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A black and white image of Vincent van Gogh's signature, which reads "Vincent" in a cursive, handwritten style.

Artistic Legitimation of Japanese Pop Culture in the Netherlands.

A Comparative Study of Institutional and Public Perceptions

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Master Thesis

June 2024

Abstract

This study discusses the artistic legitimation of the Japanese pop culture phenomenon Pokémon in the Netherlands, with a particular emphasis on the remarkable collaboration between the Van Gogh Museum and Pokémon. Using a theoretical framework of artistic legitimation processes, this study examines how both high and popular culture are recognized as art, emphasizing the importance of political opportunities, resource availability, and the ways in which these art forms are presented and interpreted. By examining political opportunities and resource mobilization, this study reveals how Dutch cultural conditions facilitated the growth of Japanese pop culture. Framing processes are then employed in content analysis to explore how cultural institutions present this art form to the public. The findings indicate that while Japanese cultural integration is recognized and valued in the Netherlands, personal experiences and historical connections play a significant role in legitimizing art. Traditional art is often held in higher regard due to its perceived cultural and historical significance, while the artistic legitimacy of Japanese pop culture is frequently questioned. In summary, although Japanese pop culture is becoming more integrated and appreciated within the Dutch cultural landscape, it is not yet widely accepted as a legitimate art form. These findings underscore the ongoing evolution of cultural legitimation processes and highlight the importance of active engagement by cultural institutions with the public to foster an inclusive and dynamic art world. This involves not only disseminating information but also actively listening to and addressing the diverse voices and needs of the audience, contributing to a more inclusive and vibrant artistic community. This study offers useful insights for cultural institutions and Japanese pop culture creators, while contributing to the theoretical framework of artistic legitimation by applying these theories to a non-Western art form in a Western setting.

Keywords: Artistic legitimation, Japanese pop culture, Van Gogh Museum, Pokémon, Cultural integration, Cultural legitimation, Netherlands

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Introduction

One serene September morning, I ventured into the digital realm, opening my Internet browser to the tune of an unexpected social media tempest: Pikachu, clad in the iconic style of Vincent van Gogh, mirrored the famous self-portrait of the Dutch master that seemed to greet me in every digital nook and cranny. With a mix of curiosity and amazement, being a Pokémon and van Gogh enthusiast myself, I began digging deeper. Was there an artistic collaboration between Pokémon and the Van Gogh Museum?

It turned out to be an actual collaboration, not fan art. A limited-edition Van Gogh-style Pikachu card (a special collectible card used in the Pokémon Trading Card Game, featuring the popular Pokémon character Pikachu illustrated in the style of Vincent van Gogh's artwork) sparked a flurry of online discussion, and visitors flocked to the museum to get their hands on them (figure 1). Enthusiastic fans flooded the merchandise stores, and the merchandise was frequently resold online for three times the initial price (Quekel, 2023., Korevaar, 2023). This excitement made me curious: was it purely for financial gain or a brilliant publicity stunt? The borders between art, commerce, and pop culture were dissolving, and I felt motivated to learn more about this fascinating interplay of creativity and marketing. This interest extends beyond a personal one, as seen by the wide media attention and debate that have surrounded the cooperation. Critics have pointed out that the collaboration trivialized Van Gogh's art by connecting it to a commercial product, which has underlined the partnership's importance and controversy. They believed that the Van Gogh and Pokémon story was not credible or appropriate for the entirety of the museum's collection (Connoisseurs, 2023). These discussions illustrate the broader cultural and commercial implications, making it a significant topic for further exploration. According to the Van Gogh Museum's website, the partnership was a 50th anniversary tribute, with the goal of introducing youngsters to Vincent van Gogh and his art in an original way. The collaboration was further strengthened by a strong connection to Japanese art and culture: Pokémon is a Japanese pop culture phenomenon, while van Gogh found inspiration in Japanese printmaking (*Pokémon X Van Gogh Museum*, n.d.).

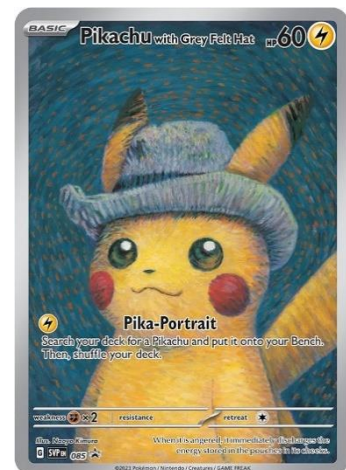


Figure 1: Pikachu with a grey felt hat trading card

How could two seemingly contradictory worlds of art and culture coexist so harmoniously? The timeless, old Dutch painting of Van Gogh and the contemporary Japanese phenomenon Pokémon are both intertwined in an artistic dialogue. All the discoveries I made online about the collaboration fuelled my curiosity about how the Van Gogh Museum publicized it. How did they present it to the public? And is such an unconventional partnership perceived as appropriate for the walls of a prestigious museum? While Van Gogh's works are world-renowned, the question arose: what about Pokémon, a Japanese pop culture phenomenon best known for video games, TV shows, and card games? Could this be considered art? And if that's the case, should we consider Pikachu and Eevee's hybrid appearances (Pikachu and Eevee are popular characters from the Pokémon franchise, known for their distinctive and endearing designs) which are intertwined with Van Gogh's recognizable painting techniques, works, and aesthetics, to be art? These questions seemed to hang in the air, and I had a strong desire to investigate and comprehend them in the context of artistic legitimacy and cultural perception.

The impact of Japanese pop culture on the Dutch cultural landscape is undeniable (Smits & Cwiertka, 2012). Many children grew up with Pokémon, and the cute Hello Kitty image is frequently seen on lunch boxes. So, the collaboration between these cultural phenomena was not entirely unexpected. But does it really call into question whether it can be considered art?

This brings us to the research's central question: how do various Dutch institutions and young adults artistically legitimize Japanese pop culture? 'Artistic legitimation' in the context of Japanese pop culture refers to the process of recognizing, accepting, and valuing this cultural form as a legitimate form of artistic expression within the larger art world. The focus on young adults is particularly relevant as these individuals are familiar with Japanese pop culture from their youth, adding a personal dimension to their engagement. This includes not only institutional recognition, such as museum exhibitions, but also how individuals, communities, and society as a whole internalize and incorporate these cultural phenomena into their understanding of art.

Through a broader notion of legitimation developed in the sociological literature on social movements, Baumann's, 2007 research highlights many creative forms of legitimation. He contends that there are essential similarities between social movements and the art world, making it possible to effectively use knowledge from social movement studies to the understanding of artistic legitimation. This leads us to the main question of the research: How do young adults and different Dutch institutions artistically legitimize Japanese pop culture? In this context, "artistic legitimation" refers to the process of acknowledging, appreciating, and

accepting Japanese pop culture as a valid artistic medium within the broader art world. The emphasis on young adults is especially pertinent because these people have personal experience with Japanese pop culture from their youth, which enhances their engagement. In addition to Baumann, Pierre Bourdieu's theories are essential for understanding the dynamics at work here. Bourdieu's theory of cultural production investigates how various players in the art world, such as traditional institutions and commercial entities, interact and compete for dominance. In this field, there is a constant struggle between the autonomous field, which is based on tradition and artistic values, and the hegemonic field, which is often commercially experienced and seeks recognition within the autonomous field. Bourdieu contends that the struggle for autonomy and cultural capital defines what constitutes legitimate art. This framework is especially useful when studying the intersection of traditional art forms and commercial pop culture, such as the collaboration between the Van Gogh Museum and Pokémon. Cultural institutions contribute significantly to artistic legitimacy by explaining to the broader public why something is deemed art. But does that imply it is genuinely art? More importantly, is what they express to the public accepted and incorporated into the public's perception of individual legitimacy? Understanding these dynamics is necessary for a thorough investigation of artistic legitimation (Jacquette, 2014., Leder et al, 2012). This study seeks to investigate not only how cultural institutions legitimize Japanese pop culture, but also how this legitimation manifests in broader public opinion and recognition. This includes investigating public acceptance and how far audiences embrace, interpret, and incorporate these ideas into their own views of art and artistic value. For example, the Van Gogh Museum may view the collaboration with Pokémon as logical, but how does the general public perceive it? Do they consider the collaboration artistic? To answer these questions, I will make use of a theoretical framework based on Baumann's concepts of opportunity, resources, and ideology framing, as well as Bourdieu's theory of the field, autonomy, and hegemony. These tools will be expanded upon in the theory section to provide a thorough grasp of the mechanisms involved in the process of artistic legitimation.

To investigate the various perspectives on artistic legitimation, this study will begin with a theory section that examines and discusses the ideas of Bourdieu and Baumann. This theoretical foundation will provide a framework for analyzing the dynamics of the artistic legitimation of Japanese pop culture in the Netherlands. To explore these dynamics, two separate studies will be conducted: a qualitative content analysis of websites of Dutch cultural institutions that present Japanese pop culture (n=20) and interviews based on visual Q methodology with young adults (n=10). The methodologies for both studies will then be

explained. Each study will employ a combination of qualitative methods to gain a thorough understanding of the various aspects of artistic legitimation. The qualitative content analysis of websites of Dutch cultural institutions will provide insights into the institutional narratives and strategies used to present Japanese pop culture, while the interviews based on visual Q methodology with young adults will capture personal perceptions and interpretations, highlighting how these institutional messages are received and integrated into individual understandings of art.

First, in study one, an in-depth content analysis will be carried out on the websites of cultural institutions that present Japanese pop culture, such as museums with anime or manga exhibitions. Through the lens of Baumann's ideology and framing, this analysis will investigate how these institutions frame and present the artistic legitimacy of Japanese pop culture to the public.

Additionally, in study two, Q-methodological interviews will be conducted with a representative sample of participants. This study aims to capture the diverse perspectives and subjective viewpoints of individuals regarding the artistic legitimacy of Japanese pop culture. Participants will be asked to share their personal perspectives and appreciations for specific works of art and cultural expressions, including traditional Japanese art and contemporary Japanese pop culture. This methodological combination will provide a comprehensive view of both institutional framings of artistic legitimacy and audience interpretations and appreciations, allowing for a thorough understanding of the complex dynamics of artistic appreciation and legitimacy in relation to Japanese pop culture within Dutch art environments.

With a solid methodological foundation in place, the research will proceed to the analyses and findings of both studies. First, the findings of Study 1 will be presented, focusing on how cultural institutions frame and present Japanese pop culture. This will shed light on how the institutional world constructs, communicates, and legitimizes Japanese pop culture to the public. Next, the findings of Study 2 will be discussed, emphasizing the audience's unique perceptions and valuations. Finally, the findings of both studies will be compared to understand which ideas and concepts were widely accepted and which had less impact or were poorly understood. This comparative analysis will provide a clearer picture of the effective and ineffective elements in the artistic legitimation of Japanese pop culture in the Dutch art context.

The presentation of the findings will lead to a comprehensive conclusion. This conclusion will not only summarize the main findings but will also discuss their implications in the larger context of artistic legitimation and the role of Japanese pop culture in Dutch art settings. Additionally, recommendations for future research will be made. These

recommendations will focus on knowledge gaps, potential methodology extensions, and new research questions raised by the study's findings. These recommendations will enable future researchers to build on the study's findings and advance the discussion of artistic legitimation and cultural inclusivity.

This study has important implications for cultural organizations such as museums, particularly the Van Gogh Museum. Museums can adjust and enhance their exhibition tactics by analyzing how Japanese pop culture is presented and accepted at these institutions. This can help to create a more diverse and inclusive presentation of many art forms, making museums more appealing to a wider audience. Additionally, this study provides artists and producers of Japanese pop culture with a greater understanding of how their work is seen and appreciated in Europe, particularly in the Netherlands. This knowledge can help them strategically place their products in order to reach a larger and more diversified audience. It also encourages intercultural communication and appreciation between Japan and the Netherlands, resulting in increased cultural diversity. Finally, this study adds to the theoretical framework of artistic legitimation by applying Bauman's and Bourdieu's ideas to a non-Western art form in a Western setting. It provides a complete overview of the mechanisms involved in artistic legitimation and can be used as a case study for future research into the integration and appreciation of various art forms in different cultural contexts.

Chapter 1: Theory

Examining the legitimation process of cultural products is important to this research and provides valuable insights into the evolving perceptions of artistic value. Understanding how cultural forms are recognized and accepted as art allows us to delve deeper into larger discussions about cultural representation, artistic boundaries, and societal appreciation for various forms of creativity. These insights also shed light on the role of institutions such as museums in shaping cultural narratives and defining artistic norms.

1.1. Theory of Artistic Legitimation: Integrating Sociological Perspectives

In his 2007 research, Baumann looks at the artistic legitimation process in the field of sociology. The process of legitimation is what gives new and initially unacceptably produced cultural works legitimacy and acceptance. Baumann highlights that this process of reframing and repositioning cultural productions occurs both cognitively and institutionally. This implies that they are now seen as 'valid' art, whether popular or high art, rather than only as commercial endeavors, entertainment, or cultural experimentation. Baumann explains the process of artistic

legitimation using ideas from the sociology of social movements. He contends that a universal theory of legitimation found in the literature of social movements can explain artistic legitimation. The three primary parts of this theory are opportunities, resources, and framing. Through the application of these ideas, Baumann demonstrates the similarities between collective action in social movements and the art industry. According to Baumann's research, there is no absolute legitimacy—rather, it can exist to varied degrees and among various groups. Rap music, for instance, has gained respectability over time and is now seen by many as acceptable popular art. This indicates a widespread, if not unanimous, agreement that the arguments supporting rap as art are sound (Pyatak & Muccitelli, 2011). According to Baumann, there can never be a full consensus on legitimacy; instead, there needs to be a minimum level of group agreement. Here, justifications are important because they offer arguments for why a specific cultural creation conforms to standards, values, or regulations that are widely accepted. Whether the audience is internal (inside the art world, for example) or external (among the general public), these explanations can change. Through the identification of similarities between social movements and the art world, Baumann offers a framework for comprehending the process of achieving artistic legitimation; this study on the creative legitimation of Japanese pop culture in the Netherlands is based on his observations. Baumann's concept of 'Discourse (Ideology, And Frameworks)' will additionally be explored in the methods section. The content analysis of the study, which focuses on how institutions like the Van Gogh Museum use rhetoric, ideology, and framing to justify their relationship with Pokémon, will depend heavily on this knowledge.

