

The impact of smartphone usage on domestic travelers' existential authenticity and behavioral perception toward island destinations: A cross-country comparison of Hainan Island and Jeju Island

Abstract

This study explains the motivating process of how smartphone usage influences the behavioral intentions of domestic travelers', considering the impacts of their perceived authenticity and travel experiences gained through smartphones. By reviewing the literature, this research developed a theoretical framework that integrates the concepts of existential authenticity and memorable experiences to determine the impact of the explorative use of smart tourism technologies on travelers' satisfaction and intentions to revisit. An online survey was conducted among domestic travelers visiting Hainan Island in China and Jeju Island in South Korea to test the proposed hypotheses and model while also identifying cross-country effects in the relationships. The results revealed the effects of using smart tourism technologies to enhance travelers' satisfaction and revive revisit intentions based on intrapersonal authenticity and memorable experiences. Based on the results of the cross-country comparison, this research concludes that Korean domestic travelers are more inclined toward seeking memorable experiences through the use of smart tourism technologies, whereas Chinese domestic travelers tend to focus on authentic moments. It is therefore recommended to implement and diversify smart tourism technology strategies that align with travelers' cultural backgrounds to enhance both their satisfaction levels and their intentions to revisit.

Keywords: smart tourism technology; smartphone; island tourism; explorative usage; existential authenticity; memorable experience; cross-country effects

1. Introduction

The hospitality and tourism industries have been revolutionized by technological improvements, and the strategies of travel organizations and destinations have also been transformed (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Constantly evolving technology has brought a unique paradigm shift to the tourism sector and impacted its operational structure. With the prevalence of search engines and social media platforms relying on shared knowledge and information, contemporary tourists have easy access to diversified information through electronic devices (Tussyadiah, 2015). Remarkably, a smartphone is one representative example of a technological device used to search for information. Its usage is ubiquitous, especially among travelers, and giving travelers the ability to have easy access to travel-related information has become one of its primary activities. Thus, the importance of smartphone use in the travel process cannot be overemphasized. Most travel-related activities performed on smartphones, both before and during a trip, consisted of activities such as searching for tourism activities and discounts, as well as scheduling and booking flights and accommodation reservations (Think with Google, 2017). Therefore, the prevalence of using smartphones for travel has prompted tourism organizations to formulate new strategies aimed at meeting travelers' needs, improving their travel experiences, and increasing their satisfaction levels.

Many scholars have focused on the concept of 'authenticity' to delve deeper into the attributes of tourists' behavior influenced by their use of technology. As a result, studies have recognized authenticity as a pivotal factor in shaping various tourist behaviors and perceptions in the context of using smart technology, referred to as 'smart tourism technologies' (STTs). According to Gao et al. (2022), authenticity is an important factor in virtual reality platforms, enhancing tourists' future travel intentions and reshaping perceptions of travel destinations. Moreover, smartphones enable visitors to view images of destinations, enabling them to publish their travel experiences on social media platforms and contextualize destinations within scenes (Carson & Pennings, 2020). Previous research has illustrated that authenticity could amplify the positive impact of tourist behaviors in the background of STTs. For travelers, authenticity is essential for experiencing the sensory stimuli of island destinations (i.e., island tourism), which are quite different from those of urban cities. Differences in the types of authenticity perceived by travelers during their island trips can influence their satisfaction and intentions to revisit (Ramkissoon, 2015; Tian et al., 2020; Wang, 1999). Due to international restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic island tourism experienced a significant surge (Ng, 2022). As a result, island tourism can be a valid and timely context for investigations of the role of STTs in tourists' perceptions of authenticity.

Based on previous research findings, this study asserts that the use of STTs influences the satisfaction levels and revisit intentions of domestic tourists toward island destinations by creating memorable experiences while enhancing tourists' perceived authenticity. Additionally, this research considers the use of STTs equivalent to the use of smartphones to analyze how technology usage will affect the aforementioned variables. Moreover, authenticity has been the subject of previous studies in the areas of restaurant and sports tourism (Fu, 2019; Takata & Hallmann, 2021), with limited knowledge about its relationship with STT usage. The majority of the existing literature has focused on tourists' use of STTs in the area of island tourism, while limited research has considered both simultaneously. Lastly, Wang (1999) subdivided the concept of 'existential authenticity' into two components—intrapersonal authenticity and interpersonal authenticity—but most existing research centers on intrapersonal authenticity, not on both terms simultaneously (Buchmann et al., 2010; Yi et al., 2017). Therefore, this research endeavors to bridge the gap by highlighting the relationship between existential authenticity and the use of STTs.

