

KEY CULTURAL ELEMENTS INFLUENCING THE SOUTH KOREA'S NATION-BRAND PREFERENCE IN BANGKOK

องค์ประกอบทางวัฒนธรรมที่สำคัญ อันมีผลต่อความชื่นชอบแบรนด์ประเทศเกาหลีใต้
ในกรุงเทพมหานคร

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Abstract

In the globalized world, 'Nation Brand' is increasingly important and 'Nation branding' concept is widely practiced as it provides great benefits to the nation. The South Korea is one of the nations which values nation brand and clearly exercises nation branding to gain great benefit from its nation-brand preference around the world including Thailand. This study is to learn from the success of the South Korea in Bangkok using quantitative research among 422 Bangkok consumers who prefer the South Korea's nation brand with the objectives of understanding the influential demographic factors on the South Korea's nation-brand preference, analyzing key cultural elements driving the South Korea's nation-brand preference and its relationship to the purchase intent of South Korean products and services. This research study will be beneficial and serve as a guidance for the Thai government officials and private sector involving in the Thailand's nation branding by suggesting the influential demographic factor of target consumer and key cultural elements that may influence nation-brand preference and purchase intent for Thailand's nation branding exercise. Through the descriptive statistics as well as Pearson Chi-square test, the results clearly show that Gender and Education are the only influential demographic factors on the South Korea's nation-brand preference. Though, all the cultural elements tested have influence on the South Korea's nation-brand preference. By far, TV series are the most influential one driving the South Korea's nation-brand preference consistently across all the respondents. Interestingly, the South Korea's nation-brand preference leads to not only purchase intention of tourism but also the other South Korea's products and services such as Korean restaurant dining, cosmetics and mobile phone/tablet.

Keywords: Nation Branding, Cultural Element, Brand Preference, Nation-brand Preference, Purchase Intention

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บทคัดย่อ

ในโลกที่มีความเป็นโลกาภิวัตน์นี้ แบรินด์ประเทศมีความสำคัญเพิ่มมากขึ้น และแนวคิดเรื่องการสร้างแบรนด์ประเทศได้ถูกนำมาใช้กันอย่างแพร่หลายเพราะมีคุณประโยชน์ต่อประเทศอย่างอนันต์ ประเทศเกาหลีใต้เป็นประเทศหนึ่งที่เห็นคุณค่าของแบรนด์ประเทศ ได้ใช้การสร้างแบรนด์ประเทศสร้างความชื่นชอบต่อประเทศและได้รับผลประโยชน์อย่างมากจากทั่วโลก รวมทั้งประเทศไทย การศึกษาเรื่ององค์ประกอบทางวัฒนธรรมที่สำคัญอันมีผลต่อความชื่นชอบแบรนด์ประเทศเกาหลีใต้ในกรุงเทพมหานครนี้เป็นการเรียนรู้จากความสำเร็จของประเทศเกาหลีใต้ โดยใช้การวิจัยเชิงปริมาณ (Quantitative Research) กับกลุ่มตัวอย่างผู้บริโภคในกรุงเทพฯ ที่มีความชื่นชอบประเทศเกาหลีใต้จำนวน 422 คน โดยมีจุดมุ่งหมายที่จะระบุคุณลักษณะของประชากร (demographic factor) ที่มีผลต่อความชื่นชอบแบรนด์ประเทศเกาหลีใต้และวิเคราะห์องค์ประกอบทางวัฒนธรรมที่ส่งผลต่อความชื่นชอบแบรนด์ประเทศตลอดจนความตั้งใจซื้อสินค้าและบริการของประเทศเกาหลีใต้ งานวิจัยนี้จะให้แนวทางอันเป็นประโยชน์สำหรับตัวแทนภาครัฐและเอกชนที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการสร้างแบรนด์ประเทศไทย โดยให้คำแนะนำในเรื่องคุณลักษณะของประชากรที่มีผลต่อความชื่นชอบแบรนด์ประเทศ ตลอดจนองค์ประกอบทางวัฒนธรรมที่ส่งผลต่อความชื่นชอบแบรนด์ประเทศและความตั้งใจซื้อสินค้าและบริการของประเทศ ผลการวิจัยโดยใช้สถิติเชิงพรรณนาและการทดสอบไคสแควร์พบว่า เพศและการศึกษาเท่านั้นที่มีผลต่อความชื่นชอบแบรนด์ประเทศเกาหลีใต้ในกลุ่มตัวอย่างนี้ ทั้งนี้องค์ประกอบทางวัฒนธรรมทั้งหมดที่ทำการวิจัยต่างก็มีผลต่อความชื่นชอบแบรนด์ประเทศ และความตั้งใจซื้อสินค้าและบริการของประเทศเกาหลีใต้โดยที่ทีวีซีรีส์เป็นองค์ประกอบทางวัฒนธรรมที่ส่งผลสูงสุดต่อความชื่นชอบแบรนด์ประเทศเกาหลีใต้ในทุกกลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ทำการวิจัยและเป็นที่น่าสนใจว่าความชื่นชอบแบรนด์ประเทศเกาหลีใต้ไม่เพียงนำไปสู่การซื้อและความตั้งใจซื้อสินค้าการท่องเที่ยวเท่านั้น แต่ยังนำไปสู่การซื้อและความตั้งใจซื้อสินค้าและบริการอื่นๆ ได้แก่ การรับประทานอาหารที่ร้านอาหารเกาหลี เครื่องสำอางเกาหลี และแบรนด์โทรศัพท์มือถือและแท็บเล็ตของประเทศเกาหลีได้อีกด้วย

