneity. As Japan expanded geographically, so did *kokutai*, and the debates about how to maintain the discourses of Japanese homogeneity and purity. Some scholars of the era proposed assimilating citizens from the newly-acquired territories through education (Oguma, 2002: 114), others referred to Japan's history by reading it as a "melting pot" (Oguma, 2002: 114) where diverse territories came together constructing feelings of belonging to form a new strong nation.

As Japan continued expanding in Asia and acquiring more military power during the World Wars, the admiration for all things Japanese started to fade out overseas, and the *yellow peril* discourse took over. The yellow peril is a derogatory term popularized by Kaiser Willhem II of Germany around 1895, during Meiji. The term "articulated fears that the relationship between the Western world and the Orient would be inverted; thereby nullifying the West's superiority" (Morris, 2013: 17). However, at the time that the yellow peril concept was coined, the Japonism trend helped balance out and somewhat obscure the negative nuance of the label, thus resting dormant. It was during 1937, when the the second Sino-Japanese war ensued, that the term arose again, and Japan's aggression with the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941 gave it more force (Morris, 2013: 19). From then on, the yellow peril notion portrayed Japan as "animalistic, barbaric, evil", thus turning the battle between Japan and the West, into one between "civilization and barbarism" or "good versus evil" (Morris, 2013: 19).

The situation changed once the United States controlled the threat with the Allied victory in 1945 and following occupation of Japan, thus relieving the fears that the yellow peril view entailed. The threat changed color and moved to Russia and

China with the Cold War in 1947, rending Japan a strategic point of Westernization in Asia (Morris, 2013: 20). Furthermore, the American occupation (1945-1952) enhanced the legitimization of Japan as a "nation that had apparently been successfully liberated from its 'feudal' and 'militarist' past and newly imbued with progressive Western ideals." (Morris, 2013: 20). This way, Japan's yellow peril portrait as a barbaric aggressive nation that threatened the West was neutralized, giving way to paternalistic portraitures of Japan as a tamed child-like nation (Dower, 2000: 550).

Japan's role as a threat to Western civilization was diluted, but some of the discourses of Japanese uniqueness that fueled the *kokutai* philosophy remained, even outside Japan. After World War II, American anthropologist Ruth Benedict's seminal work *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* was published (1946) and influenced later interpretations of post-war Japan. Benedict highlighted the extremes that Japanese identity interpretations have gone through; from good to bad, from aggressive to aesthetic, from rigid to surprisingly adaptable (Benedict, 2005, 14). However, she ascribed these fluctuations to an inherent Japanese trait of contrast, which made it "the most alien enemy the United States had ever fought" (Benedict, 2005: 12). Her influential work picked up the discourse of Japanese uniqueness where it was left off after the war, and reinforced it in the United States.

Japan's militaristic period showed that Japan's identity internally was driven by the search for cultural authenticity, purity, as embodied by the *kokutai* discourse. It came up as a response to the construction of an imaginary of the West as a foreign Other, a long exposure to its values, and the anxiety to integrate them. In spite (or probably as a result of), the efforts to integrate Euro-American philosophies,

technologies and modes of production, identity discourses of Taisho and Showa reflect that the dyad of West vs East remained a relevant referent. Also, I have stopped here to explain certain details about the discourses of Japanese homogeneity because they remain a relevant factor to define Japanese identity, even nowadays (Oguma, 2002). Be it through claims of Japan's ability to assimilate other cultures, or of racial purity, Japan is still portrayed as a homogeneous culture, further strengthening the tendency to essentialize the whole nation and obscure forms of diversity.

2.2.4 Japan as a Partner and Japan Inc.

The defeat of Japan in World War II brought Japan's demilitarization, a new constitution, new international relations, everything mostly under the guidelines of the United States, which in turn brought new identity reconfigurations. In the West, as the Cold War developed, Japan's national cultural image, remained mostly positive, albeit with its moments of tension (Morris, 2013: 20). Even if Japan's image in Euro-American eyes was now that of an ally or partner, the Orientalist discourse continued to dictate the approach to this nation; Japan was still seen under the light of Western superiority, and with a latent suspicion about its "barbaric" nature (Morris, 2013). On the other hand, Japan started to build a post-war narrative of peace that selectively obscured its history of aggressions in Asia and positioned itself as a victim of pre-1945 militaristic governments (Shimazu, 2003: 101). This mindset was expressed in Japanese visual and material culture, and cultural initiatives that served as tools for the political and social reshaping of Japan under and after the US occupation (Shimazu, 2003: 101). War, aggression, nationalism started to get "cleansed" out from

Japan's identity discourse, giving place to a reborn Japan ready to re-negotiate with its new allies (Shimazu, 2003 :108).

This peaceful reborn Japan was ready to leave the postwar identity, and the conditions that sparked it, behind. This way, the 1960's was a decade of rapid economic recovery and growth, and of new cultural diffusion. The Japanese government supported efforts to promote Japanese culture in the West, and also used it to restore Japan's image overseas, and maintain the positivity. For instance, new cultural centers opened around the world; Japanese Cultural Institutes opened in Paris in 1961 and in Rome in 1962 (Herrle & Wegerhoff, 2008: 91), and between 1952 to 1978, Japan Society in New York established a relationship with John D. Rockefeller 3rd to renew and reopen the institution on 1971 (Japan Society). Also, during this decade Japan hosted important international cultural events such as the World Design Conference in 1960, the Tokyo Olympics on 1964, and their own World Exposition in Osaka in 1970 (Herrle & Wegerhoff, 2008: 91). These events, and cultural spaces became key stages to promote a post-war Japan that was ready to partner up at equal levels with the West.

During the World Design Conference, Euro-American media celebrated Tokyo architects such as Tange Kenzo and the Metabolists (Herrle & Wegerhoff, 2008: 92). In the case of the latter, part of their successful reception was due to the inclusion of Western creative influences not only by shaping their project like the avant-garde –isms from Europe, but also through collaborations and mentorships from Euro-American architects (Herrle & Wegerhoff, 2008: 92). Japan Society was another important center to shape Japan's image through creative endeavors. Even though the institution had existed since 1907, it was not until the post-war renovation that the

gallery opened in 1971, and started support programs to Japanese graduate students who went to study to the United States (Tomii, 2007: 41). This way, the New York institution became a cultural embassy for Japan in the US, which was a tremendous responsibility given the previous hostilities.

As Japan's economic growth reached the point of a miracle, discourses of Japanese uniqueness started rising again (Hein, 2008: 5; Iwabuchi, 1994: 58), sometimes to help explain the surprising phenomenon, others in a manner that conflicted with the posture of Japan as an equal partner to the Euro-American block. This way, the decade of 1970 was marked by a boom in discourses on Japaneseness, *nihonjinron,* both inside and outside Japanese soil. The culture's collectivism, vertical society, and homogeneity became some of the theoretical axes that sustained identity discourses of the time. In Japan, with an economic miracle as background, the self-awareness on its uniqueness that stemmed from these discourses resulted in notions of cultural and economical superiority (Iwabuchi, 1994: 60). Meanwhile, in the West, especially in the United States, similar impressions of Japan's singular conditions would sustain the vision of hyper-industrialization: Japan Inc.

Japan Inc. wass the American term that described the cooperation between the Japanese private sector with the Japanese government (Morris, 2013). Although the term appears to have been used also in the 1930's decade (Morris, 2013), fifty years later the concept rose up again and transformed as the Japanese economy developed. This time it was not used only to describe the Japanese economic system, but also acquired different nuances. The Japanese system made its exports, and overall economy grow so much that it became both a fascination and a threat to the United States (Morris, 2013; Horino, 2004; Brock, 1989). On the one hand, Japan's rapid

economic growth was praised as an example to follow (Iwabuchi, 2002: 23). On the other, the pace of the economic strategies was deemed aggressive (Morris, 2013).

On the positive side, Japan's national cultural image was that of an example to follow (Morris, 2013: 22). Academics and journalists were in the search for the "secret" that could allow others to go down the same successful path (Morris, 2013: 22, Yokoi, 2004: 1, Vogel, 1979; Brock, 1989). Even though the interest sparked from an economic issue, the discourse was not without its cultural determinisms. There was literature that deemed the nation's "singular society of vertical human relationships as a determinant advantage over the United State's system" (Horino, 2004: 32). Of course, other valuable inquiries explored Japan's political and economical framework, the education system, work ethics, among other relevant possible reasons to explain the Japanese miracle (Yokoi, 2004: 1). However, what I wanted to highlight at this point was the continuous presence of the tendency to point out Japanese uniqueness, and cultural differentiation as resources to understand Japan.

On the negative side, anti-Japanese sentiments drove the image of Japan Inc., as the United States economy lost territory over the Japanese. The "iconic" automotive industry in the US. got affected by the competition of Japanese cars (Morris, 2013), American companies lost shares to Japanese ones, and as the decade advanced, the trade deficit in the U.S. fell lower, while the Japanese trade surplus grew higher (Morris, 2013; Brock, 1989). This crisis spawned a period of Japan bashing. The feelings of frustration, fear and even envy could be seen among scholars and officials (Brock, 1989). Japanese companies were buying American ones; Nintendo bought a baseball team, and Sony acquired CBS Records and Columbia pictures, an event that *Newsweek* magazine covered, depicting a geisha instead of the

Statue of Liberty in Columbia Pictures logo (Morris, 2013). Japan was economically invading the United States. While academic literature from that time acknowledged the wide diffusion of Japanese products, especially gadgets such as the Sony Walkman, some authors have also refused to recognize Japan's growing power, deeming it a hollow economical phenomenon with no cultural influence (Iwabuchi, 2002 *Soft…*: 447). In other words, the discourse of Japan Inc. that saw in Japan an economical brutality, stripped Japanese products from any cultural significance. It established a duality where Japan could not become a complete international super power if it lacked cultural impact.

Just as it was the case with the positive views, negative ones also inserted cultural essentialisms to analyze Japan. For instance, there was literature that considered the failure in communicating and negotiating with Japan a consequence of cultural differences, since Japan could not be "put in any precedent negotiating categories" (Horino, 2004: 33). However, this phenomenon was not exclusive of foreign authors who wanted to understand Japan; inside the island cultural essentialisms and (self)otherization were also developed to serve identity discourses. Particularly, statements of Japanese uniqueness became popular academically and commercially. Inside Japan, *nihonjinron* saw a boom in terms of diversification and consumption. Furthermore, it also went under a process of officialization. The Japanese government promoted anthropologist Nakane Chie's work *Tate Shakai no Ningen Kankei* [*Personal Relationships of a Vertical Society*] to be published overseas, and Japanese elites frequently quoted it (Iwabuchi, 1994: 60). At this point, Japan was "blessed by being fundamentally different from elsewhere, although now the focus was on the economy" (Hein, 2008: 6).

The expansion of the Japanese market, and the weakening of the American one during the 1970 and 1980 decades brought a change of narratives and identities. Japan morphed from a powerful ally, to a dangerous competitor and power broker; whereas the United States was perceived as having lost leverage over the once-occupied nation (Nye, 2016: 158). Japanese products were spreading around the world; cars, gadgets, and popular culture. Additionally, interpretations about this wide diffusion and consumption of Japanese items still were tainted with the Orientalist conflict between East and West that set the rules for a zero-sum game where as one gained power, the other weakened. How could it be that in less than a century a culture that was "closed and static", became the second largest economy in the world (Nye, 2016: 156)? Japan not only challenged Western economies, but the very Western sensitive values of superiority over the Oriental other.

The fear of the Japanese threat along with the wide expansion of Japanese products paved the way for otherization and contemporary orientalist views to arise in the next decades. The decades when Japan became cool.

2.2.5 Postmodern Japan and Cool Japan

The national cultural identity of Japan through Japan Inc. entailed both the perception of Japan as an aggressive economical opponent with occasional ungraspable cultural differences, and an equally difficult to understand economical example to follow. Both negative and positive interpretations lingered through the decade of 1980. However, it was not until Japan entered a recession period in the 1990's that it stopped being regarded as an economical threat, and identity discourses and interpretations started to shift again.

Starting in the decade of 1990, Japan entered a period of recession that marked what the academia calls The Lost Decade, although more recent research suggests the existence of more than one Lost Decades (Funabashi & Kushner, 2015). Once Japan's growth was halted, so was its quality as a threat. To Euro-American eyes, it became harmless, tamed, bounded. Not coincidentally, this was also the time when it became cool.

This decade was when interest on Japanese media, such as *anime*, started gathering attention as an academic topic, and as a cultural commodity. The introduction of Japanese animation to American televisions and cinemas during the 1980's brought new visuals, narratives and stories that, while they provided to be a localization challenge (Kelts, 2007:14), they also sparked interest in Japanese popular culture (Iwabuchi, 2002, *Soft…*; Kelts, 2007). During this decade TV's, theaters and fashion shows became the new stages for Japanese visual and material culture to publicly build an image for Japan for the new 21st century. Now that Japanese popular culture was in the spotlight, the previous identity discourse started switching values, but maintaining the core statement; Japan was not deemed a complete super power. This time Japan was paving its way to global cultural influence (Iwabuchi, 2002, *Soft…*), but lacked the economical super strength from the previous decade. Japan was now a soft power.

The text that asserted Japan's image in the new century, took the concept of soft power, and drove it to the next level; to the cool level. *Japan's Gross National Cool*, authored by journalist and writer Douglas McGray in 2002 started saying that "Japan looks more like a cultural superpower today than it did in the 1980's, when it

was an economic one" (McGray, 2002: 44). The keyword in that statement is 'looks', given that efforts to bring big artists and establish important cultural centers for Japanese culture after the war had been at work since the decade of 1970 (Tomii, 2007: 43). Also, the gadgets and Japanese quirks that McGray called cool then, had been acknowledged while Japan was an economic superpower as well, albeit under an ambiguously unfavorable light. Japan looks more like a cultural superpower now because before, its economical dominance made it extremely deviant, which made it look more like a menace. But now, for McGray, Japan still possessed power, but it's a nontraditional manifestation of it; it's soft power (McGray, 2002: 53).

Political scientist Joseph S. Nye defined soft power, opposed to coercive military hard power, as an ability to shape the preferences of others through attraction (Nye, 2009). For McGray, coolness, or Gross National Cool, was a kind of soft power (McGray, 2002: 53). Japan possesses a large Gross National Cool, as well as certain mysteriousness to it. The author mentioned that one of Japan's secrets for "thriving amidst globalization" is the fact that it remains somewhat unreachable to foreigners (McGray, 2002: 52). Also, it rescued traits of Japanese uniqueness that appeared in different eras, like the aforementioned ability to adapt foreign influences (McGray, 2002). However, this time, this Japanese talent was understood within the frame of postmodernism. McGray said: "Japan was postmodern before postmodernism was trendy". Summing up Japan's 21st century coolness, as defined by the author who popularized the label, Japan possesses soft power, is a postmodern Other, is still mysterious, and is harmless. Japan is now back in the limits allowed by Orientalism, where the hard power is in the hands of the West.

Inside Japan, in the early 1990's, the articulation of "distinctive 'Japaneseness' of cultural exports" grew, as well as pride in it (Iwabuchi, 2002, *Soft*…). The issue was approached through different fronts, but with similar theoretical frameworks. On the side of Japanese animation and *manga*, anime producer Okada Toshio spearheaded the vindication of the *otaku* label, a once negative term for obsessive fans, and boosted its placement as an academic topic with his 1996 book *Otakugaku Nyūmon* [*Introduction to Otaku Studies*]. In his book, Okada placed himself as a self-proclaimed *otaku* king, and talked about *otaku*'s especially "evolved sense of sight" for media, their growing abilities to engage with new varied technologies, and its spread around the world (Okada, 2000). His discourses did not explicitly talk about Japanese uniqueness, but did exalt *otaku* uniqueness; a topic that, joined with the aforementioned relationship with multimedia activities laid a fertile ground for more clear statements about Japanese uniqueness and postmodernism. Murakami Takashi took that step in the front of contemporary art. During this decade, Murakami started having his first exhibitions in big-name galleries and museums such as the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, and SCAI the Bathhouse. His artistic discourse back then was an advocacy for a hierarchy-less art and society, an idea that later on would get entangled with the aforementioned notion of *otaku* and postmodernism, giving place to his widely successful art project *Superflat* at the beginning of the 2000's (Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, 1993; Murakami, 2000). What these two authors have in common is the auto-denomination of themselves as *otaku*, and their discourses of *otaku* culture that run parallel to discourses of uniqueness. They both emphasized postmodernist values such as the collapse, or flatness, of History, hierarchies, technological and geographical boundaries and grand narratives as defining features of contemporary Japanese culture (Murakami, 2000; Mouri, 2007).

There exists a common regard for a postmodern Japanese uniqueness between discourses about Japanese identity within the creative industries and the foreign view of Japan as cool. This has laid the ground for Japanese artists, designers and art critics to soon start using the label to interpret their own artworks (Yamaguchi, 2004). For others, the epithet seems to have stricken them by surprise. Japanese books and magazines have been published around the topic of finding out that there was such a big hype around Japanese popular culture (*Kūru Japan?!...*, 2006; Kōkami, 2015). No matter their stage of adoption, Japan in the end embraced its coolness, and made it official.

The Japanese government was in no way unaware of the economic impact that the Cool Japan discourse had and can continue to have on Japanese products. Even though McGray's text talks about fashion, *anime*, phones and gadgets at the same time, Japanese public institutions chose creative industries to represent Cool Japan, and gadgets would fall under Digital Japan, or Tech Japan (Cabinet Office, 2004a). Efforts to strengthen the promotion and protection of Japanese creative industries locally and internationally can be tracked back to the 2002 Japanese Intellectual Property Strategy (Dailot-Bul, 2009). However, the actual usage of the English-language concept 'Cool Japan' on creative industry-related programs started appearing in Japanese government branding strategies in 2004 (Cabinet Office, 2004a) although at times it would also appear with alternative names such as Japan Cool or *Kakkoii Nihon* (Cabinet Office, 2004a; Cabinet Office, 2004b). On 2012 Cool Japan took an important turn since it became one of the tools that the Japanese institutions had at hand to help reinvigorate Japanese industries after the earthquake, and restore Japan's brand overseas (METI, 2012b).

Nowadays, Japan and Western powers remain in a constant negotiation to determine who is to exert domination over the other. This complicit relationship of hegemonic discourses of (self)otherization and (self)exoticism has shaped discourses of Japanese identity, and the visual and material culture that represents them through different eras. Cool Japan shows traces of Japonism from the late 19th and early 20th century when it attempts to put Japan in front (or past) modernity once again by bringing postmodernism to the discussion. Also, the discourse on Japan's coolness retakes the wide diffusion of Japanese products that the postwar economic miracle brought, but reflects on it with a fresh post-Japan Inc. and post-economic bubble view. However, Cool Japan is not only a result of previous historical conditions. It is still in transformation and responding to contemporary needs. In order to understand the current Cool Japan identity discourse, and the nature of the contemporary complicit relationship between Japan and the West, a look at the 'cool' label could be helpful.

2.3 A brief history of contemporary cool

The previous brief history of Japanese national cultural identity discourses introduced the usage and recontextualization of narratives that have shaped the 20th century, such as modernism and postmodernism. The current form of Japan's national cultural identity involves yet another one of these notions: cool. In this section, I focused on this concept and its history to highlight the constant determinant values that have held the structure of cool as a cultural category.

The historical review of the (re)definitions of cool has also taken into account the recontextualizaiton that the passage of time has brought. This way, the explanation of the history of cool was done not only minding the time frame, but also a representative circuit or community that performed different forms of cool according to their own values and objectives. The sartorial performance of coolness has been particularly highlighted given its role as a way to express each communities' identity.

Just like in the part pertaining Japan's identity formation, I approached cool as a dynamic concept that has been re-worked, at times in parallel processes that challenge the notion of a single linear chronological development. The main aim is to understand how contemporary cool came to be, and how its particular dynamics and constitution could relate to Japan's identity, its power relations, and its visual and material culture.

2.3.1 Cool's African origins

When tracing back the origins of cool, several authors pointed their fingers to the African continent (Thompson, 1973; Majors & Bilson, 1993; Pountain & Robins, 2000). Particularly, to Yoruba culture (Pountain & Robins, 2000; 28-45; Majors & Bilson, 1993: 57)., sometimes dating back even to the year 2000 BC. It has been pointed out that the Yoruba concept '*itutu*' can be translated as 'cool' nowadays (Pountain & Robins, 2000: 28), but the notion of coolness seemed to be present in several West, Central, and East African languages as well (Thompson, 1973). Art historian Robert Farris Thompson (1973, 1974) described cool as a metaphor of moral aesthetic accomplishment that portrays serenity, certainty, calmness, and interweaved

seemingly opposed traits such as responsibility and play (Thompson, 1973: 43). He dated its antiquity to the 15th century, when Nigerian kings were called *emware*, which literally meant 'it is cool' (Thompson 1973: 43), but mentions that there were sculptures from the 9th century that show features of cool that also appear in Nigerian art nowadays (Thompson, 1973: 43). However, the art historian did not pay much attention to ancestral forms of cool, instead turned to analyzing "modern traditional societies of West Africa" (Thompson, 1973: 43). In other words, cool's origins are speculated to go back centuries, even probably millennia, but the study of African origins of cool are based on African communities of the 20th century.

So, what is cool for the Yoruba? In Thompson's book *African Art in Motion: Icon and Act*, the author elaborated further on the definition of 'cool' (Thompson, 1974; 43):

> It is an all-important mediating process, accounting for similarities in art and vision in many tropical African societies. It is a matrix from which stem ideas about being generous, clear, percussively patterned, harmonized with others, balanced, finished, socially perfected, worthy of destiny. In other words, the criterion of coolness seems to unite and animate all the other canons.

According to Thompson, this mediating process is performed in different ways; through art, attire (Thompson, 1973: 42), or behavior (Thompson, 1974: 45; Majors & Bilson, 1993: 57). Regarding the latter, the author emphasized the performance of cool as a mask that is "worn" as a way to represent, through one's facial expressions, or lack thereof, the quality of balance and calmness in front of any situation. For instance, the cool mask is worn during dance, when dancing in an energetic manner (hot), but with an unsmiling, composed face (cool) (Thompson, 1974: 45) that shows patience and collectedness (Majors & Bilson, 1993: 57).

The ritualistic nature and performance of Yoruba cool still has an important role to play outside Africa. With slavery during the 18th and 19th centuries, cool arrived to the American continent. The black community endured a long period of systematic discrimination and violence that forced them to develop coping methods. One of them was cool. Psychologist Richard Majors and sociologist Janet Mancini Billson stated that this performance of wearing a cool mask to control hot behaviors has worked as a curtain that hides fear, and pain to ensure protection and survival. They said that this mask "played to the expectations of the powerful white audience" to help them get out of trouble and survive (Majors & Bilson, 1993: 61). Furthermore, these attitudes and oppression stories influenced the creation of the blues, a music genre that served as a mean for expression for slaves.

But, even though slavery ended at the end of the 19th century, discrimination against the black community did not. The performance of cool kept the blues alive and brought new expressions, like jazz. The first decades of the 20th century came with the spread of these music genres and the creation of black communities that played and enjoyed them. These groups continued to use cool as an armor against discrimination, and oppression from the hegemonic white social system (Pountain & Robins, 2000: 42). Even during the 1920 and 1930 decade when jazz became popular around the country, and the bebop subculture was born, the need for the cool mask remained among famous performers such as Louis Armstrong.

Cool was worn in the form of a symbolic mask of collected facial expression or gestures, but it was also worn in the form of fashion. In between world wars, black communities in the United States took Harlem and Los Angeles and its stages as places where they could be free and build their on cultural mecca of resistance with jazz (Alvarez, 2009: 119). But also, Harlem's and LA's streets became public scenarios to display coolness, where wearing zoot suits, suits with broad-rimmed hats,

oversized jackets and pants with gold or silver watch chains, would become important identity signals for the bebop (Alvarez, 2009).

The first decades of the 20th century were marked by war conflicts that left the world in a social, political and economical crisis. The two World Wars, the Great Depression caused a gloomy ethos in a generation that gradually lost faith in social systems, ideologies and economies. These conditions influenced emerging youth existential subcultures such as that of the rebellious hipster. But, how does this relate to the aforementioned struggles of the black community and cool? According to American essayist Norman Mailer's essay, *The White Negro*, this social crisis and disbelief led to a logical appropriation of the cool mask.

Mailer described the post-war era as "the first time in civilized history" that everybody has been forced to live with a suppressed fear, knowing that "I might still be doomed to die as a cipher in some vast statistical operation in which my teeth would be counted, and my hair would be saved, but my death itself would be unknown, non-honored and unremarked." (Mailer, 1957: 1). This uncertainty made Mailer think that it was logical for Caucasian subcultures to turn to the black communities for inspiration and answers, given that "any Negro who wishes to live must live in danger from his first day" (Mailer, 1957: 2). Now the hipsters used the performances of cool that black people used to protect themselves from a specific racist context, and reinterpret it as a generalized way of social detachment.

However, not all views around the "white Negro" were as optimistic. White youths started attending the Harlem jazz clubs, not without receiving suspicious stares (Alvarez, 2009: 119). The incurrence of white people in black places of resistance brought several moments of racial tension. When jazz started getting more popular and appropriated outside the Harlem circuits, more stories of segregation started

appearing, where black performers would be invited to play for an all-white crowd (Alvarez, 2009: 120).

This way, from ritual to urban performances, cool's African roots suggest that it started off as a virtue of a collected behavior, and later became a coping method against hostile social environments. It is equally important to point out that coolness is complex and dynamic, it has been kept alive by reinterpretation and appropriation. Part of its complexity is due to the multiple parallel meanings it can have in different spheres of interpretation. That is to say, even though contemporary cool history quotes Africa as its home land, there have been similar phenomena in other parts of the world.

2.3.2 European Cool

Coolness has also set foot en Europe. The detailed study about coolness of Dick Pountain and David Robins considered the possibility of cool to have taken different shapes, while maintaining almost the same essence in other parts of the world and in parallel chronologies. Such is the example of the term *sprezzatura*, a philosophy of emotional continence cultivated during Renaissance Italy that holds points in common with the aforementioned Yoruba cool. *Sprezzatura*, as a cultivation of an "appearance of effortlessness" (Pountain & Robins, 2000: 53), and an avoidance of affectation, suggested an attitude of collectedness. It was also hedonistic, in love with illicit pleasures and concerned with the construction of a self image (Pountain & Robins, 2000; 53), but as such, it was only practiced by those who could afford it; the aristocrats. In Rennaisance Italy, court members displayed their identity through clothing "as if it were a work of art", but following a sense of measure (Paulicelli, 2016). Visual presentation had to be done in two levels; representing oneself to

others, and representing oneself for oneself (Paulicelli, 2016: 61). *Sprezzatura* influenced aristocrats for centuries, not only in Italy, but across other European countries.

However, specifically talking about contemporary cool, Pountain and Robins also mentioned in their widely quoted study that cool is an emotional style of the 20th century (Pountain & Robins, 2000: 55). They said that "it took the collapse of faith in organized religion and the trauma of two world wars to turn it into a mass phenomenon". Detachedness, and hedonism would then permeate more social classes, not only the nobility. European avant-garde artists that developed a nonchalant attitude of individualism, detachment and skepticism in the interwar period represented one of the communities the spread such attitudes. Furthermore, they also stressed other cool values, adding to the attitude of the era. For instance, artists like the Dadaists, cultivated a transgressive irony that would make fun of modernist values and institutions during the decade of 1910 (Pountain & Robins, 2000).

After the Second World War, Existentialism spread among these creative circles of artists, musicians and writers. Followers of this philosophy gathered in Parisian cafés, where performers would sing about the world-weariness that the youth identified with (MacAdams, 2012). The desires of the post-war generation resounded with the philosophy that placed humans at the center, validated subjectivity, individual responsibility, and the freedom to break boundaries (MacAdams, 2012; Tulloch, 2016: 124). This generation of youths who lived the the anxieties of the Post-war world and the rise of the Cold War, adopted new sartorial styles attuned to what their existential idols were preaching. For instance, the black clothes, black berets, short dark hair and raincoats that French singer Juliette Greco wore during her shows influenced women in France, and even in the United States.

This was where the cool in the United States and Europe converged. The somewhat similar consequences of the two world wars put forward into consideration the relevance of this historical period for the configuration of contemporary cool. The attitudes of disbelief in big narratives like religion and the nation strengthened and diffused an existential individualism that would also impact the United States. Another point in common was the usage of these nonchalant attitudes used as a coping mechanisms in the face of the instabilities and difficulties that the wars brought.

2.3.3 Post-war Cool

To talk about the cool that ensued after the World Wars, I have to go back to the figure of the hipster. In other words, it is necessary to go back to the United States, like most books about cool do (Thomas, 1997; Stearns 1994; Pountain & Robins, 2000). The hipster, the "American existentialist" (Mailer, 1957), was a man that rejected conformism, and thus had detached himself from society, living "without roots" (Mailer, 1957). Nonetheless, the hipster is not disconnected enough to avoid the appropriation of behavioral codes of African Americans, as it was previously mentioned. Furthermore, hip figures of the time, like Jack Kerouac, also looked towards Asia, adopting Asian philosophies like Zen Buddhism and Taoism (Pountain & Robins, 2000: 68).

It was already mentioned that the appropriation of black signifiers of cool and resistance like jazz, and their attire helped shape the white subculture of hipsters. But, they also started building their own ways to signal their identities and their version of general subversion. They wore a parody of the conformist businessman suits; hipster suits were tighter, with thinner ties, and pointer shoes (Pountain & Robins, 2000: 72).

The irony in wearing a suit, expressed the hipsters' conscience of their social surroundings, but its rework also showed their rejection of the suffocating status quo of labor and military discipline.

Appropriation among subcultures is not the only kind of cultural diffusion or recontextualization that can take place within the scope of cool. The transference of cultural values or their manifestations can happen also between subcultures and institutions. The appearance of cool rebellious characters in the 1950's decade, such as those performed by James Dean, put the cool pose in the mass media stage of Hollywood (Pountain & Robins, 2000; 71). The continuous dispersion of cool through movies, TV and music reached a new generation of youth with oppositional features against the bourgeois lifestyles, "offering as an alternative a hedonistic 'counter-culture' based on sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll" (Pountain & Robins, 2000; 71). But also, this wide exposition in mass media to coolness and subversion, mixed with a promising economic growth that changed the institutions which these subcultures rebelled against to in the first place.

During the 1950's consumption and marketing behaviors changed, and oppositional consumption was born (Quartz & Asp, 2015: 33). Audiences wanted to emulate the rebels they saw in their movies, and TV shows, they wanted to wear the signifiers of subversion to signal their own rebellious identities. This behavior provided an opportunity for companies to capitalize in, which in turn enabled co-optation, and put in motion a cycle of cool that still remains today.

2.3.4 The counter-culture myth

The following decade, the 1960s is a polemic one. American political historian Thomas Frank defined this period the following way:

> The 1960s was the era of Vietnam, but it was also the high watermark of American prosperity and a time of fantastic ferment in managerial thought and corporate practice. (Frank, 1997: 6)

New radical subcultures were emerging, one of the most emblematic ones were the hippies. This subculture would maintain some attitudes from their hipster predecessors, at the same time that they built their own. They started out more politically committed than hipsters, but soon evolved to a "counter-culture" that would oppose the bourgeoisie in general, and its "square" system (Pountain & Robins, 2000: 71). The hippies had sartorial styles that would also differentiate them, but would keep the appropriation dynamics that would give way to their minorities-inspired attire with Mexican, Asian, Moroccan visual influences (Pountain & Robins, 2000: 72). They adopted these styles as an explicit alternative to what Western society had to offer, thus building an imaginary of the non-West as alternative.

The aforementioned media exposure also reached this new generation, and would impact creating two myths about the counterculture it housed. On the one hand, a conservative vision of the 1960 decade can tell a story of a counterculture that threatened Western Civilization, its values, and its morals (Frank, 1997: 3). On the other, a more liberal version of the times regarded mainstream culture and corporations as a static capitalistic monolith, and the youth subcultures as "a joyous and even a glorious cultural flowering" (Frank, 1997: 5).

However, even though the latter discourse of counterculture establishes an explicit antagonism against capitalist hierarchies and its institutions, this very drive for rebellion, its fantasies and imaginaries fed the strategies of corporations that were in the look out for a revolution themselves (Frank, 1997). Youth culture became a refreshing target audience, and a source of inspiration for the culture industry, like music and fashion. Rebellion started becoming co-opted and supported this second myth that saw subcultures as active rebellious cool communities against a boring conformist system.

Thomas Frank pointed out that this countercultural myth that co-opted rebellion is based and reinforced by the assumption that companies and official institutions are passive, oppressive entities. However, he also suggested that such a vison is rather reductionist, given that "postwar American capitalism was hardly the unchanging, soulless machine imagined by the countercultural leaders" (Frank, 1997: 6). Corporations can strengthen the structure of counterculture and along with it, the structure of cool. The 1960 decade was a time when a wide range of the population in the United States were longing for cultural revolution, after having lived the previous decade under a perceived conformism of prefabricated houses, and and elitist disregard for "low" mass culture (Frank, 1997: 10,11). It was also the time when mass media like television amplified the significance of cool lifestyles broadcasting the rock-and-roll bands that would inspire a whole generation of rebel youths (Quartz & Asp, 2015). Also, those "conformist" fifties left a rather stable middle class that would enable the oppositional subcultures of the sixties a "lifestyle discretionary spending" of music, travel, and drug experimentation (Quartz & Asp, 2015: 222, 223). This was the time that hip or cool consumerism took off.

Under the vision that coolness germinates in subcultures that are subversive, at times marginalized, and work as a coping method against systemic oppression, the co-

optation in the hands of the "square system" might sound like a danger to authentic cool. But, the decade of 1960 had a lesson to teach; that corporations have also a saying in cool. Since the, they hold complicit relationship that provides signifiers of rebellion, that impulses taste-making, and identity signaling. Cool consumerism is yet another form of the appropriation of cool attitudes and performances, one that establishes a bond between cool values and visual and material culture.

Creative circuits were once again attuned to the latest form of cool, responding to co-optation and countercultural myths with pop art. American artists like Roy Lichtenstein, Jasper Johns and, the leading figure, Andy Warhol took significant steps towards the democratization of art, and as such, the challenge of its sacredness. Andy Warhol's attitude and creative processes reflected the marriage between subversion and commercialization through an artistic celebration of popular culture. The creation of his persona as an art celebrity, his subversive art works, his fascination with mass media, and his parties that gathered actors, performers, musicians, and writers helped shape the cool scene in the 1960's. If Paris had the cafés to house existential cool kids, the United States had now Andy Warhol's studio, The Factory, to house cool entertainers. Warhol's big contribution to cool, and probably to the 20th century in general, was that he "elevated the ephemera of consumer society such as the famous Campbell's soup cans, to the status of already-art" (Pountain & Robins, 2000: 127). Pop art validated the mass media's role in subversion and in culture, and further blurred the boundaries between "high" and "low" culture in decades to follow.

2.3.5 Punk cool

As some of the ideals of the decade of 1960 gradually flowed towards new directions, the new decade would bring new tendencies as well. In the 1970's the

wealth that cool consumerism brought to acts like The Rolling Stones, The Who, and other rebel bands of the 1960's got materialized in behaviors of public excess of drugs, sex, and scandals. No longer would discretion be needed, but disregarded in favor of flaunting the excessive lifestyle of rockers, enhancing cool's bad boy attitude (Pountain & Robins, 2000: 96).

Audiences started dismissing what the hippies stood for, deeming their efforts fruitless thus engaging in angrier anarchist ideologies that also started getting reflected in new rock acts and their lyrics (Pountain & Robins, 2000: 99). Violence broke more into the mainstream as Hollywood embraced the portraiture of angst, frustration and revenge with movies like *Dirty Harry* and *Taxi Driver*. Garments also mirrored the angst of the era; youths started shaving their heads, wearing leather jackets, torn pants and shirts, and safety pins; giving way to the birth of the punk aesthetic, and a new kind of cool.