1.1.1. Opportunities

The contextual and structural elements that affect the legitimacy of artistic forms are the main emphasis of the "opportunities" component. These are features of the political context in which movements function and are frequently referred to as "political opportunities" or "opportunity structures". According to Baumann (2007), context is essential to comprehending the emergence, development, and success of social movements and artistic forms. Baumann provides several examples of external factors that could contribute to success in the context of social movements and the arts. One such example highlights the success of local grassroots environmental movements in Japan, which was influenced by the presence of a national anti-pollution movement. This national movement was able to provide financial, strategic, and ideological support to local initiatives, thereby increasing their chances of success. This illustration demonstrates how Japan's National Anti-Pollution Initiative gave grassroots

environmental initiatives at the local level crucial assistance in the form of funding, strategic direction, and ideological reinforcement. These local efforts had a much higher probability of success because of this all-encompassing backing. It demonstrates how larger political environments can act as stimulants for the accomplishment of artistic as well as social movements. An investigation will now be conducted into how such dynamics might apply to the reception and promotion of Japanese pop culture in the Netherlands, drawing comparisons with this study.

Following World War II, Japan's emergence as an economic powerhouse and its cultural export to the West were intertwined with significant geopolitical shifts (Masai et al., 2024., Staff, 2023). The postwar period, marked by American-supported reconstruction efforts, the promotion of democracy, and market liberalization, provided a conducive environment for Japan's economic and societal growth (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024). Coupled with Japan's strategic importance during the Cold War, these circumstances facilitated its economic ascent and cultural influence. The favorable political climate and economic prosperity enabled the global dissemination of Japanese art and culture (Otsubo et al., 2007., Som, 2014). This highlights how external factors, such as economic and political conditions, have played a pivotal role in the worldwide proliferation of Japanese art and culture, aligning with Bauman's emphasis on the significance of political opportunity in shaping the trajectory of social movements. Japan's restoration was greatly aided by US economic assistance in addition to military and diplomatic assistance (Pyle, 2018). Japan received substantial financial and technological support from the Marshall Plan, which was put into place after World War II to help nations devastated by the conflict rebuild their economy (Stanzel, 2015). Japan's economic recovery was aided by this assistance, which also paved the way for its later economic expansion and globalization. In addition, Japan was a crucial strategic ally of the US throughout the Cold War. The United States military's presence in Japan, particularly its bases on Okinawa, bolstered regional security and freed Japan to concentrate on its economic growth. Japan was able to benefit from the American market and technology because of its close relationship with the United States, which opened the door to economic cooperation and trade. Strong expansion in Japanese industry and trade was a result of the economic collaboration between the United States and Japan. Japanese businesses started shipping their goods to the US and other international markets. Together with technical advancement and increased production efficiency, this export-focused expansion helped Japan rise to the top of the world economy. Culturally speaking, these business connections also helped Japanese pop culture, entertainment, and art become more widely known worldwide. Japanese pop music, anime,

manga, video games, and films gained popularity outside of Japan, enhancing Japanese culture's worldwide influence. As a result, Japan benefited greatly from American political and financial backing during the postwar years, which also had a long-lasting effect on the acceptance and dissemination of Japanese art and culture throughout the world.

1.1.2. Resources

The opposite of political opportunity lies at the heart of Baumann's discussion of the concept of resources. In this case, endogenous factors are crucial. It makes sense on an intuitive level for social movements to succeed when their power comes from amassed riches. Resources can be either material or immaterial; they might be in the form of cash, labor, expertise, experience, institutionalized relationships and networks, physical assets or equipment, status and reputation, unofficial customs, organizational structures, emotional vitality, and leadership. The capacity of a movement to organize resources is essential to defining its course. Baumann highlights the significance of social movement organizations (SMOs) as one example of a resource. In addition to providing financial support and office supplies to social movements, these groups can also be seen as resources within the movement. They can be effective tools for achieving the movement's objectives and aid in the mobilization of other resources. In the art world, resources are likewise crucial to the explanation of legitimacy. The fundamental idea of the art world is mobilizing resources, which significantly changes the emphasis from art as the work of a single artist to art as collective action. In order to succeed, mobilization is required. Understanding the precise benefits that different types of resources bring and knowing what resources are mobilized are necessary to explain creative legitimation. This feature of Baumann's methodology can now be applied to Japanese pop culture study in the Netherlands. The goal is to investigate how intrinsic elements of Japanese pop culture, such as resource mobilization, contribute to its popularity and legitimacy outside.

Abundant resources have played a crucial role in Japan's economic rise and its cultural influence abroad. These resources include financial capital, skilled labor, technological expertise, networking capabilities, institutional affiliations, prestige, and more. Mobilizing these resources has been instrumental in spreading Japanese art and culture globally. One notable initiative in this regard is the "Cool Japan" strategy, which became official government policy in 2010 (Alfarisy et al., 2021). This strategy aimed to promote Japanese (pop) culture overseas, with the goal of enhancing Japan's international reputation and increasing cultural exports (De Vos, 2023., Saladin, 2018). As a result, Japan's cultural influence expanded

significantly worldwide, projecting a positive image of Japanese art, entertainment, and lifestyle.

Moreover, preceding and foreshadowing the "Cool Japan" initiative, the integration of Japanese gaming consoles like the GameBoy (figure 2), alongside technological platforms such as Sony, the Walkman, and Panasonic, played a pivotal role in popularizing Japanese pop culture in the Western hemisphere (Condry, 2006). These consoles rapidly gained global traction, granting millions access to Japanese games and entertainment, thus solidifying Japan's status as a cultural exporter (Alt, 2021). The widespread popularity of these gaming consoles, thus resources, has further facilitated the dissemination of Japanese culture and sparked global interest in Japanese art and entertainment.



Figure 2: Gameboy Color

In the Netherlands, Japanese pop culture has become deeply ingrained in society, reflecting trends observed in other Western countries. This integration was facilitated by various initiatives, including participation in the Cool Japan program, which actively promoted Japanese culture globally. In the Netherlands, this led to diverse cultural endeavors, such as museum exhibitions showcasing Japanese art, animation, and pop culture. Additionally, the proliferation of anime, manga, and gaming conventions and festivals surged, providing platforms for enthusiasts to unite and celebrate their shared passion for Japanese culture (Katz, 2012., Kuiper, 2018). These events fostered interaction and exchange among fans, sparking a growing interest in Japanese pop culture nationwide (Yang, z.d., Michael, 2021). Moreover, the enduring popularity of Japanese gaming consoles like the GameBoy and PlayStation further solidified the country's affinity for Japanese gaming, particularly through iconic titles like Pokémon, and Super Mario (a popular video game character created by Nintendo, known for his adventures in the Mushroom Kingdom, figure 3). These games transcended age barriers, appealing to a broad audience and significantly contributing to the widespread recognition of Japanese pop culture in the Netherlands (Van Gijssel, 2021). Additionally, notable cross-

cultural partnerships and initiatives emerged, such as the Pokémon x Van Gogh collaboration, which combined famous Vincent van Gogh paintings with aspects of Japanese popular culture.



Figure 3: Super Mario Bros

1.2. Bourdieu's theory of the field and cultural production

This theoretical segment will be greatly enhanced by Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the field and cultural production, with a focus on popular culture. Particularly in the context of popular culture, Bourdieu's idea of the cultural field offers a useful framework for comprehending the dynamics of cultural production and consumption.

Pierre Bourdieu's (1993) examination of literary and artistic fields offers a relational model of culture and rejects the idea of art based on originality or creative genius. According to Bourdieu, the worth and position of art are constantly being negotiated and fought, usually more vehemently by authorities than by artists themselves. According to him, the creative industries are dynamic domains of perpetual struggle in which everyone aspires to be acknowledged and have an impact in the name of cultural integrity.

Understanding that artistic progress is influenced by changes in larger social contexts, such as shifting opportunities, conflicts, and restrictions, is fundamental to Bourdieu's approach (Fowler, 2020). These changes give newcomers the chance to question accepted wisdom and assert different perspectives inside the cultural sphere (Grenfell & Hardy, 2007). For instance, movements like Impressionism subverted conventional artistic norms by emphasizing "lower" subjects like landscape and still life rather than historical portraiture (Sotheby's, 2023). Artistic works are situated within their social environment of creation, circulation, and consumption according to Bourdieu's theory of cultural production (Huhn et al., 1996). He looks at how various people and organizations, including writers, painters, publishers, reviewers, dealers, galleries, and academies, shape the cultural objects that are produced and how people respond to them. This method places a strong emphasis on the cultural field's organizational dynamics and how they relate to larger power systems.

The distinction between autonomous and heteronomous fields is central to Bourdieu's field theory. Autonomous fields include classical, established art forms that cultural elites have already recognized as legitimate and valuable. These forms of art are valued for both their intrinsic artistic qualities and their symbolic capital, which includes prestige and cultural authority. Examples include classical literature and traditional painting, which have gained legitimacy through historical recognition. Conversely, art forms that are thought to be commercially oriented and targeted at a wide audience can be found in heteronomous sectors. These artistic mediums still need to fight for acceptance and credibility in the cultural sphere. Although heteronomous art forms frequently enjoy greater public and commercial success than autonomous art forms, they frequently lack the symbolic recognition that distinguishes the former. Thus, there is an ongoing conflict inside the field for legitimacy—a process that Bourdieu refers to as a battle. Heteronomous art forms fight for a position in the autonomous field by questioning and altering accepted norms and ideals. The goal of heteronomous producers is for their commercial art to be acknowledged as genuine and valuable art. The struggle for legitimacy is intricate and fierce. Well-established autonomous producers attempt to hold onto their supremacy by setting the standards and exercising control over the industry. Conversely, heteronomous producers attempt to alter these regulations in order to strengthen their own status and get their creations acknowledged as authentic works of art. The process of legitimation is dynamic and continuous, impacting the power dynamics and organization of the sector. Heteronomous art forms that are successful in garnering attention eventually become part of the autonomous field and have the power to change ingrained societal norms and values. This procedure demonstrates how the social context and power dynamics in which cultural objects are positioned, in addition to their inherent qualities, determine their worth (Lizardo & Skiles, 2008). Therefore, legitimizing art and cultural products is a constant battle in which industry participants strive to solidify their positions by having their methods and vision accepted as standard. This struggle establishes what kinds of art and cultural products are valued and acceptable, which advances the field's ongoing development.

Film noir from the 1940s and 1950s is an example of an art genre that has already succeeded in moving from the commercial pole to the independent, acknowledged art world (Singh, 2021). Film noir originated in Hollywood as a commercial film style intended to delight audiences while also generating revenues. These films were distinguished by their gloomy, sardonic tone and visual style, which frequently incorporated shadows and light contrasts (Bello, 2024). Originally, these films were not intended to be considered "high art" but rather pleasant entertainment. But as time went on, critics and scholars of cinema came to appreciate the aesthetic significance of film noir. They gave high marks to the inventive cinematography, the characters' psychological depth, and the intricacy of the plots. European critics and filmmakers, particularly those from France, who embraced the ideas and style of film noir and started delving into its analysis and discussion in terms of cinematic art, contributed to this reevaluation. Classic film noirs like "The Maltese Falcon" (1941), "Double Indemnity" (1944), and "Sunset Boulevard" (1950) are regarded as masterpieces of cinematography as much as significant pieces of movie history today (Pfeiffer, 2024). They coexist with more conventionally acknowledged forms of art at film festivals, are studied in film schools, and are debated in scholarly publications. The narrative strategies and stylistic components of film noir have also had a long-lasting impact on popular and artistic cinema. The history of film noir serves as a source of inspiration for contemporary filmmakers like David Lynch and Quentin Tarantino, both of whom are acknowledged as creative trailblazers in the separate field of cinema art (Crislip, 2022).



Figure 4: Film Noir - The Maltese Falcon

Science fiction literature is another example of an art form that has succeeded in moving from the commercial to the autonomous pole. In the late 1800s, science fiction became a widely read literary genre, mostly found in cheap paperback books and pulp magazines. With the intention of entertaining and enthralling a broad audience, these novels were frequently created as thrilling adventures featuring futuristic technologies and extraterrestrial animals (Lombardo, 2014). As the genre developed, authors started delving deeper into topics including the human condition, philosophical problems, and social and political challenges. As a result, science fiction writers like Philip K. Dick, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Isaac Asimov came to be recognized for their creative contributions, which went beyond simple amusement. Science fiction

literature is now widely regarded as a significant element of the literary canon, with academics and critics all over the world studying and appreciating it (Menadue & Cheer, 2017). Works such as "Dune" by Frank Herbert, "Neuromancer" by William Gibson, and "The Left Hand of Darkness" by Ursula K. Le Guin are considered high literature and have left an indelible mark on the literary world. The themes and ideas explored in science fiction literature have had a profound influence on other art forms, including film, television, visual arts, and music. Films such as "Blade Runner" and "2001: A Space Odyssey" popularized science fiction themes and are now considered cinematic classics (*2001: A Space Odyssey* / *Eye Filmmuseum*, n.d.)

Nijntje, commonly known as Miffy outside of the Netherlands, is another example of a character that began in commercial entertainment but evolved into a beloved cultural icon and a recognized emblem of Dutch art and culture (Ludejo, 2023). Dick Bruna, a Dutch illustrator and writer, created Miffy in 1955. Her first journey was featured in the children's book "Miffy in the Zoo" (*Nijntje*, n.d.).

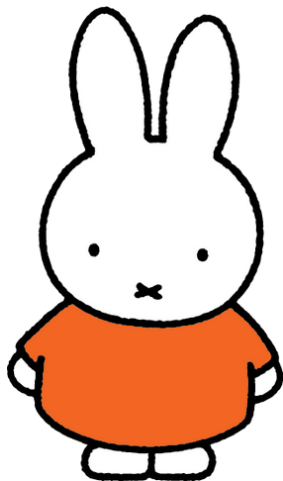


Figure 5: Nijntje

Miffy, with her basic and recognized drawing style and adorable appearance, was designed to be an appealing character for young children (figure 5). What began as a series of children's books swiftly evolved into a multimedia sensation. Miffy has appeared in numerous books, television shows, movies, merchandise, and even theme park attractions. Her global and timeless appeal endeared her to children, and grownups, around the world. Miffy has become a recognizable symbol of Dutch art and culture (Essink, 2017). Her picture currently appears on a wide range of things, including cuddly toys, apparel, dinnerware, and souvenirs. She embodies not only the charm and simplicity of the Dutch aesthetic,

but also the warm and welcoming demeanor that both children and adults like. Despite having originated as a children's commercial mascot, Miffy has had a long-lasting impact on the independent art scene. Her unmistakable appearance and unique drawing style have served as an inspiration to designers and other artists, helping to establish illustration as a legitimate art form (Victoria, 2018). Furthermore, Dick Bruna's reputation as an artist has increased over time. His contributions to the area of illustration are today recognized, and he is praised not just for creating a beloved figure, but also for his artistic vision and impact (*Dick Bruna, De Schepper Van Nijntje*, 1973b). This evolution demonstrates the possibility for commercial art forms to earn credibility and recognition in the larger art world.