คำสำคัญ: แบรินด์ประเทศ การสร้างแบรนด์ให้ประเทศ องค์ประกอบทางวัฒนธรรม ความชื่นชอบแบรนด์ ความตั้งใจซื้อ

Introduction

Globalization encourages many nation states to embrace the concept called 'nation branding' raised by Anholt in 1996, which provides the 3 benefits: 1) Positive Economic Benefit: boosting tourism, drawing in more foreign investment, and increasing the value and flow of exports from the country, 2) Higher nation-brand Value: translating into greater status in the international community and more influence in global affairs, and 3) Self-defense:

allowing the country to tell their own stories rather than being defined by foreign media, rival nations, or the perpetuation of national stereotypes (Dinnie, 2008). The South Korea's nation branding campaign demonstrates the nation branding concept more actively as it is driven by its government, stakeholders, and private sectors; which mainly are the three biggest entertainment companies: SM Entertainment, YG Entertainment, and JYP Entertainment. They were tangible activities rather than merely

marketing, advertising and PR campaigns, and the results of the strong coordination, cooperation and support (including financial and policy) between the its government, the private sector and other stakeholders. Until present, all of its nation branding programs are the combination of varieties of programs that aim to address different geographic and demographic of target audiences with target-oriented communication and media combinations, including internet and social media, which were incorporated into the daily business of its government, all the major stakeholders and the people.

Korean Wave's economic impact on Thailand is phenomenal. In 2012, Thai tourists were among the top five listed by Korean Tourism Organization as they grew 107% to 395,984. Thailand was also among the top 11 major import countries of Korean broadcasting contents during 2001-2011. In the period from 2006-2011, the export of Korean skincare cosmetics to Thailand increased by more than 1,000% reaching US\$52.2 million. Trade between the two countries was worth US\$13.9 billion in 2011. Thailand, however, has not yet explored nation branding concept to its full potential. Many past governments touched mostly on independent activities of tourism encouragement, short-term export fix, and foreign direct

investment (FDI) promotion communications. They have not strategically formed a clear long-term policy and committee to work closely with private sectors towards Thailand nation branding even though Thailand has many creative resources to exploit.

