
Presentation of Empirical Study 2 in Licentiate's Thesis
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Background of the Paper

This paper will present one of the two empirical studies in my licentiate's thesis concerning *The Image of Finnish Design Products in Russia*. The Russian taste will be the focus of the thesis. The reason for choosing this specific focus is due to the reason that the Russian taste is still quite different from the western taste. The thesis will include two empirical studies.

In empirical study one the accentuation will be put on interviewing approximately 20 stakeholders within the Finnish design industry, within interior design. The companies that are chosen are ones that are especially interested in Russia as a market. The objective of the study is to get as much information as possible on perspectives concerning why or why not the Russian market should be approached by companies promoting Finnish design. The SWOT analysis will be used when analyzing the qualitative material.

The second empirical study will focus on the Russian taste. Approximately 20 different Finnish design products will be investigated by a group of Russians (20-40 people) through Peirce's pragmatic approach on the theory of signs and then by using the semantic differential method as support. The objective of the study is to gather information concerning the Russian taste in Finnish interior design products.

The objective of this paper is to introduce the second empirical study. Information concerning how the study will be made both from the theoretical, methodological and empirical perspective will be presented and discussed. Some of the questions that the empirical study aims to answer are:

- What is the prior knowledge of Finnish design products?
- How is Finnish design perceived by Russians?
- What is the image of Finnish design products?
- How does the Russian taste differ from the western one and especially the Finnish one?
- Why is the Russian taste so different from the western one?

Theory of Signs

To begin with the study will subjectively evaluate approximately 20 products of Finnish design through Peirce's pragmatic approach on the theory of signs. An interpretation of the products as an object through the icon, index, and symbol will be made. The products will be evaluated as both pictorial and physical products. Through the subjective evaluation, attributes that can be used in the semantic differential method will be created.

Semantic Differential

The Semantic Differential developed by Charles E. Osgood measures people's reactions to stimulus of words and concepts in terms of ratings in bipolar scales that are defined as adjectives at each end. An example of a scale is presented below:

Good _____ Bad
3 2 1 0 1 2 3

The 0 is neutral, 1 is *slightly*, 2 is *quite* and 3 is *extremely*. The adjectives chosen can be further divided into three different dimensions, depending on if they are attributes of Evaluation,

Potency or Activity (EPA dimensions). Evaluation is associated with the contrasts nice-awful, sweet-sour, and helpful-unhelpful. Potency is associated with the contrasts big-little, powerful-powerless, strong-weak, and deep-shallow. Activity is associated with fast-slow, alive-dead, noisy-quiet, and young-old.

Below are some examples of adjectives that could be used while describing Finnish design products. Nevertheless they have to be evaluated separately in each case so that they suit the subject of evaluation.

Evaluation dimension

Nice - Awful

Light – Heavy

Warm – Cold

Soft – Hard

Beautiful – Ugly

Colorful – Dull

Potency dimension

Romantic – Unromantic

Cheap – Expensive

Classic - Trendy

Open – Protective

Robust – Fragile

Impressive – Modest

Economical – Uneconomical

Royal – Anti royal

Common – Exclusive

Delicate – Rugged

Anonymous – Inviting

Elegant – Clumsy

Friendly – Frightening

Functional – Ornamental

Futuristic – Historic

Advanced – Simple

Restrained – Extravagant

Masculine – Feminine

National - Foreign

Activity dimension

Playful – Serious

Industrial – Crafted

Sustainable – Unsustainable

Ecological – Unecological

Pilot study

Before making the actual study with the group of Russians a pilot study will be made with a group of Finns (5-10). 1-3 Finnish design products that have first been subjectively evaluated will be presented both as a picture and as a physical product to the evaluator. By having these at hand the evaluator is presented with a set of semantic attributes. The task of the evaluator is to score the attributes on a scale from +3 to -3. In addition evaluators will be asked to list additional adjectives/attributes related to each product. Depending on the attribute that the evaluator creates, it could perhaps be used in the final empirical study.

The objective of the pilot study is to see how the semantic differential works when evaluating Finnish design products and also to see if it is possible to get results concerning taste by using the method as support.

Final Empirical Study

In the final empirical study, 20-40 Russians (living in Finland) will evaluate 20 Finnish design products (e.g. the Alvar Aalto vase, the *unikko* textile by Marimekko, the ball chair by Eero Aarnio, carpets by Ritva Puotila, block lamp by Harri Koskinen). 10 of the products are classic Finnish design and 10 are modern design products. By using the semantic differential as support, the group of Russians will be able to evaluate the products through a set of given attributes.

Anticipated Results

Through the pilot study, tools and methods that are needed for the empirical study will become clear. In addition the validity of the adjectives/attributes related to the semantic differential can be evaluated and adjusted to suit the final empirical study with the Russians. Also, by analyzing the pilot study, a routine needed later on is learned.

The results of the empirical study will be based on linking the theory of signs, the semantic differential and the empirical study so that the concept of the Russian taste will be better understood. As a consequence, new scientific research is developed and can be used in further research concerning semiotics and taste.

Questions

- Is the group of evaluators large enough or too big?
- Is the amount of products taken for evaluation enough, or too many?
- Is it a good thing to evaluate both the physical product as well as the picture, or should just one of them be chosen?
- Can I chose Finnish design products that are from my personal perspective Finnish design products or should it be verified by a specialist that they actually are?
- Should the products be focused on a specific kind of products e.g. carpets, furniture, glassware, lighting?