It is thus not unexpected to consider that Pokémon is going through a similar metamorphosis, aiming for acceptability and acknowledgment inside the independent world of art, as seen by its partnership with Van Gogh. Vincent Van Gogh is regarded by many as an icon of independent art, a representation of cultural capital that is both autonomous and deeply ingrained in the prestigious and conventional art world. Pokémon, on the other hand, aims for greater cultural validation and recognition while representing the commercial, and thus hegemonic, power and influence of Japanese pop culture. By collaborating with Van Gogh, a figure of established cultural prestige, Pokémon may be aiming for more than just commercial success (figure 6). It may be striving for recognition and acceptance within the realm of recognized art. This collaboration can be interpreted as a strategy to elevate Pokémon's cultural standing and legitimize its presence alongside renowned artistic works. The goal is to close the gap between commercial success and cultural recognition, granting Pokémon access to new levels of symbolic capital and increasing its value in the larger cultural landscape. In this way, Pokémon follows in the footsteps of other cultural phenomena that have successfully transitioned from commercial to autonomous status. Pokémon may be aiming for a similar rise in cultural status and legitimacy through this collaboration, just as film noir, science fiction literature, and the character Miffy have demonstrated their ability to transition from commercial entertainment to recognized art forms.

Altogether, the theoretical framework discussed above provides important insights into shifting perspectives on the



Figure 6: Pokémon x Van Gogh – Munchlax and Snorlax inspired by *The Bedroom*

value of art and influences the legitimation processes of cultural products. Understanding how cultural forms are recognized and valued as art allows us to explore broader issues such as cultural representation, artistic boundaries, and social acceptance of various forms of creativity. These theories also explain how organizations like museums create creative norms and shape cultural narratives.

The ideas discussed, including Bourdieu's concept of cultural production and Baumann's general theory of artistic legitimation, shed light on how creativity and cultural

goods are evaluated and recognized within artistic frameworks. Baumann's approach emphasizes the cognitive and institutional process of granting legitimacy to cultural products, drawing on ideas from social movement sociology. He demonstrates how cultural forms, such as rap music, are gradually being recognized as legitimate art forms through argumentation and framing. This method offers a useful framework for investigating the artistic legitimization processes of Japanese pop culture in a foreign setting, such as the Netherlands.

Bourdieu's theory of the field and cultural production provides a detailed examination of the struggle for legitimacy in the cultural sphere. His distinction between autonomous and heteronomous fields sheds light on the current dynamics of cultural legitimization. Film noir, science fiction literature, and the character Miffy all demonstrate how cultural forms can transition from the commercial to the autonomous pole via legitimization processes. This demonstrates how cultural products that were once commercial are now recognized as valuable art forms.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Two research approaches, thus studies, will be used to get a comprehensive understanding of the artistic legitimacy of Japanese pop culture in the Netherlands. First, Study One will map the institutional side of legitimization using a content analysis. This involves looking at how established cultural institutions, such as museums and galleries, display, interpret, and justify Japanese pop culture in the Dutch artistic setting. Bauman's third aspect of the artistic legitimization process, ideology framing, will additionally be discussed to serve as a lens through which this analysis is performed. In addition, Study Two will employ a Q-Methodological technique to investigate individual participants' perceptions and legitimization processes. This second study will examine how people perceive, enjoy, and legitimize Japanese pop culture in general, or into their creative and cultural identities. The outcomes of these two studies will be addressed individually to acquire a thorough grasp of both institutional and individual components of artistic legitimization. These findings will then be contrasted and examined to provide a cohesive and comprehensive picture of the artistic legitimization process of Japanese pop culture in the Netherlands.

By using a combined research approach, applying Baumann's theoretical steps to content analysis followed by Q-methodology interviews, two distinct perspectives can be contrasted in the analysis: the (expected) institutional perspective presented by the museum and the individual perspective of the participants. These perspectives will complement each

other by revealing both how Japanese pop culture is officially legitimized and how it is personally received and interpreted by the public. This contrast will illuminate the dynamics of artistic legitimation, showing potential disparities or alignments between institutional narratives and public perception. This study focuses on the legitimation of Japanese pop culture in general, with a special focus on the presentation of Pokémon in the Van Gogh Museum.

2.1. Study One: Institutional Legitimation

2.1.1. Content analysis

Content analysis is a research methodology aimed at extracting meaning from the often unstructured content of various forms of communication, including texts, images, symbols, and audio data (Gheyle & Jacobs, 2017., Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In essence, it endeavors to decipher the textual significance of messages. While content analysis is just one approach among many that seek to unravel the meaning within textual communication, there exist numerous alternative analyses focusing on text, messages, and their content and meaning, such as conversational analysis, rhetorical analysis, and discourse analysis (*Columbia Public Health*, 2023). Coding the data gathered is an essential part of content analysis to identify patterns and meanings (Gheyle & Jacobs, 2017., Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

2.1.2. Sample Selection Process

Bauman's Ideology Framing sheds light on the role of discourse, ideology, and frameworks in the legitimation process within the sociology of art. These elements are viewed as explanatory factors in understanding how ideas contribute to the success and legitimacy of cultural productions. Framing is an important process for understanding and legitimizing social movements. It involves groups consciously creating shared understandings that legitimize and motivate collective action.

To acquire a comprehensive understanding of the framing procedures related to the promotion of Japanese pop culture in the Netherlands, this research carried out a content analysis on 20 websites belonging to different established Dutch cultural institutes and organizations. These included museums, universities, and cultural event organizers such as film festivals. The selection criteria for these websites were as follows: they must be well-established Dutch institutions or organizations with a significant impact on cultural discourse, have a proven track record of promoting cultural events or exhibitions, and their websites must contain relevant content not older than 2010. This ensures that the study focuses on influential and reputable sources within the Netherlands that have played a key role in shaping the public's

perception of Japanese pop culture. After that, a thorough reading and analysis of the chosen websites was conducted to determine the framing techniques employed in the promotion of Japanese pop culture. Open-coding the text allows for finding pertinent themes, ideas, and framing techniques while reading the text without following any predetermined categories (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). This process is part of grounded theory methodology, which involves iteratively coding and categorizing data to develop theoretical insights (Qureshi Ünlü, 2020). Through this method, the research identifies core dimensions of artistic legitimation, which will be further elaborated in the results section. These dimensions provide a structured framework for understanding how Japanese pop culture is framed and promoted by Dutch cultural institutions.

2.2. Study Two: Audience Legitimation

2.2.1. Q-methodology

The Q-methodology is a research technique designed to determine the dominant viewpoints or attitudes regarding a given topic. The Q-methodology is a research technique designed to determine the dominant viewpoints or attitudes regarding a given topic. Q-methodology combines both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to systematically study subjective viewpoints (Dieteren et al., 2023). It involves participants sorting a set of statements about the topic into a distribution based on their level of agreement or disagreement, which is then analyzed to identify common patterns and shared perspectives. This methodology is particularly interesting because it allows for the exploration of the nuances and complexities of individual attitudes in a structured manner (Lugovalex, 2024). It has been effectively used in various sociological studies to understand perspectives on social issues, such as political beliefs, environmental attitudes, and cultural preferences (Saheed & Becker, 2016)). Given its focus on capturing subjective cognition and interpretation, Q-methodology is a good match for examining how young adults perceive and interpret the legitimation of Japanese pop culture. This cognitive approach aligns well with the aim of understanding the individual perspective, complementing the institutional analysis conducted through content analysis. Using this method, the researcher can determine which participant groups share similar or divergent opinions, and then determine the similarities and differences between the groups (Jedeloo & Van Staa, 2009., Zabala et al., 2018). A cognitive-sociological technique might be useful for undertaking Q-methodological research, which entails determining the dominant opinions or attitudes on a specific topic. This approach focuses not only on participants' expressed ideas, but also on how they see and interpret the world around them, taking into account their social

and cultural background. Using a cognitive-sociological perspective, researchers can acquire a better understanding of how social and cultural influences influence people's perceptions and attitudes (Brekhus, 2007). This can assist reveal hidden patterns and similarities in how people think and interpret, resulting in a greater understanding of the complex dynamics that underpin human behavior and ideas. For example, in Q methodological research, researchers can ask participants to rank specific propositions depending on their personal knowledge and insights. At the same time, they can be encouraged to explain the reasoning and perceptions that underpin their decisions, allowing for a better understanding of the cognitive processes that influence their perspectives. This enables researchers to comprehend not only the surface ideas of participants, but also the underlying sociocultural framework in which these opinions are created and perceived (Bryman, 2015).

Ten participants will be asked to sort a series of photographs according to their own ideas and observations on a spectrum of -5 to +5, in response to the question: "To what extent do you perceive this as art?" These photos represent 40 various art types, which will be examined more in the technique. During and after the sorting process, participants are questioned why they picked specific choices, what their reasoning was, and how these choices related to their personal experiences, preferences, and backgrounds. Follow-up questions will be provided to explore deeper into the rationale behind the decisions made (APPENDIX C). For example, it will be explored whether recognition effects participant decisions and why certain images are deemed "most art". This technique allows for a more in-depth knowledge of how people perceive and interpret art, as well as how these views are influenced by a variety of elements such as cultural background, personal experiences, and societal influences.

2.2.2. Sample Selection

The selection procedure for the Q-methodology images included four different categories, ten images each, each with specific search criteria and search methods to achieve a theoretically informed and diverse dataset. Images for this study were gathered from a variety of online sources. It is worth noting that these searches were conducted on non-logged-in browsers to avoid the influence of personalized algorithms. This method enabled the collection of a diverse set of images relevant to the subject of this study, namely the artistic legitimization of Japanese pop culture. Using these easily accessible and widely used online resources, a diverse collection of images was compiled for the analysis of the q-methodology interviews.

1. Autonomous Japanese (Traditional Japanese works of art):
 - Keywords used: "traditional Japanese painting", "traditional Japanese artwork".

- Selected images must represent authentic, traditional Japanese works of art.
 - The category of Autonomous Japanese recognizes the historical significance of traditional Japanese art in shaping Japanese artistic expression. By assuming various pieces of art, participants may be able to delve into and reflect on Japan's deep-rooted aesthetic and cultural ideals, which frequently permeate modern art forms.
2. Japanese pop culture (Contemporary Japanese pop culture artworks):
- Keywords used: "Japanese pop culture", "cool-Japan art".
 - Selected images should depict modern works of art heavily influenced by contemporary Japanese pop culture.
 - Contemporary Japanese pop culture artworks are important because they represent the evolution of Japanese artistic expressions while also reflecting current society and its ideals. These pieces of art not only reflect popular trends and styles, but they can also represent social and cultural topics important to our understanding of Japanese culture and its place in the world.
3. Hybrid Japanese art with Japanese pop culture (Combination of traditional Japanese elements with contemporary Japanese pop culture):
- Keywords used: "The wave and Pokemon", "Red Fuji and Pokemon", "Traditional Japanese painting and anime", "Japanese art and anime".
 - Selected images should include a mix of traditional Japanese art styles and contemporary Japanese pop culture elements.
 - This category includes works of art that combine traditional Japanese characteristics with contemporary pop culture influences. This sheds light on how cultural traditions are blended and adapted to modern situations. It also demonstrates how artists investigate and articulate the contradiction between tradition and innovation. As a result, these images frequently have a contradicting impression and spark controversy.
4. Hybrid Traditional Western Art with Japanese Pop Culture (Integration of Traditional Western Art Styles with Japanese Pop Culture Elements)
- Keywords used: "Van Gogh x Pokemon", "Van Gogh and anime", "Vermeer and Manga", "Van Gogh and Ghibli".
 - Selected images should combine traditional Western art styles with elements of contemporary Japanese pop culture.

- This category looks at works of art that blend classic Western art forms with aspects of Japanese pop culture. It provides an insightful glimpse into cultural interaction and impact, combining artistic standards and symbolism from other cultures. Examining these hybrid works can help us better understand how cultural identities and aesthetics intersect and are interpreted in today's globalized society. Like the other hybrid, this could push artistic boundaries and spark controversy. This section will also include images from the case study, *Pokemon x van Gogh*, from which this research is initially derived.

By applying these defined search criteria and search methods to both Google Search and Pinterest, a diverse and representative dataset of forty images was created. A list of the images can be found in APPENDIX B.

2.2.3. Participant Selection

The "Audience Legitimation" study's participant selection process was carefully designed to generate a broad and representative data set that includes diverse perspectives and experiences with Japanese pop culture, with a particular emphasis on Pokémon. The emphasis is on the perception and appreciation of this culture among young adults, aged between 20 and 35 years. Several relevant factors influenced the study's decision to include participants aged 20 to 35 years. First and foremost, this age group includes people who grew up in an era of rapid technological advancement and media consumption (Bopp et al., 2018). This generation is actively engaged in various forms of digital media and technological developments, which keeps them informed about and involved in online cultural phenomena (Feger, 2024). This also includes the growth and popularity of Japanese pop culture, such as manga, anime, and video games like Pokémon (M, 2016). Their extensive exposure to digital media and technology may provide them with unique perspectives and experiences with these cultural elements. In addition, this age range represents a diversity of generations, including millennials and the oldest members of Generation Z. Within this group, cultural differences and shifts can be observed across generations (Geiger, 2024., Heys, 2024). This is significant because each generation has had unique experiences with the rise and popularity of Japanese pop culture in the Netherlands. The diversity within the age group thus contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of cultural trends and perceptions. Another important consideration is the educational and professional background of people in this age group. Many have completed their education and are working in various sectors of the labor market. Their educational backgrounds, professional experiences, and areas of interest can all influence how they

perceive and value Japanese pop culture. People with backgrounds in media studies, art, or international relations, for example, may hold differing views on the impact and legitimacy of Japanese pop culture in the Netherlands. Finally, but not least, this age group is likely to include people who grew up during the Pokémon "rage" in the Netherlands, which can lead to nostalgia and a better understanding of Pokémon's cultural impact (Villeneuve, 2016., Wulf & Baldwin, 2020). At the same time, this group includes people who were less exposed to Pokémon as children, which may offer a unique perspective on current appreciation for Japanese pop culture.

