Investigating the effect of country image and subjective knowledge on attitudes and behaviors: U.S. Upper Midwesterners’ intentions to consume Korean Food and visit Korea

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Abstract

Korean food (Hansik) is one of the fastest growing cuisines globally. This trend is evident with the number of Korean restaurants scattered around the world. An increasing number of Korean restaurants have been observed in the United States, especially in more culturally diverse areas such as major cities on the east and west coasts. However, noticeably less Korean restaurants are seen in the Midwest region. This study investigated the Midwesterners’ intention to try Hansik and further to visit South Korea (henceforth referred to as Korea) based on the country image of Korea and knowledge they have of Korean cuisine, which together influence their attitude toward the new cuisine. The results showed that cognitive image influences the attitude through affective image, and subjective knowledge also influences the respondents’ attitude toward Hansik. As proposed, these constructs have positive influences on both intentions to try Hansik and to visit Korea in the near future. Study implications and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

1. Introduction

International cuisines such as Italian, Mexican, Japanese, Thai, and Caribbean have shown significant growth in popularity within the ethnic food market in the United States (US). With the global movement of food and people, other international cuisines such as Vietnamese, Cuban, and Peruvian are also starting to see success in the US market (National Restaurant Association, 2012). However, unlike more popular international cuisines such as Chinese, Mexican, and Italian, less well-known cuisines such as Korean (also known as Hansik) might have many challenges in establishing its market in the US, especially in certain regions such as the Upper Midwest where consumers may have limited exposure to international cuisines. When entering a new market, product developers should consider whether or not the consumers in the region have intentions to try the new cuisine.

Consumer behavior intentions have been measured in various ways in consumer and marketing studies in the past. However, attitude has been one of the most widely studied subjects in predicting consumer behaviors (Ajzen and Driver, 1991; Day and Deutscher, 1982; Fazio, 1986; Lutz, 1985; Terry and Hogg, 1996). Attitude is a summative evaluation of objects (e.g., food) based on the information an individual has about the specific objects. The individuals can go through various sources to obtain information about certain types of food (e.g., organic/health food, Chinese food, Indian food) and develop their food attitude. Food attitude has been shown as one of the key influences on food choice and consumption behaviors (Arvola et al., 2008; Rozin, 1988; Spence and Townsend, 2006; Urala and Lähteenmäki, 2004). Thus, attitude toward consuming a new international cuisine would be a major factor for measuring one’s intention to try it. Individuals with a positive attitude toward consuming an international cuisine are more likely to try the food while individuals with a negative food attitude are less likely to try it.

Consumers also form their attitudes and purchase intentions toward foreign products based on the product country image (PCI) or country-of-origin (CoO) (Clarke et al., 2000; Felzensztein and Dinnie, 2005; Han, 1989; Knight and Calantone, 2000; Lim and O’Cass, 2001; Moon and Jain, 2002,). Country image plays an especially important role when the quality of a foreign product is unknown (Han, 1990), thus the CoO concept fits the current study appropriately because ‘foreign’ and ‘new’ food products are discussed. Traditionally, consumer products such as automobiles, electronics, and fashion products were prevalent stimuli in CoO studies; however, not many of these studies targeted food products.
the US (KAFTC, 2008). Only 115 (7%) restaurants were found in the

restaurants, primarily in the West (809) and Northeast (352) regions of

(KAFTC) indicated that as of 2008, there were 1628 Korean restau-

thus opening 300 restaurants in each of the 10 years. One of the

restaurants worldwide from 10,000 (2007) to 40,000 by year 2017;

“Globalization of Hansik” is also integrated with the “2010–2012

and network with industry experts. The Korean government hopes

toward this mission from various channels, including government

Commission for Future and Vision, and the Ministry for Food, Agri-

Cuisine to the World (2009) symposium in April 2009 with the sup-

and Diamantopoulos, 2009; Raju et al., 1995; Flynn and Goldsmith,

Little research has been done exploring the relationships among

these variables together with international food and intent to visit

(Karim and Chi, 2010) the country where food is from. This study

aims to address the research need and provide meaningful informa-

tion to international food marketers and developers for expanding

their markets globally. Investigating how subjective knowledge of

Hansik and the image of Korea influences attitude toward trying

Korean food and their intention toward trying it. In particu-

lar, Hansik would be less familiar to most Upper Midwesterners

since the region is not as culturally diverse as the East and

West coast markets. For instance, the Caucasian population in

California accounts for less than half of the population (40%), and

places like New York (58% Caucasian) and Georgia (56% Caucasian)

have larger representation of ethnic groups; whereas Upper Mid-

western states (such as North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota,

Wisconsin, Iowa, and Nebraska), have over 80% Caucasians (US

Census Bureau, 2012).

