

An Impact of Image Richness on Korea on Attitude about Korean Consumer Goods in Central Asia: Mediating Role of Reliability on Entertainment Product and Product Image

Janghyun Kim¹, Ilhyun Bae² and Yoshimoto Koji^{3*}

¹Department of Business Administration, KC University, Seoul - 07661, Republic of Korea; aidy79@hanmail.net

²College of Business Administration, Hyupsung University, Hwaseong city, Gyeonggi-do - 18330, Republic of Korea; baeih102@hanmail.net

³Department of Fisheries Business Administration, Gyeongsang National University, Tongyeong city, Gyeongsangnam-do - 53064, Republic of Korea; Koji1011@hanmail.net

Abstract

Objectives: This research examines about Korean Wave in Central Asia. Especially we study relationship of Image richness on Korea and Attitude about Korean Consumer Goods. **Methods/Statistical Analysis:** Our data analysis has been conducted was analyzed using the structural equation modeling technique, using the AMOS and SPSS software, and we adopt the covariance-based approach. Our respondents were from Tashkent, Uzbekistan (n=377). 61.3 % of total respondents were male (n=231) and 38.7 % (n=146) were female and the mean of age was 23.87. **Findings:** First, image richness on Korea positive has an impact on reliability of video and music product. Second, the relationships between reliability of video/music product and image richness on consumer goods are positive. Third, image richness on consumer goods has a positive effect on attitude on consumer goods. Moreover, the results of this study mean that reliability of video product, reliability of music product and image richness on consumer goods has a mediating role between Image richness on Korea and attitude about Korean consumer goods in central Asia. **Improvements/Applications:** the qualitative aspect of the country image had the halo effect, so it is important to help people come up with more images related to a country.

Keywords: Attitude on Consumer Goods, Central Asia, Image Richness on Korea, Image on Consumer Goods, National Image, Reliability on Entertainment Product

1. Introduction

The importance of the brand used to be emphasized at the company level. However, in this era, it is extended to the country level. It is because the country brand can create a high-value product. For example, Mont Blanc used to be a pen specialized brand but it became a male luxury fashion brand (e.g., watch and wallet) on the aid of the German country brand. It was because the German's country image, a leading technology company, supported the brand. Similarly, Hugo Boss, a male luxury fashion brand, is a popular male fashion brand in accordance with the

image of German. It is a good contrast with France, which has many female brands.

According to the previous studies, the image of a country is closely related to the evaluation of products produced in the country. It is called the country of origin effect. Previous studies proposed that the image of the country of origin could act as a source of evaluation¹.

(On the other hand,) From the last 1990s, South Korean soap operas, movies, and pop music have been very popular in Northeast Asia (i.e., China, Japan, Hong Kong, and Taiwan) and Southeast Asia (i.e., Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore). The hot blast of the

*Author for correspondence

Korean wave has spread Central Asian, Southwest Asian, and Eastern European countries including Islamic countries such as Iran, UAE, and Uzbekistan in recent years. The K-POP has extended to all over the world through the internet and the hot blast of the Korean wave has extended to Western European countries (e.g., France and the UK) and South American countries (e.g., Brazil and Chile).

This study intended to confirm the relationships among the country image, the reliability of intangible products (e.g., music and video related products), and the image and attitude toward the consumer goods of the company.

1.1 The Country of Origin Effect and the Halo Effect

The country of origin effect means that the information of the country of product or brand manufacture can affect the consumers' information process and decision-making process and accompanied behavior positively/negatively^{2,3}. Previous studies on the country of origin effect proposed that the country of origin could be classified into various forms depending on characteristics and that the country of origin should be considered in various aspects, more than a country of manufacture. For example, several studies defined the location of the head office of a product or a brand (on marketing) as the country of origin and the country, where the production was actually made, as the country of manufacture^{4,5}. In this aspect, the country of origin means the country related to the brand, while the country of manufacture means the country where the production is actually made.

(On the other hand,) previous studies reported that the image of the country of manufacture could be a source of the halo effect¹. The halo effect means that the overall evaluation is changed due to a specific character, when one evaluates a thing or a person. Previous studies, which evaluated the halo effect of a country image, mainly focused on the valence aspect of an image⁶. For example, a study reported that the country of origin affected the quality evaluation more than a brand did, although both of them influence the quality evaluation⁶. There was a study applying the halo effect to explain the effect of Korean wave in the Japanese and the US markets⁷.

