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## **Abstract**

This paper aims to focus on Bulgarian representatives of socially recognizable people (chef Michael from 'Take care of my Fridge' programme is one example) to research the nexus between multiculturalism policies and social acceptance of immigrants through the power of media portrayal. Selective media portrayal on a subject can lead respondents (viewers, users or listeners) to accept without questioning the offered image. Media is vital to creating public awareness and it is to some extent the creator of issues by deciding on the front-page news. Therefore, being aware of the news setting agenda, it will be the aim of this paper to analyze the correlation between South Korean media portrayal of foreigners (the Bulgarian case per se) and the change of the social construct and public opinion towards the subject. To narrow the scope of the proposed research only the last decade will be considered.

With recent exponential growth of social applications and online presence there is an even larger platform to frame a certain group or allocate public interest (Gilliam and Bales, 2001). Some researchers (Englandkennedy, 2008; DeVreese, 2005) suggest that media systemizes the models to construct, explain, identify and shape personal and societal opinion. Mass opinion is shaped irrevocably through the message a media conveys via text, audio or online material.

This paper will employ qualitative research method through interviewing two focus groups.

The set of questionnaires will be two and will aim to establish the model of perception of individuals of the Bulgarian community- that have lived in Korea 'long-term'- in regard to their community media portrayal from 2005 to 2015.

**Keywords:** *South Korea, Bulgarians, media representation, portrayal, perception, foreigners*

**Student number:** 2014-24246

# Chapter 1

## 1.1 Objective of Research

Research in mass media portrayal of Asian Americans or immigrants in Japan, United States or Korea is abundant but it lacks the specific focus on Europeans who are living in Korea long term. This paper aims to broaden the research on expat communities that are not involved in teaching English and Eastern European Union residents in Korea with a main emphasis on the Bulgarian case. As the reality of immigrants in Korea and view on multiculturalism has evolved since 2005 the research time frame will be on the relevant media portrayal changes in the past decade.

However, there is no specific research on Eastern European immigrants that are publicly visible into Korean society. This paper aims to focus specifically on Bulgarian representatives of socially recognizable people (chef Michael from ‘Take care of my Fridge’ programme is one example) to research the nexus between multiculturalism, association of Bulgarians with the diaspora and social acceptance of the constructed image through the power of media portrayal.

As Korea is transforming to a multicultural society, minorities have more and more exposure in the mass media. Just for half a decade there has been a significant increase of foreigners participating in broadcasted shows. Just in Seoul the migrant population is extremely diverse with the largest groups of registered foreigners being Korean-

Chinese, nationals from China, US and Taiwan, Canada, Vietnam, the Philippines (2%). The 'Other' group of 10% encompasses unmentioned number of nationalities. In these 10% there are 179 Bulgarians which are the target of this paper – a small number of long-term residents compared to other minorities.

The paper aims to look at the shift in recognition – as it is deeply rooted to the perception of the self in relation to the said diaspora. As the collected data from the research shows there is a significant difference of image association thanks to the power of media.

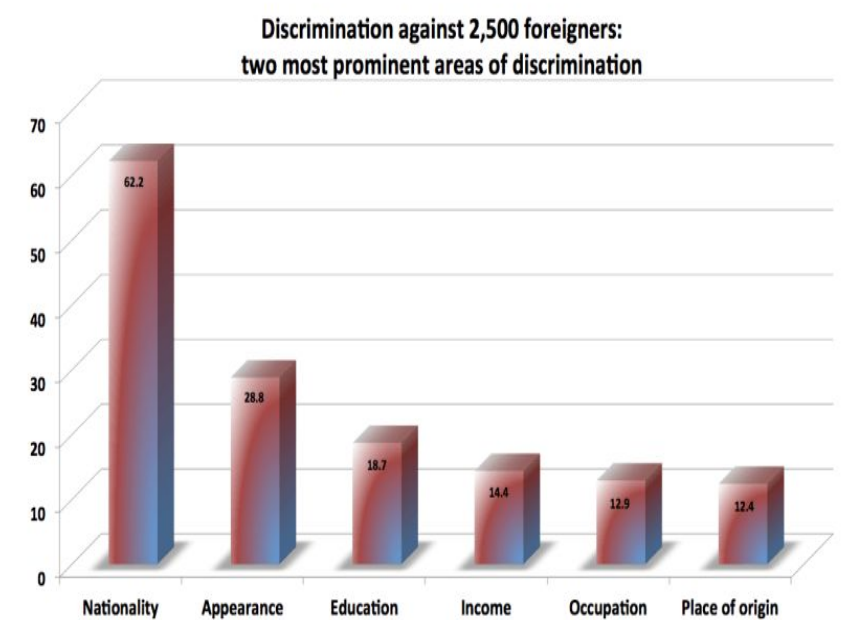
The Seoul Metropolitan Government notes that there are almost five and a half time more foreigners residing in Seoul who have registered with the Ministry of Justice: in 2015 they were at 270,000 compared to the 50,000 non-nationals at the end of 2000<sup>1</sup>. Their media presence has continuously been high reflecting on the diaspora acceptance in Korean society. The Bulgarian case study includes 76 respondents discussing the problem of being a foreigner and the perception they have been met with in Korea. This is 45.42% of the registered Bulgarian population. The increase of media presence for Bulgarians is 233.3% from the first five years (2005-2010) to the second 5 years of the decade (2010-2015): in other words, an increase from just 1 to 4 constant participants in articles and regular shows.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics according to The Seoul Institute, Seoul Global Center  
<http://english.seoul.go.kr/many-foreigners-living-seoul-now/>

Media representation is a constructed story that is presented to audiences and the interviewees have expressed their opinions on the topic. Despite the small number of Bulgarian residents compared to other minorities, the objective of this study is to examine perceptions about the Bulgarians who have quite a significant presence in Korean media. In this paper I will only focus on the past decade (2005-2015) due to time and data availability limitations.

James Hyams in his article for *Korea Observer* newspaper (*Korea Observer*, May 26, 2015) notes that nationality is the prime bias for discrimination against foreigners- almost triple that of the other two leading reasons: education and appearance.



*Seoul Institute survey, May 2015*

<http://www.koreaobserver.com/nearly-all-foreigners-victim-of-discrimination-in-seoul-29001/>

According to the social identity theory as foreigners should feel the same level of discrimination- do Bulgarians feel discrimination on the basis of nationality? In Western Europe- yes, they do. The Bulgarians are portrayed negatively and association with that nationality labels individuals with an array of undesirable associations. The paper aims to address how such perceptions influenced by media portrayal of the Bulgarian diaspora are reflecting on Bulgarians living in South Korea long term.

## **1.2 Hypothesis**

Social dimensions such as 'hierarchical nationhood' are widely applied to Americans or Chinese of Korean descent and have been discussed in papers. Some as Seol and Skrentny (2009) argue Korea's policies for foreign workers and immigrants are institutionalized with geopolitical and economic goals in mind.

Factoring the news setting agenda and the framing effect theories, the hypothesis proposed in this paper is that there are inevitably changes in the perceiving of foreigners in South Korean society.

The argument is one that is not examined in relation to the Bulgarian representative in various media outlets, residing in Korea for a period longer than 90 days.

Despite not being extensively researched as other long-term resident minorities, Bulgarians are a significant engine for the changing scene of

diversity and multiculturalism as well as the perceiving of foreigners in Korea.