Punk has roots both in the US and the UK (Bolton, 2013). In both places, punk represented the social unrest in the form of "street-level anarchist agitation", but mostly in the UK it would spawn riots advocating political change (Pountain & Robins, 2000; Bolton, 2013), and in the US it would take the form of an artistic rebellion (Bolton, 2013: 12). Even though punk had deep roots in the underground scenes of the United Kingdom and the United States, it left legacies that would exert influence beyond the streets of London and New York. Musical acts like The Sex Pistols, Siouxsie and the Banshees, The Ramones, and Patti Smith marked with their *No Future* attitude and messages the punk generation worldwide. Punk also left a mark that surpasses the 1970's. For instance, the style press, the punk fanzines that recorded sartorial trends (Pountain & Robins, 2000), had a big impact that can still be

seen nowadays, as they set the precedents of contemporary coolhunting, and inspired the creation of other fashion zines in the following decades. But, also punk has visibly passed from a subculture, or counterculture, to high couture. Head curator of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute, Andrew Bolton, deemed punk as high fashion's most influential counterculture (Bolton, 2013: 12). He wrote in the catalogue for the exhibition *Punk: Chaos to Couture*:

> Punk smashed every convention of acceptable self-presentation, whether based on age, status, gender, sexuality, or even ethnicity. It prized originality, authenticity, and individuality, and devised specific visual codes in order to rebel against the cultural mainstream. (Bolton, 2013: 12)

In previous decades I have pointed out similar behaviors; the black jazz zoot scene who wore exaggerated suits that told them apart from the white daily life, the hippies opting for garments that countered their image of Western civilization, hipsters making fun of businessmen suits. It is cool's drive to "smash every convention or acceptable self-presentation". Cool has been constantly remarked by its oppositional individualism that constructed the entity of a collective mainstream as its adversary. So, what makes punk so singular?

More than punk itself, it is the economical and creative system of cool that changed, allocating subcultures' (i.e. punk) creative and sartorial potential in a more visible plane. The cool consumerism of the 1960's, just like pop art, blurred the boundaries between counterculture and the system, authenticity and fabrication. Punk inherited these new dynamics and as they rebelled against social hierarchies, like their cool predecessors, they also developed a commercialization under their own terms.

Punk included an internal fashion industry as an integral part of their subculture just like music, and night clubs have served preceding subcultures. It has been thought that until the 1990's decade the kids that grew up with cool and co-optation started debuting in the mass media and wide commercialization industries (Pountain & Robins, 2000). However, punk creatives filled in some gaps between the cool subcultures and the cool co-optation of big companies with their self-produced media and clothes.

Punk has been deemed to have cemented the "template" for youth cool movements: invent a sartorial form of expression, adopt a drug, and a music genre (Pountain & Robins, 2000). The amalgamation of punk's commercial and subversive sides came together visibly in SEX, fashion designer's Vivienne Westwood and music impresario Malcolm McLaren's boutique. The duo's relevance in punk rose them to creative icons that shaped the aesthetic and the movement the way it came to be known until nowadays (Bolton et al., 2013: 13). The shock value of cool came alive with punk fashion. Nowadays Vivienne Westwood has grown to be an established high-profile fashion brand that keeps shaking runways in Paris, London and New York.

Punk crystalized the union of what previous versions of cool advocated for and the dynamics of the subcultures that performed it. Punk fought the system, but key figures flirted with commercialization. The co-optation from the 1960's that reshaped the industries looking for a change, also played a role in molding upcoming subcultures, starting with 1970's punk.

2.3.6 Hip hop cool

As it was previously mentioned, there are moments that parallel iterations of cool are performed by different subcultures. With cool's mobility, the reasons for subversion change, and different racial issues, or social inequalities get highlighted. As the punks expressed their rage against any form of authority, the black neighborhoods of the United States still had to struggle with increasing social and economic gaps that threatened their everyday lives (Watkins, 2005: 9). In the decade of 1970's, hip hop was born, defined by graffiti, break dancing, deejaying, and rapping; forms of expression that worked as the voices to the young and dispossessed (Watkins, 2005: 7).

Literature about hip hop emphasized the differences between underground and commercial hip hop, because its wide spread was perceived to be not only diluting the resistance that hip hop stood for, but also attempting against the voice it helped to rise (Watkins, 2005; Kitwana, 2006). Hip hop's coolness stemmed largely from street credit; a status acquired by surviving and manipulating street hardships like drug selling, dysfunctional families, and violence. Hip hop music, garments, dance and graffiti told stories about dealing and overcoming these issues. However, when hip hop music started rising in pop charts by the end of the decade, performers got a celebrity-level status, rendering their struggles in the streets also part of the spectacle. Sociologist Samuel Craig Watkins describes the situation as "one of the cruelest ironies in the rise and transformation of hip hop: the fact that its livelihood –indeed its survival as a pop culture juggernaut– rested almost entirely on its ability to sell black death" (Watkins, 2005: 2).

Even though the scene of hip hop producers, performers and consumers started getting divided since its rise in popularity at the end of the 1970's, the impact of hip hop on following generations is unquestionable. This subculture has remained, and has kept on developing during the next decades, still sparking debates about race, and the neglected youth (Kitwana, 2006) both in the underground and in the commercial scenes. In a similar way that punk's aesthetic still comes up in fashion nowadays, hip hop's stand against social injustice continues to permeate youth. This is not to say that hip hop's sartorial style with golden chains, baggy pants and Timberland boots is not relevant. The way members of this subculture dress has been so widely adopted across generations that its commercial success has been estimated to be in the billions of dollars nowadays (Kitwana, 2006: 97). However, it is important to emphasize that hip hop's cool is driven by a political subversion that as it gets co-opted, its message is endangered.

As I have suggested, each subculture and its context contributes to construct a different form of cool. Like the underground scene of Warhol's factory pushed the democratization of cool, and punk provided the do-it-yourself tools to frame it, hip hop highlights cool's subversion and even its strength as a possible political force. While the co-optation of cool and its transformation into entertainment or commodities have taken part of its development, the internal crisis of hip hop makes visible the need to keep focus on the reasons behind its subversion.

2.3.5 Club cool

The decade of the 1980's has been labeled the era of lifestyles, and the discussion of their labels (Ferguson, 2016: xii). With the advent of postmodernism, the philosophy that analyzes changes in culture and society as modernist dualisms

(e.g. high vs low culture) collapsed, came an exaltation of diversity, exemplified by the simultaneous discussions on the very definition of post-modernism (Ferguson, 2016: 2). This does not mean that there was a wider diversity of voices in the 1980's, but that there was a feeling that those voices could and should be named and heard. The need to discuss and record the plethora of subcultural lifestyles sparked the creation of various new media. In 1980, in London i-D magazine was founded in the form of a zine which, even in its incipient format of stapled sheets of paper with collages, influenced upcoming fashion editorial design (*i-D magazine: identity parade*, 2005). At the other side of the world, in New York, PAPER magazine was founded in 1984 with a similar objective as i-D; to record the urban local scenes, with a particular emphasis on the gay community that was undergoing an AIDS crisis (Ward & Thompson, 2016). The 1980's also saw the introduction of MTV, a music channel aimed at a young audience that had remained widely underrepresented in mass media (Straw, 2005: 4).

While there are authors (Pountain & Robins, 2000; Ferguson, 2016) that follow the figure of the yuppie, the greedy hedonistic Young Upwardly-mobile Professionals, to portray the spirit of the eighties and its version of cool, there is another subculture that makes a more powerful point for the decade: the club kids. This subculture embodied the transgression that cool entails in a more explicit way, made use of the previous amalgamation of fashion, music and drugs that punk made famous, and appeared in this decade's emerging media.

The "club kids" was a subculture of young male and female artists, performers, and party-goers whose activities revolved around clubs. As I have suggested before in other cases, music clubs have been a haven for subcultures,

underground movements, their forms of expression and coolness. What made these kids relevant was that they created a scene in New York of pure transgressive body expression that marked the transition era between the 1980's and 1990's, stressing out fashion and the places to perform it. However, before delving into the details of the club kids culture, it is necessary to acknowledge its British antecedent; the New Romantics.

As direct successors of punks, the New Romantics inherited their self-made approaches when it came to building their identity visually. Some punks ditched the aggressive stance of punk, tweaked their outfits, and paraded them in the new clubs in London. The venue that started it all was Billy's, a night club that on Tuesday nights would house ex-punks and new young generations who were in the search for fresh and more positive vibes. The parties, and their later iteration at Blitz, were a hotbed for the upcoming British music and fashion scene as some of its attendants, performers, and staff included Boy George, members of Visage, and groups like Duran Duran and Depeche Mode (Miles, 2012). Billy's, Blitz and other clubs later on got filled with young attendants with looks that "made you feel normality was a sin" (Johnson, 2009). This aspect of the subculture got emphasized with time, and on occasions, the only way to get in to the most exclusive events of the underground scene was by having a good look (Johnson, 2009).

The weariness around the punk wrath, negativity and a future-less existence was also taking form in the United States. Hollywood started treating the future as a topic again; there were post-apocalyptic visions like those depicted in Mad Max, Blade Runner, or others tainted with hope for changing history, like in the case of Terminator or Back to de Future (Ferguson, 2016: viii). In the subculture scene, the

death of Andy Warhol in 1987 left a big party-going creative void in New York City that did not take long to get filled.

Michael Alig was the most influential club kid that changed the New York club scene at the end of the 1980's and extended his activities until the start of the 1990's (Bollen, 2010). Him and his group of friends, that included names like Amanda Lepore and RuPaul, organized parties that emphasized a sartorial extravagance similar to the New Romantics in the UK. As the scene grew, the club kids diversified their activities; some worked on a magazine called Project X Magazine, they created a syndicate of club nights around the country, and appeared on TV commercials, among other activities (Bollen, 2010). They were a young subversive movement that also had an entrepreneurial consciousness attuned to a post-pop-art era of blurred boundaries.

Both the New Romantics and the club kids emphasized on the transgressive features of attire by making it an integral part of their community. The punk subculture also had similar features, but what makes the New Romantics and club kids stand out is how explicitly important were looks to actually be part of the scene. Punk jumped from subculture to high-couture with time, but the other two club-oriented communities emphasized that subversive "abnormal" looks continue to get formed in the underground subcultural scene.

2.3.6 Skate cool

Intensive clubbing, and drug usage did not stop with the start of the decade of 1990. Young skaters started consolidating their styles and entering the clubbing scene

both in the United Kingdom and in the United States. At first, during the 1980's decade the subculture was geographically divided, therefore the sartorial style of the skaters was also heterogeneous. For instance, in the UK, some punks became also the first skaters when they started using the skateboard as part of their leisure activities. In the US, skaters stemmed from the surfer subculture in the West Coast, thus they shared similar looks; long shorts, t-shirts, and slip-on shoes (Winge, 2013: 32). By the 1990's the West Coast look had permeated more the attire of skaters around the world, and gradually became unified as the clothes got attuned to the performed physical activity.

Cool among skaters not only inherited aspects of the club kids and New Romantics club cool, but also displayed their own version on the streets, where they would practice and perform their skateboard tricks. This way, skaters added a physical activity to the variables of cool, and would configure it as their space for subversion. In the previous decade, in 1981, skateboarding was already expanding towards institutionalization and commercialization when the National Skateboarding Association was founded by Frank Hawk, father of the famous professional skater Tony Hawk (Beal, 1995). The creation of this bureaucratic body aimed at making skateboarding visible and an accepted sport (Beal, 1995: 257) which would eventually provide platforms for skateboarders not only to continue their skating activities, but to make a living from them. However, such visions were not always shared nor well received among members of the subculture. They would reject the idea of competition, stratification, or hierarchization. When asked about what made a skater cool, responses evidenced an emphasis on community formation and camaraderie, as opposed to a competitive individual who brags and "shows off" (Beal, 1995: 261). The skaters' rejection of the professionalization of their activity of choice to display

coolness could be seen also as a defense of their horizontal organization. Skaters rebelled in order to maintain harmony in the community; in other words, the skaters' cool was supportive.

Nonetheless, regardless of the strong bonding that skater culture professed, literature about this subculture remarks that while it can be a scene with little visible racial, gender, or class stratification, it is composed by a mostly white male population (Snyder, 2017; Winge, 2013). The few women that participated as skaters themselves had widely adopted the same stances and looks as men at first. Later, the few women that became professional skaters tackled this issue creating their own brands (Winge, 2013), thus making their identity as skater women more visible. Other young women opted to stay in the sidelines as spectators (Snyder, 2017; Winge, 2013: 32). However, that did not mean that young women had no place in cool during the nineties, as the case of Chloe Sevigny, the "coolest girl in the world" suggests (Morse, 2015).

The New Yorker published a piece on 1994 that portrayed the early nineties state of cool, taking the figure of Chloe Sevigny as its protagonist (McInerney, 1994). The epithet of "coolest girl in the world" stemmed from this article, and continued to permeate Sevigny's career as she incurred in fashion and movies in later decades (Morse, 2015). Her story is that of a Kansas girl who, attracted to fashion, went to New York and started making it big appearing in music videos, movies and fashion magazines at the young age of nineteen. The article told this story enhancing Sevigny's hunger for fashion and innate intuition to see ahead of the latest trends, while hanging out at clubs and with her skater friends (McInerney, 1994). In previous decades I have mentioned the increasing stress on sartorial expressions as part of the

identity of certain subcultures, as well as the possibility for attire to support rebellious views. During the skaters' and Sevigny's era, fashion also came to suggest gender roles within cool; while the men remained active with their skateboards and cool attires that reflected their physical activity, women focused in their forward-thinking fashion.

However, it was not only the subcultures that were going under social reconfigurations; the social and political panorama of reduced job opportunities and welfare cutbacks framed them within an atmosphere of finger-pointing that put youth at the center of the discussion (Huq, 2007: 21). Media and academics of the time labeled this generation many ways: slackers, Generation X, post-baby boomers, and the MTV generation (Huq, 2007; Lipton, 1991). These kids grew up to be blamed for that period's unstable economy and unemployment due to their perceived indifference and disregard towards paid work (Huq, 2007: 21). According to this view, these youths were always idle, and self-absorbed (Huq, 2007), which is to some degree understandable when glancing superficially at the activities of the cool kids of those days; skaters that created their identities through a hobby, and fashionistas who did the same through the consumption of sartorial commodities. But, the pressure to produce some kind of impact on society was put on the shoulders of Generation X mostly as a result of a conscience, or rather, an imaginary of subcultures of previous generations that were idealized as revolutionary.

Cultural studies Professor Tara Brabazon (2017) explains this increase of expectations on youth in media and academia when constructs of previous youth subcultures were framed against a historical event:

> At specific moments, youth are hailed into existence through an overpowering unity against an event, economic agenda or political figure. The rage of the Sex Pistols against the establishment, the screams of young women when the Beatles arrived in America, display not only traces of passion but a desire for change. (…) (Y)outh have been collectivized through a single issue, song or idea that overcomes other differences.

The form that cool took on the nineties seems less a coping method against adversities and more a result of leisure and consumption. Nonetheless, its status as an oppositional force against corporations or institutionalization remained, as well as its power to question previous social values, via its rejection of the established expectations to get a stable job and form a family (Brabazon, 2017). The particularities of this moment of cool were mainly two: first, it suggested that gender-specific forms of display of coolness can exist; and second, that as media and academia started to take on subcultural and youth issues, they also built imaginaries of previous subcultures and set expectations for the new ones.

2.3.7 Japan cool

The following forms of cool that are going to be discussed take place in Asia, in Japan. To explore the performance of cool in Japan I will follow two different timelines. First, I will present the historical background of cool before the construction of the notion of Cool Japan, and second, I will fast forward to the beginning of the 21st century, a time when Japan was explicitly labeled cool.

In order to take a look at the first Japanese form of cool, I will follow Japanese studies specialist Elena Giannoulis' (2013) insightful study about *iki*. In her text *Iki: a Japanese Concept of Coolness?* Giannoulis explored the construction of coolness, its variations and functions inside Japan. She approached the concept of *iki*, departing from the understanding of coolness as a "form of emotional management leading to a specific mode of communication, which provides a pre-defined ritualized answer to imbalances of power based on social differences" (Giannoulis, 2013: 216). Under this light, *iki* is seen as a "self-protective mechanism" (Giannoulis, 2013: 216), therefore holds resemblances with previous forms of cool that have been discussed in this chapter. *Iki* enacted this self-protective coolness during the Edo Period (1603-1868) as a lifestyle of detachment and collectedness among the rising merchant class that wanted to diverge from the ruling class of the samurai (Giannoulis, 2013: 220). Later, *iki* was reframed during Shōwa (1926-1989), and got entangled with discourses of Japanese cultural identity.

According to Giannoulis, the responsible for said merge was the Japanese philosopher Kūki Shūzō who, in an intent to construct a "genuine Japanese aesthetic in contrast to Western aesthetics and philosophy", studied also the characteristics of *iki* (Giannoulis, 2013: 217). Like some other discourses of Japanese national cultural identity, *iki,* as defined by Shūzō, also professed Japanese uniqueness and took into consideration Japan's position vis-à-vis the West in an implicit aesthetic competition.

Giannoulis concludes that *iki* indeed shared points in common with the contemporary understanding of cool, but also mentioned that given the ambiguity of coolness itself, it was difficult to positively assert that *iki* is a Japanese form of cool. However, this points of contact with coolness are what makes *iki* relevant for the

present dissertation given that it adds to the understanding of the constant elements that appear in different versions of coolness across space and time. Also, I take from Giannoulis' study about *iki* the possibility that a form of coolness was already instrumentalized to support discourses of identity based on Japanese uniqueness before McGray's Cool Japan in 2002.

In the beginning of the 21st century both cool and Japan's national cultural identity discourses collided once again, and with a banging force. On the one hand, as it was previously mentioned, Japanese visual and material culture had been spreading around the world since the decade of 1980, spawning controversies. It was also pointed out that the broad consumption of Japanese products and media ranged from gadgets, to high fashion, and that it moved around many countries in the American and European continent, destabilizing the orthodox notions of East and West. Then, through the history of cool it was mentioned that the 1990's was the time when cultural studies about subcultures and youth took force, which, joined to the aforementioned parallel interest in Japanese popular culture in the media and academia, it laid a fertile ground for the attention of Japanese subcultures and popular culture that ensued in the early 2000's.

Douglas McGray published his text on Japans Gross National Cool on 2002, and impacted approaches to Japan inside and outside the archipelago. One of the objectives of the present dissertation is to explore the components of this form of cool, and this discourse of Japanese national cultural identity. But, in order to do so, it was first necessary to understand the historical backgrounds of both cool and the construction of Japanese identity to give a first step to understand the relationship and possible implications of intertwining both concepts and the baggage they come with.

What makes Japan and its culture detached, subversive, hedonistic or any of the other adjective that have come to constantly define cool?

2.4 Summary

Discourses facing the entity of Orient have taken the form of "binary narratives" (Frank, 1997) that establish two opposing extremes that seem irreconcilable. Something similar has happened with discourses around cool, the myths of counterculture and co-optation place subcultures against corporations, authenticity against commercialization, rebellion against conformism. However, what I wanted to point out through this brief history of both the image of Japan's national cultural identity and coolness was that both concepts entail active negotiations between the two imagined poles. It is also important to highlight that these negotiations have been done repeating certain values across different identity modes, be it with the Japanese identity or the cool identity.

In the first part, I suggested that the three main constants are a systematic Orientalism, (self)exotization, and the enhancement of Japanese uniqueness. These three elements co-existed enabling one another, and fueling interpretations of Japan and its visual and material culture. In the second part, the values that remained constant in the history of cool is subversion (or different versions of it, like counterculturalism, or rebellion), detachment, and a systematic appropriation. In a similar way, these three values have set the rules for selling, consuming and (re)framing products that signal identity.

Regarding Japan vis-à-vis the West, narratives have revolved around the identification of the West; Eastern countries become instrumental in positioning Western ones through a comparative process of divergence where the formers'

"weaknesses" enhanced the latters' "strengths" (Said, 2014: 45). The demarcation of 'East' and 'West', 'us' and 'them', culminates in the establishment of an Other, an entity that confirms and stabilizes the Self, which in this case is the hegemonic system of Western values (Gandhi, 1998).

The constituent factors of this hegemonic system have changed shapes and labels throughout time, but its structure of Euro-American hegemony has remained active. However, the Oriental counterpart (i.e. Japan) is also an active entity that has engaged with Western values as they shift, and has played a role in their modification. One mode of negotiation and modification is the conscious selection of not only the traits that are to be described in the abstract identity discourses, but also of the material objects that are to represent them.

The formation of Japanese national cultural identity is an example of how the nuances in identity discourses, and the light that it can shed on its visual and material culture, shift depending on the agency to perform them. Media and cultural studies Professor Koichi Iwabuchi defined national identity as "a battleground where various social groups compete with each other to define the meaning of national" (Iwabuchi, 1994: 51). Minding the contrasts of the aforementioned negotiations of Japanese identity that have passed through so many hands and translations, it is not difficult to imagine why Iwabuchi used the word "battleground". At times, those battles result in hegemonic discourses where one social group dominates the other. After this short historical account, it was suggested that the competition to define Japan ranged from seeing it as an obscure closed country to an example of a cool postmodern culture. I wanted to highlight how this competition also involves a degree of conversation that goes both ways. For instance, Japan got entangled with the European definition of

modernism, but also challenged it and later on provided its own version of it. It was also suggested that just as Japan worked as an imaginary other, so did the West for Japan. Within these conversations of otherization, power relations were also negotiated, where dominance would balance from one party to the other. This complicity then is not precisely a symptom of Japan's alleged "talent" to import the foreign and remix it. It is more an example of the kind of active and reversible relationships that can be established between the othering and the othered.

This active negotiation between East and West, Japan and United States/Europe, is the focus of Koichi Iwabuchi's study about Japanese national identity. He mentioned that Japaneseness is the result of reciprocal recognition of others where Japan retook the image that the West had drawn of it, and constructed its own portrait of both the West and of itself. Consequently, "the relationship between the West's Orientalist discourse on Japan and Japan's discourse on itself is characterized by a profound complicity" (Iwabuchi, 1994: 52). This exchange is complicit exoticism.

Koichi Iwabuchi studied the negotiation of Japanese national identity between Japan and what he calls the power bloc, Europe and the United States of America, via discourses of Japanese uniqueness, *nihonjinron*. As he analyzed them, he briefly brought in visual and material culture when he mentioned that cultural and creative industries also had a role to play. Through the previous historical background traced for this dissertation, I suggested that when framed within discourses of (self)exotization, Japanese products had "exploited local difference and particularity" (Iwabuchi, 1994: 68), be it with a *shachihoko* or with a Kenzo garment.

The exploitation of difference has also occurred throughout the history of cool. As it was previously mentioned, cool also functions within a dual narrative that puts rebellious, alternative subcultures on one side, and an oppressive square authority on the other. In this case, difference was also circumscribed within a hegemonic system that got constantly rebalanced. What is interesting to mention here is that even though the imaginary of subcultures versus the system departed from the assumption that political, economical and social power is majorly concentrated in the latter, it is the former who has, or is expected to have, the power to change it (Frank, 1997). The exploitation of the other came with appropriation, the use of a culture's symbols, behaviors, gestures by members of another culture (Rogers, 2006: 474), sometimes was enacted in the form of co-optation by corporations, and others as selective adaptation of behaviors from one subculture to the other.

However, even though literature focused on the history of cool has centered on the potential power that subcultures hold, the acknowledgment of the counterculture myth presented by Thomas Frank made it clear that cool did not inhabit only the underground. It had also been performed by European aristocracy, for instance, or punk designers-cum-high fashion brands. In this sense, cool also engaged in a complicit otherization similar to complicit exoticism, and the search for the rebalance of power that dislocates the hegemonic order. Both cool and national cultural identity are battlegrounds of meanings, and both depart from exerting hegemony over social constructs.

Its continuous transformation suggested that cool's nature is to be mobile, to be appropriated. The history of cool is the history of its appropriation. Given that appropriation is also intertwined with cultural politics and the possibility of

assimilation of marginalized communities (Rogers, 2006), it becomes also a history of hegemony. The particularity of cool, is that its history connotes also the wish to counter said hegemony. From its strong expression in black cultures to tamed cool consumption, cool has been used to configure subversive identities framed by a dual narrative of convergence and divergence.

The battleground for these narratives occurred frequently within creative circuits, with artists, literary authors, musicians, etc. The history of cool was built in a way that signaled cool's creative power. The subversive power cool was materialized in its capacity to bring something new to the world. Looking at the history of cool here traced in a critical way, the discussion of cool itself should also be brought to analysis. Cool has been given potential power to reshape its time, to bring new things to this world, hence its emulation with youth, but it has done so selectively as well. Cool has been said to take place in the underground, in the marginal, but not all those who dwelled in these alternative spaces got to mold cool or to attain its power. Appropriation at times brought the erasure of marginalized communities. Cool in this history is usually attached to men, male acts, bad boys. And ever since cool passed from black communities to "white negroes", black cool remains peripheral in some studies. Something similar happens with women, where their participation of cool is almost unnamed except for some key figures (i.e. Vivienne Westwood, and Chloe Sevigny), or studies with the specific objective of studying women's role. That is to say, it is important to keep in mind that cool, and the construction of its history, is not an all-reforming force of positive social change. It is not without its questionable discriminations, and that is why it should be put under the magnifying glass when the United States, the country whose military crushed Japan, calls the land of the rising sun cool. Furthermore, looking at these "blind spots" in the history of cool could also

help shed light on alternative manifestations, and even point out at possible places where a new form of cool might be born.

As Japanese identity made use of different tools to get build, like exoticism, at the beginning of the 21st century cool became one of them, thus bringing together the Japanese identities explained in the first part and cool identities in the second one. The power negotiations that comprised cool rendered it a mechanism with its own rules for identity signaling. These modes wee governed by values that remain constant, like subversion, and others that varied depending on the recontextualization. For instance, the cool sartorial trends from one generation to another changed, but the subcultures oppositional attitude remained.

I departed from the idea that cool was a cultural category of subversive behaviors that started being "worn" as an abstract mask of detachment. But, with time I also described how other modes of wearing became more literal and concrete. With Japan I also saw a selection of visual and material culture to display when signaling identity, like the ones exhibited during World Fairs. Nowadays, when the Cool Japan identity discourse still encloses the binary narrative of Orient vs West and strengthens it with the juxtaposition of counter-culture-versus-the-system notions, the possibility to wear Japan's cool has also arisen. Therefore, in the next chapters I have analyzed how wearing Japan is performed nowadays, who performs it, and what (oppositional) meanings are being constructed.

Chapter 3. Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

The previous section laid a general historical background of cool and Japan's national cultural image in order to understand its most recent shape as a cool other. The theorized relationship between an othering/othered national image and coolness brought to the table the discussion of power (re)balancing between the othering side, and the othered; the conqueror and the conquered. It was concluded that Cool Japan entailed a complicit exoticism that could be performed, consumed and worn following the patterns of cool. In order to inquire how is Japan worn nowadays, and how does that become cool, I am going to highlight the role of sartorial performance; i.e. the adoption Japanese urban fashion.

In this chapter I looked at the literature about this dissertation's two main axes; coolness and Japan's national cultural image as Cool Japan. The literature about both topics is vast, therefore I needed to first lay a general vision of both poles, and then locate my case study within it. The review was done in order to find guidelines through the paths that have already been covered, and detect what others have remained untracked. The case study of Japanese urban fashion fell under the latter category of topics that have not been under the spotlight so frequently. That was also the case with studies that explore the diffusion and adoption of Cool Japan in territories outside of the Euro-American centre, even though there was a growing activity in other countries. Therefore, I proposed to look at Cool Japan and cool standing from spots that have been left relatively marginal, with the objective to look at two widely researched topics from places that could unveil new aspects to them.

One of the standing points is the aforementioned adoption of Japanese urban fashion, and the other, the occurrence of said phenomenon in Latin America. Finally, I addressed one of the main objectives of the dissertation which is to apply the understanding of coolness and Japan's cool to explore the possibilities of enhancing or even triggering coolness in a different othered culture. This way, I took a geographical turn to look at Mexico and the possibility to compare it with the Japanese case of becoming cool by first approaching an incipient phenomenon similar to the fandom communities that have spawned from Cool Japan. I take a look at the Japanese communities that have appropriated and diffused Mexican visual and material culture, and its relevant literature.

This way, the objective of the present chapter is to position the current dissertation and its contributions within the scope of current studies about Cool Japan and coolness, as well as to point out the relevance of looking at the Latin American case of adoption/appropriation of Japanese popular culture and fashion. Finally, I also aimed at introducing an area of study that could further clarify the understanding of the construction of positive exotic foreign cultures and its ties with coolness. As it was previously mentioned in the Introduction, I approached Cool Japan considering that there were two entrance paths to the object of study, the one through the study of Cool, and the one through the study of Japan. In this chapter I have first assessed the current state of both areas, studies about Cool, and studies about Japan, as seen through the Cool Japan glass, and drew points in common within both spheres of literature. Later, I have introduced the place of Japanese urban fashion, and the Mexican scene, as well as the role they can play in the understanding of Cool Japan's diffusion. Finally, I suggested the study of the appropriation of Mexican culture in Japan as a way to ground the analysis of the Mexican case in accordance with the

objective of considering the application of the lessons learned about Japan's cooling national cultural identity.

3.2. Cool Studies.

Cool is a dynamic concept that involves audiences and production circuits that at certain stages collide, and in others negotiate and collaborate (Frank, 2006: 6,7). For example, cool has been at times described as an anti-system attitude that is "in love with cigarettes, booze and drugs" (Pountain & Robins, 2000; 13), and in others as a co-opted commercial tool to promote products under the fantasy of rebellion and liberation (Frank, 2006; 4). Based on these two extremes, I have identified two tendencies within the plethora of literature that have taken cool as their object of study. I acknowledged that these two branches of approaches do not exhaust the rich theoretical scope of the reviewed studies, thus they have been proposed and used as a reference of the two poles in tension and negotiation that exist in the field of study. Thus, the scenario of studies about coolness was explained following two seemingly opposed axes as a guideline: the elusive and subversive cool, and the commercial reproducible cool.

3.2.1. The elusive, subversive cool

The first trend in literature that here explained is the one dominated by historical and cultural studies that tend to portray cool as subversive, and elusive. The studies included in this first typology had three main tendencies in common; they often explained the African origins of cool, emphasize its rebellious nature, and its

challenging elusive definition. This way, cool has been approached as a foreign, counter-cultural, and multi-shape phenomenon.

In the previous section, part of the historical background of cool was explained consulting literature that fell under this category. Whether the books focus was explicitly coolness within black communities (Majors & Bilson, 1993), or looked at other circuits (Frank, 1997; Pountain & Robins, 2000) the recontextualization of cool that resulted from appropriation appeared as a foundational part in its narrative. For instance, the widely quoted study of political analyst and historian Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*, touched on the subject when he mentioned Norman Mailer's essay *The White Negro*. For Frank, Mailer's vision about the "American existentialist" with a taste for jazz, and "the slang and mores of black society" constituted the "most important contribution to the mass society literature", and portrayed hip's detachment, rebelliousness and hedonism as the perceived solutions for the time's conformism (Frank, 1997: 12).

Another often-quoted study in studies about cool was sociologist Janet Mancini Billson and psychologist Richard Billson's book *Cool Pose: The Dilemma of Black Manhood in America.* Their study went in depth on contemporary applications African-American manifestations of cool. The authors claimed that for many African-American males, life was a constant performance that requires to build an impressive persona. They needed to build an identity that was expressed in urban settings through physical elements that are similar to those of the African case; walk, clothes, and hairdo (Majors and Billson, 1993: 4). They defined cool the following way:

> As a performance, cool pose is designed to render the black male visible and to empower him; it eases the worry and pain of blocked opportunities. Being

> cool is an ego booster for black males comparable to the kind white males more easily find through attending good schools, landing prestigious jobs, and bringing home decent wages. (Majors & Billson, 1993; 5)

This way, I started glancing at one of the most common features of cool according to this branch of literature; the tendency to highlight its oppositional nature. Cool is seen as incubated within oppressed and/or marginalized communities, such as the black community, who have had to cope and resist a hostile environment (Majors & Billson, 1993: 9). In *Cool Pose…*, cool again appears as a mask, but in a contemporary urban environment worked as a safeguard to protect black communities from a dominant society that puts them in a position of social stress (Majors & Billson, 1993: 11).

Finally, another research that delved into the different forms of cool, including those manifested within the black community is Dick Pountain and David Robins' *Cool Rules: Anatomy of an Attitude*. The authors went deep in the elements that composed contemporary cool, and not only dedicated a whole chapter on its African origins (Pountain & Robins, 2000: 39), but dived in the details of the history and historiography of the concept as I know it today. The objective of said research was to observe the phenomenon of cool as a whole, and establish it as a cultural category (Pountain & Robins, 2000: 11). This way, one of the contributions of this book was a comprehensive history of the term from its aforementioned African origins to its contemporary co-optation, considering many subcultures that transformed it in between.

The history of how cool emanated from Africa got intertwined as well with the social and cultural struggles that black communities have had to face. From colonial slavery to contemporary forms of discrimination, as it was pointed out in the

historical background, the history of cool laid out also a history of resistance. The three studies previously mentioned also alluded to the process of co-opting and manipulating said resistance, with different nuances regarding what that entails for coolness.

For instance, one of Thomas Frank's big contributions was the deep analysis on the "countercultural myths", which are binary notions of "counterculture as the life-affirming opponent of mass society" (Frank, 1997: 14) that presupposed a tension between subcultures and commercial corporations. Frank shifted the focus from the consumers, and the grassroots movements, to the businesses in a critical manner through the hip American movement of the 60's. He portrayed businesses not as the square system that subcultures rebelled against, but as a dynamic sector that welcomed subversion and underwent its own revolution (Frank, 1997: 9). In this sense, Thomas Frank acknowledged co-optation as part of the process of cool, and dismantled the negative portraiture that stemmed from the optimistic visions that "greeted the youth rebellion" (Frank, 1997: 13) in hopes of pushing the boundaries of culture and enhancing the power of the consumers.

The general vision of cool of Pountain and Robins' study recognized Frank's vision regarding the complicit relationship between the counter-culture and the system. The two authors stated that cool provided a psychological structure that conciliated a "long-standing contradiction in Western societies"; the need for work and desire to play (Pountain & Robins, 2000). However, they also suggested that cool's subversive power was getting diluted as it became the attitude for the majority of the young population. For them, cool drove a selective form of consumption that offered a "handle by which Cool advertisers can steer the consumer in the desired direction" (Pountain & Robins, 2000).

On that subject, cultural analyst Jim McGuigan (2006) identified this same tendency of subversion to gravitate towards consumerism within the area of cultural studies, which directly affected the historiography of studies on cool. His assessment of contemporary Cultural Studies described an academic circle that was once subversive, but then shifted drastically to the degree of diluting its critical approaches to a mere reflection of the times (McGuigan, 2006: 154,155).

This way, the tendency to mention subversion as a constituent factor for cool within this typology of literature also gave queue to the discussion of its co-optation or appropriation. These studies built a chain of analysis where the African origins of cool are mentioned, then its performance as a coping method of resistance, and finally its appropriation by different cultural circuits.

Another characteristic of cool that appeared in these studies was its elusiveness. According to this vision, given cool's constant appropriation and re-shaping, it becomes difficult to fully grasp. At the very start of Pountain and Robins' book, they acknowledged that cool was something that was recognized once you hads it in front, and that inhabited temporarily certain cultural artifacts (Pountain & Robins, 2000: 18). Cool was not inherent to objects, but it rather existed in people's attitude towards them (Pountain & Robins, 2000: 18). To build on their ideas surrounding cool, they provided a definition of cool and used to build up on in later chapters:

> Cool is an oppositional attitude adopted by individuals or small groups to express defiance to authority –whether that of the parent, the teacher, the police, the boss or the prison warden. Put more succinctly, I see Cool as a *permanent* state of *private* rebellion. (Pountain & Robins, 2000: 19)

Throughout the book, the authors focus on the analysis on how it gets transformed, and becomes complex and rich, as it is manifested through different entities, be it people, communities or companies.

Another author that supported this view of cool was Malcom Gladwell. In his text written for The New Yorker, *The Coolhunt* (1997), he followed two coolhunters who introduce him to his activities of chasing down the newest trends and connecting them to interested businesses. The author said that their kind of research for the most innovative tendencies works like diffusion research. That is to say, they studied how novel ideas, innovations, are adopted first by the cutting-edge innovators, then by early adopters, and later follow a cycle where companies can get involved. Based on what he learned through this experience, he laid three rules of cool:

1. The quicker the chase, the quicker the flight. He described cool as a cycle that keeps on moving due to the fact that cool is chased.

2. It cannot be manufactured. It can only be observed, and maybe accelerated in its adoption, but not created from scratch.

3. It takes one to know one. You have to be cool to know what cool is.

It was the third rule that aligned with the tendency to see cool as an almost ethereal entity that escapes bindings, including that of static definitions. But, the other two rules also deserved mentioning, since they asserted the unattainable level of cool by presenting it like a kind of energy that cannot be created, only observed and chased after. This idea of the chase is what gives life to the coolhunting activity and studies on it.

