The Acceptance of Japanese Literary Works among Mongolian Readers: A Case Study of *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*

Luwei Wang

Doctoral Student, School of Foreign Languages, Peking University

Zhifeng Qin

Master's Student, School of Foreign Languages, Peking University

Abstract

The public opinion survey in Mongolia shows that Japan is among the countries with a high favorability rating among Mongolians, and Japanese literature is also widely popular in Mongolia. This study focuses on the novel *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* by Toshikazu Kawaguchi. Taking the "horizon of expectations" in reception theory as the entry point, it analyzes this work from three dimensions: narrative structure, text translation, and reader evaluation. Combined with the book promotion model, it explores the reasons for the high acceptance and wide dissemination of Japanese literary works among Mongolian readers. The research indicates that the remarkable achievements of Japanese literature in Mongolia result from the combined efforts of the work's intrinsic appeal, the adoption of translation strategies tailored to the local context, and the use of digital dissemination methods under the background of the global promotion of Japanese literature.This study highlights the factors contributing to the popularity of Japanese literature in Mongolia, which may offer broader implications for cross-cultural literary exchange and the global circulation of literature.

Keywords

Translation and introduction of Japanese literature, Mongolian readers, Before the Coffee Gets Cold

In the 1990s, following the political upheavals in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Mongolia underwent a period of social transformation. This historical turning point reshaped the ecology of cultural production and dissemination, leading to a more open and diversified stage for the introduction of foreign literature. Whereas most foreign literary works during the socialist period were translated into Mongolian through intermediary Russian versions, the post-transition era saw a diversification in cultural exchange and foreign language education. This shift enabled an increasing number of literary works to be translated directly from their original languages. This study focuses on this evolving landscape, with particular emphasis on developments in the 21st century. A key trend within this new environment has been the remarkable rise in popularity of Japanese literature among Mongolian readers.

The popularity of contemporary Japanese literature is vividly illustrated by sales data from Интерном (transliterated as "Internom"), a leading bookstore in Mongolia's book retail sector that has long dominated the local cultural consumption market. According to its top 100 bestsellers list for August 2025, three novels by Japanese author Toshikazu Kawaguchi ranked among the top thirty: *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* (Кофе хөрөхөөс өмнө, published June 2022), *Tales from the Café: A Novel* (Кафед өгүүлэх түүхүүд, published September 2023), and *Before We Forget Kindness* (Дурсамж мартагдахаас өмнө, published May 2024)[1]. These strong sales figures indicate not only a stable readership for the author but also the significant penetration of contemporary Japanese popular literature within the local cultural consumption system. Data from the weekly literary bestsellers list published on Internom's official Facebook account further demonstrates that *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* has consistently remained in the top ten since its release, underscoring its sustained popularity. The success of this series is also closely tied to its publisher, Монсудар (transliterated as "Monsudar"), which holds a position in Mongolia comparable to that of top-tier academic and literary publishing houses in other regions. With its strong professional reputation, Monsudar's editorial decisions and marketing play a crucial role in the dissemination and reception of translated works.

Despite this market success, the transnational circulation of literary works in the context of globalization faces multiple challenges, including cultural differences, language barriers, and insufficient market support—all of which can affect local reception. Existing scholarship has largely focused on the translation and promotion of literature in European and American markets (Walker L. E., 2014; Walker L., 2015), while paying relatively little attention to literary exchange within Northeast Asia. Therefore, given the long-standing cultural interactions between Mongolia and Japan, this study takes Kawaguchi's *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* as a representative case. By examining the work's reception through publicly available evidence from publishing and retail channels, this paper analyzes its dissemination pathways and cultural adaptation mechanisms in Mongolia. The findings aim to distill translation and promotion experiences applicable to diverse cultural contexts, offering a practical model for literary exchange both within the region and on a global scale.

1.The Global Dissemination of Japanese Literature and Its Reception in Mongolia

1.1 The Globalization Trend of Japanese Literary Export

Japan has consistently pursued a strategic policy of positioning itself as a "Culturally Oriented Nation". Following the promulgation of The Cultural Promotion Master Plan on March 31, 1998, which established the framework for this national strategy, the Japanese government has actively promoted international cultural and artistic exchange. This effort, aimed at enhancing both its national image and cultural identity, has produced remarkable achievements in cultural export (Agency for Cultural Affairs,1999:186–187).