2. Literature review

2.1. Globalization of Korean foods (Hansik)

In October 2008, the Korean government pledged to promote

Hansik as one of the five major international cuisines (Korean

Cuisine to the World, 2009). There have been many efforts

toward this mission from various channels, including government

agencies, state agencies, and business owners. The Presidential

Commission for Future and Vision, and the Ministry for Food, Agri-

culture, Forestry and Fisheries (MFAFF, 2007) jointly held Korean

Cuisine to the World (2009) symposium in April 2009 with the sup-

port of the Korean first lady (Oh, 2010). This provided a platform

for experts and chefs throughout the world to learn about Hansik

and network with industry experts. The Korean government hopes

to promote the culture behind Hansik, thus projecting an accurate

image of Korean food to those who are new to the cuisine. The

“Globalization of Hansik” is also integrated with the “2010–2012

Visit Korea Year” campaign, which was launched in November 2009

to attract more international tourists and create more tourism rev-

enues over the 3 years (Korea Tourism Organization, 2009).

One of the major strategies is to expand the number of Korean

restaurants worldwide from 10,000 (2007) to 40,000 by year 2017;

thus opening 300 restaurants in each of the 10 years. One of the

biggest markets for Hansik is the United States followed by China

and Japan. A study done by Korea Agro-Fisheries Trade Corporation

(KAFTC) indicated that as of 2008, there were 1628 Korean restaur-

ants, primarily in the West (809) and Northeast (352) regions of

the US (KAFTC, 2008). Only 115 (7%) restaurants were found in the

Midwest region. Since the Korean restaurant market is well devel-

oped on both coasts, the Midwest is potentially the next viable

market for the Korean government and business owners to target

for globalizing Hansik.

Before the Korean government and private sector try to

put forth efforts to expand the market in the Midwest, it is

first prudent to understand how Midwesterners perceive

Korean food and their intention toward trying it. In particu-

lar, Hansik would be less familiar to most Upper Midwesterners

Eagly and Chaiken (1993, p. 1) provided a contemporary def-

inition stating that attitude is “a psychological tendency that is

expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of

favor or disfavor.” This posits that three elements are required:

tendency, an attitude object, and evaluation. Attitudes, whether

positive or negative, can be formed either experientially or by form-

ing linkages between the primary attitude or target object and other

related attitude objects (Eagly and Chaiken, 2007; Hsu and Huang,
in press). In the context of the current research, a tendency to have

a positive or negative attitude toward a specific dish, like kimchi (a

spicy Korean side dish), can be formed either by physically eating

the food, or linking it with an existing attitude toward Hansik in

general, or even identifying with the country of Korea if no previ-

ous experience with Hansik is available. The individuals can also
go through various sources to obtain information about the cuisine

in general (e.g., flavor principles, ingredients, cooking methods) or

specific menu items (e.g., kalbi, bulgogi, kimchi) and develop their

food attitude.

Literature specifically looking at attitude as it relates to food

is rather limited in comparison to the vast amount of attitudi-
nal research across many disciplines. Literature shows that studies

on food attitudes have traditionally focused on the affective and

cognitive components without considering sensory components

that may not be evident for non-food items (Aikman et al., 2006). Eertmans et al. (2001) showed that food attitudes can be developed

from what is common in a social or economic class (e.g.,
culturally acceptable foods), sensory liking (e.g., smell, texture), and

expected consequences of consuming a food (e.g., health benefits or
detriments). The latter reflects the expectancy-value model where

attitude toward a behavior (e.g., choosing a specific food) is a func-

tion of a cognitive belief structure composed of salient beliefs and

evaluation (Blue, 1995; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). That is, choosing

a specific food (e.g., low-fat yogurt) will lead to a specific outcome

(e.g., lower fat intake) and an evaluation of that outcome (e.g., like or dislike of the food, receiving the health benefit).

