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On kitsch and kič: Comparing kitsch concepts from Bavaria, Serbia and Slovenia

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The German word kitsch has been internationally successful. Today, it is commonly used in many modern languages including Serbian and Slovenian (kič)—but does it mean the same? In a pilot study, thirty-six volunteers from Bavaria, Serbia and Slovenia rated two hundred images of kitsch objects in terms of liking, familiarity, determinacy, arousal, perceived threat, and kitschiness. Additionally, art expertise, ambiguity tolerance, and value orientations were assessed. Multilevel regression analysis with crossed random effects was used to explore cross-cultural differences: Regardless of cultural background, liking of kitsch objects was positively linked to emotionally arousing items with non-threatening content. Self-transcendence was positively linked to liking, while ambiguity of the parental image was concordantly associated with kitschiness. For participants from Serbia and Slovenia, threatening content was correlated with kitschiness, while participants from Bavaria rated determinate items as kitschier. Results are discussed with regard to literature on kitsch and implications for future research.

Keywords: empirical aesthetics; kitsch; kič; aesthetic appreciation; cross-cultural research; terminology; multilevel regression analysis; preference; liking; everyday objects

Highlights:

- Kitsch objects were rated as non-threatening, determinate but hardly arousing.
- Particularly non-threatening and mildly arousing kitsch objects were preferred.
- Liking of kitsch objects was positively associated with self-transcendence.
- Female participants tended to prefer familiar and non-threatening kitsch objects.
- In the Serbian and Slovenian sample, kitsch was linked to threatening content.

Introduction

Out of the manifold expressions for bad taste from various modern languages, only the German word kitsch has been internationally successful (Menninghaus, 2009): As an antithesis to high art and a synonym for "tasteless mass produced trash" (Pazaurek, 1912/2012, p. 349, translation by first author) kitsch counts among the most controversial aesthetic concepts of 20th century art theory (Simon-Schäfer, 1980). The term itself can be traced back to the late 1800s when it started circulating among artists and art dealers from Munich as a derogatory label for "cheap artistic stuff" (Călinescu, 1987, p. 234).[1] Meanwhile, kitsch has also entered many modern languages including Serbian and Slovenian (kič). This raises two questions: Firstly, is the colloquial use of the term kitsch consistent with basic assumptions from art theory? Secondly, when people from different cultures use the word kitsch colloquially, do they refer to the same aesthetic idea or is kitsch just an umbrella term for rather culture-specific notions of bad taste? In a first pilot study, we sought preliminary answers to these questions based on a comparison of kitsch concepts from Bavaria, Serbia and Slovenia. For this study, a set of comparative dimensions was identified from the extensive literature on kitsch and art. Practically all authors who have expressed their thoughts about kitsch are agreed that the term serves as a derogatory label of bad taste, which may be used either for nominal categorisation (e.g. A is kitsch, but not B) or continuous evaluation (e.g. A is kitschier than B) of anything subject to aesthetic judgement. Recent accounts of kitsch dwell on the contradictory relationship between liking and kitsch (Kulka, 1996): Although kitsch is despised, it is proving commercially successful. Especially with Pop Art, tension between high art and kitsch has eased considerably. In the present study, liking and kitschiness were therefore considered as two separate, but not independent, variables.

What variables predict kitsch judgements? In *Kitsch and Art,* the philosopher Tomaš Kulka (1996) elaborates on three characteristics of kitsch: Above all, he claims that kitsch requires a familiar, heart-warming subject matter that elicits an immediate emotional response. Secondly, this subject should be depicted in a perfectly conventional way allowing for instant identifiability. Thirdly, context and manner of representation must not enrich the observer's "associations relating to the depicted objects or themes" (p. 37). Kulka concludes that the more clearly and unambiguously an object complies with these "three conditions, the more paradigmatic an example of kitsch it is" (p. 38). This definition advocates a continuous assessment of kitschiness. Moreover, it links kitsch to several variables that figure prominently in empirical aesthetics: familiarity, determinacy, positive emotional valence, and arousal.

Familiarity seems highly relevant for kitsch since it relies on themes to which the beholder has been positively predisposed. This claim is shared by

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1   The earliest written account is a satirical poem by Max Bernstein published in 1878 which makes fun of an oil painting by Franz Adam titled "Mounted Bosnian insurgents" (see Joachimsthaler, 1995).

several authors who observe that nostalgia in particular engenders kitsch. Norman (2004), for instance, argues that keepsakes are mainly cherished for their ability to instil positive emotions and pleasant memories: As relics of the good old times they radiate what Titchener (1910) once described as "a glow of warmth, a sense of ownership, a feeling of intimacy, [and] a sense of being at home" (p. 408). Hence, we expect that an object will not be regarded as kitsch, unless it appears highly familiar. For kitsch to elicit a spontaneous affective response, its emotion-laden subject must be immediately and unambiguously identifiable (Kulka, 1996). Research literature even suggests that lack of ambiguity is what distinguishes kitsch from art (Muth, Hesslinger, & Carbon, 2015; Ortlieb & Carbon, 2014). We therefore surmise that kitsch has to be highly determinate in order to be enjoyable. Apart from being familiar and determinate, kitsch must not disturb or question our basic sentiments and beliefs. Only if its subject matter is charged with positive emotions, it will be able to comfort us. Thus, we expect that kitsch has to be perceived as non-threatening in order to yield a spontaneous heart-warming response. Apart from Kulka several authors have asserted that the appeal of kitsch lies in its "instantaneous emotional gratification without intellectual effort" (Menninghaus, 2009, p. 41). Since the concept of arousal plays an important role in both empirical aesthetics (Berlyne, 1971) and emotional appraisal theories (James, 1884; Lange, 1887/2013; Schachter & Singer, 1962), it appears particularly relevant for the study of kitsch. According to literature, we expect that cognition plays a completely different role in the appreciation of art and kitsch: Art is exciting because it acquaints us with something new or enigmatic (Berlyne, 1971). Thus, art perception mostly involves cognitive mastery (Leder, Belke, Oeberst, & Augustin, 2004). By contrast, kitsch offers immediate emotional gratification without reasoning (Călinescu, 1987; Kulka, 1996; Menninghaus, 2009) in that it draws on common life experience, shared beliefs and representational conventions. Hence, the consoling properties of kitsch—familiarity, determinacy and positive valence—suggest a negative relationship between kitschiness and arousal.

So what is wrong with immediate emotional gratification? Why are people repulsed rather than attracted by kitsch? So far we have addressed object-related aspects of kitsch. In the following, we will focus on five variables that might account for variance between individuals in terms of liking: art expertise, ambiguity tolerance, value orientation, age, and gender. Kitsch is usually contrasted with applied art (Pazaurek, 1912/2012), avant-garde art (Greenberg, 1939), or art proper (Kulka, 1996; Simon-Schäfer, 1980). Thus, it seems likely that one's kitsch concept depends on one's previous knowledge about art. This assumption accords with theories from sociology of art relating taste judgements to culture capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Since kitsch is seen as an antithesis to high art, we speculate that a high level of expertise will be positively correlated with kitsch ratings and negatively associated with liking. Ambiguity tolerance is another personality trait that is relevant in this respect. It moderates a person's

openness to the enigmatic, contradictory and even disturbing properties of contemporary artworks (Muth et al., 2015). Regarding kitsch, we expect that individuals with a low tolerance for ambiguity are particularly susceptible to its familiar and clear-cut qualities. Dissanayake (1990) writes that it is from our emotional responses to art that we learn about our personal values. So what does our affective response to kitsch tell us about our values? For Greenberg (1939) and Broch (1933/2002)—two supporters of the avant-garde—kitsch stands for "Evil in the Value-System of Art" (p. 137): hedonism and conservatism. Accordingly, hedonistic and conservative value orientations should be positively correlated with liking, but negatively with kitsch ratings. Even demographical aspects such as gender and age have been associated with kitsch: The writer and theatre critic H. W. Fischer (1919), for example, claimed that kitsch reflects female taste, while two authors relate kitsch to intergenerational conflict (Avenarius, 1920; Stemmle, 1931). Avenarius (1920) reports that young artists of the early 1900s made fun of their well-established predecessors and their old-fashioned ways by calling them "Kitschiers." From these early accounts of kitsch one might infer that liking ratings should be higher among female participants and positively associated with age, while kitsch ratings should be higher among male participants and negatively related to age.

Is the colloquial use of the word kitsch today still compatible with literature on kitsch? And when people from different cultures use the term, do they have the same aesthetic concept in mind? In the following we report on a cross-cultural pilot study that explored these questions by comparing kitsch concepts from Bavaria, Serbia and Slovenia.

