

The impact of soap opera on destination image: A multivariate repeated measures analysis

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research is to investigate the impact of popular culture on destination image and intention to visit the destination. To achieve this purpose, the research examines the differences between two countries, Japan and United States on Korean perception and intention to visit Korea as a destination after they watch Korean soap opera. An experiment is designed to examine whether soap opera as a type of pop-culture has an impact on destination perception and intention to visit the destination.

Keywords: destination image, destination marketing, soap opera, pop-culture, multivariate repeated measured analysis

INTRODUCTION

Pop-culture has been defined in many different ways. One of the ways is that pop-culture is seen to equate with Mass Culture as a commercial culture, mass produced for mass consumption. In recent years, Korean popular culture has gained much recognition across many Asian countries through mass media entertainment such as dramas, movies, and songs since 1999. The trend is known as “Hallyu,” which literally means Korean wave in English. The Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism appointed “Korean Wave” stars as cultural ambassadors in countries that have had a strained political relationship with Korea (Cho, 2005). The Korean wave affected intra-regional tourism, from Asia to the U.S., supporting an increase in inbound tourism.

Popular culture such as TV programs, soap opera or drama and pop-star has been a very effective vehicle in attracting tourists to a destination while boosting the economic impacts (Beeton, 2001b; Busby & Klug, 2001; Connell, 2005; Riley et al., 1998; Tooke & Baker, 1996). Media relations such as news articles, movies and popular culture, commonly referred to as autonomous agents, are considered to be more influential on image formation in that they have higher credibility and ability to reach mass crowds than the destination-originated information (Gartner, 1993; Gartner & Shen, 1992; Henefors & Mossberg, 2002). Most research about autonomous agents focuses on the strong influence of negative impact from news media such as political issues, violence, terrorist activities, and natural disaster. However, little research has been devoted to examine the impact of pop-culture on destination image formation in the aspect of an autonomous agent.

Tourist image of a destination is a significant factor responsible for its popularity and identification of the different attributes of the image might provide important information in developing promotion strategies (Ahmed, 1996). Destination image influences the intentions

and decisions of potential travelers due to intangible destination products and limited knowledge. Particularly, a strong positive image of destination can play an important role in traveler's intention to visit the destination (Alhemound & Armstrong, 1996; Hunt 1975; Ross, 1993).

The image concept has generally been considered an attitudinal construct consisting of an individual's mental representation of knowledge (beliefs), feelings, and global impression about an object or destination. Stern and Krakover (1993), in their model of the formation of a composite destination image, depicted that perceptual/cognitive and affective images together form overall image of a destination. Their results provided support for the intervening role of affect between perceptual /cognitive evaluation and overall image, as well as the interactive effects of the two components in forming overall image. An overall image of a place is formed as a result of both perceptual/cognitive and affective evaluations of that place (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

The purpose of the research is to investigate the impact of popular culture on destination image and intention to visit the destination. To achieve this purpose, the research examines the differences between two countries, Japan and United States on Korean perception and intention to visit Korea as a destination after they watch Korean soap opera. In this study, pop-culture is considered as manifest in the facets of entertainment such as sports, music, film, literature, TV programs, drama and pop-star. The two research questions for the study are as follows: 1) Are there differences between Japan and U.S. on perception and intention? 2) Are there differences before and after watching Korean soap opera on perception and intention?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

An experiment is designed to examine whether soap opera as a type of pop-culture has an impact on destination perception and intention to visit the destination. Subjects will consist of students attending a university in Japan and United States. 30 students for each country will be randomly selected; therefore, a total of 60 students will be randomly selected for this research. Dae Jang Geum ("The Jewel in the Palace") as a Korean soap opera for this study will be chosen to show participants. The survey instrument consists of two sections: questions relating to the image measurement of the respondents' overall image and affective and perceptual/cognitive evaluations of Korea as a destination; and questions relating to the intention to visit the destination in the future.

Measures

The experiment consists of two parts: pre-test and post-test which will be administered three months later on perception and intention. For perception measurement, five items for each perceptual/cognitive and effective evaluation will be generated from the literature review. Respondents will be asked to rate their overall image of Korea as a destination on a 10-point anchor scale ranging from 1 = "very negative" to 10 = "very positive". Intention to visit to Korea will be measured on a ten-point bipolar scale ranging from 1 = "very not like to visit Korea" to

10 = “very much like to visit to Korea”. A multiple repeated measured analysis of variance (ANOVA) will be conducted on two measures: perception (image) and intention. Perception and intention will be measured for Japanese and U.S. groups at two different times: before and after watching a Korean soap opera.

IMPLICATION

Popular culture such as soap opera offers tremendous marketing opportunities for tourism organizations, such as destination marketing organizations (DMOs). DMOs can use pop-culture as springboards for destination promotions and generate marketing opportunities at the different stages of the destination promotion process. It is significant for marketers to take the exposure as a chance to rebuild their image management strategy, depending on how the destination is represented through soap opera. Promoters should understand the content of the soap opera and identify how the destination is depicted in it.

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