*Question 1: How has perception of foreigners (the other) changed in the past decade? (According to long-term resident Bulgarians in Korea)*

*Question 2: How did the Bulgarians' media representation change for the given time frame?*

*Question 3: What connotation does associating with the Bulgarian diaspora have for its members- positive or negative?*

These questions focus on group perceptions as social identity is based on the sense of belonging to a certain social identity (social status or family); we enhance our self-image in order to belong more. In social identity theory this is labeled as 'enhancing the group self-image' thus creating a group of 'us' and a group of 'them. With those boundaries it is easier to discriminate against the 'outsiders' and group members will find negative connotations to anything related to the 'other' group. Seeking to find negative aspects promotes self-image and identification.

Therefore, it will be the focus of this research to look at the relative linkage between social identification and comparison to news-setting agenda and framing.



## **Chapter 2**

### **2.1 Theories and Literature Review**

The concept of multiculturalism is a widely researched and there are varying views on what it includes. For the purpose of defusing ambiguity and giving a more concrete paradigm framework to work with in this paper, multiculturalism will be defined with the concept of Charles Taylor (1994) “the politics of recognition” where the cultural majority recognizes minority groups as having equal rights and values.

To illustrate the direct causality between media created symbols and certain images inducted by it, McCombs (1993) contends that there is agenda media setting that does not reflect reality as it is but rather contorts it to its own means i.e. ‘agenda building’. It emphasizes the role of media in what the viewer thinks. Mass media helps focus and guide public opinion towards a set topic and it does it by framing an agenda-setting.

Mass media possesses extremely persuasive power in shaping beliefs as it can offer much selected information to its viewers. It shapes the viewer’s reality and through accentuating on emotions it ‘leans’ public reactions towards their agenda- facilitating change in collective behavior. As it frames issues in a certain way it can influence a debate on an issue (migration, for example) by simply maximizing accusations and showing any opposition to the image as incompetence.

However, mass media offers a unique space for competing opinions and discussions.<sup>2</sup>

With recent exponential growth of social applications and online presence there is an even larger platform to frame a certain group or allocate public interest (Gilliam and Bales, 2001). Some researchers (Englandkennedy, 2008; DeVreese, 2005) suggest that media systemizes the models to construct, explain, identify and shape personal and societal opinion.

Also, this symbolic system is changing over time, therefore, media coverage is meant to make an impact on individuals in a given time frame. Those representations change to become more characteristic of reality despite the fact that the audience also influences media. (Levinson and Wien) Furthermore, according to Cissel (2012), framing is what defines news coverage and communication, shaping mass opinion using those specific frames to guide the audience into understanding the issue.

Mass opinion is shaped irrevocably through the message a media conveys via text, audio or online material. Encoding those messages is effective means of employing certain heuristics that connect an image to a frame. For example, immigrants can be easily framed as ‘bad’ or ‘needed’ for the economy of the host country. Decoding the message by the audience is simplified to a word that translates to a belief. In this

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<sup>2</sup> For more on the topic of agenda setting and influence on mass public opinion see Potter, al (1993); Gamson et al. (2004); and Tversky and Kahneman (1974)

way, encoding and relaying a complex issue is no more a hard task as framing acts as a tool of creating an interpretation .(Scheufele and Tewksbury,2007)

Cushion, Moore, and Jewell (2011, p9) add that today's culture is inevitably centered around news and media provides the means for a large majority of people to become aware of not only far away places or cultures, but also their surroundings. National newspapers are a powerful discourse space for forming attitudes and representing persistent stereotypes. In this sense, I will like to take into account the new tendency to present 'registered aliens' or long-term foreigners in Korea as a competition to Koreans in their own country. Not because the majority of those resident in Korea are not socially accepted individually, but because as Gamson et al (1992, p391) concludes that in general media encourages indifference, scepticism and latency rather than activation of civic engagement and participation. Additionally, the tendency is to reduce the informative character of news whise segmenting it with more and more messages.

Social identity theory affirms the linkage between self and group identification. Such group identification stimulates individuals to display constructive valuations of the 'us' group and deleterious ones of the 'other' group. Such instrumentalisation of imposed conformism causes widespread opinions on what political privileges need to be enhanced by political groups representing the less 'popular'.

## **2.2 Analytical framework**

For the purpose of analysis, this paper will employ a qualitative methodology. It will employ two sets of questionnaires and a sample of videos. The articles and videos were selected on the basis of keywords *Bulgarian, Bulgaria, introduce*.

As open-ended questions to participants might be erroneous as the answers can be quite ambiguous and this can lead to as it will limit the scope of answers and extrapolating the major tendencies in answers. Isolating the answers into groups will show the causal relationship between a positive answer to foreigners' popularity and avoid perceived correlation between 'foreigner' and 'public distraught' (criminal offences conducted only by foreigners but not Koreans). However, too many open questions can have a major disadvantage to the focus group because the survey result might not represent completely the opinion of the greater target group and conformation bias is to be taken into account.

Agreement and non-agreement to the statements in the questionnaire can reinforce the casual reasoning, however, it cannot be taken as proof due to unknown factors that could have lead to certain answers (for example, expectation of an interviewee to answer in a certain manner). Data construction will be based on the answers after the initial observations of the control groups and their answers. Collecting the data will be done through surveys with limit of answers ('yes or no' framework and expanded where applicable).

The concept of 'media portrayal' and 'foreigners' can have multiple definitions various indicators will be used. The data will be collected by giving interviewees questions related to their measurement of changes of perception of foreigners twice. There would be a pre-test to evaluate the comprehension of the participants of 'foreigners' and 'media' definitions. The pre-test will consist of introduction to the concept of media and 'foreigner' in order to limit the subjectivity. Indicators of identifying specific answers will be created with a measurement scale. Any correct answers indicating between the maximum assigned measure and above 0.5 distinction of the ultimate answer will be considered valid as they will provide accuracy and consistency of measurement.

This method will insure that the interviewees are probed on the way they feel about the topic to reach beyond the initial answers. It will include conducting in-depth personal interviews and group discussions on the topic (minimum of two people) to ensure answers are genuine and curb the effect of casual reasoning.

## 2.3 Methodology

The two focus groups of the questionnaires were individuals of the Bulgarian community that have lived in Korea ‘long-term’ or more than 91 days<sup>3</sup>. One group is the ‘F visa’ holders who amount to 33 interviewees and the second focus group is the ‘D visa’ holders who are 69 individuals but only 43 filled in the questionnaire. The F visa group consists of individuals that are the spouses of Korean citizens, permanent residents and joining family members or family members’ visa holders. That amounts to 18.43% of the Bulgarian population of 179 long-term residents for 2015 according to the Immigration Statistical Office.

The other group consisted of 43 interviewees holding a D visa, meaning they are either studying at an academic institution, performing academic duties (professors or teachers) or are industrial trainees for a set period that is not short-term.

Furthermore, there was a controlled group of both D visa and F visa holders (15 participants) who were interviewed in-depth for their perceptions on the topic. The discussion of the selected group was noted down and excerpts of the interviews are included at the end of this paper.

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• <sup>3</sup> ‘Foreigner stay is categorized as follows:  
-Short-term stay: Limited, up to 90 days of stay  
-Long-term stay: Limited, more than 91 days of stay  
According to the statement on the Immigration Guide of the HiKorea e-Government for foreigners website, available on [www.hikorea.go.kr](http://www.hikorea.go.kr)

The questionnaire regarding perceptions of non-native residents of Korea was contributed before a showing of selected articles and video from Korean newspapers and broadcast presenting Bulgarians to the Korean public; and the second one was distributed after reading the aforementioned articles in order to investigate any fluctuations in their perception towards the topic.