Method

Samples

A total of thirty-six participants from Slovenia ($n = 12$; 6 males), Serbia ($n = 12$; 6 males) and Bavaria ($n=12$; 6 males) attended to the present study. Participants from Ljubljana (Slovenia) were aged between 21 and 56 years (M_{age} = 25.3 yrs., SD = 9.76). Participants from Belgrade (Serbia) were aged between 19 and 22 years (M_{age} = 19.3 yrs., SD = 0.89) and the age range of participants from Bamberg (Bavaria) was from 19 to 46 years (M_{age} = 22.7 yrs., SD = 7.57). Most participants were psychology students who participated for course credit.

Stimulus material

Being a very broad aesthetic concept, kitsch of course raises the question of appropriate stimulus material. Although kitsch may apply derogatorily to music, literature, filmmaking, architecture, fashion, furnishing, and interior decoration, it was originally limited to artistic production in the visual domain (Călinescu, 1987). Hence, we decided to address kitsch in everyday objects: A set of 200 high-resolution digital images of kitsch objects such as keepsakes (e.g. miniature Eiffel tower), give-aways, toys, or collectibles (Fig. 1 D), as well as

merely decorative (Fig. 1, A and C), and devotional objects (Fig. 1, A and E) was used.[2] Apart from these 200 images of kitsch objects, eight images of plain household objects (see Figure 1, F) were included as base stimuli.

(A)   (B)   (C)

(D)   (E)   (F)

Figure 1. Examples of typical stimuli from the study. All objects were photographed and provided by the Department of General Psychology and Methodology (University of Bamberg).

Variables and measures

The 208 images were rated in terms of liking, familiarity, determinacy, arousal, perceived threat, and kitschiness. For each rating, a seven-point Likert-scale was used (see Table 1). The German, Serbian and Slovenian versions of these scales were created by the first, second and third author based on an English reference version.[3] Based on these translations three otherwise identical digital questionnaires were created using the ExperimentBuilder© (Version 1.10.165) software.

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2   Of course, these different types of objects do not represent disjunctive categories. An old teapot may serve as a decorative object, while a glass paperweight is of some—albeit rather limited—practical use apart from pleasing the eye with its marbled inclusions.

3   All translations were checked for translation correctness based on back translations by three native speakers from each country.

Table 1
Likert-scales and translations

English version (created by 1st author)	German version (translated by 1st author)	Serbian version (translated by 2nd author)	Slovenian version (translated by 3rd author)
Liking:	Gefallen	Dopadanje	Všečnost
How do you like the depicted object?	Wie gefällt Ihnen der dargestellte Gegenstand?	Koliko vam se dopada prikazani predmet?	Kako vam je všeč prikazani predmet?
(1=*I don't like it at all*; 7=*I like it very much*)	(1=*gefällt mir gar nicht*; 7=*gefällt mir sehr*)	(1=*uopšte mi se ne dopada*; 7=*veoma mi se dopada*)	(1=*sploh mi ni všeč*; 7=*zelo mi je všeč*)
Familiarity:	Vertrautheit	Poznatost	Poznanost
How familiar do you find this object?	Wie vertraut finden Sie diesen Gegenstand?	Koliko vam je poznat prikazani predmet?	Kako znan se vam zdi prikazani predmet?
(1=*not familiar at all*; 7=*very familiar*)	(1=*gar nicht vertraut*; 7=*sehr vertraut*)	(1=*uopšte mi nije poznat*; 7=*veoma mi je poznat*)	(1=*zelo neznan*; 7=*zelo znan*)
Determinacy:	Eindeutigkeit	Jasnoća	Enoznačnost
How determinate do you find this object?	Wie eindeutig finden Sie diesen Gegenstand?	Koliko vam je prikazani predmet jasan?	Kako enoznačen se vam zdi prikazani predmet?
(1=*not determinate at all*; 7=*very determinate*)	(1=*gar nicht eindeutig*; 7=*sehr eindeutig*)	(1=*uopšte nije jasan*; 7=*veoma je jasan*)	(1=*zelo večznačen*; 7=*zelo enoznačen*)
Arousal	Aufgeregtheit	Uzbudljivost	Vzburjenost
How exciting do you find this object?	Wie aufregend finden Sie diesen Gegenstand?	Koliko vam je uzbudljiv prikazani predmet?	Kako zanimiv se vam zdi prikazani predmet?
(1=*not exciting at all*; 7=*very exciting*)	(1=*gar nicht aufregend*; 7=*sehr aufregend*)	(1=*uopšte nije uzbudljiv*; 7=*veoma je uzbudljiv*)	(1=*zelo nerazburljiv*; 7=*zelo razburljiv*)
Perceived threat:	Bedrohlichkeit	Pretnja	Grožnja
How threatening do you find this object?	Wie bedrohlich finden Sie diesen Gegenstand?	Koliko vam je prikazani predmet preteći?	Kako grozeč se vam zdi prikazani predmet?
(1=*not threatening at all*; 7=*very threatening*)	(1=*gar nicht bedrohlich*; 7=*sehr bedrohlich*)	(1=*uopšte nije preteći*; 7=*veoma je preteći*)	(1=*zelo negrozeč*; 7=*zelo grozeč*)
Kitschiness:	Kitsch	Kič	Kič
How kitschy do you find this object?	Wie kitschig finden Sie diesen Gegenstand?	Koliko vam je prikazani predmet kič?	Kako kičast se vam zdi prikazani predmet?
(1=*not kitschy at all*; 7=*very kitschy*)	(1=*gar nicht kitschig*; 7=*sehr kitschig*)	(1=*uopšte nije kič*; 7=*veoma je kič*)	(1=*zelo nekičast*; 7=*zelo kičast*)

A self-devised questionnaire was applied to estimate the participants' level of expertise in the visual arts domain (see Table 2). The original German version was created by the senior author. The Serbian and Slovenian versions of this questionnaire were translated from an English version which was also provided by the senior author. Table 3 shows how scores for art expertise were calculated.

Table 2
Self-devised questionnaire for art expertise

German version (Carbon, unpublished)	English version (Carbon, unpublished)	Serbian version (translated by 2nd author)	Slovenian version (translated by 3rd author)
(1) Üben Sie kunstbezogene Hobbies aus (z.B. Malen, Tanzen)?	(1) Do you practice any art-related hobbies (e.g. painting, dancing)?	(1) Da li imate neke hobije povezane sa umetnošću (npr. slikanje, ples...)?	(1) Ali imate kakšne umetniško hobije (npr. slikanje, ples...)?
(2) Wie viele Kunstausstellungen besuchen Sie pro Jahr (durchschnittlich)?	(2) How many art exhibitions do you visit every year (on average)?	(2) Koliko često posećujete umetničke izložbe u toku godine (u proseku)?	(2) Kako pogosto na leto obiščete umetniško razstavo (v povprečju)?
(3) Wie viele Kunstbücher besitzen Sie?	(3) How many art books do you own?	(3) Koliko knjiga o umetnosti imate?	(3) Koliko umetniških knjig imate?
(4) Wie wichtig ist Ihnen Kunst? (1=*gar nicht wichtig*; 7=*sehr wichtig*)	(4) How important is art to you? (1=*not important at all*; 7=*very important*)	(4) Koliko je za Vas važna umetnost? (1=*uopšte nije*; 7=*veoma mnogo*)	(4) Kako pomembna je za vas umetnost? (1= *sploh ne*; 7=*zelo*)
(5) Wie würden Sie Ihre Kunstkenntnisse einschätzen? (1=*keine Kenntnisse*; 7=*Experte*)	(5) How would you rate your knowledge of art? (1=*no knowledge at all*; 7=*expert*)	(5) Kako biste ocenili svoje znanje o umetnosti? (1=*početnik*; 7=*stručnjak*)	(5) Kako bi ocenili svoje znanje o umetnosti? (1= *zelenec*; 7= *profesionalec*)

Table 3
Coding of art expertise questionnaire (Carbon, unpublished)

Items	Item type	Coding
(1) *Do you practice any art-related hobbies (e.g. painting, dancing)?*	Free text	At least one art-related hobby from the visual domain reported (=2 pts.); only art-related hobbies from outside of the visual domain reported (=1 pt.); no art-related hobby reported (=0 pts.)
(2) *How many art exhibitions do you visit every year (on average)?*	Free text	Number of art exhibitions reported equals number of points (2 exhibitions=2 pts.)
(3) *How many art books do you own?*	Free text	No art books reported (=0 pts.); between 1 and 10 art books (=1 pt.); more than 10 art books (=2 pts.)
(4) *How important is art to you?* (1=*not important at all*; 7=*very important*)	Rating	Rating equals number of points
(5) *How would you rate your knowledge of art?* (1=*no knowledge at all*; 7=*expert*)	Rating	Rating equals number of points