To further its cultural dissemination agenda, on June 8, 2010, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry established the "Cool Japan"[2] Overseas Promotion Office. This initiative was designed to strengthen the global promotion of Japan's cultural industries, including animation, manga, television, film, video games, and publishing, thereby creating a key platform for the worldwide spread of Japanese culture. Just ten days later, on June 18, the Kan Naoto Cabinet officially incorporated the overseas promotion of Cool Japan into its New Growth Strategy. This move elevated the initiative to a national strategy, providing crucial policy and financial support that has since facilitated the global expansion of Japan's cultural industries and the broader dissemination of its culture.

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[1] Интерном-Топ 100 [Internom-Top 100]. (n.d.). *Internom*. Retrieved September 25, 2025, from https://internom.mn/charts/internom-top100

[2] クールジャパン機構 [Cool Japan Fund]. (n.d.). *Cool Japan Fund*. Retrieved March 22, 2025, from https://www.cj-fund.co.jp/en/

In the literary sphere, works by Haruki Murakami, such as *Norwegian Wood* and *1Q84*, serve as prime examples of Japanese literature that have successfully reached a global readership. Supported by government policies and the active involvement of overseas publishing houses, Japanese literature has established a mature and robust global promotion system. Through international book fairs, publishing collaborations, and other channels, it has significantly expanded its international influence. Concurrently, the proliferation of digital publishing platforms and social media has enabled Japanese literature to reach global audiences via online platforms and e-books, attracting a growing readership among younger generations.

A key contributor to this international outreach is the Japan Foundation[3], which actively supports overseas cultural projects, exhibitions, and performances. This support includes translation and publishing initiatives, particularly in Mongolia. For instance, with the foundation's assistance, Yasushi Inoue's short story *The Hunting Gun* (猟銃, 2023) and the anthology *Japanese Short Stories* (日本短編小説集, 2016) have been translated, published, and promoted in the Mongolian market, and are also available in digital formats.

In summary, Japanese literature has successfully developed a multi-dimensional export network that seamlessly integrates traditional publishing with digital channels. This approach not only enhances its global influence but also fosters cross-cultural exchange and integration. Within this context, Mongolia, as an important country in East Asia, holds a significant history of translating and disseminating Japanese literature. As its society and culture continue to open up, Mongolia's engagement with and reception of Japanese literature have steadily grown. It is therefore crucial to examine the historical trajectory and current state of Japanese literary translation in Mongolia.

1.2 The Trajectory of Japanese Literary Translation in Mongolia: History and Current State

The history of Japanese literary translation in Mongolia is characterized by a distinct evolution through two principal stages. Initially, translation was conducted indirectly, relying on Russian as an intermediary language and focusing predominantly on poetry and short stories. Subsequently, with the strengthening of Mongolia-Japan relations and the development of local expertise in the Japanese language, the practice shifted towards direct translation from original Japanese texts. This transition broadened the scope of translated works to include a more diverse range of literary genres, reflecting greater thematic richness and stylistic diversity.

The initial phase of translation, spanning from the 1950s to 1980, was heavily shaped by the geopolitical context of the era according to research by Mongolian scholars S. Dolgor and Ts. Onon, this period was dominated by poetry and short story collections, with as much as 97 percent of works being translated indirectly from Russian. This reliance on an intermediary language, a consequence of Soviet cultural influence and a domestic shortage of Japanese-language specialists, inevitably imposed limitations on the content and style of the works introduced to Mongolian readers (Dolgor S. & Onon Ts., 2016, p. 145-146).

A significant turning point occurred in the 1990s following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. As Japan initiated aid programs in Mongolia, focusing on infrastructure and public welfare, it fostered considerable public goodwill and laid the groundwork for closer diplomatic ties. This changing political landscape catalyzed a new era for literary translation. The scope of translated works began to expand beyond poetry and short stories to include novels, essays, and other genres. Between 1980 and 2007, this period saw the publication of over 300 translated Japanese literary works, including those by renowned

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3   The Japan Foundation. (n.d.). *The Japan Foundation*. Retrieved March 22, 2025, from https://www.jpf.go.jp/e/

authors such as Natsume Sōseki, Kawabata Yasunari, and Murakami Haruki (Dolgor S. & Onon Ts., 2016, p. 146).

