Transcultural Tourism: the Role of Cultural Metaphors in Enhancing Destination Image

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This study introduces transcultural tourism as an alternative to traditional cultural tourism. Transculture is a term that refers to transcendence of the borders of traditional cultures. The study examines how cultural metaphors are used to influence consumer mental models in a way that creates transcultural perspectives and enhances destination image. The study context is the Pilsen Mexican community where phenomenological interviews are conducted with Latino artists (cultural workers) and American tourists. Observations and photographs are also used as research methods. Findings from the study demonstrate three thematic dimensions that explain the concept of mental model transcendence as how cultural metaphors enhance the destination image. These are: 1) an awareness of a transcultural identity 2) an awakening to a sense of self, and 3) an inspiration of universal ideals.

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of t-tests also provided preliminary evidence supporting the argument that motives and linkages between motives in cognitive schemas can impact variables in the MGB for both Chinese materialists and non-materialists.

We also got interesting results from a longitudinal comparison of Chinese materialists over a ten-year period with rapid economic growth (Year 1998 vs. Year 2008). The cognitive schemas of Chinese materialists have become more well-defined as their affluence increase over time. While personal motives remained relatively stable over time, social motives are more contingent on economic development. A cross-cultural comparison of Chinese materialists with their American counterparts showed that Chinese materialists not only have a more complex structure of social motives but also have some unique motives such as socially defined success.

REFERENCE

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In recent times, immigration and globalization has resulted in a transcultural consumer era (Penaloza, 1994) that calls for enriching transcultural attractions to enhance destination image. Transcultural is a new sphere of cultural development that transcends the borders of traditional cultures (Epstein, 2009). A destination’s image is the “composite of various products (attractions) and attributes woven into a total impression” (MacKay and Fesenmaier, 1997, p. 2). This paper investigates transcultural tourism as an alternative to conventional cultural tourism. The paper considers the use of cultural metaphors to influence consumer mental models, which in turn enhances their perception of the destination image. Cultural metaphors are associations that convey shared beliefs and understandings of a particular society (Gannon, 2002). The term metaphor refers to associations that relate abstract concepts to physical things and are used to construct conceptual understandings (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). The symbolic anthropological construal of metaphor is grounded in cultural images (Hirschman, 2002). The term metaphor refers to associations that relate abstract concepts to physical things and are used to construct conceptual understandings (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). The symbolic anthropological construal of metaphor is grounded in cultural images (Hirschman, 2007) and has been noted for its ability to create new mental models and to overcome entrenched perspectives (Barret & Cooperrider, 1990). Consumers’ mental models are structures of meaning, which includes beliefs and feelings, activated when a consumption situation takes place (Christensen and Olson, 2002).

This study makes three theoretical contributions. First, this study examines how transcultural metaphors enhance the destination image. A number of studies have examined cultural tourism and the enhancement of destination image such as iconic structures (e.g. Thakara, 2002), megaevents (e.g. Allen et al., 2002), thematisation (e.g. e.g. Arnould and Price, 1993; Joy and Sherry, 2003; Hughes, 2000) and heritage mining (e.g. Russo, 2002). However, there have been minimal studies that diverge from the traditional cultural tourism to discover other non-conventional ways of leveraging culture to enhance the destination image. This study diverges from the traditional cultural tourism perspective to investigate transcultural tourism that enhances destination image by leading consumers to transcend cultural differences and to incorporate new concepts and visions from alternative cultures. This is important because according to Richards and Wilson (2005), consumers are increasingly searching for alternatives to traditional cultural tourism.

Second, this study considers how metaphors can be used to transcend consumer mental models. A number of researchers have examined metaphors and their effects on consumer mental models (e.g. Zaltman and Coulter, 1995; Christensen and Olson, 2002). These studies have exposed the fact that metaphors assist in shaping consumer mental models. However, “what about transformative experiences that falls outside the range of consumer mental models?” The current study addresses this gap by introducing the concept of mental model transcendence. Transcendence is “the capacity of mental models to transcend the boundaries of their immediate sense of time and space to view life from a larger, more objective perspective” (Piedmont 1999, p.988). We argue that incorporation of transcultural perspectives has a potential to lead to a transcendent state that falls outside of existing mental models.