Recent studies have shown that a five-factor composite model adequately explained the general dimensions of food preferences and attitudes (Aikman et al., 2006; Aikman and Crites, 2007). The five factors are: positive affect (e.g., happy, satisfied), negative affect (e.g., disgusted, and sick), special sensory qualities (e.g., creamy, oily), abstract cognitive qualities (e.g., healthy, lean), and general sensory qualities (e.g., color, odor, taste). Specific and relatively common food items such as broccoli, apples, and chicken were provided to the respondents for evaluation based on the attitude items. Although the factors have proven stable across populations in the US (Hispanic/Mexican and Anglo American), this very detailed evaluation scale may not be appropriate for evaluating Hansik as a whole, especially when the respondents do not have a concrete frame of reference. Adopting a general attitude measurement toward consuming Hansik in semantic differential terms that are easily understood (i.e., Not enjoyable–Enjoyable, Unpleasant–Pleasant, Bad–Good) was more appropriate for this study. This degree of favorable or unfavorable evaluation concisely reflected elements of Eertmans et al.’s (2001) concept, particularly expected consequences of consuming a food and sensory liking, as well as a snapshot of Aikman et al.’s (2006) positive/negative affect, and special sensory, abstract cognitive, and general sensory qualities. This positive–negative evaluation can be considered as the first determinant of behavioral intention, particularly toward an unknown cuisine. This study aims to explore food attitudes, particularly attitude toward consuming an unfamiliar food, as it relates to the image the consumer holds of the country of origin, the subjective knowledge of the consumer regarding the unfamiliar cuisine, and the resulting intentions to consume the new cuisine and to visit that country.

### 2.3. Country image

Country-of-origin (CoO) image or product country image (PCI) (Papadopoulos and Haslop, 1989) has been recognized as a crucial marketing concept for the last four decades, since Nagashma (1970) first studied the differences between US and Japanese businessmen’s attitudes toward a foreign product based on country image. The concept has become even more relevant as the world economy is becoming increasingly global. Generally, country image is defined as “the total of all descriptive, inferential, and informational beliefs one has about a particular country” (Martin and Eroglu, 1993, p. 193) or “the sum of beliefs and impressions people hold about places” (Kotler and Gertner, 2002, p. 251). Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009) provided a review of the extant literature showing that country image has also been defined or viewed as perceptions, associations, stereotypes, or schemas.

Country image is often studied in the literature as a multidimensional construct with cognitive and affective measurements (Martinez and Alvarez, 2010; Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009). Traditionally, country image studies have focused on measuring only cognitive evaluation of tangible products (Kaynak and Cavusgil, 1983). More recent studies have agreed that country image also includes an affective component, which is “country-related emotions” (Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009, p. 737). Researchers suggest that taking into consideration both the cognitive and affective aspects provides a better grasp and/or measurement of the consumer’s perception of image (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999).

Consumers depend on the country image as their product evaluation cue just as they would use price, brand name, packaging, and warranty, which are referred to as intangible or extrinsic attributes (Cordell, 1992; Eroglu and Machleit, 1989; Martinez and Alvarez, 2010; Skaggs et al., 1996). Consumers tend to rely more on these extrinsic cues when they are not familiar with the products or when they have no prior knowledge of the product (Han, 1990; Skaggs et al., 1996). One study found that respondents rated products from South Korea and Morocco very low quality (d’Astous et al., 2008); the authors proposed the low evaluations were a result of unfamiliarity with the countries. Thus, country image has been viewed as a halo, which is used to infer the quality of unfamiliar foreign products (Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Erickson et al., 1984; Han, 1989). Han (1990) suggested that consumers might eliminate a product from their choices when they are unfamiliar with the country or the country’s products. For example, given a choice between Japanese, Chinese, or Korean restaurants, customers in the Upper Midwest may eliminate the latter simply because they may have limited exposure to it and are unable to make inferences. Despite the abundance of research on country image, a majority of these studies are mainly focused on tangible and durable products such as automobiles, appliances, computers, apparel, and air transportation (Krystallis and Chryssochoidi, 2009; Felzensztein and Dinnie, 2005). A few studies have shown the effect of country image on food products, but the subject still remains notably under-researched (Howard, 1989). Skaggs et al. (1996) summarized some of the country image research in relation to food products from mid 1960s to early 1990s. However, most of these dealt with specific food items (instant coffee, canned food) and beverages (soft drinks, juice, wine, beer, and liquor). Research is lacking on the acceptance of a specific foreign country cuisine based on the image of the particular country.

