



Tourists' attitudes towards textiles and apparel-related cultural products: A cross-cultural marketing study

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ABSTRACT

This study examined American, Korean, and Chinese female consumers' evaluations of and purchase intentions towards Korean textiles and apparel-related cultural products. This study also investigated how a consumer's evaluations of Korean textiles and apparel-related cultural products are related to novelty-seeking tendency, world-mindedness, and familiarity with Northeast Asian culture on the part of female tourists. Novelty-seeking appeared to be useful only when predicting how one will respond to cultural products from other countries and cultures, but not from one's own. Regardless of the sample, respondents' evaluations of the color and design of the product stood out as the most important indicator, across all four products, of how much they would like a given product, and further, would also like to purchase the product. Northeast Asian design contributed to favorable purchase intention even for those who are from Northeast Asia, indicating that fashion cultural products are not targeted only at those from other cultures.

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1. Introduction

World tourism activity has demonstrated substantial growth in the past century, clearly marking tourism as one of the most remarkable economic and social phenomena. According to a report from the [World Tourism Organization \(2008\)](#), the number of international arrivals shows a tremendous increase from 25 million in 1950 to nearly 900 million in 2007, with an average annual growth rate of 6%. Tourism experts of the United Nations World Tourism Organization project continued sustainable growth in world tourism ([World Tourism Organization, 2008](#)). Among the top tourist-receiving regions, Northeast Asia was the fastest growing region over the last decade of the 20th century, welcoming 68 million International Tourist Arrivals (ITA) and \$48 billion in International Tourism Receipts (ITR) ([World Tourism Organization, 2005](#)).

Researchers define cultural tourism as one of the key elements that attract tourists to a particular destination and

identified several cultural elements that attract tourists, such as traditions, handicrafts, gastronomy, leisure activities, and clothing items ([Ritchie & Zins, 1978](#)). For today's travelers, tourism and shopping are inseparable activities. In fact, shopping is considered to be one of the most important aspects of tourism ([Law & Au, 2000](#)), serving as a motivating factor for travel ([Timothy, 2005](#)). [Kent, Shock, and Snow \(1983\)](#) claimed that tourists spend more on shopping than accommodation and food. Other researchers also noted that without shopping activity, a tour cannot be a complete traveling experience ([Hudman & Hawkins, 1989](#); [Keowin, 1989](#)). A report by the [Travel Industry Association \(2001\)](#) (TIA) of America indicated that among the many common activities Americans undertake while traveling, shopping is the most popular activity of all. According to [TIA \(2008\)](#), tourists spend one-third of their total domestic tourism expenditures on shopping. Researchers asserted that a well-managed tourist shopping experience may contribute to building a more favorable image of tourist destinations as well as economic advantages ([Tosun, Temizkan, Timothy, & Fyall, 2007](#)). Cultural products represent and convey economic, social, and cultural values, and often can turn local culture into products that satisfy tourists' desires ([Klamer, 2001](#)). Thus, cultural products that are specific to a place can provide a competitive advantage for a destination ([Pugh & Wood, 2004](#)).

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Tourism shopping is often associated with symbolic consumption, which provides the tourist with memories from their travel experiences (Littrell, 1990; Littrell, Anderson, & Brown, 1993). Gordon (1986) claimed that the souvenir is a reminder of an experience with people, places, and events apart from their daily routine. Littrell (1990) also found that souvenirs inspired tourists to contrast trips with their everyday experiences, to expand their world-view, to differentiate themselves from others, and to experience a more authentic cultural life. Wallendorf and Arnold (1988) suggested that cultural products purchased while traveling are among individuals' most valued belongings. Onderwater, Richards, and Stam (2000) also argued that souvenir purchasing is an important element of tourism consumption, influencing visitors' tourism experiences while visiting a destination. Developing a successful product that provides genuine value to target tourist consumers is one of the major tasks for marketers (Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 2003).

A substantial portion of cultural products that tourists purchase while traveling is accounted for by textile crafts and apparel items (Anderson, 1993; Littrell, 1996); therefore, the present study focused on textiles and apparel-related cultural products in order to examine consumers' evaluations of cultural products and factors influencing them. More specifically, this study examined US, Korean, and Chinese female consumers' evaluations of and purchase intentions towards Korean textiles and apparel-related cultural products. This study also investigated how a consumer's evaluations of Korean textiles and apparel-related cultural products are related to novelty-seeking tendency, world-mindedness, and familiarity with Northeast Asian culture on the part of female tourists.