Gender diversity is an important factor in participant selection because it ensures a diverse range of perspectives and experiences (Love et al., 2022). As a result, it was decided that the study would include four men, five women, and one non-binary individual. This enables the dataset to include a diverse range of perspectives and experiences regarding various types of media influences and cultural appreciation. Participant recruitment is carried out through various channels such as social media, universities, and local communities. This broad recruitment process helps attract a diverse group of participants who are representative of the target group of the study (Negrin et al., 2022). The study results are expected to provide an in-depth insight into the various ways in which Japanese pop culture is understood, appreciated, and interpreted in the Dutch context, thanks to this carefully planned and substantiated approach to participant selection. This will lead to a better understanding of audience legitimization processes and cultural perceptions in the larger context of media and cultural studies. It is also required that all participants reside in the Netherlands. This geographical restriction was purposefully chosen to ensure that the experiences, perceptions, and appreciations of Japanese pop culture are studied specifically in the Dutch context. By selecting participants from the Netherlands, a better understanding can be gained of how Japanese pop culture, such as Pokémon, is perceived and appreciated in the country's cultural and media environments. This geographical focus helps to ensure that the study results are accurate and relevant to Dutch cultural and media users.

Additionally, Participants were selected in accordance with ethical guidelines to ensure that their rights and privacy were protected throughout the study. Prior to participating in the study, all participants were informed of the study's purpose, expected duration of participation, and potential risks and benefits. They were also given a consent form that included all relevant information, and they were encouraged to ask any questions before deciding whether to participate.

2.2.4. Participants list

Name	Age	Gender	Code
Allison	26	Female	ALF26
Annika	21	Female	ANF21
Daniel	30	Male	DAM30
Eline	27	Female	ELF27
Grayson	21	Female	GRF21
Jurre	27	Male	JUM27
Laura	27	Female	LAF27
Marnix	30	Male	MAM30
Shiloh	24	Non-binary	SHX24
Tijs	25	Male	TIM25

Chapter 3: Institutional legitimation

The findings of the institutional legitimation processes, obtained from the content analysis, shed a fascinating light on how Japanese pop culture is positioned and legitimized in the Netherlands. This method exposed the various strategies used to legitimize Japanese pop culture and revealed different ways of ideological framing, as investigated by Baumann. It is important to see ideological framing as different characters that emerge from different ideological pots, but still form a coherent human whole. These "characters" symbolize the many ideological stances they take and the techniques they use to gain legitimacy. This analogy helps us appreciate the complexity and nuances of ideological positions and the strategies employed for legitimation. It paints a clear picture of cultural legitimation's dynamics and history, helping us see how disparate ideas and approaches combine to build a coherent narrative. This allows us to expand our perception and better understand the social and cultural processes that underpin the legitimacy of artistic forms in society.

The themes that emerged throughout this analysis demonstrate the nuances and dynamics of these ideological positions and strategies, as identified through the open coding process and subsequently categorized into dimensions, as described in the methods section. It is important to highlight that I, the researcher, recognized and named these themes based on the studied text. This will be detailed further down the findings per theme. The identified themes are as follows: Cultural Integration Legitimation (CI), Cross-Cultural Legitimation (CC), and Historical Legitimation (HL). Because of the dynamic nature of legitimation processes, these categories overlap and are interconnected rather than strictly separated. This is because various aspects of the legitimation of Japanese pop culture frequently intersect and influence one another. For example, Cultural Integration Legitimation (CI) and Cross-Cultural

Legitimation (CC) may overlap because they both emphasize cultural integration and exchange between Japan and the Netherlands, albeit from different perspectives. Furthermore, Historical Legitimation (HL) is linked to Cultural Integration Legitimation (CI) in that it sheds light on the historical roots of Japanese pop culture and how they have been integrated into Western culture over time, which is relevant to cross-cultural interactions. These overlaps demonstrate the complexity and multi-layeredness of the legitimation processes, emphasizing the importance of understanding the interconnectedness of the various themes

3.1. Cultural Integration Legitimation

This form of legitimation aims to frame Japanese pop culture as inherently legitimate, having evolved into an integral element of Western culture. Participating institutions play an active role in showcasing how various aspects of Japanese pop culture are interwoven with diverse facets of Western everyday life, art, entertainment, and history. In the content analysis, this theme was first noticed, and thus named, on the Pokémon x Van Gogh collaboration website, where it was prominently featured. This theme appeared in eight of the ten websites analyzed, accounting for 20 codings in total, making it the most prevalent theme in the dataset. The frequency and prominence of this theme indicate that it is a common institutional strategy for legitimizing Japanese pop culture by emphasizing its integration and significance in Western contexts. For example, several museum websites highlighted exhibitions that juxtaposed traditional Japanese art forms with contemporary pop culture elements, resulting in a narrative that connects historical art with modern cultural expressions. This was not a sporadic mention; it was built into the structure of their exhibitions and educational content. The frequent occurrence of this theme suggests that these institutions made a concerted effort to portray Japanese pop culture as an important and influential part of Western cultural landscapes.

Explicit references by Leiden University mentioning Hello Kitty as a symbol "found in all levels of society" (Smits & Cwiertka, 2012) and the prevalence of cuteness culture in the Netherlands indicate not only widespread acceptance but also broad integration into various aspects of daily life. Another quote highlighting the cultural integration was found on the promotion website of the Pokémon x van Gogh collaboration, saying: "The collaboration arose from the shared link with Japanese art and culture: Pokémon is a Japanese pop culture icon and Japanese printmaking was an important source of inspiration for Vincent van Gogh." (*Van Gogh Lessen Voor De Basisschool*, n.d.). This quote Emphasizes the inspiration from Japanese art van Gogh integrated into his work, thus already emphasizing its integrated nature within

the Dutch art world. The recurrence of these themes across numerous institutions signifies a coordinated initiative to normalize and advocate for Japanese pop culture in Western nations.

Various statements and promotions shed light not only on the integration of Japanese pop culture into Western society (CI), but also on the extensive exchange of different cultural influences (CC). Consider the following statement about the collaboration between Pokémon and Van Gogh: "the collaboration stems from the shared bond with Japanese art and culture: Pokémon is an icon of Japanese pop culture, and Japanese printmaking was an important source of inspiration for Vincent van Gogh Gogh" (Van Gogh Lessons for Primary School, n.d.). This statement does more than just emphasize the integration of Japanese pop culture into the Western context; it also demonstrates how cultural exchange and cross-cultural influences play an important role in legitimizing cultural phenomena. The emphasis on Van Gogh's inspiration from Japanese printmaking highlights the cultural interaction and mutual influence between Japanese and Western art. This aspect of cultural exchange and integration coincides with the incorporation of Japanese pop culture into Western culture, blurring traditional cultural boundaries and spawning new forms of artistic expression. These overlapping themes of cultural integration and cross-cultural influences emphasize the complexity and dynamic nature of legitimation processes. They demonstrate how cultural phenomena do not exist in isolation within specific cultural frameworks, but rather thrive and evolve as a result of intercultural interaction and exchange. This approach to cultural legitimation, which takes into account both integration and cross-cultural influences, provides a more in-depth understanding of how cultural phenomena become embedded in and resonate with diverse societies.

In general, the Cultural Integration legitimation strategy highlights how Japanese pop culture has been widely integrated into Western society on a variety of levels. It fosters the notion that aspects of Japanese culture are no longer seen as "foreign," but rather as important parts of the Western, or Dutch, cultural experience. These institutions support the legitimation of Japanese art and culture as independent art forms within their conceptions of what art is by embracing Japanese pop culture as an authentic component of their own cultural identity. This gives the impression that Japanese pop culture has always existed and been assimilated into our conception of art and culture, creating a sort of "new normal" in the Dutch cultural landscape.

3.2. Cross Cultural Legitimation

Cross-cultural legitimation, or (CC), is a legitimation strategy that prioritizes cross-cultural integration and exchange. In this instance, it alludes to how Japanese pop culture is acknowledged and accepted in Western societies and how this integration happens across temporal and cultural barriers. It emphasizes the idea that cultural influences are not just transferred from one culture to another, but rather are hybridized in this exchange of cultures. Conversely, through interaction and conscious integration, they develop a hybrid character. This suggests that while incorporating aspects of one culture into another, they also need to be adjusted and changed to better fit the recipient culture. People may deliberately integrate aspects of different cultures into their own cultural practices in order to go through this process. This theme was first noticed on the Pokémon x Van Gogh collaboration website, where the emphasis differed from the cultural integration legitimation. Although similar to the previous theme, this one focused heavily on the cross-cultural aspect of art appreciation. This theme was found on nine of the ten websites analyzed, for a total of eleven codes.

Similar to how established artists like Vincent van Gogh were influenced by Japanese art and how contemporary Japanese artists are in turn inspired by Van Gogh's work, the legitimation strategy of Cultural Integration highlights the widespread acceptance and assimilation of Japanese pop culture into Western society. A quotation that highlights the exchange of cultures serves as more evidence of this: "Japanese art served as an inspiration for Vincent van Gogh. Additionally, some Japanese artists of today draw inspiration from Vincent's creative output. For instance, the illustrators of Pokémon!" This demonstrates the reciprocal relationship between various artistic traditions and eras and their cultural influences and inspirations. The remarkable way that Van Gogh, a well-known artist from the Netherlands, was incorporated into the promotion of Pokémon and Van Gogh's collaboration serves as an example of how effectively cultural integration is framed as a dynamic and ongoing process.

The integration of Japanese pop culture in the Netherlands is not only aided by cross-cultural influences, but also by historical context, as demonstrated by the following quote: "The Dutch years 1965-1970 paint a surprisingly new picture of a self-confident young Kusama, who lived in the Netherlands of provo, happenings, and youth culture lays the foundation for her world-conquering artistic oeuvre." (Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, 2023). This statement demonstrates how Japanese artists, such as Yayoi Kusama, have influenced the Dutch art scene, promoting cross-cultural dialogue and influence. The mention of Kusama's Dutch years not only demonstrates her influence on the Dutch art scene, but also emphasizes the recognition of

her work as art and a means of integrating different cultures. The historical link between Kusama's artistic development and her stay in the Netherlands demonstrates how art not only exists within specific cultural boundaries, but also evolves through interaction with various cultural contexts.

Similarly, the cross-cultural legitimation theme is also frequently found in a symbiotic relationship with the cultural integration legitimation theme, reinforcing and interweaving one another. This affair between the two framing approaches reflects the complex nature of cultural integration, where cultural exchange is not only about acceptance and adaptation but also about legitimizing cultural forms within new contexts. This process focuses on the dynamics and evolution of cultural identities, as well as their interpretation in an increasingly globalized world.

Two quotes aptly highlight the mutual inspiration between East and West, as well as the evolution of cultural integration through time. The comment "The unique connection and inspiration that East and West share has existed for centuries. (...) In short, Japan frequently adopts things from the West and improves them so that people associate them with Japan." This demonstrates how cultures exchange ideas and elements and adapt them, resulting in new associations and meanings. This process of adoption, improvement, and cultural appropriation helps legitimize Japanese pop culture in the West, and vice versa. The second quote reads, "Since the 1950s, the museum has maintained regular contact with Japan through loan exhibitions." "We usually bring art from our collection to Japan," says Bremer in his opening words, "today we show what we brought here from Japan." emphasizes cultural institutions' active role in promoting cross-cultural dialogue and exchange. These exchanges help people understand and appreciate each other's cultural heritage and contemporary artistic expressions, which strengthens the integration of Japanese pop culture into Western society.

Both quotes serve as fluid ideological framings, emphasizing the dynamic interaction of cultures and how these interactions contribute to the legitimacy and integration of artistic and cultural forms. They show how cultural institutions and artists actively work to connect cultures and create new narratives that highlight cultural diversity and synergy. This emphasizes the significance of both cross-cultural and cultural integration legitimation in comprehending and appreciating Japanese pop culture in the Western context.

3.3. Historical Legitimation

The strategy of historical legitimation (HL) provides valuable insights into Japanese pop culture by emphasizing its deep historical roots, positioning it as more than just a passing contemporary trend. This approach suggests that Japanese pop culture has evolved over a significant period, with its historical background serving as the foundation for its organic growth and development. By highlighting this historical continuity, HL establishes Japanese pop culture as an inherently valuable and legitimate cultural phenomenon, essential to cultural progress rather than a mere fad. This theme was first identified on the Cool Japan exhibition's promotional website, which placed a strong emphasis on historical continuity. This theme was found on six of the ten websites analyzed, for a total of eleven codes.

Historical Legitimation broadens the scope of Japanese pop culture beyond mere aesthetics, emphasizing its profound cultural and historical significance. This perspective highlights how Japanese pop culture has influenced artists and maintains deep-rooted cultural connections over time. As exemplified by the quote, "There are remarkable parallels between the works of the old masters and contemporary illustrators. You'll find in Cool Japan that contemporary manga artists and animators continue to employ time-honored methods and visual tricks found in historical prints, woodcuts, and paintings" (Cool Japan, n.d.), it underscores the enduring impact and aesthetic value of Japanese icons.

Similarly, manga and anime's origins in traditional Japanese art are emphasized in another quote: "Since the Middle Ages, text and imagery have been blended together in traditional Japanese art. American cartoons found fertile ground when they were introduced to the nation. Manga, or inexpensive comic strips with distinctive Japanese characters, became extremely popular after World War II. Soon after, moving anime versions of this appeared" (Cool Japan, n.d.). This highlights the natural evolution of manga and anime from traditional Japanese art, affirming their legitimacy.

Moreover, the strong historical roots of modern Japanese visual culture are highlighted in the quote: "Zelda, Sailor Moon and Hello Kitty: all world-famous icons from Japanese visual culture you may know. But did you know that contemporary Japanese visual culture also has a rich history? For instance, the style of contemporary Japanese cartoonists, or 'mangaka' is heavily influenced by Japan's historical print art and techniques pioneered by old masters. Through unique historical works from its own collection and loans, the MAS presented this long tradition from which contemporary Japanese pop culture has grown from.." (Cool Japan,

n.d. -b). This emphasizes the historical lineage and influence of traditional Japanese art on contemporary visual culture.