The deepening of bilateral relations in the 21st century further accelerated this trend. The relationship was elevated to a "Strategic Partnership" in 2010 and later to a "Special Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity" in 2022, marking the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations[4]. These political milestones, coupled with economic agreements, created a fertile environment for cultural exchange and growth. Consequently, Japanese literary translation in Mongolia has entered its most recent and direct phase, evidenced by the widespread popularity of contemporary authors. Works such as Mieko Kawakami's *Heaven* and Toshikazu Kawaguchi's *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* series have garnered significant attention, indicating a mature market for diverse Japanese narratives.

Ultimately, literary translation functions as more than a simple manifestation of cultural exchange; it is a vital catalyst for strengthening bilateral relations. The circulation of Japanese literature in Mongolia allows for a nuanced transmission of ideas and values, which can cultivate greater understanding and trust toward Japan among Mongolian readers. This cultural affinity, in turn, reinforces cooperation in political, economic, and security spheres. Thus, sustained and diverse literary exchange acts as a significant source of soft power in the development of Mongolia-Japan relation, creating broader opportunities for collaboration and mutual growth. A detailed analysis of the reception and dissemination of Japanese literature in Mongolia is therefore crucial, as it can illuminate adaptive strategies in cross-cultural communication and provide a robust theoretical and practical foundation for future case studies.

2. Analysis of Before the Coffee Gets Cold within Reception Theory

2.1 Author and Work Overview

Born in Osaka in 1971, Toshikazu Kawaguchi's early career was rooted in theater, where he served as a playwright and actor for the Sonic Snail company. This extensive experience in dramatic writing and performance provided a crucial foundation for his subsequent transition to literary fiction. In 2010, his stage play *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* premiered, earning critical acclaim for its unique narrative premise and emotional depth, including the Grand Prize at the 10th Suginami Theater Festival.

Building on this theatrical success, Kawaguchi adapted the script into a novel. Following its publication in December 2015, the novel achieved immediate commercial and critical success. Its blend of sentimental and philosophical themes resonated with a wide audience, leading to sales of over 450,000 copies in Japan within its first year and a top-ten ranking in the 2017 Honya Taisho (Booksellers' Award)[5]. The book's global sales have since surpassed four million copies[6], with translations published in mainland China in 2017 and, notably for this study, in Mongolia in 2022.

The novel is set in a mysterious café that offers patrons the ability to travel through time, albeit under a strict set of rules: the journey must be undertaken from a specific seat, must conclude before a poured cup of coffee gets cold, and cannot alter the past. The narrative follows four characters, each with a poignant desire to revisit a moment in time: a woman hoping to reconcile with her former lover, a

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[4] Embassy news. (2023, April 11). From strategic partnership to "Special Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity ." *Embassy of Mongolia in Tokyo.* https://tokyo.embassy.mn/post/1434

[5] Douban Book. (n.d.). *Before the coffee gets cold.* Retrieved March 22, 2025, from https://book.douban.com/subject/26998070/

[6] 川口プロデュース[Kawaguchi Produce]. (n.d.). *Kawaguchi Produce.* Retrieved March 22, 2025, from https://kawa-puro.jimdosite.com

wife wishing to read a letter from her late husband, a sister longing to see her deceased sibling again, and the café owner hoping to meet her future daughter.

Through these intertwined narratives, the novel explores themes of human connection, loss, and redemption. It posits that while the past is immutable, cherishing the present and moving forward with unfulfilled love are the true meaning of life.

2.2 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This study adopts the core concept of "Horizon of Expectations" from Hans Robert Jauss's Reception Theory as its analytical framework, integrating the cultural background and reading experience of Mongolian readers to construct an analysis model tailored to this readership. According to Jauss, a reader's horizon of expectations is formed through the accumulation of cultural and social awareness alongside literary reading experience (H.R. Jauss & R.C. Holub, 1987: 6).

Based on this theoretical premise, this study organizes Mongolian readers' horizon of expectations into three analytical dimensions. First, the foundational dimension addresses readers' perceptions of the narrative architecture and setting of *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*. It includes a comparison with interwoven and episodic narrative patterns characteristic of Mongolian literature to clarify connections between the novel's storytelling mode and traditional Mongolian narrative structures. Second, the cultural dimension examines the representation of culture-specific references (for example, clothing, cuisine, and festivals) and assesses how the Mongolian translation supports readers' understanding of Japanese culture. Third, the aesthetic dimension considers readers' responses to emotional expression and thematic concerns in the text, with attention to the relationship between their aesthetic expectations and contemporary social psychology.