1.2 Studies on Credibility

Generally, the credibility is associated with the source evaluation delivering information and it can be defined

as "believability"⁸. Moreover, the credibility indicates if the intention of an entity is believable at a specific point⁹.

The credibility was mainly studied in the communication field. Studies in this field mainly emphasize the role of the credibility associated with verbal information¹⁰⁻¹³. In particular, studies showed the verbal communication at off-line condition was different from that at online and as the communication via the online and the internet became active¹⁴. In other words, people determine the credibility of the information source based on the similarity with oneself¹¹, the fascination of the information source¹⁰, and the expertise¹¹ at an off-line situation. It is highly likely that people determine and standardize an opponent with using limited information such as opponent's speaking style, writing style, and conversation situation because there is insufficient information about the opponent in an online situation.

Some studies applied the credibility concept to the brand¹⁵. In this aspect, these studies focused on the effects of imperfect and asymmetric information in the brand selection process of customers and proposed that the brand credibility was the signal role of the brand¹⁵. The credibility of a brand is defined by how reliable the production information in a brand is and it is considered as an evaluation if the brand can continually deliver what it promises and if it is reliable⁹. In other words, the expertise, a lower dimension of the brand credibility, is the capability to deliver what a brand promises to deliver and the credit, another lower dimension, means the brand is willing to deliver what it promises^{16,17}.

2. Research Model and Hypotheses

The image of a subject can bring a positive evaluation. It is because an image has vivid information. Previous studies focused on the influence of a subject's characteristics, which were provided to consumers. Several studies related to this field emphasized the vividness of the provided information. For example, consumers are more interested in, pay more attention to, and think more about vividly described information¹⁸. Moreover, a study indicated that a headline of a newspaper, which reflected a linguistic image, played an important role in the communication between a news reporter, who composed the article, and a reader¹⁹.

It is because vivid information draws the attention of a receiver better and stimulates a receiver's imagination

more than abstract information does. The belief formed by vivid information has higher accessibility and it is accepted as a more reliable thing. If other conditions are identical, vivid verbal communication can be considered as a more reliable media²⁰. If this discussion is connected to the image richness, a rich image can be considered as more vivid information than poor image. Therefore, we can deduct that a rich image will increase the credibility.

The halo effect of the country of origin can be another reason. Consumers draw a conclusion by using accessible clues²¹. For example, consumers consider a cheap product as a low quality product²² and a long warranty period as a highly reliable product²³. The country of origin plays the same role and it can be considered as the halo effect of the country of origin. The country of origin effect means that the country of manufacture information of a product/a brand influences the information process and the decision-making process of consumers and other behaviors associated with them positively/negatively^{2,3}. A previous study indicated that the image of the country of origin caused a halo effect to affect the individual attribute assessment⁵.

In particular, culture contents such as music and video product has a strong credence quality attribute and an experience quality attributes, so various factors various factors affected the quality. It was determined that the country of origin could play a main role in the decision making process.

If the image of a country is more favorable, the culture content (i.e., music product and video product) will be more reliable and consumers will have more favorable attitude.

H1: As a consumer has a richer image to a country, the credibility of the country's music product will be higher.

H2: As a consumer has a richer image to a country, the credibility of the country's video product will be higher.

A brand with high credibility reduces the information cost of consumers and it plays a signal role indicating that it can increase the expected convenience value^{15,16}. Therefore, a reasonable consumer chooses a highly credible brand or searches information to determine the credibility for minimizing a potential error in a decision-making. In other words, the brand credibility can influence the determination on a subject.

Moreover, a previous study revealed that a brand with higher credibility had higher brand quality and made

customers perceive a lower risk in purchasing the brand and a lower opportunity cost of the brand¹⁵. For example, Samsung home appliances are advertised in many places and many people are using them. Consumers may take the high advertisement cost as a signal that the brand is reliable. Through this, the credibility of the brand increases. Consequently, consumers perceive that the Samsung brand is high quality and it reduces the risk in purchasing a Samsung brand product.

