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Interface of Country Affective Image and Its Tourism: Evidence from Chinese and South Koreans

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Introduction

The investigation of the affective component of country image and its tourism has been a relatively recent phenomenon. Methodologies to investigate this component have yet to be developed because in tourism research, a limited set of positive and negative emotions has been used to measure this component. Furthermore, the scope of investigation has mostly been limited to a tourism destination, and its affective image has not been understood together with its country affective image.

The present study addresses two such limitations in the extant literature. The application of the affective image concept to the context of a country and its tourism is discussed first. Then the methodology to examine the pattern by which each domain of the affective component of country image and its tourism is associated with each other is suggested and explored with samples collected from South Korea and China.

Affective Component of Country Image and Its Tourism

In the present study, the affective component of country image is proposed as a multidimensional construct reflecting the characteristics of affective place quality and consumption emotions (Roth and Diamantopoulos 2009). Affective tourism image is conceptualized as emotional response to travel experience. As has been used in previous studies such as Li, Petrick, and Yuan (2007), it incorporates the psychological description of affective quality (Russell and Pratt 1980). The multidimensionality of the affective component enables to incorporate diverse emotional elements such as Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance (PAD, Mehrabian and Russell 1974); the Differential Emotion Scale (Izard 1972, 1977), which includes ten fundamental emotions of interest, enjoyment, anger, disgust, contempt, sadness, fear, shame, guilt, and surprise; Plutchick's (1980) Eight Basic Emotions of fear, anger, joy, sadness, acceptance, disgust, expectancy, and surprise; and Richins' (1997) consumption emotion.

The notion of country-of-origin effect implies that country image can be associated with the product image from the country. However, the extension of such a notion to tourism image has not been done until recently (Lee and Lockshin 2012). The attempts to link country image and its tourism can be found in few recent studies (Elliot, Papadopoulos, and Szamosi 2013). In fact, examination of the affective image linkages between the country and its tourism has been scarce. Despite such scarce empirical examinations, theories of the network of human memories,

such as the Human Associative Memory (e.g., Anderson and Bower 1973), imply the existence of the associations of the affective components of country and tourism images. Although, due to a lack of previous studies, it is hard to determine which dimension of country and tourism affective image is more closely associated with another, it is also expected that certain domains of the affective component would show high associations with another while others do not.

Methodology

Although the tourism experience has been approached as consumption in previous studies while the affective component of image of the place is not necessarily formed due to the consumption of the products, the present study adopted measurement of emotions by considering both the environmental affection and consumption emotions in order to facilitate the comparison of the two realms of a country and its tourism by using the same items to capture the affective component. Therefore, selected items from consumption emotion scales (Richins 1997) and environmental affection scales (Russell and Pratt 1980) were included. As a result, a total of 20 items were used for the measurement of each of the affective components of country and tourism images. Unipolar instead of bipolar scales were used, and the items were asked with 7-point Likert-type scale items. The affective image of the United States and its tourism perceived by Chinese and South Koreans was the context. Items asking country image were listed parallel to those asking the image about its tourism.

A total of 572 complete responses for analyses were collected in South Korea, mostly in Seoul, Daejeon, and Gyeonggi Province. Among a total of 653 complete responses collected in China, 572 responses from Shanghai, Jiangsu Province, and Shandong Province were selected for further analyses in order to balance samples from the two countries.

Univariate and multivariate analyses were utilized in order to reveal the associations between the affective image of country and its tourism. First, a series of paired-samples t-tests were conducted by the sample collected from each country. And then the multidimensional scaling technique was utilized based on the insight from Richins (1997), in the consumption emotion context, that “(m)ultidimensional scaling (MDS) is a more appropriate tool” (p. 132) than factor analysis in revealing the dimensionality of emotions.

Results

Univariate Analyses

For the Chinese sample, all the items other than one—alive—had a higher mean value of tourism image than of country image. Among the four sub-domains of the consumption emotions set (Richins 1997), all the items within the domain of the sense of peacefulness and contentment and two out of three items representing optimism showed significantly higher tourism image than country image. For the Korean sample, the peacefulness domain had a higher tourism image. For the domain representing optimism, the Korean sample showed higher, although insignificant, country image than tourism image in two of the three items. Across the two samples, the item “loving” had a significantly higher tourism image than its country image while “warm hearted” showed an insignificant difference.