Through the application of this three-tiered framework, this study aims to identify the key factors contributing to the novel's success in the Mongolian market and, in doing so, to shed light on the specific cultural needs and aesthetic preferences of its contemporary readership.

2.2.1 Foundational Dimension: Analysis of Story Setting and Narrative Structure

According to Reception Theory, a reader's engagement with a literary work is fundamentally shaped by a pre-existing "horizon of expectations", which is informed by their life experiences, reading history, and cultural background. Toshikazu Kawaguchi's *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* leverages its distinctive time-travel premise and interwoven narrative to elicit and sustain readers' curiosity and exploratory engagement. This structural approach is particularly resonant for audiences familiar with similar narrative traditions.

For Mongolian readers, this horizon of expectations is partly defined by a rich literary heritage featuring classic works such as *Vikrama's adventures*, *King Gesar,* and *The Thirty-two Wooden Men*. These texts, originally introduced from India and transmitted orally for centuries, are cornerstones of Mongolian literature. A key characteristic of these works is their use of an interlinked episodic structure, where a central premise or event serves as a narrative thread connecting multiple, distinct stories. In The Story of *the Thirty-two Wooden Men*, for instance, a newly crowned emperor discovers a set of thirty-two wooden men, each narrating a tale about his predecessor. These stories collectively aim to guide the new ruler toward virtuous conduct, thereby validating his right to the throne (Wang Hao, 2015:191, 202).

Kawaguchi skillfully employs a similar interlinked episodic structure in *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*. The novel is set entirely within a mysterious café where a specific seat allows patrons to travel in time. This setting provides the backdrop for four interconnected narrative threads: Fumiko Kiyokawa's attempt to reconcile with her former lover, nurse Kotake's desire to read a letter from her late husband,

Hirai Yaeko's wish to see her deceased sister again, and café owner Tokita Kei's hope to meet her future daughter. Although these storylines appear independent, they are tightly bound by the shared setting and the immutable rules of time travel. Within this framework, each character follows a distinct emotional trajectory and develops individually, while their experiences are coherently integrated into a unified spatiotemporal context. Consequently, the novel maintains a strong sense of coherence and narrative logic as it moves between episodes.

This narrative strategy not only enriches the novel's thematic diversity and expands its narrative scope but also enhances its overall unity and readability. For Mongolian readers, the structural parallel between Kawaguchi's narrative approach and the familiar conventions of their local literature fosters a sense of affinity and cultural resonance. This structural familiarity enables them to more readily appreciate the novel's intricate design and its emotional depth, thereby facilitating the successful dissemination and reception of Japanese literature in Mongolia.

2.2.2 Cultural Dimension: Analysis of Translation and Cultural Adaptation

The successful reception of Japanese literature in Mongolia depends on effective localization, in which translation plays a pivotal role. Strategic translation is central to promoting widespread dissemination, enhancing reader comprehension, and securing cultural acceptance.This section examines these dynamics through a case study of the Mongolian translation of *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*. It focuses on translation strategies for proper nouns and culture-specific items to show how the text is integrated into the Mongolian cultural context, thereby strengthening both its readability and cultural adaptability.

1. Proper Nouns

The novel contains numerous proper nouns deeply embedded in Japanese culture. The Mongolian translation predominantly employs transliteration, a strategy that preserves the source text's cultural specificity while ensuring recognizability for the target audience. For example, personal names like "Fumiko" and "Gorou" are rendered as "Фумико" and "Горо", respectively. Similarly, place names such as the city of "Sendai" are transliterated as "Сэндай".

This approach aligns with the phonetic nature of modern Mongolian Cyrillic, making transliteration a common and effective practice in literary translation. The strategy maintains fidelity to the source text, allowing readers to engage with Japanese culture-specific items in their original form. Furthermore, it reduces cultural unfamiliarity, thereby facilitating smoother immersion in the novel's narrative world.