A comprehensive understanding of the effects of country image can provide important information for international business marketing strategies because it influences consumers’ attitude formation toward products made or related to that country and subsequent purchase intentions (Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Han, 1989; Johansson, 1989; Knight and Calantone, 2000; Kotler and Gertner, 2002; Nadeau et al., 2008; Papadopoulos et al., 1988; Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009). It has been suggested that the country image is constructed hierarchically from cognitive to affective (Gartner, 1993; Orbaiz and Papadopoulos, 2003). Individuals first evaluate the cognitive cues of a country, which then create emotions toward the country. Thus, the cognitive component will have an indirect effect on consumers’ attitude while the affective image will have a positive direct effect on attitude (Beerli and Martin, 2004; Stern and Krakover, 1993). This study examines whether this statement is applicable to the Upper Midwestern consumers’ attitudes toward Korea and consuming Hansik. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**Hypothesis 1.** Cognitive country image (CCI) positively influences affective country image (ACI).

**Hypothesis 2.** Affective country image (ACI) positively influences attitude toward consuming Hansik (ATT).

### 2.4. Subjective knowledge (SK)

Consumers’ knowledge of a product can influence their perceptions of and behaviors toward a product. A variety of research has shown that consumer knowledge can be measured as three distinct constructs, namely subjective knowledge, objective knowledge, and experience (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987; Biswas and Sherrell, 1993; Brucks, 1985). Subjective knowledge relates to one’s perception or confidence (Park and Lessig, 1981) and can be assessed with self-report measures (Brucks, 1985). Sample questions usually ask whether one is an expert or more knowledgeable than friends or other people about a product. For example, a question “I know how to judge the quality of a good California wine” can be asked to assess one’s subjective knowledge. In comparison, objective knowledge is defined as actual knowledge about a product and is measured with specific questions (Johnson and Russo, 1984). For example, a more
information specific question about California wine can be asked, such as “Chardonnay is the most planted grape variety in California” with an answer option of true or false for respondents. Other questions might relate to terms/definitions and specific attributes such as acidity, bouquet, and finish. Experience relates to the consumer’s usage of a product or ownership. Past researchers have found moderately high correlations (.40 to .60) between subjective and objective knowledge (Cole et al., 1986; Feick et al., 1992; Raju et al., 1995), as well as moderate correlations between subjective knowledge and usage. However, because it is highly probable that the majority of respondents in the Upper Midwest would have limited specific knowledge of Hansik, objective knowledge was not assessed as a part of this study.

Subjective knowledge is basically one’s confidence in choosing a product based on its attributes (Park and Lessig, 1981). In particular, Brucks (1985) stated that subjective knowledge refers to how much people think they know and that it significantly differs from objective knowledge when there is a gap in a person’s confidence about their actual knowledge level. Flynn and Goldsmith (1999) operationalized the construct as “a consumer’s perception of the amount of information they have stored in their memory” (p. 59), and developed a stable and reliable five-item scale for measuring it across multiple product categories. The authors have suggested that the scale is appropriate for developing or evaluating new products. They also found subjective knowledge was a better predictor of wine consumption than objective knowledge (Flynn and Goldsmith, 1999).

Raju et al. (1995) found that subjective knowledge was significantly related to decisions, more so than objective knowledge. Similarly, subjective knowledge is a stronger predictor of purchase intentions (Flynn and Goldsmith, 1999) and a stronger motivation for purchase related behaviors in comparison to objective behavior (Selnes and Gronhaug, 1986). In the context of the current research, an example of a purchase related behavior could be the intention to try Hansik. Previous research has also found that subjective knowledge can be a predictor of consumer satisfaction with purchases (Raju et al., 1995) and a motivator of purchase (Fiske et al., 1994). Thus, given the parameters of this study, subjective knowledge is a viable construct to measure, because familiarity with Hansik in the Upper Midwestern US is believed to be limited. Thus, the next hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3. Subjective knowledge of Hansik (SK) positively influences attitude (ATT) toward consuming Hansik.

2.5. Attitude and behavioral intentions

Attitude in relation to food has been found to be an important influence on one’s food choice and food related behaviors (Rozin, 1988) such as people’s intent to purchase food. The latter in turn is a predictor of actual purchases (Choo et al., 2004; Tarkiainen and Sundqvist, 2005) which could then demonstrate the viability of marketing Hansik in the region. Based on the literature discussed on attitude earlier, the next hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4. Attitude (ATT) toward consuming Hansik positively influences intention to try Hansik (FIN).