This study builds an integrated framework that merges the use of STTs, existential authenticity, and memorable experiences to identify the impact on tourist satisfaction and revisit intentions. The majority of existing research relied on cross-country comparisons to assess the effect of STTs conducted between eastern and western countries that had considerable cultural differences. There are very few studies that have examined cross-country comparisons among countries with similar cultural backgrounds. Hainan Island in China and Jeju Island in South Korea were the most popular domestic island destinations during the COVID-19 pandemic (He et al., 2022). Both destinations have a smart tourism infrastructure that offers amenities such as free Wi-Fi and applications like ‘Smart Tour Hainan’ and ‘Visit Jeju’ (Gong et al., 2021; Um & Chung, 2021). Therefore, this research conducts a cross-country comparison between China’s Hainan Island and South Korea’s Jeju Island. Additionally, this research also investigates tourists’ use of the proposed technical framework as a means to identify their use of STTs to ensure memorable experiences. To achieve this in the literature, this study serves a threefold purpose: (1) to investigate how the explorative use of STTs influences tourist satisfaction and their intention to revisit; (2) to explore the roles of intrapersonal authenticity, interpersonal authenticity, and memorable experiences; and (3) to identify cross-cultural differences that may exist between Hainan Island and Jeju Island when exploring the impact of STTs on tourists' satisfaction levels and their intentions to revisit.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Impact of Smartphone Usage on the Tourism Industry

Smartphones have become indispensable in our daily lives in the 21st century, providing various applications and services that serve a variety of purposes, many of which can contribute to improving the users' health and overall quality of life. Moreover, the use of smartphones to access wellness-related information, receive assistance, and participate in social engagement has been documented to have a positive influence on mental health (Bert et al., 2014; Kang & Jung, 2014). In the tourism industry, scholars have conducted numerous studies assessing the widespread use of smartphones (Jamal & Habib, 2020; Tan & Chen, 2021; Tan & Lu, 2019; Wang et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2016a). In this context, smartphone devices and travel applications are noted as important sources of travel-related information that directly impact travelers' decision-making processes (Xiang et al., 2015b). Previous research has shown that the usage of smartphones, with their diverse range of functions, leads to travel satisfaction (Wang et al., 2012) and enhances the overall travel experience by providing tourists with greater connectivity and confidence (Wang et al., 2016a).

Jamal and Habib (2020) conducted research to test the use of smartphones in identifying tourists' travel planning behavior, while Tan and Chen (2021) emphasized the significance of smartphone usage in both work and tourism in a leisure environment. However, there are opposing opinions regarding the impact of smartphone usage. An example of such opinions is that it leads to several consequences by creating distance between travel companions, which interferes with social interaction (Tan & Lu, 2019). The research findings show that smartphone usage is not only essential to daily life but also plays an instrumental role in enhancing or exacerbating tourist satisfaction and the overall travel experience. Hence, it is worthwhile to ascertain the impact of smartphones on satisfaction, considering the complexities of tourism behavior in different settings.

2.2. Island Tourism

Island tourism is another form of tourism that has had a tremendous impact on the tourism industry, serving as a source of economic growth by attracting visitors and providing a diverse range of cultural travel experiences. The unique scenery and climate features of islands can sustain their popularity as preferred tourism destinations (Apostolopoulos & Gayle, 2002; Croes, 2006; Sharpley, 2001). Furthermore, islands possess ethnic, natural, and cultural resources, which gives them a competitive advantage (Buhalis, 2000). In other words, in order for island destinations to be unique, it is important to optimize their resources. In order to achieve this objective, many scholars have directed their attention towards the authentic value of these resources. Due to the inherent intangibility of travel products and the accessibility of purchasing tourism demands in consumer preferences, tourism-related information holds significant value (Stienmetz et al., 2013).

The importance of island tourism has been rapidly accelerated through the application of smart tourism guidelines (Bulchand-Gidumal, 2022). Xu et al. (2020) provided a model for evaluating island tourism's pursuit of sustainable development within the framework of smart tourism, considering the complex and diverse characteristics involved in achieving this objective. Moreover, Dabeedooal et al. (2019) have endeavored to apply a smart city framework to improve the living conditions and sustainability of the island nation of Mauritius, capitalizing on its unique cultural and historical aspects. In this context, the application of smart tourism guidelines in island destinations allows for multiple efficiencies, including sustainable development, improved service quality, and smooth access to information. To achieve these objectives, it has been posited that smartphone usage, a crucial component in sustaining the framework of smart tourism, is fundamental to the tourism industry of the respective islands proposed for this study (Xu et al., 2020).

Furthermore, considering the geographical characteristics, it is important to consider making the entry of tourists more identifiable and the definition of tourism destinations holding greater significance, as islands cover the entire tourism experience (Bulchand-Gidumal, 2022), unlike other urban and heritage destinations. This makes smart tourism implementations more efficient in island destinations. It is crucial to note that the term 'smart' goes beyond the implementation of technologies (Xiang et al., 2015a), but it also considers the different perspectives of individuals and organizations (Nam & Pardo, 2011). In this context, tourism practitioners aim to evaluate the effectiveness of island visitors while sustaining their businesses, while tourists anticipate benefiting from the smart framework in terms of access to information and services.