2. Culture-Loaded Terms

Culture-loaded terms, which carry rich and unique cultural connotations, require careful handling to ensure Mongolian readers accurately grasp the embedded cultural information. In the Mongolian version of *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*, these terms are addressed through three primary strategies:

(1)　　Transliteration:Transliteration: This strategy is implemented in two forms. The first is direct transliteration for items such as "kimono (着物)," rendered as "кимоно." As this loanword is attested in the Mongoltoli (Comprehensive Mongolian dictionary)[7], it is already a familiar designation for traditional Japanese attire. The second form combines transliteration with brief explanatory notes, using appositive connectors such as хэмээх ("called") or буюу ("or/known as"). For example, "Tanabata (七夕)" becomes "Танабата хэмээх наадам" ("the festival called Tanabata"), and "笹飾り" can be rendered as "хулс

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[7] Монгол толь [Mongolian Dictionary]. (n.d.). *Mongolian Dictionary*. Retrieved September 25, 2025, from https://mongoltoli.mn/dictionary/

модод буюу сасаказаригаараа" ("bamboo decorations, or sasakazari"). Alternatively, endnotes are used to gloss culture-specific items (CSIs) such as сакэ (sake) or сүкияки (sukiyaki).

(2)   Literal Translation: In certain cases, terms are rendered literally and accompanied by a brief explanatory gloss. The folktale Warashibe Chōja (わらしべ長者, "The Straw Millionaire") is translated as сүрлийн саятан, with an endnote that outlines its origin and significance as a Heian-period Buddhist tale. This dual approach preserves the source narrative content while providing Mongolian readers with the relevant cultural context.

(3)   Paraphrased Translation (Adaptation): Culture-specific expressions are sometimes adapted to align with Mongolian cognitive and cultural frameworks. For example, the Japanese era name "Meiji 7" is rendered as 1874 он (the year 1874), conforming to Mongolian dating conventions. Similarly, a Japanese idiom about a soul not resting in peace is paraphrased into a more direct Mongolian question: Талийгаачдаа жаахан хүдэтгэлтэй хандаж болдоггүй л юм байх даа? ("Can't you show a bit of respect for the deceased?"). This adaptation makes the emotional tone and intended meaning more accessible by translating a culturally specific concept into a more universal expression of respect.

Through these varied strategies—preserving source culture via transliteration, clarifying meaning via literal translation with notes, and enhancing relatability via adaptation—the translation effectively bridges cultural gaps. This multi-faceted approach enables Mongolian readers to more fully comprehend and appreciate the appeal of Japanese literature, underscoring the vital role of thoughtful translation in cross-cultural literary exchange.

2.2.3 Aesthetic Dimension: Reader Feedback and Socio-psychological Analysis

Figure 1 presents the social media usage rates in Mongolia from 2022 to 2025, showing that Facebook has consistently accounted for over 70 percent of total users, far surpassing other platforms. As a result, Facebook has become a gathering place for readers from all social strata and age groups in Mongolia. The comments they leave on the platform, to a certain extent, authentically reflect their reading preferences, aesthetic tendencies, and value judgments. These data offer insights into the Mongolian readership's views and attitudes toward related topics, carrying both typicality and representativeness.

For this reason, the present study selects Facebook as the primary data source to further explore Mongolian readers' emotional responses to Before the Coffee Gets Cold. This approach enables analysis of audience sentiment toward the novel, capturing both individual reactions and broader socio-psychological patterns within the readership.
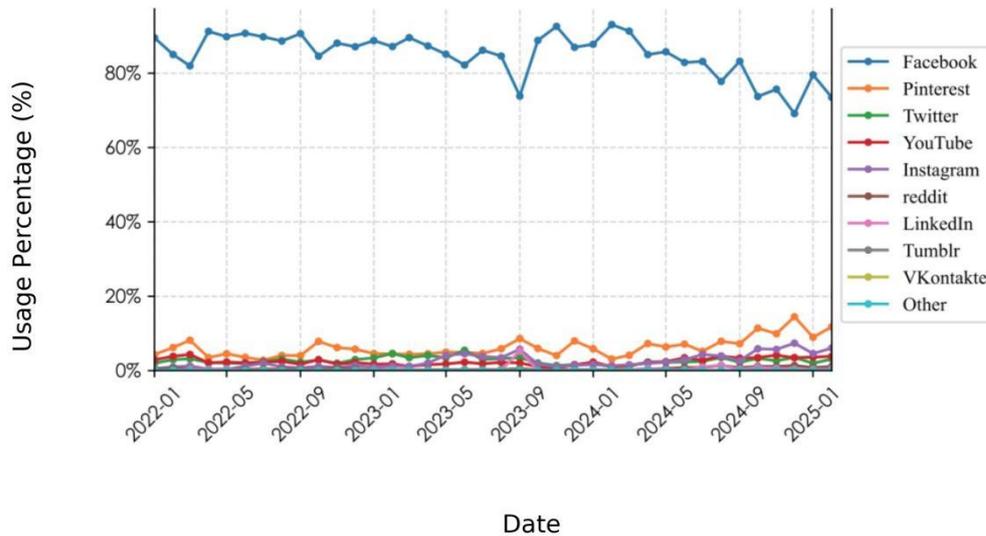
Changes in Social Media Usage Over Time

