

FLORIDA RESIDENT'S FAMILIARITY WITH KOREA: DO MORE FAMILIAR RESIDENTS HAVE MORE POSITIVE IMAGES?

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Abstract

This study examined Floridian non-visitors to South Korea and their image of South Korea as a travel destination. Unlike most previous research, this study focused on non-visitors' images and familiarity. Also unlike previous tourism research, this study measured familiarity using a multidimensional method. The results show there is positive relationship between familiarity and image. The result is supported by previous research (Milman & Pizam 1995; Baloglu 2001). There were significant differences across all image domains with respect to level of familiarity. This result may be important information for managers of destinations. Marketing efforts to promote positive image should incorporate familiarity (knowledge based and experiential) as a factor. Specifically, destination management organizations in South Korea (i.e., Kyonggi Province) would benefit from knowing this information.

1.0 Introduction

The tourism industry in Asia has grown at an unprecedented rate, reflecting the rapid growth of the individual economies of the region (Sadi & Bartels 1999). In particular, Korea's tourism industry has grown tremendously over the last three decades. The number of foreign visitors to Korea increased from 173,335 in 1970 to 5.1 million in 2001 (www.ktri.re.kr).

According to Travel Industries (TI), visitors from South Korea represent 2% (almost 500 thousand) of the overall inbound market to the United States (Travel Industries 2000). American visitors to South Korea represented 12% of the tourism market (Korea Tourism Research Institute 1998), which is second only to the number of visitors from Japan. As a segment of the American market, the state of Florida has always represented a primary market for South Korea. The exact number of visitors from Florida to South Korea is not known; however, according to the Florida Department of State,

South Korea is Florida's third largest trading partner (after Canada and Mexico). Personal communication with the Secretary of State suggests that outbound travel to South Korea by Floridians is respectable. The reasoning for this may stem from a relationship called the Sister States Act. Kyonggi Province, which houses Seoul the capital of South Korea is a sister state with Florida. As part of economic development, attempts have been made by the Kyonggi government to increase travel by Floridians. Of late, there is a strong desire to promote South Korea to Floridians.

The theoretical framework of this study is the model of brand familiarity, confidence and purchase intention in a choice context (Laroche et al. 1996). This model explained that among those made aware of a destination, a subset will have their image of that destination enhanced by the positive image of destination. Also, it suggests that the combination of familiarity and positive imagery will result in a subset of consumers inquiring about the destination and receiving a fulfillment piece. Familiarity was defined "the extent of a consumer's direct and indirect experiences with a brand (Alba & Hutchinson 1987; Kent & Allen 1994), including consumer's brand knowledge structures, that is the brand association s that exists within a consumer's memory" (Campbell & Keller 2003). Also familiarity goes beyond 'direct experience' and is regarded as a component of the consumer knowledge construct (Cordell 1977).

Destination image is the total perception of the destination that is formed by processing information from various sources over time (Assael 1984; cited in Fakeye & Crompton 1991). Destination image is defined as the people's beliefs, ideas, or impressions about a place (Choi et al. 1999) and as the visual or mental impression of a place, a product, or an experience held by the general public (Milman & Pizam 1995). Destination image is a complex concept that may be analyzed from different perspectives and is composed of a variety of individual perceptions that relate to various product/service attributes (Milman & Pizam 1995). More recently, research has suggested that familiarity of a travel destination is an important element in image formation and behavior to purchase (Milman & Pizam 1995; Baloglu 2001; Kim & Richardson, 2003). Also,

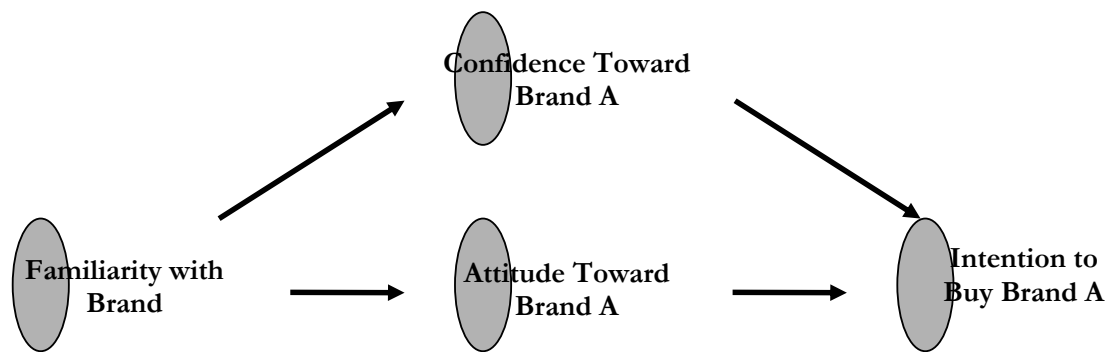


Figure 1.—The Model of Brand Familiarity, Confidence and Purchase Intention
Source: Laroche, Kim, & Zhou (1996)

in marketing research, familiarity has been studied to be an important factor influencing consumers' attitude (Laroche et al. 1996). However, few studies in tourism have actually examined familiarity as a variable in image formation studies. Also, most study in tourism research measured familiarity by the only direct experience such as previous visitation (Pearce 1982; Milman & Pizam 1995), but there is a need for multidimensional measurement (Baloglu 2001). On the other hands, much of the previous research related to image has focused on visitors to a destination. Consequently, fewer studies have examined non-visitors' image of a destination. However, some research suggested that research is also needed on non-visitors (Baloglu 2001).

Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to examine non-visitors' familiarity and images of South Korea as a travel destination. Further, this study examined whether familiarity had an impact on non-visitors' image of South Korea as a tourism destination. The research questions which guided this study included: (1) "What are Floridian's level of familiarity with South Korea as a travel destination? (2) "What are Floridian's level of images of South Korea as a travel destination? (3) "What is the relationship between image and familiarity with South Korea as a travel destination and awareness?

2.0 Methodology

A stratified random sample of residents of Florida who were non-visitors to South Korea was used. For a 99% confidence level with a maximum of 5% margin error, the recommended non-visitors' sample size was 498. A telephone survey was conducted for this study. The survey took approximately 10-20 minutes to complete and participants were called up to three times. A private

consulting firm from Orlando, FL completed telephone interviews. The responses were analyzed using SPSS. A total of 498 completed interviews were logged between January 2003 and April 2003. Image of South Korea was measured with 22 Likert statements. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a five-point scale, ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5) as labeled, upon each attribute statement. For example, respondents were asked to indicate how they would rate South Korea with statements such as 'a good place for viewing landscape', 'a good place for ancient heritage', and 'a good place for shopping'. Familiarity was measured with fifteen knowledge- related questions about South Korea and two experience-related questions about South Korea. The items were developed by a focus group interview and previous research. Examples of knowledge-related questions included "South Korea is a technology advanced country".

3.0 Results

The majority of the respondents to the survey were female (57.1%), lived with their spouses (65.4%), and employed (63.0%). Most of the respondents (78.4%) had some college experience; 50.3 percent had earned college degrees and 13.5 percent had postgraduate degrees. Most respondents (75.0%) had household incomes between \$20,000 and \$80,000.

Most of all familiarity was recoded to examine Floridian's level of familiarity with South Korea. In this study, familiarity was measured by respondents answer such as yes, no or don't know. Don't know was recoded as missing. If the respondent answered the question correctly they received one point. The total points possible were 17. According to the response rate, three

Table 1.—Level of Familiarity with South Korea

Group	Label	Total Point	N
Group1	Low Familiarity	0-6	164
Group2	Moderate Familiarity	7-10	226
Group3	High Familiarity	Over 11	130

Table 2.—Image Attribute Domains, Based on Factor Analysis

Image Domains	Factor Loading	% of Variance	Cronbach's alpha	Mean	S.D.
<i>Factor 1: Diverse activities and attractions</i>		23.22	.82	3.57	.89
South Korea is a good place for viewing landscapes	.78			3.79	1.09
South Korea is a good place for ancient heritage	.75			4.11	1.07
South Korea is a good place for cultural attractions	.69			3.85	1.15
South Korea is a good place for night life and entertainment	.67			3.21	1.24
South Korea is a good place for social activities	.67			3.14	1.15
South Korea is a good place for diverse activities	.61			3.32	1.17
South Korea is a good place for shopping	.52			3.49	1.21
<i>Factor 2: Communication and accommodation</i>		15.94	.62	3.37	.97
The residents of South Korea are friendly	.73			3.66	1.06
Many people understand English in South Korea	.70			3.34	1.25
Accommodations are great in South Korea	.60			3.14	1.12
<i>Factor 3: Sports and Events</i>		12.02	.85	3.12	1.15
South Korea is a good place for participating in sports	.82			3.13	1.21
South Korea is a good place for sporting events	.80			3.12	1.23
<i>Factor 4: Accessibility</i>		10.60	.79	3.11	1.24
South Korea is easy to get to as a destination	.86			3.12	1.36
South Korea is easily accessible	.85			3.09	1.35

Note: Extraction Method is Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method is Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 9 iterations. Cronbach α for 22 items is .9062. Total variance explained in the data = 61.78%097

familiarity groups were created. Group 1 was labeled “low familiarity” and had total point 0 to 6 (n=164), Group 2 was labeled “moderate familiarity” and had total point 7 to 10 (n=226) and Group 3 was labeled “high familiarity” and had total point 11 to 17 (n=130).

The 22 image statements were analyzed by principal component factor analysis and varimax rotation, which resulted in a four-factor solution. The purpose of the factor analysis was to combine the statements into a

smaller set of factors that were deemed to represent the image dimensions of South Korea. The final four image factors were named Diverse activities and attractions (Factor 1, 23.2%), Communication and accommodation (factor 2, 15.9%), Sports and events (factor 3, 12.0%), and Accessibility (factor 4, 10.6 %). To do follow-up analyses, the items that comprise each factor were added together to generate a mean score for each of the four dimensions. Table 2 shows the results of image attributes domains based on factor analysis.