Literature Review

Cultural element is the key tool nation uses in their nation branding exercise (Olins, 2002) and in the nation-brand measure of reputable studies, ie. The Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands IndexSM and The Nation Brand Index Model: NBDO. It is considered as part of nation brand identity which is communicated to form the nation-brand image (Dinnie, 2008) as shown in Figure 1. Provided its emotional quality and uniqueness, Saxena (2013) remarked that culture-base branding not only ensures high-value recall but also gives a high-success nation-brand strategy. Relationship between cultural elements as a part of nation-brand identity, nation-brand image and nation-brand preference lends a lot of thinking from the commercial brand management. Based on Sääksjärvia & Samiee (2011), brand identity and brand image are the main sources of brand preference featured in Figure 2.

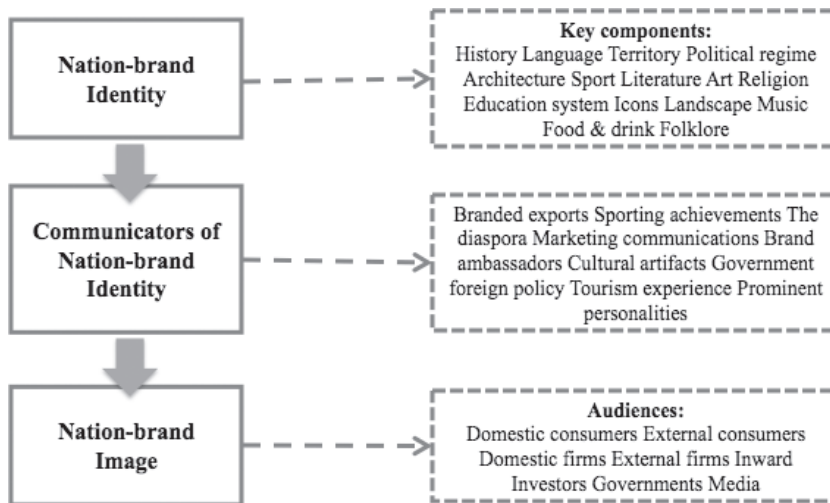


Figure 1 Conceptual Model Of Nation-Brand Identity And Image

Source: Dinnie (2008)



Figure 2 The Relationship Among Brand Identity, Brand Image And Brand Preference

Source: Sääksjärvia & Samiee (2011)

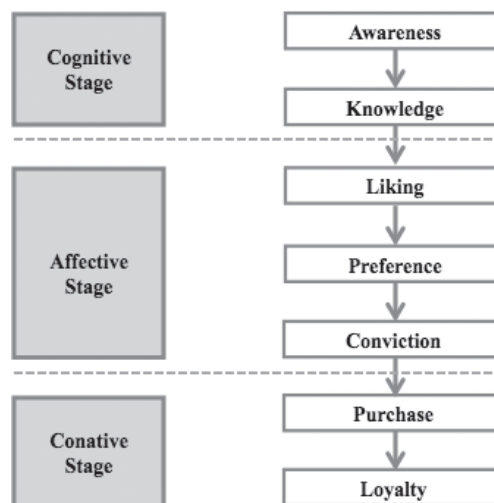


Figure 3 Hierarchy Of Effects Model

Source: Lavidge & Steiner (1961)

Furthermore, brand preference has a relationship with purchase and loyalty according to the hierarchy of effects model (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961) which describes seven stages of purchase process in Figure 3. In the past five years, the South Korea's cultural elements most exposed among Thai consumers are music, TV series, film, food, sports, celebrity and tourism as confirmed by the 2 entertainment executives in Thailand; Ms. Gina Osothsilp (personal communication, November 10, 2014), Director of GMM Tai Hub and Mr. Gary Tan (personal communication, February 2, 2015), Director of SM True, in the in-depth interviews. Previous empirical study in Mueng District, Chiangmai among 400 teenagers on Korean Wave (a popular culture) and behavior of Thai consumers done by Wonkboonma (2009) also suggested that Korean TV series/movie and music were the most consumed cultural elements. The key factors influencing the purchase of cultural products were: 1) Interest in Korean singer, 2) Satisfied Korean celebrities, and 3) Advertisement of products, respec-

tively. Additionally, Saleepoch (2009) suggested that Korean Wave leads to the expanding export of cultural products (TV series, movie, pop music, and other exported products such as food, cosmetics, consumer goods, tourism, language and books) to Thailand during 2003-2008.