Nadeau et al. (2008) suggested that the way the country is perceived will influence tourism outcomes, while Karim and Chi (2010) stressed the importance of linking food and tourism. The latter found that there was a relationship between food image of a country and people’s intent to visit the destination. Their results showed that 7–13% of the variance in visit intentions could be predicted by food image for the countries of France, Italy and Thailand. Other researchers also found that food is a motivation for travel (Quang and Wang, 2004) and that it is a key factor in destination choice (Hu and Ritchie, 1993). Therefore, some suggest that food is a good promotional tool for tourism destinations (Hjalger and Richards, 2002). Thus, this study includes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5. Attitude (ATT) toward consuming Hansik positively influences intention to visit Korea (VIN).

In summary, the primary objective of the study is to explore the Upper Midwesterners’ intentions to consume Hansik and to visit Korea in the future. Based on extant literature, five hypotheses are proposed (Fig. 1).

3. Methodology

3.1. Measurement of variables

A survey questionnaire was developed to measure each construct in the proposed model. Most of the measurement items were adapted from previous studies. Cognitive country image was measured with 26 items from various previous studies (Han, 1990; Martin and Ergoulu, 1993; Martinez and Alvarez, 2010; Passow et al., 2005). Respondents were asked about their level of agreement on each of the 26 statements about Korea on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral, 7 = strongly agree). Country characteristics assessed in these statements included adjectives such as important, well-known, modern, peaceful, socially developed, and politically stable. Affective country image was adapted from previous studies. Cognitive country image was measured with 26 items from various previous studies (Han, 1990; Martin and Ergoulu, 1993; Martinez and Alvarez, 2010). Three 7-point semantic differential scale items ranging from –3 to 3 (unpleasant–pleasant, not friendly–friendly, not trustworthy–trustworthy) measured respondents’ affective image of Korea.

Five items for subjective knowledge of Hansik were adapted and modified from Flynn and Goldsmith (1999). Respondents were asked their level of agreement on the five statements (i.e., I know a lot about Korean cuisine; among my circle of friends, I’m one of the “experts” on Korean cuisine; when it comes to Korean Cuisine, I really don’t know a lot) about Korean cuisine on 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral, 7 = strongly agree).

To measure the respondents’ attitude toward consuming Hansik, three semantic differential measurement items were extracted from Ajzen (1988, 1991). This scale has shown stability across product categories. Respondents were asked to complete the
Respondents’ intentions to consume (try) Hansik and visit Korea in the future were also measured. Three items for each intention were adapted and modified from Ajzen’s (1991). For intention to consume Korean food, “I (would like to/will/intend to) try Korean foods in the near future” were included. Similarly, for intention to visit Korea, “I (would like to/will/intend to) visit Korea in the near future” were measured. The survey also included respondents’ demographic information such as gender, ethnic background, education, household income in the previous year, and previous experience of consuming Hansik and visiting Korea.

3.2. Sample and data collection

The purpose of this study was to better understand the US Upper Midwest market and to gauge the potential for Korean food market expansion based on country image, subjective knowledge, attitude, and future intentions. The sampling pool for this study was a subset of the Upper Midwest population, primarily Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Thirty-seven undergraduate senior students and five faculty members in a hospitality program at a major Midwestern university pre-tested the survey. Some changes and modifications were made to enhance understanding based on their suggestions. The survey was administered both online via a survey provider and offline via a traditional paper-pencil survey in February and March of 2011 for 4 weeks. The online survey link and paper surveys were shared with the undergraduate students in a Hospitality capstone class, who distributed both versions to their family members, friends, and co-workers via e-mail, Facebook, and face-to-face contact. All students were given a script that could be read during personal interaction and the same script was used in the online version, so that the recipients could read the script. The online survey was also distributed through the university faculty and staff listserv. Respondents were given 2 weeks to complete the survey. A total of 392 questionnaires were returned; 14 of them were deleted due to incomplete responses. Thus, 378 useable data was retained for further analysis.

The demographic profile of respondents is shown in Table 1. Of the 378 respondents, 64% were females and 35% were males. Over half of the respondent group (57.4%) was under the age of 25 and 22.2% 41 years or older. Nearly half of the respondents had a high school diploma and 39.2% had at least a 4-year college degree. More than half (59.5%) of the respondents were single and 33% were married. With the population being young, 38.9% reported that they made less than $25,000 and 30.5% made between $25,000 and $75,000 in the previous year. The majority of the respondents (90%) lived in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota, with some respondents from Nebraska, Wyoming, and Montana. Of the respondents 92% identified themselves as White/Non-Hispanic.