The usage of smartphones in island tourism differs subtly in its application to other forms of tourism. For instance, in the domain of urban tourism, Liu et al. (2022) examined the impact of smartphones on urban tourists and their decision-making behaviors. Smartphones are known for their impact on tourists' behavioral perceptions, distances, and the significance of local destinations (Yovcheva et al., 2014). Also, the simplicity of urban travel emphasizes the intuitive characteristics of decision-making processes for urban travelers (Liu et al., 2022). Consequently, smartphone usage in urban tourism acts as a mediator, providing information and rationales that empower tourists to make spontaneous decisions regarding the diverse tourism-related infrastructure and activities within urban destinations. Conversely, smartphone usage in island tourism is considered an amplifier due to its nature-based characteristics. Kurniawan et al. (2018) examined the usage of augmented reality (AR) apps to explore how tourists utilized them in exploring tourist attractions on Batam Island, Indonesia. Customized recommendations supported by mobile AR evoke sensations of delight and enthusiasm, finally altering the intention to utilize such technologies (Kourouthanassis et al., 2015a; Kourouthanassis et al., 2015b). A similar study conducted by Jiang et al. (2019) showed that the usage of AR significantly impacted tourists' perceived value and experiences in the context of a national park characterized by a natural environment. Tourists seek positive emotional experiences by immersing themselves in natural environments (Jepson & Sharpley, 2018). In this context, smartphone usage in island tourism contributes to providing memorable tourism experiences, enabling tourists to become fully immersed in the natural environment.

In this light, it is assumed that the availability of information, along with tourism infrastructure and attractions, enhances the accuracy of information and the authenticity of the travel experience on islands. For these reasons, this study demonstrates that the extensive use of smartphones is directly connected to the authenticity of the traveler's island experiences. Notably, the prominence of STTs among smartphone users who visit islands has been highly unexamined. Additionally, authenticity is known to be a valuable factor, especially in island tourism. Therefore, this research aims to gain further insights from the tourists' perspective and posits that smartphone usage reflects their existential authenticity and behavioral perceptions toward the given destination.

2.3. Authenticity and Smartphone Usage

The term authenticity is considered an exposition of the legitimacy and increased regard for travel infrastructures (Chambers, 2009). It is regarded as a significant factor in increasing a destination's competitive advantage (Ramkissoon & Uysal, 2010; 2011). Scholars have emphasized the importance of authenticity, which leads to a positive impact on travelers' cultural and behavioral intentions (Ramkissoon & Uysal, 2010), as well as their repurchase behavior, such as loyalty (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013). As a result, authenticity plays a crucial role in island destinations as it nurtures the ethnic and cultural values that play instrumental roles in attracting visitors.

In the context of tourism, the application of authenticity was initially introduced by MacCannell (1973) and further elaborated by Wang (1999), who categorized the conceptualization of the various types of authenticity, which include objective authenticity, constructive authenticity, and existential authenticity. Among these, existential authenticity is a form of engagement with one's existence driven by participation in different entertainment activities (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 1999). By way of explanation, the actual authenticity of tourist attractions and destinations is not the primary source for pursuing tourists' existential authenticity. Instead, it is considered a voluntary act of engaging in different entertainment activities that have been restricted due to their social status (Wang, 1999). This term has been both theoretically and empirically utilized by many scholars. For instance, Kolar and Zabkar (2010) utilized the mediating effect of existential authenticity within the context of cultural motivation and loyalty. Moreover, empirical research conducted by Yi et al. (2017) within the heritage tourism context sought to understand how individuals' authenticity of their living within their societal framework affects the two dimensions of existential authenticity. The majority of other research also sought to know how visitors interacted with attraction backgrounds and highlighted the value of emotional and experiential processes (McIntosh & Prentice, 1999). Furthermore, many researchers have started to examine the effect of existential authenticity from various research approaches, such as grounded theoretical perspectives and philosophical perspectives, which have been divided into interpersonal and intrapersonal authenticities (Bryce et al., 2015; Kim & Jamal, 2007; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Wang, 1999; Zhou et al., 2013). Intrapersonal authenticity is a state of existence where individuals experience a sense of liberation and genuine self-realization rather than the genuine object itself. It correlates to the aesthetics of enjoying a wonderful time and the freedom experienced with the constraints of everyday life (Brown, 2013). When tourists engage in tourism activities, sensory stimuli such as sound, touch, and visual experiences collectively satisfy their needs for self-actualization and self-realization (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006).

In collaboration with authenticity, smartphones have been the enabler in processing the pursuit of traveling akin to a resident, interacting with the locals, and engaging in various local activities. (Törn et al., 2008). Additionally, smartphone usage serves as the core technology for creating tourist experiences (Wang et al., 2012), which also enables the occurrence of authentic moments (Huang et al., 2017). Apart from smartphone usage, other advanced technologies such as AR and VR are also representative examples of pursuing authentic experiences. For instance, Zhu et al. (2023a) utilized AR to investigate social presence and telepresence from a postmodern authenticity perspective, analyzing their impact on tourists' satisfaction and intentions to revisit. Additionally, the relationship between objective authenticity, constructive authenticity, and existential authenticity was tested in assessing travelers' behavioral perceptions during AR tourism experiences at the World Cultural Heritage Site (Zhu et al., 2023b). Atzeni et al. (2022), in the case of VR, tested its tour guide experience by the use of smartphones on tourists' experiential factors, which are object-based authenticity, existential authenticity, and other behavioral perceptions, based on a well-known heritage site called 'Su Nuraxi' in Italy. As a result, the usage of smartphones and modern technologies such as AR or VR is highly discussed among tourism scholars due to their positive impact on tourists' authentic experiences and behavioral perceptions. Moreover, Ghaderi et al. (2019) examined the tourists' attitudes towards smartphone usage and came to the realization that it had a significant impact on their intentions for local travel. In other words, smartphone usage has had numerous impacts on tourists by providing authentic moments and experiences.