Table 3.—Differences in Image Domain by the Familiarity Levels

Image Domain		df	SS	MS	F	P
Diverse activities and attractions	Between Groups	2	8.20	4.10	5.23	.012
	Within Groups	466	365.59	.79		
Communication and accommodation	Between Groups	2	10.26	5.13	5.49	.001
	Within Groups	443	414.10	.94		
Sports and Events	Between Groups	2	21.09	10.55	8.16	.001
	Within Groups	385	497.60	1.29		
Accessibility	Between Groups	2	22.90	11.45	7.66	.001
	Within Groups	420	627.93	1.49		

Table 4.—Multiple Comparisons of Image Domain by the Familiarity Levels

Image Domain	Low (1)		Familiarity Moderate (2)		High (3)		Post Hoc
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Diverse activities and attractions	3.33	1.10	3.59	.91	3.71	.70	1 < 2, 3
Communication and accommodation	3.14	1.04	3.34	.99	3.58	.83	1 < 3
Sports and Events	2.66	1.25	3.17	1.14	3.34	1.02	1 < 2, 3
Accessibility	2.63	1.24	3.21	1.24	3.26	1.19	1 < 2, 3

Note: The numbers in parentheses in column heads refer to the numbers used for illustrating, significant differences at the .05 Level in the last column titled “Post Hoc.”

To examine the relationship between awareness and the four image dimensions, ANOVA was computed (Table 3). Again, results indicated significant differences on all image dimensions. Post hoc test with Scheffe revealed differences between subgroups on some dimensions (Table 4). The Low awareness group and high awareness group showed differences with all image dimensions. The moderate awareness group and high awareness group did not show significant differences with three of four dimensions, diverse activities and attractions, sports and events, and accessibility. The low awareness group and the moderate awareness group showed differences on all but one-image dimensions (communication and accommodation). However, with all dimensions, groups who were more aware had more positive images than who were less aware.

ANOVA was run to examine the relationship between 22 items and the three familiarity groups. Again, results indicated significant differences on 14 image items among 22 items (Table 5). Post hoc test with Scheffe

revealed differences between subgroups on some items. The low familiarity group and high familiarity group showed differences with 9 image items with $p < .05$. The items are “the residents are friendly” “South Korea is a dynamic place” and etc. The moderate familiarity group and high familiarity group showed significant differences with two of fourteen image items, “South Korea is a dynamic place”, and “Accommodations are great” with $p < .05$. However, with all image items except one item, Groups who were more familiar had more positive images than who were less familiar. The item is “South Korea is a good place for relaxation”.

4.0 Conclusion

This study examined Floridian non-visitors to South Korea and their image of South Korea as a travel destination. Unlike Most previous research, this study focused on non-visitors’ images and familiarity. Also unlike previous tourism research, this study measured familiarity using a multidimensional method. The results show there is positive relationship between familiarity

Table 5.—Multiple Comparisons of Image Items by the Familiarity Levels

Image Items	Familiarity			P	Post Hoc
	Low (a)	Moderate (b)	High (c)		
The residents are friendly	3.49	3.59	3.90	.013	a < c
A good place for diverse activities	3.06	3.31	3.55	.013	a < c
South Korea is a dynamic place	2.91	3.05	3.56	.001	a, b < c
Accommodations are great	3.00	3.00	3.41	.012	b < c
A good place for social activities	2.97	3.09	3.37	.043	-
Easy to get to as a destination	2.77	3.24	3.25	.011	a < b, c
A good place for sporting events	2.83	3.15	3.35	.011	a < c
South Korea is easily accessible	2.60	3.24	3.30	.000	a < b, c
South Korea is a safe place	2.12	2.39	2.71	.002	a < c
A good place for cultural attractions	3.60	3.90	3.98	.035	a < c
A good place for night life and entertainment	2.91	3.25	3.44	.014	a < c
A good place for participating in sports	2.81	3.15	3.37	.005	a < c
A good place for relaxation	2.66	3.18	2.99	.007	a < b
Lifestyles and customs are similar to ours	1.87	2.03	2.32	.008	a < c

and image. The result is supported by previous research (Milman & Pizam 1995; Baloglu 2001).

There were significant differences across all image domains with respect to level of familiarity. On nearly every item, the level of positive image increased with the level of familiarity with South Korea (except on 1 item “South Korea is a good place for relaxation”). Perhaps this is because if you have more knowledge of Korea, you would recognize that South Korea is a developed and crowded place. Especially, people with more knowledge of Korea may have image of Seoul as a metropolitan for South Korea image. This result means that familiarity may not always affect image positively.

This result may be important information for managers of destinations. Marketing efforts to promote positive image should incorporate familiarity (knowledge based and experiential) as a factor. Specifically, destination management organizations in South Korea (i.e., Kyonggi Province) would benefit from knowing this information. If South Korea wants to improve visitation by Floridians the first step is to educate the average public on the benefits and opportunities of traveling to Kyonggi Province (Seoul). Also, Kyonggi Province should budget for marketing, advertising, and public relations strategies to increase familiarity with South Korea among non-visitors.

For future research, comparing non-visitors and visitors would be helpful in understanding a more holistic picture of the relationship between familiarity and image. Examining familiarity and image using a greater number of variables may be more illuminating.

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