

The Arbitrariness and Universality of Cultural Contents

Eun-Young Ryu

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies,
Dongdaemungu, Imunro 107, Seoul,
Korea jenous@daum.net

Abstract. As Korean pop culture has gained popularity in the world, the discourse regarding Korean culture has been activated and shifted at the global dimension. The discourse starts from the discernment of the concept; it is time to discuss arbitrariness and universality of Korean perspectives on cultural contents. This term coined by Korea emphasizes on diversity, designating the term with the plural form. In the initial stage, the term signified digital contents. However, since the mid-2000s, it diverged to analog as well as digital contents, referring to 'the products of pop culture based on culture or cultural archetype' planned and created according to ludic desire of the public.' In other words, the cultural contents in Korea is defined as the concept of creativity, culture, industries and entertainment. In addition, not only its notation but its orientation differs from that of the West.

Keywords: cultural contents, hallyu(the Korean Wave), Korean cultural discourse, digital media, creation, cultural industries, entertainment

1 Introduction

According to the spread of Korean pop cultural contents so-called hallyu, the related discourse is led to a global dimension. For example, it has been easy to find many learned books on the Korean culture in the recent years; on Google.com which shows the trends of the world's pop culture in real time, the documents related to Korean culture are also increasing. In this regard, either publically or academically at the global dimension, it is not overstated that the discourse on Korean culture has become more activated over the years.

Furthermore, the discourse starts from understanding of the concept, so it is time to discuss arbitrariness and universality of Korean culture. One of the most fundamental and urgent issues is 'cultural contents' of the cultural circle in Korea. The term, cultural contents or culture contents is a coinage used by Korean cultural circle. In this study, the quotation mark " between the words is used to exactly search the words on Google.com. The "cultural contents' and "culture contents' appeared 84,300 and 61,500 respectively on Google.com as of May 25, 2014. What is interesting is many foreign texts related to these two terms as well as Korean texts also appear.

In this regard, even though cultural contents or culture contents were used in Korea at the start, the term spread throughout the world, however, the meanings of Korean web texts differ from those used abroad in many ways.

2 Process of Development on Cultural Contents

To understand "cultural contents or culture contents" embedded in Korean arbitraries and universality, we search these two terms on Google.com. As of May 25, 2014, the results are shown on table. 1.

Tab. 1 cultural contents & culture contents

words	results(no.)
cultural contents	84,300

google.com

It is likely to differentiate between the two terms, but they are randomly used without any definite public opinion in Korea. In the initial stage, the usage of 'culture contents' emerged more often, yet 'cultural contents' are widely accepted as shown on Tab. 1. Considering the fact that there exist some similar terms such as 'culture & contents', 'culture N contents', 'culture's contents' and 'culture-contents,' 'cultural contents' actually prevail. Moreover, the significant result came out when searching foreign web texts including these two terms. As for 'culture contents', among the top 100 web text has few of Japanese with only a couple of times while more than fifty times appears in the English-speaking nations when searching 'cultural contents.'¹ Thus, it is possible to define the term 'cultural contents' has been used more widely.

The term 'cultural contents' was used first when Korea culture & Contents Agency, now changed its name to Korea Creative Contents Agency(KOCCA), was established in 2001. It defines cultural contents as following: Cultural contents are a coinage that was made in Korea; its concept is to create culture as contents. As culture has been emphasized in the 21st century, the term has naturally been generalized. Primarily, cultural contents refer to contents that have characteristics of culture. With the emergence of digital culture of the 21st century, this Korean term simultaneously appeared. In English, the term is written with a plural form 'contents' because it endows the term with more meanings and diversities. Sometimes, though it is described as 'content' according to the usage in the West. In other words, the reason for Korean coinage 'cultural contents' refers to general contents that are included in a wide variety of media [1]. Particularly, in the initial stage, the term indicated digital contents, which is interrelated with a major business of KOCCA. But staggering the start, the Korea Institute of Public Administration under the Office of Prime Minister emphasized the marketability and creativity in the concept of cultural contents in 2007:

The cultural contents are cultural products having the concept in which cultural elements consisted of cultural heritage, living style, creative ideas and values produce economic values [2].

¹ This result searched in the text of Philips, K., "Culture Contents"(American Outlook, Vol.4, No.2, 2001, pp.28-29), but it turned out to be miswritten.

This expanded the meaning of cultural contents more comprehensively to the creative contents made according to public interests and consuming desire based on cultural archetypes since the mid-2000 [3]. Cultural contents are cultural products made according to public needs; with the modern consumptive culture, the general cultural industries, particularly, entertainment industry has been led by cultural contents. According to Semiotic Square of Consumption Values coined by Jean-Marie Floch, the structure of human society is classified into four categories: practical, utopian, critical and ludic model [4]. Today's consumption of cultural contents is certainly intertwined with the ludic model. In addition, to understand the productivity of which cultural contents aim for and tolerance, the case study of the graduate school curricula at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies² is suggested as an example.