A dramatic difference was also found in the arousal category of the environmental affection scale. For the Korean sample, this category consistently, although insignificantly, had a higher country than tourism image, while for the Chinese sample, the values were higher in its tourism rather than its country image except for one item (“alive”). For the affective domain

representing pleasant emotions, the tourism image was mostly significantly higher than its country image across the two samples. The results from the t-test are illustrated in Table 1.

Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) Results with Aggregated Data

Multidimensional scaling (PROXCAL) was conducted with the 20 affective image items of the United States as a country and with the 20 other items asking the image about its tourism. The visual representation of the dimensional pattern of the image items driven by the multidimensional scaling technique would show general ideas about the proximity between the same affective items across the two—country and its tourism. Proximity between the items represented in the graphics would provide instinct ideas about the perceptual similarities between the items. The plot was created based on Euclidean distance. Absolute distance and correlations between items measuring the affective country image and its tourism showed that two items representing love (loving, sentimental), two items for peacefulness and relaxation (calm, peaceful), and one item representing arousal (active) about the United States as a country and its tourism are closely associated to each other (Table 2).

Table 1. Paired T-test Results of the Affective Component of Country and Tourism Images

Category (Source)	Item	Chinese				South Korean			
		Mean		t	p	Mean		t	p
		Country	Tourism			Country	Tourism		
Love (A)	Loving	4.71	4.85	-3.512	<.001	3.77	3.99	-5.038	<.001
	Sentimental	4.97	5.02	-1.147	.252	3.81	3.97	-3.382	.001
	Warm hearted	4.99	5.05	-1.133	.258	4.31	4.31	-0.09	.928
Peacefulness (A) and Relaxation (B)	Calm	4.9	5.03	-2.799	.005	3.62	3.91	-5.923	<.001
	Peaceful	4.89	5.07	-3.891	<.001	3.76	4.02	-5.727	<.001
Contentment (A)	Contented	4.98	5.11	-2.875	.004	4.33	4.39	-1.456	.146
	Fulfilled	5.04	5.25	-4.501	<.001	4.27	4.31	-1	.318
Optimism (A)	Optimistic	5.15	5.23	-1.615	.107	4.46	4.38	1.734	.083
	Encouraged	5.12	5.22	-2.083	.038	4.26	4.37	-2.42	.016
	Hopeful	5.07	5.19	-2.641	.008	4.48	4.45	0.717	.474
Arousal (B)	Intense	4.98	5.15	-3.61	<.001	4.5	4.5	0.148	.882
	Arousing	5.03	5.09	-1.261	.208	4.53	4.44	1.917	.056
	Active	5.13	5.24	-2.688	.007	4.71	4.67	0.859	.391
	Alive	5.15	5.13	.239	.811	4.7	4.66	0.739	.46
	Forceful	5.11	5.15	-.962	.336	4.74	4.63	2.507	.012
Pleasure (B)	Pleasant	5.1	5.17	-1.766	.078	4.54	4.48	1.263	.207
	Nice	5.18	5.23	-1.076	.282	4.35	4.5	-3.55	<.001
	Pleasing	5.14	5.24	-2.204	.028	4.35	4.52	-4.46	<.001
	Pretty	5.16	5.31	-3.415	.001	4.15	4.28	-3.39	.001
	Beautiful	5.23	5.36	-3.18	.002	4.36	4.53	-4.15	<.001

Note. A: consumption emotion scales (Richins, 1997); B: environmental affection scales (Russell & Pratt, 1980)

Table 2. Pairs of Affective Image Items with Small Distance and High Correlation

Category	Absolute distance smaller than the median	Correlation higher than the median
Love	Loving, Sentimental	Loving, Sentimental, Warm hearted
Peacefulness, Relaxation	Calm, Peaceful	Calm, Peaceful
Contentment	Contented	
Arousal	Active, Intense, Arousing, Alive, Forceful	Active
Pleasure		Nice, Pleasing, Pretty, Beautiful

Conclusions and Implications

This study is one of the first empirical studies to explore the affective component of country image and its tourism together. Overall, the affective component of tourism image, especially the domain of peacefulness and relaxation, was higher than that of country image, which implies that utilizing such tourism image for affective country image enhancement would be worth consideration. The study also revealed differences in some affective image domains, such as arousal, by different countries, which suggests differentiated utilization of image domains by different regional segments. Furthermore, active leveraging of tourism image would be encouraged for the items significantly higher than and highly associated with country image, such as loving, calm, and peaceful images. Further consideration for strategic application of affective image, which facilitates the coordinated image management of a country and its tourism, is warranted in future studies.

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