2. Literature review

2.1. Product evaluations for tourists

Consumers make purchase decisions based on the value attached to various products (Swanson & Horridge, 2002). Due to the distinctive nature of cultural products, an individual's preference for a cultural product is likely to be shaped by a selective list of product attributes (Turner & Reisinger, 2001). Several studies have sought to identify a group of important cultural product attributes. According to Graburn (1989), preferred product attributes of travelers include portability, inexpensiveness, cleanness, and usability at home. Pysarchik (1989) found size, fragility, and manageability as important product attributes to travelers. Throsby (2003), on the other hand, suggested the following important characteristics of cultural products: aesthetic properties, spiritual significance, symbolic meanings, historic importance, artistic trends, authenticity, integrity, and uniqueness. Turner and Reisinger (2001) found three significant product attributes for tourists purchasing cultural products: value (range, quality), product display characteristics (color, display, packaging, size), and uniqueness (memory of the trip).

They also noted that product attributes play an important role in determining tourists' purchase satisfaction. Littrell et al. (1994) developed a list of product attributes sought by different categories of tourists based upon their travel orientations. Tourists oriented toward local culture and arts were found to value aesthetic qualities and workmanship of items, uniqueness of items, and the reputation of the producer. This type of tourist was interested in crafts that exhibited timeless qualities rather than emphasizing a fashion element. History and parks-oriented tourists placed importance on aesthetic and functional qualities of an item. They preferred crafts that displayed a regional, ethnic, or

country theme. Urban entertainment-oriented tourists considered ease of care and symbolism of place as important product attributes. Active outdoor-oriented tourists tended to seek out unique products that could be displayed in their homes, which were made from natural materials, and which had a country or folk art theme.

Later, in a study of tourists' souvenir purchase intentions, Kim and Littrell (1999) identified three dimensions of travelers' souvenir evaluation criteria: aesthetic quality, uniqueness, and portability. They found that tourists' attitudes toward aesthetic qualities and uniqueness of souvenirs revealed strong positive effects on purchase intentions, while no relationship was found between their attitude toward the portability of souvenirs and purchase intentions.

Tourism studies also support the finding that tourists' cultural product evaluations and purchase decisions are influenced by various consumer characteristics such as a novelty-seeking tendency, world-mindedness, and cultural knowledge.

2.2. Novelty-seeking

Hirschman (1980) defined novelty-seeking as a desire to seek out the new and different. Psychologists have suggested that, by exploring their environment, people may engage in novelty-seeking behavior in order to achieve satisfaction of their lives (Berlyne, 1960; Fiske & Maddi, 1961; Hunt, 1963). When an individual's desire for stimulation rises, this desire leads to novelty-seeking, whereby the individual seeks to increase stimulation from any source in the environment (Menon & Kahn, 1995). According to a report by *abcNews* (2005), novelty gives a sense of excitement to people, encouraging them to explore something new, such as new places, new stores, and new products. Consumers' novelty-seeking tendencies, therefore, play an important role in their decision making, preference, and loyalty behavior (Hirschman, 1980). Manning, Bearden, and Madden (1995) affirm that novelty-seeking plays a pivotal role in the early stage of consumers' adoption of new products. Many tourism researchers asserted that novelty-seeking is one of the major motives for tourists' choice of travel destinations and tourism shopping (Cohen, 1972, 1995; Crompton & McKay, 1997; Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Yuan & McDonald, 1990). By purchasing cultural products, tourists may seek to acquire unique experiences that they cannot find in their home countries. Shopping might be one of the best means of experiencing the uniqueness of international travel (Hsieh & Chang, 2006).

2.3. World-mindedness

Sampson and Smith (1957) defined world-mindedness as "a frame of reference, or value orientation, favoring a world-view of the problems of humanity" (p. 105). They also noted that world-minded individuals use humankind as the primary reference group instead of respective nationalities. Gomberg (1994) suggested that some of the characteristics of world-minded individuals include displaying interest in and knowledge of international affairs and a regard for world spirit and consensus development. Although the world-mindedness scale negatively correlates with the nationalism scale, the correlation only shows a small degree of inverse relationships, implying that world-mindedness and nationalism are not opposite concepts (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989), and that people may have both characteristics in varying degrees. According to a study done by Crawford and Lamb (1982), world-mindedness positively affected professional buyers' willingness to buy foreign products. As part of a study predicting tourists' souvenir purchase

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