The first questionnaire focused on perception of foreigners and the 'media' which I defined as 'technical methods of information production and distribution to a great number of audiences simultaneously'<sup>4</sup>. Questions 1, 4 and 5 were attributed a 100% scale to measure the number of participants from both focus groups giving the same answer. The dimensions of the possible answers were 1= True, 2= somewhat true, 3= Uncertain and 4= False.

Questions 2 and 3 were attributed a scale of 10 to measure the perception of change on a variable 4 dimension axis as follows: 1 to 5- negative, 6 – neutral, 7 to 10 – positive.

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<sup>4</sup> Definition following the identification of mass media by John Thompson in *The Media and Modernity- A Social Theory of the Media* (p26–28, p74), Stanford University Press (1995)

The questions were structured as follows:

- 1) Do you find that media is the main source of introducing a unfamiliar construct to a large audience?
- 2) Do you agree that there is increased exposure of foreigners in Korean media in the past decade?
  - a) from 2005 to 2010
  - b) from 2010 to 2015;
- 3) Do you agree that there is a better environment for foreigners compared to 2005?;
- 4) Do you find a difference in treatment of foreigners from when you arrived and now- in what category would you place that treatment?
- 5) Will you change your place of residency due to the state of media portrait your diaspora has in the host community?

The second questionnaire was given to a selected group of individuals that were asked to evaluate their perception of the portrait constructed by media regarding Bulgarians. This was done through a discussion after reading articles from Yonhap, Chosun, Korea Herald, Daily NK and a video compilation material collected from KBS 1TV and JTBC programmes.



Those included excerpts from ‘*Misuda* (Chatting with Beautiful Women or Global Talk for short)’ and ‘*Take care of my fridge*’<sup>5</sup>. The time frame of the data to construct the interview was an article from 2009, 2011, 2014 and 2015.

The video material was compiled from clips of some of *Misuda*’s 2010 episodes, 2014 V-Pop Festival<sup>6</sup> and an episode of the KBS show ‘*My Neighbour Charles*’<sup>7</sup>. They were focused on the participants in each, namely, Tsvetelina Kuzmanova (KBS1TV), the Pink Spiders volleyball player Vasileva (KBS), Ivailo (KBS), chef Mihail Ashminov (JTBC).

The reason for selection of exactly these materials was that apart from the official bulletin of the Bulgarian Embassy all other articles focused on economic relations. As the aim of the paper is to examine perception of individuals continuously living in Korea and not bilateral cooperation, it was logical to leave out materials that did not fulfill the selection criteria.

Also, most of the appearances in the video were of people who are easily recognized in the Bulgarian community and their popularity is another prerequisite for creating a good image in media.

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<sup>5</sup>미수다 available on the website of JTBC ( aired from 10 May to 25 December 2010) and 냉장고를 부탁해 (airing since 16 November 2014)

<sup>6</sup>V-POP 페스티벌] 흥국생명 바실레바 'Dancing Queen' & 선수인사, available <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1sv3SVvPwjM>

<sup>7</sup>이웃집 찰스 14 회, aired 15 April 2015, available at [www.kbs.co.kr](http://www.kbs.co.kr)

## **Chapter 3**

### **3.1 Korea transforming to a multicultural society**

#### **3.1.1 Defining society and the self – social identity**

Korea is a country long ruled by Confucianism and Western values and concepts have been implemented only a century ago to help foster the rapid change that transformed South Korea to a leader in Asia. To understand the state of civic society one has to estimate the influence of both the moderate and radical elements that comprise it. Why is that important? Exploring those social pillars would give the researcher a rather quick look over popular opinions towards questions of immigration, democracy, equality and human and labour rights. Those inclinations draw the watershed on political actions in current South Korean politics. Radical and conservative elements emphasize socioeconomic equality and labour rights, while the very minimum of democratic procedures is emphasized by moderate groups.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, the individual positions of the citizens are shaped by the two visions and more often than not social status has direct implications on inclinations towards one on the other. The correlation between social status of an individual and how that individual approaches immigration-related problems is what lays the foundation of a social

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<sup>8</sup> For more on the issue Kim, Y.I. & Kyung O. C. (1996), “A Study of the Political and Social Consciousness of Korean Women”, *Asian Women* 2: 117-147

system that will either advance or constrain the multi-dimensional structures of political ideologies. Henceforth, putting the society in a position to advance equal opportunities and through civic participation appreciate political and socio-economic benefits. (Lee, 2005, p8-9)

Therefore, the acceptance of foreigners as functional members of the civil society in Korea is heavily dependent on the inclination of the said society to implement equality or restrictions. To have a greater understanding of the change in Korean society towards a multicultural one, I will briefly introduce the historical background of the influences shaping Korean civil society.

First, Neo-Confucianism should be taken into account when trying to understand the complexity of relations' perception in a society fundamentally different from Western one. Fundamental for Korean culture is the fostering of loyalty to state leaders, strengthening inequality by accentuating the boundaries between the sexes; the old and young generations; and the prevalence of state-community relations as more important than the individual ones to the state. Consequently those boundaries deteriorate civic engagement with the political establishment in modern times. Civil society is fragmented more than in the West but in the moral conscience of society rather than in being critical and demanding faster democratic transition.

Second, the public does not cogitate civic movements to be of importance as power struggles and interest competitions are evident even at the pinnacle of their efforts. (Alagappa, 2004)

Social theorists have underlined the correlation of public engagement in overcoming collective problems such as lack of rights (labour, minority, etc.); and the how vertical ties of hierarchy (such as sponsor-beneficiary) impede development and only narrowly bind together small segments of society (Putnam, 1993 and Shin, 2006). A strongly minded civic movements is thwarted by the duality of networking in Korea: in essence, the close personal relationships that go beyond rules or values against the linkages between individuals based on mutual philosophical or political values.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, taking into account the specifics of the Korean case, there should be given more precaution to reliance on ties or association of individuals that will exclude one part of the population. To have a society that is working actively towards resolving these issues for all its members, is to have a society that recognizes it is not exclusive to the trend of immigration and influx of people from different racial background that will identify with the host nation in just a generation.

With the last decades of great migration waves it is not viable for any nation to claim homogeneity as the dynamics of immigration bring diversity and change to the hosting population.

However, Korea has traditionally been viewed as a homogenous society and it is only recently that the concept of 'pure-blood' has been criticized by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of

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<sup>9</sup> For more on the topic see Jones, Nicola Anne (2006) *Gender And the Political Opportunities of Democratization in South Korea*; Palgrave MacMillan

Racial Discrimination (CERD). In 2006 the Korean government submitted a report to CERD that on its first page stated:

*4. The Republic of Korea is an ethnically homogeneous country*

*with a total population of 47,254,000 as of November 2005.*

*However, the ethnic composition of the population is not clearly documented since the Republic of Korea does not conduct a census on ethnicity.<sup>10</sup>*

It is clear that ‘identification’ is the main concept linked to terms of collectively, democratic enhancement and civic engagement, and even a nation’s representation towards others. A form of self-identification, or belonging, is needed to conceptualize the term of ethnicity and demarcate the boundaries of ‘the other’.

Researchers have linked society, self identity and social relationships (Mead 1934; Meltzer 1972) in an attempt to examine the correlation between an individual and his or her behavioural choices in the frameworks of a society.

The theory stipulates that people tend to be engaged in relationships to others, operating in a rather limited scope of social interaction. The

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<sup>10</sup> For further reference to ethnic homogeneity and discrimination in the Korean case, see Kyung-Koo, H. (2007). The archaeology of the ethnically homogeneous nation-state and multiculturalism in Korea. *Korea Journal*, 47(4) and Shin (2006) *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

scale of commitment to those social networks depends on the individual's identity and role, shaping the concept of society. (Stryker, 2000, p5) And, therefore, producing cultural hegemony against globalization.