Historical Legitimation (HL) in Japanese pop culture not only reveals deep historical roots but also reflects broader dynamics within the field of cultural production, as Bourdieu theorized. Bourdieu's framework focuses on the social conditions surrounding the creation, circulation, and consumption of artistic works, recognizing the roles of various actors such as writers, artists, publishers, critics, and institutions such as galleries and academies. In this context, HL aligns with Bourdieu's distinction between traditional, autonomous art forms and commercial, heteronomous art aimed at a larger audience. The historical legitimation of Japanese pop culture not only emphasizes its evolution over time, but also incorporates historical elements into contemporary expressions such as manga, anime, and visual art. The enduring influence of traditional Japanese art techniques, as seen in manga and anime, exemplifies a fusion of historical continuity and modern artistic innovations, which adds legitimacy and cultural significance. The historical lineage emphasized in HL is similar to Bourdieu's concept of symbolic value in cultural production. Traditional forms, such as classical painting and literature, frequently have symbolic value because of their historical significance and association with cultural elites. Similarly, Japanese pop culture draws on its historical roots and incorporates them into contemporary expressions that appeal to a wide audience, striking a balance between artistic depth and commercial success. Furthermore, Bourdieu's insights into the struggle for recognition, validity, and power among cultural producers are consistent with the ongoing debate over the legitimacy of Japanese popular culture. The recognition of historical influences, as well as the continuity of artistic techniques from traditional Japanese art to contemporary expressions like manga and anime, contribute to the country's global cultural value and reputation.

Even though Japanese pop culture is praised as historically stemming from amazing traditions, It is noteworthy to mention that it is also frequently mentioned—especially online—as commercial art, which runs counter to the historical legitimation from which it “originated”. This change from historical acknowledgment to business strategies demonstrates how dynamic the cultural field is. Within the realm of cultural production, as previously mentioned, historical art holds a special place due to its centuries-long cultural significance and institutional validation which Bourdieu calls Autonomous principles. Its value stems from its perceived aesthetic and historical significance, making it the epitome of artistic excellence. According to Bourdieu's theory, historical art is a highly prized and sought-after type of cultural capital among specialists (Bourdieu, 1993). In contrast, heteronomous fields include art forms that

are perceived as commercially oriented and aimed at a broad audience. These art forms frequently enjoy greater public and commercial success, but lack the symbolic recognition that distinguishes autonomous art forms. Japanese pop culture, particularly its commercial aspects, falls into this diverse category. The ongoing shift in Japanese pop culture from historical legitimation to commercialism exemplifies the struggle for cultural legitimacy. This struggle entails heteronomous art forms attempting to gain acceptance and credibility by transitioning to the autonomous field and challenging and redefining established norms and values. For example, Pokémon's collaboration with the Van Gogh Museum represents an attempt to gain legitimacy in the autonomous field through association with a prestigious art institution. This collaboration pushes traditional boundaries and emphasizes the fluidity of autonomous and heteronomous fields. It demonstrates how commercial entities strategically navigate the cultural field in order to gain recognition and legitimacy, reflecting Bourdieu's theory of the dynamic and contested nature of cultural production.

Established organizations, such as museums, academic institutions, and art critics, validate the significance of manga and anime, thus Japanese pop culture, and uphold their standing as high art, thus supporting their legitimacy. A quotation from the Vrije Academie College serves as an illustration of this: "Since the Middle Ages, text and image have coexisted in traditional Japanese art, American cartoons found fertile ground when they were introduced to the nation. Manga, or inexpensive comic strips with a distinctively Japanese character, became extremely popular after World War II. Soon after, anime—animated versions of this—arose. With the advent of streaming services like YouTube and Netflix, the global success of both commercial art forms was further cemented at the close of the 1970s". This formally bids traditional art adieu and moves the industry closer to commercialization. Similarly, the quote "A major role in this is played by commerce, which is flooding the country with cuteness," refers to the commercialization of art and culture, particularly the rise of cuteness, or "kawaii" culture, in Japan. This culture has an impact on many aspects of daily life and society, including marketing, fashion, and even social interactions, in addition to the arts and entertainment. It emphasizes how commercial interests and consumer demand for cute products and experiences have aided in the popularity and spread of this aesthetic, as well as the growth of commercial art forms like manga, anime, and other cute-related content. According to Bourdieu, commercial art reflects a distinct form of capital within the discipline—one that prioritizes financial gain over creative integrity.

The tension between historical and commercial art thus also reflects broader struggles within Bourdieu's cultural field, with competing interests vying for dominance and recognition.

The narrative surrounding artistic legitimacy is greatly shaped by institutions and gatekeepers, who also have an impact on the works of art that are praised and those that are marginalized (Klinger, 2015). But as Bourdieu notes, there is room for struggle and negotiation, and the field's dynamics are not set in stone. In the end, Bourdieu's theory highlights the intricate relationship that exists between historical and commercial art within the cultural field, addressing the various forms of capital and the complex nature of artistic legitimation.

A better comprehension of the social forces influencing how art and culture are viewed can be achieved by examining these dynamics through the lens of sociology. The findings show how Japanese pop culture in the Netherlands is legitimized by various forms of ideological framing, as researched by Baumann. These framing techniques capture the complexities and dynamics of cultural legitimation, which includes both cultural integration and historical continuity. This demonstrates how cultural phenomena like Japanese pop culture not only emerge within specific cultural frameworks but also thrive through interaction and exchange across cultures and time periods. The interaction of historical and commercial framing in the cultural sector highlights the ongoing struggle for recognition and legitimacy, as well as insights into the complex social forces that shape public perception of art and culture.

Chapter 4: Audience legitimation

Moving to the audience's perspective side of the research; the Q-methodological interviews provided a wealth of diverse perspectives, opinions, and insights into the artistic perception of Japanese pop culture in the Dutch context. This part of the study seeks to investigate and analyze the public's various perceptions and attitudes toward the legitimacy of Japanese pop culture. The primary goal is to investigate the acceptance or rejection of forms of legitimation as identified in the previous content analysis from the perspective of the audience.

First, the themes identified through the content analysis will be discussed and compared to public perceptions. This helps to paint a more complete picture of how the public perceives these forms of legitimacy. Following that, the themes in artistic legitimation raised by participants during the Q-methodological interviews will be addressed. The goal is to investigate which aspects of artistic legitimation emerge beyond the previously identified themes in the content analysis and how these relate to broader cultural perspectives. The data collected from the Q-methodological image sorting exercise and subsequent interviews consist of two types: the sorting data itself and the reflections or interview data. The sorting exercise involves participants arranging a set of images along a spectrum (e.g., from -5 to +5) based on

their perceptions of the images as art. This generates quantitative data about their preferences and sorting processes. Additionally, participants provide qualitative reflections during and after the sorting process, explaining their choices and the reasoning behind them, which offers deeper insights into their personal experiences, preferences, and backgrounds. The qualitative interview data is then analyzed using thematic analysis to extract key themes and insights. This includes coding the interview transcripts and identifying recurring themes and concepts. This combined approach seeks to reveal the dimensions of artistic legitimation that emerge from the audience's perspective. By comparing these dimensions to the themes identified in the content analysis, it is possible to determine how audience perspectives align with or differ from institutional narratives.

Finally, a conclusion will be drawn based on the results of both the content analysis and the Q-methodological interviews. This conclusion will shed light on the public's acceptance or rejection of various forms of legitimation and have far-reaching implications for our understanding of cultural perceptions and dynamics in Dutch society.

4.1. Harmonious Blending: Exploring Cultural Integration Legitimation in Participants' Art Appreciation

The ideal image of the theme Cultural Integration Legitimation implies that Japanese pop culture is regarded as intrinsically legitimate and integrated into Western society. This would imply that participants would prioritize hybrid forms of Japanese pop culture, such as the collaboration between Pokémon and the Van Gogh Museum, during their sorting processes. In this ideal image, participants value and understand cultural integration, viewing it as an enrichment of both Japanese and Western culture, rather than something unusual. This is aided by the active participation of various institutions that show how various aspects of Japanese pop culture are intertwined with various aspects of Western daily life, art, entertainment, and history. Explicit examples include Hello Kitty, which is regarded as a symbol "found at all levels of society," indicating widespread acceptance and inclusion in various aspects of daily life. Furthermore, examples of cultural integration include the Pokémon x van Gogh collaboration, which demonstrates how Japanese art and culture influenced Western artists like Vincent van Gogh. The use of this theme in multiple settings suggests a concerted effort to normalize and promote Japanese pop culture in Western countries.

During the Q methodological sorting exercise, participants were asked to rate a series of images on a scale of -5 to +5 based on their perception of them as art. However, the classifications did not completely capture the ideal image of Cultural Integration Legitimation.

Although three out of ten participants rated the collaboration between Pokémon and the Van Gogh Museum higher, as did other hybrid forms of Japanese pop culture, the majority did not regard these hybrid forms as art and ranked them lower. This shows that, while some participants appreciated cultural integration, the majority did not fully accept these forms as legitimate art. They saw collaboration and other hybrid forms as commercial rather than artistically valuable. This contradicts the ideal of complete cultural integration and acceptance, and it highlights the complexities of cultural legitimation.

To further illustrate these complexities, the results of the Q-methodological interviews shed light on the cultural integration of Japanese pop culture within Dutch society. Although this theme did not receive much attention during the interview coding process, there is evidence that elements of Japanese culture are integrated, valued, and recognized in Dutch environments. Jurre, for example, highlights how Japanese pop culture is deeply ingrained in the childhood memories of many people in the Netherlands, saying, "Yes, everyone knows Dragon Ball Z. Or Pokémon. Everyone is busy with that. So it is so woven into many people's youth. People really appreciate it. And that they truly see it." Furthermore, Eline stated, "Because, in any case, Pokémon, that is really something that is burned into all children's minds, and we can all remember when we used to get Flippos with bags of chips and you just wanted that. That all comes from Japan. And yes, it has had a significant impact on what people like. We also participate in the hype that has been created there. And, of course, that has an impact on society." It is thus regarded as an essential part of their childhood, having influenced their preferences and values. This is demonstrated by comments about the popularity of Pokémon and other Japanese symbols in Dutch culture. The memories of Pokémon flippos, which were inspired by Japan, show how Japanese culture has had a direct impact on Dutch youth culture. Some comments indicate a broader cultural exchange and mutual influence between Japanese and Dutch artists and cultures, as noted by Laura when asked about the perceived influence of Japanese culture in the Netherlands: "But... One hundred percent. Certainly. Van Gogh created numerous... Japanese-inspired works. And that is the most well-known in the Netherlands." As Allison points out, references to Japanese influences in Van Gogh's work demonstrate that these cultural exchanges have been ongoing for a long time and have had an impact on artistic and cultural developments in the Netherlands. The quote "You see intercultural communication the most. And I find that absolutely fascinating. However, I am also aware that van Gogh was heavily influenced by Japanese art, specifically in his earlier works." By Allison, again, acts as an example of recognizing and legitimizing the concept of cultural integration. Allison appreciates the significance and prevalence of intercultural

communication. This implies an understanding of the continual trade and discussion between different cultures, which is a critical component of cultural integration.

Although the sorting exercises did not fully capture the ideal cultural integration of Japanese pop culture, the Q-methodological interviews provide useful insights into how this integration is perceived and valued in Dutch society. There is some appreciation for cultural integration, but there is also reluctance to fully accept the hybrid art forms of Japanese pop culture as legitimate.

4.2. Interwoven Inspirations: Exploring Cross-Cultural Legitimation in Participants Art Appreciation

The ideal image of the theme "Cross-Cultural Legitimation," as identified through content analysis, emphasizes cross-cultural integration and exchange. This theme focuses on how Japanese pop culture is recognized and accepted in Western societies, and how this integration transcends temporal and cultural boundaries. It emphasizes the idea that cultural influences are not simply transferred from one culture to another, but rather hybridized during cultural exchange. This implies that when elements from one culture are incorporated into another, they are adapted and changed to better suit the receiving culture. In this ideal scenario, participants would value Japanese pop culture not only for its inherent qualities, but also for how it incorporates and adapts Western cultural elements. This viewpoint sees cultural exchange as a reciprocal process in which Japanese and Western cultures enrich each other, resulting in a hybrid that is valued in both contexts. The ideal image would be for participants to value cross-cultural dialogue and regard it as a symbol of artistic unity and cultural significance. The theme of cross-cultural integration was prevalent throughout the content analysis. Many quotes were found in which Japanese culture was acknowledged as art because it was inspired by our own recognized art, and vice versa. This intercultural interaction was viewed as a means of preserving the art forms' value and legitimacy. For example, the fact that Japanese artists were inspired by famous Dutch artists, and vice versa, was interpreted as evidence of artistic unity and cultural significance. During the Q methodological sorting exercise, participants were asked to rate a series of images on a scale of -5 to +5 based on their perceived artistic value. However, the classifications did not completely reflect the ideal image of Cross-Cultural Legitimation. Although some participants recognized and appreciated the cross-cultural exchange and rated depictions of hybrid art forms in the neutral range, the majority did not fully embrace the concept. While four out of ten participants valued the cross-cultural aspects and rated these forms higher, the remaining participants did not believe hybridization was a

significant factor in determining artistic value as communicated by the institutes. This suggests that, while some participants valued the integration and mutual influence of Japanese and Western cultures, the majority were neutral or skeptical of the artistic legitimacy of these hybrid forms. They frequently found these forms interesting or unique, but did not regard them as equivalent to traditional art forms.

When asked whether he believed Japanese culture had influenced the Dutch art/cultural scene, Marnix responded with the following: "Yes, it certainly has an impact. Artists in Japan have historically drawn inspiration from the Netherlands, indicating a longstanding connection. You see echoes of this influence in elements like Ghibli, as well as in their use of color and space. However, I don't believe this is confined to just Japan and the Netherlands. With the internet, inspiration knows no bounds; it flows from one source to another" Marnix emphasized the historical aspect of cultural exchange between Japan and the Netherlands, noting how artists from both countries have absorbed influences from one another. He specifically stated that some elements of Japanese art, such as color and space, have found their way into Dutch art forms. This implies a shared cultural inspiration with historical roots, emphasizing the hybridity of art forms. Allison, on the other hand, stated, "I am also aware that van Gogh was heavily influenced by Japanese art, particularly in his early works. So it's kind of like, yeah, yeah, he'd have been pleased with this. He'd have liked. He would say, yes, historically, it makes sense." Emphasizing the well-known influence of Japanese art on one of the most famous Dutch painters, Vincent van Gogh. She recognized that his early works were heavily influenced by Japanese art, which is historically explicable and significant in art history.