3.3. Data analysis

Due to the bi-modal method of data collection, data collected face-to-face and data collected via the online survey were compared to see if there were significant differences between the response modes. Descriptive statistics, such as those in the demographic profile and means were calculated by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS v.17). There were no significant differences between the two response methods by demographic categories, except “income” in the paper version had significantly more respondents in the below $25,000 group. When the mean scores for attitude, intent to try Hansik and visit intentions, and knowledge were compared by survey methods, there were no significant difference at the p = .05 level. Therefore, the data were combined for further analysis.

The two-step process, as recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), was performed on the data for analyses using AMOS16 (Arbuckle, 2007). The first step involved a confirmatory factory analysis (CFA) to verify that all measured variables consistently associated with hypothesized latent variables. From the CFA, reliability and validity of all construct measurements and the overall measurement model fit were also inspected. In the second step, the proposed paths among constructs were tested in a structural equation model (SEM) by inspecting the standardized coefficients and t-values.

4. Results

4.1. Exploratory factor analysis

In order to reduce the number of variable dimensions and to identify the underlying factors for 26 cognitive country image items, a series of exploratory factor analyses with principle component and varimax rotation were conducted. Items with low factor loadings (less than .40), high cross loading with other items (greater
The model fit, reliability and construct validity were first tested before testing the paths in the proposed structural model by using commonly practiced method in psychology and marketing studies (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981). A 31-item, eight-factor covariance structure measurement model was estimated. All loadings between the observed variables and each latent variable were significant, ranging from .40 to .98. The composite reliability for each construct was also assessed. As shown in Table 3, they ranged from .76 to .95, meeting the suggested cut-off value of .70. These results confirmed that the multiple items accurately measured each construct (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Hair et al., 1998; Nunnally, 1978). Thus, the convergent validity was evident. The internal consistency was assessed by the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct. All AVE, ranging from .52 to .86, met the suggested threshold value of .50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The discriminant validity was tested by comparing the squared correlations between the constructs with the AVE for each construct. All squared correlations between each pair of constructs were smaller than the AVE (Table 3). For instance, the AVE for CCI 1 was .64 and the squared correlation between CCI 1 and CCI 2 was .49. Thus, the discriminant validity was also evident.

The model fit was also tested by CFA using a covariance matrix. Although the Chi-square of the measurement model was significant ($\chi^2 = 926.02, df = 401, p < .001$), it might have been affected by the large sample size (Baguszi and Yi, 1988). Thus, other suggested fit indices were also assessed. Comparative fit index (CFI = .95), normed-fit index (NFI = .91), and root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA = .059) all met the recommended thresholds and indicated that the model fits the data very well (Byrne, 2001).

### 4.3. Structural model

The standardized coefficients for the proposed paths (Fig. 1) were examined by running a structural equation model (SEM) simultaneously with a maximum likelihood method. According to the model goodness-of-fit indices ($\chi^2 = 1063.0, df = 416, CFI = .94, NFI = .90, RMSEA = .059$), the proposed structural model fit the data reasonably well (Table 4). Fig. 2 diagrams the supported (solid lines) and not-supported (dotted line) paths with respective coefficients and standardized t-values.

The test results showed that all proposed paths were supported except for one of the cognitive country image factors (CCI 1 = Fundamental) to affective country image ($\beta$ CCI 1 ACI = -.95, t = 8.37). The other two cognitive image factors showed a positive effect on affective image (CCI 2 = social/economic development: $\beta$ CCI2 ACI = .92, t = 2.86; CCI 3 = good reputation: $\beta$ CCI3 ACI = .75, t = 6.75). Thus, Hypothesis 1 is partially supported. Affective country image was found to have a positive influence on attitude toward consuming Hansik ($\beta$ ACI ATT = .50, t = 9.19), supporting Hypothesis 2. Subjective knowledge of Hansik (SK) also showed a significant effect on attitude toward consuming Hansik ($\beta$ SK ATT = .29, t = 5.38), supporting Hypothesis 3. Finally, attitude toward consuming Hansik (ATT) has significant positive relationships not only with intention to try Hansik ($\beta$ ATT FIN = .70, t = 14.52), but also with intention to visit Korea ($\beta$ ATT VIS = .30, t = 5.78). Thus, Hypotheses 4 and 5 were fully supported.