Coolhunting is the activity where cool gets discovered by people who, according to Gladwell's account, are also cool and have the vision to record it,

observe it, and sell it to businesses interested in incorporating the newest and the most cutting-edge trends. The key to coolhunting, Gladwell said, was to find cool people first, and cool things later (Gladwell, 1997), which echoed with what Pountain and Robins state regarding cool as an attitude enacted by people, not by objects. In other words, coolhunting is the area where cool inspires (Kerner & Pressman, 2009), and communicates innovations from one community to another in several levels (Gloor & Cooper, 2007). This way, coolhunting is an activity that feeds cool's movement, its ethereal nature, but does so with consumption and co-optation in mind. Coolhunters take the first steps towards recording and quantifying cool, which is the labor of the second typology of literature about cool.

3.2.2. The reproductive, checklist cool

The second typology of tendencies in cool studies literature portrayed a cool that could be created, and /or manipulated, once it was recognized through a series of conditions lined up in a kind of checklist. These studies tended to have a pragmatic vision of cool directed towards a commercial objective. Given the profitability that cool could entail when correctly molded, this kind of studies tended to look for ways to measure it, and operationalize its elements, thus most of these approaches are quantitative.

The research done by media studies scholar S. Shyam Sundar and computer scientists Daniel J. Tamul and Mu Wu (2014) is a good place to start explaining this typology not only because it serves as a transition from the previous one through the initial consideration of cool as mobile, but also because of the inclusion of counter-culture/subculture as one of its constituent elements to test. Sundar et al. called these elements 'factors', and their aim was to unveil the factor structure of coolness in order

to help interface designers create cool user experiences. Their object of study was still coolness, but, in comparison with the first typology, their priorities have shifted; from analyzing the social effects or manifestations of cool, to putting it under a magnifying glass, seeing through it and dissecting its components. Also, they turned their attention from cool people, to cool objects. Specifically, pieces of technology. They tacitly stated that cool can indeed inhere in artifacts themselves. After their experiments, they concluded that coolness was built through the factors of subculture, attractiveness, and originality.

Another research that holds several parallelisms with that of Sundar, Tamul, and Wu. was done by Carol Farnsworth, Karen Holtzblatt, Theo Held, and Shantuai Pai (2014). They also integrated subculture as a dimension of cool, as well as attractiveness, uniqueness and genuineness. Their aim was to build a methodology to measure factors of coolness that could point out areas that needed to be improved during testing phases of technologic items. The specific factors that had to be measured according to their surveys were seven: accomplishment, connection 1, connection 2, identity, sensation, hassle factor, learning delta.

The aforementioned couple of quantitative studies revealed an intention of building, or refining technology into becoming cool, and they did so with the participation of consumers. The paper *Constructing the Cool Wall: A Tool to Explore Teen Meanings of Cool* (Fitton et al., 2012) followed said approach, adopting the Participatory Design practice as underlying principle for its surveys. The authors described this activity as a way to engage the end users in the discussion of the technologies they would be eventually offered (Fitton et al., 2012: 142). However, before they went into their own approach to find the essential categories or factors of cool, they organized their understanding of cool by mapping three hierarchical levels: Being Cool, Doing Cool Things, Having Cool Stuff. This triangle of cool gave the

concept further depth by naming some of the layers involved in its formation, opening the possibility for their components of cool (rebellious, antisocial, retro, authentic, rich or high value, innovative) to be different in each one of these levels. For example, the factors of rebellion, anti-social, and innovativeness were hypothesized as associated with "being cool", whereas retro, authentic, and high value with "having cool things" (Fitton et al., 2012: 145). Keeping this in mind, they choose to focus on the latter, the bottom layer of the triangle, in order to develop an explorative tool of cool. Their aim was to create what they call "the cool wall", a visual interactive interface where users, teenagers, can rank elements in 4 levels; serious uncool, uncool, cool, subzero.

Marketing and business scholars Caleb Warren and Margaret C. Campbell (2014) led another research that helps in giving depth to cool characteristics or levels. In their study, the detailed element was the subversion, rebelliousness, or subculture, here named autonomy. However, Warren and Campbell stated that it was not just any kind of autonomy, and that it followed certain conditions. After surveys and experiments they concluded that cool was different from being good because of autonomy, an appropriate or bounded kind of autonomy. They explained this appropriate divergence the following manner:

> In order to understand when autonomy will seem appropriate and, hence, increase coolness, there are four important considerations: 1) whether the brand diverges from a descriptive or an injunctive norm, 2) the perceived legitimacy of the injunctive norm from which the brand diverges, 3) the extent to which a brand diverges from injunctive and descriptive norms, and 4) the extent to which the observer or audience values autonomy (2014: 546).

This way, autonomy was seen as a trigger of cool when it defied a norm perceived as illegitimate, but in a bounded way, and was moderated by the countercultural tendencies of each consumer. Warren and Campbell based their experiments on perceptions of products or brands, following the trend of seeing cool as an asset for business. However, they concluded their paper by acknowledging that the role of cool within brand and product development was complex for various reasons such as the dilution of coolness due to widespread adoption, or the difficulty to appeal to everybody because of the variance of countercultural leanings of each consumer.

Up to this point, I have pointed out the existence of two typologies of literature about cool based on their tendencies. Both categories of scholarship, even though they have their differences, they communicate with each other through bridges like coolhunting, or through overlaps on theoretical frameworks. For instance, Sundar, Tamul, and Wu's (2014) study on cool where, before proceeding to measure cool, they agreed with Gladwell and Pountain and Robins, when they departed from acknowledging cool's constantly changing nature. Furthermore, they reached a consensus with Pountain and Robins when they stated that coolness as a concept was stable, but the perception of it in a given object was not (Sundar, et al., 2014: 170). Also, Fitton et al.'s proposed method to understand the elements of cool looks at the aforementioned literature and drew similar conclusions that highlight cool's rebelliousness, and illicitness (Fitton et al., 2012: 144).

The next step is to find the tendencies in the literature regarding Cool Japan, and its connecting points with visions about coolness itself.

3.2. Cool Japan Studies.

After having covered the cool part of Cool Japan, I have also assessed the current understanding of Japan in the light of coolness. Just like in the case of the definition of cool, Cool Japan is a deep and multidimensional object of study, that has been approached from different angles. Within this variety of points of view, I noticed that these approaches also followed similar tendencies as the ones mentioned in the two typologies of studies of cool; the elusive, and the quantifiable. Therefore, in a similar manner, I offered two categories as a guideline to discover the general characteristics of the literature of Cool Japan and the places where the two overlap and/or complement each other.

Following the explanation of the two typologies, I went into the details of literature regarding this dissertation's case studies: Japanese urban fashion and its presence in Latin America. First, I located the study of Japanese urban fashion, or Harajuku subcultures, as related to research about Cool Japan. Given that there are few examples of research inside this scope, I traced the bridges that link Japanese fashion to aspects of Cool Japan, bringing attention to *kawaii* and appropriation as two of the most solidly built ones.

3.3.1. The elusive Cool Japan

Regarding investigations that inquired Japan's coolness, the tendency to see it as abstract or elusive also arose. Compared to the first typology of tendencies within cool studies, this line of research on Cool Japan addressed the reasons behind its coolness in a more direct fashion. For instance, in the case of cool, some studies left the definition of the term itself on a second plane, and rather focused on its

manifestations, or affections (Pountain & Robins, 2000). In the case of Cool Japan, authors have explicitly weighed in on the direct reasons why they conclude that Japan's coolness stemmed from. However, the studies frequently turned into descriptions of Japanese uniqueness, which in turn carried notions of unique Japanese features that elude the non-Japanese. Therefore, analysis of Japanese coolness at times became descriptions of Japanese cool products or manifestations as well; treating Japan's coolness as an ostensive definition. In this sense, Japan's cool followed the tendency of assuming that cool could only be recognized once it was in front of us.

An example of said discourses departed from the assumption that Japan was postmodern. Japan has been described as a postmodern culture (Azuma, 2009; Mouri, 2007), but it is only recently that said characteristic has been equated to its attractiveness, and, furthermore, its coolness (Abel, 2011; Kono, 2009; LaMarre, 2006; McGray, 2002; Allison, 2006). For example, Douglas McGray said that Japan was postmodern, due to its particular mix of tradition with modernity, and local with foreign, before postmodernism was trendy (McGray, 2002: 48). However, the definition of Japan's coolness explained in McGray's view remained elusive due to mainly two reasons. On the one hand, emulating cool with postmodern only transfered the question 'why is Japan cool?' to 'why is the postmodern cool?'. On the other, this reasoning derived from the supposition that Japan was inherently postmodern, and as such, it is also inherently cool. The distance between Japan and those who wanted to approach it and its coolness became further enhanced in McGray's text as he stated that there was "a Japan for the Japanese, and a Japan for the rest of the world", and that its coolness was unmeasurable and impenetrable (McGray, 2002). However, he went on to give examples of products, brands or traditions that are cool from Japan, and that have spread throughout the world nonetheless.

Following this same assumption, the contemporary artist Murakami Takashi has promoted Japanese artists and designers overseas through his art project *Super Flat*. He has not aligned himself explicitly with Cool Japan, if anything, he has shown himself critical towards it (Sasaki, 2012). However, as Professor Mouri Yoshitaka (2007) pointed out, the multimedia artist has reproduced, visually and theoretically, concepts of Japan that are under the umbrella of Cool Japan. Murakami overtly stated that Japan was futurist in his Super Flat Manifesto when he says that "the world of the future might be like Japan is today –super flat". He described super flatness as an original "sensibility" that has contributed to the construction of Japanese culture and its mixture of past, present and future (Murakami, 2000: 5). This way, Murakami Takashi portrayed Japanese culture as intrinsically futuristic and postmodern in similar terms as those from Douglas McGray, hence supporting an Orientalist stereotype. He followed also McGray's treatment of Japanese cool as an ostensive definition and applied it to Super Flat by giving examples of artworks, artists and designers who are manifest super flatness, after drawing a distance between those who possessed the Super Flat sensibility (i.e. the Japanese) and those who did not.

Another study that brought up Japan's postmodernity and pointed out Cool Japan's blurry outlines was done by Jonathan E. Abel (2011). In his study about Cool Japan, Abel quoted philosopher Azuma Hiroki when he explained the idea of a postmodern society, (i.e. the Japanese society) that was not able to build meaning, and, as a result, created cultural products that were incomprehensible (Abel, 2011: 64). Abel related these unintelligible products to cool the following way:

> (…) one feels they (cultural products) are interesting without concretely being able to understand them. So precisely because they are not known or understood they can be considered cool. (Abel, 2011: 64)

In other words, Abel located Cool Japan's coolness in unknown and distorted areas of (non-)understanding Japanese cultural products, leading to a contemporary exoticism (Abel, 2011: 63) in a similar fashion as Murakami Takashi did.

Allison and Cross's (2006) book about Japanese toys and play also converged with this route of approach. They accepted Japan as postmodern too, but they did not directly regard this as the reason for its coolness. For them, what made Japan distinctive, and cool, was its coping methods to post-war conditions (i.e. the loss of a symbolic fatherly figure that led to the construction of the fantasy of destruction and rebirth), and its particular modes of consumption and entertainment (i.e. an animist sensitivity towards goods). While they did not make Cool Japan their main object of study, their book touched on the subject since it was centered around games, one of the most prominent creative industries under the Cool Japan umbrella. Their analysis of Japanese products and consumption dynamics was theoretically rich and delved into how Japanese culture has penetrated not only overseas markets, but also everyday lives. However, the explanation of Japanese particularities seemed to fall in a circle when they asserted that Japanese coolness was due to their unique history and singular animist aesthetic and consumption. In other words, Japanese coolness emanated from Japan's uniqueness.

Something similar was expressed in the late cultural promoter Takamasa Sakurai's story about exploring European and Asian conventions on Japanese popular culture. Instead of cool, he explains Japan's perceived *kawaiiness*. In this case, even if *kawaii* is a concept that has a theoretical complexity in its own right, it holds close ties with Cool Japan as a national branding campaign. For instance, Sakurai co-founded the *Kawaii* ambassador program in 2009, and since then it has been part of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry's (METI) Cool Japan strategy to promote Japanese culture (METI, 2010: 22; METI, 2011: 6). The project was born

shortly after his research trips outside Japan to investigate the diffusion of Japanese popular culture. In the book *Sekai Kawaii Kakumei –Naze Kanojotachi ha Nihonjin ni Naritai to Sakebunoka* [*The world's kawaii revolution: why are girls screaming "I want to become Japanese"]* Sakurai recollected his experiences overseas and told his impressions about going around conventions in Paris, Italy, Spain and Thailand, asking attendees why they felt so attracted by Japanese popular culture, particularly by fashion. He started wondering about Japanese coolness, and confessed that he still felt surprised when hearing in media that Japan was cool (Sakurai, T., 2009) One of the girls he interviewed was the French singer Solita, when he asked her what she thinks is *kawaii*, she repliesd

> For example, Hello Kitty is *kawaii*, but you cannot the same about Snoopy. There is a Tokyoish value embedded in the word *kawaii*. (For the text in Japanese, refer to Appendix C)（Sakurai, T., 2009)

This way, he concluded that the word *kawaii* had the nuance of having something similar to a Japan or "Tokyo flavor", even if the product itself was not made in Japan (Sakurai, T., 2009). Also, he brought forward the prominence of *kawaii* as an amalgam for contemporary Japanese visuality and materiality. The topic of *kawaii* has been developed further in the next section, but here I have mentioned it to highlight the cycle of elusiveness expressed in the idea that Japan was *kawaii*, and that it was *kawaii* because it looked like Japan.

To resume, Japan's coolness was explained in a cycle where Japan is cool because it was postmodern, and it was postmodern because of some traits that happen to be uniquely Japanese, like its post-war history. Literature that followed these tendencies explained Japan's coolness as a result of certain unique aspects of its culture or its history, that will never be grasped by the non-Japanese. In this case, just

like with literature that saw cool as ungraspable, it is assumed that coolness is inherent to certain people or attitudes that temporarily transfer coolness to certain objects (Pountain & Robins, 2000; Gladwell, 1997). Under this light, Japan's mysterious postmodern uniqueness granted coolness to its products, but it was so unique that it became difficult to grasp, therefore the only way to explain it was through making a list of products where cool was currently inhabiting.

3.3.2. The reproducible Cool Japan

On the other hand, there were also quantitative studies that approached Cool Japan within academia (Miura, 2013, Aizawa, 2013, Tanaka, 2009). Furthermore, almost at the same time that Cool Japan was being developed theoretically, it was also being enacted materially in the form of institutional efforts to replicate and bolster projects of Japanese popular culture that had been successful overseas; like the NHK's TV show Cool Japan (Kōkami, 2015), or the creation of the Cool Japan Fund. That is to say, this kind of exploration of Cool Japan was based on the premise that Japan's cool could be fabricated or manipulated, for commercialization. Literature with this framework is the second typology here to be presented.

Before delving into the details of the second typology of studies, it is necessary to mention that, just like with the previous typologies of cool literature, there were studies that became overlapping areas between approaches. For instance, there existed a tendency on building catalogues of Cool Japan elements. They combined the characteristics of both typologies in that they assumed Japan as inherently cool, and focused on enumerating what or who is cool in Japan, creating a checklist of examples of projects that should be reinforced commercially. The juxtaposition allowed for one piece of literature to also be an area of overlapping of

the two frameworks, the one about the elusive Japanese cool and the other that described a coolness that could be reproduced and controlled.

That trend could be seen from the very beginning with the text that triggered the talks about Japan's coolness, *Japan's Gross National Cool*, by Douglas McGray (2002). Just as it was mentioned in the beginning, McGray did mention why he believed Japan was cool (McGray, 2002: 48), but he developed his idea mainly by listing examples of creative industries and celebrities. This way, a discourse that departed from the idea that Japan's unique coolness was elusive to the point that a list of examples becomes necessary, it could transition into a list of products and industries that could be monetized. In the case of McGray's text, he listed markets and products that had been widely adopted outside of Japan, from Pokémon, to Issey Miyake, including sumo wrestlers, and Hello Kitty in the middle.

Another point of fusion between typologies is the aforementioned work by Takamasa Sakurai, *Sekai kawaii kakumei –naze kanojotachi ha nihonjin ni naritai to sakebunoka* [*The world's* kawaii *revolution: why are girls screaming "I want to become Japanese*"]. In this section this study is mentioned it in the light of Sakurai's qualitative exploration of the state of Japanese popular culture outside of Japan and how he did so in a way that hints at a potential market that could be exploited in a manner that could benefit different Japanese creative industries (Sakurai, T., 2009). He himself did not operationalize his findings, but provided some strategies to follow based on his interviews in order to hop on the strong organic wave of *kawaii* and try to take control of it and amplify it commercially.

The second typology is conformed by qualitative, and (mostly) quantitative studies that survey the characteristics of Japanese creative industries or products that could provide business opportunities and enhance national branding. An example of a

quantitative study about Cool Japan is *Inobēshon Fukyū Riron Kara Miru Hokubei no Kūru Japan Genshō* [*Diffusion of Innovation and Cool Japan Phenomena in North America*] (Aizawa, 2013). In this paper, the researcher interviewed and surveyed attendees of ConnectiCon, a comic convention, with the objective of exploring the current image of Japan in United States of America (USA). The author focused on *anime* and *manga*, and revealed that the reasons why fans from the USA read *manga* was due to: interesting contents, great visuals, interesting topics, empathy with the main characters, high quality of edition, and interesting frames.

Another quantitative approach was done by Ema Tanaka (2009), where the diversity of media mix was explained as an asset for the expansion of Japanese visual contents, like *anime*. The author argued that the Japanese structure of separated horizontal collaboration of diverse companies enabled diversity, and, with the advent of broadcasting systems, the widening of *anime* distribution. Tanaka's and Aizawa's studies focused on case studies, both related to *anime*, with the objective of analyzing the conditions that have led to the popularity or success of this creative industry. While they did not directly propose any commercialization, they depart from a notion that Japan's coolness can be not only explained, but measured.

Regarding studying the market potential of Cool Japan, public-private organizations, such as JETRO (2005) and the Cool Japan Fund (Nagata, 2013) have played an active role examining Japanese creative projects with market potential. However, Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) has taken the lead in terms of institutional efforts. The Japanese government has been surveying the phenomenon since the government of Prime Minister Koizumi (2001-2006). During his period, several institutions related to the promotion of Japanese creative industries were created, such as the Head Office for Intellectual Property Strategy, the Committee for Tourism Nation, the Research Committee for Content Business,

among others (Iwabuchi, 2015). The actual usage of the English-language concept 'Cool Japan' on creative industry-related programs started appearing in Japanese government branding strategies in 2004 (Cabinet Office, 2004a) although at times it would also appear with alternative names such as 'Japan Cool' or '*Kakkoii Nihon*' (Cabinet Office, 2004a; Cabinet Office, 2004b). On 2012 Cool Japan took an important turn since it became one of the tools that the Japanese institutions had at hand to help reinvigorate Japanese industries after the earthquake, and restore Japan's brand overseas (METI, 2012). Nowadays, in the institution's official website, the Study Group meetings regarding Cool Japan can be found from 2010 to 2012 (METI).

After the triple disaster in Fukushima, tourism and academic exchange programs got affected (Mohn, 2011), thus the efforts to clean Japan's image worldwide strengthened the need for Cool Japan's success. After 2011, the METI (METI, 2012b) acknowledged such a need, and addressed the issue by stating that with a clear understanding of the country's current situation, the power of Japanese creativity could be directed towards enhancing the image of Japan (METI, 2012b: 4).

Throughout the years, the scope of Cool Japan has been changing within these organizations. Nowadays, according to the latest plan published on May 2017 (METI, 2017), Cool Japan as strategy to promote Japanese culture covers creative industries under five categories: contents, fashion, food and drinks, services, and local produce. In spite how varied the extent of Cool Japan is, the aforementioned qualitative and quantitative studies have privileged the area of contents; the creative industries like *anime, manga,* and videogames. The other four categories have remained in a second plane, being Japanese fashion one of them.

3.3.3. Harajuku fashion subcultures and Cool Japan

In contrast with the number of studies focused on *anime*, *manga* and videogames, the number of studies about Japanese fashion is reduced. Even more so are the of academic approaches to Japanese fashion under the phenomenon of Cool Japan. But, before analyzing the relevant literature, it is important to first make clear that fashion is diverse in the same way that the category of contents comprises different industries. The institutional umbrella of Cool Japan gathers different brands, with changing markets, and varied target audiences. For example, the METI supports both high-end events like Tokyo Fashion Week with the support of the Japan Fashion Week Organization (METI, 2013), and urban fashion foreign events like Harajuku Street Style in Singapore (METI, 2012a).

The focus of this dissertation is on the latter sector of fashion, urban Harajuku subcultures. In the introduction to this chapter, it was mentioned that the reason for choosing this particular sector was due to its potential to shed light on under-researched areas of Cool Japan. However, it was also due to its entanglement with the widely researched subject of *otaku* culture (LaMarre, 2009) of *anime* and *manga*, what made it a helpful case study. The spaces in common that Harajuku subcultures have with the *otaku* subculture provide a vast array of theoretical and methodological references. For instance, the intertwinement of the *otaku* and the Harajuku subcultures was evidenced in the previously mentioned exploration of Japanese popular culture diffusion overseas by Takamasa Sakurai. He stumbled upon the phenomenon of the adoption of Harajuku urban fashion when he realized that in a comic convention the Harajuku communities share spaces with the *otaku cosplayers*. His impression was that *anime* and fashion were agglutinated in the Paris' event, bringing Tokyo's Harajuku and Akihabara together (Sakurai, T., 2009: 17,18).

Sakurai's text also served as an introduction to the main role that *kawaii* has on the stage of Cool Japan, and Japanese urban fashion. *Kawaii* is a concept that recurrently appears in studies about Japanese popular culture, especially when it comes to describing femininity in the light of this cultural phenomenon. Therefore, it is necessary to take a general look at the relationship that has been cultivated between *kawaii*, and Japanese fashion within Cool Japan. I acknowledged the depth that *kawaii* has as an object of study, therefore the literature here mentioned only covered the scope framed within its relationship with Japanese urban fashion and/or Japanese cool.

Japanese Studies scholar Laura Miller (2011) also took Sakurai's ideas as a starting point. She offered a critical view of Sakurai's project of *kawaii* ambassadors and explained its impact in the manipulation of women's bodies within Cool Japan. She saw that the portraiture of Japanese women was done to represent lost femininities, and imagined pure innocent women that were a product of the males' desires (Miller, 2011: 27). She pointed out that Cool Japan, and its *otaku* ethos sanitized and hid the prevailing sexism in Japanese popular culture promotion.

Delving deeper into the *kawaii* territory, there were also other female authors who have explored the link between *kawaiiness* and Harajuku urban subcultures. On the other side of the spectrum of the discussion about gender, lied the approach to *kawaii* as a means of empowerment. Amelia Groom (2011) stated that *kawaii* could subvert sexist values where "cuteness ignores or outright contradicts Japan's male productivist ideology of standardisation, order, control, rationality and impersonality" (Groom, 2011: 205).

Standing in the middle of the argument about whether *kawaii* was empowering or not, Japanese visual culture specialist Sharon Kinsella (1995) looked at the

historical development and growth of *kawaii* from handwriting, to abstract ideas. Her approach considered that there indeed existed a tendency for rebellion, but in a rather tamed way, where women rejected the oppression of the married life, but did so non-aggressively and with demure. Popular culture and fashion researcher Masafumi Monden (2015) supported this claim and dimensioned it under the view of gender relations where both men and women could perform *kawaii* through a sartorial "delicate revolt", blurring the lines between genders and at times subverting their social conventions.

Kawaii is controversial as it spawns a deep debate that gravitates around gender, power relations, and identity. Furthermore, it has also fallen in the area of elusiveness just the same way that cool has. In the anthropological publication about Japanese fashion subcultures by fashion scholar Yuniya Kawamura (2013), a fashion store owner was quoted saying that even the teen consumers did not know the meaning of *kawaii*, they just felt it and intuitively knew it at sight, thus the need to keep in direct contact with them to keep on producing *kawaii* clothes for them (Kawamura, 2013: 59).

A study that connected cool and *kawaii* in an explicit way was *The Cool-Kawaii: Afro-Japanese Aesthetics and New World Modernity*, by Thorsten Botz-Bornstein (2012). The German philosopher saw cool and *kawaii* as aesthetics that contributed to the construction of personal identity (Botz-Bornstein, 2012: xii), in an individualistic and apolitical manner since "no deep belief in anything seems to subsist" (Botz-Bornstein, 2012: xix). Also, both shared ten "first degree parallelisms" which are: control, as a way to control the performance; ethnicity, as "non-white" phenomena; subjective demands, as they cannot be objectively assessed; commercial, as ethics of consumer capitalism; attempts to soften, as attempts to relief violence and stress; search for security, as providers of a sense of security; narcissism, as devoted

to self-image; group identity, as social values that express group identity; elasticity, as aesthetics with a wide scope; and indirect empowerment, as empowerment through the decision to give up power (Botz-Bornstein, 2012: xxvi-xxviii).

But, the study of Japanese urban fashion subcultures did not revolve only around *kawaii*. Other studies about the topic have used of anthropological methods to explain the interactions, conditions and history of the subculture scene or of a particular community. In these cases, appropriation emerged as another core concept, at times tied to the exotization of Japanese culture, which, as I have explained, served as a strong foundation for the cooling of Japan and its produce. There have been approaches to appropriation that directed their attention to the duality between imaginaries of the West versus Japan (Kawamura, 2015; 21-28, Monden, 2015). Some Orientalist ideas (Monden, 2015) placed value on perceptions of difference and bear the danger of being simplistic, and of enforcing the idea of Japan looking up passively to the West. For example, the historical review that Kawamura used to explain the changes in fashion trends reproduced such a tendency. She explained that in the decade of 1950 and 1960 Japan would import "whatever trend was popular in the West" or "exact copies were reproduced locally" (Kawamura, 2013; 22). However, such transcultural exchanges tend to go in more than one direction, thus reflecting local interpretations (Monden, 2015; 16) that could enrich the understanding of both the culture appropriated and the one appropriating. This last point of view that acknowledged an active refashioning of trends and garments was explained in Masafumi Monden's *Japanese Fashion Subcultures: Dress and Gender in Contemporary Japan*. Monden took five case studies where the representation of contemporary Japanese sartorial styles challenged gender and cultural conventions. For instance, he explained that clothes were important for both men and women, and

that the case of reinterpretation of European styles in Japan reinvented tradition and created new meanings (Monden, 2015: 135).

Cultural flows could go different ways simultaneously, and just like Japan had appropriated and (re)interpreted foreign fashion trends, so had other countries offered their own views on Japanese urban fashion. Transnational studies scholar Iris-Aya Laemmerhit analyzes in her book *Embracing Differences: Transnational Cultural Flows between Japan and the United States* the infamous case of U.S. singer Gwen Stefani's exotization and objectification of Japanese women through her Orientalist portrayal of Harajuku girls. For her album titled *Love. Angel. Music. Baby*., Gwen Stefani rebranded herself taking inspiration from Tokyo's Harajuku fashion district and the fashion-forward thinking girls that used to dwell there (Matlow, 2007). However, she did so in a colonizing way where she would accessorize herself with four adult Asian women that followed her silently, and visually matched her outfits and presentations. Stefani's performances and aesthetic of the time reproduced the stereotype of an immature, childish Asian Other, as opposed to an active, mature Western Self (Laemmerhit, 2014: 12).

In the aforementioned studies the term Japanese urban fashion, or Japanese fashion subcultures were used in a relatively loose way, used to describe sartorial communities, tendencies or aesthetics that were originated mainly from Tokyo, and more specifically from the area of Shibuya and Harajuku. This has led to subcultures like the *lolitas* or *gyaru* to become representatives of the urban fashion scene in Japan, given the amount of studies that concentrate on them or take them as a case study (Monden, 2015; Hinton, 2013; Kawamura, 2013; Rahman, 2011; Mackie, 2009, Matsuura, 2007). Nonetheless, fashion subcultures in Japan also exist outside of Tokyo, and even away from metropolitan areas. As an example, when Yuniya Kawamura (2013) explained the dynamics of the iconic fashion mall Shibuya 109,

girls that came from the countryside played a role in maintaining trends, and sales alive after Tokyo girls diverged from them (Kawamura, 2013: 55). Also, Osaka had a scene of its own. Scholar Don Cameron (2000) focused on the creation of the image of a cool street as a symbolic space that sustained a circuit of perception of fashion authenticity that involved both the subcultures that inhabited the street and the street itself. He exemplified the case with *Amerikamura* [America Town], or *Amemura,* in Osaka, where he saw that fashion magazines had enabled the creation of an interdependence between the real-life space and the space represented, as well as the categorization of the people who stroll in them. This has led fashion consumers to become audiences and spectacle at the same time as they browse the street as if they were browsing a magazine. In his study he succinctly mentioned that Shibuya worked in a similar way (Cameron, 2000; 180), but given that his focus went towards the dynamics of the Osaka area, the comparison did not transcend further.

Nowadays, Japanese urban fashion as represented by the Harajuku subcultures has reached beyond Tokyo, beyond Osaka, becoming an international phenomenon. Even if some authors have touched on the topic (Kawamura, 2013; Hinton, 2013; Sakurai, T., 2009), few have made a detailed analysis on the adoption/appropriation of the Harajuku styles and the creation of local communities overseas. Takamasa Sakurai's narration of his experience exploring the European and Thai scenes started shedding some light on the current status of the Japanese urban fashion dissemination around the world and the possibilities it might hold for the creation of new markets. However, so far, specific local communities, their values, dynamics and systems have remained under-researched. Even in more general terms, the study of Cool Japan has had difficulties keeping the accelerated pace of the transcultural adoption and diffusion of its representative creative industries. Therefore, there are also geographical areas that are still to be covered by the academia, and as a result,

potential new interpretations about Cool Japan. The present dissertation stands in the convergence of two of these relatively obscured research areas: Harajuku urban subcultures in Latin America.

3.3.4. Cool Japan in Latin America

So far I have approached Cool Japan and its study in steps from the general to the particular to sort out the vast scope of literature. The first step was to take coolness as the entrance way, then to move towards the understanding of Japan through the Cool Japan literature, followed by the consideration of Harajuku fashion communities as a relatively under-researched, but visibly related area that could help shed light on new approaches to the object of study at hand. In the present section, the last step was taken: the analysis of a particular community of Harajuku fashion fans that developed in a geographical territory that has also fallen outside the spotlight of the Cool Japan academia. The chosen territory to explore is Latin America, and I have taken Mexico as a window to its current conditions. The reason behind this choice has already been explained in the Introduction, but it is important to keep in mind that, just as with the election of Harajuku urban fashion, I expect that this relatively relegated object of study can provide a new territory for inquiries about Cool Japan.

The phenomenon of Cool Japan reached Mexico indirectly, mainly due to the fact that so far, the distribution of Japanese popular culture has been mostly unofficial, and has fallen in the hands of the fandom itself (Hernández, 2012). However, the presence of Japanese popular culture and its impact on Latin American population is big and varied, albeit its relative invisibility as a research topic.

One of the few researchers that have explored the area is the Mexican researcher Álvaro Hernández Hernández. While he was still a PhD student at the University of Kobe, Hernández edited a self-published book (Hernández, 2012) in English about Japanese subcultures in Mexico, with the collaboration of Mexico-based anthropologists. The texts worked as a much needed introduction to the topic of local communities that have conformed a circuit of consumption, production, and diffusion of Japanese popular culture. However, as it was the case with the general studies about Cool Japan, the topics of the book revolved around the creative industries of manga, *anime*, and videogames, leaving fashion outside of its scope.

The same thing happened with other efforts from academics inside Mexico, like Mario Javier Bogarín Quintana who, with the aid of the Autonomous University of Baja California, published a book in Spanish about the aesthetic and sociocultural construction of the *otaku* community in Mexicali City, in Baja California, from a philosophical point of view (Bogarín, 2012).

The works of both authors have points in common. They both started to expose academically the local Mexican communities both inside (Hernández, 2012) and outside (Bogarín, 2012) the Mexican capital, gathered information regarding their history, and thus laid a fertile ground for further research. Also, as part of the trajectory of the communities reported, both researchers have pointed out the unofficial quality of the projects that have gathered and distributed Japanese popular culture, particularly those under the *otaku* category. It can be seen through the research of Hernández and Bogarín that the Mexican fandom has created offline and online spaces of interaction that further strengthen their bonds, and interests to the point that they have changed events, like comic conventions, according to their interests (Hernández, 2012; 252), and have founded businesses that eventually undertook the distribution of official media, like Arcade Media.

The phenomenon that Takamasa Sakurai observed in Europe where the Akihabara and Harajuku scenes would converge (Sakurai, T., 2009), also took place in Mexico. Nonetheless, as it is addressed further in the analysis, the Mexican fandom of Harajuku fashion subcultures defines itself as dissimilar from the *otaku* circle, and as a consequence started to create their own spaces. This search for areas dedicated to Japanese fashion and the development of an independent community fell outside the scope of Hernández and Bogarín's inquiries, therefore to trace back their activities it was necessary to look at either texts generated by the community itself, or other records about it in magazines or newspapers.

One of the first events to ever focus solely on urban fashion was the Hallyu Harajuku Fashion Show, hosted by the independent online radio station Tanoshi Radio. The first edition was held on 2011, in the context of the radio's anniversary celebration (Rick The Fox, 2011). Said fashion event, mixed Korean pop songs with runways and presentations of Harajuku subcultures. The venue, as it used to be the case with other events for and by the community, was a small rental space for miscellaneous social gatherings, the *Centro de Espectáculos Plaza* at the Colonia Tabacalera.

Something similar was happening online at the same time. The community of Mexican fans of Harajuku urban fashion founded and administered free discussion groups like My Lolita Style (1750 members), Visual Kei México (217 members) and Tea Party Mexico (524 members). My Lolita Style spawned what could be considered the strongest community given that, in spite of the abandonment of the forum itself, its main members moved to a blog and not only did they maintain their presence online, but diversified their activities. This Tijuana-based community of *lolitas* started organizing events that eventually became visible enough for *kawaii* ambassador Aoki Misako to attend (My Lolita Style, 2014; Aoki, 2013), and for one of the founders,

Daniela Michel García, to receive the same title on 2013 (Japan Lolita Association, 2013).

However, not only the community of *lolitas* started getting recognition from a Japanese institution. On 2014 the Mexican version of the Harajuku Fashion Walk, Mexijuku, took place, with the support of Dj Sisen, a member of the Tokyo underground fashion movement Tokyo Decadence. With the leadership of Mexican *visual kei* stylist Karla Hernández, the event gathered a variety of attendees; families, couples, groups of friends, anybody that would identify with a Japanese fashion subculture. The colorful group met at the *Monumento a la Revolución* [Monument to the Revolution] a Mexico City landmark, then crossed one of the main avenues in the city, Reforma, and finished at *Parque México*. As of March 2018, the event is still done every year, although with a different route, and recently expanded outside of Mexico City, creating a Mexijuku walk in Guadalajara, on August 20th, 2017.

On 2016 the community reached another high point of institutionalization when the Mexico-Japan Association housed a Harajuku-themed runway show during the *Natsu Matsuri*. With the endorsement of the Japanese Ambassador Yamada Akira (González, 2016), but fully organized by Expo Japan and the creative collective Milkshake (Millán, 2016), the fashion show featured local brands founded and managed by members of the Mexijuku community, with models that belonged to the same scene.

The development of the community from its beginnings with amateur projects, free online forums and small-venue runways, to the current events with the participation of Kawaii Ambassadors and Japanese representatives from the Embassy, has been registered mostly by independent media that have grown almost in parallel with the community. In recent years the increasing visibility of the activities of the

Mexijuku community has reached established local (Milenio, 2017) and international (Santos, 2016) media outlets that have covered their events. Mexijuku is living currently a moment of not only growth in terms of number of members, but also structurally, due to the support and recognition of Japanese institutions. This marks an important transition moment towards officialization and inclusion of a Latin American community in the Cool Japan campaign, as envisioned by the Japanese government.