Ambiguity tolerance was measured using the German *Inventar zur Messung der Ambiguitätstoleranz* (IMA) by Reis (1996). According to the IMA-manual, persons scoring high on scales for ambiguity tolerance are likely to "(a) seek out ambiguity, (b) enjoy ambiguity, and (c) excel in the performance of ambiguous tasks" (MacDonald, 1970, quoted from Reis, 1996, p. 7), whereas persons with low scores tend "to perceive or interpret information marked

by vague, incomplete, fragmented, multiple, probable, unstructured, uncertain, inconsistent, contrary, contradictory, or unclear meanings as actual or potential sources of psychological discomfort or threat" (Norton, 1975, quoted from Reis, 1996, p. 7). The IMA comprises 40 items which discriminate between ambiguity tolerance regarding openness to experience (OE), role stereotypes (RS), parental image (EB), unsolvable problems (PR), and social conflict (SK). For each participant, six sum scores—five sub scores and a global IMA-score—were calculated in accordance with the IMA-manual: Twenty-four items featured a six-point Likert-scale ranging from 1=*very true* to 6=*not true at all*. The original German version of the IMA has been validated and normative data is reported by Reis (1996). The Serbian and Slovenian versions of the IMA-scales were translated by the second and third author from an English translation by the first author. All versions of the IMA-scales are reported in Table 4.

Table 4
IMA-scales and translations

IMA (Reis, 1996)	English version (translation by 1st author)	Serbian version (translation by 2nd author)	Slovenian version (translation by 3rd author)
IMA-subscale ambiguity tolerance regarding openness to experience (OE)			
(1) Ich weiß gerne im Voraus, was mich in meinem Urlaub erwarten wird.	(1) I like to know in advance what to expect when I go on holiday.	(1) Volim da znam unapred šta da očekujem kada idem na godišnji odmor.	(1) Ko grem na počitnice, želim vnaprej vedeti, kaj lahko pricakujem.
(1=*trifft sehr zu*; 6=*trifft gar nicht zu*)[a]	(1=*very true*; 6=*not true at all*)[a]	(1=*potpuno tačno*; 6=*uopšte nije tačno*)[a]	(1=*povsem drži*; 6=*sploh ne drži*)[a]
(8) Ich gehe am liebsten auf Parties, auf denen ich neue Menschen kennen-lernen kann.	(8) I prefer going to parties where I can meet new people.	(8) Volim da idem na žurke na kojima mogu da upoznam nove ljude.	(8) Najraje hodim na zabave, kjer lahko spoznam nove ljudi.
(6=*trifft sehr zu*; 1=*trifft gar nicht zu*)[b]	(6=*very true*; 1=*not true at all*)[b]	(6=*potpuno tačno*; 1=*uopšte nije tačno*)[b]	(6=*povsem drži*; 1=*sploh ne drži*)[b]
(11) Es macht mir manchmal Spaß, mit meinen Bekannten neue Unternehmungen durchzuführen.	(11) Together with my friends I sometimes enjoy going on new adventures.	(11) Ponekad uživam da zajedno sa prijateljima idem u nove avanture.	(11) Marsikdaj se zabavam, ko se s prijatelji odločimo za pustolovščino.
(17) Ich brauche eine vertraute Umgebung, um mich wohlzufühlen.	(17) I need a familiar environment in order to feel comfortable.	(17) Potrebno mi je poznato okruženje da bih se osećao/-la prijatno.	(17) Za to, da se počutim udobno, potrebujem znano okolje.
(21) Ich fahre gerne in Länder, die ich noch nicht kenne.	(21) I like to travel to countries which I do not know.	(21) Volim da putujem u zemlje koje ne poznajem.	(21) Rad/a potujem v neznane države.
(26) Ich mag es nicht, in irgendeiner Weise überrascht zu werden.	(26) I do not like to be surprised in any way.	(26) Ne volim nikakva iznenađenja.	(26) Ne želim si biti kakorkoli presenečen/a.
(34) Ich interessiere mich für ausländische Sitten und Gebräuche	(34) I am interested in foreign customs and traditions.	(34) Interesuju me strani običaji i tradicije.	(34) Zanimam se za tuje navade in tradicije.
(40) Ich kann mich leicht für neue Hobbies begeistern.	(40) I easily get inspired by new hobbies.	(40) Lako me inspirišu novi hobiji.	(40) Hitro se lahko navdušim nad novim hobijem.

IMA (Reis, 1996)	English version (translation by 1st author)	Serbian version (translation by 2nd author)	Slovenian version (translation by 3rd author)
IMA-subscale ambiguity tolerance regarding role stereotypes (RS)			
(2) Frauen sollten sich beim Tanzen vom Mann führen lassen.	(2) When dancing, women should give men the lead.	(2) U plesu žene treba da prepuste muškarcima da vode.	(2) Med plesom naj bi ženska prepustila vodstvo moškemu.
(7) Die Kleidung sollte das Geschlecht des Trägers erkennen lassen.	(7) One should be able to identify gender by the kind of clothing a person is wearing.	(7) Pol neke osobe trebalo bi da može da se odredi po odeći koju ta osoba nosi.	(7) Spol osebe naj bi bil prepoznaven na podlagi tega, kako se oseba oblači.
(13) Eine Frau sollte sich entscheiden, ob sie Karriere machen oder Kinder haben will.	(13) A woman should decide between having a career or having children.	(13) Žena treba da izabere da li će graditi karijeru ili imati decu.	(13) Ženska bi se morala odločiti med kariero in otrokom.
(18) Ich finde es gut, dass es zunehmend mehr sogenannte „Hausmänner" gibt.	(18) I appreciate that there is an increasing number of so-called "house-husbands".	(18) Cenim to što je sve više „muževa domaćica".	(18) Dobro se mi zdi, da je vedno več tako imenovanih "gospodinjskih moških".
(19) Auch homosexuelle Paare sollten Kinder adoptieren dürfen.	(19) Homosexual couples should be allowed to adopt children.	(19) Homoseksualnim parovima treba dozvoliti da usvoje decu.	(19) Homoseksualni pari bi morali imeti možnost posvojitve otrok.
(23) Ich finde es gut, wenn Lehrer sich von ihren Schülern duzen lassen.	(23) I appreciate it when teachers are on first-name terms with their pupils.	(23) Cenim kada se nastavnici obraćaju učenicima na ti.	(23) Dobro se mi zdi, ko se učitelji in učenci tikajo.
(36) Lehrer sollten zu ihren Schülern ein distanziertes bzw. klar abgegrenztes Verhältnis haben.	(36) The relationship between teachers and their pupils should be distant and clearly defined.	(36) Odnos između nastavnika i učenika treba da bude na distanci i jasno definisan.	(36) Odnos med učitelji in njhovimi učenci mora biti distanciran/zadržan in jasno definiran.
(38) Frauen sind in manchen Berufen einfach fehl am Platze (z.B. in Kirchenämtern oder beim Militär).	(38) Women are out of place in certain professions (e.g. clergy or military).	(38) Ženama nije mesto u nekim profesijama (npr. sveštenstvo ili vojska).	(38) Nekateri poklici niso primerni za ženske (npr. duhovništvo ali vojska).
(39) Ein Mann sollte sich ausschließlich seinem Beruf widmen können.	(39) A man should be able to dedicate himself only to his work.	(39) Čovek treba da može da se posveti samo svom radu.	(39) Moški bi se morali posvečati izključno svojemu poklicu.
IMA-subscale ambiguity tolerance regarding parental image (EB)			
(3) Meine Eltern haben mir sowohl oft geholfen als auch oft geschadet.	(3) My parents have often both helped and harmed me.	(3) Moji roditelji su mi često i pomagali i odmagali.	(3) Tako pogosto kot so mi moji starši pomagali, so mi tudi škodovali.
(5) Ich habe zu meinem Vater ein zwiespältiges Verhältnis.	(5) My father and I have an ambivalent relationship.	(5) Moj otac i ja imamo ambivalentan odnos.	(5) Z očetom imava ambivalenten odnos.
(6) Ich werde meine Kinder genauso erziehen, wie meine Eltern mich erzogen haben.	(6) I will raise my children exactly the way my parents raised me.	(6) Odgajaću svoju decu na potpuno isti način kao što su mene odgajali moji roditelji.	(6) Svoje otroke bom vzgajal/a natanko tako, kot so moji starši vzgajali mene.
(10) Ich habe zu meinem Vater immer ein gutes Verhältnis gehabt.	(10) I have always had a good relationship with my father.	(10) Uvek sam imao/-la dobar odnos sa ocem.	(10) S svojim očetom sem vedno imel/a dober odnos.

