



Investigating the effect of country image and subjective knowledge on attitudes and behaviors: U.S. Upper Midwesterners' intentions to consume Korean Food and visit Korea

WooMi Jo Phillips^{a,*}, Amelia Asperin^{a,1}, Kara Wolfe^{b,2}

^a Department of Apparel, Design, and Hospitality Management, North Dakota State University Dept. 2610, P.O. Box 6050, Fargo, ND 58108-6050, USA

^b Bradley University, Family and Consumer Sciences, 1501 West Bradley Avenue, Peoria, IL 61625, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Country of Origin
Country image
Subjective knowledge
Attitude
Unfamiliar cuisine
Korean food

ABSTRACT

Korean food (Hansik) is one of the fastest growing cuisines globally. This trend is evident with the number of Korean restaurants scattered around world. An increasing number of Korean restaurants have been observed in the United States, especially in more culturally diverse areas such as major cities on the east and west coasts. However, noticeably less Korean restaurants are seen in the Midwest region. This study investigated the Midwesterners' intention to try Hansik and further to visit South Korea (henceforth referred to as Korea) based on the country image of Korea and knowledge they have of Korean cuisine, which together influence their attitude toward the new cuisine. The results showed that cognitive image influences the attitude through affective image, and subjective knowledge also influences the respondents' attitude toward Hansik. As proposed, these constructs have positive influences on both intentions to try Hansik and to visit Korea in the near future. Study implications and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

© 2013 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

International cuisines such as Italian, Mexican, Japanese, Thai, and Caribbean have shown significant growth in popularity within the ethnic food market in the United States (US). With the global movement of food and people, other international cuisines such as Vietnamese, Cuban, and Peruvian are also starting to see success in the US market (National Restaurant Association, 2012). However, unlike more popular international cuisines such as Chinese, Mexican, and Italian, less well-known cuisines such as Korean (also known as Hansik) might have many challenges in establishing its market in the US, especially in certain regions such as the Upper Midwest where consumers may have limited exposure to international cuisines. When entering a new market, product developers should consider whether or not the consumers in the region have intentions to try the new cuisine.

Consumer behavior intentions have been measured in various ways in consumer and marketing studies in the past. However, attitude has been one of the most widely studied subjects in predicting

consumer behaviors (Ajzen and Driver, 1991; Day and Deutscher, 1982; Fazio, 1986; Lutz, 1985; Terry and Hogg, 1996). Attitude is a summative evaluation of objects (e.g., food) based on the information an individual has about the specific objects. The individuals can go through various sources to obtain information about certain types of food (e.g., organic/health food, Chinese food, Indian food) and develop their food attitude. Food attitude has been shown as one of the key influences on food choice and consumption behaviors (Arvola et al., 2008; Rozin, 1988; Spence and Townsend, 2006; Urala and Lähteenmäki, 2004). Thus, attitude toward consuming a new international cuisine would be a major factor for measuring one's intention to try it. Individuals with a positive attitude toward consuming an international cuisine are more likely to try the food while individuals with a negative food attitude are less likely to try it.

Consumers also form their attitudes and purchase intentions toward foreign products based on the product country image (PCI) or country-of-origin (CoO) (Clarke et al., 2000; Felzensztein and Dinnie, 2005; Han, 1989; Knight and Calantone, 2000; Lim and O'Cass, 2001; Moon and Jain, 2002.). Country image plays an especially important role when the quality of a foreign product is unknown (Han, 1990), thus the CoO concept fits the current study appropriately because 'foreign' and 'new' food products are discussed. Traditionally, consumer products such as automobiles, electronics, and fashion products were prevalent stimuli in CoO studies; however, not many of these studies targeted food products

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 701 231 7358; fax: +1 701 231 5273.

E-mail addresses: woomi.phillips@ndsu.edu (W.J. Phillips),

amelia.asperin@ndsu.edu (A. Asperin), klwolfe2@bradley.edu (K. Wolfe).

¹ Tel.: +1 701 231 5720; fax: +1 701 231 5273.

² Tel.: +1 309 677 3879; fax: +1 309 677 3813.

(Skaggs et al., 1996). Assuming that Korean Hansik is unfamiliar and new to most Upper Midwesterners, the image they have of Korea might have a substantial influence on their attitude toward consuming the food. Consumers with a positive image of Korea as a country will have a more positive attitude toward consuming Hansik.

Consumer's product knowledge also has been known to affect consumer information processing (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987). In particular, subjective knowledge, which refers to how much one thinks he/she knows about a specific product, plays a significant role in product evaluations (Park et al., 1994; Zhu, 2004) and decision-making (Brucks, 1985). Researchers have shown the effects of product knowledge on purchases related to food, beverage, and foodservice (Boccaletti and Moro, 2000; Dodd et al., 2005; Hamstra, 1995; House et al., 2004). Specific product knowledge would also affect Upper Midwesterners' attitude toward consuming Hansik. Thus, the more one believes that he/she knows about the foreign food, the more positive attitude one has toward consuming it. Research has shown that both CoO and subjective knowledge influence consumer evaluation, attitude and decision-making (Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Papadopoulos et al., 1988; Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009; Raju et al., 1995; Flynn and Goldsmith, 1999).