### 5. Discussion

This study considered two important concepts, country image and subjective knowledge, which traditionally have been applied...
### Table 3
Correlations among constructs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CCI 1(^a)</th>
<th>CCI 2(^a)</th>
<th>CCI 3(^a)</th>
<th>ACI(^b)</th>
<th>SK(^b)</th>
<th>ATT(^b)</th>
<th>FIN(^b)</th>
<th>VIN(^b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCI 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CCI 2</td>
<td>.70(.49)**</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCI 3</td>
<td>.56(.32)**</td>
<td>.63(.39)**</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACI</td>
<td>.13(.02)(^c)</td>
<td>.12(.02)(^c)</td>
<td>.35(.12)**</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>-.08(.00)</td>
<td>-.05(.00)</td>
<td>.06(.00)</td>
<td>.36(.13)**</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>.13(.02)(^c)</td>
<td>.08(.00)</td>
<td>.25(.06)**</td>
<td>.50(.25)**</td>
<td>.37(.14)**</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIN</td>
<td>.12(.06)(^c)</td>
<td>.08(.00)</td>
<td>.24(.06)**</td>
<td>.46(.22)**</td>
<td>.39(.15)**</td>
<td>.70(.48)**</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>VIN</td>
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<td>.06(.00)</td>
<td>.22(.05)**</td>
<td>.45(.20)**</td>
<td>.33(.11)**</td>
<td>.32(.10)**</td>
<td>.48(.23)**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean     5.90  5.33  5.48  1.72  2.73  1.10  4.80  2.75
SD       1.69  1.60  1.40  1.37  1.31  1.59  1.57  1.58
AVE      .64   .64   .57   .81   .52   .57   .86   .81
Composite reliability .92  .91  .80  .76  .80  .95  .90  .92

Note: Parenthesis means the square of a correlation between constructs. CCI, cognitive country image; ACI, affective country image; SK, subjective knowledge; ATT, attitude; FIN, food intention; VIN, visiting intention.

\(^a\) Measured on a scale of 1–7.
\(^b\) Measured on a scale of −3 to 3.
\(^c\) p < .05.
\(^*\) p < .01.

### Table 4
Standardized maximum likelihood parameter estimates (n = 378).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paths</th>
<th>Standardized coefficients</th>
<th>t-Value</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive country image 1 → affective country image</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.95</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive country image 2 → affective country image</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>2.86(^*)</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive country image 3 → affective country image</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>6.75(^*)</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective country image → attitude</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>9.19</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective knowledge → attitude</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>5.38(^*)</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude → food intention</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>14.52(^*)</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude → visit intention</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>5.78(^*)</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Goodness of fit statistics: \(\chi^2 = 1063.0; df = 416; p < .001, \chi^2/df = 2.56; CFI = .94, NFI = .90, RMSEA = .064. \(^\ast\)

\(^*\) p < .01.

To the study of new and or foreign consumer products. This study empirically investigated the application of these concepts to study potential consumers’ intentions to try a new and foreign cuisine and to visit the country of origin. The study findings showed that the Upper Midwesterners’ attitude toward consuming Hansik is influenced indirectly by cognitive country image and directly by affective image of Korea. The indirect effect of cognitive image on attitude is marginally supported with two significant paths out of three proposed paths. One reason why the fundamental cognitive image factor did not influence the affective image may be because the items are very specific to the political climate and civil rights of South Korea. Unless one was specifically studying this, it would not be common knowledge for the average American. On the other hand, the factors social/economic development and good reputation include items that could be drawn from media sources and news that are readily available. Based on these results, marketing and promotions of Korea as a whole should focus on increasing the positive perceptions of the social/economic development and good reputation dimensions.

The study findings also showed that the Upper Midwesterners’ attitude toward consuming Hansik is influenced by the subjective knowledge they have about Hansik. However, the preliminary

![Fig. 2. Results of hypothesized model.](image-url)
descriptive analyses showed low to neutral mean values (Table 3) for most of the independent variables. This indicates that generally, the respondents from the Upper Midwest had a neutral, bordering on negative image of Korea, do not know much about the country or Hansik, and thus have neutral attitudes toward consuming Hansik. Even then, study results showed that the respondents’ attitudes had strong influences on both intentions to try Hansik and to visit Korea in the near future.