IMA (Reis, 1996)	English version (translation by 1st author)	Serbian version (translation by 2nd author)	Slovenian version (translation by 3rd author)
(15) Manches hätte ich bei meiner Erziehung anders gemacht als meine Eltern.	(15) In terms of my education I would have done some things differently than my parents.	(15) Kada je u pitanju moje obrazovanje, neke stvari bih uradio drugačije nego moji roditelji.	(15) Nekatere stvari povezane z mojo izobrazbo bi naredil/a drugače kot moji starši.
(20) Ich habe zu meiner Mutter ein zwiespältiges Verhältnis.	(20) My mother and I have an ambivalent relationship.	(20) Moja majka i ja imamo ambivalentan odnos.	(20) Z mojo mamo imava ambivalenten odnos.
(22) Es gab keine Konflikte zwischen mir und meiner Mutter.	(22) There were no conflicts between me and my mother.	(22) Između moje majke i mene nije bilo konflikata.	(22) Med mano in mojo mamo ni bilo nobenih konfliktov.
(24) Meine Eltern haben mich zu wenig geliebt.	(24) My parents have loved me too little.	(24) Moji roditelji su me premalo voleli.	(24) Moji starši so me premalo ljubili.
(31) Es gab Konflikte zwischen mir und meinem Vater.	(31) There were conflicts between me and my father.	(31) Između mene i mog oca bilo je konflikata.	(31) Med mojim očetom in mano so bili konflikti.
(32) Ich habe zu meiner Mutter immer ein gutes Verhältnis gehabt.	(32) I have always had a good relationship with my mother.	(32) Uvek sam imao/-la dobar odnos sa majkom.	(32) S svojo mamo sem vedno imel/a dober odnos.
(35) Meine Mutter hat mich geliebt, aber auch gehasst.	(35) My mother loved me, but she also hated me.	(35) Majka me je volela, ali me je i mrzela.	(35) Moja mama me je ljubila, a tudi sovražila.
IMA-subscale ambiguity tolerance regarding unsolvable problems (PR)			
(4) Probleme, die mir als unlösbar erscheinen, empfinde ich als persönliche Herausforderung.	(4) I consider problems that appear unsolvable to me to be a personal challenge.	(4) Probleme koji mi izgledaju nerešivi vidim kao lični izazov.	(4) Probleme, ki se zdijo nerešljivi, si vzamem za osebni izziv.
(9) Mit Problemen, die mir unlösbar erscheinen, würde ich mich nicht ernsthaft beschäftigen wollen.	(9) I would not like to deal with problems that appear unsolvable to me.	(9) Ne bih voleo/-la da se bavim problemima koji mi se čine nerešivim.	(9) Ne želim se ukvarjati s problemi, ki se mi zdijo nerešljivi.
(12) Auch für viel Geld würde ich meine Zeit nicht mit Problemen vergeuden, die mir unlösbar erscheinen.	(12) Even for a lot of money I would not waste time on problems that appear unsolvable to me.	(12) Čak ni za velike pare ne bih traćio/-la vreme na probleme koji mi izgledaju nerešivi.	(12) Tudi za veliko denarja ne bi zapravljal/a svojega časa za probleme, ki se mi zdijo neresljivi.
(27) Probleme, die mir unlösbar erscheinen, versuche ich zu umgehen.	(27) I try to avoid problems that appear unsolvable to me.	(27) Pokušavam da izbegavam probleme koji mi se čine nerešivi.	(27) Problemom, ki se mi zdijo nerešljivi, se poskušam izogibati.
(30) Es erscheint mir sinnlos, mich mit Problemen zu beschäftigen, die mir unlösbar erscheinen.	(30) For me it is pointless to deal with difficult problems that appear unsolvable to me.	(30) Mislim da nema svrhe baviti se teškim problemima koji mi se čine nerešivim.	(30) Zdi se mi nesmiselno ubadati se s težkimi problmemi, ki se mi zdijo nerešljivi.
(37) Eine Beschäftigung mit Problemen, die mir als unlösbar erscheinen, kann auch dann für mich von Nutzen sein, wenn ich sie nicht lösen werde.	(37) Dealing with problems that appear unsolvable can be beneficial for me even if I am not able to solve them.	(37) Bavljenje problemima koji se čine nerešivim može biti korisno za mene čak i kada nisam u stanju da ih rešim.	(37) Ukvarjanje s problemi, ki se zdijo nerešljivi, se mi zdi koristno, tudi če problemov ne morem rešiti.

IMA-subscale ambiguity tolerance regarding social conflict (SK)			
(14) Ich versuche, Streitigkeiten zu vermeiden.	(14) I try to avoid conflicts.	(14) Pokušavam da izbegavam konflikte.	(14) Poskušam se izogibati konfliktom.
(16) Ich gehe Menschen, die sich gerne streiten, nach Möglichkeit aus dem Weg.	(16) If possible, I avoid people who like to argue.	(16) Kada je to moguće, izbegavam ljude koji vole da se svađaju.	(16) Č je le možno, se poskušam izogibati ljudem, ki se radi prepirajo.
(25) Ich gehe Streitigkeiten nach Möglichkeit aus dem Weg.	(25) If possible, I avoid conflicts.	(25) Ako je to moguće, izbegavam konflikte.	(25) Če je možno, se izogibam konfliktom.
(28) Ich versuche, mit jedem gut auszukommen.	(28) I try to get along with everybody.	(28) Pokušavam da se dobro slažem sa svima.	(28) Poskušam se razumeti z vsemi.
(29) Es ist für mich wichtig, dass andere Leute mich nicht für streitsüchtig halten.	(29) For me it is important that other people do not perceive me as quarrelsome.	(29) Važno mi je da me drugi ljudi ne vide kao svađalicu.	(29) Zame je pomembno, da me drugi ljudje ne doživljajo kot prepirljivega.
(33) Ich ziehe es vor, mit Bekannten über unverfängliche Themen zu sprechen.	(33) With acquaintances, I prefer to talk about harmless topics.	(33) Sa poznanicima više volim da pričam o nekim „bezbolnim" temama.	(33) Z znanci se raje pogovarjam o neškodljivih temah.

[a] All items were combined with an identical six-point Likert-scale. For items 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 36, 38, and 39 ratings were coded from 1=*very true* to 6=*not true at all*.

[b] For inverted items (i.e. 3, 4, 5, 8, 11, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 34, 35, 37, and 40) ratings were coded from 6=*very true* to 1=*not true at all*. Thus, higher IMA-scores indicate a higher level of tolerance for ambiguity (Reis, 1996).

For the assessment of basic value orientation, the *Short Schwartz's Value Survey-German* (SSVS-G) by Boer (2014) was applied (see Table 5). The underlying model by Schwartz (1992) describes commonalities in content and structure of values based on empirical research in twenty countries. It postulates two universal value dimensions: *Self-enhancement* versus *Self-transcendence* and *Conservation* versus *Openness-to-Change*. The first dimension relates to "the conflict between concern for the welfare of other people (high Self-Transcendence) and concern for individual outcomes and personal interests (low Self-Transcendence)" (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005, p. 171), whereas the latter reflects "the conflict between the motivation to preserve the status quo and the certainty that conformity to norms provides (high Conservation), on one hand, and the motivation to follow one's own intellectual and emotional interests (low Conservation) on the other hand" (p. 171). Participants rated the importance of ten abstract values—Power, Achievement, Hedonism, Stimulation, Self-direction, Universalism, Benevolence, Tradition, Conformity, and Security—on a six-point rating scale (1=*not important at all*; 2=*not important*; 3=*not really important*; 4=*somewhat important*; 5=*important*; 6=*very important*). For each participant four different scores were derived from these ratings: *Self-enhancement* (mean from scores on power and achievement), *Self-transcendence* (mean from scores on benevolence and universalism), *Conservation* (mean from scores on tradition, conformity and security), and *Openness-to-Change* (mean from scores on hedonism, stimulation and self-direction). In the case of the SSVS-G, the English version of the *Short Schwartz's Value Survey* (SSVS) by Lindeman and Verkasalo (2005) served as a basis for translations into Serbian and Slovenian. In both versions, however, rating scales were adjusted to the six-point scheme of the SSVS-G. All translations were checked for translation correctness based on back translations by three native speakers from each country.