However, as Kastrovano (2002) argues, those 'pockets of cultural hegemony' are constantly changed by cultural interrelatedness that changes the perception of 'the other'. It is quite visible in all immigrant-open societies and as in the case of Korea, which is now a society that is on its way to become an immigrant receiving country rather than immigrant originating country- slightly strongly so. In such a society that change of realities is sometimes painfully accepted and a feeling of isolation is present to the foreigners who decided to make the host country their new home. This constant clashing between fundamentally different realities gives ground for societal fragmentation in reaction to the challenge posed to the dominant society identity. It can also result in negative reinforcement of a nation's exclusivity through harsher border control and rigorous visa requirements.

### **3.1.2 Media representation of the social construct of others**

Media is a social institution that builds and decomposes images, it shapes cultural understanding through exposure to different realities and practices. In this sense, it is a channel for culture and a framework through which individuals try to understand themselves and different social processes (Byers & Dell, 1992, p. 192) The audience is a consumer of the image of ‘others’ constructed by the channel through text, audio and visual material. Selective media portrayal on a subject can lead respondents (viewers, users or listeners) to accept without questioning the offered image.

Media is vital to creating public awareness and it is to some extent the creator of issues by deciding on the front-page news. Therefore, being aware of the news setting agenda, in this research paper will aim at analyzing the correlation between South Korean media portrayal of foreigners (the Bulgarian case per se) and the change of the social construct and public opinion towards the subject. In order to examine any major shifts I will look into the several articles and programmes related to Bulgarians in a selected group of newspaper and broadcasters. In the following chapter I will introduce the data and analysis of the sources and the shift of attitude.

## **3.2 Immigration aspects**

### **3.2.1. Visas**

The system of granting permission to enter Korea for foreigners, or the Korean visa system, has seen quite a bit of modifications and changes in the past 20 years. To illustrate the change I will look at the statistics of Korean Immigration Service for long term Bulgarian residents between 2005 and 2015. I will only use the specific types of visa mentioned below as those are the specified as 'long-term stay visas'

- 1) **Culture/Art (D-1)** - Those that perform artistic or academic activity which does not make profit
- 2) **Students (D-2)** – Anyone in the process of earning a degree (bachelor's or higher) or conducting a research at a college, university or graduate and post-graduate school
- 3) **Industrial Trainees (D-3)**- Foreigners who are following training in an industrial enterprise
- 4) **Student / General Trainees (D-4)**- Individuals engaged in Korean language institute; education or internships or those who are foreigner company researchers in any national or public organizations
- 5) **Visiting & Joining Family (F-1)** - Those seeking stay for the purpose of visiting relatives (foreign or Korean), living with family, getting support, household maintenance or other similar purposes.; Household servants of diplomatic and consular personnel in Korea



- 6) **Residence/Spouse of Korean National (F-2)**  
**(now replaced by F-6)**- The spouses of Korea nationals or the spouses of a person with permanent residence status (F-5 visa)
- 7) **Family Member (F-3)**- The family members of Culture/Art (D-1), Students (D-2), General Trainees (D-4), Particular Occupation (E-7) visa holders

The visas under consideration were chosen because they fulfil the criteria for long-term and according to the data of the Korean National Statistical Office- there were only a few holders in 2005 with a significant fluctuation in the next years.

Year	D Visa	F Visa
2005	29	52
2006	41	45
2007	23	21
1008	12	16
2009	34	24
2010	39	19
2011	39	27
2012	51	39
2013	54	33
2014	68	31
2015	67	33

The country is new to the high influx of immigrants and it is only logical to introduce a rigid visa system as mentioned before (see page 15). As could be seen from the following graph created by the electronic government for Seoul Metropolitan area for 2015, just in Seoul the migrant population is extremely diverse with the largest

groups of registered foreigners being Korean-Chinese, nationals from China, US and Taiwan, Canada, Vietnam, the Philippines (2%). The ‘Other’ group consists of 10% but it encompasses unmentioned number of nationalities. In these 10% there are 179 Bulgarians which are the target of this paper.

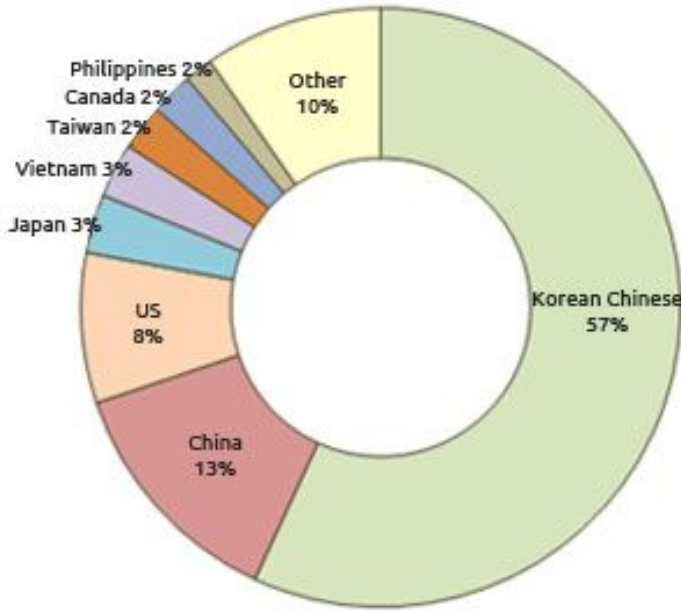


Figure 0

As shown on Seoul Metropolitan Government website, available at <http://english.seoul.go.kr/400000-foreign-resident-era-dagachi-seoul-master-plan/>

## **Chapter 4**

### **4.1 Change in the multicultural scene- Datasets**

Although there is a significant amount of studies that have been conducted to examine different diasporas and their settlement in Korea, there is an ardent lack of research on Eastern Europeans.

For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on respondents' views and perceptions on the phenomenon of media presence of Bulgarians in Korea. To examine the dynamics of public visibility on the community two sets of questionnaires were given to participants.

In the following pages the datasets are analysed starting from questionnaire number one and Figure one (data on question 1, page 11 of this paper).

Figure 1 below provides the percentage of the four dimensions for both D-visa (47 respondents) holders and F-visa holders (33 interviewees). The results show a insignificant difference in positive perception as 69% ( 32 students) and 45% (15 respondents) find that media is the primary source of introduction to an unfamiliar concept for a large group of people. Similar number of respondents find it somewhat true (D visa- 11; F visa- 12) or are uncertain (D visa- 8; F visa- 5). Only one person from both groups found the statement incorrect (false).