3.4 Mexico in Japan

The main object of study is Cool Japan and the core development of its coolness. But, based on the understanding of the career of Cool Japan as both an organically, and artificially boosted phenomenon, I aim at applying the findings of this research to explore the possibility of comparing it and adapting it to Mexican culture. After analyzing the presence and the study of contemporary Japanese popular culture in Mexico, the focus of the present dissertation crossed the Pacific back to Japan, and concentrated on a case study of another local community of fans: the circuit of Japanese fans of Mexican arts and crafts. The objective of this turn is to assess the current state of the image of Mexico overseas through the presence of certain pieces of visual and material culture, and the motivations that drive people to adopt these representations of Mexican culture as part of their personal and commercial identities. Thus, in this section of the literature review, I examined the approaches to the understanding of Mexican visual and material culture in Japan as an object of study.

The community of Japanese who like Mexico seems to still be somewhat incipient, with events on its first editions and key figures on the process of rising to

positions of opinion leadership. Therefore, compared to the Mexijuku community there is less news coverage and no academic literature on the subject. However, they have also incurred in the creation of their own media on the subject of their fandom. For this reason, I have included in this literature review the books and blogs that have been produced by members of this community to take a look at their own views on the matter and track its history and antecedents.

The Japanese community of fans seemed to be chronologically parallel to Mexijuku. In the Introduction it was mentioned that the first Mexijuku-related forum seems to have been created in 2008. In the case of the Japanese community, although big Mexican events like the Fiesta Mexicana in Odaiba in Osaka and Tokyo have been around for 17 years now (Japan Times, 2000), it was only around 2006 that the community started forming as the women who would later become opinion leaders to their peers began their projects of diffusion of Mexican culture. Their efforts to engage with Mexican culture were at the same time personally recorded in their online blogs and books written in Japanese. One of the most known authors among the Japanese fandom is Yoko Sakurai, a Japanese artist who moved to Oaxaca, Mexico and started her own cultural project on 2005, Saruya, which supported local artisans and introduced Mexican culture to Japan. She started a blog with the same name on 2006, and since then has kept a diary of her experiences with Mexican craft producers at different towns in Oaxaca. Additionally, Saruya is still functioning as an online shop that offers hand made traditional Mexican items, mostly apparel, manufactured by the Mexican artisans. Finally, Sakurai published a book in 2014, *Arutesania ga* kawaii*: Mekishiko Oahaka he* [*Artesanía is* kawaii*: to Mexico and Oaxaca*]. Seven years earlier, Latin American Studies specialist Yuko Anderson published a book, about a very similar topic, crafts in Oaxaca (Anderson, 2007). Also in 2007, Anderson founded in Japan her online shop Trensa, where she sells

miscellaneous Mexican goods. Even though Sakurai is a very active member of the community and acts as one of the innovators who personally guides Japanese who are interested in visiting Oaxaca, most of the members have followed Anderson's model of business and interaction; visit Mexico, bring goods and resell them in Japan.

These two examples of publications regarding Mexican culture and its attractiveness served as documents that gave an insight to the community that has been forming in Japan. Both authors were women, which reflected the the fact that most of the fandom's members are female. Also, both authors went to Mexico for different reasons; Sakurai went to a resort in Cancun for vacations, and Anderson did an exchange at the *Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey* [Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education]. Both got deeply interested in Mexican culture after interacting with Mexican people and finding their crafts during their trips. Also, both publications focus on Oaxaca, which, as I have discussed in Chapter 8, was, and continues to be, one of the most prominent references of Mexicanness for the community. Furthermore, Sakurai and Anderson's publications and activities became the model for other Japanese fans to follow. As a result, the fandom largely replicated the authors' language, tastes and modes of diffusion, giving birth to similar Japan-based projects of promotion of Mexican culture.

Similar to the Mexijuku community, blogs have also served as tools for brands and initiatives to not only record their activities but also to promote them and to open channels of communication with other members and non-members. They also serve as independent media that register the happenings of the community. However, compared to Mexijuku, the Japanese fans of Mexican culture have not yet diversified their activities as much. That is to say, there are no independent radio stations, or online magazines dedicated to the appreciation of Mexican culture. Another contrast was that, even though the Japanese community that liked Mexico had a presence

online, they frequently interacted, and created new bonds offline. This reduced the amount of online media that could provide texts to consider for the present literature review. However, this does not implicate a lack of discourses about Mexico or a weakness in constructing an image of the Latin American country. These points have been addressed in Chapter 8.

3.5 Summary

Throughout this section two typologies of tendencies within literature have been raised in order to organize the plethora of approaches, and constant variables in both cool and Cool Japan. I suggested that the two typologies that were found in literature about cool had parallelisms with literature about Cool Japan. In other words, there was one typology that found cool and Cool Japan elusive and unmeasurable, and another that deemed it reproducible and measurable.

The first typology of studies treated cool and Cool Japan as ostensive definitions. Literature in this category offered rich cultural and historical analysis that were focused on the construction of theoretical and historical frameworks that ed at understanding the development of coolness and Cool Japan. They often incurred in the investigation of what was cool in general and what was cool in Japan and complement their inquiries by listing examples of cool media, cool people, cool products, cool attitudes, etc. However, these studies have left in a low priority the clarification of why these things cool, and specifically why was Japan cool. This way, cool was assumed as an inherent quality of characters, communities, or Japan, that was expected to be recognized at sight (Pountain & Robins, 2000; Gladwell 1997).

Contrastingly, the other typology of cool studies and Cool Japan had a more pragmatic and commercial point of view. This second classification was populated by quantitative and qualitative studies that sustained that it was possible not only to measure the characteristics of cool, but also to replicate them. This way, the researches under this category generated variables, or adapted previously explored concepts to variables in order to dissect the elements of cool, and later on provided a checklist for businesses to use.

It was also mentioned that even if these two typologies were apparently opposed to each other, they both shared points in common, they overlapped, and communicated with each other. Both cool and Cool Japan are cultural phenomena that involve the movement, the diffusion of products, attitudes, and messages. This was the point of departure of some shared characteristics among both tendency typologies.

As I have suggested so far, the literature on elusive cool, and the reproducible cool commonly highlighted subversion, or some versions of it, as a variable that catalyzed the perception of cool. It has been mentioned that cool found its place among subcultures (Sundar et al., 2014), it was scandalous, and oppositional (Pountain & Robins, 2000), antisocial (Fitton et al., 2012), and autonomous (Warren & Campbell, 2014).

Another variable in common was originality, also signaled as singularity (Sundar et al), innovation (Fanrsworth et al. 2014), or creativity (Majors & Bilson, 1993). This characteristic is particularly relevant to Cool Japan since it has been considered a reason why Japanese products are attractive (Sakurai, T., 2009; Allison, 2006: 10), and why Japanese arts are cutting edge (Favell, 2010). This vision can be found even outside of academia. In 2012 Adobe conducted a study around creativity

and revealed that was considered the most creative country in the world (Adobe, 2012).

Finally, the third and last commonality I wanted to point out in this section was the recognition of the stratification of cool, and the production circuits involved in its construction. Quantitative and qualitative studies in both typologies of literature described coolness based on layers of consumption and performance. From the simplest dichotomy of culture versus subculture, or mainstream versus underground, (Sundar et al., 2014) to more complex relationships with grey areas that make the distinction between "authentic counterculture and fake" more difficult (Frank, 1997: 8), cool is a stratified cultural category. Similarly, Cool Japan maintains the duality of East versus West, modern versus postmodern, thus also suggesting a set of varied circuits of production, consumption, interpretation, etc.

With this in mind, I have approached cool and its levels in a careful way, considering that even if there were tensions between poles, there were also areas of overlapping, negotiations, and dialogue between tendencies and between subcultures as active consumers, and corporations as responsive producers. Consequently, I approached Japan in a similar light as I tried to understand its coolness minding its layers and different definitions, without privileging one over another. In other words, I aimed at acknowledging Japan's coolness as a dynamic phenomenon that was organically fueled by subcultures as much as it was an institutionally and commercially boosted as well. Consequently, what became necessary from was to construct a theoretical framework that could allow the mapping of these different layers, their interpretations of Japan and coolness, and the role they play in the diffusion and adoption of Japanese popular culture.

Other form of mapping that was necessary was the assessment of the diverse Japanese creative industries as objects of study or case studies of researches about Cool Japan. In this literature review I suggested that the contents category of creative industries (*anime, manga* and videogames) has held the academic spotlight. The academic literature concerned with these topics frequently explained the consumption, diffusion and interpretation of Japanese material and visual culture by locating it within the *otaku* (sub)culture. One major drawback of this tendency was the limitation of theories and methodologies to talk about a cultural and commercial phenomenon with a scope wider than what the *otaku* circuit might dictate. The prominence of that creative sector was not a coincidence minding that the Ministry of Economy Trade and Industry has been actively targeting the European Union and the United States as the main markets for *anime, manga*, movies, music and games (METI, 2010c).

This focused targeting has also put several countries in Latin America outside the field of vision of METI's Cool Japan (METI, 2010c). Institutionally, the Japanese government has mostly overlooked Latin America and fashion, and academia has followed, thus perpetuating the obscurity of these areas that could provide equally rich objects of study. Another blind spot has been the search for concrete answers to 'why' cool happens in general and Japanese coolness in particular. A large corpus of the literature on cool and Cool Japan has also perpetuated the evasion of finding the reasons that gave origin to cool and Cool Japan (especially studies in the first typology). Therefore, that led me to believe that finding a careful and strategic point that subtly steps outside of the commonplaces of these frameworks, but acknowledges its rich contributions could help the exploration of more areas of Cool Japan and take a step towards finding some answers. I moved out of the usual tendencies by choosing as my object of study the creative industry of fashion as adopted by a community in a

Latin American country, Mexico. But, I kept ties with previous investigations since, as it was explained, fashion communities have shared spaces with the *otaku* ones, and still occupy an important place in the Cool Japan campaign in the hands of METI, and have had a growing activity albeit independent from official institutions.

The present dissertation also took into account studies about contemporary Japanese fashion. The reality is that these studies provided valuable insights about Japanese fashion history and its social and cultural components, but did not study its relationship with any layer of Cool Japan. Some authors have mentioned soft power and even talked about Cool Japan explicitly (Botz-Bornstein, 2012; Kawamura, 2013), albeit marginally, thus marking some routes that could be taken to understand Japanese fashion in the light of Cool Japan more profoundly.

Finally, one of the main objectives of this dissertation is to apply the knowledge about Cool Japan to assess the possibility of boosting a similar phenomenon for Mexican culture. I also aim at understanding the growing community of Japanese fans of Mexican culture to give insight into the concrete conditions that have already catalyzed the creation of a fandom that finds Mexico cool. Given that it is still under development, it has not figured as an object of study in the academia, nor as a point of interest for Mexican institutions. Therefore, the literature here discussed was composed not by studies about the discourses of the community but by the very materials that have boosted the creation of said discourses of about Mexico. This dissertation proposes these discourses of Mexicanness as an aid to the assessment of the current image of Mexico that has been deemed appealing, and at the same time propose it as an academic topic.

Chapter 4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Introduction

It has been mentioned in previous sections that the two main conceptual axes were cool and Japan's national cultural identity. This section has also taken these two objects of study as starting points to explain the theoretical framework that sustained my approach to Cool Japan throughout the present dissertation. However, I have also paid particular attention to the hypothesized overlap between the two concepts that was introduced during the historical background (Chapter 2), and used it to explain one of my main hypothesis regarding why Japan became cool. Also, I have also addressed the problems and questions laid so far in previous chapters, such as the questions about how is Japan performed nowadays, who performs it, and what (oppositional) meanings are being constructed. But, before entering those areas, I approached the need to construct a framework that could map the different layers of cool and Japan's contemporary national cultural identity of Cool Japan.

Regarding the aforementioned mapping, I discussed in the previous chapter the existence of two different typologies in cool, that are also mirrored to a certain degree in the studies about Cool Japan. The need to organize the tendencies of studies about cool and Cool Japan came from the plethora of research that has described both objects of study in ways that some times were conflictive but at others shared important characteristics. Therefore, I am going to look for the conducting threads that tie the different layers of coolness and Cool Japan, as well as the characteristics of each one of them. Thus, I started the organization of the theoretical framework

with a system to help with the localization of different spots of the wide spectrum of cool, and of Cool Japan.

Later, I focused on the dynamics that keep the system functioning. During Chapter 2, I mentioned that Japan's national cultural image comprises a negotiation of meanings between different spheres of power, enabled by the usage and reinterpretation of concepts like modernism. I concluded that in the 21st century, cool entered the scene of Japanese national cultural identity in the form of one of these tool concepts that would establish a common (battle)ground of conversations and power exertion between Japan and the West. I have defined in more detail this overlap between cool and Japanese national cultural identity in the present chapter by looking at how these negotiations of complicit exoticism shape coolness, and how coolness also continues to shape Japan's exoticism. If this process and its components are located and understood, it might be easier to look for the same or similar factors in Mexican culture in order to calibrate the possibility for a phenomenon like Cool Mexico to arise.

Finally, I touched on the particular concepts and theories related to my case study. Cool and Japanese national cultural identity also came together performatively through fashion. During the historical background (Chapter 2) I signaled the growing role of fashion when it came to representing identities in general and cool identities in particular. On the other hand, I also introduced in Chapter 3 the impact that studying Japanese urban fashion could have in opening more paths to understand Cool Japan. It is a creative industry that has had roles to play both for cool and for national cultural identities. Therefore, in this chapter I addressed the concepts of identity and representation as performed through fashion.

This way, the theoretical framework was organized in the following way. First, I first introduced the system that would help in the mapping of the different layers of cool and Cool Japan. I used as a basis the classification of adopters theorized by Everett M Rogers' diffusion of innovations theory (1983). In this section I explained the adaptations that needed to be done to Roger's categories and variables; for instance, the inclusion of appropriation and subversion, as well as the consideration of fandoms as innovators. After this, I delved into the analysis of complicit exoticism and cool, where I have inquired about the meanings of pairing Japanese national identity with a kind of exotic cool that has rendered Japan a bounded Other. To explain the concept of bounded Other I focused on cool's frequent component of subversion through Warren and Campbell's study about bounded autonomy (2014). Finally, I will explained the two main approaches under which I defined my object of study. On the one hand I approached it as a fandom, a community of interest that engages in cultural activities that often fall outside the official institutions. On the other, I will define it as a fashion community where identity is constructed based on sartorial tastes, thus giving meaning to their chosen looks.

4.2 Mapping cool and Cool Japan

4.2.1 diffusion of innovations theory

In this dissertation I am approaching cool as a layered cultural category. That is to say, I established it as a category of oppositional behaviors that dictate the creation of meanings (i.e. identity construction, community values, and motives for visual and material culture production and consumption) and physical and symbolical

performances. When I say that it is layered, I refer to the different strata that house cool through space and time. As I mentioned before in the literature review, there have been authors that have already hinted at the existence of layers of cool (Sundar, 2014), and their embedment in a cycle of recontextualization (Sundar et al., 2014; Pountain & Robins, 2000; Gladwell, 1997). Cool constantly moves from one decade to another, mutating as it also passes through the hands of different communities, and inhabits the rebellious and the commercial. During the literature review the activity of coolhunting was also addressed. I described it as the activity where cool gets discovered by people who are also cool and thus possess the ability to spot it. The objective of the coolhunters is to record, observe and sell knowledge about cool to those interested in incorporating the freshest trends. As elusive or ethereal cool might have seemed at times, these coolhunters do follow a methodology to spot these trends and the key actors that perform them. They follow the categories of adopters explained by Everett M. Rogers in his diffusion of innovation theory, and find cool in the first two circles of adoption: the innovators and the early adopters.

Diffusion of innovations theory, according to Everett M. Rogers, is the theory that explains the way new ideas are communicated and adopted while they interact and affect a social system (Rogers, 1893: 5). Its main elements are four: the innovation, communication channels, time, and social system. Rogers theory detailed each of this elements in different sub-classifications, and as such its scope was wide. For this dissertation I focused on the social system and the innovation itself. The reason behind this decision is two-fold. On the one hand, I followed the path of cool hunting to map the key performers of cool and also use the categories that Rogers applied to adopters in the social system. On the other hand, I believed that a focus on

the values within the social system could help clarify the values that compose cool and as a result frame it, and make it less elusive.

Rogers explained that the members of the social system were divided in 5 categories. They followed the sequence in which they adopted the innovation as its classification criteria, from the ones who created it or adopted it first, to the ones who adopted it last. The categories are: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards (Rogers, 1983: 248-265). Each group of adopters had its particularities (Table 1). Additionally, Rogers provided generalizations, where adopters in the early spectrum had more possibilities to have a higher education, literacy, and economical and social status (Rogers, 1983: 251). The author mentioned that these 5 categories were taken as ideal types, and as such, they were conceptualizations based on observations, designed to enable comparisons and make generalizations. That is to say, they were not absolute definitions that exhausted the possibilities of the social system. There was room for exceptions, so they should be used as a frame of reference (Rogers, 1983: 247-248).

Minding these stages of adoption, the diffusion of innovations theory laid out that the process of diffusion could be in two different ways: centralized or decentralized. In the first kind, the innovation emanated from a legitimate source, and got adopted within a system of vertical relationships. In the second one, the sources for the innovation could be diverse, and it got diffused across a horizontal connection system. Even though Rogers pointed out that both kinds of structures had different characteristics, he also acknowledged that their separation was not sharp or definite, due to the fact that a system of diffusion usually consisted of an alternation between both (Rogers, 1983, 336).

Adopter category	Characteristics
Innovators	• Adventurous. • Cosmopolites. • Good financial resources, enough to absorb a possible loss in the case of adopting a failed innovation. • Can handle high levels of uncertainty • Responsible to bring the Innovation within the borders of the diffusion system
Early Adopters	• More integrated to the system than innovators, thus they act as role models. • Localites. • Respected by their peers, they are the embodiment of a discreet and successful adoption of an innovation • Responsible of lowering the uncertaintly levels around the adoption of a new idea.
Early Majority	• Cautious. • Frequently interact with their peers, but rarely act as role models. • Longer period of wait before adopting an innovation. • Responsible for interconnecting the networks of the system.
Late Majority	• Skeptical. • Adopt ideas out of economical reasons, or peer pressure. • Relative low resources that demand for an almost complete removal of uncertainty around a new idea to guarantee its adoption
Laggards	• Traditionalist. • Almost non-existent opinion leadership. • Base their decisions on the past. • When they finally adopt a new idea, it is likely that there is already a newer one being generated by the innovators.

Table 1 Characteristics of adopters in the social system, according to Everett M. Rogers.

4.2.1.1 Decentralized Diffusion Systems, and culture diffusion

The diffusion of innovations theory provided categories and generalizations that could serve as theoretical and methodological references, thus opening a plethora of possibilities for comparisons, exceptions, modifications, and applications of the classifications of the members of the social system, and the kinds of diffusion of the innovation. That is why, in order to start the application of the conceptual framework of this theory to the diffusion of cool, it was necessary to first reduce the amount of possible paths and exits, and then focus on the ones that are relevant for the present dissertation.

First, the diffusion of innovations theory as explained by Everett M. Rogers, covered mainly technological or scientific innovations, which resulted in the creation of a boundary that left out cultural expressions and the particular characteristics they might contribute to the system. Also, even if the author recognized decentralized diffusion systems, he also mentioned that back then they were under-researched. However, nowadays there is a corpus of research that has already taken the task of exploring decentralized diffusion systems and in addition adapting Rogers' theory to cultural topics.

One of the investigations that took the diffusion of innovations theory to the cultural realm was led by Adam Mayer and Jeffrey M. Timberlake (2014). Their research also gave the diffusion of innovations theory an update by including contemporary modes of communication. Mayer and Timberlake had the hypothesis that the growth of online media helped broaden the diffusion of metal music because

it maximized the reach of the innovators' networks that otherwise would have not been connected. Mayer and Timberlake established more details on the kinds of centralized and decentralized diffusion in the particular case of cultural elements. They stated that cultural diffusion could also be centralized and decentralized, and placed their object of study in the last category. The authors considered that the Internet provided the necessary tools for economic and power factors to be diversified within the first spheres of adoption: with the innovators and early adopters (Mayer & Timberlake, 2014). For example, Rogers (1983) originally presented innovators as having economic resources substantially enough to absorb the shock of adopting an Innovation that results non-profitable. In contrast, Mayer and Timberlake observed that the use of the Internet as a communication channel enabled the existence of diffusion circuits where power relations were balanced in a way that there was no coercion, and the limited economical resources did not represent a significant obstacle (Mayer & Timberlake, 2014: 31). This study's conclusion was that the Internet had a salient role as a diffusion mechanism for cultural elements, practices and ideas, and it could be inferred that it also strengthens decentralized diffusion systems.

Communication scholars Weiai Wayne Xu, Ji Young Park and Han Woo Park (2015) supported these ideas in their own study about the diffusion of Korean popular music. In their article *The Networked Korean Diffusion of the Korean Wave* cultural diffusion appeared as a dynamic that revealed unexpected patterns that were opposite to those explained in previous studies about diffusion of innovations. They approached cultural diffusion taking the case of Korea, a nation that, as explained by the authors, produced pop music that had reached territories far from Asia, like Latin America, in spite of the cultural obstacles that they deemed could arise from the distance (Xu et al., 2015:45). Just like in the phenomenon of metal music diffusion,

the Internet provided the tools for new diffusion patterns to emerge due to the collaborative platforms that supported decentralized social systems composed of interconnected users, their nexus, and the content they share (Xu, et al., 2015: 43).

In both cases, metal music and Korean pop music, collaborative online platforms had the role of enabling and strengthening cultural diffusion. Something similar has started to happen with cool hunting as there are many international and local websites that have begun to look for the next icons, and the cutting-edge in creative circuits to showcase them in a digital format ("Our Story", n.d.). In other words, the Internet has also turned into a place where cultural innovations can be diffused, and provide innovators and Early Adopters with the tools to build communities and identities, as well as discover, interpret and spread discourses. This applies to innovators and early adopters that are both considered cool, and those who are not. So, how can the scope be narrowed down to be more adequate to map cool?

To adapt the categories of adopters proposed by Everett M. Rogers to the realm of cool it was necessary to include the variables or factors that comprised cool. As it was pointed out in Chapter 2, subversion was one of the most relevant. Also, appropriation stood out as an important motor for coolness mobility, as it jumped from one circuit from another, and got recontextualized and co-opted. Therefore, in the following sections I examined the inclusion of these two concepts to a diffusion system.

4.2.1.2 Adoption ≠ Appropriation

When cultural innovations start getting diffused they do not get just neutrally adopted. They go through adaptations that respond to the adopting communities' own values. As I have suggested previously, as a gesture, or object got recontextualized from one community to another, it necessarily underwent through a redefinition based on the needs of each circle. For instance, jazz music once served as a way of performance characteristic of the black population, but later jazz, and the mode of life surrounding it, were appropriated by the so-called "White Negro", thus turning the resistance of a black community against a racist society to match their own resistance against society in general. The use of symbols, artifacts, rituals or behaviors of cultural communities outside of one's own is called appropriation (Rogers, 2006).

Richard A. Rogers (2006) distinguished four different categories of appropriation based on the social structure, power relations and group or individual agency that takes part on the appropriation process. The categories were a) cultural exchange, with a reciprocal power balance, b) cultural dominance, where the appropriation occurred in a unidirectional way, from a dominant imposed culture over a subordinated one, c) cultural exploitation, also involved a dominant culture exploiting a subordinated one, without any compensation, and d) transculturation, which was the mix of multiple cultural elements where the distinction of the comprising ones is unclear.

As the previous definitions suggests, cultural appropriation involves cultural politics, whereas neutral adoption does not. First, cultural appropriation consists of a communication between two communities, and as such it can reflect and constitute

the identities and sociopolitical positions of those involved in the exchange (Rogers, 2006). Also, appropriation is as an active process where power relations are at play. Once the two cultural circles come in touch, a procedure of definition of limits between what is considered inside and outside a community starts (Ziff & Pratima, 1997). The definition of a boundary between in and out of a community brings along a course of identity construction and identity signaling of convergence and divergence.

This process of identity signaling and differentiation makes cool temporarily inhabit one object, and then move to another (Berger & Heath, 2007: 133). Tastes change and go from one adopter, or appropriator in this case, to the other. A clear example of divergence and boundary-establishment is the differentiation between mainstream and subculture, and as I have mentioned before, even then it is difficult to sometimes assess exactly what is real subculture and what is not (Frank, 1997). Therefore, in order to map coolness and Cool Japan a more complex set of categories is necessary. Instead of departing from the unstable territory of the dyad subculture/mainstream, I have made use of Rogers' classification of adopters. But, I did so acknowledging the cultural implications of meaning construction and power exertion that appropriation entails, consequently calling them appropriators.

4.2.1.3 Subversion as a variable

As I already mentioned during the literature review, subversion arose as a common factor of coolness in both typologies; the elusive cool, and the reproducible cool. Subversion appeared in different forms, and followed a spectrum; it went from illegality (Fitton et al., 2012), to a kind of rebelliousness that blurred the line between

real subculture and assimilated subculture (Frank, 1997). These levels of rebelliousness echoed with Everett M. Rogers descriptions of adopters ranging from adventurous to traditional. In this sense, the inclusion of subversion was a variable inside a cultural diffusion system is not entirely novel, but it needed to be made specific and explicit.

Another study that has also pointed out the different levels of subversion, or autonomy, and its impact on perceptions of cool was led by marketing and business scholars Caleb Warren and Margaret C. Campbell (2014). In their study 4A and 4B, the researchers concluded that consumers with high countercultural levels were more critical about society and its institutions, thus, they found coolness in people and objects that possessed high levels of autonomy (Warren & Campbell, 2014). However, Warren and Campbell also found that both highly countercultural and low countercultural subjects agreed that moderate subversion was cool.

Therefore, pairing up Roger's descriptions of adopters with Warren and Campbell's findings, innovators are adventurous, which means that they are the subjects with highest levels of subversion and could be assumed to be the most critical about their social and cultural surroundings. As the process of adoption moved forward in the categories of adopters, the levels of subversion went down, but not necessarily its levels of coolness. The different levels of subversion informed of the change in gazes that regard something or someone as cool, thus changing its composition. This way, as the cultural innovation, gets appropriated, a new version of cool is born in each circuit. For example, what is cool for the early majority is different from what was cool for the innovators.

4.2.2 A step towards mapping cool and Cool Japan

So far, the categories of adopters laid by Everett M. Rogers in his diffusion of innovations theory have been adapted aiming at achieving two objectives: to frame cool without reproducing notions of elusiveness but acknowledging its cultural complexity, and to understand the values within the social system that could shed light on the values of those who perform cool. To achieve this, it was necessary to consult complementing studies about diffusion of innovations to widen its scope into the cultural dimension. First, I added details regarding decentralized diffusion systems, and how the Internet has provided spaces and tools for them to proliferate in different cultural realms. Next, I specified that the mobilization of cultural units like cool gestures or cool objects are not just neutrally adopted, but appropriated, as they could entail different power relationships. Finally, I explicitly considered subversion as a value whose level gets reduced as the cool unit gets more widely diffused. So, now the question is, how does this all relate to Cool Japan?

The goal to map approaches about Cool Japan as an object of study was to take a look at Cool Japan as a whole. As I mentioned, on the one hand there were studies that described Cool Japan as a unique culturally determined phenomenon that defied conceptualization, whereas on the other there were those studies that not only wanted to clearly define it but to measure it. The overlaps and gray areas in between these two seemingly opposed poles suggested that Cool Japan was a multidimentional object of study. However, this complexity and apparent contradiction in visions of Cool does not necessarily mean that Cool Japan is a shapeless phenomenon.

If the understanding of how Japanese coolness gets constructed, appropriated, interpreted and diffused is central to this dissertation, it is necessary to make sense of its shape, the actors involved, its hierarchies, and the values that move each of them. This is why the classification of adopters/appropriators that was already in use to describe coolness can be helpful. The innovators adventurous, subversive quality could describe the communities that have approached Japanese culture via unofficial channels outside of the institutions. That is the case of the early Mexican communities of fans of Japanese visual and material culture, where they turned to counterfeit goods and piracy to fulfill their cravings for Japanese goods. A contrasting version of Cool Japan has taken place in the offices of the Ministry of Economy Trade and Industry of Japan, where the coolness there encouraged is calculated, institutional, and regulated. This rendition of Cool Japan could probably belong to the late majority, where subversion levels are almost at its lowest, and ideas are adopted/appropriated due to peer pressure and economic reasons. In other words, as Japan's coolness gets interpreted, appropriated by different circuits, a new version of Cool Japan is born.

4.3 Cool and national cultural identity

4.3.1 Complicit exoticism

Subversion plays a pivotal role in understanding Japan's contemporary coolness. So far, I have addressed how the levels of subversion in each circuit of diffusion of Japan's coolness helped determine the characteristics of each version of Cool Japan. I stated that innovators possessed the highest levels of subversion, and as such they perceived coolness in products that deviated the most from the norms. But, how did these products enter the radar of these critical consumers?

In spite of cool's apparent desirability that has made it hop from one circuit who needed it to another, it is important to remember what was said in Chapter 2: cool is not an all-reforming force of social change. Especially in the case of Cool Japan, it has been framed within a structure of power that tends to privilege a Euro-American-centric discourse. To explain the conversations that happen inside this structure between the Euro-American powers and Japan I resorted to Koichi Iwabuchi's explanation of complicit exoticism. I brought it back in the theoretical framework to explain in more detail how these negotiations and historical conditions might have helped Japanese products to enter the view range of the innovators.

First, let us quote the relationship of complicit exoticism as explained by Koichi Iwabuchi:

> … (T)he relationship between the West's Orientalist discourse on Japan and Japan's discourse on itself is characterized by a profound complicity. Both tend to use the Other to essentialise the Self and to repress heterogeneous voices within. This perspective opens up a dimension of power/knowledge alliance *within* the nation and *between* nations; how the discursive construction of dehumanized Others has been subtly utilized by the power bloc to instill nationalist sentiment into people's minds; how the heterogeneous voices of people within the nations have been repressed through the homogenising discourses of an imaginary "us" versus "them" (Iwabuchi, 1994: 52,53).

In this dissertation I have focused on the kind of essentialization of national cultural identities that happens between nations. Complicit exoticism helped unveil the powers

that drove the construction of Japan's contemporary national cultural identity as cool, thus critically dissecting cool's role within this process.

The historical background (Chapter 2) brought to the table the constant relocation of Japan when defined vis-à-vis the West. For example, during the 19th century Europe fell in love with the idea of Japan as a mysterious primitive land that produced beautiful crafts (Gruchy, 2003: 17), but in the 20th century, the panorama changed drastically and the admiration wore off as Japan became an imperial power (Minichiello, 1998: 2). In this case, the shift of Japan's role from an inspiration to a threat was determined by European standards and expectations. However, Japan has entered these conversations and constructed its own notions of Self and Other as well. When facing Europe and the United States of America, Japanese discourses of national cultural identity recurrently took the West as a universal referent (Iwabuchi, 1994: 54); either as an entity to differ from, or as a source of concepts to resignify. As a result, Japan has engaged in self-exoticization when it complies with Euro-American essentialisms. For example, in the 19th century, when European audiences found certain pieces of visual and material culture fascinating, the Japanese government actively showcased those very works of art to appeal to that market, and some workshops had to integrate European modes of production to deliver (Kondo, 2016: 101). Complicit exoticism takes place in these moments of (re)definition and (re)establishment of what falls inside and outside of the Self. In other words, at the core of complicit exoticism lies the edification of the walls that divide the Self and Other.

This is where coolness comes in. Discourses of Euro-American-centric otherization have laid a fertile ground for coolness to arise. These notions were loaded

with ideas that portrayed Japan as a cultural deviant; as "too unique to be understood by others" (Iwabuchi, 1994: 68). To put this into more concrete terms, looking at the tangible expressions of complicit exoticism can be of help. Iwabuchi claimed that cultural otherness was a successful marketing tool (1994: 68). This echoed with cultural anthropologist Anne Allison's experience with Japanese toys. In her book *Millennnial Monsters: Japanese toys and the global imagination*, she gave her take on the popularity of toys made in Japan, regarding its "foreign references" and "distinctly non-American feel" as one of their biggest appeals. According to her, "signs of cultural difference is more the trend today than simple Americanization of such foreign imports" (Allison, 2006: 2). In this example, Japan was still clearly demarked as an Other, as "distinctly non-American", but that is precisely what gave power to its toys. Their different or deviant nature not only triggered their commercial success, but also their coolness.

However, the historical background of complicit negotiations of Japan's exotization suggested that being a deviant culture was not the sole requirement to be cool; it was necessary to be a bounded deviant.

4.3.2 Bounded Autonomy

In the literature review (Chapter 3) I briefly introduced the rich work of Caleb Warren and Margaret C. Campbell about coolness and autonomy as an example of the second typology of cool studies. Also, I used it in this section as a reference to talk about the impact of the different levels of autonomy, or subversion, of appropriators on perceived coolness. Now, in the present chapter I have taken their concept of

bounded autonomy as a condition for coolness to explain Japan's construct as autonomous or deviant.

Warren and Campbell proposed that when a brand, a person or an attitude seemed autonomous in an appropriate way, perceptions of coolness increased. This form of appropriate deviation was what they called bounded autonomy. They described the conditions for bounded autonomy in 5 studies. The first study tested the role of divergence as a catalyzer of cool. The results suggested that people found a design cool when it diverged from the norm, rather than when it conformed (Warren & Campbell, 2014). Study 2 showed that coolness arose when autonomy was shown against a norm that seemed illegitimate. Study 3 tested how an autonomy that was restrained, and empathetic could also lead to coolness, and could even influence consumers' decisions. Study 4 was divided in the 2 aforementioned tests whose results proposed that participants with a higher counterculturalism would perceive coolness in products with bounded autonomy but with extreme autonomy as well. Finally, the fifth and last test suggested that there were contexts when signaling autonomy was desired but others where conformity was required; for instance, a job interview (Warren & Campbell, 2014).

In a general sense, this study on bounded autonomy discussed the positive nature of cool when it shows empathy and "appropriate" levels of counterculture (Warren & Campbell, 2014). Hence, if my suggestion of otherness as a notion of cultural deviance, and Warren and Campbell's propositions about perceptions of coolness stemming from bounding that deviance are overlapped, it could be assumed that a cool other is also an appropriate Other; a bounded Other. In other words, Japan had to be perceived as a bounded deviant if it was to receive the label of cool.

4.3.3 The bounded Other

As it was mentioned previously, Japan's image has been changing and the attitude towards it as well, sometimes it was seen as positive and inspiring, sometimes as negative and threatening. Cool Japan is leaning towards the former. So, given the understanding that Japan was autonomous, and deviant as an Other, but it was also cool, what is bounded it and made it "appropriate"? The answer might be in the previous/simultaneous essentialist label that described Japan in the 1990's: Japan Inc.

Understanding of the transition between Japan Inc. to Cool Japan, might give some hints towards finding out one of Cool Japan's catalyzing agents. I mentioned during the historical background that Japan Inc. was the American term that described the cooperation between the Japanese private sector with the Japanese government (Morris, 2013). The term became popular in the decade of 1980 as a description of Japan's economic system and its aggressiveness (Morris, 2013). It was during these period that Japan's exports, and overall economy grew so much that it became a threat to the United States (Morris, 2013; Horino, 2004; Brock, 1989). This phenomenon was controversial in media and academia, spawning a period of Japan bashing but also at times of admiration, at times explained with cultural determinisms of Japanese uniqueness.

The expansion of the Japanese market, along with the perception of Japan as an aggressive economical opponent with ungraspable cultural differences laid two main conditions that would allow Cool Japan to bloom: a growing presence of Japanese products, and a challenging Other that had to be bounded. Japanese investment was welcomed in areas that were beneficial to American economy (Brock,

1989), thus there were lingering positive views to Japan's growth as a miracle to learn from. However, it was not until Japan entered a recession period in the 1990's that it stopped being regarded as an economical threat.

Starting in the decade of 1990, Japan entered a period of recession that diluted its threatening nature. During the historical background I quoted Douglas McGrays phrase describing Japan's cultural power: "Japan looks more like a cultural superpower today than it did in the 1980's, when it was an economic one" (McGray, 2002: 44). I have quoted it here once again to point out the turning point of discourses; from a negative light to a favorable one, from dangerous to cool. Japan "looks" more like a cultural superpower now because before, its economical dominance made it extremely deviant, which made it "look" more like a menace. Now Japan was in place, it was still unique and mysterious, it was still an Other, but within the limits allowed by Orientalism, where the power is in the hands of the West. Japan is now cool because it is a bounded deviant, its otherness has the "appropriate" levels of counterculture. Furthermore, Cool Japan has also been constantly mentioned along with the label of soft power (McGray, 2002). Douglas McGray (2002) mentioned that Japan's cultural dominance represented soft power's unquantifiable non-traditional ways of exerting power. The label "soft power" placed Japan in yet another dichotomist framework, where "hard power" lied in the hands of those with coercive, aggressive military resources. The "softness" of Japan's cool power confirms it as a bounded Other. It is perceived now as an exotic, deviant and countercultural entity, but soft, tamed, and controlled. It has just the right amount of deviation.