Several studies showed the positive and significant relationship between brand credibility and subject evaluation^{9,16,17}. Moreover, there was a study arguing that the tactile information influenced the individual attitude and changed a behavior²⁴. Based on this discussion, the following hypotheses were made.

H3: As a consumer has higher brand credibility on a music product, the image richness of the country's consumer goods will be higher.

H4: As a consumer has higher brand credibility on a video product, the image richness of the country's consumer goods will be higher.

The country image is called the prejudice or the stereotype of the country of manufacture. It means the image or the reputation of general consumers on products manufactured in a specific country. It was replaced by the variable called the country of origin effect and many studies have been conducted in the marketing field since the 1960s. The majority of studies proved that the country of origin information was used as an important factor determining the quality of a product. For example, the influence of the country image differs by the product involvement. High involvement products such as the automobile affects the country image 4 times more than low involvement products do²⁵. Moreover, the country image can affect the product evaluation of the country and the product purchase²⁶. People tend to form a more favorable attitude to a product from a more developed country than the country where customers currently reside²⁷. In particular, the country image considerably affects a product as an extrinsic information cue, which the intrinsic information cue of a product cannot be acquired easily.

This study proposed that the country image would give a positive influence on the product evaluation via the entertainment product evaluation. In other words, a positive country image would affect the entertainment product of the country positively and it influences the

image of consumer goods positively (Hypotheses 1~4). The improved image of products would positively affect the evaluation (i.e., attitude) of the products.

H5: As consumer goods have richer images, the attitude toward these products will be higher.

Figure 1 shows the research model based on proposed hypotheses.

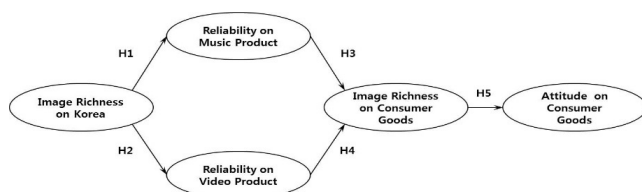


Figure 1. Research Model.

3. Data Analysis and Results

To prove the proposed hypotheses, a survey was conducted to Uzbekistan consumers residing in the Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. Total 377 people responded to the survey and the data was analyzed. There were 231 male respondents and 146 female respondents. The mean age of respondents was 23.87 year (minimum = 14, maximum = 78, and standard deviation = 4.468).

The followings were the list of measured variables for the study. The image richness of South Korean and South Korean consumer goods were measured by three 5 point Likert-type scales (e.g., South Korea is a subject like a picture in my mind. When I think of South Korea, this image appears in my mind. South Korea reminds me many things)²⁸⁻³⁰.

The trustworthiness of music products and video products was measured by five 5 point Likert-type scales. South Korea conducts what it promised in the video product such as movies and soap operas (or music product such as K-Pop). What South Korea argues in the video product such as movies and soap operas (or music product such as K-Pop) is trustworthy. According to my experiences on the video product such as movies and soap operas (or music product such as K-Pop), they will keep their promise even after time goes by. In the aspect of the video product such as movies and soap operas (or music product such as K-Pop), South Korea is a trustworthy name. In the video product such as movies and soap operas (or music product such as K-Pop), South Korea does not pretend that it is capable of doing something¹⁵.

Lastly, the attitude toward South Korean consumer goods was measured by six 5 point meaning differentiation Likert-type scales (negative/positive, unpleasant/pleasant, dislike/like, unuseful/useful, bad/good, and unfavorable/favorable)^{31,32}. Researchers described in the survey that non-durable consumer goods (e.g., Korean food such as seaweed, Kimchi, rice wine) and durable consumer goods (e.g., electronic products, cell phones, and automobiles) are examples of the consumer product to aid the understanding of local consumers to measure the attitude toward consumer goods products.

Prior to testing the hypotheses, the reliability and validity of collected data were confirmed. It was confirmed that all variables had internal consistency (consumer goods attitude =.858, consumer goods image richness =.774, South Korea image richness =.783, the reliability of video products=.792, and the reliability of music products). Later, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted.