Both the Cultural Integration Legitimation and Cross-Cultural Legitimation themes recognize that Japanese and Dutch cultures are integrating and exchanging ideas. The quotes from Marnix and Allison demonstrate the recognition of cultural integration and mutual inspiration between Japanese and Dutch art. However, despite participants' recognition and discussion of cross-cultural influences, the findings suggest that these aspects are not used to legitimize art forms. Participants previously approached integration and influences through the lens of recognition, nostalgia, and interesting historical facts. Jurre, Eline, Laura, Marnix, and Allison's comments highlight Japanese pop culture's popularity and impact among Dutch youth and art history, but this recognition does not imply that Japanese pop culture is legitimate as art. Rather than using cultural integration to defend the legitimacy of art, participants highlight personal experiences, historical connections, and cultural influences as fascinating aspects of the subject. This suggests that, while cultural integration and intercultural exchange are valued, they are not used as primary arguments to validate or legitimize art forms as 'real' art in the

context of art criticism or institutional recognition. The appreciation appears to be based on personal involvement and cultural understanding rather than formal legitimation of art forms.

4.3. Age-Old Dilemma: Participants Perceptions of Historical Legitimacy in Art Appreciation

The ideal of the topic "Historical Legitimation," as identified in the content analysis, focuses on the deep historical origins of Japanese pop culture, as well as how these cultural aspects have organically grown and expanded over time. Declaring Japanese pop culture legitimate through historical legitimization elevates it to the status of a meaningful and valid cultural phenomena with deep historical roots, rather than a fleeting fad. Historical Legitimation highlights the importance of Japanese pop culture not only for aesthetic reasons, but also for its deep cultural and historical significance, which is necessary for cultural advancement and continuity. It demonstrates how Japanese pop culture has inspired artists while maintaining strong cultural linkages over time. The fact that contemporary manga artists and animators continue to use historical methods and visual tricks from ancient prints, woodcuts, and paintings demonstrates the long-lasting effect and aesthetic value of Japanese icons. The ideal scenario would be for participants to positively evaluate Japanese pop culture, not just for its current forms, but also for its logical continuation of age-old Japanese drawing techniques. However, during the sorting exercise, which required participants to rank 40 images, it became evident that the majority of participants rated Japanese pop culture images lower than traditional prints. Nine of the ten interviewees recognized past Japanese art traditions, leading them to regard present Japanese pop culture as derivative and inferior.

Historical legitimation as communicated through the institutes thus had a completely different impact on how Japanese pop culture was perceived by participants. Instead of creating a seamless transition where old and new complement each other, the presence of traditional works of art alongside Japanese pop culture resulted in a stark contrast. This contrast called Japanese pop culture's legitimacy into question, and in some cases, even undermined it completely. The comparison of traditional art and Japanese pop culture created in many cases a perception of traditional versus commercial, rather than a harmonious fusion of various artistic movements. Participants in the interviews indicated that historical works of art were frequently given more respect and appreciation due to their deep cultural and historical significance. As a result of the historical status of traditional works of art, Japanese pop culture has occasionally been perceived as less valuable or legitimate in comparison. Hence the most frequently recurring theme in the interviews in general is Historical Legitimation, which was

applied when participants validated the perceived more traditional works of art as more artistic due to their perceived historical significance. On historical legitimation Jurre mentioned “I really think antiquity plays a role in this. That you really get the impression that it was made a long time ago. That a lot of time has passed. And that you step into a kind of sketch of the past. Antiquity also has something to do with it. New art, I think I have more interest in old art than in new art. With new art I still need time. But it doesn't have that, because it's new, so I need time to really fully appreciate new art. And actually you mainly see new art here. Yes” Jurre's quote exemplifies the idea of historical legitimacy in art appreciation. He emphasizes his preference for older works of art over new works of art, demonstrating a greater understanding of the historical context of art. Jurre associates ancient art with antiquity and time, giving these works of art a sense of value and permanence. He describes how he "really gets the impression that it was made a very long time ago" and how entering these works of art feels like "stepping into some kind of sketch of the past." This view of older art as linked to historical timelines and cultural legacies differs from his view of new art. Jurre admits that he needs more time to fully appreciate new art because it is recent and lacks the historical depth of older art. His comments suggest that the historical context and age of works of art have a significant impact on how people perceive their value and legitimacy.

In response to the question about their method of image sorting: Do you not see this as art because you recognize the characters, or because you recognize an original work of art that they used in their own work? Shiloh answered “No, it's the fact that they reuse the artwork in such ways because I think it's just poor taste and insecurity for children (..) Because of course art can have amazing value of presenting history. And best styles. And there's lots of value to it. I'm not saying we should be stuck. We shouldn't move any more things. But we still should be able to appreciate things of the past and being able to reflect on them. So we don't repeat things as well. That's why I would say that this lack of justification makes it non-commercial legitimate art and there's the need to have the conversation why it deserves to be in the museum in the first place. Because it's commercial, clearly, because it's Pokemon and people will click it people will like it. People will share it then it needs to be talked through.” Shiloh's quote reflects a nuanced viewpoint that combines historical legitimacy with concerns about commercialism in art, consistent with Bourdieu's cultural field theory. Shiloh emphasizes the importance of appreciating the past to avoid making the same mistakes by recognizing the value of art in presenting history and diverse styles. This viewpoint emphasizes the depth and significance of art beyond its commercial value. The notion that a lack of justification can render art non-commercial but legitimate in other ways indicates a conflict between artistic

value and market value. Shiloh's comment about the need for a discussion about why certain works of art belong in museums raises important questions about the criteria for inclusion in cultural institutions. Calling Pokémon a highly commercialized cultural phenomenon demonstrates how popular and market-driven art forms can still have cultural significance worth recognizing and discussing. Bourdieu's theory is relevant here because the discussion focuses on the struggle for recognition and legitimacy in the cultural field. Shiloh's emphasis on the importance of dialogue about art placement in museums reflects Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital associated with various art forms. This discussion goes beyond artistic merits to include broader social values, perceptions, and market influences that shape art's reception and placement within cultural hierarchies.

In addition to the themes of historical legitimation, legitimation based on age was frequently mentioned within the same context. Age legitimation as a theme was used when participants noticed that works that were commonly regarded as traditional appeared to be older, and thus had stood the test of time, or were even considered more artistic simply because they appeared older. This idea is consistent with the sociologists' discussion on consecration, such as Bourdieu. Consecration, according to Bourdieu (1993), happens when cultural products gain legitimacy and validity over time through the acknowledgement they receive from gatekeepers and cultural organizations. This method is distinct from historical legitimation, which bestows legitimacy to a piece of art based on its established function and significance in the historical canon and is anchored in the cultural and historical narrative around it. Eline's quote serves as an example: "It is frequently the case that if things have survived time, that is also a type of selection" Eline emphasizes the concept of age legitimacy by observing that cultural expressions that have stood the test of time are frequently assumed to be valuable. Her remark implies that the mere fact that something 'survives' represents a type of selection process in which less qualitative or impactful works are naturally overlooked. As a result, a work's age or ability to remain relevant over time can be interpreted as a form of legitimacy. In another example, when asked about his sorting process and why he had traditional Japanese prints on the positive side of the spectrum, Daniel stated that he truly believed these were legitimate pieces of art, adding, "Also, I believe it is a little older. More old-school, traditional Japanese art." When asked to elaborate on whether the age of the art mattered in his validation, he responded, "Yes, I do think so. I believe that was also a benchmark for me in the picture. Because it has stood the test of time. Especially that bottom one is a very iconic image [referring to 'The Great Wave off Kanagawa' by Hokusai]. So I think that's what makes it more art." Daniel emphasizes the concept of age legitimacy by claiming that the age of an artwork can be

used to determine its value and legitimacy. He recognizes that a work's long-term relevance, having passed the "test of time," increases its value to him and thus confers greater legitimacy. This emphasizes the importance that some people place on the historical and cultural continuity of works of art as a factor influencing their perception of quality and legitimacy. Another example comes from Tijs, who said "No, but you have certain ideas of what should hang in such a museum" when asked if hybrid forms should belong in museums. When asked what those ideas were based on, he replied "Well, somewhat time-related. If it's a bit older, I think I'm more inclined to take it seriously. Because then it stood the test of time, and people still hang it in a museum.". Tijs' perspective exemplifies age legitimization in museum representation. He believes that older artworks are more likely to be taken seriously and deemed worthy of museum display because they have stood the test of time and continue to be relevant to contemporary audiences. This concept emphasizes the perceived importance of age as a criterion for artwork to earn its place in a perceived museum setting.

Historical legitimization, particularly in the context of traditional art, offers a compelling contrast to Japanese pop culture. Traditional Japanese works of art are perceived to have intrinsic value and depth because an emphasis is placed on their historical context and age. These works of art have "withstood the test of time", are incorporated into cultural heritage lines, and are frequently regarded as embodiments of cultural identity and aesthetic. Hence that this stand in sharp contrast to pop culture, which is by this way deemed to be "new" and thus perceived as lesser valuable. This contrast becomes more pronounced when participants consider pop culture, particularly hybrid artworks. In every interview, this phenomenon revealed a captivating dynamic in the way art is valued and legitimized. When participants encounter new creations first, they start on the positive side of the spectrum. However, as traditional paintings emerge and claim the positive position, the new artworks gradually fade to the background of the spectrum. To be validated as art, hybrid forms of pop culture must not only be artistically convincing in their own right but also combat the implicit prejudices that stem from the historical preference for perceived older art forms. The relative novelty of these creations may be viewed as a barrier to their full acceptance as art. Participants often give more respect and legitimacy to works of art with a long history because they are linked to deep-rooted cultural and historical narratives.

4.4. Exploring New Dimensions of Legitimation: Insights from Participant Perspectives on Japanese Pop Culture

In the analysis of participant responses, the initial focus was on the three primary forms of legitimation concerning the institutionalization of Japanese pop culture versus the participant perspective. However, the interviews uncovered three additional themes: labor intensity and lack of authenticity, artist legitimacy, and the absence of conceptual depth in pop art. The first theme explores how products of pop culture are considered less sincere due to a perceived lower labor intensity when compared to traditional art, particularly in the case of hybrid art forms. Secondly, the interviews revealed that pop culture is often perceived as superficial or conceptually shallow, especially when compared to traditional art forms. Finally, the interviews demonstrated that artworks by well-known or famous artists often benefit from higher artistic validation. Below, these three perspectives on the processes of legitimation in Japanese pop culture are explored in more detail.

4.4.1. Labor Intensity & Lack of Authenticity

A recurring theme in the interviews was labor intensity, which refers to the perceived amount of physical or manual labor required to create an artwork. Interviewees noted that pop culture, particularly hybrid art forms, is sometimes perceived as less sincere due to a perceived lower labor intensity when compared to traditional art. This is especially evident in the context of modern technologies such as computer software, which can speed up the creative process while also resulting in a lack of depth or craftsmanship. This theme was identified by six out of ten participants and coded 25 times, making it the most often coded theme.

When asked why the Pikachu x van Gogh portrait was more on the negative side of the spectrum, Marnix explained “Yes. Actually, it's the same reasoning that... It's not necessarily something that required a lot of new creativity. Of course, it's made in the style, but I think with today's technology, it's actually quite easy to copy. So, I don't see the original creativity in it. I encounter this a lot with those hybrid things”. Marnix's quote effectively depicts the aspect of labor intensity in the context of hybrid art forms. He emphasizes that, while these works of art may introduce new styles and ideas, they do not always necessitate a significant creative effort. With today's modern technologies, replicating this hybrid art has become relatively simple, which Marnix believes can detract from the originality and depth of the creative expression. His comments imply that the ease with which hybrid art can be reproduced raises concerns about the authenticity and level of creative labor put into these works. When asked what he kept in mind while sorting the photos, Marnix replied, "Number one is authenticity. Above all,

originality is essential. So, someone who created it themselves. And they did not necessarily copy other things, but rather made them their own. And I am referring to the hybrid things. Furthermore, I see art as something that is not necessarily created digitally. When asked to elaborate on what he meant, he replied, "Yes, it may work in terms of perhaps coloring and everything. However, I also see art more as artwork, indeed. So if something is digitally drawn... Or with the support of technology... I perceive it as less of art". In this statement, Marnix emphasizes the importance of authenticity and originality in art creation, preferring artworks that are not copied or heavily reliant on digital tools or technology. This is consistent with the idea that labor-intensive artworks, in which the artist exerts significant physical or manual effort, are perceived as more genuine or valuable. Marnix's emphasis on the artist's personal creation and unique interpretation reflects a desire for depth and craftsmanship, which can be overlooked in digital or technologically assisted art forms. His distinction between digitally created or technologically supported art and traditional artworks highlights the ongoing debate over perceived authenticity and artistic merit in various mediums and creative processes.

This lack of labor intensity code is frequently associated with the theme Lack of Authenticity, which calls into question the originality and depth of an artwork. The perceived rapid creation of hybrid artworks by simply combining two existing artworks can give the impression of less authentic artistic expression. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the use of modern technologies, which streamline the creative process while removing its artisanal elements. Eline's quote, "This is again a mashup of The Wave," exemplifies the perceived lack of authenticity. She goes on to say "I still think it's nicely done. But it does look like it's just cut and pasted from something else. Like it wasn't drawn from scratch". Marnix elaborates on this issue in his comment about what he looks for in art: "Number one is authenticity. Above all, originality is essential. So, someone who created it themselves. And did not necessarily copy other things, and created his own version of it." He goes on to say, "And I am speaking to the hybrid things. Furthermore, I see more art... Something that is not always made digitally." through this quote, Marnix emphasizes the importance of authenticity and originality in art, and that this means artists creating their own works without simply copying other things. He especially mentions hybrid art forms, in which artworks are created from existing elements, and emphasizes that they do not fit his standards for authenticity. He emphasizes the importance of craftsmanship and personal character in art, as it is not always generated digitally. These comments indicate how a lack of originality and creative invention, such as in hybrid art forms, can weaken the perception of authenticity.