Additionally, the label of cool strengthened complicit exoticism insofar as it requires a negotiated othering. Coolness is a force that diverges and challenges (Pountain & Robins, 2000), but that requires an external gaze to be recognized as such (Abel, 2011: 64). In the case of Japan, creative industries are finding out what is cool through the eyes of foreigners (Kōkami, 2015; Abel, 2011; Sakurai, T., 2009), and acknowledging its "unique exotic" traits to promote themselves overseas, and to grasp their own potential. What is pointed out as potential in this case remarks commercialization potential. Koichi Iwabuchi has already proposed that othering sells (1994:68), therefore an othered Japan can sell Japanese goods; however, here I further have further specified that a bounded othered Japan can sell cool Japanese goods.

4.4 Wearing Cool Japan

4.4.1 Fandoms of innovators

So far, in this dissertation, the layers in cool have been explained, their role to help map the diverse definition of Cool Japan, and how those layers were divided based on the appropriators' characteristics. I have also addressed how each stratus of cool gives birth to different versions of cool, and that subversion had a big say in shaping them. Also I pointed out that precisely because of the decisive function of subversion in cool, cool hunters tended to focus on the first two circuits of adoption/appropriation who possessed the highest levels of subversion to find out what was the freshest cultural innovation. Additionally, innovators, as their name suggested, were the ones who started turning the gears of cool, hence the focus on them as well to examine their approach to Japanese visual and material culture to aid in the search for the elements that put Japan in the cool scene. I hypothesized that the notion of Japan as a bounded Other, embodied in the Cool Japan discourse, has

provided a boost for Japanese visual and material culture to further enter the view range of innovators. However, I have not regarded this as the sole reason why Japan became cool. The motives and values of the innovators and early appropriators also had the power to determine the shape that Japan had when being paired with coolness. Therefore, next, I have focused on detailing the characteristics of the circuit of appropriators in my case study: the innovators of Japanese urban fashion.

To theorize about this community, I have approached it from two fronts, first I framed it as a fandom, based on suggestions of previous literature about Cool Japan. Next, I analyzed this community of innovators as a fashion subculture, considering their process of identity signaling through sartorial performance. Both approaches had the commonalities of acknowledging the exercise of subversion in the community and its organization in a decentralized diffusion system, therefore these two conceptualizations have the potential to cooperate complementing each other.

Media scholar John Fiske defined fandoms as communities of interest that selected and discriminated fiercely the pieces of visual and material culture of their liking, while engaging in activities that often fell outside of the official institutional channels of consumption (Fiske, 1992). Defining communities interested in Cool Japan as a fandom is not entirely novel (Hernández, 2012; Abel, 2011; Allison, 2006; LaMarre, 2006; Leonard, 2004). In fact, there have been studies that made their main focus the unofficial dynamics of distribution and communication that take place within these communities, particularly the ones referred to as *otaku* (LaMarre, 2006; Leonard, 2004). The already explored path of fandom gave this dissertation some theoretical stability, however, as it was mentioned in the literature review (Chapter 3) the communities of fans of Japanese urban fashion have constructed their own virtual

and physical spaces separated from the *otaku* circuit. Therefore, it was necessary to acknowledge their distance from the *otaku* community to approach this dissertation's object of study as a fandom in an appropriate way. Consequently, I have framed them directly within a theoretical framework about fandom, instead of an *otaku* fandom.

John Fiske developed his theories on fandom using Pierre Bordieu's model of culture as "an economy in which people invest and accumulate capital" (Fiske, 1992:31). According to this model, the cultural system worked in a similar way to the economic one, in which resources were distributed unequally thus creating hierarchies where the privileged lied at the top, possessing knowledge about culture, and the deprived stayed at the bottom, lacking said knowledge (Fiske, 1992: 31). These social distinctions were maintained through institutions that promoted certain cultural tastes through the educational system, art galleries, museums, etc. The kind of culture housed in these sort of venues is referred to as "official culture", and knowledge about this form of culture is what is called "cultural capital" (Fiske, 1992: 31). According to this point of view, this socially and institutionally legitimate culture could be converted to economic capital. For instance, investing in education to acquire knowledge on official culture (cultural capital) could be translated in the future to finding better job opportunities (economic capital).

Fiske wished to broaden Bordieu's view of cultural capital to consider also forms of non-official culture. Pierre Bordieu's scope covered only the official cultural capital, and the high hierarchy of people who possessed it, but Fiske explained that those that were deemed lacking of official culture had their own modes of getting cultural capital as well (Fiske, 1992: 32). For him, this unofficial culture was popular

culture; the kind of meanings and objects that were diffused massively in different media.

This is the moment when fans enter the picture. According to Fiske, fans are active producers and users of the cultural capital of unofficial culture (Fiske, 1992; 32). That is to say, they accumulate knowledge on popular manifestations of culture, while creating their own communities, dynamics and even institutions and hierarchies. Cultural capital at this level is rarely transformed into economic capital, but there are alternative ways of cashing it. Fiske said that "fandom offers ways of filling cultural lack and provided social prestige and self-esteem that go with cultural capital" (Fiske, 1992: 33). This way, while unofficial cultural capital would hardly provide more job opportunities, it could provide dividends in the form of pleasure or positions of opinion leadership in a community of interest.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I have not inquired deeply about the popular quality of the culture that fans engage with. This is because in this particular case, the creative media under the umbrella of Cool Japan can be both considered official and unofficial culture. On the one hand, teachings about *anime* and *manga* are now part of some university programs, and art works related to these expressions, as well as Japanese urban fashion have been exhibited in art museums in different parts of the world. On the other, fans of Japanese goods still engage in what Fiske calls a "moonlighting" of culture when they tinker with toys, storylines and outfits in unofficial ways that were not originally intended by the institutions that produced them. However, I picked the division of official and unofficial as it echoed with the division of Everett M. Rogers of diffusion systems, where unofficial culture would flow in a decentralized diffusion system while official culture would inhabit a

centralized diffusion one. Also, this differentiation aided with the understanding of cool Japanese visual and material culture as subcultural or subversive.

The group of innovators that I have taken as my object of study about Cool Japan can be called a fandom as it has taken a form of unofficial culture, Japanese urban fashion that has little to no presence in Mexico, and created a community and a system of diffusion around it. They come up with their own forms of acquiring knowledge about Japanese urban fashion, and Japan in general, through ways that push the limit of legality reproducing printed media without permission, creating their own unofficial translations of blogs, and sewing their own outfits based on what they see online. Japanese urban fashion provides them with a cultural capital that helps build their identities, and perform their notions of what is Japanese culture.

4.4.2 Fashion and identity

Fashion also plays an important role in building and signaling identities. Fashion studies scholars and professors Eugenia Paulicelli and Hazel Clark (2009) saw fashion as a manufacturing culture industry that was as a lens through which cultures and their regulating cultural and economic mechanisms could be understood. This way, fashion is defined as the cultural system through which clothes and looks are mediated, interpreted and acquire meanings, thus engaging in processes of communication. Fashion and gender studies specialist Susan B. Kaiser agreed when she stated that fashion was about "producing clothes and appearances, working through ideas, negotiating subject positions (e.g., gender, ethnicity, class), and navigating through power relations" (Kaiser, 2013: 20). In the present research, I

acknowledged these definitions of fashion, but also complemented them with the concepts of convergence and divergence.

Paulicelli and Clark claimed that fashion had a privileged position to look at cultures, and individual lives (Paulicelli & Clark, 2009), but before backing this statement it was necessary to inquire where this privilege comes from. Marketing professor Jonah Berger and organizational behavior professor Chip Heath conducted a quantitative research to find out the domains where consumers search to signal identity the most. Their hypothesis was that any product could potentially signal identity, but people seemed to prioritize certain taste domains over others (Berger & Heath, 2007: 123). Furthermore, these places of major identity signaling are also the realms where people infered identity and where they tended to desire to diverge the most. That is to say, there were taste domains where people felt like they could get to know better the person who chose certain gesture or object, and where they wanted to stand out more. The results of Berger and Heath's test suggested that realms that have been relevant to coolness (i.e., music genre, hairstyle, music artist, clothes) ranked the highest as identity-relevant but also as places of divergence (Berger & Heath, 2007: 125). These taste domains pointed out that the realms of music and fashion held privileged positions for identity signaling, inference and divergence.

Keeping these quantitative and qualitative studies in mind, I have approached fashion as a cultural system where identities are built through sartorial taste domains like clothing, hairstyle, shoes, and accessories. The visual and material culture of these domains are usually mediated, interpreted, and consumed, thus constructing meanings and communicating them. Additionally, I acknowledged Susan B. Kaiser's suggestion that these moments of communication navigated through power relations.

She regarded binary narratives as strong enablers of the unbalance in power. For instance, the dualities of the Self and the Other, or the West and the East established poles where one was usually favored over the other. Therefore, under this premise, Kaiser said that finding the places of overlapping realities and contradictions could open new paths of understanding that dislocated these dualities (Kaiser, 2013: 22-24). This point of view was useful to the present dissertation given its focus on areas of Cool Japan that have fallen "between the cracks and the subtle" (Kaiser, 2013: 23) precisely to unveil other modes of interpretation of coolness, otherness and Japan.

However, the present research has taken a path different to Kaiser when addressing identity. She focused on the "becoming" (a continuous unfinished process of subject construction) opposed to identity, which she deemed as a concept with the risk of stagnation and fossilization (Kaiser, 2013: 72). I suggested that there are moments when these movements pause, and identity is crystalized while walls of convergence and divergence are built. Identities go through a process of delimitation as well, where subjects discuss what they are and what they are not to establish the terms of the conversations happening when signaling and inferring identity.

4.5 Summary

During this chapter I addressed the questions and needs that arose within this dissertation up to this point. The theoretical framework here constructed attempted to not only limit the scope of the concepts that are going to guide the search for answers, but also to organize the information thus given so far to achieve coherence.

First, the needs for organization were addressed. Everett M. Rogers' diffusion of innovations theory was taken as a point of departure to explore the elements that composed a system of diffusion in order to later adapt some of its sections to the cultural dimension that could explain the adoption and transformation of cool. The objective was to map the flow of cool, its different layers, shapes and interpretations to consequently provide a guideline to also map Cool Japan and its variety of definitions. I concluded that cool and Cool Japan required modifications to Roger's original structure, such as the detailing of decentralized diffusion systems, the explicit consideration of subversion, and the specification of adoption as appropriation. These adjustments would help frame the understanding of the flow and recontextualization of cultural units among distinct circuits based on their characteristics and needs.

It was also mentioned that coolhunters often looked for the roots of the next cutting edge by approaching the circuits of innovators and early adopters. With the aforementioned map established, and adding Mayer and Timberlake's (2014) considerations about online decentralized diffusion systems functioning without the need of good financial resources, I proceeded to look for the innovators of Cool Japan. Previous literature had explored online and offline communities that operate outside the official institutions of diffusion of Japanese visual and material culture, but still engaged in the search for the newest Japanese goods. Their profile fitted the innovators characteristics as they appeared to be the first in the timeline of appropriation, they were subversive to the point of engaging in illegal modes of distribution, and they brought the cultural object within their system of diffusion. This way, I suggested that those studies that define Cool Japan on the grassroots level, might be approaching it through the circuit of innovators, while those that happen at an institutional official level have more characteristics of the Late Majority circuit.

Next, I focused on the pivotal role that subversion has played in the definition of the layers of Cool Japan, and explored the way in which it related to the two theoretical axes of this dissertation: cool and national cultural identity. I used first the concept of complicit exoticism to explain the process of identity formation and negotiation between cultures, based on the dualism of the Self and the Other. I stated that otherization is guided by a process of understanding the othered culture or individual as divergent from the Self. In the case of Japan, its history of negotiation of (self)exoticism around the polarizing concepts of Self and Other, West and Orient has rendered it a culturally divergent culture that is "distinctly non-American" (Allison, 2006). Consequently, this divergence has found its way into Japan's contemporary self-exoticizing national cultural image, thus laying a fertile ground for coolness to germinate.

Then, I centered on the kind of divergence that drives coolness specifically. To explain it Warren and Campbell's (2014) study about bounded autonomy was applied. It was suggested that for deviance to be considered cool, it needed to be constrained, as opposed to excessive. Therefore, taking this into account I propose defining Japan as a bounded Other. To illustrate the term, it was necessary to look at the historical background of Japan's national cultural identity and locate the point when Japan became a bounded Other. I argued that at the moment when Japan entered a recession that halted its expansion, it stopped being an economical threat to Euro-American interests. Japan as an economical powerful Other represented a source of excessive deviance, but when that changed, it fell back into the appropriate levels of divergence as dictated by Orientalist discourses. In this sense, discoursively, cool and Japanese national cultural identity came together at a crucial moment for cool and

Japan. As it was pointed out in the literature review (Chapter 3), by the time Cool Japan acquired its label at the beginning of the 21st century, cool was already theorized, commodified and media and academia had already built expectations about what cool entailed. On the side of Japanese national cultural identity, Japanese goods had already been out in the market and being consumed worldwide as a consequence of its economic expansion. But, a big catalyzer for the Cool Japan discourse to take off was Japan's deviance getting bounded as its threatening nature decreased.

Performance-wise, cool and Japanese national cultural identity juxtaposed in fashion. To address my object of study embedded in Cool Japan, Japanese urban fashion communities in Mexico, I divided it in two dimensions. On the one hand, acknowledging previous studies about Cool Japan, I defined them as a fandom that discriminates fiercely and refines their tastes, discussing what is to fall inside or outside their scope of interest. As fans, I saw them as a community attracted to the accumulation of knowledge about Japanese urban fashion, which heavily determined their own identities as a community, but also the images they constructed about Japan. On the other hand, I took a closer look to their object of interest: fashion. In Chapter 2, the usage of clothes and the construction of looks were framed historically, which highlighted their prominent function to perform coolness across different circuits and ages. In this section I further inquired about fashion's relevance in terms of identity formation, signaling and communication. I defined fashion as a system where identities, and the elements to construct them are mediated, interpreted, and appropriated in ways that make such identities visible. Berger and Heath's research explained this visibility when comparing several different products with the objective of finding out which ones proved to be more relevant to signal and infer identity. Their results indicated that the domains of music and fashion stood out as the realms

where most people built and communicated their identities. Consequently, also those were the domains where people tended to diverge the most; where the distinction of said identities was defined. This last part echoed with John Fiske's account about the importance of the selection process that fandoms immerse themselves in when they discriminate and pick the objects or gesture that are going to "make meanings of their social identities and social experiences" (Fiske, 1992, 35). In other words, when Fiske said that fans "discriminate fiercely" (Fiske, 1992: 34), it meant that they took part in strong processes of divergence.

Finally, it was important to mention that while this theoretical framework was done with the objective of understanding of Cool Japan in mind, it was also modeled in a way that could shed light on applying the lessons learned from Cool Japan to the Mexican case. Othering gazes have been directed not only towards the East, which opened the opportunity for the emergence of a "cooling" process of complicit exoticism to arise outside of Cool Japan. Latin America has also been subject to asymmetrical relations with colonial powers since the Spanish domain vis-à-vis Europe (Miranda, 2013; Mignolo, 2009), and more recently in relation to United States (Chuang & Roemer, 2015). In the case of the latter, Mexicans have been the most common target of othering due to the frequent immigration to U.S. territory, which has led to negative portraiture (Chuang & Roemer, 2015). However, there are other territories that do not see Mexicans as a threat, yet see them as an Other. Under this light, I believed that building a framework that was aware of the development of Cool Japan with otherization at its core, could be useful to approach other instances of otherization and then inquire about its potential relationship with cool.

Chapter 5. Methodology

5.1 Introduction

This chapter's objective is to explain in detail this dissertation's quantitative and qualitative approaches. The assumptions formed throughout the aforementioned theoretical framework and concepts have been considered and tested through the analysis of two case studies: one embedded in the discourse of Cool Japan, and another creating its own discourse about Mexico.

It was mentioned in the Introduction that this work's three main objectives were 1) to identify the reason why foreign audiences consider Japan a cool culture, 2) discern the specific characteristics of Japan as a cool country at an unofficial grassroots level of innovators, and 3) provide a reference for Mexico to assess its image, based on the findings about the Japanese case. The theoretical framework explained in Chapter 4 helped setting a background about the elements that could be involved in the construction of perceptions of cool, as well as the importance of complicit exoticism as a power dynamic that determined discourses on Japanese national cultural identity. I proposed to look at the overlapping of both through the notion of a bounded Other to shed light on the process of Japan's coolness. Therefore, the achievement of the first objective depends on the assessment of the bounded Other, and whether its elements of appropriate cultural subversion get manifested in the audiences that consider Japan cool. Also, both the literature review and theoretical framework pointed at the importance of the innovators for a cultural unit to become cool. Consequently, I have aimed at detecting the characteristics of the image of Japan that innovators are perceiving to find out whether this community is actually seeing

Japan as a bounded Other, or whether they have an alternative image. Additionally, I have inquired about the priorities this community had and how could they be or could not be getting satisfied by their appropriation of Japanese urban fashion. Finally, the intention to compare, and possibly apply, the findings to the case of Mexican culture has been done in two stages, first a consideration of what lessons could be learned about Cool Japan from the study of the Mexijuku community, and then I an analysis of another group of innovators that has taken Mexican culture and crafts as their object of interest.

To operationalize this dissertations' concerns, I have taken two objects of study: two communities of innovators. Consequently, I have explained in this chapter first the selection of each of the the communities; one involved in the diffusion of Japanese urban fashion and another in the diffusion of Mexican crafts. Next, I have addressed the function of exploring the creative circuits of both case studies through interviews. After that, I focused on the scope of the content analysis, my approach to this method, the units of analysis selected and the objective I planned to achieve.

5.2 Case Studies

This dissertation is focused on two case studies, taken under an inductive emic approach (Tracy, 2012: 22) given that it was deemed necessary to focus on areas that have fallen through the cracks of academic studies and institutional projects of promotion. On the one hand, I wanted to shed light on obscured areas of Cool Japan, from the very inside of those under-researched fields in hopes of revealing answers to my questions. On the other, I wanted to introduce the consideration of Mexican culture as cool, or performing attractiveness in a similar nature as Cool Japan. Both of

my methods required starting from a relative tabula rasa in terms of literature. Therefore, it is would be helpful to start from a case study, observe it, and analyze it to later draw conclusions and take steps towards theorization (Tracy, 2012: 21,22). The two chosen case studies are a community of innovators that interacts with Japanese urban fashion in Mexico, Mexijuku; and a community of innovators that does the same but with Mexican crafts in Japan.

The reasons behind the selection of the case study were briefly addressed during the Introduction, but here I have added more details about the rationale of it. First, growing movements being carried in countries like Argentina, Chile, and Mexico, to name a few, have showed signs of having their own modes of engagement with Japanese visual and material culture that could contribute to the field of study about Japanese urban subcultures in Latin American countries. I pointed out that the few studies about Harajuku fashion outside Japan were either Europe or United States-based, and the other rare approaches to Cool Japan in Latin America have not touched so far on the issue of Harajuku fashion. Thus, it fulfilled the desired condition to look at Cool Japan through an an under-researched topic that could bring new insights to the phenomenon.

The reason to choose Mexico over all the other Latin American countries, was because the model of diffusion corresponded to a decentralized system. The two main events focused on Japanese popular culture are still managed by fans. Most of them are focused on the frequently highlighted creative industries of *anime* and *manga,* and distribute predominantly counterfeit media. Nowadays new projects are leaning towards officialization, like Arcade Media, with the objective of bringing official products and screenings to Mexico and even other countries in Latin America. Also,

the *lolita* community of Mexico is widely represented by the multimedia platform My Lolita Style. They started out as an online forum, but grew to be directly related to Japan's Lolita Association and now also bring Japanese *kawaii* ambassadors to Mexican events.

Another reason to choose Mexico is because specifically, in the realm of Harajuku fashion, the Latin American country has been visibly active. The internationally recognized Harajuku Fashion Walk, an event organized by fashion brand 6%DOKIDOKI to celebrate and promote Harajuku fashion all over the world, arrived in Latin America only two years after its conception in 2010. This way, Latin American Harajuku Walks appeared in 2012 in Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, later Peru followed on 2013 and Mexico on 2014, under the name Mexijuku (Appendix A). However, before that, Mexico had already earned its own *kawaii* ambassador, appointed by the official Japan Lolita Association. The first Latin American *lolita* to be named *kawaii* ambassador was from Brazil, but that same day Daniela Michel García, from Mexico and one of the founders of the community My Lolita Style (Japan Lolita Association, 2013) was also bestowed with the same title. The *lolita* scene in Mexico has continued to proliferate, and more recently, in 2016 a new *kawaii* ambassador was appointed, Briz Blossom (Japan Lolita Association, 2016) Also, particularly in the *lolita* scene, Mexico is one of the most active Latin American countries. When looking at the events posted in the official Facebook page of the Japan Lolita Association, there are 18 albums with events in Mexico, out of 56 albums in total (not counting the albums with profile pictures, cover pictures or journal pictures).

Many of these communities, including the ones bringing official media to Mexico, started online. The internet continues to have a central role as a diffusion channel and has expanded its impact to also enable this community's growth, allowing them to develop their own distribution projects or fashion brands offline as well. The recent acknowledgment of the once unofficial activities by fans in Mexico points out at the formation of a cycle where self-made dresses now have developed into brands worn by Japanese *kawaii* ambassadors. Therefore, I believed that it was relevant to approach this community of innovators to find out their ways of engaging Japanese urban fashion and Japanese culture in general to unveil what were the values and motives that determine their activities.

To tackle the objective of looking for references for a similar process of cooling with Mexican culture, I have taken another object of study. I approached in a similar manner a growing community of innovators of decentralized diffusion of Mexican crafts in Japan. The community has been active recently, in comparison to the Mexican fandom, hence its rather incipient nature. However, it is starting to show similar symptoms of officialization of activities that used to be completely self-managed, and are constructing an image of Mexico that seems to align with the concept of a bounded Other.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, Mexico's image has affected its tourism and commerce, in a similar way to post-Fukushima Japan. Therefore, following the Japanese initiative of enhancing the promotion of creative industries as a national brand could be a helpful initial step towards finding a strategy that could heal said damaged portraiture. To make such a task more attainable, a reference for the current state of Mexico's image is necessary to assess a point of departure. To achieve this

objective, I have focused on the community of innovators that have appropriated Mexican culture in Japan.

Mexico and Japan's diplomatic relationship has stayed overall positive, and more recently with the growing investment of Japanese industries in Mexican soil (Embajada de Japón en México, 2015), but achieving such a state is also the result of some historical negotiations as well as discourses on said history. Therefore, I have also addressed the historical background that has led to the construction of the image of Mexico in Japan supported by the government to address the possibilities of Mexican culture to turn cool. The main objective is to understand the kind of relationship that official instances want to promote when they start showing interest in the independent projects of the Japanese fandom of Mexican goods.

5.3 Interviews with innovators

To determine the values and priorities that incentivized each group of innovators, I first conducted exploratory interviews. In the case of the community of innovators of Harajuku fashion in Mexico, I divided the studies in two stages. First, I interviewed actors of the first generation of innovators of the group Mexijuku in Mexico that are nowadays involved in any job or project related to Japanese fashion or Japanese culture. The second stage was a content analysis that has been explained in Section 5.5. As for the case study of Mexican culture in Japan, just as I did with the innovators in Mexico, I conducted interviews with members of this community of fans, who are engaged in activities related to Mexican culture. I did not conduct a content analysis on the communication channels of this community because their shared channels of communication were almost non existent at the moment of writing.

Their sources of information vary a lot, thus finding a common ground proved problematic. Furthermore, when asked about how they found out about Mexican culture or Mexican events, they frequently mentioned word of mouth, and attending related events. In other words, activities offline seemed to be their primary way of cohesion.

The questions of the interviews (Appendix P) were general and open ended. The objective was for the innovators to talk freely and for a conversation to flow where they could tell in detail their experience with their objects of interest in particular and the foreign culture they are appropriating in general. I chose actors that held opinion leadership positions and had their own brands, organized events, or owned venues for the diffusion of the fandom's interest. In the case of Mexijuku I chose brands like Apparel K, Mye Mye clothing, Wireframe, and Sweet and Sour. I also approached models that have appeared in Harajuku-related catwalks, and the organizer of the Harajuku fashion walk. All of the actors were once or are still involved in the Mexijuku community, and come from different urban subcultures (*lolitas*, *visual kei*, *kodona*, *shironuri*, and *dekora*). The chosen actors from the Japanese community have brands like Chichineo, PAD, Frida, and Imuy. I also included one artist and gallery owner, staff from the specialized travel agency Mexico Kanko and the one of the founders of the Mexican culture promotion project Hermanas Project. I met with all of these innovators on one-on-one conversations, either in person or by phone, except in the case of Apparel K who is ran by two persons.

The questions went from general topics like talking about their current job, and later delved into talking about their personal experiences with Japanese culture

and fashion or Mexican crafts. In the case of the members of Mexijuku, none of the interviewees had ever been to Japan by the time of the encounter, so the questions regarding their impressions of Japan sprung answers based on mediated experiences with the culture. To continue the same pattern, the content of the interviews done to the Japanese fandom of Mexican culture went from general areas to particular personal experiences with Mexican culture. However, there was a shift in the questions because all of the intervewees had gone to Mexico at least once (some go three times a year, one even mentioned that she has lost count), so their contact with Mexico could have been both mediated by a written or visual source, or an experience in the country. This way, the questions about their initial impression of Mexico and today's impression is not based only on the passage of time, but on the experience of being able to build their own understanding of Mexican culture.

In this initial exploration, the Mexijuku members exhibited the tendency to describe Japan as a free and open-minded country. For example, former *dekora* and Mye Mye clothing brand owner "Fanuni" said:

> Japan is a country where people think very differently. Although there is a traditional part, they are also very open. For example, you see guys dressed as girls. I would love to visit, even if I am still not so sure about what is going on there. (For the original text in Spanish, please refer to Appendix D) ("Fanuni", personal communication, August 30, 2015)

In a similar note, the organizer of the Mexijuku fashion walk Karla Hernández (also known as Kissa) talked about her view on Japanese urban fashion, and how she found it very imaginative:

> (…) It is something very characteristic of Asian fashion, specifically from Japan because I think that in comparison to other countries, like China, Korea, or even Thailand, there are countries where they are more backwards, they don't allow so many liberties whereas Japan has allowed experimentation with different cultures. (For the original text in Spanish, please refer to Appendix E) (K. Hernández, personal communication, October 7, 2016)

Another important part of the interviews was to find out what were their communication channels and gathering places. They mentioned that there were physical gatherings at a park in central Mexico City called *Parque Hundido* [Sunken Park], and that the reunions were mostly organized online. Thus, it became quite important to find out what were these virtual places that served as cohesion spaces. The older Mexijuku members mentioned online forums, whereas younger ones preferred Facebook groups or Instagram. However, some of these communities in social media saw their origins in forums, such as the frequently mentioned My Lolita Style. Thus, after the interviews, I turned to analyzing the source of the Mexijuku movement: online forums.

On the side of the Japanese innovators, the participants described the image of Mexico as a colorful country, as it was hypothesized in this dissertation, but some also said that they felt attracted to its open-mindedness, mirroring the image that Mexicans have of Japan. For instance, jewelry brand owner Yumiko talked about the points that she likes about Mexico the following way:

> The thing that I like is that everybody is open. When I am in Japan, I am very friendly and since Japanese are closed, I stand out. But, when I am in Mexico, everybody is usually that open, so I feel very welcome, or more like there is only people like that, so I feel like I was normal. (For the original text in Japanese, please refer to Appendix F) (Yumiko, personal communication, June 6, 2017)

Given the potential importance that this community has to boost a phenomenon similar to Cool Japan with Mexican culture, I have analyzed their interviews. Even though it has not been possible so far to identify a communication channel online that could serve as a parallel to the forums of the Mexijuku community, I used this exploratory data and also conduct a content analysis to take some steps towards taking specific measures to potentially trigger Mexico's coolness.

5.4 Content Analysis

The second stage of the study, as it was previously mentioned, is a content analysis. I took the definition of content analysis by Kimberly A. Neuendorf (2002) as the "systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics". This method was selected due to its properties as an exploratory tool of media to categorize, analyze, compare and theorize based on the latent and manifest meanings of words (Neuendorf, 2002: 6). Given the fact that both objects of study herein studied have fallen mostly outside the scope of academia, it is important to use a method that enables theory creation. Content analysis is also helpful in tackling the identification of patterns in messages that could allow the emergence of categories, which in turn would be useful to achieve this dissertation's objective of finding out

the main set of priorities that motivates their appropriation of a foreign culture, and their modes of interpreting it. Therefore, I approached the objects of study with two different kinds of content analysis and a word co-occurrence analysis.

On the one hand, the main content analysis is interpretative, conducted in the discussion forums used by the Mexijuku innovators. On the other, the complementary content analysis was done on the interview transcripts of the talks with members of the Japanese fandom of Mexico took place. The function of the latter content analysis is exploratory and complementary; it was done mainly as a first step towards ground the lessons that could be learned from a process of complicit exoticism like Cool Japan.

Regarding the Mexijuku community, the innovators mentioned the salient role of internet forums as part of their involvement in Japanese fashion subcultures. I asked them for names of the forums they were the most active in. The first one that arose was Visual Kei Mexico. Also, one *lolita* mentioned that their community was probably the strongest one, so I looked for *lolita* forums. The result of the search indicated that My Lolita Style was a prominent forum, which came to no surprise as one of its founders was Daniela Michel, the first Mexican *kawaii* ambassador. The forum had a total of 1,750 members and 45,406 messages. However, by the time of researching for this dissertation, the forum was closed to the public view and was not accepting new members. Part of what it is so prominent is because the My Lolita Style community grew and expanded to other platforms with a blog, a Facebook fan page and a YouTube channel. I tried to reach them and ask for access to the forum, stating that it was for academic purposes. Unfortunately, they refused, but pointed us to their blog and some forums that they recommended. Among them I found one other

lolita forum called Rosas de Cristal, and a miscellaneous forum that started out as a *lolita* one called Tea Party Mexico. The other forums listed in the recommendation post were either closed to the public view or did not exist anymore.

This way, I conducted the content analysis in three forums that even though they are not active anymore, they still remained open to the public view by the time of the data gathering. The forums are Visual Kei Mexico, Tea Party Mexico and Rosas de Cristal. The three forums were completely downloaded with Offline Explorer on June, 2016, and transformed into text files. Later, each entry of each user was cleaned from spelling mistakes, and emoji to leave it ready for text mining. Once this process was done, the topics that are relevant to the dissertation were selected. This way, discussions about technical support and concerting details of gatherings (finding the most fitting time and place for everybody) were left out. The unit of analysis are the posts, leaving only the user name, date and topic title for identification. The full user's information, like total posts, rank, age, and location were omitted since it was found on exploratory text mining that the word frequency was being skewed. For example, the word 'Mexico' first appeared as one of the most frequent words, but most of the occurrences came from the fact that most of the user's location was 'Mexico', thus showing that it was not a discussion topic.

The software used to do the content analysis were two; R and Nvivo 11. The word frequency query was done initially with Nvivo 11 with its Spanish and Japanese dictionary, however, problems in the word stemming in Spanish required manual intervention that was possible with R. Due to the same reasons, the word co-occurrence analysis was done also with R in both the forums and the interviews. Regarding the creation of categories in the forums, all of the posts (n= 2,914) were

first manually read, coded and annotated, following the organization of the posts delimited by the original forum's set of topics. That is to say, the order of the conversations started by the users was maintained, under the classification that they intended. For instance, if users had a special space to propose projects, and did so in stages, the order and classifications of the posts related to those projects was followed when reading and annotating them. Later, to test the suggested categories, I worked with a sample of 1,462 posts, managed by two Mexican coders. It was decided that both coders should be Mexican so that no nuances in language usage would be missed. The sample was made randomly, choosing every other post. In the case of the interviews to Japanese innovators, the conversations were transcribed in their totality by either a Japanese native speaker or under the supervision of a Japanese native speaker. To do the word count and word co-occurrence analysis, the replies of the interviewees were separated, and analyzed in R.

The objective of the analysis on the forums was to determine patterns in the topics discussed by the Mexijuku innovators and extract form them categories based on the contents of the discussions about fashion, subcultures and Japanese culture as seen through a Mexican community. I believed that obtaining a set of categories could help in signaling the priorities and values that incentivize innovators to approach Japanese culture and consider it cool, and potentially to add factors to the perception of coolness in the particular case of appropriating a foreign culture. With the interviews to Japanese innovators, my objective was to collect data on this community to have a grounded understanding of their approach to Mexican culture and find out concretely what they find cool.

5.5 Summary

The methodology is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. I approach cool as a dynamic phenomenon and consider the multiple definitions of cool, and the different methodologies they might require. Thus, in the theoretical framework I considered a mapping of cool that would respect its complexity and mobility based on the adaptation of parts of the diffusion of innovations theory as explained by Everett M. Rogers (1986). One of the conclusions taken from this mapping was that innovators were the key actors in the system that supports cool as they are the first ones to appropriate or generate the cool unit. Therefore, my methods are aimed at analyzing the messages between innovators, and their discourses.

To find the innovators, it was necessary to get in touch directly with people who hold positions of opinion leadership to trackback to those who were at the head of the community back in the time of its inception in the case of Mexijuku, and nowadays increasing their impact in the case of the Japanese innovators. I interviewed them to find their information sources and channels of diffusion, later I analyzed their discourses to find patterns with a content analysis. This shed light on the categories of values that move these communities based on the topics that they prioritize.

My main efforts were directed at understanding Cool Japan, the components that had led to its coolness, and how that relates to dynamics of complicit exoticism and bounding the Other. By taking the object of study of Mexijuku and exploring it through interviews and the content analysis, I revealed some elements that could contribute to the understanding of said process of "cooling" a foreign culture. To complement the lessons that could be learned from Cool Japan, I later took a look at

another community of innovators, this time in Japan. I approached what would be almost the mirror of the Mexijuku community, a group of Mexico enthusiasts that promote Mexican culture and products. I sought how they started to approach Mexican culture, the values they promoted, and their image of Mexico in general. Understanding these two ways of approaching foreign cultures provides two points of departure to start taking steps towards finding the limits and possibilities of the replication of a phenomenon like Cool Japan.

Section Two. Data Analysis.

Chapter 6. Content Analysis

6.1 Introduction

The following chapter marks the beginning of the second section of this dissertation, dedicated to the analysis of the data gathered. I approached the object of study embedded in Cool Japan with a content analysis conducted in three discussion forums where the Mexijuku community used to communicate: Rosas de Cristal, Visual Kei México and Tea Party México. The research was done in two steps. First, I conducted an exploratory word frequency analysis that was used as a guideline to the most frequent topics and what could be inferred about them. Then, I complemented this quantitative view with the details gathered in the interviews to approach the possibility of creating categories of discussion topics. As it was explained in Chapter 5, the aim of these categories is to shed light on the values that motivate the innovators to appropriate Japanese urban fashion, and Japanese culture in general.

6.2 Exploratory Word Frequency

The exploratory phase of the content analysis was done through a word frequency count using Nvivo 11, through a query that includes stem words in Spanish. The results have been translated to English, and as such, some word stems in Spanish might translate to two different words in English. For example, *gusto* can both refer to the verb 'to like' and the noun 'taste', or 'hacer' in English can be translated as 'to do' or 'to make'. Thus, the English words here presented in the following chart offer the interpretations that were deemed the most accurate to the original meaning in Spanish (for the Spanish version of the chart, please refer to Appendix K).

Word	Frequency (N)	Similar words/derivatives
lolitas	1154	*lolita, lolitas, lolitosa, lolitosas, lolitoso, lolitosos*
taste/like	541	like, liked, liking, will like, would like, taste
good	525	good
forum	479	forum, fora
do/make	453	do, make, doing, making, used to do, used to make
hope/expect/wait	453	expect, expected, hope, hopes, wait,
welcome	428	welcome
hello	413	hi, hello, holo
well	405	well
can	328	can, could
believe	325	believe, believed, will believe, would believe, create, created
visual	315	visual, visuals
favorite	306	favorite, favorites
style	288	style, styles
know	272	know, knew, will know, get to know, known, knowledge
here	278	here
happen/pass	269	pass, passed, will pass, would pass, happen, happened, will happen
group	264	group, groups
sew	261	sew, sewn, sewed, things, thing, “things”
invite	232	invitation, invitations, invite, invited, will invite, would invite

Table 2 Top 20 stem words resulting from the word frequency query.