Firstly, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted for each variable. 'South Korea/consumer goods image richness' were measured by three items so they were excluded in this analysis step. Analysis results were mostly satisfactory (reliability of music products: $\chi^2=14.109$, d.f.=2, $p=.001$, GFI=.982, CFI=.974; reliability of video products: $\chi^2=2.144$, d.f.=2, $p=.342$, GFI=.997, CFI=1.000; consumer goods attitude: $\chi^2=61.766$, d.f.=9, $p=.000$, GFI=.947, CFI=.944). Afterward, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted at the measurement model level, which included all variables. Results showed that two items in the reliability of music products and one item in the reliability of video product reduced the goodness of fit. Therefore, they were removed from the analysis. After removing three items, the goodness of it was $\chi^2=270.178$, d.f.=109, $p=.000$, GFI=.920, CFI=.940, which satisfied the most of the criteria. Moreover, results showed that standard factor loadings of each item were significantly larger than .5. Furthermore, the average variance extracted (AVE) value was larger than .5 as well (Table 1).

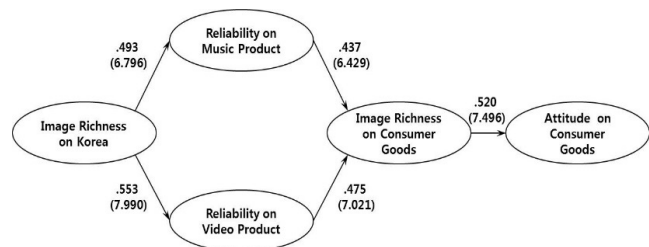
To confirm the discrimination validity, AVE values and squared correlation values were compared. In the <Table 3>, values at the diagonal line were AVE values and values in parentheses were squared correlation values. The AVE of a variable was larger than the squared correlation value. Therefore, the scales used in the study had the discrimination validity. Moreover, construct reliability values were always larger than .7 as shown in Table 2, which indicated that the high reliability among the measurement items of variables was acquired.

Table 1. Result of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	item	t-value	St. Coefficients	average variance extracted	construct reliability
Reliability on Video Product	item3	-	.763	.569	.772
	item2	13.997	.779		
	item4	13.073	.721		
Reliability on Music Product	item2	-	.740	.620	.737
	item3	12.488	.832		
Image Richness on Consumer Goods	item1	-	.580	.533	.749
	item2	12.056	.762		
	item3	11.523	.781		
Attitude on Consumer Goods	item1	-	.758	.514	.869
	item2	10.902	.728		
	item3	11.063	.673		
	item4	10.866	.816		
	item5	10.600	.725		
	item6	10.076	.670		
Image Richness on Korea	item1	-	.721	.547	.768
	item2	12.245	.762		
	item3	11.523	.707		

After conducting a confirmatory factor analysis, hypotheses were tested based on refined items. Results showed that one item in consumer goods attitude hindered the goodness of fit so the item was removed. Results revealed that the goodness of fit was $\chi^2=342.182$, d.f.=98, $p=.000$, GFI=.904, and CFI=.902, which satisfied the overall criteria. Hypotheses testing results are shown in Figure 2. The variable of each coefficient indicated a standardization regression coefficient and a value in a parenthesis was t value.

Hypothesis 1 was set as the credibility of the country's music product would be higher when a consumer has a richer image to a country. Results showed that a standardization regression coefficient (hereafter, a regression

**Figure 2.** Hypothesis Testing.

coefficient or a coefficient) was .493 and it was statistically significant ($t=6.796$, $p<.01$). Therefore, hypothesis 1 was accepted. Hypothesis 2 was that the credibility of the country's video product would be higher when a consumer has a richer image to a country. Results showed that a coefficient (hereafter, a regression coefficient or a

Table 2. Inter-Construct Correlations and Discriminant Validity

	A	B	C	D	E
A: Reliability on Video Product					
B: Reliability on Music Product	.734 (.539)				
C: Attitude on Consumer Goods	.641 (.411)	.509 (.259)			
D: Image Richness on Consumer Goods	.599 (.358)	.646 (.417)	.448 (.201)		
E: Image Richness on Korea	.482 (.232)	.405 (.164)	.535 (.286)	.361 (.130)	

coefficient) was .553 and it was statistically significant ($t=7.990$, $p<.01$). Therefore, hypothesis 2 was accepted. Hypothesis 3 was set as that the image richness of the country's consumer goods would be higher if a consumer has a higher brand credibility on a music product. Results indicated that a coefficient was .437 and it was statistically significant ($t=6.429$, $p<.01$). Therefore, hypothesis 3 was accepted.

