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The Gaze Construction of Nordic Cross-cultural Consumption: From the “Nordic Trend” to IKEA in Taiwan

The Nordic/ Scandinavian lifestyle has been all the rage in Taiwan since 2005, creating a desirable mediascape in books, magazines, TV and IKEA advertisements. The Nordic Trend introduces a new element to our cross-cultural imagination; we no longer identify “American modernity” as the sole image of “the West” in Asia as we used to in the past.

This article investigates the influence of the Nordic Trend on Taiwan’s lifestyle by tracing the changes in the anxiety and tension of Taiwan’s consuming society over the aesthetization of everyday life. The “tourist gaze” as John Urry defines it will be presented, together with relevant consumption and space theories, in order to analyze the processes of gaze construction in the Nordic Trend and the role of IKEA in the cross-cultural consumption.

The article locates and articulates the meaning of the Nordic Trend in the context of cross-cultural consumption in Taiwan by comparing it to Japanese and American mediascapes. The focus, however, is placed specifically on IKEA’s visual construction of the “space archive”. The Nordic Trend represents the innovative way Taiwan’s society gazes/imagines the West and impregnates this gaze in travelling texts and city images with the possibility of an alternative modernity.