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Competing for Australian Tourists: Affective Images of Korea, Japan and China

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Introduction

Tourism is the world's largest growing industry and one of the strongest drivers of world trade and prosperity (UNWTO and SNV, 2010). In many cases, tourism is so vital for many countries that their economy is dependent on the tourism industry. Tourism generates foreign exchange earnings and creates opportunities for direct and indirect employment, bringing economic benefits to the region. UNWTO (2011) reported that international arrivals numbered 940 million in 2010. Tourism contributes an estimated 5 percent to the worldwide gross domestic product (GDP) and 6-7 percent of the overall number of jobs directly and indirectly. The overall export income generated by inbound tourism, including passenger transport, exceeded US \$1 trillion in 2010 (US \$3 billion a day). Since tourism is such a major source of potential economic benefit, national tourism authorities were created to promote the nation as a tourism destination.

Given the tourism is a vehicle to maximize foreign exchange and ensure economic growth, South Korea government has been trying to host international events including the G20 meeting in 2010 and various international sports events and Expos. Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) launched the "2010-2012 Visit Korea Year" campaign to attract inbound travelers to boost the tourism industry and to gain economic benefit in South Korea. The KTO established the Visit Korea Committee for the marketing activities and conducted overseas marketing activities to boost the image of South Korea. However, not many researches have been done to understand how different countries will perceive South Korea. In order to gain better understand of image perceive by the potential inbound market, image should be explored in terms of variable that has influence on intention to visit. It is vital to understand image of the competitive countries to find out what can be South Korea's strength comparing with them. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study is to examine the image that residents of Australia hold about Korea as a destination and compare it with images of destinations-competitors such as Japan and China.

Literature Review

Destination image studies have a long tradition in tourism literature and the measurement of destination image has been of great interest to tourism researchers and practioner (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Echtner and Ritchies, 1993). Destination image has been investigated in two directions. Gunn (1997) argue that tourism image is divided into organic image and induced image according to visit behavior. The recent approach on destination image is the formation of destination image built by cognitive, affective image and conative component of attitude (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Beerli and Martin, 2004; Gartner, 1993; Tasci et al, 2007). Destination studies have traditionally focused measurement of cognitive component which is

known as intellectual attribute to evaluation a destination image (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997). However, lesser attention has been drawn to affective images component-the “motives one has for destination selection” (Gartner, 1993, p196) related to emotional experiences.

In recent studies on destination image, they have placed emphasis on affective image providing evidence that affective image has direct influence on overall image formation (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Echtner and Ritchies, 1993; Russel, Ward and Pratt, 1981). Indeed, with imagery, the affective has shown to predominate over the cognitive (Kim and Yoon, 2003). Ruessel and his colleague (1981) had developed a scale measures the affective image component and argue that the scale can be applied in tourism study setting. The scale has been adapted to later affective image studies (Baloglu and Brigberg, 1997), however a few utilize the affective image scale to measure image of South Korea, especially to compare with other countries.

Methodology

A survey was designed to assess the affective image of three countries and visitors intention to visit. The questionnaire comprise of four parts: Affective image, Intention to visit, General information on travel habit/pattern of respondents, and Demographic Characteristics. Affective image were measured adopting Russel and his colleague (1981) scale of pleasant/unpleasant, rousing/sleepy, exciting/gloomy, relaxing/depressing. The scales were measure based on a seven-point Likert scale designed as semantic differential scale for all three countries. Intention to visit measured as ‘intention to visit near future’, ‘choosing it as next vacation destination’, and ‘interested to visit’ on five point Likert scale that ranged from 1 to 5, where 1= not all likely and not interested at all to 5=very likely and very interested.

The field survey was implemented on Adelaide, the capital of South Australia, and a total of 375 usable questionnaires were analyzed after removing 28 unusable responses. A survey was conducted in the crowd place like airport, mall, squares and park. A random sampling method was used and the questions were asked directly to respondents. The field surveys were asked to Australian Citizens in June-August 2007, excluding Asian-based migrants to avoid the bias result. The study was carried out to support on the model of destination image formation. The cause-effect relationships between affective image and intention to visit were verified by multiple regression analysis.

