

Japan brand strategy: The taming of ‘cool Japan’ and the challenges of cultural planning in a postmodern age

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Abstrak

The production of a new and attractive ‘Japan Brand’—one that resonates with the emerging global image of ‘Cool Japan’ associated with Japan's popular culture—is a national project incorporated in the Japanese Intellectual Property Strategy promoted by the state since 2002. This article critically examines the Japan Brand Strategy as a government-owned production site of Cool Japan imagery and as a cultural policy designed to promote a specific sense of cultural identity. Detailed reconstructions of the selective appropriation of cultural products in order to create a new cultural imagery for Japan, of the meanings attached to this imagery and of the tactics devised to spread it, highlight how problematical it is to appropriate market-made images of Cool Japan for national ends. Furthermore, by examining the various functions attributed to this national strategy, I show that while it is primarily promoted as a means for enhancing Japan's industrial policy and cultural diplomacy, it is also devised as a mechanism to mobilize the nation during unsettled times. Through examining the Japan Brand Strategy, this article highlights the challenges faced today by cultural policy makers, questioning the contemporary relevance of the modernistic approach to the state as a regulatory cultural planning apparatus.