Table 5
SSVS-scales and translations

SSVS (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005)	SSVS-G (Boer, 2014)	Serbian version (translated by 2nd author)	Slovenian version (translated by 3rd author)
Instruction			
Please read the following values and their descriptions. Following this, we ask you to rate how important these values are for you personally.	Bitte lesen Sie sich die folgenden Werte und ihre Beschreibungen durch. Kreuzen Sie dann an, wie wichtig diese Werte für Sie persönlich sind.	Molimo Vas da pročitate sledeće vrednosti i njihove opise. Nakon toga ocenite koliko su za Vas lično važne ove vrednosti.	Prosim, preberite naslednje trditve in njihove opise. Ko boste končali z branjem, prosim, ocenite, kako pomembna se vam zdi posamezna trditev.
How important are the following values for you?	Wie wichtig sind Ihnen die folgenden Werte?	Koliko su za Vas lično važne ove vrednosti?	Kako pomembne se vam zdijo naslednje trditve?
Response options[a]			
1=*not important at all*; 2=*not important*; 3=*not really important*; 4=*somewhat important*; 5=*important*; 6=*very important*	1=*überhaupt nicht wichtig*; 2=*nicht wichtig*; 3=*eher nicht wichtig*; 4=*eher wichtig*;5= *wichtig*; 6=*sehr wichtig*	1=*uopšte nije važno*; 2=*nije važno*; 3=*uglavnom nije važno*; 4=*pomalo važno*;5= *važno*; 6=*veoma važno*	1=*zelo nepomembna*; 2= *nepomembna*; 3=*ne prevec pomembna*; 4= *nekoliko pomembna*;5= *pomembna*; 6=*zelo pomembna*
Values			
POWER: social status and prestige, control of people and resources	MACHT: Sozialer Status und Prestige, Kontrolle oder Dominanz über Leute und Ressourcen	MOĆ: društveni status i prestiž, kontrola nad ljudima i resursima	MOČ: socialni status in prestiž, kontrola ljudi in virov
ACHIEVEMENT: personal success by demonstrating one's abilities	LEISTUNG: Persönlicher Erfolg durch die Demonstration von Kompetenz gemäß sozialer Maßstäbe	POSTIGNUĆE: lični uspeh kroz prikazivanje svojih sposobnosti	DOSEŽKI: osebni uspeh na podlagi demonstracije lastnih sposobnosti
HEDONISM: pleasure and sensually rewarding experiences	HEDONISMUS: Vergnügen und sinnliche Belohnung des Selbst	HEDONIZAM: zadovoljstvo i iskustva koja pružaju čulna uživanja	HEDONIZEM: ugodje in čutno nagrajujoče/ prijetne izkušnje
STIMULATION: leading an exciting life, appeal of the new, seeking challenges in life	ANREGUNG: Aufregendes Leben, Reiz des Neuen und Herausforderungen im Leben	STIMULACIJA: uzbudljiv život, privlačnost novog, traženje izazova u životu	STIMULACIJA: živeti razburljivo življenje, privlačnost novega, iskanje izzivov v življenju
SELF-DIRECTION: independent thinking, acting, creating and exploring	SELBSTBESTIMMUNG: Eigenständiges Denken und Verhalten, Kreieren und Erkunden	SAMOUSMERAVANJE: nezavisno mišljenje, gluma, stvaranje, i istraživanje	SAMOUSMERJANJE: neodvisno mišljenje, obnašanje, ustvarjanje, raziskovanje
UNIVERSALISM: sympathy, appreciation, tolerance and protection of the well-being of mankind and nature	UNIVERSALISMUS: Verständnis, Wertschätzung, Toleranz und Schutz des Wohles aller Menschen und der Natur	UNIVERZALIZAM: saosećajnost, uvažavanje tolerancija i zaštita dobrobiti čovečanstva i prirode	UNIVERZALIZEM: simpatija, razumevanje, toleranca in varovanje blagostanja človeštva in narave
BENEVOLENCE: the maintenance and enhancement of people's well-being in one's social environment	SOZIALITÄT: Erhaltung und Verbesserung des Wohlergehens der Menschen, mit denen man regelmäßigen Kontakt hat	DOBRONAMERNOST: održavanje i unapređivanje dobrobiti ljudi u svom društvenom okruženju	DOBROHOTNOST: vzdrževanje in izboljševanje blagostanja ljudi v njihovem socialnem okolju

TRADITION: respect, obligation and acceptance of customs and opinions that are directed by tradition or religion	TRADITION: Respekt, Verpflichtung und Akzeptanz von Bräuchen und Meinungen, die die Tradition oder Religion vorschreibt	TRADICIJA: poštovanje, negovanje i prihvatanje običaja i mišljenja koja su usmerena tradicijom i religijom	TRADICIJA: spoštovanje, upoštevanje in sprejemanje navad in mnenj, ki jih narekujeta tradicija ali religija
CONFORMISM: restraining one's behaviour and desires because they might bother or harm others or offend social expectations and norms	KONFORMITÄT: Zügelung von Verhalten oder Neigungen, die Andere verärgern oder schaden könnten und die soziale Erwartungen und Normen verletzen	KONFORMIZAM: sputavanje sopstvenih ponašanja i želja jer bi mogle uznemiravati ili naneti štetu drugima ili uvrediti društvena očekivanja i norme	KONFORMIZEM: obvladovanje lastnega vedenja in zelja, ker bi lahko motili ali škodovali drugim ali kršili socialna pričakovanja in norme
SECURITY: protection and harmony, stability of society, relationships and the self	SICHERHEIT: Schutz, Harmonie und Stabilität der Gesellschaft, von Beziehungen und des Selbst	BEZBEDNOST: zaštita i sklad, stabilnost društva, odnosa među ljudima i unutrašnja stabilnost	VARNOST: zaščita, harmonija in stabilnost družbe, odnosov in jaza

[a] The original SSVS by Lindeman and Verkasalo (2005) features a nine-point Likert-scale ranging from 0=*not important at all* to 8=*very important*. In the present study, response options were adjusted to the six-point scale of the SSVS-G.

Procedure

The study was conducted at the Universities of Bamberg (Bavaria), Belgrade (Serbia) and Ljubljana (Slovenia). In every location, the study was conducted according to the same procedure (Figure 2): Initially, participants signed an informed consent form and completed the art expertise questionnaire, the IMA-questionnaire (Reis, 1996) and the SSVS-G (Boer, 2014). Subsequently, 208 images of everyday objects were presented and rated in terms of liking, familiarity, determinacy, arousal, perceived threat, and kitschiness. In order to minimize loss of vigilance, stimuli were rated in two sessions (k_1 = 92 and k_2 = 116). Within each session images were presented in a random sequence, while the order of ratings was identical for every stimulus.
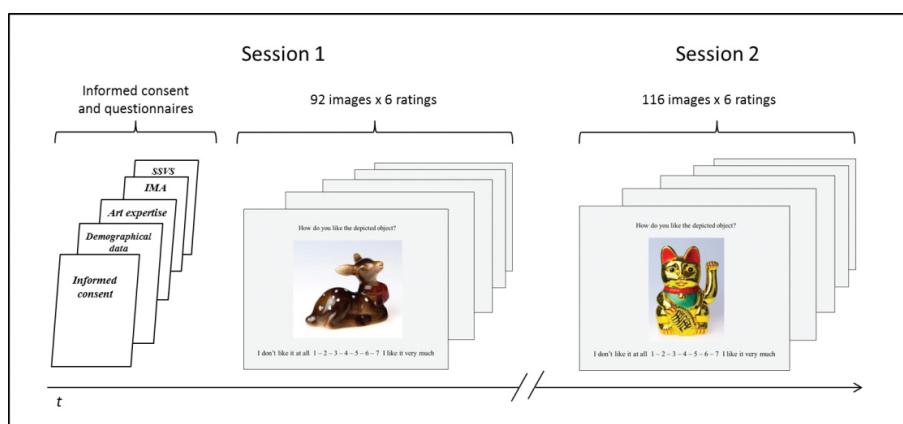

Figure 2. Procedure of the study.

Results

Initially, descriptive statistics for age, art expertise and personality scales were examined (see Table 6). Since some of the variables (age, IMA *Problems*, SSVS *Self-transcendence*, SSVS *Self-enhancement*, SSVS *Openness-to-Change*) had non-normal distributions, measured using the Shapiro-Wilk test, the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was used for all variables to test differences among the three cultures. Significant differences between the three subsamples were obtained for age, H (2) = 18.21, p <.01 and IMA *Parental image, H* (2) = 7.34, p <.05. Mann-Whitney tests were used to follow up these findings. Bonferroni correction was applied so effects are reported at a .0167 level of significance. It appeared that the Slovenian sample was older than the Serbian (U = 5, r = .83, p <.0167) and the Serbian sample had higher scores on IMA *Parental image* than the Bavarian (U = 31.5, r = .48, p <.0167).