Research Objective

1) Identify profiles and/or characteristics of Bangkok consumers who prefer South Korea's nation brand, 2) Identify the key cultural elements driving the South Korea's nation-brand preference, and 3) Identify the purchasing intention of South Korean products and services among Bangkok consumers who prefer South Korea's nation brand.

This study will academically provide the learning on key cultural elements and its impact on nation-brand preference of the South Korea which can be used as a basis for development of Thailand's nation branding campaign.

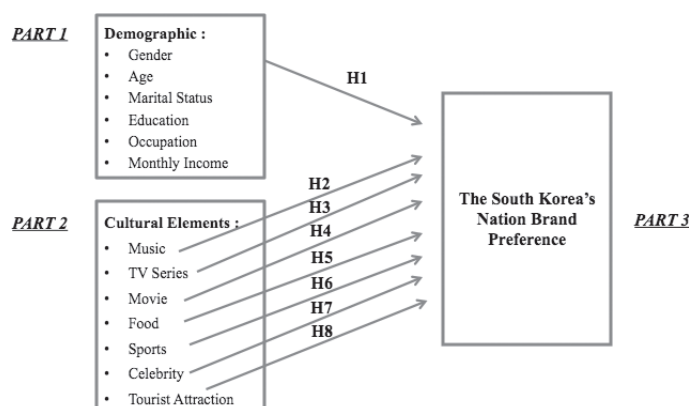


Figure 4 Conceptual Framework

Provided the literature review, the researcher set up eight pairs of null and alternate hypotheses and classified them into 2 groups:

H₀₁: There is no relationship between demographic factors (gender, age, marital status, education, occupation, and monthly income) and the South Korea's nation-brand preference.

H₀₂-H₀₈: There is no relationship between cultural elements (music, tv series, movie, food, sports, celebrity, and tourist attraction) and the South Korea's nation-brand preference.

Methodology

The researcher used the sample size identified in the Yamane's Statistics Table to achieve a 95% confidence level; at least 400 samples were required. Hence, the sample size for the study was. The convenience sampling was used among Bangkok male and female population aged 18 and over who preferred the South Korea located in the 5 Bangkok's central locations (Siam, Silom, Victory Monument, Central Lardprao, and The Mall Bangkoe.) as suggested by 3 research experts during IOC to ensure the spread of demographics specification among the samples. The researcher adopted quantitative survey and used a questionnaire as a tool to collect data for this study using face-to-face personal interview in Thai.

The questionnaire was composed of five sections respectively: 1) Screening part to identify the target sample, 2) Overall nation-brand preference of the South Korea, 3) Cultural elements influencing the South Korea's nation-

brand preference, 4) Past and future purchasing intention of the South Korea's cultural products and services, and 5) personal information of the respondents measured by gender, marital status, education, occupation, monthly personal income, and monthly household income. The researcher analyzed data variables using SPSS program and classified into: 1) **Descriptive statistics**: Percentage is used to capture the frequencies of variables and explain demographics information of the respondents, the influence of cultural elements towards the South Korea's nation-brand preference, past and future purchasing intention of products or services of the South Korea. 2) **Inferential statistics**: As the responses from likert-type items do not add up to a character/personality trait, Pearson's Chi-square (χ^2) test is used to test the relationship of independent variable and dependent variable in accordance with hypotheses.

Research Findings

Based on Table 1, the basic characteristic of Bangkokian aged 18 and over who prefer the South Korea incidentally were female (68.01%) with majority holding a bachelor degree or equivalent (63.74%). The most of respondents were aged 18-35 years old (74.18%) and single (62.80%). The largest group of respondents (67.06%) were either employees of private companies or business owners, followed by students (23.22%). The largest monthly personal income bracket was between 10,001-30,000 Bht (58.29%). In addition, 70.61%

of the respondents had monthly household income above the average of Thailand's monthly household income at 23,236 Bht (National Statistical Office, 2013).