Table 2. Curriculum Subjects

Introduction to Cultural Contents	Digital Contents Planning
Cultural Contents and Cultural Theory	Cognitive Science and Films
Critical theories on Cultural Contents	Visual Contents and Digital Archive
History and Cultural Contents	Cross-Cultural Understanding and Cultural Contents
Culture Archetype & Culture Contents	Analysis of Cultural Contents in Traditional Korea
Contents and Culture Philosophy	Analysis of Cultural Contents in China
Comparative Analysis of Art Theory in East and West	Analysis of Cultural Contents in Japan
Media and Storytelling	Analysis of Cultural Contents in Southeast Asia
Culture and Visual Contents	Analysis of Cultural Contents in West Europe
Culture Content and Culture Policy	Analysis of Cultural Contents in North America
Research on the Copyright Act of Cultural Contents	Local Cultural Resources and Festival Contents
Cultural Informatics	Cultural Travel Contents Study
Research on Mass Culture and Marketing	Cultural Contents and Performing Art
Korean Wave and Contents Planning	Practice in Museum
Cultural Heritage Contents Development	Theme Park Planning

The Korean cultural contents are based on the structure that is set up with literature(arts), history, philosophy, that is, humanities, media and modern digital scientific knowledge and technologies, adding creativity and industries put together as entertainment. Britain defines the cultural industry as creative industry while Canada refers it to art industry; Korea defines the cultural industry as cultural contents industry, meaning that the concept of cultural contents signifies the concept connoting creativity, culture, industry and entertainment comprehensively. Such concept combined with the concept of humanity-orientated human contents, culture technology that emphasizes techno-friendly contents has consistently studied, broadening its spectrum.

² Hankuk University of Foreign Studies established the department of Cultural Contents for the first time in the nation in the early 2000s.



Fig. 1 Structure of cultural contents

As mentioned above, the concept of cultural contents was originated in Korea, that of the West differs from each other. First, the envisioned description is different that of Korea; the West designates 'culture content' while Korea uses the plural form, contents. In fact, the term, multimedia content, was widely used in the West from the mid-1990s.

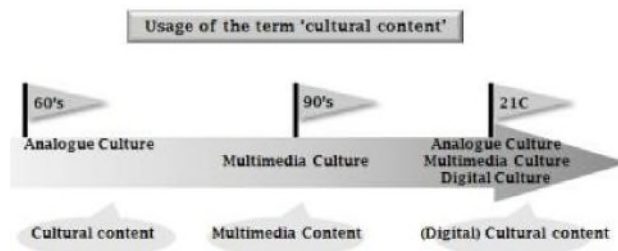


Fig. 2. Usage of the term 'cultural content'

However, before the 1960s when the multimedia culture was activated, the books like *The Analysis of Culture Content and the Patterning of Narrative Concern in Texas* written by Benjamin N. Colby in 1966 [5] or *Economic Development, the Cultural Content* by Thomas De Gregory in 1969 referred contents to cooking, traveling, festivals and civilization, that is, analog culture, at that period of time. But entering the 21st century, culture based on multimedia becomes even more prosperous with rapid development of digital media. Thus, the tern such as e-Culture: cultural content in the digital age coined by Alfredo M. Ronchi in 2009 has accounted for a large portion in the cultural circle [6]. Especially, the Western Europe has been indulged into an enthusiastic discourse regarding digital cultural contents in the recent years. Even though it is still hard to find the books titled 'cultural content' on Amazon.com as of May 25, 2014, leading to the conclusion that academically the public opinion

has not been established on this matter.³ Yet, the trend is gradually changing since its usage is increasing on Google.com since 2006. The cultural content appears 80 times out of the top 100 web texts.

3 Conclusion

The cultural contents were created in Korea to classify digital contents at first. But the singular form, cultural content was widely used in the West from 1960s. It referred to the content based on analog culture, changing into digital content in the 21st century. In other words, the cultural contents of the West have developed from analog to digital content while the Korean concept of cultural contents started from digital contents to analog. At the present time, cultural contents include cultural archetype, visual contents, literary contents, broadcasting content, internet content, mobile contents, game contents, edutainment contents, character contents, music contents, performing contents, exhibit contents, spacious contents, and multicultural contents. These concepts comprehend contents that actually consist of consumptive popular culture. That is, cultural contents are products of consumptive popular culture; the creative contents based on culture or cultural archetype planned and created according to ludic desire of the public, especially, the cultural contents contained in diverse media.

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³ From 2006 to 2008, the books titled 'cultural content' or 'culture content' were searched regularly; the number of the books was relatively insignificant, however, the Korean books titled the western style, 'cultural content' or 'culture content,' appeared quite often in the past few years. As of May 25, 2014, the books written by the western authors also appeared five times.