Table 6
Descriptive statistics at the level of participants and Kruskal-Wallis H values for differences between the three groups (N = 36)

	Medians and Interquartile Ranges				H
	Total	Bavarian	Slovenian	Serbian	
Age	20.5 (3.0.)	20.0 (3.5)	**22.0** **(2.0)**	**19.0** **(0.0)**	18.21
Art expertise	15.0 (7.8)	12.5 (5.5)	16.0 (9.5)	18.0 (7.5)	5.15
IMA Unsolvable problems	29.0 (6.8)	29.0 (3.8)	27.0 (5.8)	31.0 (6.5)	2.50
IMA Social conflict	17.5 (7.8)	17.5 (11.8)	18.0 (6.3)	17.5 (7.8)	0.15
IMA Parental image	30.0 (12.5)	**29.0** **(14.5)**	29 (7.5)	**37.0** **(13.3)**	7.34
IMA Social stereotypes	43.0 (5.0)	43.0 (2.8)	42.5 (8.8)	42.0 (10)	0.60
IMA Openness	35.0 (8.5)	35.0 (8.5)	33.0 (9.8)	37.0 (8.5)	1.95
SSVS Self– transcendence	5.5 (1.0)	5.8 (0.9)	5.5 (1.0)	5.5 (0.9)	0.86
SSVS Self-enhancement	4.0 (1.4)	4.0 (1.4)	4.0 (1.4)	4.0 (1.4)	0.91
SSVS Conservation	3.5 (1.3)	3.5 (0.9)	3.9 (1.5)	3.0 (1.8)	0.80
SSVS Openness-to-change	5.0 (1.0)	5.0 (0.9)	5.2 (1.0)	5.0 (1.0)	0.36

Note. Bolded values are significant differences between the three groups at the level p <.0167, df = 2

The medians for averaged values for the six rating dimensions of 200 kitsch images are shown in Table 7 (eight non-kitschy objects were excluded from analysis). In general, kitsch objects were disliked and described as non-

threatening, non-arousing and highly determinate. Regarding perceived threat, 80% (!) of all ratings were equal to or less than 2 on a seven-point Likert-scale ranging from 1=*not threatening at all* to 7=*very threatening*. Similarly, 54% of arousal ratings (1=*not exciting at all*; 7=*very exciting*) and 47% of liking ratings (1=*I don't like it at all*; 7=*I like it very much*) were equal to or less than 2. Besides, 54% of determinacy ratings (1=*not determinate at all*; 7=*very determinate*) were equal to or higher than 6. Again, normality of distribution was assessed using Shapiro-Wilk test, and for some scales (kitschiness, liking, arousal and perceived threat) non-normal distributions were confirmed. Therefore, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used for all variables to test the cross-cultural differences in terms of these ratings. In three cases, ratings differed significantly between the three cultures: familiarity, H (2) = 14.42, p <.01, determinacy, H (2) = 15.61, p <.01, and kitschiness, H (2) = 7.67, p <.05. In the Serbian sample, images were rated as more familiar than in the Slovenian (U = 25, r = .55, p <.01) and the Bavarian (U = 7, r = .77, p <.01) samples, and more determinate than in the other two samples (Slovenian: U = 10, r = .73, p <.01, Bavarian: U = 27, r = .53, p <.0167). The Bavarian sample rated the images as kitschier than the Slovenian (U = 28.5, r = .51, p <.01).

Table 7

Descriptive statistics of averaged ratings of images and Kruskal-Wallis H values
for differences between the three groups (N = 36)

| | Medians and Interquartile Ranges | | | | H |
	Total	Bavarian	Slovenian	Serbian	
Liking	2.91 (0.90)	3.23 (0.85)	2.66 (0.29)	2.99 (1.03)	3.39
Familiarity	4.31 (1.43)	**3.94 (0.63)**	**3.86 (1.79)**	4.80 (1.36)	14.24
Determinacy	5.28 (1.16)	**5.24 (1.02)**	**4.62 (1.34)**	**5.90 (0.87)**	15.61
Arousal	2.75 (0.87)	2.52 (1.70)	2.80 (0.42)	2.72 (1.01)	0.79
Perceived threat	1.63 (0.87)	1.50 (1.10)	1.89 (1.29)	1.48 (0.84)	2.94
Kitschiness	3.86 (0.89)	**4.31 (1.34)**	**3.79 (0.38)**	3.68 (1.54)	7.67

Note. Bolded values are significant differences between the three groups at the level p <.0167, *df* = 2

For further exploratory analyses, multilevel modelling of crossed random effects was used (Heck, Thomas, & Tabata, 2013; Hox, 2010). This method has two assets: Firstly, the advantage of multilevel analysis over traditional univariate or multivariate analysis on one level with mean ratings of individuals or mean ratings of images (Muth et al., 2015; Silvia, 2007). Secondly, crossed effects modelling has an advantage over hierarchical multilevel models in that

it avoids the problem of whether to analyse data on the level of ratings done by individuals within images or images within individuals (Fischer, Carbon, Rutar, Stojilović, & Ortlieb, 2016). Models of crossed random effects are able to take multiple sources of variation into consideration—variations between participants, between images and their interaction, and individual replies (level 1) are nested within participants and within images (level 2).

The restricted maximum likelihood method was used to evaluate the model. The significance of fixed effects was assessed using p values from the Wald test, and the significance of random effects was estimated using $-2\Delta LL$ likelihood ratio tests and informative criteria (AIC and BIC) between two models including the same fixed effects (Hoffman, 2015). The values for denominator degrees of freedom were obtained by a Satterthwaite approximation.

Liking and kitschiness were defined as dependent variables. Ratings of familiarity, determinacy, arousal, and perceived threat, which varied with every new judgement, served as predictors on the level of kitsch stimuli, while constant values for art expertise, ambiguity tolerance, value orientation, gender, and age were included as predictors on the level of participants. All continuous predictors were centred on the grand mean.

Best predictors for liking

Initially, empty models (i.e. models without predictors) were modelled to split the total variance of liking. At both levels the diagonal matrix of random effects was defined providing an estimate of the variance for each random effect, and covariance between the two random effects was restricted to be zero. As a result, 17.7% of the total variation of liking is due to differences between participants, while 13.4% reflects variation between images. The remaining 68.9% of total variation is residual variance which cannot be explained by variation either at the level of participants or images (Table 8, Model I).

For the next model, both individual ratings of familiarity, determinacy, arousal, and perceived threat and their interactions were used. Three level-1 covariates were significantly related to liking judgements: arousal, familiarity and perceived threat. In Model II (Table 8) predictors on the level of participants are included. Predictors and interactions which were not significant were left out. Only for the SSVS-scale *Self-transcendence* a significant interrelation with liking was obtained: Higher scores on *Self-transcendence* were positively correlated with liking of kitsch objects. Relative to the empty model, predictors of Model II reduced the residual variance by pseudo-R^2_{res} = .31, image random variance by pseudo-R^2_{img} = .38 and subject random variance by pseudo-R^2_{sub} = .49. Model II reduced total variance from 3.36 (empty model) to 2.19, hence explaining 35% of total variance.

Table 8

Results for crossed subjects and images conditional models for liking with random intercepts (Models I and II) and random slopes (Model III). Bold values are p <.05.

Model Effects	Model I			Model II			Model III (ref group Male)		
	Est.	SE	*p* <	Est.	SE	*p* <	Est.	SE	*p* <
Model for the Means									
Intercept	**3.038**	0.138	.001	**3.059**	0.108	.001	**3.180**	0.144	.001
Arousal				**0.613**	0.012	.001	**0.603**	0.036	.001
Familiarity				**0.121**	0.010	.001	**0.059**	0.032	n.s.
Perceived threat				**-0.248**	0.014	.001	**-0.132**	0.042	.01
Arousal * Perceived threat				**-0.052**	0.007	.001	**-0.040**	0.008	.001
SSVS Self-transcendence				**0.435**	0.165	.05	**0.460**	0.163	.01
Gender (Female)							-0.168	0.201	ns
Gender (Female)* Familiarity							**0.130**	0.045	.01
Gender (Female)* Perceived threat							**-0.160**	0.058	.05
Model for the Variance									
Residual	**2.314**	0.039	.001	**1.595**	0.027	.001	**1.425**	0.024	.001
Image Random Intercept Variance	**0.451**	0.052	.001	**0.229**	0.028	.001	**0.203**	0.025	.001
Subject Random Intercept Variance	**0.596**	0.145	.001	**0.364**	0.090	.001	**0.336**	0.088	.001
Subject Random Arousal Slope Variance							**0.040**	0.011	.001
Subject Random Familiarity Slope Variance							**0.016**	0.004	.001
Subject Random Perceived threat Slope Variance							**0.021**	0.008	.05