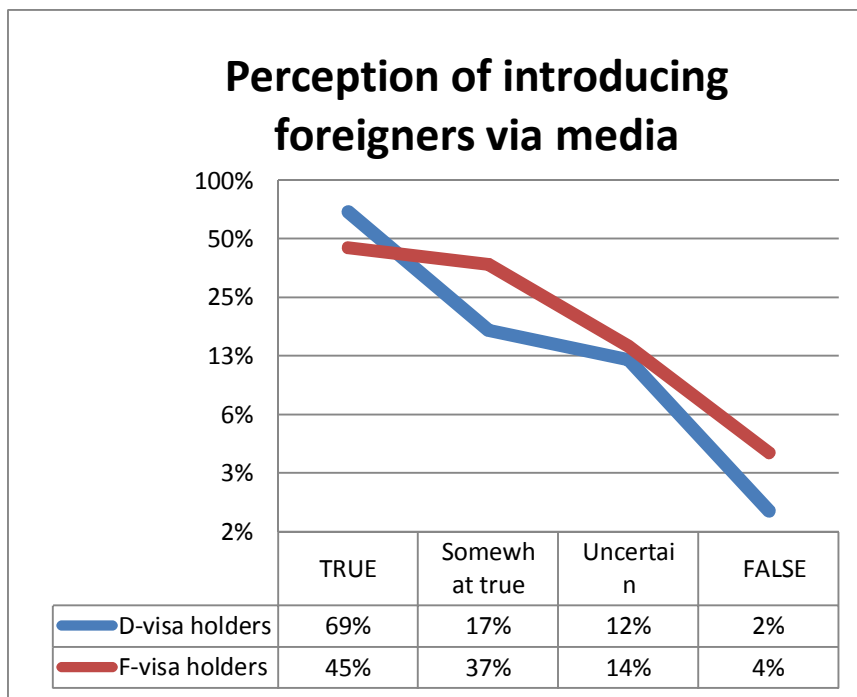


Figure 1

It shows that two times more respondents from the academic sphere find media increasingly the only method of relaying new and unfamiliar information to a large group of people. And it is evident that respondents who are joining family do not find the statement as necessarily true. It is striking that similar number of both groups found it rather true, showing awareness of the media impact. While only 8 and 5 people answered they were uncertain and just one from both indicated the statement as false.

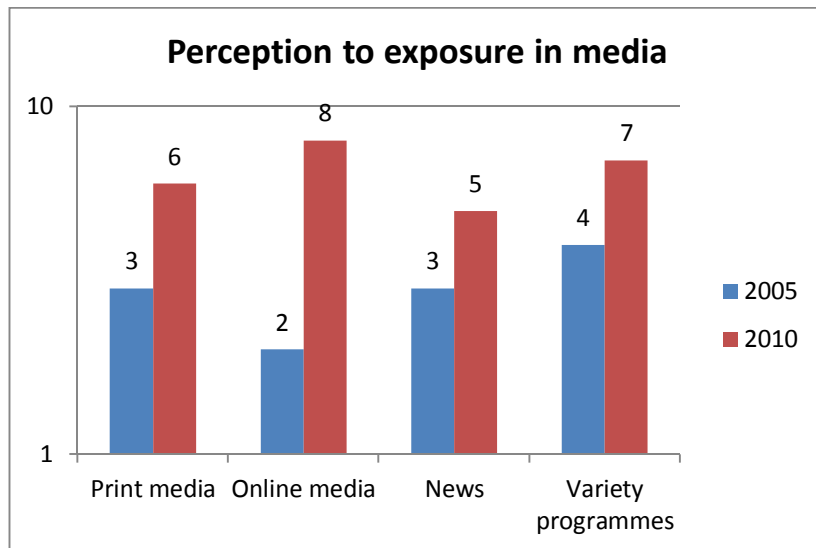


Figure2.1

Figure 2.1 shows how much agreement there was to the statement of increased media exposure of foreigners in Korean media from 2005 to 2010. Questions 1, 4 and 5 were attributed a 100% scale to measure the number of participants from both focus groups giving the same answer. The dimensions of media are print media, online media, news and variety programmes (shows).

The 10-point scale measured the perception of change with indicators of 1 to 5- negative, 6 – neutral, 7 to 10 – positive.

It is clearly visible that there is a stark difference in perception for the period of five years with double and quadruple increase in the case of respondents' perception of visibility of foreigners in print and online media.

Next is Figure 2.2, showing the same date but for the period of 2010 to 2015. The indexes are considerably higher than for the previous period indicating larger presence in media and definite increase of foreigner related topics in all media outlets.