Within the context of smartphone usage, it is expected that visitors can acknowledge and explore unknown facts about themselves through the use of different technologies.

Embarking on an adventure by an individual on a quest to discover unknown facts and broaden their knowledge, visitors tend to possess a real feeling of self-searching, adventure, discovery, and excitement (Fu, 2019). In other words, smartphone initiatives motivate travelers to broaden their knowledge about their own identities. On the other hand, interpersonal authenticity emphasizes community bonds, which postulate that people's social status or role are overlooked and tend to interact with themselves in a pleasant, institutional, and prudent manner (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Wang, 1999). These types of household relationships involve emotional interactions, with a sense of closeness occurring during tourism activities (Wang, 1999). This study posits that further evaluations are needed to find out the impact of existential authenticities on behavioral outcomes, especially within the context of smartphone usage.

2.4. Cross-country Comparison

National differences have widely been considered to be a key factor in motivating consumer decision-making (Burgmann et al., 2006; Rojas-Mendez et al., 2017). With regard to consumers who incorporate smartphone technologies into their travel activities, the impact of national variety was evaluated to understand their differences in behavioral patterns (Navío-Marco et al., 2018). Selim et al. (2022) also evaluated travelers' sharing behaviors from four different countries who participate in online travel communities, aiming to determine the factors that multinational enterprises ought to consider when broadening their global market share. In this context, it is believed that the impact of national differences is rooted in travelers' perceptions of authenticity and their behavioral perceptions. Additionally, Cha and Wang (2020) conducted a study about the comparison of the instant noodle selection process between consumers from China and South Korea. The different industrial highlights within the two nations revealed a cross-national impact that exists between individual behaviors in China and South Korea. Therefore, the current study employed a cross-national comparison between domestic travelers in China and South Korea to identify the differences in their perceived authenticity and behavioral perceptions of using smartphones when visiting island destinations.

3. Hypothesis Development

The current study posits that the explorative use of STTs is expected to influence the tourist's ability to have a memorable travel experience. The term 'exploration' is defined as seeking new knowledge and investigating the unknown by immersing oneself in an environment to discover an answer or a solution (March, 1991). Exploration includes tasks such as testing potentially game-changing concepts, practicing unique skills, and devising novel uses for resources. It symbolizes a quest for new information and skills (Auh & Menguc, 2005; Gretzel et al., 2015; Subramani, 2004). Particularly, the explorative use of smartphones and social networking services may reveal a unique location, an out-of-the-way adventure, or even provide a flexible schedule that will improve travel experiences in an innovative and creative way (Gretzel et al., 2015; Huang et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2012). Torabi et al. (2022), in an Iranian study, linked the impact of smartphones on domestic travelers' memorable experiences and intentions to revisit based on the Theory of Planned Behavior. Therefore, this study posits that the greater the explorative use of smartphones in searching for novel stimuli and experiences, the more enriching experiences travelers will have. Therefore, based on previous research, this hypothesis was proposed in the current study.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Explorative use of STTs positively affects the memorable experience.

The relationship between the use of STTs and authenticity has been undermined due to the evaluation of other variables. For instance, Balakrishnan et al. (2021) utilized the four dimensions of STTs to evaluate the image of heritage sites. The results were effective and aligned with the image dimensions proposed by Lu et al. (2015). However, as defined by Lin et al. (2007, p. 183), "destination image is defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions individuals have of attributes and or activities available at a destination". Along with this definition, it is believed that explorative behavior in the search for exotic and adventurous moments is correlated with individuals' authentic behavior, particularly in the tourism context. In this regard, it is assumed that the explorative use of smartphones is closely linked with existential authenticity, as it represents a behavior aimed at discovering exotic and insightful destinations (Koo et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2012), which can enhance the travel experience in a more exciting and meaningful way (Huang et al., 2017). Thus, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Explorative use of STTs positively affects intrapersonal authenticity.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Explorative use of STTs positively affects interpersonal authenticity.

The two divisions of existential authenticity have received much attention from scholars from a variety of research backgrounds (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017; Yi et al., 2017). While several studies were focused on motivations and destination loyalty, it was worthwhile to evaluate the relationship with the variable of memorable experience, a main factor in tourism outcomes. Many researchers have studied the impact of memorable tourism experiences using student samples, but Chandralal et al. (2015) recommended conducting further research with samples of authentic travelers for better generalization. For instance, novel stimuli are to be the most noticeable factor in retrieving customer preferences, which induce better memory and acknowledgment of certain objects (Brandt et al., 2006). Moreover, tourists who engage with native customs create a distinctive and noteworthy experience, native culture contributes to their memorable experiences during their trips (Kim, 2010). Park and Santos (2017) also highlighted that interactions with other tourists have positive impacts on the recollection of memorable experiences. In other words, tourists'

social relationships with fellow tourists, families, or even bystanders could have practical impacts on their evaluation of the trip. Based on these findings from previous research, this study clarifies the relationship between authenticity and memorable experience in specific destinations, based on the individual travelers' use of smartphones, leading to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Intrapersonal authenticity positively affects the memorable experience.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Interpersonal authenticity positively affects the memorable experience.