Given the limitations of Nvivo’s Spanish word processing, some words with similar stems, but belonging to different roots were paired and counted as the same. For example: ‘creer’ which means ‘to believe’ was counted along with ‘crear’ which

means ‘to create’. Also, it was noted that ‘good’ and ‘well’ had a high frequency, but expressed similar feelings of positivity. Therefore, I proceeded to do a refined text count, this time with R, to address these necessities. The R software was chosen given the possibility to manipulate more freely and manually the word stemming in Spanish. This way, for the new word count, word stem miscounts like that of ‘create’ were corrected, and the words for ‘well’ and ‘good’ were grouped in one single term ‘good or well’. The resulting top 20 of words is as follows (for the Spanish version of the chart, please refer to Appendix L):

Word	Frequency (N)
lolita	1125
good or well	763
forum	455
welcome	423
hello	401
to hope	383
taste	330
to do	326
favorite	298
visual	295
group	263
style	240
to believe	221
place	205
thank you	200
rosebush	187
name	177
clothes	158
music	157
image	149

Table 3 Top 20 stem words refined in R.

According to this first approach, it was visible that the *lolita* subculture has the strongest presence, be it as a topic of discussion or due to the number of members that identify as such. The second subculture that appears in the word count is *visual kei*, the community of fans of *visual kei* music bands. This is further reinforced with the presence of the word 'music', in the last place of the count. Also, words like 'taste' and 'favorite' illustrate the presence of personal tastes as a conversation topic, which could suggest that this is community of interest. Also, community cohesion appears as a relevant topic based on the frequency of words like 'group', 'thank you', 'forum', 'welcome', 'hello', and 'invite'. Finally, the action 'to believe' could indicate that expressing opinions and discussing them is an important activity in these forums.

To find out further details about the discourse of the innovators community, I conducted a more thorough analysis of the posts. The following step was to read each one of the entries in the forums, and classify them manually. Based on the interviews and the word frequency analysis, I hypothesized the possibility of finding categories related to community and identity formation, knowledge discussion, tastes discussion, and narratives about otherness or subversion.

6.3 Categories of Discussion topics

In this stage, all entries in the forums were read, and manually annotated with possible categories that could fit their content. It was decided that given the varying length of the posts and the different topics that were covered, it was better to not set a limit to the amount of categories per posts so that they would not be mutually exclusive. The resulting categories were 16, gathered in three thematic groups: Community cohesion, Cultural conscience, and Knowledge discussion and diffusion.

Each of the thematic groups were tested by two coders. The agreement percentage was 92.3%, with 0.797 of Krippendorff's Alpha.

Categories	Coder 1	Coder 2	Average
Community cohesion	406	368	387
Criticizing dissimilar groups	14	10	12
Denote belonging to the community	46	44	45
Denote hardship	46	53	49.5
Normal people don't understand us	56	47	51.5
I am not X	26	18	22
Propose projects	28	21	24.5
Cultural conscience	301	259	280
Adopt a Japanese name	41	34	37.5
Criticizing Mexico	18	15	16.5
Comparisons between Mexico and Japan	12	14	13
Things from Japan are good	31	25	28
Usage of Japanese words	138	117	127.5
Knowledge discussion and diffusion	240	227	233.5
Demonstrating knowledge	72	71	71.5
Sharing information	50	44	47
Learning Process	46	45	45.5
Do's and Don'ts of the subculture	55	50	52.5
I am here to learn	17	17	17

Table 4 Number of posts coded per coder in each category.

Out of the resulting three thematic groups, the most numerous was Community cohesion, followed by Cultural conscience, and Knowledge discussion and diffusion coming in third and last place. All but two of the 16 categories of posts describe their content, while Usage of Japanese words points out a tendency in language usage. The reason to include it in spite of its different nature was its notable frequency, standing as the sole most numerous category with 127.5 average instances.

This phenomenon somewhat unbalanced the count of total posts per thematic group, as the rest of the Cultural conscience categories are contrastingly not as numerous. However, its salient nature as a resource for communication across all three forums implied that it was an essential characteristic of this community.

Next, I proceeded to analyze each of the thematic groups and the categories that compose them. Examples of posts that represented each category will be given in order to illustrate what kind of conditions were taken into account to classify them. I looked in depth at these categories aiming at taking steps towards unveiling the values that move this community of fans of Japanese urban culture, and how they built meanings around their object of interest and Japan in general.

6.3.1 Community cohesion

This was the group of categories where trust-building took place, but also where the rules were set. Members of the community created bonds between them through intimacy while they vent their problems, told episodes of hardship, and expressed the importance of the relationships they build within the community. At the same time, they discussed the identities from which they diverge, such as what they considered "normal people" or other communities. The categories that fall inside this area were Criticizing dissimilar groups, Denote belonging to the community, Denote hardship, Normal people don't understand us, I am not X, and Propose projects. What I presented here are descriptions of the guidelines considered to code posts in each category, and provide a translated version in English of an example of a representative post.

- Criticizing dissimilar groups. Posts with statements where users explicitly criticized groups dissimilar to the Harajuku community

Example:

Forum: Visual Kei Mexico

Topic: Read this, it's not about visual kei, but if you're interested in lolitas…

User: Zeth Zauber

Date: July 27th 2010, 12:37 am

Message: the actual prostitutes are called reggaettoneras xD (I hate them more than anything, I hope one day all of them die)

- Denote belonging to the community. Users described the community as a fundamental part of their lives. The key words that identified this category denoted brotherhood or belonging, such as 'family', 'home', 'brothers', 'identification'.

Example:

Forum: Rosas de Cristal

Topic: Rosas de Cristal Anniversary

User: kittie_cheshire

Date: September 13th 2010, 12:28 am

Message: Waaaa, memories… This is a very young forum, but united, beautiful, warm, like a beautiful home should be. Thank you Hime and Shere, without you I would be lost, this forum is my little house, my lolita home. I can say that I have grown enormously. There are so many users (day by day lolitas are getting close to world domination muahahaha XD), and every corner is as nice as the first day I was

here, it is inspiring. I love you so much all of you, thank you for forming this big beautiful family.

- Denote hardship. Posts that described the difficulties faced by members of Mexijuku. There were two kinds of hardship: 1. Efforts and sacrifices that have to be done in order to be part of Mexijuku; 2. Difficulties that arose around them due to their belonging. In this category problems such as social and economic difficulties, time availability, and discrimination issues were mentioned.

Example 1:

Forum: Rosas de Cristal

Topic: Foster a Lolita

User: Angel

Date: December 18th 2010, 02:09 pm

Message: (…) don't you think 3 weeks is too short? A lolita that is just starting or that doesn't have an outfit has to invest time and money no matter the case, and even having experience, you cannot make miracles happen, don't you think it should at least be 2 months?

Example 2:

Forum: Tea Party Mexico

Topic: Nazi Lolita D:

User: Diwhitekitty

Date: October 16th 2010, 11:33 pm

Message: (…) I think the issue is that sometimes, for us who don't have money are discriminated because I don't have brand things. You are saying that if you don't

buy at least some socks, then you're not committed, but I don't agree… well I want to say that not all of us have money to spend in these things… I'd rather spend on things for my daughter than on some socks that will end up breaking, and that doesn't make me any less of a lolita…

- "Normal people don't understand us". Statements that pointed out that the users' subculture was part of their identity, and those that lived outside of it were not able to understand the elements they use to signal said identity.

Example:

Forum: Visual Kei Mexico

Topic: Read this, it's not about visual kei, but if you're interested in lolitas…

User: maki

Date: July 27th 2010, 12:37 am

Message: Mhhh you can say I might sound like a smartass but here in Mexico lolitas used to be certain kind of women in the past hehe, something that is COMPLETELY different in Japan, that is why one should be careful about who you talk about this with, because in Mexico people tend to be very ignorant but well, you know it is better that normal people don't know about certain topics because then things get ruined (…)

- Propose projects. Posts where projects or group activities were suggested.

Example:

Forum: Tea Party Mexico

Topic: LOLIDAY

User: queen

Date: May 17th 2010, 11:48 pm

Message: It would be great to get together weee so excited! I think it's a good idea to give information about lolitas so that people can get to know about us and realized that I am not going out in a costume to the streets; they should see that it is a way of life and that way I can contribute a bit to it, right? Well, whatever you plan I'll be there!

- "I am not X". Posts where the user declares that there were differences between the Mexijuku community and other groups, and stated the characteristics of said difference.

Example:

Forum: Visual Kei Mexico

Topic: Schizophrenia TV show

User: ZozzyKurOneko

Date: October 26th 2010, 1:50 pm

Message: O.O they always say bullsh… in TV Azteca!!!! How the hell do they show emos with visual kei, and prostitutes with lolita?!! (…) I don't know whether to laugh or get angry like AAAA die!! >_< hahahahahaha and then Saint Seiya, come on!! Not because you are Visual Kei means you have to be an otaku!!! Or viceversa!!!

6.3.2 Cultural conscience

This was the group of category where the members of Mexijuku express their thoughts about their own culture and the foreign one they were appropriating. Posts here gathered include statements of open rejection of certain social values of Mexican society, and comparisons with the community's perception of Japan. They took Japanese culture as an ideal and build new identities based on their impressions of it. I

included here any mentions of Mexico and/or Japan, be it in a positive, negative, or neutral light. This thematic group was comprised by the categories Adopt a Japanese name, Criticizing Mexico, Comparisons between Mexico and Japan, Things from Japan are good, and Usage of Japanese words.

- Adopt a Japanese name. Posts where the user mentioned his/her real name, but declared that he/she prefers to go by a Japanese name of their choice. Also, posts where people introduced themselves with Japanese names directly, omitting their real ones are considered.

Example:

Forum: Tea Party Mexico

Topic: Konnichiwa! Introducing myself

User: Kanon

Date: November 18th 2010, 2:46 am

Message: Hello! My real name is Odette, but I like the name Yuuki and many of my friends call me like that, so call me any way you want ^^

- Criticizing Mexico. Content where criticism against Mexico, Mexicans, Mexican society or media were mentioned.

Example:

Forum: Tea Party Mexico

Topic: Hikikomoris. A serious social problem.

User: Mumu

Date: August 3rd 2010, 9:52 am

Message: That's cool! Countries so nice that people who are "losers" only hide to die with their own pain, in contrast here they would become drug addicts, robbers,

murderers, reggaetoneros and a thousand things that only rot society XD LOL it's so different the way of thinking, incredible o.o

- Comparisons between Mexico and Japan. Entries where the social and/or cultural conditions of Mexico and Japan were contrasted. The user did not necessarily need to favor one side or the other. Only highlighting the differences between one and the other is considered as part of this category.

Example:

Forum: Tea Party Mexico

Topic: Nazi Lolita D:

User: Mumu

Date: October 16th 2010, 11:33 pm

Message: Remember that, well, yes there in Japan lolitas have the stores right around the corner… I don't… I live in the third world and spending more than 2000 pesos in a dress is a lot for an average family

- "Things from Japan are good". When the user described Japanese social and cultural elements with positive adjectives. This applied also to Japanese celebrities, music bands or general aspects of Japanese society.

Example:

Forum: Visual Kei Mexico

Topic: Conichiwaa IwaSawa GaKaRi Nyaa!!

User: iwasawa-gakari

Date: October 19th 2010 4:26 pm

Message: Conichiwa ñ.ñ I am iwasawa gakari and recently I discovered I liked oshare-kei I have always tended to like Japanese music (for me the best in the world ñ.ñ) (…)

- Usage of Japanese words. Posts where Japanese words were used inserted in a Spanish-language text. It also included modified and misspelled Japanese words.

Example:

Forum: Visual Kei Mexico

Topic: Guren desu!! nwn

User: Guren

Date: December 17th 2010 12:14 am

Message: Kon'nichiwa!!! Watashi No Namae Wa Guren Desu!!! nwn you can also call me ryuki o ryuu (whichever you like nwn) (…)

6.3.3 Knowledge discussion and diffusion

This was the group of categories where the community discussed, shared and accumulated knowledge. Posts here gathered emphasize the importance that the acquisition and interpretation of knowledge has within the group. It helped to establish hierarchies or positions of influence, depending on the amount of knowledge they have related to Japan or Harajuku fashion subcultures. It also served as a space to set rules about what values are to be considered valid or not for their group, and how it relates to their identities. Finally, it also played a role in the actual explicit diffusion of knowledge about Japan, since there were also posts where people shared their findings, provided translations, or asked for more information about certain topics.

The categories here included were: Demonstrating knowledge, Do's and don'ts of the subculture, Learning process, Sharing information, and I am here to learn.

- Demonstrating knowledge. Posts where users stated a high degree of knowledge. There were three kinds: 1. Posts where users listed (four or more) items that signal identity such as band names, or brands; 2. Entries where users stated that they are knowledgeable about certain area related to the Harajuku subculture are considered; 3. When users described their trajectory in the subculture and express that they have a long experience within it.

Example 1:

Forum: Tea Party Mexico

Topic: Gokigenyou...

User: shaman oscura

Date: November 2nd 2010 7:04 pm

Message: Nice to meet you all. My name is Mayra, my friends call me Shaman. I am 20 years old, I'm from Celaya, Guanajuato (if you know anybody from here let me know, I feel lonely). I knew lolita 3 years ago, and recently I decided to dress it, but until now I am "wearing it". My styles are EGL, EGA, Gothic lolita, Sweet lolita. I love visual kei, my inspiration is Mana-sama, my favorite bands are: Malice Mizer, An Café, 12012, Versailles, The Candy Spooky Theater, Mix Speaker's,Inc, Kaya, Gackt, etc (…)

Example 2:

Forum: Visual Kei Mexico

Topic: Your visual kei story

User: Zeth Zauber

Date: July 19th 2010 11:58 pm

Message: My VK story started a lot of time ago, when I started watching Jpop videos (…) with the passage of time I knew more and more music bands, and nowadays I know mmmm… around 80 visual kei bands, many of those are not even from Japan (or what? Did you think that this amazing style was exclusive to Japan? Well, you're wrong, it also exists in Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Russia, etc…) and these past days I have been focusing on visual kei girl bands like Exist Trace or caMIn.

Example 3:

Forum: Visual Kei Mexico

Topic: Hello everybody ^w^

User: Naomi Visual

Date: July 28th 2010 9:17 pm

Message: Hello hello, I am new in the forum. I am 17 years old, and I know Visual (Kei) since I was 11 =D (…)

- Do's and don'ts of the subculture. Posts with explicit rules about what should be considered within or outside the subculture, as well as the discussion of said rules. Also, replies to queries about the right path to follow to belong to the Harajuku subculture are considered.

Example 1:

Forum: Rosas de Cristal

Topic: Himeko K. Asanuma

User: More than a goodbye, a letter for you

Date: April 27th 2011 6:00 pm

Message: (…) Be yourselves, lolitas. Au revoir! Himeko K. Asanuma. Former Admin of RDC. PS- Really girls, don't ask stupid things like "can I wear pants?" it just simply makes no sense ha ha

Example 2:

Forum: Tea Party Mexico

Topic: I want to dress like a lolita, be lolita… but I am a tomboy :(

User: Gisita

Date: March 23rd 2011 11:11 pm

Message: In my life I had male friends, and prefer climbing a tree or going fishing, but I love the idea of lolita, but my life is full of liberty and carelessness. Even if (without being modest) I'm very educated and literate, I am a feminist and independent. What can I do? At 26 I still don't have a group of girl friends, not even one that makes me feel more girly, I am a metalhead, otaku and freaky (…) I would love to get some comments or suggestions. At least give some guidance about how to become a good lolita. PS: where I live it's very hot, so no black clothes please (that's one of the reasons why I never dressed like a metalhead)

- Learning process. Posts where the user emphasized the importance of learning and knowing, as well as deepening the acquired knowledge.

Example:

Forum: Visual Kei Mexico

Topic: Hello World

User: ChibiChibi

Date: October 8th 2010 5:34 pm

Message: Welcome!! I am in the same conditions, don't worry! I'm also quite bad at remembering names, and I am just starting but later on I will learn more lyrics and will know more about visual kei hoho… Well, I hope you're doing well!

- Sharing information. Entries used as encyclopedic articles. Here I find content that was directly copy and pasted or translated from other sources. Also, posts with external links are considered. The main characteristic of this category is that the information provided is not of the user's authorship.

Example:

Forum: Tea Party Mexico

Topic: *Lolitaz make up ~tutorials~**

User: queen

Date: September 11th 2010 10:51 pm

Message: Woo I think it's a very interesting and fun idea to get together and help each other XD Well, I'm gonna leave here a video, I hope you like it and that it's helpful, I think it's pretty simple and it looks very natural in case you don't like a very complicated make up.

- "I am here to learn". Posts where users mentioned that they joined the forum due to a motivation related to knowledge accumulation.

Example:

Forum: Tea Party Mexico

Topic: Hello hello!!!

User: sweet_agony

Date: April 12th 2011 7:04 pm

Message: *Name: Cez *Nickname: Sweet_agony *Age: 18 *Special skill: make desserts, especially ice-cream ^-^ and I am good with crafts o_O *City: Mexico City, but I am currently exiled in the State of Mexico *Subculture: Lolita *How did you find this group? I was looking for more information about lolita in Mexico.
Hello, well I decided to join this nice forum to know more about Lolita and go little by little clearing my doubts and I hope I have a good time. Regards!

6.4 Image of Japan

After the division and organization of the main contents discussed in the forums, I focused on the data that could help us discern the kind of image of Japan that is constructed within this community. To do so, I have focused on the categories under the group of Cultural Conscience, since those were the discussions that were explicitly related to Japan, and Japanese culture. I conducted a word co-occurrence analysis using R in order to find out what are the 10 most correlated words around the word Japan. Given that sometimes the opinion of the innovators was formed based on comparisons with their own social context, I also conducted a word co-occurrence analysis with the word Mexico, to see what are the impressions they explicitly voice regarding their own country. The word co-occurrence was drawn also using stem words.

6.4.1 Word Co-occurrence analysis

The word co-occurrence analysis around the word Japan was done with stem words as well, so words referring to Japanese language and Japanese people were also included in the search for correlations. The results showed 6 words with a correlation

of 1.0, so I included the immediate 14 words following with 0.99 correlation to complete the top 20 words. However, it is important to mention that the aforementioned 14 words in the top 20 appear high in the correlation ranking due to their alphabetical order. In total, there were 141 words with 0.99 correlation (Appendix M).

Word	Correlation
special	1
great	1
to like	1
best	1
new	1
nyappy	1
accepted	0.99
lovers	0.99
ancafe	0.99
anecdote	0.99
besides	0.99
supporting	0.99
area	0.99
articles	0.99
make sure	0.99
help	0.99
dance	0.99
baroque	0.99
silly	0.99
boku	0.99

Table 5 Top 20 correlated terms to stem words of Japón *[Japan].*

All but one of the 20 words here presented have a positive meaning. It could be inferred from these numbers that the Mexijuku community of innovators regarded Japan and its visual and material culture as a country that is special, great, and the

best. The word ‘silly’ was the only one that has a negative connotation. On a closer inspection, it was noted that the posts where this last word appeared were discussions about the proper behavior of *lolitas*, stating that they should act innocent, but not silly. In the light of this phenomenon, it could be suggested that there were more conversations about what Japan, and Japanese urban fashion was, than what it should not be.

The word ‘new’ also appeared as highly correlated. However, when I took a closer look it was revealed that it was used in different manners. It appeared in posts with new information about Japan, but most of them in the self-introductions of new members, and statements when users clarified that they are new to the subculture in general. Another highly correlated word is ‘*nyappy*’, an invented term of the community that is a portmanteau of ‘happy’ and ‘*nyan*’. This word also had a positive connotation, which further emphasized the ideal and positive image that this community had of Japanese culture and Japanese goods.

In terms of actions, the verbs ‘to like’, ‘make sure’, ‘supporting’, and ‘dance’ appeared. As it was to be expected, the users frequently talked about their tastes, which turned out to cover a wide range: music bands, brands, movies, celebrities, and fashion styles. This result might suggest that while the community’s main interest was Japanese urban fashion, their positive image of Japan impacts other realms of taste other than attire. The words ‘make sure’ appeared in posts with suggested actions about *lolita* behavior and forum behavior. Regarding ‘supporting’, it was a term that was usually mentioned in self-introductions where users stated their gratitude to supporting the forum or express their support to the new member. Finally, the verb ‘dance’ appeared in a few posts about customs of the *gyaru* subculture.

The thematic group concerned with cultural conscience is composed mostly of posts regarding Japanese culture. Nevertheless, conversations about Mexican culture also seemed to be a point of departure to talk about Japan, or vice versa. Therefore, the next step was going to be an exploration of the most correlated terms to stem words of Mexico in order to find out how the Mexijuku community felt about their own country.

Word	Correlation
hug	1
like	1
support	1
help	1
fall	1
comment	1
knowledge	1
conventions	1
believe	1
to grow	1
to find out	1
drawing	1
difficult	1
to hurt	1
to understand	1
to study	1
happy	1
group	1
to arrive	1
to fill/fulfill	1

Table 6 Top 20 co-related terms to the word México *[Mexico].*

The results were 37 words with a correlation of 1. Due to space constraints, I only showed here the first 20 in alphabetical order (for the rest of the list, please refer to Appendix N). Given the fact that out of the two categories related to Mexico, the one about Criticizing Mexico proved to outnumber the category Comparisons between Mexico and Japan, I was expecting words with negative meaning to appear in the table. However, words expressing community support arose, like 'hug', 'support', 'help', 'to grow', 'to understand'. Other words with a similar nuance that had the same correlation value but do not appear in this top 20 are 'members', 'proposal' and 'users'. In order to take a deeper look into this, I conducted a word frequency query only in the category Criticizing Mexico (Table 7).

The results point out that, just as with other categories, the word '*lolita*' was the most frequent, showing the hegemony of this particular subculture. An interesting finding was that effectively, a word with a positive meaning 'good' was at the top of the list. Following 'good', there was the word 'people', with the same number of iterations. This suggests that members of the Mexijuku community direct their criticism of Mexico towards its people, and possibly their beliefs, minding that the following word in the frequency is 'believe'. Lower in the ranking appeared the negative words that were originally expecting like 'bad' and 'ignorant'. Another important finding was that three subcultures made it into the ranking of the 10 first places: '*lolita'*, '*visual'*, and '*emo'*.

Word	Frequency (N)
lolita	23
to pass	19
visual	18
things	13
good	12
people	12
believe	11
emo	19
say	10
bad	10
mexico	10
persons	10
to say	9
mexican	9
ignorant	8
better	8
way	8
know	8
to leave	7
form	7

Table 7 Top 20 of the most frequent words in the category Criticizing Mexico.

A possible explanation to this phenomenon could be the fact that, on the side of *lolitas*, they are the most numerous and the most active in general in the group, therefore it is a topic that permeates many of the categories. But, regarding *visual kei* and *emo*, they are closely tied as there are many posts where users express their discontent regarding outsiders confusing their *visual kei* aesthetic with the *emo* subculture. The user GazeUverSailles expresses this dissatisfaction in a post about misconceptions about *lolitas* in the forum Visual Kei Mexico:

> I agree, the raeggaetoneras are the prostitutes, if you have doubts just look at how they dance, please they are having sex with clothes. Now, all of us who are VK, because of the way I do my clothes and hair, they call us emos, because these kids of Satan or whatever have a similar way of hair and dress as VK. Now, talking about lolitas, that is really bad, here in Mexico unfortunately there are ignorant people who are closed to knowing other cultures. (…) (For the original text in Spanish, please refer to Appendix G)

This post is a good representation of the flow of discussions in general in the forum. It touched on several topics like group distinction, openness to distinct cultures, and criticism of their local social environment. While she did not talk about Japan explicitly, she did mention Mexico as a country where ignorant people existed and who were not open to "other cultures". This could be interpreted as a tacit awareness of how they diverge as a subculture and the challenges that poses to the local values. Joined to the positive image that members of Mexijuku have of Japan, and the numerous presence of words of support even when talking about Mexico, it could be inferred that their challenges aimed to be constructive. This assumption was further reinforced by the statement of model and designer Carlos Ceballos (also known as Darien Schatz), one of the innovators who was interviewed when he addressed the topic of rebellion:

> (…) Part of my concept of Harajuku or Asian fashion is not really wanting to be like them, but what I take from Harajuku since the first moment is the act of being rebellious. But, I mean, not rebellious as in breaking windows, right? I mean rebellious as in wearing whatever you want (…) (Y)ou can be a rebel

just by going against what you are told is right. (For the original text in Spanish, please refer to Appendix H) (C. Ceballos, personal communication, September 11, 2016)

However, it was important to keep in mind that these discussions about subversion, and going against certain rules, be it of Mexican society or the fashion subculture, seem to remain in an implicit dimension just like the post from GazeUverSailles illustrated. Expressions about rebellion, or challenging the system were absent from the word frequency counts, and the co-occurrence analysis. Something similar happened with acknowledgements of difference. Only the word 'raro' which is Spanish for 'strange' or 'weird' appeared with a 0.99 correlation to the word 'Japan'. It is interesting to note however, that when this word appeared it is in posts when they talk about themselves as being weird, not Japanese goods or Japanese culture. It would seem that their subversion was not voiced out in the form explicit confrontation, and otherness was not expressed in a clear-cut way either. However, these two elements seemed to be embodied in different ways, like criticism of different communities (Bashing dissimilar groups), or criticism of their local society (Criticizing Mexico).

6.5 Summary

In this dissertation, the approach to the community that first adopted/appropriated Harajuku urban subcultures in Mexico was taken as the circuit that could hint at the values and motivations that triggered the perception of Japan as cool. Thus, finding out their main topics of discussion, and the matters developed around Japan and its culture could aid in the search for the values that brought Japan

within the borders of coolness. In this section I analyzed the posts of three forums of the Mexijuku community to find out what they talk about the most, and what are their priorities. From the data it could be inferred that members of Mexijuku found in their passion for Japanese urban fashion a source for community cohesion, cultural conscience and knowledged discussion and diffusion.

Based on the interviews, I was expecting topics related to knowledge acquisition and otherness and/or subversion to come up numerous times and form categories. However, only one of these themes satisfied said prediction. A total of five categories integrated the thematic group Knowledge discussion and diffusion, which came in third, and last, place of post numbers out of all the three thematic groups. Nonetheless, the category of Demonstrating knowledge was the second most numerous individual one, only after Usage of Japanese words, thus establishing itself as a frequent topic in the Mexijuku community. Otherness or subversion were absent not only from the categories, but also from word counts in general and word co-occurrences. Nonetheless, these elements were not entirely invisible. When taking a look at the category about Criticizing Mexico, it was revealed that users did have talks about not being satisfied with their social context or the gazes they receive, and also expressed how they defended themselves and wished for things to be different. In other words, they did exhibit subversive attitudes, but did not verbalize them explicitly. This could suggest two things: on the one hand, it could be assumed that subversion or rebellion is not so much of a priority as it was originally hypothesized; on the other, it could unveil that rebellious acts had their place as underlying, tacit motivations for their actions.

Something similar happened with otherness. It did not climb up in the ranks of frequency nor correlation, but found its way as a veiled conscience of difference. The only word that could have denoted some kind of awareness of otherness was 'weird', but it was later revealed that the instances where this word appeared was to refer to the character of the user himself or herself. For instance, when they said that they had always been considered weird by their peers. In this sense, the perceived weirdness or difference of Japan was not addressed directly, but the weirdness of the members who appropriated its culture was.

I also noted that, contrary to what was predicted, words of solidarity appeared correlated to stem words of Mexico. This surprising outcome was inspected more carefully and results pointed out the tendency of this community to engage in actions with a positive intention. This could also be inferred from the categories and number of posts that comprised them. In the thematic group of Cultural conscience, the lowest ranking categories were Comparisons between Mexico and Japan with 13 posts in average, and Criticizing Mexico with 16.5 posts in average. The remaining three categories of this group could be seen as exaltations of Japanese culture. The category of Things from Japan are good had almost double the amount of posts of each of the two aforementioned critical categories. The category Adopt a Japanese name has 37.5 posts in average and Usage of Japanese words has 127.5 posts in average. These two last categories described a process of inclusion of their perceptions of Japanese culture to their own individual identities. These results could indicate that while the Mexijuku community indeed had a critical view directed towards Mexico, there was a heavier focus on the good things Japan had to offer.

The outcomes of the content analysis pointed out that the integral elements of the image of Japan's coolness in the innovators community of Mexijuku varied from the prediction. Knowledge did appear as an important category of discussion, but instead of otherness and subversion, community cohesion and cultural conscience arose as important traits of the community. Statements about Japan's divergence or the innovators' search for subversion were not as visible as it was expected, thus hinting at a different mode of engaging with Cool Japan that might not be as literal. However, Cool Japan's overall positive-leaning tendency seemed to be replicated within the community not only when approaching Japanese goods and the image of Japan, but also when establishing bonds between themselves and their local culture, which they criticized. In the following chapter I have inquired how these variations could be interpreted in the light of cool and Cool Japan, what could they tell us about the appropriation of Japanese urban fashion in Mexico, and what lessons could be learned from this case of study.

Chapter 7. Data Interpretation.

7.1 Introduction

The previous section laid out the results of the data analysis conducted on three forums that the innovators of the Mexijuku community used to communicate and bond during its first stages of the formation. Some observations regarding the outcomes of the content analysis were explained, and in the present chapter I detailed the interpretations about to how these relate to Cool Japan and the understanding of its inception. In this chapter, I applied the theoretical framework laid in Chapter 4 to each of the thematic groups and tied in all the lose threads to make sense of the results of the content analysis in the light of Cool Japan. While doing so, I highlighted the areas where my case study fulfilled my hypothesis, and where it diverged in order to also assess what particularities this Mexican community could reveal regarding the appropriation and diffusion of Japanese visual and material culture.

This chapter followed the order of the thematic groups, Community cohesion, Cultural conscience and Knowledge discussion and diffusion. They were paired with the sections of the theoretical framework that helped explain their constitutive categories the best. The idea behind that matching obeyed a need for clarity addressing the different theories laid before, and how they were or were not materialized in my object of study. However, minding that the categories were not mutually exclusive, some of them cover only one part of the content of the posts, which is a condition that should also be reflected at the moment of applying the theories explain them. In other words, I looked at the thematic groups and each of their categories individually, but also acknowledging that they were parts of a whole

that interconnected topics, discussions and categories across thematic groups and boards.

7.2 Community cohesion

The category of Community cohesion was explained as the space where the community buildt bonds of trust (Denote belonging to the community), told their personal struggles (Denote hardship), and organized collective activities to strengthen the understanding or diffusion of the object of their fandom (Propose projects). At the same time that they came together, they also fell apart from those who were not their peers. They did so in different ways, like discussing their differences from other communities in particular (I am not X), and from expectations of their social system in general ("Normal people don't understand us"), or by criticizing people that belong to different groups (Criticizing dissimilar groups). In other words, it could be said that this collection of categories could reflect a process of convergence and divergence within identity formation.

In Chapter 4, I argued that approaching Cool Japan through a community that gravitated around fashion held the potential to visibly illustrate the identity formation processes given that apparel, accessories, hairstyles and other sartorial resources belonged to a domain of goods that was often used to signal and infer identity (Berger & Heath, 2007). This proved to be true when I analyzed the conversations in the forums that were dedicated to Japanese urban fashion subcultures. To achieve community cohesion, members of Mexijuku discussed what set them apart, what brought them to the community, and how it impacted their personal lives. However, even though half of the categories in this group showed divergence tendencies, the

ones about convergence were slightly more numerous. The sum of the number of posts that denote divergence in the categories of Criticizing dissimilar groups, Normal people don't understand us, and I am not X, results in a total of 85.5 in average. Contrastingly, the remaining three categories, Denote belonging to the community, Denote hardship, and Propose projects, have a total of 115.5 posts in average. This result could demonstrate that Mexijuku members were more concerned about building bonds between them, than constructing thick walls of divergence.

Part of their activities to bolster their bonds was the organization of projects related to the object of their fandom. In this category they had both online and offline activities that range from meet ups and contests, to the edition of books and diffusion of information to the general public. These initiatives were all self-organized, and self-funded, with no financial objective in sight. Such conditions echoed with Mayer and Timberlake's study about decentralized cultural diffusion systems. In this study, the authors identifed four different kinds of systems, one of which is the Decentralized political-cultural. In this system, the innovation was of political or cultural nature, had limited or no economic incentives motivating its diffusion, and the actors involved were usually peers with a similar status, thus reducing the space for coercion (Mayer & Timberlake, 2014: 32). In this regard, the object of study Mexijuku exhibited these hypothesized conditions of a decentralized system of cultural diffusion that functioned autonomously outside of the scope of an institution, and without the need to have substantial economic resources, like Rogers' diffusion of innovations theory first explained.

Another aspect that was also deemed relevant in terms of identity formation was the establishment of a Self and an Other. In this thematic group I suggested that

the process of convergence and divergence overlapped with the assessment of what was to be considered the Self and the Other for the community. On the one hand, the Mexijuku members create their own Others when they pointed their fingers at different subcultures that they do not want to be aligned with (Criticizing dissimilar groups, "We are not X"). On the other hand, they also establish themselves as Others in the category of Normal people don't understand us, where they highlighted their own divergence from social expectations. In summary, they locate themselves as Others at a global level in Mexican society, but as a Self in the realm of subcultures that they do not want to be associated with.

7.3 Cultural conscience

To continue the analysis of the construction of Self and Other, I explored the realm of Japanese national cultural identity. The categories that belonged to the group of Cultural conscience also exhibited a process of identity conformation, but this time directly entangled with the creation of a Japanese identity as well. The category that covered explicit talks about Japanese goods, society and people did so in a positive manner. Things from Japan are good was in the third place of post numbers in this category with 28 posts in average. However, the emphasis regarding Japanese identity seemed not to be in the understanding of its national cultural image for the Mexijuku members, but on its integration to their own personal identities. This could be clearly seen in the categories of Adopt a Japanese name with 37.5 posts in average and Usage of Japanese words with 127.5 posts in average, standing as the most numerous individual category in the content analysis. These two categories reflected this community's commitment to adopting a Japanese identity themselves. Under this

light, it could be inferred that they deemed Japan good, therefore they wanted to make it their own, and they directed their efforts to this endeavor.

The cultural conscience in this category had two dimensions; on one side, the community praised Japanese visual and material culture, and on the other they criticized their own local social context. In these categories the innovators of Mexijuku navigated their own conscience as an Other within Mexican society and the tensions with the Self by analyzing or opposing the Mexican values they disagreed with, at the same time that they adopted foreign values they agreed with. Based on the literature review and the theoretical framework, I was expecting subversion or confrontational behaviors to be an integral part of this community. However, as it was pointed out during the content analysis, this factor was not as salient as I forecasted. Nonetheless, I saw in this community a drive to diverge from Mexican norms, even if not as a primordial concern.

Aligning this understanding of Mexijuku's form of divergence with the framework of bounded autonomy, it could be said that the Mexijuku fandom concentrates more in the bounded part than in the autonomy one. That is to say, their subversion seemed to lay in a second plane, while the positive and even beneficial nature of their cultural and social divergence was enhanced. Said attitude ran parallel with Warren and Campbell's study on bounded autonomy when they explained that coolness was more likely to arise in products that opposed a perceived illegitimate norm (Warren & Campbell, 2014). In the case of my object of study, the users of the forums of Japanese urban fashion addressed the illegitimacy of certain Mexican norms in the category Criticizing Mexico, and chose to deviate from them adopting a beneficial Japanese identity. In this sense, it could be said that Japanese identity in

this community was performed as a celebration and appropriation of Japanese visual and material culture, and Japaneseness, with subversion as a subtext. In other words, the posts enclosed in the group of Cultural conscience are part of a space of appropriation first, and a space of rebellion after.