Figure 1. Social Media Usage Rates in Mongolia, 2022–2025[8]

The data analysis in this study comprises three steps: data collection, manual cleaning, and machine learning. First, using the keyword "Кофе хөрөхөөс өмнө", Python-based web scraping techniques were employed to extract relevant text data from posts on the Facebook platform.[9]⑦ After data collection, a manual cleaning process was carried out to remove posts unrelated to the research topic, such as book advertisements, meaningless repetitions, and entries containing abnormal characters, to ensure data relevance and clarity. This process yielded a final dataset of 94 valid text entries, totaling 14,404 characters.

To improve the effectiveness of machine learning, a self-compiled Cyrillic Mongolian Stop Word List was created to filter out common words lacking substantive meaning—such as болох, байх, тэр, энэ, and their various inflected forms—thus enhancing the precision of keyword extraction in subsequent text-mining stages.

On this basis, the TF-IDF (term frequency–inverse document frequency) weighting method was applied to the dataset for in-depth analysis. TF-IDF estimates each term's importance in the corpus, enabling the identification of prominent high-frequency terms and key phrases, thereby informing subsequent interpretation. Specifically, term frequency (TF) measures a term's within-document frequency, while inverse document frequency (IDF) measures its rarity across the corpus. Together, these measures highlight terms that are especially prominent in the corpus, allowing for more targeted and meaningful analysis.

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[8] Statcounter Global Stats. (n.d.). *Social media stats in Mongolia-February 2025*. Retrieved March 19, 2025, from https:/ /gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/mongolia/#monthly-202201-202502
[9] The Python code for web scraping and data analysis has been uploaded and published on GitHub:https://github.com/x dzinroi/facebook-research.

Word (Mongolian)	English Meaning	TF-IDF Value
цаг	Time	0.2957
өнгөрсөн	Past	0.2188
руу	Toward / To	0.1685
одоо	At Present	0.1626
уулзах	To Meet	0.1602
хүн	Person / People	0.1419
өнгөрсөнд	In the past	0.1360
аялах	Travel	0.1271
боломжтой	Have an opportunity	0.1151
кафе	Coffee	0.1124

Table 1. TF–IDF Analysis Results for *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*

Through TF–IDF analysis, it is possible to gain a clearer understanding of the focal points that Mongolian readers emphasize when discussing the novel. This discussion can be approached from two perspectives: the aesthetic dimension of Reception Theory and the socio-psychological dimension of Mongolian society. Combining the TF–IDF results with the word cloud analysis (Figure 2) reveals that terms such as цаг ("time"), өнгөрсөн руу ("return to the past"), уулзах ("to meet"), хайр ("love"), and хүн ("person") emerge as the most prominent keywords. These findings suggest that the novel's emotionally driven, time-travel-centered storytelling and its exploration of the themes of love and interpersonal relationships have attracted considerable attention among Mongolian readers and prompted further reflection.

Figure 2. Word Cloud of *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*

From the aesthetic perspective of Reception Theory, *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* has evoked a wide and intense emotional resonance among readers in Mongolia. Many describe the work as "healing, relaxing, and interesting" or as "the warmest book," reflecting how its portrayal of diverse emotional bonds, such as romantic love, family affection, and friendship, has touched readers' inner lives with particular clarity.

In the romantic storyline of Fumiko and Gorou, although Fumiko's return to the past does not change Gorou's decision to go to America, she learns his inner secrets and sense of inferiority, and Gorou promises to return in three years. This experience brings Fumiko peace of mind, teaching her that understanding and tolerance are essential in relationships, and helping her accept reality while awaiting the future. Such narrative moments immerse readers in the twists and growth inherent in love.

Similarly, the story of Hirai and her sister Kumi, marked by regret and emotional tension, prompts a profound appreciation of the irreplaceable value of family bonds.