Regarding the study of smart technology, past experiences of using smart technology were identified to increase users' intentions to use it again in the future (Ozturk & Hancer, 2015). Jeong and Shin (2020) summarized that previous studies on the usage of mobile technologies, especially in the hospitality industry, have demonstrated that using mobile applications can have either positive or negative effects on travelers' behavioral intentions under diverse circumstances, necessitating further evaluation to determine specific situations (Rivera et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2016b). Moreover, Huang et al. (2017) emphasized that the explorative and exploitative use of smartphones has a significant influence on travel experience and satisfaction. However, only a few studies have identified the ways in which the use of smartphones influences tourists' memorable experiences, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions (e.g., Carbonell & Escudero, 2015; Jeong & Shin, 2020; Lee et al., 2022). This sequential relationship needs to be tested in different settings to verify its generalizability (Cavalheiro et al., 2021; Gong et al., 2021). Given the context of smart island tourism, this study thus presents the role of tourist satisfaction as a mediator between island domestic travelers' memorable experiences and their intention to revisit, leading to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Memorable experiences positively affect tourist satisfaction.

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Tourist satisfaction positively affects tourist revisit intention.

Most studies on smart tourism or island tourism investigate the differences in impact between countries with distinctive cultural backgrounds, such as the U.S. and South Korea (Jeong & Shin, 2020; Kim & Stephenkova, 2017; Shin et al., 2021). However, there are few cross-country comparisons between Eastern countries (e.g., China, Japan, South Korea, etc.) that have identified diverse tourist behaviors and perceptions (e.g., Lee & Lee, 2009; Yu & Ko, 2012). Lee and Lee (2009) conducted research comparing Japanese and Korean tourists who visited Guam, and the findings were that Japanese tourists who had previously visited Guam tended to be more satisfied with their experience there. In a cross-cultural analysis of medical tourists from China, Japan, and South Korea visiting Jeju Island, Yu and Ko (2012) explained the differing intentions and participatory behaviors of the three groups, including their selection of a destination, preferred products, and what they found inconvenient. Thus, the following hypothesis was formulated to determine the impact of cultural differences on domestic travelers from China and South Korea. Meanwhile, the impact of cultural differences was generally considered a moderator in the conceptual framework. For instance, the process of evoking millennial consumers' trust and associated actions toward e-travel websites was determined to be moderated by their diverse national backgrounds (Jensen & Wagner, 2018). Moreover, Jeong and Shin (2020) also identified that the impact of diverse cultural backgrounds would play a role as a moderator in affecting travelers' tourism experiences and behavioral intentions when using STT in smart destinations (e.g., Seoul and New York). Therefore, this study assumes that the moderating impact of cultural differences would be activated in the current setting.

Hypothesis 8 (H8): The proposed relationships in this study are moderated by the cultural backgrounds of the travelers.

4. Methodology

4.1. Data Collection and Measures

This study investigated two smart island destinations, Jeju Island in South Korea, and Hainan Island in China, both known as the most popular island destinations in their respective countries. Jeju Island has been designated as a Biosphere Reserve, a World Natural Heritage Site, and a Global Geopark. Jeju Island, on the other hand, is also recognized by Korean and international tourists alike as a unique tourist location (Kim et al., 2017). Hainan Island, with its tropical nature and climate, is one of China's most frequently visited domestic destinations, serving as a hub of the national economy and of cultural and social enhancement in the nation's tourism industry (He et al., 2022). Both destinations have made significant impacts on the advanced tourism industries. Jeju Island also offers recreational activities such as hiking, horseback riding, sightseeing, and nature exploration (Kim et al., 2022). Hainan Province, on the other hand, started construction as an international tourism island in 2009 and aimed to create an all-in-one tourism destination, an initiative enthusiastically supported by the country (Zhang et al., 2018).

The development of smart tourism on both islands has been officially supported by their respective local governments. To achieve the goal of distinguishing itself as a smart tourism destination, Jeju Island has partnered with digital technology industries with a focus on sustaining the natural environment and becoming an economic and social hub. This initiative has led to the implementation of digital signage, mobile applications, and other digital technologies that provide real-time information about attractions, restaurants, and other points of interest to visitors (Invest Korea, 2022). Smart tourism was first developed in Hainan in 2014, when the China National Tourism Administration declared 'smart travel' as the theme of the year (Guo et al., 2014). By the end of 2020, Hainan Province had launched a smart tourism app, 'Smart Tour Hainan,' which offers tourists travel information such as details about attractions, lodging, food options, and recommended routes (Gong et al., 2021). In addition, cities in Hainan Province developed their own versions of smart tourism. For instance, Qionghai and Sanya partnered with Tmall, an online shopping platform operated by Alibaba Group, where tourists could conveniently shop for tourism products from their mobile devices (Zheng & Chen, 2018).