As it was previously mentioned, given the historical and theoretical background of Cool Japan laid in this dissertation, it was expected that members of this community would be drawn to the perceived otherness of Japan, or have discussions about it. Even though the word 'special' appeared with a correlation of 1 in the word co-occurrence analysis, which is a term that has been regarded to accentuate uniqueness or singularity (Dale, 1986), the number of posts that directly addressed Japan is much lower than those where users simply adopt Japanese names or Japanese language. However, there seemed to be a tacit conscience of difference expressed in the form of comparisons, as conveyed in the category Comparisons between Mexico and Japan. The results of this thematic group could indicate that Japan was perceived as an Other, and Japanese uniqueness was acknowledged in a positive form (special), but as it was addressed previously, it was a bigger priority to integrate that special trait to themselves. It is also important to recognize that these posts are part of a whole, connected to the discourses of other thematic groups. Therefore, the Mexijuku members' action of appropriating Japanese culture could be connected to the act of also acknowledging themselves as an Other, or as "weird". Also, it could hold a relationship with the importance placed on the acquisition of knowledge in the form of a motivation to look for information about the "special" culture they are appropriating.

7.4 Knowledge discussion and diffusion.

Perhaps the group of categories that satisfied this dissertation's hypothesis the most was Knowledge discussion and diffusion. I approached the Mexijuku community through the theoretical framework of fandom as defined by John Fiske, expecting that the accumulation of knowledge on their object of interest, fashion, would trigger the creation and administration of cultural capital. The forums analyzed revealed that members of Mexijuku value knowledge, interpretations, and creations based on it.

Fiske stated that fans were the most active users of popular cultural capital (Fiske, 1992: 33). They got organized in communities, fandoms, that accumulated knowledge that was later used to interpret, discuss, and even produce their own texts based on their preferred cultural production (e.g. TV series, musicians, comics, etc). This way, fans subverted the disadvantages or uncertainties that the non-official nature of popular cultural capital encompassed, and they opened the possibilities of creating their own communities, and even taking leading roles within them, getting validated by their peers, and achieve empowerment (Fiske, 1992: 42,43). These different behaviors were observed in the Mexijuku community.

First, I saw in the category Demonstrating knowledge, a tendency in users to introduce themselves and state their level of savviness within the subculture. This helped them to organically get organized in hierarchies that eventually affect other activities like project organization or the setting of rules inside the community. For instance, there were dynamics in the *lolita* community to identify the most experienced members so that they could foster the beginners and guide them into

becoming an ideal type. To prove their high rank, the users had to state their knowledge by, for instance, demonstrating how many years had they been active as a *lolita*, and contribute frequently in the forum.

In this thematic group there was also another layer of organization in the category of Do's and Don'ts of the subculture. Based on their acquired knowledge, the users had discussions about the rules of their fandom, and as a corollary, the rules that defined their identity. In this sense, the members of Mexijuku also internally converged and diverged, forming subgroups within the subculture they appropriated, depending on the rules they chose to practice. What is interesting to note is that at times, the rules discussed also included the consideration of the limitations that the Mexican context entails. For example, the user Diwhitekitty says:

> (…) It's like Yukino was saying, what is brand? I have my brand, I make my own dresses and they are exclusive! I make them only for me ha ha… remember that lolitas there in Japan have the stores right around the corner… I don't… I am from the third world… and spending more than 2000 pesos on a dress is a lot for an average family… (For the original text in Spanish, please refer to Appendix I)

This post also evidenced the aforementioned fan production that Fiske mentioned as being part of the fandom's subversive activities of engagement with their object of interest. Back in the inception of the Mexijuku community there was already a sector of Mexican *lolitas* who were producing their own brands, thus laying the antecedents for indie *lolita* fashion brands based in Mexico nowadays.

A deeper understanding of the fan's production can be achieved by looking at the category of Sharing information. The posts here comprised inform the activity of assembling a corpus of information that they deem relevant for their community. The members brought together posts, external links, and curated them in topics. Even though the users were engaging with pieces of information that were not directly produced by them, the source's original language was not Spanish therefore they had to make their own translations in order to make them available to everybody.

Finally, the other two categories in this group enforced the importance of knowledge acquisition within the Mexijuku community. They stated that one of their primary objectives to join the forum was to learn more (I am here to learn), and also address the progress of said process (Learning process). This could suggest that the forum was seen as a tool or a space for developing specified knowledge throughout different stages. Considering the previous thematic groups, it could be said that it was important for the Mexijuku members to have this development together, minding the fact that the forum was also seen as a place for community creation.

In a general sense, this thematic group suggests that Mexijuku indeed worked as a fandom, and as such it produced and distributed cultural capital in different layers, be it in the form of vertical hierarchies or horizontal subsets of subcultures. However, the power that resulted from the accumulation of knowledge about Japanese fashion and Japanese culture in general could also hold another dimension in a community that is embedded within the distribution of a cool cultural unit. The aforementioned study by Warrren and Campbell opened the way for future research when they expressed the consideration of cool as a reward to incentivize socially beneficial change (Warren & Campbell, 2014). They stated that "coolness may offer

an alternative social hierarchy providing status to those whose behavior offers an appropriate alternative to the status quo rather than exclusively to those with wealth or a prestigious family" (Warren & Campbell, 2014). Here cultural capital and bounded autonomy overlap as they both open possibilities to cash the social benefits of cultural capital and an appropriate way of divergence. In other words, there might exist the possibility that in the case of Cool Japan the accumulation of knowledge also plays a role in its coolness.

7.5 Summary

To summarize the findings and their interpretations, I have addressed how they satisfied or not the expectations as laid by my hypothesis and the theoretical framework with the objective of understanding the panorama of Mexijuku vis-à-vis the current understanding of Cool Japan, and the contributions it could make to this field.

Regarding the results that went as expected, as it was already mentioned, the prominence of the activities related to accumulation of knowledge shed light on the behaviors of the Mexijuku community as a fandom, and the nature of some of their subversive activities. Their modes of production and participation overlapped with other parts of the theoretical framework used in this dissertation such as subversion, particularly in its bounded form. Also, it connected with the other thematic groups when moments of cultural consciousness arise as the users locate themselves within the Mexican context to make sense of the information they are receiving and diffusing.

Another theoretical approach that was reflected in the results of the content analysis was the community's position within a decentralized cultural diffusion system. Their organization was vastly based on the accumulation of cultural capital, not on economical resources. As a consequence, also all their activities were self-funded, but with no aims at changing their economical situation.

Finally, the expected execution of explicit convergence and divergence as part of a community focused on fashion was also fulfilled. The content analysis revealed that for members of Mexijuku, the creation of bonds, and walls was an important topic that extended not only to the establishment of their identities within the general Mexican social system, but also among other subcultures. Other thematic groups also showed tendencies to establish Selves and Others, thus revealing different layers of organization and consequently of categorization. For instance, the group of Cultural conscience showed that the users compared Mexico and Japan, manifesting a process of demarcation of differences and similarities. Also, in the group of Knowledge discussion and diffusion the category of Do's and Don'ts exhibited similar tendencies as it provided a space for discussing the rules of the subcultures, enabling the establishment of internal subgroups.

Regarding the unexpected outcomes of the analysis, the two more salient deviations were the lack of emphasis on subversion and otherness. While there did exist moments of delimitation of the Self and the Other, they were not numerous thus suggesting that they were not one of the main concerns of the Mexijuku community. Something similar could be said about subversion, since users acknowledged their places as deviants when they challenge Mexican social norms, but discussions about

this issue were not frequent. Contrastingly, the users focused more on positive traits of Japanese culture and how that brought them together.

Taking this into account, it could be said that subversion and otherization happened in the background, while identity formation, community cohesion and cultural capital accumulation took the foreground. Each of these components interacted with each other with different levels of emphasis, defining the identity of the community and the identity of Japan that they are creating at the same time. Due to the underlying elements of subversion and otherization, the panorama of the entanglement of identity conformation of Mexijuku and Japan was painted with two coats: on the one hand the users assessed themselves as individuals that diverge from their social system; on the other, they focused on Japan's contrasting benefits and choose to appropriate them to satisfy their personal diverging identities.

In order to incentivize a similar phenomenon to happen with Mexican culture, it is necessary to take into account all these components, the way they interact, and how prominent the entanglement of personal identities with national cultural identity is. The next step, then, was to adapt the interpretations of the data and the contributions they could make to understand the creation of a cool Mexican cultural national identity.

Chapter 8. Application to the Mexican Case.

8.1 Introduction

One of the main objectives of this dissertation is to analyze the phenomenon of Cool Japan, its elements and ways of conformation in order to ponder about the possibility to apply it to Mexican culture. I have enquired theoretically about the factors that come in play when conforming a complicit (self)exoticizing image of Japan based on the binary of East-versus-the-West. Additionally, I have delved in the realm of practice and performance of Cool Japan by looking at its concrete reception in the innovators' circuit of Mexijuku. In this section the findings so far have been summarized and I have also analyzed the key lessons from both the instances when the object of study fulfilled my hypotheses and the ones when it diverged. Additionally, to complement, an exploratory inquiry about a Japanese fandom of Mexican culture has been included. This community was taken here as a parallel object of study that could inform of the concrete status of Mexican culture overseas, its image, and modes of diffusion.

8.2 Lessons from Cool Japan

Up to this point in the dissertation there are three main lessons that could be learned from Cool Japan: the importance of explicitly discussing national cultural identities and creating theories around it, the fact that these discourses are received, adapted and practiced in ways that vary from the theory, and the determinant role that innovators have in the diffusion of said discourses. The analysis of these three lessons have been done by first addressing how *nihonjinron*'s complicit exoticism impacted

Cool Japan, next the contributions of the Mexijuku case study both in the light of the creation of their own notions of Japan, and finally the important role they played as innovators.

The historical background and theoretical framework of complicit exoticism suggested that discourses of national cultural identity should be discussed in literature but also expressed through visual and material culture. The part that pertains to exoticism exhibits that the discourses of national cultural identity were embedded in an Orientalist system that tended to (and continues to do so) privilege Euro-American points of view and its conceptualizations. However, the complicit nature of the process allowed certain negotiation and power re-balance as it opened spaces for self-assessment of the Euro-American concepts.

It was previously mentioned that Koichi Iwabuchi's study on complicit exoticism and the discourses that sustained it had as a basis the analysis of *nihonjinron*, or studies on Japaneseness, since he stated that manifestations of complicit exoticism could be openly appreciated in this genre of literature and research (Iwabuchi, 1994: 54). The creation and diffusion of the values of Japanese culture that could be seen in *nihonjinron* literature became relevant at this stage because they maintained the topic of Japaneseness and Japan relevant throughout different decades. Also, the back and forth movement of the conversations between Japan and the United States kept the values like uniqueness, otherization constantly being resignified and reshaped. Even if *nihonjinron* constantly assumed that East and West were different, and implicitly replicated its hierarchical and colonial implications, this self-exotization had at times been exploited to Japan's benefit. The fact that Japan still took the entity of the West as a reference, and even defined itself

under Western terms (Iwabuchi, 1994), was not necessarily a detriment to the powerful impact of its material and visual culture. Koichi Iwabuchi also brought to attention that the discussion of Japaneseness was not only supported by literature, but also by creative industries. This way, *nihonjinron* discourses both embodied by literature and material culture were widely successful overseas because, as Iwabuchi put it "cultural otherness sells in the age of globalization" (Iwabuchi, 1994:68). Complicit exoticism worked as the conversation, or competition, of values that shaped national image. As a result, national image could also be embodied in different containers, like literature such as *nihonjinron*, or creative industries. In the case of the latter, complicit exoticism also became a creative force that could mold Japanese creative industries, and/or their support system. Also, *nihonjinron* had a role to play; it was the carrier of particular values that laid a fertile ground for Japanese products to exploit their "distinctly non-American" traits.

Therefore, one of the first steps that I hypothesized could be taken to open the possibility putting Mexican culture inside a similar system as Cool Japan is the creation of a kind of *mekishikojinron*: the theorization of what is unique to Mexico and Mexicanness. Furthermore, it would be helpful to do so not only locally inside Mexico, but engage in a complicit exoticism with a foreign culture that would help in the redefinition of concepts. Finally, said discourses on Mexicanness could be complemented with the promotion of visual and material culture that represented the image of Mexico that would align with it. However, this should be done with the caution that acknowledging *nihonjinron*'s historical and political baggage might bring. That is to say, that discourses of Japanese uniqueness heavily relied also on discourses on Japanese homogeneity, and its essentialisms. Therefore, cautions should

be when appealing to stereotypes as explanations, but avoiding the repression of cultural diversity.

The next step should be the acknowledgment that the actual reception of discourses on Mexicanness might vary from the theory. Additionally, the exchange among accomplices about national identity could be overheard in territories that are not directly taking part of the conversation. For example, even though Mexico was not being taken into account discursively at the inception of Cool Japan in the United States, nor institutionally as a promotion of Japanese creative industries, communities like Mexijuku engaged in not only the consumption of Japanese goods that they found cool, but also their diffusion.

This relates to the importance of innovators. If Mexican creative industries are going to go down the road of cool and not only of good, it is necessary to appeal to the innovators. It was revealed that even though innovators are theorized as the most subversive, and that they could find cool products and gestures with high levels of subversion, in the Mexijuku community rebellion took the second plane, while community cohesion, cultural conscience and knowledge discussion and diffusion took the spotlight. Therefore, expressions of rebellion and otherness while they should not be disregarded, they should be enacted with more subtlety in favor of promoting Mexican culture as an asset for cohesion and cultural capital.

Regarding the particularities revealed in the content analysis, it became clear that language was an important factor for establishing a relationship with the foreign culture that is appropriated, and among members of the community. This aspect, joined to the tendency to adopt Japanese names, and the very fact of adopting the

rules of the Japanese subcultures, could imply that the members are committed to developing a kind of Japanese identity outside of Japanese soil. It is also important at this point to remember that none of the innovators interviewed, nor the vast majority[3] of the members of the forums had ever been to Japan. Therefore, it could be safe to assume that the creation of these Japanese identities had been mediated through the internet by interaction with peers and with online sources of information. As a conclusion to this point, considering that language is such an important element, including it as part of the promotion of Mexican creative industries could be fruitful.

Nonetheless, the case of Mexijuku, as a fashion community, had the particularity of comprising a set of rules, just like the category of Do's and Don'ts of the subculture shows. This might not be the exact case with Mexican arts and crafts, therefore it is also necessary to acknowledge the characteristics that might be singular to this case. Therefore, it is necessary to assess Mexico's current image, especially within a community of innovators that started to present similar behaviors as the Mexijuku members. The fandom of Mexican culture that arose in Japan seemed to satisfy some of the aforementioned hypothesized requirements to put Mexico and its visual and material culture inside a framework that could help reinvigorate its image.

8.3 From Cool Japan to Warm Mexico

In the introduction of present dissertation, it was mentioned that Mexico had a similar need as Japan to restore its damaged image, consequence of the war on drugs. But, there are other conditions in common between Japan and Mexico that made the

[3] While manually annotating all the forum posts, it was noted that only one member mentioned having gone to Japan.

case of Mexican culture an interesting point of inquiry. In the introduction I also briefly introduced the circumscription of the image of Mexico within a colonial system similar to Orientalism, but in this section I delved deeper in the analysis of the conditions of Mexican culture nowadays and its relationship with Japan.

Nowadays, it could be said that Mexico has not only been the subject of othering, but also of bashing. The most recent form of Mexico bashing came from President Donald Trump who started his campaign saying that Mexicans were rapists, that they brought their worst people to the US, and that they stole jobs from US nationals (Neate, 2015). However, this negative portraiture of Mexico is not new. Former Colorado republican congressman Tom Tancredo had a similar view as President Trump and railed against a "Mexican invasion" of illegal immigrants around 2007 (Arellano, 2012: 5). In this sense, Mexico has been bashed because it was imagined, very vocally and explicitly, as a big threat to the United States' economy and safety. This is not to say that Mexican culture was completely rejected by its northern neighbor. Mexican journalist Gustavo Arellano analyzed how "Mexican food conquered America", and introduced the topic telling the story of the time when he met Tom Tancredo. Arellano and Tancredo got together on 2010 for a public debate about immigration and assimilation of Mexicans, and for a dinner at a Mexican restaurant afterwards. While both parties had opposed points of view, their antagonism seemed to vanish over their plates of Mexican food (Arellano, 2012: 7). Arellano says:

> More than a year later, I can only recall some of the points of my philosophical fisticuffs, but the scene I can't get out of my head is

> Tancredo's ear-to-ear, tamale-induced smile. Tom may not like Mexicans, but he sure loves his Mexican food (Arellano, 2012: 7).

There was an othering of Mexico where it was seen as a Third-World country, opposed to the Euro-American First World, and there was an appreciation for parts of its culture. However, it was the ongoing strong perception of Mexico as a threat that hindered its transformation to a bounded Other, and as a consequence, to coolness. Nonetheless, there was another place in the world where Mexican culture was being othered, appreciated, and not perceived as threatening: Japan.

To make the jump from Cool Japan to Warm Mexico, there are a few considerations to take into account. For instance, the conditions of Mexican culture within Japan, and the historical background that sustained them. Japan had favorable conditions for a Mexican version of the Cool Japan positive othering phenomenon to grow. In fact, it has been happening for almost a decade now. Official Mexican events like the Fiesta Mexicana in Odaiba and Osaka have been around for 17 years now (Japan Times, 2000). However established these events are, it was not until very recently, around 2006, that a small community of Japanese fans of Mexican culture started getting strength in both urban centers and got committed to the diffusion of Mexican culture and the creation of specific events and spaces. Following the concept of the bounded Other as proposed in Cool Japan, where an economic threat is tamed, I have also analyzed the historical background of the Mexican presence in Japan in the 20th century.

In a wider scale, Mexico-Japan relations have stayed on the positive side, albeit with some moments of tension. During World War II, after Japan's attack on

Pearl Harbor, Mexico broke relations with Japan, and the small community of Japanese living in Mexico were subject of restrictive measures (Peddie, 2006). Their bank accounts were frozen, processes for citizenship and naturalization were suspended or revoked, and entire families were relocated and concentrated away from their homes with limited resources (Peddie, 2006). Mexico received and replicated its northern neighbor's propaganda against the Japanese, even if applying it with less rigor. For instance, Mexico did not declare war immediately to Japan, and limited itself to break political and diplomatic relations (Uscanga Prieto, 2015). Nonetheless, the Axis' attack on a Mexican oil boat, *Potrero del Llano*, led the Mexican government to take further actions and actively engage in the armed conflict. The Mexican air force Escuadrón 201 was sent to train in the United States in 1944, and was deployed the next year to aid the attacks led by US forces in Asia, engaging against the Japanese (Salazar & Flores, 1998). Literature about this moment in history often emphasized that Mexico was put in the middle of the conflict between Japan and the United States, countries with whom it had strong economic, and diplomatic relations (Peddie, 2006; García, 2014; Uscanga Prieto, 2015). The discourse of the history-long friendly relationship between Mexico and Japan, as well as the strong presence of Japanese industries in Mexico might have played a role in Mexico's swift normalization of the diplomatic bonds with the Asian country, and its support in front of the international community (Zambrano Barajas, 2007). In the end, it was these latter conditions, the diplomatic and economic partnership between the two countries, that largely defined the hegemonic discourse about the relationship between Mexico and Japan. The antagonism, as well as the segregation of the Japanese population in Mexico during the war have remained mostly invisible to the wide public nowadays, and have just started to be studied in the academia (Peddie, 2006).

That is not to say that the good diplomatic relations, and constantly strengthening economic ones were overestimated. They were indeed ongoing and have been growing in the last decade. In 2005, Mexico and Japan's *Acuerdo de Asociación Económica* [Economic Association Agreement] started to be implemented, which has brought an even more constant flow of Japanese investment in Mexico. By 2014 the number of Japanese companies in Mexican soil had almost tripled (Embajada de Japón en México, 2015). This favorable panorama of international cooperation, joined to the relative invisibility of the historical tensions, signals that for Japan, Mexico is not a threat.

The positive notions of the relationship between Mexico and Japan have been recently countered by the media's depiction of Mexico through the highlight of its insecurity and drug cartel activities. Amidst these conflicting views, a Japanese fandom that was interested in Mexican culture arose. Members of this community took the responsibility to diffuse Mexican products and information about them in a decentralized way through sales, organization of events, exhibitions, books, and websites. The formation of this community is rather recent, therefore, at the moment of writing it is still an incipient phenomenon that has not yet taken a defined shape. Nonetheless, it is already showing some leading figures.

One of the most popular figures among this community is Yōko Sakurai, a Japanese artist who moved to the state of Oaxaca, in southern Mexico. In 2005, she started her own cultural project, Saruya, which is both a blog and an online store that supports local artisans and introduces Mexican culture to Japan (Saruya, 2009). Additionally, she has welcomed other Japanese artists that are interested in Mexico and worked with them selling Mexican crafts (Kaneko, 2012). Another influential

figure is Anderson Yuko, a specialist in Latin American studies who founded the Mexican craft shop Trensa (Trensa, 2007). Both women have presence online and offline; they both manage online shops, blogs, and have written books about Mexican culture.

Their discourses and promotion strategies have influenced a wave of Japanese men and women that got interested in the Northern Latin American country. Nowadays, there are some other Japanese who have set their online shops, blogs, and who travel frequently to Mexico, especially to Oaxaca, in the same fashion as Sakurai and Anderson. Both books by these authors describe Mexico through their own experiences in the state that they liked the most, Oaxaca. Even though they do not theorize explicitly about Mexican identity, they do emphasize the points that they find *miryoku* [attractive], or *dokutoku* [unique] of Mexico. Their insights went further than just a travel guide, even if Sakurai wrote her book mostly as such (Sakurai, Y., 2009: 5). They engaged with the community, told their stories, give historical context about the Pre-hispanic origins of Mexican goods, and describe their colors, but most importantly, their "Mexicanness" (*mekishikorashii*), or "Oaxacaness" (*oahakarashii*). Particularly, Yūko Anderson (2007) approached Mexican culture comparing it to the Japanese one (Anderson, 2007: 29), or by highlighting how she had never seen or tasted anything like what she experienced in Oaxaca (Anderson, 2007: 89). For example, she mentioned how the combination of colors that she saw in Oaxaca's architecture and daily appliances were colorful in a way that she had never seen in Japan, or that could have been considered extremely flashy (Anderson, 2007: 24, 89, 140). Sakurai's book was more historical and concentrated on Mexican material culture. She found that the *dokutoku* [characteristic] trait of Oaxaca's arts and crafts was their freedom of design. Her book started with the statement that in Oaxaca there

were no two items done identically (Sakurai, Y., 2009: 12). The craft makers, or *artesanos*, did things by hand and had creative freedom, thus allowing each product to be distinct and have an "original design" (Sakurai, Y., 2009: 12, 18).

While their discourses on Mexicanness lacked the explicit and deep focus on national identity that *nihonjinron* uses, they did take some steps towards its theorization, and also replicated some strategies similar to those used in *nihonjinron* literature. For instance, they used the words that accentuate uniqueness or singularity, like *tokuchō* or *dokutoku* (Dale, 1986), made comparisons with other cultures to further enhance Mexico's particularities, and used words from the local language to refer to these singular traits. In this case, Mexico was established as an Other when they describe that its characteristics are like nothing they have seen before, or when they had experiences that made them think "where in the world am I?" (Anderson, 2007: 140). Additionally, just like in the case of *kawaii*, which, according to Takamasa Sakurai and the people he interviewed, was a term that had no satisfying translation (Sakurai, T., 2009: 41), Mexico had its own terms too. For instance, for Anderson, the *mercados* are markets with a rich, warm experience where not only goods that she has never seen before are sold, but also function as places where people connect with each other (Anderson, 2007: 24). Even though the word '*mercado*' could be directly translated to English as 'market' or to Japanese as *ichiba*, Anderson constantly uses the word '*merukado*' instead, after she framed it as a special word when she dedicated a full page to describe its particular atmosphere. Something similar happens with the word '*señora*', which she spelled '*senyōra*' in katakana, when she talked about Mexican ladies in Oaxaca's streets or *mercados*. She describes Oaxaca women the following way:

> The women from Oaxaca are strong-willed, and work hard for their families. But, within that strength, there is also charm, as you can see in their smiles and stylish sense. Their checkered embroidered aprons, flower-patterned skirts, fringe shawls, and colorful shopping bags, make me feel like I want to mimic them, but I cannot. Where in the world does this unique maiden-sense come from? (Anderson, 2007: 12). (For the original text in Japanese, please refer to Appendix J)

There were many more examples that both Anderson and Sakurai shared in terms of Spanish language usage. While there were Japanese words for 'market', 'lady', 'craft', the authors insisted on using their Spanish equivalent, spelled in katakana, tinging them with interpretations of cultural uniqueness.

Following the considerations made at the beginning of this chapter, the next step to assess the image of Mexico in Japan would be to analyze the reception of these national cultural image discourses and practices. This way, the following part of this investigation focused on the practice of the discourses of a cool national identity as built through a process of complicit exoticism, and bounding an other. The main objective of the next analysis is to inspect the reception of the images of Japan and Mexico through the fandoms that consumed and diffused said images and products. This could strengthen the understanding of the practical reception of national images, and how they are received, recontextualized and transferred to the sphere of cool in general, and could also aid in the search for the particularities of Mexican culture's appeal in particular. Furthermore, through looking at the fans that became culture promoters, I aimed at establishing a link between the discursive, theoretical and abstract plain of othering, and the general consumption of an othered culture.

8.4 Warm Mexico in practice

I approached the Japanese community of fans of Mexico (Appendix B) and their interpretations of Mexico not through the analysis of their online channels of communication, but by analyzing their interviews. The reason for the change in the unit of my analysis is the fact that this community does not have as many communal activities online as it does offline. While they have created spaces of diffusion in the Internet with their blogs or webpages, participating in events, and promoting Mexican goods in them seems to be their primary way of cohesion. Therefore, in this section I am going to analyze the responses to the interviews that were done to key members of the community that hold opinion leadership positions. The chosen actors are all brand CEOs, event managers, or gallery owners. They were asked about their experiences within the community, their contact with Mexican culture, and the specific traits and things they like about Mexico. Compared to the Mexijuku community, these individuals have all visited Mexico more than once, and/or have studied there. Therefore, they were also asked about their experience when getting in touch directly with Mexico. In this case also an exploratory word frequency analysis was conducted and a word cloud was generated.

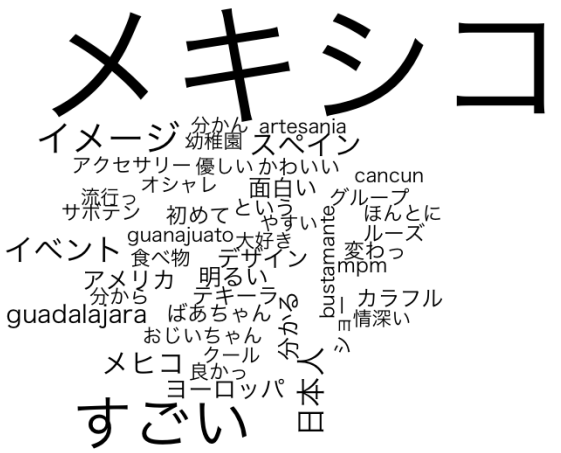

Figure 1 Word cloud from all the interviews with Japanese fans of Mexican culture.

The word cloud showed that the words '*mekishiko´* [Mexico] and '*sugoi*' [great] had a high occurrence. Also, Spanish words appeared, including the names of places like Guadalajara, Cancun, and Guanajuato, names like Bustamante, but also the replication of the usage of the word '*artesanía*' to refer to Mexican crafts. I also see the presence of other words that were frequent in the books written by Anderson and Sakurai; '*kawaii´*, '*karafuru*' [colorful] and '*akarui*' [cheerful]. What is interesting to note is that the words *'kūru*' [cool], and '*oshare*' [trendy] also appeared, albeit with less frequency.

The results of the word count confirmed an affinity with the discourse laid by Sakurai and Anderson in their books, where they portrayed Mexico as colorful, friendly, and cute. However, there were places where the views of the community members also diverged. For instance, Oaxaca was not mentioned, whereas Guadalajara was. This was due to the fact that Guadalajara and Kyoto are sister cities, and thus represented a strategic launching point for the event Mexican Port Market and the import of high-end Mexican jewelry. Also, the members often refered to Mexico as '*mehiko*', instead of the usual Japanese pronunciation, '*mekishiko*'. This

also suggests a replication of the aforementioned language tendencies, where the adoption of words used in the exoticized country were extracted and used to exalt its uniqueness. Consequently, the word '*supeingo* '[Spanish], referring to the language, appeared in a high ranking spot, right below '*nihonjin*' [Japanese], referring to the nationality. The results further enforced the impression that for this community the usage of Spanish, and the comparison with their own customs were instrumental in the creation of an image of Mexico. Furthermore, comparisons with Europe and the United States appeared as additional points of comparison to locate Mexican culture.

Word	Frequency (N)
Mexico	198
great	74
image	33
event	23
Japanese	23
Spanish	20
México	19
Guadalajara	14
Europe	13
United States	12
understand	12
cheerful	12
design	11
interesting	11
colorful	9
tequila	9
first time	9
old lady	8
changed	8
kawaii	7

Table 8 Top 20 most frequent words used by the Japanese fandom.

To deepen on the understanding of the image of Mexico in Japan, a co-occurrence analysis was conducted with the term Mexico, spelled '*mekishiko´*. However, only one Word appeared as correlated; '*hajimete*' [first time]. Hence, instead of Mexico spelled in the usual way, I tried with Mexico, spelled as '*mehiko*'. This time, more words appear as co-occurring (for the version of the chart in the original language, please refer to Appendix O).

Word	Correlation
activity	1
friendship	1
field	1
family	1
idea	1
passion	1
sympathy	1
strange	1
care	1
mutual	1
boring	1
accessory	1
approach	1
artist	1
appeal	1
gallery	1
Taxco	1
friendly	1
Latin	1
kind	1

Table 9 Top 20 most correlated words with the term Mehiko *[Mexico].*

The first 9 correlated words were in Spanish and among them there are words referring to belonging like '*familia*' [family], and '*amistad*' [friendship]. Also, words that signal the importance of creative industries like *akusesarī* [accessory] '*ātisuto*' [artist], and '*gyararī*' [gallery] ranked among the Top 20. Finally, even though the state of Oaxaca did not appear correlated, there were words that enforced the exoticizing image of Mexico and its appeal a friendly country, such as '*osewa*' [care], '*simpatía*' [sympathy], '*pasión*' [passion], '*otagai*' [mutual], *yasashii* [kind] and *hitonatsukkoi* [friendly]. However, there were also opposite words like '*okashii*' [strange], '*tsumaranai*' [boring]. The instances when these words came up were related to comparisons between Mexico and Japan.

The content analysis of the interviews to key actors in the diffusion of Japanese and Mexican culture suggested that the drive to compare the local culture with the admired foreign one is a constant for both communities. In the case of the Mexican fans, the word 'Japan' appeared in the 8th place of the frequency word count, and while 'Mexico' appears in the 35th place, it still represents the community's point of departure to approach Japan. Generally, the context to mention their own country was to point out things that they deemed lacking. For instance, some mentioned that Mexicans lack effort, lack dedication, and have low respect for the different. Under this light, even though words like 'different' and 'foreign' ranked low in the word count, the tendency to compare puts both Mexican and Japanese culture on a stage of implicit contrasts.

On the other hand, for the Japanese fans of Mexican culture, mentioning Japan served not only to point out differences, but also to mention Japan's limited understanding of Mexico. One of the interviewees even mentioned explicitly how she

wanted to share Mexico's varied and rich culture, since there are many people who did not know it and only got the news that usually focused around the mafia. This vision could be directly related to another high-ranking word, '*kawatta*' [changed]. Most of the interviewees that mentioned this word, did so in the context of their experience before and after going to Mexico. It is also worth mentioning that there did not seem to be a pattern in the motives that have driven these people to Mexico, but they all seemed to have expected something different from what they actually lived when going.

Regarding patterns within and across the fan communities, there were many other aspects that should be addressed in further research to deepen the understanding of the image-molding process. For instance, the socio-economical conditions of each population seemed to be different, which could in some extent influence the communities' resources to get in touch with the othered entity and to develop their own projects. Even gender and sexuality could shed light on the needs of the population of the communities. During this first approach, it was noted that the Mexican community, and their leading figures, are composed by a mixed population of female and male members, with a predominance of the former. Also, many of them identified with some spectrum of the LGBT community. On the side of the Japanese community, all the interviewees were female, which in turn represented the largely female population of attendees and participants of the events related to Mexican culture in Japan. These aspects are only two of the various others that should be addressed in the future to investigate the depths of the communities that adopt, mold, and diffuse a foreign culture in their own country, and the relationships they establish with cool and complicit exoticism.

8.5 Summary

The case studies taken into account for this dissertations hold differences and particularities among each other. For instance, compared to the complicit exoticism that shapes Cool Japan, Mexico only has the othering part established, but has not yet started negotiating its identity with its accomplice, Japan. Nonetheless, the two nations have had a relationship of complicit exoticism on the side of Japan, due to the reception of the Cool Japan discourse in Mexico. Even if there are still no studies specifically about Cool Japan's cultural or commercial development in Mexico, the Mexican audiences and fans of Japanese popular culture seem to consume the catalogue of goods covered by the Cool Japan discourse, albeit with their localizations (Hernández, 2012). Also, it is important to mention that Mexico has started to participate recently in Cool Japan programs like the *kawaii* ambassadors, mostly a result of the efforts of the private sector that started in forums like the ones here analyzed. In the case of fans of Mexican culture in Japan, they have also engaged in activities of diffusion and consumption that are started as self-funded and decentralized, but mainly in offline spaces. Even though the phenomenon is relatively recent, the community has started also to get inside the scope of institutionalization as they get more involved with the Mexican embassy in Japan. One of the biggest contributions that this community has done was to lay a fertile ground for the development of a discourse of Mexicanness that has similar characteristics to those that have been the result of complicit exoticism.

Another particularity in the relationship between Mexico and Japan was the kind of othering relationship. Cool Japan had the dichotomy West vs East as one of its motors, but between Mexico and Japan not only the exoticizing gaze was coming

from the East, but from a culture that has been subject to othering as well. Both cultures involved are discursive Others. However, even if Mexico's recent othering in US. media presents a negative portrait of Mexico as a threat (Chuang & Roemer, 2015), Japan seemed to be coming up with its own portraiture of Mexico. While in the United States the election of Donald Trump as president has further affected the image of Mexico (Reuters, 2017), and enhanced the image of the Latin American country as a threat (Thrasher, 2017), in Japan there is a community that sees Mexico as warm, colorful, and *kawaii* country (Sakurai, Y., 2009), beyond the violence described by the media.

Consequently, the two cultures are engaging in a two-way complicit exoticism. In this case it is not the same complicit exoticism that happened during the decades of 1970 and 1980 when the Japanese growing economical dominion triggered a counter-discussion on "Americanness" (Iwabuchi, 1994: 62). The current panorama involves Mexico and Japan having two different othering conversations at the same time. On the one hand, Mexico has emulated the Cool Japan discourse and started to adapt it. On the other, Japan has commenced an image of a warm, *kawaii* Mexico. Literature on Cool Japan can serve as a reference for understanding the Mexican fans' image of Japan, and the aforementioned books and blogs can give hints about the Japanese fans' image of Mexico, theoretically. However, given the fact that both these communities and their specific localization and diffusion activities have remained under-researched, it became necessary to reach directly to them in order to find out how they built their discourses and what were the values they attached to the foreign culture they have engaged themselves with. Besides, their role as initiators and discourse boosters placed them at the center of the discussion about how othering identities got interpreted and diffused.

The process of building a national identity based on complicit exoticism requires a conversation between two nations, but does not necessarily involve the colonial tension between the West vs the East. As it was shown with the case studies from Mexico and Japan, a conversation about both countries' national identities is not only taking place among othered cultures, but hold parallel negotiations of othering. That is to say, a two-way complicit exoticism could happen beyond a counter-discussion, result of the fear of a threat, and develop two parallel negotiations of national identity without entering a zero-sum-game (Iwabuchi, 1994). Also, the presence of a bounded Other was theorized as a variable that could trigger coolness. In the case of the United States, there was a tangible tension with Japan's growing economy. However, in Mexico, Japanese investment was welcomed, due to the amount of jobs it generates (Embajada del Japón en México, 2015). Japan was seen as cool (*padre*), but its status as a threat has been virtually erased from the collective view. Therefore, it might not be exactly a bounded Other, but a beneficial Other. However, Japan's otherness did not appear as a common topic of explicit discussion. The content analysis pointed out that even though difference, and rebellion were mentioned, they were not as much of a priority. However, there was evidence of a tacit cultural conscience that triggered moments of comparison, which could imply an acknowledgement of differences between the local and the foreign culture.