In the last model, we examined the extent to which the effects of the image predictors show systematic individual differences by adding subject random slopes for the image predictors to the model (Table 8, Model III, Figure 3).We retained subject random effects for the intercept as well as for arousal, familiarity and perceived threat slopes. Given significant subject variation in the effect of three image predictors, the next step was to test that variation with subject predictors. The strongest interrelation with liking was obtained for arousal, *b* = 0.60, *t* (35.84) = 16.89, *p* <.01, *d* = 2.82. The importance of familiarity and perceived threat were moderated by gender: For female participants familiarity and liking were positively associated, *b* = 0.13, *t* (33.40) = 2.90, *p* <.01*, d* = 0.50, while the negative correlation between perceived threat and liking was less pronounced for male participants, *b* = –0.16, *t* (21.81) = 2.74, *p* <.05, *d* = 0.59. Model III explained 39% of total variance.
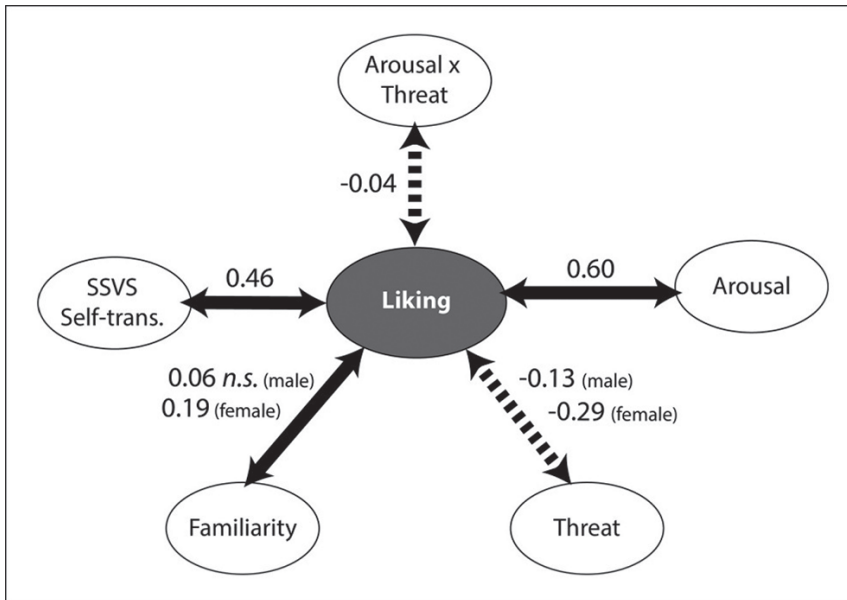
Figure 3. Illustration of final model for liking including strengths of relations based on regression coefficients. Legend: solid lines—positive regression coefficients; dashed lines—negative regression coefficients; numbers—unstandardized regression coefficients.

Best predictors for kitschiness

Again empty models were calculated to split total variance of kitschiness. At both levels the diagonal matrix was defined. 24.2% of total variation regarding kitschiness reflected differences between participants, while another 25.0% was due to variations between images leaving 50.8% of unexplained residual variance (Table 9, Model I).

Ratings of familiarity, determinacy, arousal, and perceived threat as well as their interactions were added to the next model. Arousal and determinacy had a significant direct effect. Perceived threat, however, revealed both a significant direct effect and interaction effects with familiarity and determinacy. For Model II predictors on the level of participants were added (Table 9). Since non-significant predictors and interactions were left out, only two predictors on the level of participants were retained: cultural background and IMA-parents. Participants from Serbia and Slovenia rated images less kitschy than participants from Bavaria, $b = -1.32$, $t (32.02) = 3.40$, $p < .01$, $d = 0.60$; $b = -0.81$, $t (31.98) = 2.31$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.41$. Participants who scored higher on IMA-parents rated images as kitschier. Compared to the empty model, Model II reduced the residual variance by pseudo-$R^2_{res} = .10$, image random variance by pseudo-$R^2_{img} = .06$ and subject random variance by pseudo-$R^2_{sub} = .22$. In sum, Model II explained 12% of total variance by reducing it from 3.79 (empty model) to 3.35.

Table 9

Results for crossed subjects and images conditional models for kitschiness with random intercepts (Models I and II) and random slopes (Model III). Bold values are p <.05.

Model Effects	Model I			Model II			Model III		
	Est.	SE	*p* <	Est.	SE	*p* <	Est.	SE	*p* <
Model for the Means									
Intercept (ref. Bavarian sample)	**4.062**	0.175	.001	**4.777**	0.262	.001	**4.739**	0.250	.001
Arousal				**-0.298**	0.012	.001	**-0.289**	0.035	.001
Perceived threat				**0.174**	0.016	.001	**-0.041**	0.058	*n.s.*
Determinacy				**0.027**	0.013	.05	**0.096**	0.020	.01
Familiarity				**-0.007**	0.011	*n.s.*	**-0.029**	0.025	*n.s.*
Perceived threat *Familiarity				**0.027**	0.007	.001	**0.026**	0.007	.01
Perceived threat * Determinacy				**-0.027**	0.007	.001	**-0.018**	0.008	.05
Serbian				**-1.325**	0.390	.01	**-1.205**	0.372	.01
Slovenian				**-0.806**	0.349	.05	**-0.897**	0.332	.05
IMA parents				**0.053**	0.022	.05	**0.051**	0.021	.05
Serbian * Perceived threat							**0.224**	0.080	.01
Slovenian * Perceived threat							**0.227**	0.076	.01
Serbian * Determinacy							**-0.087**	0.041	.05
Slovenian * Determinacy							**-0.095**	0.038	.05
Model for the Variance									
Residual	**1.927**	0.033	.001	**1.742**	0.030	.001	**1.560**	0.027	.001
Image Random Intercept Variance	**0.918**	0.222	.001				**0.644**	0.167	.001
				0.890	0.094	.001			
Subject Random Intercept Variance	**0.946**	0.100	.001						
				0.721	0.183	.001	**0.816**	0.086	.001
Subject Random Arousal Slope Variance							**0.036**	0.010	.01
Subject Random Familiarity Slope Variance							**0.017**	0.005	.01
Subject Random Perceived threat Slope Variance							**0.024**	0.009	.01
Subject Random Determinacy Slope Variance							**0.004**	0.003	*n.s.*

In Model III we examined the extent to which the effects of the image predictors show systematic individual differences (Table 9, Figure 4). We retained the subject random effects for the intercept and all four image predictor slopes—arousal, familiarity, determinacy, and perceived threat. Arousal was negatively linked to kitschiness, $b = -0.29$, $t (35.89) = 8.36$, $p <.01$, $d = 1.39$, while interrelations with perceived threat and determinacy differed with regard to cultural background, $F (2, 28.6) = 5.93$, $p <.01$; $F (2, 26.64) = 3.68$, $p <.05$: In the Bavarian sample, perceived threat and kitschiness were unrelated, whereas

ratings of perceived threat were positively correlated with kitsch ratings in the Serbian and the Slovenian sample. A positive link between determinacy and kitschiness was only observed in the Bavarian sample. Model III accounted for 18% of total variance.
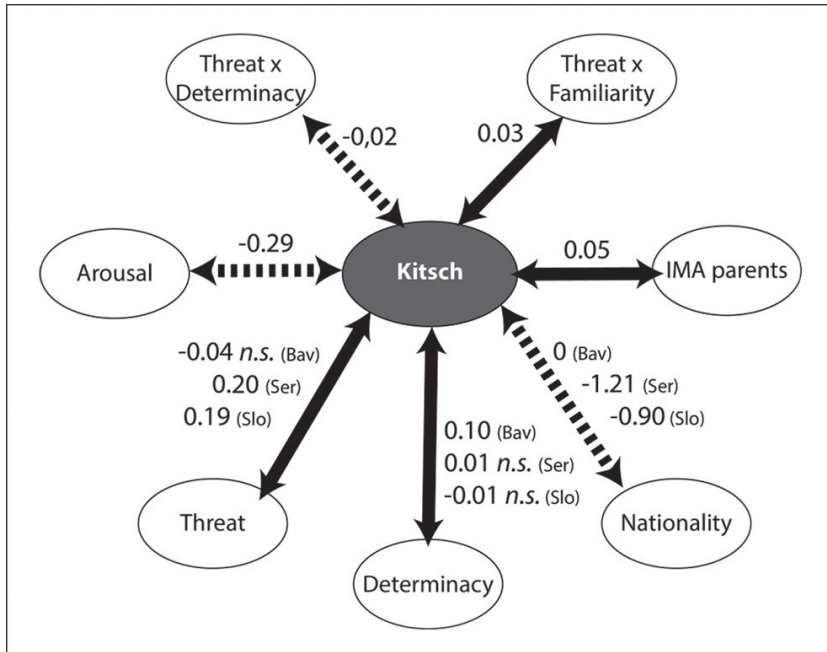

Figure 4. Illustration of final model for kitschiness including strengths of relations based on regression coefficients. Legend: solid lines—positive regression coefficients; dashed lines—negative regression coefficients; numbers—unstandardized regression coefficients. Abbreviations: Bav—Bavarian; Ser—Serbian; Slo—Slovenian.