Hypothesis 3 was that the image richness of the country's consumer goods would be higher if a consumer has a higher brand credibility on a video product. Results showed that a coefficient was .475 and it was statistically significant ($t=7.021$, $p<.01$). Therefore, hypothesis 4 was accepted. Lastly, hypothesis 5 was about the relationship between the consumer goods image richness and the consumer goods attitude. Results revealed that a coefficient was .520 and it was statistically significant ($t=7.496$, $p<.01$).

4. Conclusion

Uzbekistan is a country representing the Central Asian market. The study evaluated how the Uzbekistan customers' perception on the country image of South Korea, the credibility of intangible products produced in South Korea (e.g., music products and video related products), and the credibility on these culture contents influenced the evaluation of consumer goods, in other words, the images and attitude to consumer goods. The results and implications are as follows.

Results showed that as a customer had richer the country images of South Korea, the customer showed higher credibility on South Korean music products and video products. Moreover, it was shown that the country

image made a positive influence on product evaluation through the evaluation of entertainment products. In other words, a positive country image made a positive influence on the country's entertainment products and it affects the consumer goods of the country. The study showed that the enhanced image of a product positively influenced the evaluation (or attitude) of a product.

Moreover, the study results provided following implications. Firstly, this study, unlike previous studies evaluated of the country image in the qualitative dimension, not in the quantitative dimension. Moreover, analysis results revealed that the qualitative aspect of the country image also had the halo effect. Therefore, it is important to create a positive country image, as it has been emphasized, and it is also important to help people come up with more images related to a country. In other words, various efforts will be needed to connect a node, called South Korea, to more links.

Moreover, the study results showed that the country of origin effect appeared at intangible products such as video and music products as well as tangible products. In particular, it affected the credibility of these intangible products and the credibility positively influenced the image and attitude of the overall consumer goods. In other words, the study suggested that the country image, culture content products, and consumer goods were closely related. As stated earlier, an image of Germany could play the halo effect and increase the credibility of fashion brands and the effect can be extended to other types of products. Moreover, the evaluation of culture content products, derived through this process, can positively influence other consumer goods.

Although this study had meaningful implications as stated above, this study had following limitations. Firstly,

this study was about the influence of the South Korea's country image in the Uzbekistan. Therefore, it might be inappropriate to apply the study results to various cultural areas. Moreover, the Uzbekistan is a large country and it is hard to say that a small set of data can represent the whole country. The follow-up research should study the majority of the population in various cultural areas. Secondly, the study is meaningful that it confirmed the effect of the country image at the qualitative dimension. On the other hand, it has a weakness of not considering the quantitative dimension of the country image at the same time. Therefore, a future study should deal with both dimensions at the same time.