To conduct a cross-cultural comparison between the two island destinations, the research aimed to collect samples from domestic travelers to Jeju Island and Hainan Island. The sampling process involved nationwide data collection through two commercial online survey companies: Embrain in South Korea and Wenjuanxing in China. Data were collected from July 11 to 13, 2022, in South Korea, and from September 19 to 22, 2022, in China. Both companies are renowned for their expertise in providing accurate survey results, and all incoherent and inconsistent results were excluded before being delivered to the authors. As a result, 210 responses from South Korea and 270 from China were collected, each with a 100% validity rate, confirming a total of 480 responses (Table 1). Responses from residents on Jeju Island and Hainan Island were to be removed respectively, as the purpose of this study was to define perceptions of destinations through the use of STTs among domestic travelers.

However, with a geographic size considerably larger than that of Jeju Island, permitting wider travel to certain destinations, residents of Hainan from 18 cities at various administrative levels in the Hainan Province are eligible for intra-island travel (Wu et al., 2020). Additionally, Zhang and Ju (2021) asserted that the tourism industry on Hainan Island has rapidly developed due to domestic tourism rather than inbound tourism. This is because Hainan Island has a diverse tourism infrastructure, such as buildings, heritage sites, various local activities, and exceptional astronomical and meteorological landscapes. On the other hand, inbound tourism on Hainan Island was more of a supplementary factor since domestic

tourism accounted for a higher portion of the number of tourists and tourism revenue. In this context, this research suggests that the perceptions of existential authenticity, memorable experiences, tourist satisfaction, and intentions to revisit by residents of Hainan Island may differ compared to those from Jeju Island. Moreover, domestic travel has been the rising paradigm within the Chinese tourism industry in the year 2022 (Wu et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022). This research expects that residents within Hainan have engaged in a significant amount of domestic activities within the island. Short-distance travel within Hainan Island was highly supported by the local government, while local tourism businesses were also widely encouraged to provide travel products that would stimulate consumption among Hainan residents (Hainan Daily, 2020). For instance, considering the growing desire among Hainan residents to travel and the emphasis on the local market, in 2022, the capital city of Hainan Province, Haikou, elaborated on 23 travel routes and 8 major themes based on its tourism resources to attract more residents to visit (People’s Daily Online, 2022). In this context, this research assumes that Hainan local residents have engaged in a significant number of domestic travel activities, resulting in their inclusion in the study’s existential authenticity, memorable experiences, tourist satisfaction, and tourist intention to revisit. However, in the case of Jeju Island, inbound travelers during the timeline consisted of local Koreans, with their numbers reaching the highest record in 2022, with 99% of them being local travelers from outside of Jeju Island. The majority of these tourists traveled abroad, implying that the majority of tourism activities were from inbound local travelers (Boram, 2022). In this context, there is a limitation in including the perspectives of residents in Jeju when testing their authenticity and behavioral perceptions. Therefore, this study excluded responses from Jeju residents while maintaining those from Hainan residents.

Table 1. Demographics of survey participants

Demographic	Total (n = 480)		South Korea (n = 210)		China (n = 270)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender						
Male	208	43.33	105	50	103	38.15
Female	272	56.67	105	50	167	61.85
Age						
20–29	160	33.33	42	20	118	43.7
30–39	181	37.71	41	19.5	140	51.85
40–49	53	11.04	43	20.5	10	3.71
50–59	44	9.17	42	20	2	0.74
60–69	42	8.75	42	20	0	0
Education						
Below high school	2	0.42	2	0.95	0	0

High School	36	7.5	31	14.76	5	1.85
Enrolled in a college degree (3 years)	2	0.42	0	0	2	0.74
Enrolled in a bachelor's degree (4 years)	38	7.91	9	4.29	29	10.74
Graduated with a college degree (3 years)	47	9.79	28	13.33	19	7.04
Graduated with a bachelor's degree (4 years)	300	62.5	113	53.81	187	69.26
Enrolled in a master's degree	7	1.46	5	2.38	2	0.74
Graduated with a master's degree	1	0.21	1	0.48	0	0
Enrolled in a doctoral degree	38	7.92	15	7.14	23	8.52
Graduated with a doctoral degree	9	1.87	6	2.86	3	1.11
Occupation						
College students	19	3.96	8	3.81	11	4.08
Office worker	361	75.21	116	55.23	245	90.74
Housewife	32	6.67	32	15.24	0	0
Self-employed	24	5	17	8.1	7	2.59
Freelancer	24	5	17	8.1	7	2.59
Unemployed	15	3.12	15	7.14	0	0
Others	5	1.04	5	2.38	0	0
Annual income						
Less than \$20,000	40	8.33	20	9.52	20	7.41
\$20,000-\$34,999	146	30.42	42	20	104	38.52
\$35,000-\$49,999	172	35.84	74	35.24	98	36.3
\$50,000-\$74,999	65	13.54	34	16.19	31	11.48
\$75,000-\$99,999	41	8.54	29	13.81	12	4.44
Over \$100,000	16	3.33	11	5.24	5	1.85

The survey is divided into sections for the sake of clarity. Before completing the survey, respondents were informed that their responses were intended for academic use only. Respondents who agreed to participate were provided with explanations and examples of STTs (e.g., mobile payments, SamsungPay, Alipay) for better understanding. Next, they answered screening questions relating to their visits to either Jeju or Hainan Island. They were also asked if they had ever used any type of STTs while traveling to Jeju or Hainan Island and if so, which specific ones. Respondents who had never visited Jeju or Hainan Islands nor used any type of STTs during their visits were excluded from the survey. The answers regarding the types of STTs respondents used during their travels are presented in the Appendix.