Liking and kitschiness

Finally, the relationship between the two dependent variables—liking and kitschiness—was explored using multilevel modelling. With liking as a predictor centred on the grand mean, a moderate negative relationship between the two variables was obtained, $b = -0.41$, $t (7140) = 41.52$, $p < .01$, $d = 0.50$. This interrelation was not affected by cultural background.

Discussion

The German word kitsch has been adopted by many modern languages, including Serbian and Slovenian, yet it remains unclear whether its colloquial use is based on the same notion of bad taste. The aim of the present cross-cultural pilot study was to fathom differences and commonalities between concepts of

kitsch from Bavaria, Serbia and Slovenia. Thirty-six persons rated 200 images of kitsch objects in terms of liking, familiarity, determinacy, arousal, perceived threat, and kitschiness. Additionally, art expertise, ambiguity tolerance and value orientation were assessed and a multilevel regression analysis with crossed random effects was conducted to identify predictors for liking and kitschiness. In the following, we discuss results with regard to literature on kitsch and previous findings. Finally, the limitations of the present pilot study and the implications for further research are pointed out.

Descriptive analysis showed a consistent pattern: Most kitsch objects were disliked and a majority of them were characterized as perfectly harmless, highly determinate, but hardly arousing. From an item-based perspective, this accords with Kulka's (1996) assumption that non-threatening content and determinacy are necessary, but not sufficient preconditions for kitsch classification. Of course, these item-characteristics have to be taken into consideration when we interpret results from multilevel modelling.

Independently of cultural background, kitsch was used as a derogatory term: Apart from mean liking ratings, this is clearly indicated by a negative correlation between liking and kitschiness that did not vary significantly between cultures. A moderately high interrelation between the two dependent variables also suggests that the relationship between liking and kitsch is an ambivalent one: Although it is widely acknowledged that a proclivity to "[k]itsch is to be found in every human being" (Schmidt, 1994, p. 136), it is rejected as overly simplistic and consoling.

What aspects of kitsch are most predictive of liking? Interestingly, arousal ratings allowed for the best discrimination between likable kitsch objects and rejected ones: While arousal was positively associated with liking, it was inversely related to kitschiness. At first glance it may seem that these findings support Berlyne's (1971) basic assumption, that aesthetic appreciation results from an increase in arousal which is brought about by something surprisingly new, ambiguous or otherwise enigmatic. Upon closer examination, however, the range of arousal ratings and other item characteristics do not fit in: Mean arousal ratings were low-to-medium and a majority of kitsch objects was described as familiar, determinate and non-threatening. This pattern is perfectly in line with Kulka's (1996) criteria for kitsch: In order to be comforting, kitsch objects need to appear familiar, unambiguous and perfectly harmless. Possibly, responses to kitsch also follow Berlyne's (1971) positive correlation of arousal and liking, but only on a lower level. This hypothesis must be tested based on physiological measures of arousal. Due to our choice of method—self-reports instead of bio-feedback—our approach seems prone to emotional appraisal theories. In accordance with Schachter and Singer's (1962) two-factor-theory of emotion, for example, arousal may also be regarded as the unspecific component of an immediate emotional response to kitsch. From this point of view, the close interrelation between liking of kitsch objects and arousal seems concordant with the widely shared assumption that kitsch is liked for its capacity to "spontaneously trigger an unreflective emotional response" (Kulka, 1996, p. 26).

Finally, it cannot be excluded that operationalization might have contributed to a positive link between arousal and liking. As ratings were used, the concept of unspecific arousal had to be translated into everyday language. Unfortunately, near equivalents of arousal from common language are either limited to certain contexts of use, or they convey an evaluative surplus meaning. In German and Serbian, for example, the term "erregend/uzbuđen" implies sexual arousal, while the alternative translation "aufregend/uzbudljiv" (exciting) may also be used to express aesthetic appreciation. Thus, our choice of wording ("aufregend/ uzbudljiv") might partly explain why stimuli were rated concordantly in terms of liking and arousal.

The SSVS-dimension of *Self-transcendence* reflects sympathy, tolerance and well-being of one's social environment. Across all samples, commitment to these values was positively related to liking of kitsch objects. Since kitsch ratings were unrelated to SSVS-scores for self-transcendence, it appears that participants scoring high on self-transcendence did not judge stimuli less harshly. They rate these objects as likable in spite of the fact that they recognize them as kitsch. Interestingly, self-transcendence figures prominently in Dissanayake's (1990) study on the arts in pre-modern societies: From a cross-cultural perspective, she argues that—with the only exception being Western avant-garde art—art production was originally about sharing "valued states of mind and body such as self-transcendence [and] intimacy with our fellows" (Dissanayake, 1990, p.132). Possibly the familiar, unambiguous and consoling qualities of kitsch compensate for these needs in Western societies (Ortlieb & Carbon, 2017).

Ambiguity of the parental image was associated with higher kitsch ratings. High tolerance of ambiguity regarding the parental image indicates that close relationships are not idealized, but reflected critically. Since students were overrepresented in all of the three samples, high ambiguity tolerance towards the parental image and higher kitsch ratings could be interpreted as statements of independent judgement from the younger generation: Although the parents are honoured and respected, the offspring claim autonomy with regard to aesthetic taste. This interpretation remains highly speculative since we cannot infer from our study data whether kitsch objects were truly perceived as "old-fashioned". In any case, kitsch has been repeatedly associated with intergenerational competition (Avenarius, 1920; Stemmle, 1931).

Independent of cultural background, strengths of interrelations between familiarity, perceived threat and liking varied between male and female participants: A positive association between familiarity and liking was only significant for female participants (see Fig. 3). Besides, non-threatening content seemed more relevant for women than for men. These results are consistent with previous research from empirical aesthetics indicating that women tend to prefer stimuli with non-threatening content over stimuli with threatening content (Ortlieb, Fischer, & Carbon, 2016). However, there was no further indication for gender differences in terms of liking or kitsch ratings.

To what extent do kitsch and kič reflect culture-specific notions of bad taste? So far, we have focused on cross-cultural commonalities. Multilevel modelling also suggests some minor cross-cultural differences: For participants from Serbia and Slovenia, kitschiness was positively associated with perceived threat, whereas participants from Bavaria rated kitschy objects as more determinate. Since the entire stimulus material was provided by researchers from Bavaria, it might be argued that these culture-specific results are due to the fact that kitsch objects were simply more familiar to the German subsample. However, there is no indication that stimuli were particularly typical for Bavaria: Apart from a Christmas bauble portraying Ludwig II of Bavaria, stimuli reflected an international canon of kitsch (e.g. Japanese *maneki-neko*; miniature Eiffel tower). Most importantly, there was no difference between participants from Bavaria and Slovenia regarding familiarity ratings. In the Serbian sample, familiarity ratings were even significantly higher than in the other samples. Anyhow, our culture-specific findings require replication and closer examination. For example, it would be desirable to conduct two otherwise identical studies based on a selection of typical kitsch objects from Serbia, respectively Slovenia.

As a very broad aesthetic concept, kitsch is applicable to "virtually anything subject to judgements of taste" (Călinescu, 1987, p. 235). Due to the stimulus material used—images of everyday objects—findings cannot be generalized to phenomena outside of the visual domain (e.g. kitsch in music or literature). Strictly speaking, the present study has focussed on kitsch in interior decoration (e.g. German *Nippsachen*) at the expense of other aspects in the visual domain (e.g. kitsch in architecture). Additional research is needed to clarify the consistency of the kitsch concept across various domains.

Finally, with kitsch being a derogatory term, the issue of social desirability has to be raised: Especially since there is some preliminary indication for discrepancies between implicit and explicit kitsch judgements (Reiter, Ortlieb, & Carbon, 2015), future studies should include implicit measures. Participants with an academic background may be particularly reluctant to admit that they have a 'heart for kitsch'. Since our pilot study was based on small samples which were also very homogenous with regard to age and education, results must be interpreted very cautiously. The three models presented in this paper have to stand further testing with larger, more diverse samples and stimuli before they can be generalized.

Conclusions

From the results of our pilot study, we conclude that there is a common understanding of kitsch which prevails over culture-specific aspects. Moreover, this shared notion of bad taste seems widely in agreement with prominent theoretical accounts of kitsch. So far, our findings are limited to the visual domain and a small homogenous sample. Further quantitative and qualitative research is needed to validate these findings and to shed light on the culture-specific facets of kitsch.

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