Findings

For all the scale Japan founded to be perceived more positive score than China and South Korea to Australians. Between China and South Korea, China had lower score on “distressing-relaxing” scale than South Korea. This could be that Australian perceives that China is crowded than other counties. However, how this image attribute influence their intention to visit can be different.

Table 1
Affective image descriptive (mean)

	South Korea (n=375)	Japan (n=375)	China (n=375)
unpleasant-pleasant	4.82	5.81	4.71
gloomy-excited	4.92	5.63	4.94
distressing-relaxing	4.54	4.95	4.26
sleepy-arousing	4.81	5.41	4.95

Further analyses of affective images as a whole on intention to visit the three countries are found to be significant at 0.00 level (Korea, $R^2 = .162$, $F=72.280$, $p<0.001$; Japan, $R^2 = .134$, $F=57.862$, $p<0.001$; China, $R^2 = .134$, $F=57.945$, $p<0.001$). However, as individual, the images had different effect on each country. The affective image of “unpleasant-pleasant” has significant effect on all three countries at 0.05 level. This result indicates that wherever destination the tourists want to travel, they seek for pleasant and the result shows that pleasant image element can be a vital to promote the tourists. Apart from the common factor, the difference is found between the countries that China has a significant effect of “gloomy-exciting”, Japan has a significant effect of “distressing-relaxing” and South Korea has a significant effect of “sleepy-arousing” scale on intention to visit at 0.05 level.

Table 2
Affective Image and Intention to visit-South Korea

	B	SE B	β	t	Sig
unpleasant-pleasant	0.286	0.084	0.251	3.393	0.001(*)
gloomy-excited	0.000	0.088	0.000	0.005	0.996
distressing-relaxing	0.078	0.079	0.062	0.990	0.323
sleepy-arousing	0.182	0.074	0.166	2.466	0.014(*)

Note: $R^2=0.172$, Adjusted $R^2= 0.163$, $F=19.173$ Sig=0.000

* 0.05<p

Table 3
Affective Image and Intention to visit-Japan

	B	SE B	β	t	Sig
unpleasant-pleasant	0.271	0.080	0.217	3.399	0.001(*)
gloomy-excited	0.124	0.080	0.106	1.539	0.125
distressing-relaxing	0.125	0.062	0.110	2.020	0.044(*)
sleepy-arousing	0.035	0.067	0.033	0.522	0.602

Note: $R^2=0.143$, Adjusted $R^2= 0.134$, $F=15.427$ Sig=0.000

* 0.05<p

Table 4
Affective Image and Intention to visit-China

	B	SE B	β	t	Sig
unpleasant-pleasant	0.201	0.073	0.190	2.731	0.007(*)
gloomy-excited	0.168	0.065	0.168	2.605	0.010(*)
distressing-relaxing	0.017	0.067	0.016	0.260	0.795
sleepy-arousing	0.084	0.058	0.080	1.449	0.148

Note: $R^2=0.142$, Adjusted $R^2= 0.133$, $F=15.356$ Sig=0.000

* $0.05 < p$

Conclusion

The study emphasized the importance of destination image formation and intent to visit different cultural destinations. By examining effective images of three competitive destinations and the Australian perception of them, the study identified the images that can influence the tourist's intent to visit these destinations. The result suggests marketing implications to the countries and what should be considered when promoting destination images to induce visitors. Beside common factors, South Korea's "arousing image aspect" is found to influence the potential visitor's intent to visit. Therefore, KTO should be able to promote the dynamic side of South Korea. Marketers of Japan and China should take necessary actions to promote their strengths, which is respectively, "relaxing" and "exciting" aspect based on finding in this study. Each country has a different aspect that visitors want to seek in the county. It is important for a destination to know a strength and unique aspect and make use of it, so that can induce potential inbound market.

To be a world class tourist destination, it is vital for South Korea to know how South Korea is perceived to potential inbound tourist market. Therefore, this study should be conducted in the other potential market like Canada, U.S.A, and etc. to generalize the result. The results of the study provide both theoretical and practical implication. From a theoretical perspective, comparative analysis of influence of affective image in different cultural setting brought better understanding of tourist behavior. From a practical standpoint, the study provides marketing implication for all three countries managing destination image by utilizing the affective image.

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