In modern Mongolian society, where the pace of life is accelerating and pressures from multiple directions are mounting, the desire for emotional warmth is increasingly strong. The emotional elements in *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* act as a form of psychological balm, offering comfort and healing that meet readers' urgent emotional needs. Readers often remark that the novel conveys important themes such as cherishing the present, living bravely, and showing empathy. Impressions like "live without regrets, express more, communicate more" and "treasure time, treasure the present, leave no regrets" show how readers connect their own life experiences with the novel's stories, engaging in deep reflection. In real life, people often overlook those around them due to busy routines, sometimes making decisions they later regret. Through its characters' varied experiences, the novel guides readers to reflect on their own lives, highlighting the importance of timely emotional expression and valuing those close to them. These thematic insights hold strong real-world significance, offering readers fresh perspectives and understandings that can positively influence their lifestyle and values.

The timing of the Mongolian edition's release in June 2022, during the COVID-19 pandemic, further amplified its impact. In the three years following the initial outbreak, Mongolia's GDP growth exhibited marked volatility.[10] Meanwhile, the labor market weakened, with the unemployment rate in 2021 increasing by 1.6 percentage points relative to 2020. [11]In this unstable economic climate, citizens faced employment difficulties, heightened living pressures, and repeated setbacks. The novel's thematic emphasis on valuing the present and maintaining a constructive outlook offered a form of psychological solace. For example, in the story of Fusagi and Kotake, Fusagi is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and experiences progressive memory loss, yet Kotake remains by his side with consistent care. This portrayal of steadfast commitment amid hardship offers readers warmth and encouragement to cherish loved ones and face challenges proactively.

From a socio-psychological standpoint, the novel also fulfilled a pandemic-era need for connection and belonging. While public health measures created physical distance, they simultaneously intensified the collective desire for emotional exchange. The book's rich depictions of resilient human bonds—from the tolerance between lovers to the protection between family members—offered a source of vicarious emotional comfort. This sense of connection helped alleviate feelings of loneliness and anxiety, allowing readers to find a sense of belonging within the narrative world.

In sum, the popularity of *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* in Mongolia results from a convergence of factors. Aesthetically, it satisfies readers' emotional needs and expectations through compelling storytelling and profound themes. Socio-psychologically, it aligns with the demands of a post-pandemic populace facing economic difficulty and future uncertainty. The work, therefore, transcends mere reading pleasure to actively shape readers' attitudes and modes of reflection, establishing it as a significant cultural touchstone in Mongolia during this period.

3. Multi-dimensional Analysis of Book Promotion and Sales Channels

The bestseller status of *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* in Mongolia is attributable not only to the work's intrinsic qualities but also to the decisive role of external marketing and distribution strategies. A

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[10] Статистикийн мэдээллийн нэгдсэн сан [National Statistics Office of Mongolia]. (n.d.). *ДНБ-ий өсөлтийн хувь [GDP growth rate]*. Retrieved March 22, 2025, from https://1212.mn/mn/statistic/statcate/573052/table-view/DT_NSO_0500_022V1
[11] Статистикийн мэдээллийн нэгдсэн сан [National Statistics Office of Mongolia]. (n.d.). *Ажилгүйдлийн түвшин [Unemployment rate]*. Retrieved March 22, 2025, from https://1212.mn/mn/statistic/statcate/573065/table-view/DT_NSO_0400_020V2

combination of online promotion, in-store displays, cross-sector collaborations, and digital publishing drove the book's strong performance.