Together, these perceptions are frequently, arguably inevitably, pitted against traditional prints, which have a perceived stronger reputation for manual production and labor-intensive processes. These traditional works of art are rarely challenged in terms of labor intensity because their creation process has been in place for centuries and is deeply rooted in craft traditions. Allison's quote exemplifies this tension: "I still stand by my first argument that re-imagining an existing piece requires a certain kind of creativity. But, out of respect for the original creator and the original artwork, I give it a higher artistic rating. Yeah". Allison's perspective on reinterpreting existing works adds an interesting dimension to the debate over Labor Intensity and Lack of Authenticity. Her acknowledgement of the creative effort required to reinterpret existing works demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of artistic creativity. However, her emphasis on respecting the original creator and work of art reflects a concern for authenticity and artistic quality that is consistent with traditional beliefs Laura stated in her interview that everything she had around the 0 point on the spectrum (mostly Japanese pop culture mixed in with Japanese traditional art) was derived from traditional craft methods. However, when asked why she placed them on the zero to minus side of the spectrum, she replied, "Yes, good question. Because this makes it no less legitimate. But it is... It would be a different media format. This was made using a computer. As a result, it no longer feels like true art to me. Then this [traditional prints], I'd say." Laura's response emphasizes the distinction in creative processes between traditional artworks and works created using modern technologies, such as computer-generated art. Her comments address the issue of medium specificity and how it influences perceptions of authenticity and artistic value.

4.4.2. The Perceived Superficiality of Pop Art

According to the interviews, pop culture, and hybrid art forms are sometimes perceived as superficial or less conceptually deep than traditional art forms. This aspect can be expressed through comments about a lack of depth, symbolism, and creativity. Respondents observed that the fusion of existing elements in pop culture appeared to focus primarily on making the work visually appealing, rather than adding deeper narrative or symbolic layers found in traditional art. This element was cited by five participants and coded eleven times, representing half of the interviewees.

An example of such experiences with the hybrid forms of art can be found in Jurre's quote "You've seen that style so many times [reproduction works] that you think, 'Well, those lines, that imitation, and those facial expressions or that style, I've seen them so many times. How much time do you still need to invest to make it like that yourself? Creativity for it, well

really looking at it, is just redrawing (imitating). How different is it then from what you already know? If it's very different from what you already know then. A place that I find more if I'm searching." This quote from Jurre emphasizes the lack of originality and depth that some pop culture works appear to have when compared to traditional art. He criticizes the repetition and lack of creativity he observes in some reproductions and pop culture expressions. Jurre appears to argue that mimicking familiar styles and facial expressions is insufficient to be considered art, especially when the outcome is not significantly different from what is already known, emphasizing the superficial nature of some pop culture works, focusing on imitation rather than creative innovation or profound concepts.

Pop culture references in artwork are frequently interpreted as a marketing ploy or commercial strategy. The Pop Culture as Consumer Good code emphasizes this viewpoint, in which pop culture is recognized not for its artistic merits, but rather as a tool for attracting customers, increasing brand awareness, and communicating specific information. This approach frequently places pop culture on the commercial end of the spectrum rather than the artistic one.

Even in collaborations between Van Gogh and pop culture icons such as Pokémon, the emphasis is often on the commercial aspect. While these collaborations can be artistically interesting, "attract generations" and provide new perspectives, they are frequently viewed as a means to increase merchandising or promote a specific brand. As a result, they are not always regarded on the same artistic level as works aimed primarily at artistic expression with no commercial motivations.

4.4.3. The Relationship between Artistic Legitimation and Artist Status

The legitimacy of art is frequently influenced by the artist's fame and reputation, a concept called Artist Legitimation. During the interviews, it became clear that well-known artists such as Yayoi Kusama and Takashi Murakami have frequently established a certain status in the art world, which means that their works are automatically assessed positively. These artists have made a significant contribution to both traditional and modern art, and their involvement with pop culture and hybrid art forms is regarded as an extension of their oeuvre. The fact that nine participants found familiarity in the works they had to classify, resulting in speedier positive assessments, and that this code appeared no less than 19 times during the interviews emphasizes the relevance of artist legitimacy in assessing art.

In an instance of this recognition, Laura promptly identified a work by Murakami. Upon recognition, she associated his name with positive regard. When asked if she rated him

positively due to recognition, she responded “Yes, I think so. Definitely. I'm a fan of his story. So, I think because I know his work well, I think, "I recognize this too." This specific one is not my favorite. But because of that, I know, okay, I consider this real art. From her too. I have seen a lot of exhibitions of hers [referring to Yayoi Kusama]. So then I think, okay, this is real art for me”. Laura's comment demonstrates the significance of familiarity and affinity for an artist when evaluating works of art. Her recognition of Takashi Murakami and Yayoi Kusama, two well-known artists, gives her a sense of familiarity and authenticity when appreciating their works. Laura associates their works of art with authenticity and high artistic value based on her knowledge of their stories and visits to numerous exhibitions. Additionally, Marnix had a same kind of responds when asked why Murakami found himself on the more positive side of the spectrum, saying “Well, Murakami, I think, has truly established something unique. He has also really defined his image in that regard. As I say, he has created something. He has a certain vision attached to it. A particular worldview that he shares with you. Colors, combinations, etc. And that's what really grabs me about... Wow, you've really created art. Or at least, you've created something that comes from the heart. And that's something you carry through all your works. And that's why I experience it much more as art. Something that exists on its own. Instead of being a part of other things”. Marnix's quote, again, is consistent with Artist Legitimation because it emphasizes Murakami's distinct artistic contributions and style. Marnix recognizes Murakami's ability to create a cohesive artistic vision that reflects a specific worldview through color combinations and other elements. This recognition of Murakami's creative identity and consistent artistic expression leads Marnix to see Murakami's works as standalone pieces rather than mere components of larger contexts. Allison's final comment underscores the impact of personal familiarity with artists on their work's evaluation. She expressed a high regard for Yayoi Kusama, citing her appreciation for Kusama's work. When asked about her recognition of Kusama, Allison confirmed, "Yeah, it's because of what I recognize." She noted that artworks she feels less personally connected to tend to receive more negative judgments from her. This observation aligns well with the Artist Legitimation theme, highlighting how recognition of an artist like Yayoi Kusama can positively influence the perceived artistic value of their work. Such recognition, rooted in the artist's reputation and distinctive style, plays a significant role in legitimizing artwork in the eyes of viewers.

These well-known artists' works were frequently rated positively by interviewees, who recognized their names and reputations. This differs from the perception of artworks for which the artist was unknown or no credit was given. These works, primarily categorized as fan art, new media, and commerce, were frequently placed on the negative end of the spectrum.

Traditional prints such as "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" and "Red Fuji" tended to be recognized right away and thus placed on the positive side of the spectrum, even when respondents were unfamiliar with the artist's name. This implies that some works have established their own 'legacy' and are regarded as cultural icons, regardless of the artist. It was assumed that because these were Canon works, the artist would be recognized. This theme arguably also ties back into the Historical Legitimation theme, where works deemed to be recognized, withstood the test of time and are thus considered more artistic. Laura distinguishes between original works of art by Japanese artists and adaptations, such as Pokémon's collaboration with Van Gogh. This is consistent with the observation that traditional prints like "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" and "Red Fuji" are immediately recognized and appreciated by respondents, regardless of whether they know the artist's name. This implies that certain works of art have transcended their creators to become cultural symbols or icons, which is related to the broader concept of historical legitimation, in which works of art that have stood the test of time are given greater recognition and value as art. Tijs' response adds an interesting layer to the discussion by demonstrating how familiarity and recognizability have a direct impact on the appreciation of works of art. Tijs automatically assigns "Red Mount Fuji" to the positive end of the spectrum due to its status as a well-known work of art. When questioned if it was solely because he recognized the painting, Tijs noted "Yes, I know that's a famous work of art. So then I'll put it on this side of the spectrum (positive). Automatically, actually. Out of recognition, yes". This concept of automatic appreciation based on recognition reflects the larger theme of artistic legitimation, in which the reputation of a work of art or artist influences the perception of its artistic value. Tijs' comments highlight the complex relationship between fame, recognition, and art appreciation within the larger context of artistic legitimacy. Linking back to the historical legitimation theme, when asked why he placed perceived traditional Japanese prints on the positive side of the spectrum, he said, "Yeah, I think so. I think that for me, it also had a measure in the image. Because it has stood the test of time. At least the bottom one is a very iconic image [the wave]. So I think that makes it the most artistic." Daniel emphasizes historical legitimacy as a criterion for art appreciation. He recognizes that age is a benchmark for evaluating works of art because they have stood the test of time. His remark about the iconic value of "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" demonstrates how art that is deeply rooted in history and has cultural icon status is automatically valued higher and considered more artistic. This perspective on historical and cultural relevance as a factor in artistic appreciation is consistent with the larger theme of artistic legitimation and the impact of historical factors on the perception of art.

Chapter 5: Summarizing Audience Perspectives on Japanese Pop Culture – Living in the Historical Shadow of Its Ancestors

The study on public perceptions of Japanese pop culture revealed interesting themes that enriched our understanding. First, it was discovered that Japanese cultural integration is recognized and valued in the Netherlands, particularly in terms of its impact on youth and art culture. Although this aspect was less emphasized by participants, they emphasized personal experiences and historical connections rather than cultural integration as a legitimization for art. This implies that, while integration and cultural exchange are important, they are not used to legitimize art forms.

Furthermore, the perception of historical legitimacy resulted in an interesting dynamic. Traditional art was frequently given more respect due to its deep cultural and historical significance, sometimes challenging or even undermining the legitimacy of Japanese pop culture. The concept of 'old versus new' emerged prominently, emphasizing the complexities of art appreciation. Bourdieu's cultural field theory enriched discussions of art justification by emphasizing concerns about commercialization and a lack of authenticity. The combination of historical legitimacy and concerns about commercialism creates a multifaceted understanding of art appreciation, in which understanding the artist and the context of creation is critical in determining artistic value.

The findings on age legitimacy, thus consecration, provide interesting insights into how art is valued and legitimized. Participants emphasized that traditional works are frequently perceived as more artistic simply because they appear older. The concept of 'old versus new' is evident in how art is valued and displayed, particularly in museum settings. Eline and Daniel, for example, both emphasized the importance of older works. For them, the age of a work of art represents legitimacy and quality, with its ability to remain relevant over time playing an important role in its value. Tijs' remarks on museum representation also emphasize the perception that older works of art are taken more seriously and considered more valuable simply because of their age and continued relevance. These discussions reflect a broader cultural tendency to associate historical continuity and sustainability with artistic value and legitimacy. The concept of age legitimation demonstrates how historical and cultural contexts influence our perception of art, with older works often valued more due to their long-term impact and significance. The findings on labor intensity and lack of authenticity in pop culture shed interesting light on how art is valued and legitimized in the context of Japanese popular culture. Participants in the interviews emphasized that pop culture, particularly hybrid art

forms, is sometimes viewed as less genuine due to a perceived lower labor intensity when compared to traditional art forms. This is especially evident in the context of modern technology like computer software, which can speed up the creative process while resulting in a lack of depth or artistry. Marnix effectively demonstrated this idea when he discussed a Pikachu x van Gogh portrait, which he argued required little unique originality because to the technological capability of duplicating similar works. This predicament is similar to other art forms in which the entrance of technology was once perceived as corrupting. Consider the rise of the synthesizer (A machine that electronically makes and changes sounds) in the 1980s, which was first chastised for undercutting the authenticity of live performances by including synthetic sounds that were not made with traditional instruments (Marks, 2015). Marnix emphasized the value of authenticity and originality in art creation, preferring works that were not reproduced or relied excessively on digital tools or technology. Traditional works of art are rarely questioned in terms of labor intensity, as their creation process stretches back centuries and is strongly based in artisan traditions.

Pop culture is frequently criticized for lacking depth and conceptual complexity, particularly when compared to traditional art forms. The interviews reflected this perception, stating that pop culture and hybrid art forms can appear superficial or lack conceptual depth when compared to their traditional counterparts. This viewpoint was expressed through comments that cited a perceived lack of symbolic depth, creativity, and narrative complexity in pop culture works. Participants observed that the incorporation of existing elements in pop culture frequently appeared to prioritize visual appeal over deeper layers of meaning or symbolism found in traditional art. Jurre, for example, emphasizes this point of view by criticizing the lack of originality and depth in some pop culture works, particularly those that rely heavily on reproducing well-known styles and expressions. His observation that familiarity creates a sense of redundancy in pop culture imitations raises concerns about the genre's tendency to prioritize imitation over genuine creative innovation or deep artistic concepts. Jurre's position highlights the ongoing debate over pop culture's perceived superficiality and emphasis on aesthetic appeal rather than substantive artistic exploration.

Finally, Participants generally appreciated works by well-known artists, as they recognized their names and reputations. This contrasts the perception of works where the artist is unknown or has not received recognition, such as works that are perceived as “fan art”, new media, and commercial pieces, which are frequently rated lower by participants. Furthermore, traditional prints like "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" and "Red Fuji" are instantly recognized and appreciated, even if participants are unfamiliar with the artist's name. This recognition

emphasizes the concept of works that have evolved beyond their creators to become cultural icons, increasing their perceived value and legitimacy as art. Tijs' automatic positive placement of "Red Mount Fuji" due to its fame and recognition emphasizes this point even further. In short, the recognition of artists and artworks based on their reputation and iconic status influences how participants perceive and value art. This dynamic is closely related to historical legitimation, in which works that have stood the test of time or become cultural icons are automatically valued higher and regarded as more artistic. These findings shed light on the intricate relationship between fame, recognition, historical context, and art appreciation within the realm of artistic legitimacy.

Conclusion

The collaboration between the Van Gogh Museum and Pokémon did not just capture attention; it sent a whirlwind of curiosity through the Netherlands and beyond, challenging the very essence of what is understood as legitimate art. Building on the momentum generated by the Pokémon x Van Gogh collaboration, this study investigated the intricate process of legitimizing Japanese pop culture in the Netherlands. By merging Baumann's theoretical framework and Bourdieu's insights into cultural production, it provided a thorough examination of how both high and popular cultural works are recognized and valued as art. In doing so, this study found its academic relevance in contributing to the development of theories surrounding artistic legitimation and cultural production. Meanwhile, its social significance came from the light it shed on the dynamics of cultural appreciation in the modern art world.