In the case of Japan, given the friendly relations that both countries hold, Mexico is not necessarily seen as a threat either. Also, similarly to the case of the Mexijuku community, explicit statements about Mexico's distinction were not among the most discussed topics. However, comparisons between Mexican and Japanese cultures also signaled an implicit acknowledgement of difference in a similar manner

as the Mexican community of Japanese urban fashion subcultures. At the same time, this community seemed to be replicating more strongly the discourses on Mexicanness as laid by Yūko Anderson and Yōko Sakurai. The words for 'colorful', 'passion', 'sympathy', 'compassionate' appeared with a high frequency and as highly correlated with the word México. Also, the pattern to adopt the language as a part of their community is present in all their members. The most frequent words were all in Spanish, and the word that provided the most correlations was the Spanish-adapted word '*mehiko'*, instead of the usual one, '*mekishiko'*. Even though the word *cool* appeared in the word cloud and occupies the 38th place in frequency, the terms replicated in this discourse on Mexicanness point at an image of Mexico as a place of human warmth.

Further research needs to be done to assess these two communities to find out the localizations of Cool Japan on othered countries, and to explore the possibilities for a cool complicit exoticism to take place among other cultures. The idea of a bounded Other could help shed light on theoretical assumptions about national image and cool. However, given the political and historical baggage that the bounded Other entails, the political engagement or conscience of these communities should be tested in order to achieve a better understanding of the cultural phenomenon.

The present study started taking Japan as a point of departure to understand the process of national identity and coolness based on a complicit exoticism, but finished in Mexican territory. Mexico is seen as an active receiver; it receives the discourse of Cool Japan, and localizes it, and receives lessons to follow regarding a possible cool, or warm, national identity. The lessons can be drawn from Cool Japan that can be implemented in the Mexican case are two. First, Mexico needs to enter in

contact with Japan to negotiate the exoticism created there and trigger a complicit relationship. Two, to complement and strengthen point number one, it is necessary to develop more explicit discussions on Mexicanness both inside and outside Mexico, based on these notions of Mexico as a bounded warm other. The significance of the discussions on Japaneseness, *nihonjinron*, point out that Mexico could establish a "battleground" through literature and creative industries to explicitly theorize on Mexican identity.

Chapter 9. Conclusions.

9.1 General summary

This dissertation was started with the main objective of understanding the dynamics and patterns that led to the achievement of a cultural cool status of Japan through its material culture. I wanted to achieve this in order to take initial steps to create a guideline of considerations to apply to other cultures, i.e. Mexico. The Japanese case of coolness presented diverse advantages, given not only its relative long development since 2002 (McGray, 2002) when the phenomenon got its name, but also due to the amount of literature that exists about it as an object of study. This situation provided several options to take as points of departure. In this sense, both the historical background and the literature review worked not only as requirements to frame my own object of study, but also as general studies in themselves about the tendencies within approaches to Japan, to coolness and to Japanese coolness.

The first tendency to arise at that stage was the preeminence of binary narratives (Frank, 1997) at different levels. For instance, in the case of Japanese national cultural identity, the imaginary poles of West versus East and their emulation with Self versus Other remains a constant in the history of the construction of Japanese national cultural identity (Iwabuchi, 1994). On the side of cool, something similar happens, as the dichotomy of subculture versus the system takes the spotlight. At the same time, these dualities are enclosed and interpreted based on yet another system sustained by imaginary poles, which I described as typologies of interpretations or approaches to the objects of study. On the one hand I explained the definitions of coolness as an elusive attitude that could only be explained through

examples, and its equivalent within the Cool Japan literature who also provided a sort of list of material culture that represented Japanese coolness. On the other hand, I pointed out the corpus of literature that saw cool as a measurable and reproducible trait, that could also be seen in literature about Cool Japan. However, I also acknowledged that these dualities had points of overlap and communication, which hinted at the existence of gray areas between the Self and the Other, West and East, subcultural and institutional, and elusive and reproducible.

In order to open up the conversations about cool and a cool national cultural identity to other territories of reception and generation it was necessary to start dismantling these binary narratives and the limitations they entail. In this sense, the aforementioned gray areas of overlap and even more so, the darker ones that "fell through the cracks" (Kaiser, 2013: 23) of the studies mentioned in the literature review became essential. The chosen realm of material culture to shed light on these areas of juxtaposition was fashion, and the geographical territory to study its performance as well as the application of the lessons learned was Mexico.

I hoped that by choosing Mexico I could open the discussion about how an Other receives othering, which is relevant given the fact that the process of appreciation of Mexican culture as cool, or warm, with Warm Mexico is starting in an othered territory: Japan. In this sense, my assessment of the practical conditions that led to Japan's coolness could be seen not only in a general sense of how the theorized conditions are actually practiced, but also how are they practiced inside a territory that has also been othered.

As a consequence, the topic of otherness was also fundamental for this dissertation. However, given the pre-condition of the present dissertation to approach Cool Japan departing from the understanding of cool, the task of interpreting otherness got entangled with the salience of subversion as a condition for cool to arise. The objective of trying to find out what triggers coolness called for such a measure, especially because I was trying to dissect the elements of national cultural identities that play an active role in the construction of a cool Other. This way, the elements discerned as having those characteristics were the construction of an other and the inclusion of a bounded form of subversion (Warren & Campbell, 2014). In other words, creating a discourse of a bounded Other through dynamics of complicit exoticism (Iwabuchi, 1994) was theorized as an essential trait in the national cultural identity of Japan as cool.

The term of the bounded Other was the result of the historical background explained in Chapter 2, and the theoretical framework laid in Chapter 4. I supported the idea that the back and forth negotiation to define Japan's national cultural identity throughout its latest history suggests that it is mostly determined by an Orientalist system (Iwabuchi, 1994). The contemporary iteration of said process took place in the 20th century with Japan's recession, when Japanese visual and material culture's global presence stopped being an economical threat according to Euro-American views, and went back to have the appropriate levels of divergence that could fit the aforementioned Orientalist system. An explanation of how this got tied with coolness was offered by looking at the study of bounded autonomy by Warren and Campbell (2014) which suggested that perceptions of coolness were more likely to appear when products, or in this case material culture, showed appropriate modes of autonomy, instead of excessive autonomy. This case could also inform of how the opposition of

hard power in the face of soft power also determined the realms where coolness was enacted. In other words, it could be inferred that cool deviance was bounded to the cultural sphere, but if it were to happen in the economic or military sphere it could turn into a threat, an excessive deviance, thus cancelling its potential coolness.

However, I also pointed out that the abstractions and essentialism that fueled discourses of complicit exoticism like Cool Japan were enabled by the commodification of the material culture that represented said discourses (Iwabuchi, 1994: 68). That is to say, there existed a link between the theory of Cool Japan as a discourse and its representation through a selection of visual and material culture that got further enhanced with the growing presence of Japanese products in the decades of 1980 and 1990. Given this connection, it was also important to study the practice of Cool Japan; its actual reception and consumption.

To explore the practice of Cool Japan, and the possibility to apply it to Mexico, I had to build a map of the different points of view of cool and Cool Japan that would be both coherent with the objective of dissecting and dismantling the aforementioned binary narratives, but that would also acknowledge cool's multidimensional and dynamic nature. The mapping of cool and Cool Japan would provide the initial categories to start viewing the different layers of adoption/appropriation that culture goes through when it starts being viewed as cool. This needs were tackled with an adaptation of some parts of the diffusion of innovations theory explained by Everett M. Rogers (1983). It was concluded that cool starts as a decentralized system of diffusion, and that instead of being neutrally adopted, the cultural Innovation gets appropriated, thus acknowledging the power relations that get manifested in exoticizing discourses. Finally, subversion and its

different forms, counterculture, autonomy, rebellion, were also included as elements of cool. The map pointed out that to find out what made Japan cool, or any other cultural Innovation, it was necessary to reach out to those that lead the appropriation chain: the innovators.

I took as my main case study the innovators of the Mexican community Mexijuku, to find out their communication channels and the ideas about Japan that they shared in them. I wanted to test whether the theorized high levels of subversion would actually inhabit this community, and whether this was manifested in their conversations. Also, I wanted to inquire what was their image of Japan and Japanese culture. To interpret their activities and discussions I framed them as a fashion fandom. With the framework of fandom, I acknowledged their management of cultural capital as they accumulated and discussed knowledge on the foreign culture they were adopting. And with the framework of fashion, I tackled the processes of identity construction and signaling that were performed.

This stage was when I started applying the theorized concepts, and test the assumptions done in the first theoretical section of the dissertation. The historical background, literature review, and theoretical framework point out the importance of otherness and subversion as triggers to perceptions of cool, and of innovators as actors of cool. Fashion was taken as the selected form of material culture that represents Japanese cool, and accumulation of knowledge as a possible addition to the elements that trigger perceptions of cool.

Then, I proceeded to the content analysis of the three forums that I could access. In the portals I could find conversations of some Mexijuku members at the

inception of the community. That is to say, when they were taking their first steps towards organization and conformation of their points of view. The results suggested that knowledge discussion and diffusion indeed proved to be a priority for this community, not only in terms of local organization, but also as a source of Japanese traits that they could add to their identities. However, othering and subversion took the background, while community cohesion and cultural conscience got a more prominent role. That is not to say that subversion and othering were completely absent, rather they were veiled and motivated actions to accomplish different objectives. For instance, othering was not done just for the sake of pointing out how different or foreign Japanese fashion was, but took the form of comparisons, to highlight differences between Mexico and Japan.

Regarding the nuances of these differences, they somewhat align the the notion of the bounded Other, even though othering did not appear as a priority topic of discussion. That is to say, Japan was seen as special according to the word co-occurrence analysis and the categories of Comparisons between Japan and Mexico, and Things from Japan are good, but it was all seen in a positive light. In this sense, Japan does show appropriate modes of divergence. And perhaps not only appropriate but beneficial. I mentioned as well that this particular positivity was briefly introduced in Warren and Campbell's study about bounded autonomy. They said that certain subversive activities, when directed against a norm that is perceived illegitimate, could lead to coolness as a way of rewarding socially beneficial change (Warren & Campbell, 2014). Nonetheless, as it was mentioned in Chapter 2, the history and historiography of cool also showed a discriminatory tendency to leave out female figures or foreign cultures out of the Euro-American scope. Therefore, it should be taken with care the assumption that cool could bring only benefits, and

stand for just rebellions. Instead, I suggested that cool brought power. Those who stood against illegitimate norms, and in the case of Mexijuku, against illegitimate Mexican values, got rewarded with the power of cool. The acquisition of power was suggested by John Fiske's (1992) account on fandom, when he mentioned that cultural capital could be exchanged to power in the form of climbing up in the hierarchies of the fandom. However, I put forward for consideration the idea that said cultural capital could also be cashed in in coolness. If perceptions of beneficial social change through a bounded rebellion were to meet with the accumulation of cultural knowledge about an othered culture, cool could be reinforced at an innovators level.

Before moving to discussing the concluding lessons to be learned about Cool Japan, the introductory exploration of the Japanese innovators community was addressed. The community of innovators who have started to approach Mexico in ways that are desirable to boost discourses and consumption like that of Cool Japan comes in as a useful object of study to ground my suggestions to follow. It was concluded that said exploration was helpful as it revealed that more than a Cool Mexico, it should be addressed as Warm Mexico. The co-occurrence analysis revealed that the word Mexico was correlated with words like '*sugoi*', and '*kawaii*', but also its overall image was that of a culture of human warmth.

Regarding points in common with the Mexijuku case, notions of othering were also present in veiled manifestations such as comparisons. At the same time, the community presented a behavior similar to the Mexijuku members when they adopted words from the foreign culture they are adopting. Also, Mexico appeared to be portrayed in a favorable light, although it should be further researched whether this community also looks up to Mexico.

9.2 Contributions

To address this dissertation's contributions, first I have tackled how the research questions were replied and whether the hypotheses were fulfilled. Then, this research's overall contributions were explained.

This dissertation's first research question was "how is Japanese culture perceived and how do these traits relate to coolness?". I hypothesized that the image of Japan in Mexico would be that of a free, unique, and creative culture, due to its bounded otherness, and that it related to coolness by providing innovators with references to visually and materially perform their subversion. This assumption was half-fulfilled, since freedom, uniqueness or creativity did not rise as correlated words nor as priorities in the topics of discussions. However, bounded otherness came up as an implicit trait hosted in discussion to reach certain objectives (e.g. Comparisons between Japan and Mexico). Also, Japan did provide them with references to add to their identities, however the process of identification as subversive took a turn that was different than expected. The Mexijuku members did not assume themselves as explicitly subversive, but as Others inside their Mexican social system. Therefore, in this sense, Japanese urban fashion provided them with references to signal said otherness, thus also enforcing the supposition that Japan's otherness acts as an underlying layer that motivates other explicit actions.

The second question was "what are the characteristics and motives of the audiences that first appropriated Japanese urban fashion in Mexico?". My hypothesis was that the motivation for innovators to appropriate Japanese urban fashion would

obey their subversive tendencies, hence their objective to integrate Japan's uniqueness and otherness to their own identity. At this stage, subversion, otherness, and knowledge acquisition were expected to arise as determinant factors of Japan's coolness for this community. This assumption got also partially satisfied. As it was previously mentioned, the community's subversion is not explicit, but it still plays a role in determining, even if peripherally, their identity construction and signaling. What seems to make them integrate Japan's perceived special traits is their self-assessment as Others.

Finally, this study's third research question was "what is the current status of Mexico's image in Japan?". I hypothesized that Mexico would be seen also as unique, creative, and other, but traditional would come up as a particular trait that Japan would not have manifested. Here, I found out that Mexico was seen as a place of human warmth and that was deemed one of its main reasons to be attractive. The word co-occurrence analysis also showed that while the word *creative* did not appear as correlated, words like '*artist'*, '*accessory'*, and '*gallery*' pointed out that the identity of Mexico was largely constructed through the approach to its creative industries. The hypothesis of Mexico seen as traditional was not satisfied since the word '*traditional*' did not appear as correlated nor frequent.

Based on how these questions were responded, I can say that this dissertation's contributions are the following: a) by approaching Cool Japan through the understanding of cool, I revealed that it is necessary to consider elements that turn material culture from being perceived as merely good to being seen as cool. This leads us to suggesting that subversion and othering in the form of a bounded Other helps to determine a foreign culture's coolness; b) complicit exoticism also showed

that to negotiate otherness it is necessary to have an accomplice. Under said term, Mexico would have to enter a conversation with its potential accomplice, Japan, to enhance the notion of Warm Mexico; c) by bringing Mexico to the conversation, I hope to have taken an initial step to opening a research path that would bring more attention to different modes of engaging with cool and Japanese cool, but also to broaden the spectrum of negotiation of identities beyond the binary narrative of West-versus-the-Rest.

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and heart, that's why I want to spread it along the world with Misako san. I will do my best. =) Nice to meet you all! (^▽^)σ)[Photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/japanlolita/photos/a.402961086466976.87424.401585729937845/425579127538505/?type=3&theater

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11 Appendices

11.1. Images

Appendix A

Picture of the members of the Mexijuku community during the Mexijuku walk 2016

(from page 157)

Picture by Mexijuku. Reproduced with permission.

Taken on July 23rd, 2016

Source:

https://www.facebook.com/Mexijuku/photos/a.1423086557936447.1073741829.1423027687942334/1775903135988119/?type=3&theater

Appendix B

Pictures of some Mexican culture fans community in Tokyo during the Mexican Port Market at Yokohama, 2017 (from page 222)

Pictures by Mexican Port Market. Reproduced with permission.

Taken on May 24th, 2017

Source:

https://www.facebook.com/mexicanportmarket/photos/a.229356357552408.1073741830.193541834467194/229359874218723/?type=3&theater

11.2 Translations

Appendix C

Original text in Japanese from Sakurai T. (2009). *Sekai kawaii kakumei: nazekanojotachi nihonjin ni naritai to sakebu noka*. PHP Kenkyujo (from page 102).

そうですね。たとえば、ハローキティはカワイイですが、スヌーピーはカワイイとはいいません。カワイイという言葉は東京チックなものに対する評価が含まれています。

(English translation: For example, Hello Kitty is kawaii, but you cannot the same about Snoopy. There is a Tokyoish value embedded in the word kawaii.)

Appendix D

Original text in Spanish from the interview with Mexican former *dekora* Amarain (Fanuni) (from page 163)

Es un país que piensa muy diferente. Aparte de que es muy tradicional, porque sí tiene muchas tradiciones, también es muy abierto. Porque los chicos se visten de mujeres y así. Igual todavía no entiendo bien eso ni por qué sucede eso en Japón, pero sí me gustaría visitar allá.

(English translation: Japan is a country where people think very differently. Although there is a traditional part, they are also very open. For example, you see guys dressed as girls. I would love to visit, even if I am still not so sure about what is going on there.)

Appendix E

Original text in Spanish from the interview with Mexican Harajuku walk (Mekijuku) organizer Karla Hernández (Kissa) (from page 164)

(…) Es algo muy característico de la moda asiática. Específicamente de Japón porque creo que en comparación a otros países, no sé China Corea, incluso, no sé, Tailandia, o sea hay países que son más retrógradas, no permiten tantas libertades, y Japón como que se ha dado mucho el experimentar sobre distintas culturas.

(English translation: (…) It is something very characteristic of Asian fashion, specifically from Japan because I think that in comparison to other countries, like China, Korea, or even Thailand, there are countries where they are more backwards, they don't allow so many liberties whereas Japan has allowed experimentation with different cultures.)

Appendix F

Original text in Japanese from the interview with jewelry maker Yumiko Ono (from page 165)

気に入っているところは、皆がオープンなところで。なんだろな？日本にいる時にね、私はすごく人懐っこくて、日本人はクローズだから浮いてた。だけど、メヒコに行ったら私のそのオープンな性質が、すごく歓迎されて、寧ろそういう人しかいなくって、私が普通だった。だからその世界によって、何が普通かは違うでしょう？

(English translation: The thing that I like is that everybody is open. When I am in Japan, I am very friendly and since Japanese are closed, I stand out. But, when I am in Mexico, everybody is usually that open, so I feel very welcome, or more like there is only people like that, so I feel like I was normal.)

Appendix G

Original text in taken from the forum Visual Kei México (from page 195)

Estoy de acuerdo, las reggetoneras son las prostitutas, si no solo miren como bailan, por favor están teniendo sexo con ropa Ahora todos los que somos VK, por la forma de vestir y peinarnos, nos dicen emos, dado que estos engendros del demonio, o de lo que sea, tienen la forma forma de peinarse y vestirse como un VK, ahora lo de las lolitas, eso es muy malo, aqui en México desgraciadamente hay personas ignorantes, y se niegan a aprender otras culturas (…)

(English translation: I agree, the raeggaetoneras are the prostitutes, if you have doubts just look at how they dance, please they are having sex with clothes. Now, all of us who are VK *(visual kei)*, because of the way I do my clothes and hair, they call us emos, because these kids of Satan or whatever have a similar way of hair and dress as VK. Now, talking about lolitas, that is really bad, here in Mexico unfortunately there are ignorant people who are closed to knowing other cultures. (…))

Appendix H

Original text in Japanese from the interview with make up artist and fashion brand owner Carlos Ceballos (Darien Schatz) (from page 195-196)

(…) O sea, como que parte de mi concepto de Harajuku o de la moda asiática no es tanto ser o querer ser como ellos, sino que lo que yo tomo del Harajuku desde el primer momento es como el acto de ser rebelde pero vamos, no rebelde de que vas a romper vidrios y ¿no? Sino me refiero a la rebeldía de usar lo que quieras (…) puedes ser rebelde pero sólo por ir en contra de lo que te dicen que está bien ¿sabes?

(English translation: Part of my concept of Harajuku or Asian fashion is not really wanting to be like them, but what I take from Harajuku since the first moment is the act of being rebellious. But, I mean, not rebellious as in breaking windows, right? I mean rebellious as in wearing whatever you want (…) (Y)ou can be a rebel just by going against what you are told is right.)

Appendix I

Original text in taken from the forum Tea Party Mexico (from page 207)

(…) (Y) como dice yukino, qué es marca? yo tengo mi marca...yo hago mis vestidos y son exclusivos!!! pues solo los hago para mi ja...
recuerden que pues sí, las lolitas de haya en Japón tienen las tiendas a la vuelta de su casa... nosotras no... nosotras somos tercermundistas.. gastar mas de 2000 pesos en un vestido es mucho para una familia promedio...

(English translation: (…) It's like Yukino was saying, what is brand? I have my brand, I make my own dresses and they are exclusive! I make them only for me ha ha… remember that lolitas there in Japan have the stores right around the corner… I don't… I am from the third world… and spending more than 2000 pesos on a dress is a lot for an average family…)

Appendix J

Original text in Japanese from Sakurai T. (2009 Sakurai, Y. (2014). *Arutesania ga kawaii: Mekishiko Oahaka he [Artesanía is kawaii: to Mexico and Oaxaca]*. Tokyo: Ikarosu Shuppan. (from page 222-223)

オアハカの女性たちは家族思いでよく働き、逞しい。でも、そんな強さの中に、笑顔とお洒落心も覗かせていてとてもチャーミング。刺繍入りのチェックのエプロンに、花柄のプリントスカート、フリンジ付きのショールに、カラフルなお買い物バッグ等など真似したくても真似できない、あの独特の乙女センスは一体どこから来るのかしら。

(English translation: The women from Oaxaca are strong-willed, and work hard for their families. But, within that strength, there is also charm, as you can see in their smiles and stylish sense. Their checkered embroidered aprons, flower-patterned skirts, fringe shawls, and colorful shopping bags, make me feel like I want to mimic them, but I cannot. Where in the world does this unique maiden-sense come from?)

11.3. Tables

Appendix K

Word frequency chart in Spanish (from page 173)

Main word	English word	Frequency (N)	Similar words/derivatives
lolitas	lolitas	1154	*lolita, lolitas, lolitosa, lolitosas, lolitoso, lolitosos*
gusto	taste/like	541	*gusta, gustaba, gustaban, gustado, gustan, gustando, gustar, gustara, gustará, gustaría, gustarme, gustaron, gustas, guste, gusten, gusto, gustó, gustos*
buenos	good	525	*buen, buena, buenas, bueno, buenos*
foros	forum	479	*foro, foros*
hacían	do/make	453	*hace, hacemos, hacen, hacer, hacerla, hacerlas, hacerle, hacerles, hacerlo, hacerme, hacernos, haces, hacía, hacían, hacías, haciendo, haciéndoles, haciéndolo*
espero	hope/expect/wait	453	*espera, esperaba, esperado, esperamos, esperan, esperanza, esperanzas, esperar, esperaré, esperas, esperemos, esperen, espero*
bienvenido	welcome	428	*bienvenid@, bienvenida, bienvenidas, bienvenido, bienvenidos*
hola	hello	413	*hola, holas, holo*
bien	well	405	*bien*
creo	believe	325	*crea, crean, creas, cree, creemos, creen, creer, creerán, creería, creerlo, crees, creí, creían, creo, crear*
visuales	visual	315	*visual, visuales*
favorita	favorite	306	*favorita, favoritas, favorito, favoritos*
estilo	style	288	*estilo, estilos*

conocía	know	272	*conoce, conocemos, conocen, conocer, conocerán, conocerás, conoceré, conocerla, conocerlas, conocerles, conocerlo, conocerlos, conocerme, conocernos, conoces, conocí, conocía, conocida, conocidas, conocido, conocidos, conociendo, conociera, conocieran, conocimiento, conocimientos, conocimos, conoció, conociste*
aquí	here	278	*aquí*
pasó	happen/pass	269	*pasa, pasaba, pasada, pasado, pasamos, pasan, pasando, pasar, pasara, pasará, pasaran, pasarás, pasaré, pasaría, pasarla, pasarlo, pasarme, pasarse, pasas, pase, pasé, paseaba, pasear, pasen, pases, paso, pasó*
grupo	group	264	*grupo, grupos*
coser	sew	261	*cosa, cosas, "cosas", cose, coser, cosía*
invito	invite	232	*invitación, invitaciones, invitadas, invitado, invitamos, invitando, invitar, invitaron, invitas, invitemos, inviten, invites, invito*

Appendix L

Word frequency refined with R (from page 174)

Main word	English word	Frequency (N)
lolita	lolita	1125
bien o bueno	good or well	763
foro	forum	455
bienvenido	welcome	423
hola	hello	401
espero	to hope	383
gusto	taste	330
hacer	to do	326
favorito	favorite	298
visual	visual	295
grupo	group	263
estilo	style	240
creo	to believe	221
lugar	place	205
gracias	thank you	200
rosal	rosebush	187
nombre	name	177
ropa	clothes	158
música	music	157
imagen	image	149

Appendix M

Word co-occurrence with 1 and 0.99 correlation with stem words of *Japón* [Japan]

(from page 190)

Main word	English word	Correlation
especiales	special	1
genial	great	1
guste	to like	1
mejor	best	1
nuevo	new	1
nyappy	nyappy	1
aceptadas	accepted	0.99
amantes	lovers	0.99
ancafe	ancafe	0.99
anecdota	anecdote	0.99
aparte	besides	0.99
apoyando	supporting	0.99
area	area	0.99
articulos	articles	0.99
asegúrate	make sure	0.99
ayudar	help	0.99
bailan	dance	0.99
barroco	baroque	0.99
bobas	silly	0.99
boku	boku	0.99
bolas	balls	0.99
cafekka	cafekka	0.99
callada	quiet	0.99
canta	sing	0.99
captor	captor	0.99
cara	expensive	0.99
card	card	0.99
casarse	to get married	0.99

chapultepec	Chapultepec	0.99
chino	Chinese	0.99
clasicos	classic	0.99
clave	key	0.99
codigo	code	0.99
combinar	combine	0.99
concuerden	match	0.99
confusion	confusion	0.99
conocer	to know	0.99
conversacion	conversation	0.99
corri	ran	0.99
costumbre	habit	0.99
creador	creator	0.99
creian	believed	0.99
damas	ladies	0.99
diga	to say	0.99
directo	direct	0.99
divertidas	fun	0.99
dominaremos	will dominate	0.99
elegante	elegant	0.99
empezaré	will start	0.99
encantado	pleased	0.99
escogí	chose	0.99
escrita	written	0.99
espaldas	back	0.99
espero	hope/wish/wait	0.99
estúpidas	stupid	0.99
estima	like	0.99
estrenado	opened	0.99
examenes	exams	0.99
excelente	excellent	0.99
existiera	existed	0.99
extras	extras	0.99

extravagantes	extravagant	0.99
facilmente	easily	0.99
festivales	festivals	0.99
fiel	loyal	0.99
fondos	backgrounds	0.99
formo	formed	0.99
frances	French	0.99
fundamental	fundamental	0.99
graciosos	funny	0.99
guapo	handsome	0.99
gustar	to like	0.99
hablas	talk	0.99
halla	find	0.99
halloween	Halloween	0.99
horario	schedule	0.99
ideas	ideas	0.99
identidad	identity	0.99
idolos	idols	0.99
importan	cared	0.99
impresionantes	impressive	0.99
infantil	childish	0.99
info	info	0.99
inocente	innocent	0.99
insulto	insult	0.99
interesantes	interesting	0.99
invitacion	invitation	0.99
irte	leave	0.99
juguetes	toys	0.99
kawaii	kawaii	0.99
kmusic	kmusic	0.99
lastima	shame	0.99
late	late	0.99
lejos	far	0.99

lira	guitar	0.99
llamadas	called	0.99
llegan	arrive	0.99
llevaron	took	0.99
mesa	table	0.99
meter	to put	0.99
millones	millions	0.99
miren	look	0.99
network	network	0.99
niego	deny	0.99
ondas	vibes	0.99
opening	opening	0.99
originales	originals	0.99
paro	stop	0.99
peinarnos	do a hairdo	0.99
pies	feet	0.99
poste	pole	0.99
posteo	posting	0.99
publicidad	publicity	0.99
pudo	was able	0.99
puros	only/pure	0.99
quedamos	stay	0.99
rama	branch	0.99
raro	strange	0.99
recibida	received	0.99
recordatorio	reminder	0.99
referencia	reference	0.99
reflejada	reflected	0.99
reloj	watch	0.99
rojo	red	0.99
saca	grab	0.99
saint	saint	0.99
salga	go out	0.99

salían	went out	0.99
secreto	secret	0.99
secundaria	high school	0.99
seguidores	followes	0.99
seiya	seiya	0.99
saber	to know	0.99
servira	be useful	0.99
sexualmente	sexually	0.99
similares	similar	0.99
solos	alone	0.99
sombrero	cap	0.99
supone	suppose	0.99
time	time	0.99
tios	uncles	0.99
tocando	touching	0.99
tonto	dumb	0.99
últimos	last	0.99
urbanas	urban	0.99
útil	useful	0.99
valen	worth	0.99
vestimentas	garments	0.99
viajo	travel	0.99
vieron	saw	0.99
vinieron	came	0.99
volar	flew	0.99

Appendix N

Word co-occurrence with 1 and 0.99 correlation with stem words of *México* [Mexico]

(from page 192)

Main word	English word	Correlation
abrazo	hug	1
agrado	like	1
apoyo	support	1
ayudar	help	1
caiga	fall	1
comentar	comment	1
conocimiento	knowledge	1
convenciones	conventions	1
crean	believe	1
crecer	to grow	1
descubri	to find out	1
dibujo	drawing	1
dificil	difficult	1
duele	to hurt	1
entendemos	to understand	1
estudiar	to study	1
felices	happy	1
grupo	group	1
llegar	to arrive	1
llenar	to fill/fulfill	1
malice	malice	1
mensajes	messages	1
miembros	members	1
momentos	moments	1
monton	bunch	1
novala	novala	1
preguntas	questions	1

propuesta	proposal	1
proximamente	soon	1
ropita	clothes	1
seccion	section	1
segura	sure	1
semanas	weeks	1
supe	knew	1
trate	tried	1
ultima	last	1
usuarios	users	1

Appendix O

Word co-occurrence with 1 correlation with stem words of *Mehiko* (from page 227)

Original word (Japanese or Spanish)	English word	Correlation
actividad	activity	1
amistad	friendship	1
campo	field	1
familia	family	1
idea	idea	1
pasión	passion	1
simpatía	sympathy	1
okashii	strange	1
osewa	care	1
otagai	mutuak	1
tsumaranai	boring	1
akusesarī	accessory	1
apurōchi	approach	1
ātisuto	artist	1
ukeru	appeal	1
gyararī	gallery	1
tasuko	Taxco	1
hitonatsukkoi	friendly	1
ratengo	Latin	1
yasashii	kind	1

11.4 Interview Questions

Appendix P

For the Mexijuku innovators in Mexico (Spanish)

1. Nombre completo
2. ¿A qué te dedicas actualmente?
3. ¿Cuándo comenzó tu interés por la cultura japonesa?
4. ¿Cuándo comenzó tu interés por la moda japonesa?
5. ¿Cómo fue tu primer acercamiento a la cultura japonesa?
6. ¿Cómo fue tu primer acercamiento a la moda japonesa?
7. ¿A través de qué medio?
8. Una vez involucrado, ¿cuáles fueron tus fuentes principales de conocimiento sobre los aspectos de la cultura japonesa que más te interesan?
9. ¿Cuáles son tus fuentes principales actualmente?
10. ¿Cuál era tu imagen de Japón cuando comenzaste a acercarte a la cultura/moda japonesa?
11. ¿Cuál es tu imagen general de Japón actualmente?
12. Específicamente ¿qué elementos de la cultura japonesa te han atraído?
13. Específicamente ¿qué elementos de la moda japonesa te han atraído?
14. ¿Por qué consideras que Japón es afín a tu imagen/proyecto?
15. ¿Hay alguna otra influencia en tu imagen/proyecto aparte de la cultura japonesa?
16. ¿Por qué decidiste incluir esa influencia?
17. ¿Es importante para ti compartir este gusto por Japón y su moda con otra gente?
18. ¿Cuál crees que es el lugar de la cultura japonesa/la moda japonesa en México?
19. ¿Cómo describirías el movimiento Harajuku en México?
20. ¿Por qué decidiste involucrarte?

Appendix Q

For the Mexijuku innovators in Mexico (English Translation)

1. Complete name
2. Current job
3. When did you start getting interested in Japanese culture?
4. When did you start getting interested in Japanese fashion?
5. What was your first contact with Japanese culture?
6. What was your first contact with Japanese fashion?
7. Through what media did you receive this contact?
8. Once you got caught on Japanese fashion, what were your sources to keep yourself updated with the aspects of Japanese culture that you found interesting?
9. What are your main sources of information nowadays?
10. What was your image of Japan when you had your first contact with the culture?
11. What is the image of Japan that you have now?
12. Other than Japanese fashion, what other aspects of Japanese culture have attracted you?
13. Within fashion, which specific aspects of Japanese fashion have attracted you?
14. Why is the role of Japanese culture within your own project? What are the affinities?
15. Are there other influences in your work other than Japanese culture?
16. Why did you choose this other influence?
17. Is it important for you to share your liking of Japanese culture with other people?
18. What do you think is the role of Japanese culture and Japanese fashion in Mexico?
19. How would you describe the Harajuku movement in Mexico?
20. How did you decide to get involved?

Appendix R

For the innovators of Mexican culture in Japan (Japanese)

1. 氏名
2. 現在、何の仕事をしていますか？
3. いつからメキシコに興味を持ちましたか？
4. メキシコの中に一番気に入るところは何ですか？
5. いつからそのことに興味をとりましたか？
6. メキシコ文化との最初の触点は何でしたか？
7. メキシコの一番気に入ることとの最初の触点は何でしたか？
8. 情報源は何でしたか？
9. 今メキシコについての情報を参考している本、サイトは何ですか。
10. メキシコの第一印象は何でしたか？
11. 今のメキシコのイメージは何ですか？
12. メキシコと自分の性格と相性、類似性があると思いますか？
13. なぜ？
14. メキシコに興味を持つことは自分の仕事に影響がありますか。
15. どんな影響ですか？
16. メキシコの文化を紹介することは他人とシェアするって大事ですか。
17. 日本のメキシコが好きの組、グループはどんな特徴があると思いますか？
18. どうやってこのグループと触れ合えましたか？
19. どうして参加しようと決定しましたか？
20. これからメキシコに関する活動は何ですか？

Appendix S

For the innovators of Mexican culture in Japan (English translation)

1. Name
2. Current job
3. When did your interest for Mexico start?
4. What is the thing that attracts you the most about Mexico?
5. When did you felt attracted to this?
6. What was your first contact with Mexican culture?
7. What was your first contact with the thing that attracts you the most about Mexico?
8. What was your information source during the period of first contact?
9. What is your current source of information about Mexico?
10. What was your first impression about Mexico?
11. What is your current impression about Mexico?
12. Do you feel there is an affinity between yourself and Mexico?
13. Why?
14. Does Mexico have an impact on your job?
15. What kind of influence does it have?
16. Is it important to you to share Mexican culture with people around you?
17. What are the characteristics of the community that likes Mexican culture in Japan?
18. How did you come in touch with this group?
19. Why did you decide to take part on this group?
20. Do you have any plans related to Mexico in the future?

Errata

Date: June, 2018

Doctoral candidate: Lisander Martinez Oliver

Title of the thesis: *The Cool Other:A Study on Mexico's Harajuku and Its Connection with Japan's Oaxaca*

The present errata sheet lists minor modifications and some corrections done to the electronic version of the doctoral thesis *The Cool Other:A Study on Mexico's Harajuku and Its Connection with Japan's Oaxaca*. The amendments are explained in the form of a list.

Format modifications

Location	Original	Amendment
Page 4	"advices"	"advice"
Page 41	"from from"	"from"
Page 127	"diffusion"	"Diffusion"
Page 128	"(Rogers, 1983: 336)"	"(Rogers, 1983: 336)."

Language modifications

The tenses of the verbs were modified where relevant in order to achieve grammar uniformity in the text. Also, to enhance readability throughout the thesis of foreign terms and linguistic examples, the former have been maintained in italics, whereas the latter now appear in between single quotations. These formatting conditions have been explained in more detail in an updated version of the "Translation and Style Notes" of the dissertation. Additionally, the Appendices in foreign languages now include English translations to further aid the reader.

Other modifications

The wording of the third objective stated on page 16 has been altered slightly to maintain consistency in the main text of the thesis:

Original wording: "…provide references for Mexico to follow and restore its deteriorated image, based on the findings in two case studies…"
Amendment: "…provide a reference for Mexico to assess its image, based on the findings about the Japanese case..."

Subsequent references to the third objective have also been standardized in this regard.