In the digital age, social media has become a primary channel for book promotion. The publisher and booksellers ran sustained campaigns across major platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, using visually rich posts to foreground the novel's distinctive premise and emotional depth. This steady online presence attracted substantial public attention. Data from Internom's bestseller list indicate that from its release in June 2022 to September 7, 2025, the book remained in the top ten for 164 weeks, including 68 weeks at number one. As shown in Figure 3, this sustained performance underscores the novel's remarkable popularity. The combination of social media outreach, website visibility, and positive word of mouth substantially amplified awareness of the book.
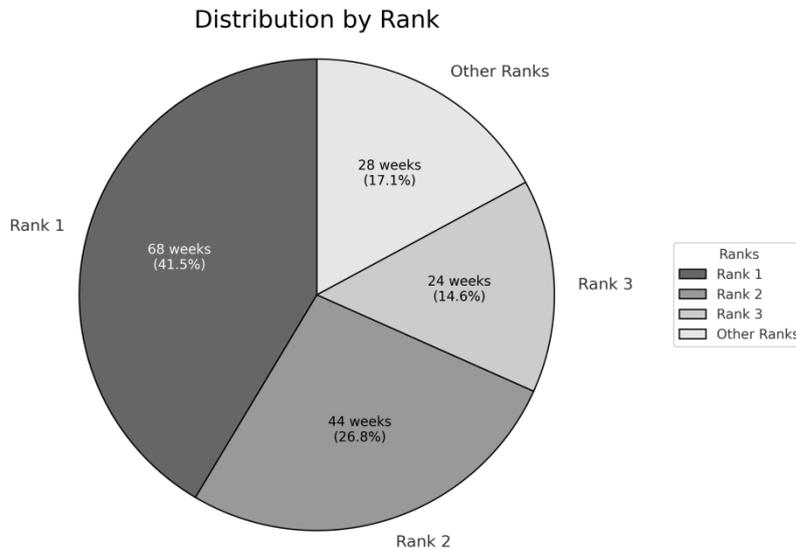

Figure 3. Weekly Sales Ranking of *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* at Internom Bookstore, June 20, 2022–September 7, 2025[12]

Physical bookstores remain crucial; display strategies within them significantly influence purchasing decisions. As a bestseller, *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* was placed in front-of-store placements. Cross-sector collaborations also played a significant role: for example, joint reading events with local cafés integrated the book into leisure activities, transforming it into a cultural bridge and creating mutual benefits for the book and partner businesses. Online retail platforms such as Internom further facilitated promotion with curated recommendations and author introductions.

The growing prevalence of digital reading in Mongolia also contributed to the novel's success. Both *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* and its sequel were released as e-books, with the first volume also issued as an audiobook, broadening distribution channels. The convenience of digital formats aligns with contemporary, fast-paced lifestyles. Audiobooks in particular allow audiences to engage with the text during commutes or other activities, thereby increasing accessibility. By offering e-book and audiobook formats, the publisher addressed the diverse needs of contemporary audiences, enhancing the novel's market reach.

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[12] Internom Bookstore. (n.d.). *Official posts from Internom Bookstore's Facebook account*. Facebook. Retrieved March 30, 2025, from https://www.facebook.com/InternomBooks

Taken together, the novel's bestseller status in Mongolia was the result of a multi-pronged strategy. Each stage, from social media promotion and in-store displays to digital publishing, was carefully planned and mutually reinforcing, collectively driving the book's exceptional performance in the Mongolian market.

4. Conclusion

This study of Toshikazu Kawaguchi's *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* reveals that its success in Mongolia stems from a convergence of factors: a receptive global context, an alignment of narrative style with local literary traditions, effective localization strategies, and modern digital dissemination.

First, the globalization of Japanese literature, supported by cultural-promotion programs such as *Cool Japan*, has provided a robust foundation for cultural exchange. As part of the Asian cultural sphere, Mongolia has exhibited a high degree of receptivity to Japanese literary works, reflecting longstanding regional affinities.

Second, the novel's interlinked episodic structure resonates with traditional Mongolian narrative forms, fostering an immediate sense of familiarity. Its simple, heartwarming storyline and accessible themes of family and love align well with Mongolian aesthetic preferences and cultural values, creating an emotional connection that transcends borders.

Third, high-quality translation proved decisive in bridging cultural gaps. By using strategies like transliteration with explanatory notes for culture-specific terms, the Mongolian version preserved the source text's authenticity while ensuring comprehension, highlighting the crucial role of localized translation.

Finally, digital publishing and promotion were instrumental. The availability of e-books and audiobooks, combined with extensive social media engagement, amplified the novel's visibility and accessibility, allowing it to reach a broad audience and thrive in the contemporary media landscape.

The success of *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* offers valuable lessons for cross-cultural literary dissemination. It demonstrates that a successful strategy requires not only a quality text but also culturally adaptive localization, collaboration with local partners, and robust use of digital platforms. By addressing the specific cultural needs and emotional sensibilities of the target audience, literary works can achieve meaningful global reach, contributing to the preservation of cultural diversity and the promotion of international exchange. In this context, Mongolia's engagement with foreign literature positions it as an active and important node in the global cultural network.

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