Little research has been done exploring the relationships among these variables together with international food and intent to visit (Karim and Chi, 2010) the country where food is from. This study aims to address the research need and provide meaningful information to international food marketers and developers for expanding their markets globally. Investigating how subjective knowledge of Hansik and the image of Korea influences attitude toward trying out Hansik and possibly visiting Korea in the future is appropriate when exploring the introduction of Hansik and promotion of Korea as a tourism destination to the Upper Midwest market.

2. Literature review

2.1. Globalization of Korean foods (Hansik)

In October 2008, the Korean government pledged to promote Hansik as one of the five major international cuisines (Korean Cuisine to the World, 2009). There have been many efforts toward this mission from various channels, including government agencies, state agencies, and business owners. The Presidential Commission for Future and Vision, and the Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MFAFF, 2007) jointly held *Korean Cuisine to the World* (2009) symposium in April 2009 with the support of the Korean first lady (Oh, 2010). This provided a platform for experts and chefs throughout the world to learn about Hansik and network with industry experts. The Korean government hopes to promote the culture behind Hansik, thus projecting an accurate image of Korean food to those who are new to the cuisine. The "Globalization of Hansik" is also integrated with the "2010–2012 Visit Korea Year" campaign, which was launched in November 2009 to attract more international tourists and create more tourism revenues over the 3 years (Korea Tourism Organization, 2009).

One of the major strategies is to expand the number of Korean restaurants worldwide from 10,000 (2007) to 40,000 by year 2017; thus opening 300 restaurants in each of the 10 years. One of the biggest markets for Hansik is the United States followed by China and Japan. A study done by Korea Agro-Fisheries Trade Corporation (KAFTC) indicated that as of 2008, there were 1628 Korean restaurants, primarily in the West (809) and Northeast (352) regions of the US (KAFTC, 2008). Only 115 (7%) restaurants were found in the Midwest region. Since the Korean restaurant market is well developed on both coasts, the Midwest is potentially the next viable

market for the Korean government and business owners to target for globalizing Hansik.

Before the Korean government and private sector try to put forth efforts to expand the market in the Midwest, it is first prudent to understand how Midwesterners perceive Korean food and their intention toward trying it. In particular, Hansik would be less familiar to most Upper Midwesterners since the region is not as culturally diverse as the East and West coast markets. For instance, the Caucasian population in California accounts for less than half of the population (40%), and places like New York (58% Caucasian) and Georgia (56% Caucasian) have larger representation of ethnic groups; whereas Upper Midwestern states (such as North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Nebraska), have over 80% Caucasians (US Census Bureau, 2012).

2.2. Food attitude

Attitudinal research across disciplines has a long and robust history; as such the definition and applications of attitude as a construct are constantly evolving (Eagly and Chaiken, 2007). One of the most widely accepted operationalization of the construct is the tripartite model (e.g., Fishbein, 1967; Insko and Schopler, 1967; Rosenberg and Hovland, 1960) which states that attitude has three distinct components of response to stimuli: cognition (beliefs, knowledge structure, and perceptions), affect (emotional, instinctive, or sympathetic nervous activity), and behavior (explicit actions, behavioral intentions, or verbal statements). Eagly and Chaiken (2007) state that cognition, affect, and behavior do not always have to be present simultaneously to form or express attitudes—it can be based on only one or on any combination of the components.

Eagly and Chaiken (1993, p. 1) provided a contemporary definition stating that attitude is "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor." This posits that three elements are required: tendency, an attitude object, and evaluation. Attitudes, whether positive or negative, can be formed either experientially or by forming linkages between the primary attitude or target object and other related attitude objects (Eagly and Chaiken, 2007; Hsu and Huang, *in press*). In the context of the current research, a tendency to have a positive or negative attitude toward a specific dish, like kimchi (a spicy Korean side dish), can be formed either by physically eating the food, or linking it with an existing attitude toward Hansik in general, or even identifying with the country of Korea if no previous experience with Hansik is available. The individuals can also go through various sources to obtain information about the cuisine in general (e.g., flavor principles, ingredients, cooking methods) or specific menu items (e.g., kalbi, bulgogi, kimchi) and develop their food attitude.

Literature specifically looking at attitude as it relates to food is rather limited in comparison to the vast amount of attitudinal research across many disciplines. Literature shows that studies on food attitudes have traditionally focused on the affective and cognitive components without considering sensory components that may not be evident for non-food items (Aikman et al., 2006). Eertmans et al. (2001) showed that food attitudes can be developed from what is common in a social or economic class (e.g., culturally acceptable foods), sensory liking (e.g., smell, texture), and expected consequences of consuming a food (e.g., health benefits or detriment). The latter reflects the expectancy-value model where attitude toward a behavior (e.g., choosing a specific food) is a function of a cognitive belief structure composed of salient beliefs and evaluation (Blue, 1995; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). That is, choosing a specific food (e.g., low-fat yogurt) will lead to a specific outcome

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1009725>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1009725>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)