5. References

1. Schiffman LG. Perceived risk in new product trial by elderly consumers. *Journal of Marketing Research*. 1972; 9(1):106–8.
2. Elliott G, Cameron R. Consumer perception of product quality and the country of origin effect. *Journal of International Marketing*. 1994; 2(2):49–64.
3. Samiee S. Customer evaluation of products in a global market. *Journal of International Business Studies*. 1994; 25(3):579–604.
4. Chao P. Partitioning country-of-origin effects: consumer evaluations of hybrid product. *Journal of International Business Studies*. 1993; 24(1):291–306.
5. Johansson JK, Douglas SP, Nonaka I. Assessing the impact of country of origin on product evaluations: a new methodological perspective. *Journal of Marketing Research*. 1985; 22(4):388–96.
6. Han CM, Terpstra V. Country of Origin Effects for Uni-National and Bi-National Products. *Journal of International Business Studies*. 1988; 19(2):235–55.
7. Park S, Kim J, Bae I. A theoretical approach to Korean wave and its empirical study on intention to purchase. *Information: An International Interdisciplinary Journal*. 2016; 19(5):1355–61.
8. Tseng S, Fogg BJ. Credibility and Computing Technology. *Communications of the ACM*. 1999; 42(5):39–44.
9. Erdem T, Swait J. Brand credibility, brand consideration, and choice. *Journal of Consumer Research*. 2004; 31(1):191–8.
10. Chaiken S. Communicator Physical Attractiveness and Persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 1979; 37(8):1387–97.
11. McGuire JH. Limiting Sage Surface Temperature of Combustible Materials. *Fire Technology*. 1969; 5(3):237–41.
12. Najafi I, Kahani M. E-Trust readiness indexes assessment at E-Transactions in the context of B2C E-Commerce. *Indian Journal of Science and Technology*. 2016; 9(2):1–12.
13. Wathan CN, Burkell J. Believe it or not: factors influencing credibility on the web. *Journal of American Society for Information Science and Technology*. 2002; 53(2):134–44.
14. Lee C, Lee H, Lee S, Kim J. The Effect of WOM's Information Characteristics on WOM Adoption in the Online Shopping Context: Focused on the Mediating Roles of Trust and Usefulness. *Korea Research Academy of Distribution and Management Review*. 2013; 16(3):59–75.
15. Erdem T, Swait J. Brand Equity as a Signaling Phenomenon. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*. 1998; 7(2):131–57.
16. Kim J, Bae I. An Influence of Korean National Image on Japanese Consumer's Perceived Quality, Risk and Information Cost Saving: focused on Mediating Role of Brand Credibility. *International Area Studies Review*. 2011; 15(1):315–39.
17. Erdem T, Swait J, Louviere J. The Impact of Brand Credibility on Consumer Price Sensibility. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*. 2002; 19(1):1–19.
18. Herr PM, Kardes FR, Kim J. Effects of word of mouth and product-attribute information on persuasion: an accessibility diagnostically perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research*. 1991; 17(4):454–62.
19. Yergaliyev K, Amrenov A, Kadyrova B, Esirkepova K, Orazhanova M. Newspaper headlines as a marker of a language picture of the world. *Indian Journal of Science and Technology*. 2016; 9(26):1–9.
20. Grewal R, Cline TW, Davies A. Early-Entrant Advantage, Word of Mouth Communication, Brand Similarity, and the Consumer Decision-Making Process. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*. 2003; 13(3):187–97.
21. Szybillo GJ, Jacoby J. Intrinsic versus extrinsic cues as determinants of perceived product quality. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 1974; 59(1):74–8.
22. Rao AR, Monroe KB. The Effect of Price, Brand Name, and Store Name on Buyers' Perceptions of Product Quality: An Integrative Review. *Journal of Marketing Research*. 1989; 26(3):351–7.
23. Broniarczyk SM, Alba JW. The role of consumers' intuitions in inference making. *Journal of Consumer Research*. 1994; 21(4):393–407.
24. Hornik J. Tactile stimulation and consumer response. *Journal of Consumer Research*. 1992; 19(3):449–58.
25. Hooley GJ, Shipley D, Krieger N. A method for modeling consumer perceptions of country of origin. *International Marketing Review*. 1988; 5(3):67–76.
26. Nagashima A. A Comparison of Japanese and U. S. Attitudes toward Foreign Products. *Journal of Marketing*. 1970; 34(1):68–74.
27. Wall M, Heslop LA. Consumer attitudes toward Canadian-made versus imported product. *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*. 1986; 14(2):27–36.

28. Yingling RW. Classification of reaction patterns in listening to music. *Journal of Research in Music Education*. 1962; 10(2):105–20.
29. Hargreaves DJ. Preference and Prejudice in Music: A Psychological Approach. *Popular Music and Society*. 1982; 8(3-4):13–8.
30. Lacher KT, Mizerski R. An exploratory study of the responses and relationships involved in the evaluation of, and in the intention to purchase new rock music. *Journal of Consumer Research*. 1994; 21(2):366–80.
31. Kirmani A. The effect of perceived advertising costs on brand perceptions. *Journal of Consumer Research*. 1990; 17(2):160–71.
32. Homer PM. Ad size as an indicator of perceived advertising costs and effort: the effects on memory and perceptions. *Journal of Advertising*. 1995; 24(4):1–12.