Only Gender (both male and female) and Education (both lower than bachelor degree and higher than bachelor degree or equivalent) were found to be the influential demographics on the South Korea's nation-brand preference (Table 2). The rest of the demographic profiles which are age, marital status, occupation, monthly personal income and monthly household income do not have influence on the South Korea's nation-brand preference.

Not only TV series but also the rest of cultural elements (music, film, food, sports, celebrity and tourism) found to have influences over the South Korea's nation-brand preference (Table 3). The majority of respondents (87.68%) had the purchasing intention of South Korean products and services in the next 3 months. Majority of all respondents had intention to go to Korean restaurant (21.37%) shown in Table 4. Additionally, the female respondents mostly had purchasing intention of cosmetics (63.51%), whereas, the male respondents had the intention to purchase the electrical appliances (21.54%).

Table 1 The Summary of Demographic Factors

Demographic	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	135	31.99
	Female	287	68.01
	Total	422	100
Age	18-25 years	145	34.36
	26-30 years	84	19.91
	31-35 years	84	19.91
	36-40 years	44	10.43
	41-50 years	47	11.14
	51-60 years	15	3.55
	More than 60 years	3	0.70
	18-25 years	145	34.36
	Total	422	100

Table 1 The Summary of Demographic Factors (cont.)

Demographic	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Marital Status	Single	265	62.80
	Married	150	35.55
	Divorced / Widow / Separation	7	1.65
	Total	422	100
Highest Education	Lower than Bachelor Degree	129	30.57
	Bachelor Degree or Equivalent	269	63.74
	Master Degree and higher	24	5.69
	Total	422	100
Occupation	Students	98	23.22
	Civil Servants / Public Company Employees	28	6.64
	Private Company Employees	192	45.50
	Business Owners	91	21.56
	Homebody / Housewife / Retired	12	2.84
	Freelancers	1	0.24
	Total	422	100
Monthly Personal Income	Less than 10,000 Baht	80	18.96
	10,001-15,000 Baht	97	22.99
	15,001-20,000 Baht	71	16.82
	20,001-30,000 Baht	78	18.48
	30,001-40,000 Baht	40	9.48
	40,001-50,000 Baht	13	3.08
	50,001-60,000 Baht	6	1.42
	60,001-70,000 Baht	6	1.42
	70,001-80,000 Baht	3	0.71
	80,001-90,000 Baht	1	0.24
	90,001-100,000 Baht	4	0.95
	More than 100,000 Baht	23	5.45
	Total	422	100

Table 1 The Summary of Demographic Factors (cont.)

Demographic	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Monthly Household Income	Less than 10,000 Baht	0	0
	10,001-15,000 Baht	4	0.95
	15,001-20,000 Baht	11	2.61
	20,001-30,000 Baht	41	9.72
	30,001-40,000 Baht	68	16.11
	40,001-50,000 Baht	49	11.61
	50,001-60,000 Baht	55	13.03
	60,001-70,000 Baht	36	8.53
	70,001-80,000 Baht	22	5.21
	80,001-90,000 Baht	10	2.37
	90,001-100,000 Baht	37	8.77
	More than 100,000 Baht	89	21.09
	Total	422	100

Table 2 The Summary of Hypothesis Testing (Hypothesis 1)

Hypothesis	Variable	p-value	Result
H1	Gender and the South Korea's nation brand preference	0.001	Rejected H_0
	Age and the South Korea's nation brand preference	0.541	Failed to reject H_0
	Marital status and the South Korea's nation brand preference	0.151	Failed to reject H_0
	Education and the South Korea's nation brand preference	0.003	Rejected H_0
	Occupation and the South Korea's nation brand preference	0.451	Failed to reject H_0
	Monthly personal income and the South Korea's nation brand preference	0.699	Failed to reject H_0
	Monthly household income and the South Korea's nation brand preference	0.458	Failed to reject H_0