The next section measured the six testing variables for this study. These variables are: ‘explorative use of STTs,’ ‘intrapersonal authenticity,’ ‘interpersonal authenticity,’ ‘memorable experience,’ ‘tourist satisfaction,’ and ‘tourist revisit intention.’ The questions for assessing these factors were adopted from previous studies to ensure validity and consistency. Measurement items for the explorative use of STTs were developed by Torabi et al. (2022) and Huang et al. (2017), with additional items for settings such as attractions, accommodations, and services. Items for intrapersonal authenticity were sourced from several studies (Lalicic & Weismayer, 2017; Tian et al., 2020; Yi et al., 2018), while interpersonal authenticity items were also sourced from Yi et al. (2018). The extent of the memorable experience was adapted from the research of Jeong and Shin (2020). Tourist satisfaction was based on the research of Veasna et al. (2013), and tourist revisit intention was derived from the research of Shin et al. (2021) and Chang (2022). All items were measured using a Likert scale (i.e., 1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *neutral*, and 7 = *strongly agree*) without any reverse coding. In the final section, respondents answered socio-demographic questions.

Since this study investigated domestic travelers in South Korea and China, the questionnaire was translated into Korean and Chinese. The content in both translated versions was strictly aligned with the original questionnaire in English to ensure consistency. Moreover, the Korean version was reviewed by three native Korean speakers who were fluent in English to ensure precision and understandability. Simultaneously, the Chinese version was reviewed by five bilingual experts proficient in both Chinese and English to verify the accuracy and clarity of the translation. Some sentences and words were slightly modified based on their feedback.

4.2. Data Analysis

This research analyzed the collected data by utilizing a partial least squares (PLS) analysis. The PLS is well-suited for predicting relationships among constructs in a structural model (Hair et al., 2011), particularly when the sample size is small (Ahuja & Thatcher, 2005). This research conducted the analysis of the research model using SmartPLS. Additionally, a multi-group analysis was conducted to investigate any differences between South Korea and China.

4.3. Measurement Model

The measurement items for each variable were adopted from those validated in previous research. Specifically, six items for explorative use of STTs were adopted from the research by Huang et al. (2017) and Torabi et al. (2022). For intrapersonal authenticity, five items were adopted from the research by Lalicic and Weismayer (2017), Tian et al. (2020), and Yi et al. (2018). Three items were used to assess interpersonal authenticity, adopted from Yi et al. (2018). Four items were used to assess memorable experiences, based on Jeong and Shin (2020). For tourist satisfaction, four items were taken from Veasna et al. (2013); for tourists' revisit intention, four items were taken from the research conducted by Shin et al.

(2021). During the exploratory factor analysis, five items were excluded as they did not show clear loading against the focal variables, including two items from explorative use of STTs, two from intrapersonal authenticity, and one from tourist satisfaction.

The measurement model was estimated independently for the sample data from South Korea and China. The convergent and discriminant validity were evaluated for both models. In terms of convergent validity, both models met four criteria: 1) the standardized loading (Loading) for each construct exceeded 0.5; 2) the composite reliability (CR) exceeded 0.7; 3) its Cronbach's α exceeded 0.7; 4) its average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded 0.5 (Chin, 1998) (Table 2). Additionally, the criterion for discriminant validity was satisfied in both models, as shown by the square root of a construct's AVE, which is the diagonal elements in Table 3, being higher than the correlations between the focal construct and other constructs (Chin, 1998).

Table 2. Convergent validity of measurements (South Korea / China)

Variables	Items	Loading	CR	Cronbach's α
Explorative use of STTs	I used STTs to discover and explore attractions and scenic spots at the destination.	0.861 /0.755	0.917 /0.784	0.879 /0.731
	I used STTs to discover and explore catering services (restaurants, bars, cafes, bakeries, etc.) at the destination.	0.901 /0.647		
	I used STTs to discover and explore accommodations (hotels, B&B, etc.) at the destination.	0.873 0.620		
	I used STTs to discover and explore transportations (flight, railways, bus, subway, etc.) at the destination.	0.790 /0.730		
Intrapersonal authenticity	By using STTs, I felt like I have integrated into Jeju or Hainan Island's culture.	0.822 /0.875	0.925 /0.773	0.893 /0.713
	By using STTs, this tour helped me learn more about Jeju or Hainan Island.	0.943 /0.837		
	By using STTs, I believe the local island experience activities are very authentic.	0.799 /0.706		
Interpersonal authenticity	On the tour, I could keep in touch with local people in a natural way (no identity or class difference), thanks to STTs.	0.897 /0.659	0.877 /0.846	0.738 /0.737