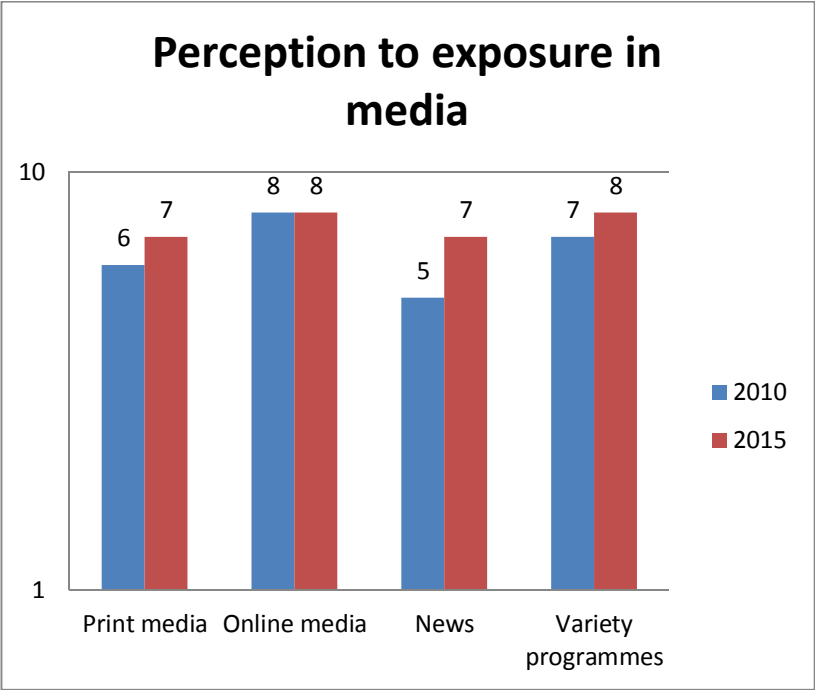


Figure 2.2

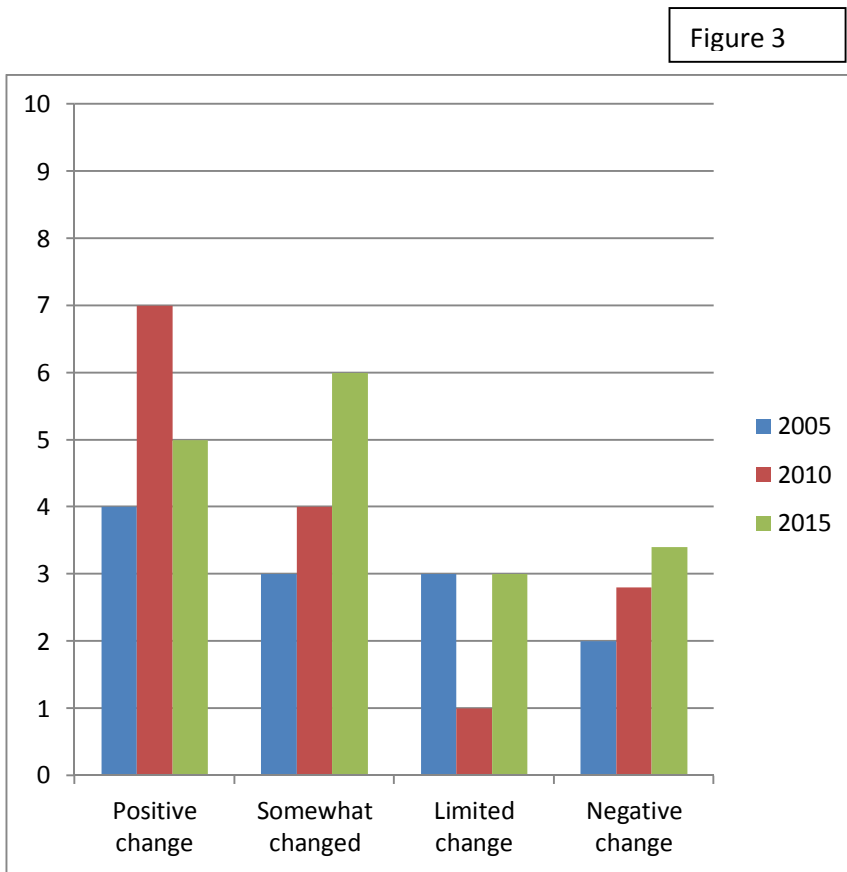
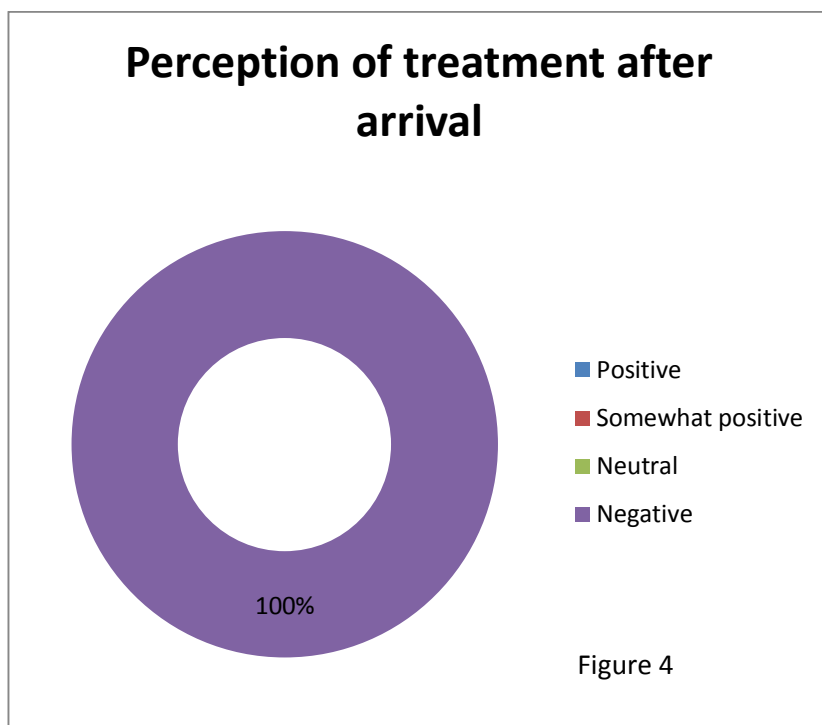


Figure 3 shows the shift of perception of foreigner-friendly environment in Korea with three points in time, namely, 2005, 2010 and 2015. It shows a sharp indication for positive change in 2010 (marking 7), while only slight increase for negative change perception but still in the line of the negative marking on the 10-point scale (2 to 5). The indicator for ‘somewhat changed’ perception for 2015 shows that some respondents considered a neutral response leaning towards positive compared to 2010 (marks 4) or 2005 (mark 3). ‘Limited change’ to environment is without fluctuations apart from the decrease in 2010 to the negatives.

#### 4.1 Perception of treatment after arrival



More than half of the respondents marked their experience after they arrived in Korea as positive and 21% indicated they had a ‘somewhat positive’ one. This is a staggering 76% of the respondents who gave a positive evaluation to the shift of attitude towards them. Only 15% of both groups (12 people out of F and D visa holders amounting to 76), said they considered the environment to be without change. Just 9% reacted negatively to the statement of perceived difference in treatment.



Figure 5 Perception of immigration due to media representation

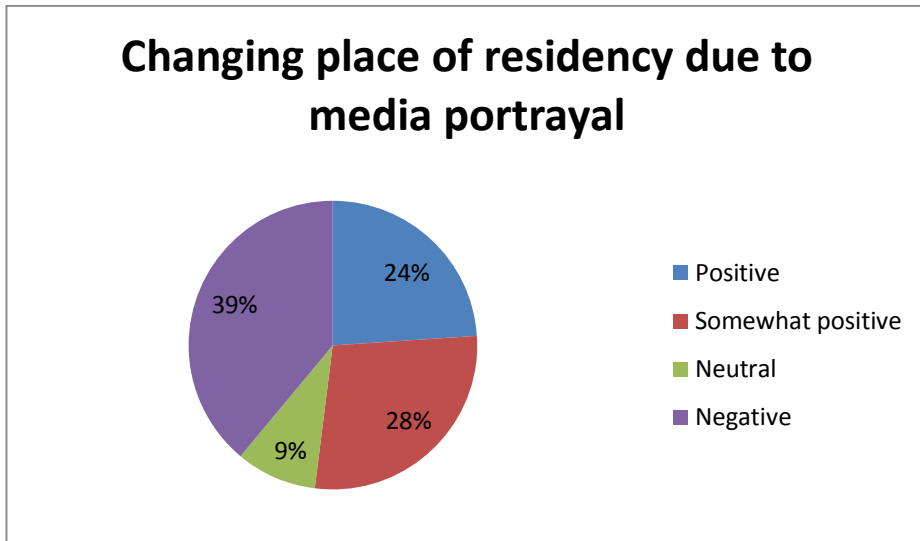


Figure 5 shows indicators towards immigrating to a new place due to unfavourable representation (the use of hate speech, for example). Slightly over half of the answers (24% and 28%) indicate a positive answer to the statement. Most people would definitely change their place of living (city or country) if they felt hostility or incoherent image of their nationality. Only 9% or 7 answers indicated that they cannot share an opinion or have not thought about it. However, 39% of the F visa holders replied negatively to the statement, indicating that they would not leave their Korean home because foreigners were not favourably viewed upon.

### **4.2.1 Perception of the Bulgarian diaspora in Korea**

#### **4.2.2 Construction of datasets**

A total of 15 interviewees completed the second survey and the data collected is presented in the following chapter. In sum, the participants were asked to write their responses to the following questions:

- 1) After reading and viewing the material do you think there is a larger representation of Bulgarians in Korean media?
- 2) Do you consider the image of Bulgarians represented in mass media to be positive?
- 3) Do you think the media portrayal of Bulgarians is incoherent?
- 4) Do you feel comfortable with the construct of the current media portrait?
- 5) If you agree to the former statement- do you feel challenged to associate with that image?

The questionnaire was followed by a discussion that examined the sources that influenced their opinion. Furthermore, the video compilation aimed to evaluate the following areas: 1) change in identifying with the diaspora (as a Bulgarian) due to media portrayal and to examine 2) the level of comfort with the new public awareness of Bulgarians in the media. In section 1 to 5 of the five part questionnaire the respondents were asked to evaluate 4 statements about media portrayal, frequency of exposure, and comfort with the way Bulgarians are portrayed and their personal association to it.

A scale of 4 points was used 4= Definitely 3= Somewhat 2= Uncertain  
1= No.

In addition, a scale of 10 points had to be attributed a to measure the degree to which participants have changed their opinions after getting acquainted with the material.

On the scale 1 to 5 equals a negative response, while 5 to 10 equal a positive one.

The dimensions and the factors are presented below:

- 1) Incoherent representation/ Very uncomfortable
- 2) Somewhat incoherent/ Somewhat uncomfortable
- 4) Neutral but leaning negative
- 5) Neutral but leaning positive
- 6) Coherent representation/ Somewhat positive
- 7) Very good image/ Positive
- 8) Extremely good portrayal/ Extremely positive

This is a subjective scale that does not represent to the maximum the variables of personal opinions expressed in the discussion.

Nevertheless, it represents the mean score of 3 dimensions that were found present in the answers and represent the concepts of negative, neutral and positive.