Some important implications can be drawn from the test results. First, improving the existing country image and educating potential consumers about the country and cuisine should be the main marketing efforts in order to develop better attitude from this potential market. Previous research has shown that the products from other countries are affected by country image (d’Astous et al., 2008). Results from this study empirically confirmed that the effect of country image on consumer products is applicable to cuisine and destination as well. For example, at the time of data collection, political issues about North Korea were prominent in the news. This may have triggered negative perceptions about South Korea’s country image and viability as a future destination, particularly for potential visitors who did not differentiate between North and South Korea. In the same manner, with little exposure to Hansik, Midwesterners will probably rely on the image of Korea (country of origin) as a proxy for information to be used in making consumer choices. That is, when the respondents have a more positive image of Korea, know more about the cuisine and have a positive attitude toward the cuisine, their intentions to try Hansik and visit Korea will likely increase.

As mentioned in Section 2, subjective knowledge influences usage (Raju et al., 1995) and it is influenced by past experience (Park et al., 1994). Subjective knowledge also relates to self-confidence about products, which leads to purchase intentions (Park and Lessig, 1981). Respondents in this study had little experience with Hansik or Korea which may be the reason that scores for intentions were low in this study. To promote the country and cuisine, marketers could develop ways for people to experience Korean culture. The Korean government and private sectors need to educate the potential market segment about the country and food using various methods in order to encourage consumption of Hansik and eventually promoting travel to Korea in the future. Korea should promote itself through travel books, TV travel channel and the Internet as much as possible. Korean food products could be distributed in grocery stores, including in-store demonstrations to promote them. Another promotional tool might be to have Food Network specials, which could focus on certain aspects of Hansik, including healthy and fresh. Korean Tourism officials could also host a Korean festival in bigger cities, such as Minneapolis, Omaha, or Milwaukee (which hosts many cultural festivals: African World Fest, Bastille Days, Festa Italiana, German Fest, Greek, Polish, and Irish just to name a few). These ethnic festivals focus on a celebration of heritage, customs, food and drink and religious activities associated with each ethnicity’s culture and origins (City of Festivals, 2012). The festivals have traditionally been well attended, which presents a viable venue to introduce Hansik to the Upper Midwest market.

6. Conclusion

Although exploratory at this stage, the methodology and framework can be used to evaluate the viability of other lesser-known cuisines and countries in an unchartered market such as the Upper Midwest. With the global movement of food in general, this model can be used in the context of cuisines such as Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian cuisines, traditional Indian, and some South American or Caribbean cuisines. Interest or involvement with the product or other motivational factors such as novelty seeking behavior, risk-aversion, food neophobia, and price and/or value consciousness may covary with knowledge or the desire to find out more about ethnic foods and foreign countries in general. Thus, this may influence the resulting attitude and behavior intention or the strength of the relationship between these constructs. Further research about specific food choice motivations of the new target market and using these to develop marketing campaigns may also increase the propensity of Midwesterners to try Hansik and other ethnic foods. For example, American consumers already view Korean food as healthy and nutritionally balanced (Jang et al., 2009). If freshness and health benefits are important motivations, marketing campaigns can focus on how Hansik exemplifies these characteristics or desired outcomes.

There are some limitations to the study, in that the sample was one of convenience. Therefore, the results may not be representative of all Upper Midwesterners in the US and more research is needed to verify the veracity of the results. There was a limited variance in the demographic profile of the respondents such as age and income. Bi-modal data collection was effective, but perhaps could be made more robust by purchasing access to a sampling panel from a market research provider for the online survey or administering the paper survey to a randomized sample at food courts in multiple local malls. The data collection, especially via the social networking site, presents difficulty in testing for non-response error as there is no feasible way to assess members of the sampling pool who may have seen the invitation but chose not to participate. Purchasing a panel provides the possibility of resending the survey to non-respondents to check for non-response error. Future studies could expand data collection to other Midwestern states and use these different sampling techniques to ensure that more information is collected from a bigger portion of the potential market across age groups, purchasing power, and locale (urban versus rural). Information from a more diverse sample could provide important and specific information for designing marketing and promotional campaigns.

References


Zhu, P.T., 2004. The relationship among community identification, community trust, and purchase behavior – the case of RVs communities, Masers degree thesis, Graduate School of International Business, National References Dong Hwa University, Shoufeng. Figure 1 Proposed Model.