



## A cross-cultural comparison of fast food restaurant selection criteria between Korean and Filipino college students<sup>☆</sup>

Seung-Hee Baek<sup>a</sup>, Sunny Ham<sup>b,\*</sup>, Il-Sun Yang<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Department of Food & Nutrition, Shingu College, Korea*

<sup>b</sup>*Nutrition and Food Science Department, College of Agriculture, Hospitality and Tourism Management, University of Kentucky, 121 Erikson Hall, Lexington, KY 40506, USA*

<sup>c</sup>*Food Service Management, College of Human Ecology, Yonsei University, Korea*

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### Abstract

Despite the globalization of the hospitality and tourism industry, present cross-cultural research is limited to examining consumer behaviors or perceptions on the products and services the industry provides. The current exploratory study between Korea and the Philippines investigates college students' perceptions on the fast food restaurant selection criteria with respect to the attributes they feel are important. A conjoint analysis, proven as a statistical marketing research tool with strong predictive power of consumer choices among multi-attribute product alternatives, was utilized for the analysis of the data for the study, and the analysis revealed that both Koreans and Filipinos viewed Menu Price as the most important attribute. Next important attributes, in Korea, were followed by brand, food-related factors and service- and hygiene-related factors, while in the Philippines, they were food-related factors, service- and hygiene-related factors and brand. This type of study is requisite for globalization of the food service industry in developing effective marketing strategies and establishing operational strategies, by understanding the different components of the Asian food service industry relative to the US market.

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\*Corresponding author. Tel.: +859 257 4332; fax: +859 257 4095.

*E-mail address:* [sham2@uky.edu](mailto:sham2@uky.edu) (S. Ham).

## 1. Introduction

According to the latest A. C. Nielsen Online Consumer Survey (2005) conducted in October 2004 throughout 28 countries across Asia Pacific, Europe and the US, Asians are emerging as the world's greatest fast food fans. In addition, Korea and the Philippines are reported as the most developed fast food segments in Asia in terms of both number of outlets and market share (Business Asia, 2000). College students are the major customers of the fast food industry. It is estimated that college students spend \$7 billion for less essential purchases, which includes fast food (Knutson, 2000). In Korea, the population of teenagers and 20-something's are considered to be the major patrons of fast food restaurants and the numbers are growing, reporting up to 90 percent in 1996 (Kim et al., 1996).

Both Korea and the Philippines launched the fast food industry in the late 1970s and both are currently at the maturity stage in the life cycle. The local brands, Lotteria in Korea and Jollibee in the Philippines, are leading the fast food industry of each country, mainly offering hamburgers, chicken and fries, like other fast food restaurants. In terms of the menu, Jollibee offers dish with rice as well as the above-mentioned fast food items commonly offered in the US. It is followed by McDonald's and Burger King as the second and the third brand in hamburger fast food market of each country. Both local brands revolutionized the fast food industry as pioneers, globalizing their chains to other countries. Korea and the Philippines are the only two countries in the world where McDonald's is not the market leader in the fast food industry (Business Asia, 2000). While maintaining the characteristics or caliber of the international brands, localization is an important consideration. For example, Filipino fast food markets provide dishes with rice, a regular meal for the nationals, especially to lower-income group, resulting in more local restaurants being patronized. On the other hand, localization of fast food seems rare in Korea, as fast food is considered as a merely a snack rather than a meal.

Many trade-offs of attributes take place; however, hospitality customers typically choose a product or service, which consists of multi-attributes (Lewis et al., 1991). Since a majority of the product attributes, like location, brand name and image, may be in non-metric form, it is difficult to measure using an interval or ratio scale. A conjoint analysis has had strong predictive power of consumer choices among multi-attribute product alternatives. In other words, the application of the conjoint analysis is so great in identifying and understanding the combined effects of product attributes on preferences for a product/service (Hobbs, 1996) that the analysis has been utilized to design the most preferred product by hotel customers (Goldberg et al., 1984; Hu and Hiemstra, 1996; Lewis et al., 1991; Wind et al., 1989; Wong and Lam, 2001), travel packages (Mulhbacher and Botschen, 1988) and meeting planning products (Renaghan and Kay, 1987; Hu and Hiemstra, 1996). Despite these findings, little attention has been paid to the measurement of restaurant industry products using a conjoint analysis despite its popularity in the consumer behavior research arena (Dube et al., 1994; Koo et al., 1999).

Having noted the similarities and differences between the two markets in the eating habits, localization and perceptions of fast food, as well as recognizing the

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