Third, this study extends the role of cultural metaphors. Some studies have also been conducted on the role of cultural metaphors as a consumer research tool (e.g. Denny and Sunderland, 2005). Others have examined the role of cultural metaphors in understanding cultural differences (e.g. Gannon, 2002). Although these studies have exposed the fact that cultural metaphors are tools for understanding cultural complexities, they do not explain how the cultural metaphors lead to consumer mental model transcendence. The introduction of mental model transcendence in this paper extends the current literature to include a transcendent experience in the mental models of consumers that is made possible by transcultural metaphors. It also captures the psychological perspectives embedded in transcultural interactions and acknowledges the importance of these perspectives in understanding consumer behavior.

To examine consumer use of cultural metaphors, the investigation was conducted with artisans as well as American tourists in the Pilsen Mexican community in Chicago. A qualitative approach, in the form of phenomenological interviews, observations and photography, was
adopted to address the research objectives. The Pilsen community, with a rich cultural heritage, predominantly Latino is selected for the investigation. Three thematic dimensions are discovered that explain the concept of mental model transcendence. These are: 1) an awareness of a transcultural identity 2) an awakening to a sense of self, and 3) an inspiration of universal ideals. We utilize Teichert et al’s (2006) theory on metaphor roles and Fauconnier and Turner’s (2002) Blending theory to inform our argument. While Teichert et al’s (2006) theory of how metaphors influence and alter mental models is crucial to our argument, we extend it to accommodate the process of mental model transcendence evident in our data.

REFERENCES


The Power of One in Mindful Consumer Behavior

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The purpose of this research is to (1) introduce mindful consumer behavior and (2) identify the underlying mechanisms, i.e., what drives consumers to behave mindfully or mindlessly. We define mindful consumers as individuals who, in all stages of consumer behavior, are aware of themselves, their communities and the society at large and behave in ways that contribute to the well-being of all these entities. The concept of well-being goes beyond instant satisfaction to involve good health, sustainability including financial sustainability, social responsibility and self-actualization.

Mindful consumer behavior involves an internal facet and an external one. The internal facet pertains to the individual such as her/his health, financial sustainability, and happiness. The external facet is related to the environment and society at large. Hence, issues related to nutrition, exercise, medical information and treatments, budgeting and frugality are all examples of internal aspects. Consuming in a socially responsible way including going green and donating for noble causes are examples of external aspects. The two are not unrelated. For instance, a mindful spending might enable a consumer to have the ability to donate money to support those in need.

Mindful consumer behavior can be practiced at all stages of consumption. The stages of consumer behavior include acquisition, consumption including possession and maintenance, and disposal of goods and services (Hoyer and MacInnis 2010). At the acquisition stage, consumers can be mindful while making product and brand choices and, e.g., choose healthy food, environmentally friendly goods and be cautious about the way they invest their time and money. At the consumption stage, mindful consumers consume moderately, share, and take care of their possessions. Finally, consumers can recycle, donate and pass possessions to others at the disposal stage.

To understand what drives conscious consumer behavior, we draw on research in sociology, psychology and social psychology. We argue that consumers’ tendency to behave mindfully is contingent on their (1) temporal focus, and (2) perception of self-efficacy.

Temporal focus is “the attention individuals devote to thinking about the past, present, and future.” (Shipp et al. 2009). The concept is important because it affects how people incorporate perceptions about past experiences, current situations, and future expectations into their attitudes, cognitions and behavior (Zimbardo & Boyd 1999). Mindful behavior usually involves thinking about the future and the consequences of one’s actions such as over-eating or consuming a particular product. Strathman et al. (1994) demonstrated that the extent to which people consider distant vs. immediate consequences of potential behaviors impact these behaviors. Hence, we expect the following:

H1: Individuals who tend to focus on the future behave more mindfully as consumers than individuals who tend to focus on the present or the past.