### 4.2.3 Survey results

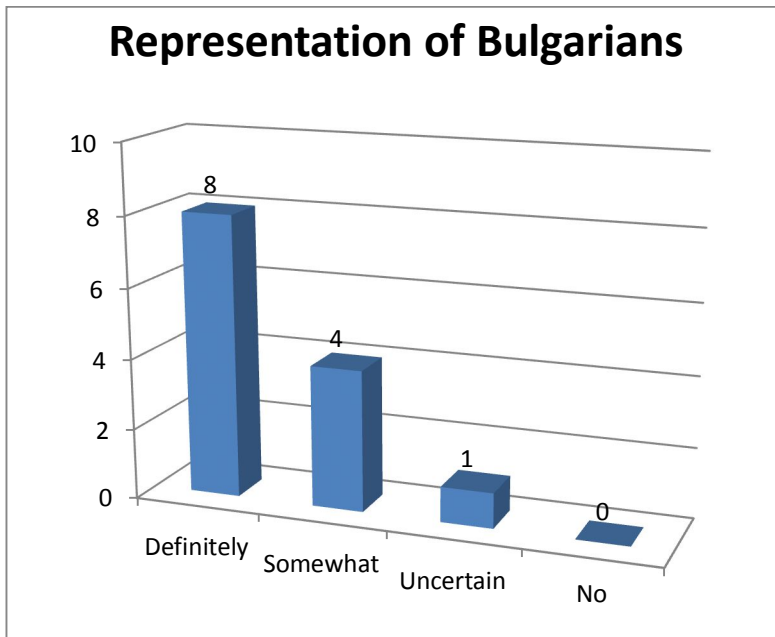


Figure 2.2.1

Figure 2.2.1 provides the median score of the 4 dimensions for answering the question and we can observe that there is no change (1 indicator) in uncertainty after viewing the visual materials in respondents. Notably, we can also observe that there is a sizeable increase in the opinion of positive change (8) showing that respondents were definitely positive that there is a change in Bulgarian representation in Korean media after being exposed to the selected material.

### Perception on positive image

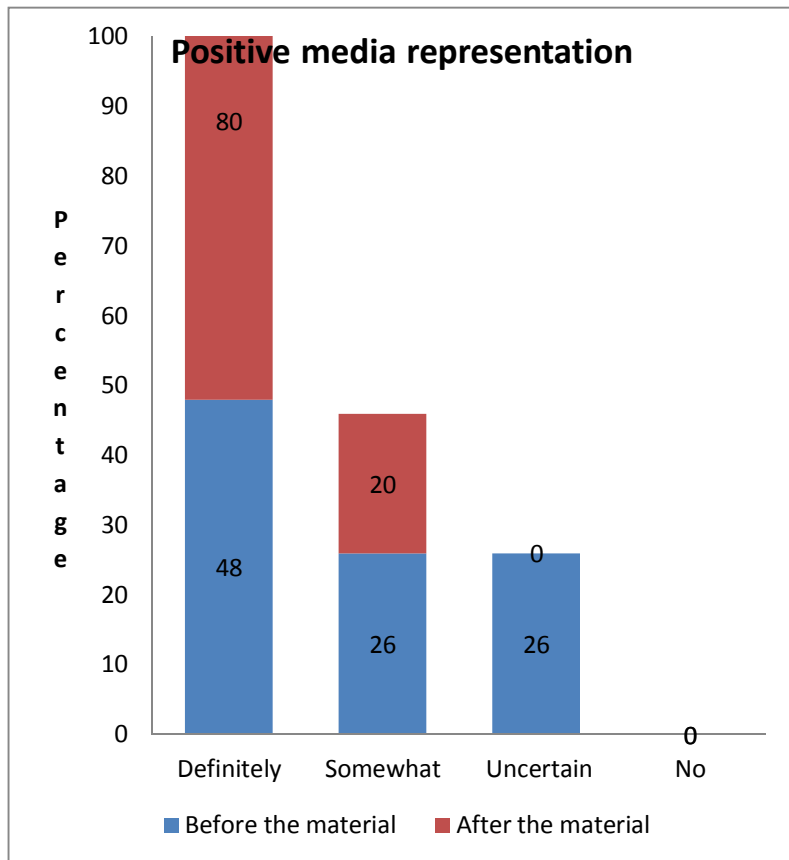
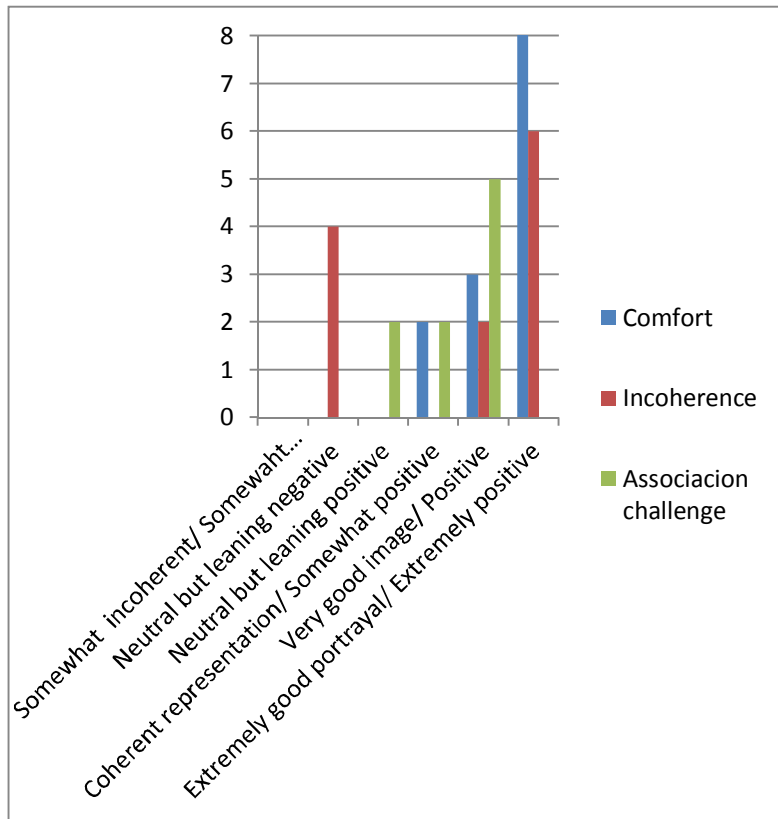


Figure 2.2

Looking at the dataset it is visible that after viewing the material 80% of the focus group definitely thought there was a positive media image of Bulgarians, compared to the 48% beforehand. Also, 26% were uncertain of their perception. We can again observe a strong positive response of 100% of the combined positive indicators. The figure represents the median score of the second focus group.

Figure 2.3 Perception of association and comfort with the image



The vertical axis represents notions of 1 to 4 negative, 5 to 6- neutral and 7 to 8 positive:

1. Extremely negative
2. Strongly negative
3. Negative
- 4 Somewhat negative
- 5-6. Neutral
7. Positive
8. Extremely positive

In this data compilation, the last three questions were merged into a big dataset in order to examine more coherently the perception of how comfortable respondents feel themselves with the created image and if they would not incline to associate being of Bulgarian nationality, provided the image was negative.

Most notably there is an extremely strong positive perception of identifying with the presented media image – meaning almost all participants felt comfortable to be linked to the same nationality. There is also some visible neutrality on the subject of ‘incoherence of the image’ – this is due mostly the fact that everyone of the focus group was familiar with at least one of the faces from the material shown.

On the scale of association challenged due to probable negative representation there is neutrality and expressed agreement on the ‘positive image’ (green line) that indicated unwillingness among participants to consider rejection on the grounds of probability.