In explorative fashion, the in-depth content analysis at the outset of this thesis aimed to dissect the communication strategies employed on Dutch cultural institutions' websites to present Japanese pop culture. The content analysis unveiled a notable trend: Japanese pop culture is steadily gaining ground in the Dutch cultural landscape, receiving growing recognition and acceptance from recognized institutions. Subsequently, a total of ten Q-methodological interviews provided detailed insight into public perceptions and interpretations of these institutional messages. The interviews helped to produce a more nuanced perspective on the apparent process of integration of Japanese pop culture among Dutch cultural institutions, indicating that to the individual, personal experiences and historical connections remain central to determining the legitimacy of art. Traditional artworks, rich in cultural and historical significance, continue to hold sway, casting doubt on the artistic legitimacy of Japanese pop culture. Fusing these two methodologies resulted in a rich tapestry of insights,

offering a holistic perspective on both institutional perspectives and individual understandings of artistic legitimacy. These insights underscore the multifaceted nature of art appreciation, highlighting the enduring influence of individual experiences and the weight of historical context on artistic perception.

The findings presented in this thesis have important implications for cultural institutions such as museums, including the Van Gogh Museum. They demonstrated how the collaboration between the Van Gogh Museum and Pokémon not only caused a media storm, but also sparked a broader debate about artistic legitimacy. This in turn indicates that museums can benefit from diversifying their exhibitions by incorporating a wider range of art forms, which will attract larger audiences. Doing so can make museums more appealing to a wider range of audiences while also contributing to a more dynamic art landscape. Altogether, by analyzing how Japanese pop culture is presented and accepted in these institutions, this study might be used by museums to adapt and improve their exhibition strategies.

Furthermore, this study provides artists and others involved in the production of Japanese pop culture with a better understanding of how their work is perceived and appreciated in Europe, particularly in the Netherlands. The findings demonstrate how cultural integration and legitimization occur, as well as the factors that influence the acceptance of Japanese pop culture as art. This knowledge can help artists position their work strategically in order to reach a larger and more diverse audience. In addition, it encourages intercultural exchange and appreciation between Japan and the Netherlands, resulting in increased cultural diversity and a better understanding of the mutual influences between these two cultures.

From a theoretical perspective, this study adds to the theoretical framework of artistic legitimation by applying Baumann and Bourdieu theories to a non-Western art form in a Western context. It provides a comprehensive overview of the mechanisms involved in artistic legitimation, including political opportunities, resource mobilization, and framing processes. As such, it sheds light on the creation and recognition of artistic value in various cultural and social contexts. Meanwhile, the analysis of these mechanisms in the context of the Van Gogh Museum's collaboration with Pokémon, might serve as a case study to guide future research into the integration and appreciation of diverse art forms in various cultural contexts.

Although this study provided valuable insights, no study is all-encompassing, and some limitations must be acknowledged. First, the sample size was restricted to a subset of young adults and cultural institutions in the Netherlands. As a result, the findings cannot be easily applied to other cultural contexts or demographic groups. A larger and more diverse sample may provide a broader range of perspectives and a more in-depth understanding of the

dynamics of artistic legitimation in Japanese popular culture. Furthermore, the study focused on young adults' perceptions and attitudes toward Japanese pop culture, as well as those of cultural institutions. Other key stakeholders, including art critics, academics, and members of the Japanese community, were not fully involved. Involving a broader range of stakeholders may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the problem and increase the validity of the findings. Furthermore, the study relied primarily on qualitative research methods, such as interviews and content analysis. While these methods have provided useful insights, quantitative approaches such as surveys and experiments can add to the information and make the findings more generalizable. Finally, the study focused solely on the Dutch context, ignoring cultural differences and contexts in other countries. It is critical to recognize this cultural diversity and investigate how the artistic legitimacy of Japanese pop culture varies across cultural and geographical contexts.

Based on the limitations of this research outlined above, several potential avenues for future research begin to take shape. As I stated in the introduction to this thesis, my initial interest in this topic stemmed from news reports that influenced the narrative development surrounding Pokémon and Van Gogh. Hence, instead of focusing solely on cultural institutions' websites, future research could include a content analysis of newspaper articles to enhance understanding of the media's role in the construction of cultural legitimacy. By incorporating this approach, it becomes clear that personal media experiences significantly influenced the research direction and focus. This could help to demonstrate not only the value of newspaper articles as additional sources of analysis, but also how the media actively influences popular perceptions and ideas about Japanese pop culture.

Another worthwhile approach to unveiling the complex processes of cultural integration and legitimation could be to conduct a longitudinal study of shifts in perceptions of Japanese pop culture over time. Following the same group of participants over several years would allow researchers to investigate how and why perceptions evolve, as well as which factors are most important. This could help to better understand the long-term viability and evolution of Japanese pop culture appreciation, and provide opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying cultural acceptance and appreciation.

Furthermore, future research could look into the role of educational institutions in the legitimization of Japanese pop culture. This could include how schools and universities incorporate Japanese pop culture into their curricula, how students and teachers respond to it, and how it influences their perceptions and appreciation of these cultural forms. By investigating the role of educational institutions, a better understanding can be gained of how

the younger generation interacts with and learns about Japanese pop culture, as well as how this affects its overall cultural legitimacy. To close on a personal note, I would like to say that this research was not only academically and professionally enriching, but also fascinating for myself as a fan of both Pokémon and Van Gogh. I was delighted to engage intensively with this collaboration, and, yes, I admit that I am proud of my 'Pikachu with the Grey Felt Hat' Pokémon card. Hence, I certainly hope that this research will contribute to scientific discourse, but also wish it will encourage broader discussion on the value and meaning of art in our society.

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APPENDIX A: Content analysis list of webpages

Type of institute	Webpage
Museum	https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/nl/over/samenwerken/van-gogh-museum-merklicenties/a-z/pokemon-x-van-gogh-museum
Museum	https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/nl/basisonderwijs/lessen
Museum	https://amsterdam.werldmuseum.nl/nl/zien-en-doen/tentoonstellingen/cool-japan/kawaii
Museum	https://amsterdam.werldmuseum.nl/nl/zien-en-doen/tentoonstellingen/cool-japan
Museum	https://amsterdam.werldmuseum.nl/nl/zien-en-doen/activiteiten/zomervakantie-cool-japan-arcadehal
Museum	https://museazutphen.nl/nieuws/the-big-draw-voor-het-eerst-in-zutphen/
University	https://www.vrijeacademie.nl/ons-aanbod/colleges-japanse-kunsten-cultuur/
Museum	https://mocomuseum.com/artists/takashi-murakami/16502
University	https://www.utwente.nl/nl/cultuur/evenementen/2023/9/1044844/konnichiwa-minicon
University	https://www.utwente.nl/nl/cultuur/evenementen/2023/9/1044844/konnichiwa-minicon
Movie theatre	https://kinorotterdam.nl/special/kaboomanime/
Movie theatre	https://kinorotterdam.nl/special/ghibli/
University	https://www.vrijeacademie.nl/ons-aanbod/colleges-japanse-kunsten-geschiedenis/
University	https://www.utwente.nl/nl/cultuur/evenementen/2023/9/1044844/konnichiwa-minicon
Museum	https://stedelijkmuseumschiedam.nl/tentoonstelling/yayoi-kusamade-nederlandse-jaren-1965-1970/
Museum	https://mas.be/en/content/cool-japan
Museum	https://museumtv.nl/japan-is-terug-nooit-weggeweest/#:~:text=Na%20de%20enorme%20economische%20groeï,op%20precies%20het%20juiste%20moment.
Museum	https://krollermuller.nl/tijldlijn/ikiro-be-alive
Festival	https://thebigdrawnederland.nl/
Museum	https://www.kunsthal.nl/nl/plan-je-bezoek/tentoonstellingen/manga-manga/





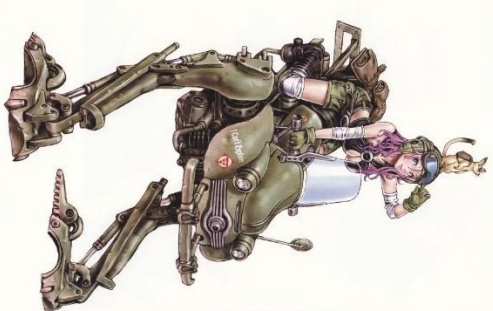
APPENDIX B: Q-Methodology images






10 images of Traditional Japanese art

<p>1. Hokusai's "The Great Wave off Kanagawa"</p>	 A horizontal woodblock print showing a massive, curling blue wave with white foam crashing over a small boat. In the background, three snow-capped mountains are visible under a pale sky. The print is signed and titled in the upper left corner.
<p>2. Hiroshige's "Sudden Shower over Shin-Ōhashi bridge and Atake"</p>	 A vertical woodblock print depicting a rainy scene. A long wooden bridge with several figures is the central focus. The rain is represented by fine, vertical lines. The background shows a dark landscape with a small boat on the water. The print is signed and titled in the upper right corner.
<p>3. Utamaro's "A Young Woman Seated Holding a Letter"</p>	 A vertical woodblock print showing a young woman in a kimono seated and looking down at a letter she is holding. The scene is set indoors, with a sliding door visible in the background. The print is signed and titled in the lower left corner.
<p>4. Katsushika Hokusai's "Red Fuji Southern Wind Clear Morning"</p>	 A horizontal woodblock print featuring Mount Fuji with a striking red hue. The mountain is set against a blue sky filled with white, stylized clouds. A small boat is visible on the water in the foreground. The print is signed and titled in the upper left corner.






<p>5. Kitagawa Utamaro's "Two Lovers Beneath a Mosquito Net"</p>	
<p>6. Ogata Korin's "Iris at Yatsuhashi"</p>	
<p>7. Maruyama Ōkyo's "Monkey Reaching for the Moon"</p>	
<p>8. Suzuki Harunobu's "Evening Bell at the Clock"</p>	
<p>9. Tawaraya Sōtatsu's "Waves at Matsushima"</p>	
<p>10. Utagawa Hiroshige's "Autumn Moon over Tama River"</p>	

10 images of Japanese pop art/culture

<p>1. Murakami Takashi's "Flower Ball"</p>	
<p>2. Akira Toriyama illustration art</p>	
<p>3. Yayoi Kusama "Mushrooms, 2005"</p>	
<p>4. Shonen Knife's album cover art</p>	
<p>5. Shunya Yamashita's character designs</p>	






<p>6. Naoko Takeuchi's "Sailor Moon" illustrations</p>	
<p>7. Osamu Tezuka's "Astro Boy" manga</p>	
<p>8. Hayao Miyazaki's movie posters (e.g., "Spirited Away")</p>	
<p>9. Pokemon Ruby, Sapphire, and Emerald Gameplay (2002)</p>	
<p>10. Hiroyuki Takahashi's "Bubblegum Crisis" concept art</p>	






10 images of Hybrid Japanese traditional art with Japanese pop art:

<p>1. Takashi Murakami's Superflat "727"</p>	
<p>2. Chiho Aoshima's "Apricot 2"</p>	
<p>3. Yosuke Ueno's psychedelic paintings</p>	
<p>4. Masami Teraoka's "McDonald's Hamburgers Invading Japan"</p>	
<p>5. Tenmyouya Hisashi "Japanese spirit No. 14"</p>	

<p>6. Pokemon “The Great Wave Pikachu & Friends”</p>	
<p>7. Godzilla vs Kong</p>	
<p>8. MyKiddo “Ukiyo e Kanagawa Goku”</p>	
<p>9. Ashley (little crow) “Sailor Moon, Ukiyo-e Style”</p>	
<p>10. David Redon “Floating worlds series”</p>	

10 images of Hybrid Japanese pop art with traditional Western art

<p>1. Pokemon “Pikachu with the Grey Felt Hat”</p>			
<p>2. Paula Koster “Starry night, Vincent van Gogh”</p>			
<p>3. Pokemon Eevee x van Gogh</p>			
<p>4. The night watch</p>			
<p>5. Girl with the pearl earring</p>			

<p>6. Milkmaid</p>	
<p>7. Pokemon “van Gogh Sunflora”</p>	
<p>8. Pokemon “van Gogh Bedroom”</p>	
<p>9. Pokemon “self portrait”</p>	
<p>10. Totoro x starry night</p>	

APPENDIX C: Q-Methodology Interview guide

What will happen:

- You will soon receive forty images.
- I'd like you to sort them based on your own opinions and insights.
- The question for sorting these images is; to what extent do you perceive this as art
- The scale you'll use ranges from -5, indicating that you don't perceive the image to be art, to +5, indicating that you do perceive the image to be art.
- During the process you can ask me any question and I may also ask you some questions.
- When the sorting is done I will have some questions I would like to ask.

A reminder: there is no right or wrong, and no prior knowledge into these images is required.

Topic list:

Why did you rank this image as -5 'Don't perceive as art'?

Why did you select this image as +5 'Do perceive as art'?

- e.g., Why do you perceive image (..) more as art than image (..)?
- e.g., I can see that most of the images "perceive to be art" fall under the same theme, why do you think this might be?"
- e.g., I can see that most of the images "Don't perceive to be art" fall under the same theme, why do you think this might be?"

In general, how did you decide to rank the images?

- What do you consider/keep in mind while ranking them?

Thank you, I will now ask you some general questions concerning Japanese pop culture.

General perceptions of Japanese pop culture:

- Do you feel these images represent Japanese pop culture well?

Acceptance of Japanese pop culture:

- To what extent are you aware of and/or interested in Japanese pop culture?
 - Why do you believe Japanese pop culture is popular (or not) in the Netherlands?

Traditional Versus Modern:

- What do you think distinguishes traditional Japanese art from modern Japanese pop art?

- Do you notice a connection between these two?

Hybrid art forms:

- Are there examples, that you are aware of, of artworks that combine Japanese pop culture with traditional Western art?
 - What do you think about these combinations?
 - Do you believe these combinations belong in a museum?

Influence of Japanese pop culture on Dutch society:

- Do you think Japanese pop culture has had an influence on Dutch society, art, and culture?
 - If so, in which ways?

Cultural identity and legitimacy:

- How do you perceive Japanese pop culture in the Dutch cultural context?
 - Is it recognized as a legitimate form of artistic expression?