Table 3 The Summary of Hypothesis Testing (Hypothesis 2-8)

Hypothesis	Variable	p-value	Result
H2	The South Korean's music preference and the South Korea's nation brand preference	0.000	Rejected H_0
H3	The South Korean's TV series preference and the South Korea's nation brand preference	0.000	Rejected H_0
H4	The South Korean's movie preference and the South Korea's nation brand preference	0.003	Rejected H_0
H5	The South Korean's food preference and the South Korea's nation brand preference	0.000	Rejected H_0
H6	The South Korean's sports preference and the South Korea's nation brand preference	0.000	Rejected H_0
H7	The South Korean's celebrity preference and the South Korea's nation brand preference	0.001	Rejected H_0
H8	The South Korean's tourist attraction preference and the South Korea's nation brand preference	0.000	Rejected H_0

Table 4 The Summary of Top 3 Purchasing Intention of South Korean products and services

All Respondent (N=422)		
Variable	Frequency	Percent
Korean restaurant	231	21.37
Cosmetics brand from the South Korea	196	18.13
Mobile phone / tablet from the South Korea, such as Samsung, LG	153	14.15
Female Respondent (N=287)		
Variable	Frequency	Percent
Cosmetics brand from the South Korea	181	63.51
Korean restaurant	163	57.19
Mobile phone / tablet from the South Korea, such as Samsung, LG	92	32.28
Male Respondent (N=135)		
Variable	Frequency	Percent
Korean restaurant	68	21.86
Electrical appliances from the South Korea, such as Samsung, LG	67	21.54
Mobile phone / tablet from the South Korea, such as Samsung, LG	61	19.61

Conclusion

The research demonstrated a trace of relationship among the preference of South Korean's cultural elements, nation-brand preference and purchasing intention that coincides with the hierarchy of effects model developed by Lavidge & Steiner (1961). Only Gender (both male and female) and Education (both lower than bachelor degree and higher than bachelor degree or equivalent) were found to have influence on the South Korea's nation-brand preference. The relationship between education and brand preference was backed by McNeal (1982) that consumers normally choose certain products, services and activities because they are associated with a certain education. All 8 cultural elements were found to be influencing the South Korea's nation-brand preference.

Discussion

The preference of these cultural elements led to not only purchasing intention in the area of South Korea's tourism, but also the purchasing intention in varieties of the South Korea's products and services. This suggests that Soft Power in the form of Cultural Power (Fan, 2008) is transformative as it can induce Economic Power. They also support Dinnie's observation that the role of advertising and PR on nation branding in itself should not be regarded as sufficient (Dinnie, 2009). This confirms the interesting thought raised in the introduction part as well as brings about the new concepts detailed as follows:

- The good cooperation between the government and private sectors, particularly entertainment and consumer goods companies, on constructing the nation branding strategy, plan and action is crucial. This is to ensure that the promotion of cultural elements by either party will lead to the purchasing intention of many products and services in addition to tourism.
- Partnering the government's tourism campaign with private sector's products or services may yield a greater economic returns for the government's tourism campaign. As travelling abroad is not activity individual consumer can afford to do daily.

Recommendations and Future Research

As the AEC is drawing near, Thai government should pay careful attention to nation branding and the cultural elements in order to fully utilize them as tools to create an economic gain for Thailand. However, this national effort requires helping hands from various private sectors and government bodies to maximize the economic opportunity. The synergy among the government and private sectors as well as among the private sectors themselves are needed to create the well orchestrated nation branding objective, strategy, planning and execution. This should help maximize the economic impacts of Thailand's nation brand campaign.

To support Thailand's nation branding exercise, it is recommended that the similar research should be applied to foreign tourists

in Thailand as well as targeted country citizens abroad. Detailed attributes of each of Thai cultural element should be added, checked and analyzed their effect on our nation-brand preference and purchasing intention. Additionally, the further understanding on those who do

not prefer Thailand should be added, analyzed and rationalized in order to clearly provide the complete view of opportunity and barrier of using cultural elements to influence nation-brand preference.

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