Overall, we can see a strong positive attitude towards images of Bulgarians in broadcast shows or articles as they were considered ambassadors of the country in Korea.

When coding the interviews the observation of active involvement in the social sphere was repeated throughout with varying degrees of importance. It has become clear that in the last five years there has been an increase of foreigners, them taking an active role in the social life of their new community, making them more visible. It has also been discovered that most of the long-term Bulgarian residents see Koreans gradually opening up to different cultures and being curious. Thus it is creating an environment for the media to represent foreigners in a more detailed manner.

That perception opposes the main idea of ‘pockets of cultural hegemony’ as mentioned by Kastroyano – it actually serves as a stepping stone to globalizing Korean society rather than acting against it. But it still relates to the second part of the theory and reinforces it. Korean society is still trying to make the transformation to being the receiving end of immigration, thus, creating a rigorous system of visa categories and subcategories.

The frequent changes and merges of those subcategories in the researched timeframe show how the Korean societal construct of ‘foreigners’ has changed in the past decade.

A surprising finding was that due to the fact that most of the administrative and government services in Korea have been publicized through mobile apps, which have made Korean public more responsive to foreign residents despite some language barriers. It is a positive finding on the topic that shows the power of media usage through mobile devices.



It correlates strongly with agenda building and allocation of public interest and how media shapes societal opinion. As more people rely on social media channels the impact that these channels have over the construction of ‘image’. It has been noted that interviews are generally aware of the framing of news media but it is relied upon as a tool to interpret unfamiliar concepts. This awareness opposes Gamson’s assertion of media creating apathy rather than an active stance in the public. On the contrary, it gives a platform for activism and instant sharing of new information. Henceforth, it supports Scheufele and Tewksbury’s findings on mass media and heuristics.

Another variable that came up repeatedly in interviewees’ answers was the comfort felt on a personal level regarding Koreans becoming more accepting of different cultures. The positive indicators of the respondents (Figure 2.1, 2.2 and Figure 3) correlate to the notion of acceptance and the hypothesis of this paper. Positive change is happening and the Bulgarian diaspora is playing a vital part in it.

According to the social theory, employed in this research, the self is tied to the limited social circle of the diaspora to identify with and is prone to positive assessment of that circle. Immigration policies are tied to economic or geopolitical goals, but the data findings support the social identity theory and expand over the offered explanations of civil society and engagement by Lee and Alagappa.

Korean society is perceived to be much more foreign-friendly than earlier with a twofold increase in perception.

The data from Figure 1 and Figure 4 show a much perceptive media coverage on foreigners and treatment in general. It is utilizing the 'politics of recognition' through engagement of media- the general public is no longer baffled when recognizing Bulgarian nationality. (refer to the Appendix) However, recognition is rather limited to 'yogurt' and 'chef Michael' and does not go beyond. Despite media participation of Bulgarian representatives being immediately available for access on mobile devices, it is still somewhat unfamiliar country. Nevertheless, there is far more public awareness than compared to five years ago when 'Bulgarian' was not identified at all on personal recollections from interviewees.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusions**

This study was conducted with the aim to trace how media influences perceptions of the self in Bulgarian immigrants in Korea.

The Korean society – ever so dynamic- makes an interesting case of the case and the effect is due to the media shaping public opinion according to its framing agenda. Understanding that media sets its agenda is an issue that not many of the public think about and as could be seen from the above data the more positive a portrayal is- the better.

The findings of this study indicate that:

First, the themes of foreigners and self are closely linked to bringing equality among the host nation and immigrants. The shift of a immigrant-sending country to a immigrant-receiving country for Korea proves to challenge the current system and create a rather large apparatus of immigration regulation and regular visa requirement changes.

Second, the perception of foreigners in Korea has changed since 2005 also due to the expansion of the digital services that give access to media instantly. Furthermore, it has transformed Korean society to being more accepting of foreigners in general and their media presence in particular.

Third, that acceptance has seen a positive shift in the Bulgarian case – with greater frequency of articles related to them coming out in 2015 compared to just ten years ago. There are socially well-known Bulgarians through Korean media such as chef Mihail, entertainers and sport figures. Being a Bulgarian in Korea has become a known concept to Koreans and nevermore is there confusion when mentioning nationality.

It is striking that from a limited amount of data from just 3 national newspapers and broadcasts. it is possible to observe the changes in perception with both the questionnaires and articles, with a low negative outcome due to the lack of negative information. The positive side of the opinion spectrum is persistent and shows the media effect clearly.

Results also show a strong nexus between social identification (positive) and news framing (already cultivated image of the other). That is in support of the hypothesis’ correlation of in-group discrimination against the out-group to enhance self-image based on social identity theory. Also, there is an extremely strong positive perception of identifying with the presented media image – meaning almost all participants felt comfortable to be linked to their nationality. Therefore, effectively opposing and dismantling the correlation between the in-group (us) and out-group (them) in social identity theory.

## **5.2 Limitations and areas of further research**

This research has attempted to allocate a platform for looking at the attitudes towards an immigrant group becoming more recognizable in a society and the related experience and associations of the representatives of the community in question. However, due to the rather low number of participants and statistically insignificant amount of articles there are some limitations to the paper.

Firstly, to correctly identify the model of general attitude it would have been best if more participants answered the sets of questionnaires.

Second, the lack of data limited the time frame used and this prevented a more accurate conclusion drawing of the influence of media as the author could not compare sources in-depth.

Third, this field is uncharted and it deserves more attention as the prevailing image of a 'foreigner' is the American, Japanese or Korean Chinese one. However, the long-term resident scene encompasses more types which need to be explored the same as larger groups.

Henceforth, those major limitations can only support a valid argument that there is positively an influence on perception and attitudes toward foreigners in the Bulgarian case due to favourable media portrayal.

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## **Appendix**

### **Questionnaire 1**

- 1) Do you find that media is the main source of introducing a unfamiliar construct to a large audience?
- 2) Do you agree that there is increased exposure of foreigners in Korean media in the past decade?
  - a) from 2005 to 2010
  - b) from 2010 to 2015;
- 3) Do you agree that there is a better environment for foreigners compared to 2005?;
- 4) Do you find a difference in treatment of foreigners from when you arrived and now- in what category would you place that treatment?
- 5) Will you change your place of residency due to the state of media portrait your diaspora has in the host community?

Questions 1, 4 and 5 were attributed a 100% scale to measure the number of participants from both focus groups giving the same answer. The dimensions of media are print media, online media, news and variety programmes (shows).

The 10-point scale measured the perception of change with indicators of 1 to 5- negative, 6 – neutral, 7 to 10 – positive.

## **Questionnaire 2**

- 1) After reading and viewing the material do you think there is a larger representation of Bulgarians in Korean media?
- 2) Do you consider the image of Bulgarians represented in mass media to be positive?
- 3) Do you think the media portrayal of Bulgarians is incoherent?
- 4) Do you feel comfortable with the construct of the current media portrait?
- 5) If you agree to the former statement- do you feel challenged to associate with that image?

A scale of 10 points was attributed a to measure the degree to which participants have changed their opinions after getting acquainted with the material.

On the scale 1 to 5 equals a negative response, while 5 to 10 equal a positive one.

The dimensions and the factors are presented below:

- 1) Incoherent representation/ Very uncomfortable
- 2) Somewhat incoherent/ Somewhat uncomfortable
- 4) Neutral but leaning negative
- 5) Neutral but leaning positive
- 6) Coherent representation/ Somewhat positive
- 7) Very good image/ Positive
- 8) Extremely good portrayal/ Extremely positive