	On the tour, I could keep in touch with family members in a natural way (no identity or class difference), thanks to STTs.	0.909 /0.671		
	On the tour, I could keep in touch with other travelers or tourists in a natural way (no identity or class difference), thanks to STTs.	0.870 /0.677		
Memorable experience	I had wonderful memories about my trip, thanks to STTs.	0.930 /0.690	0.955 /0.797	0.937 /0.761
	Using STTs made my trip enjoyable in Jeju or Hainan Island.	0.943 /0.694		
	Using STTs made my trip beneficial in Jeju or Hainan Island.	0.922 /0.688		
	My travel experience was unforgettable. Thanks to STTs.	0.874 /0.744		
Tourist satisfaction	Overall, I was satisfied with the travel experience in Jeju or Hainan Island.	0.947 /0.815	0.964 /0.835	0.945 /0.704
	I am sure it was the right thing to be a tourist in Jeju or Hainan Island.	0.948 /0.768		
	I feel good about my decision to visit Jeju or Hainan Island.	0.952 /0.796		
Tourist revisit intention	I want to revisit Jeju/Hainan Island if I have the chance.	0.902 /0.772	0.951 /0.817	0.932 /0.706
	I would like to revisit Jeju or Hainan Island in the near future.	0.921 /0.661		
	If I had to decide again, I would choose Jeju or Hainan Island again.	0.923 /0.727		
	I would more frequently visit Jeju or Hainan Island.	0.899 /0.743		

Table 3. Discriminant validity of measurements (South Korea / China)

Correlation	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Explorative use of STTs	0.857 /0.690					
2. Intrapersonal authenticity	0.459 /0.479	0.870 /0.679				

3. Interpersonal authenticity	0.199 /0.434	0.568 /0.586	0.884 /0.856			
4. Memorable experience	0.697 /0.560	0.669 /0.652	0.389 /0.466	0.917 /0.704		
5. Tourist satisfaction	0.525 /0.620	0.593 /0.535	0.246 /0.419	0.685 /0.588	0.949 /0.792	
6. Tourist revisit intention	0.401 /0.488	0.453 /0.613	0.186 /0.513	0.489 /0.568	0.769 /0.596	0.911 /0.727

5. Findings

The research model was estimated using a bootstrapping technique, with a sample size of 500. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was employed to assess the fit of the estimated model. A research model is considered to have an acceptable fit when its SRMR is below 0.08 (Henseler et al., 2014). For the model tested with the sample data from South Korea, the SRMR was calculated to be 0.067, while for the model tested with the sample data from China, it was 0.066, confirming the acceptability of both models.

Figure 1 presents the results of the model tested with the sample data from South Korea. With the exception of the effect of interpersonal authenticity on memorable experience ($\beta = 0.059$, $p = 0.288$), all other effects were positively significant as hypothesized (Explorative use of STTs \rightarrow Intrapersonal authenticity: $\beta = 0.459$, $p < 0.001$; Explorative use of STTs \rightarrow Interpersonal authenticity: $\beta = 0.199$, $p < 0.05$; Explorative use of STTs \rightarrow Memorable experience: $\beta = 0.498$, $p < 0.001$; Intrapersonal authenticity \rightarrow Memorable experience: $\beta = 0.406$, $p < 0.001$; Memorable experience \rightarrow Tourist satisfaction: $\beta = 0.685$, $p < 0.001$; Tourist satisfaction \rightarrow Tourist revisit intention: $\beta = 0.769$, $p < 0.001$). To test the mediating role of intrapersonal and interpersonal authenticity, a mediation analysis was conducted. Consistent with the results mentioned above, it was found that the impact of explorative use of STTs on memorable experience is partially mediated only by intrapersonal authenticity (Explorative use of STTs \rightarrow Memorable experience: $\beta = 0.311$, $p < 0.001$; Explorative use of STTs \rightarrow Intrapersonal authenticity \rightarrow Memorable experience: $\beta = 0.398$, $p < 0.001$).

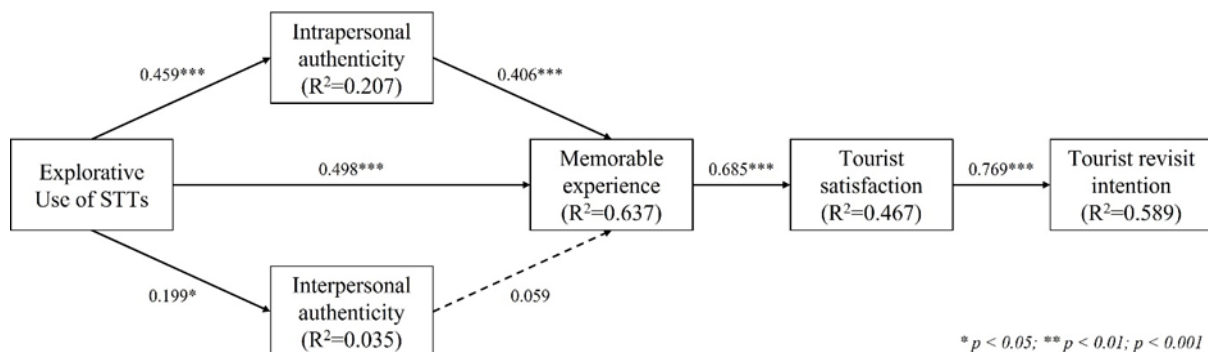


Figure 1. Results of the model tested with the sample data of South Korea

Similar results were obtained in the model tested with the sample data from China (Figure 2). While the effect of interpersonal authenticity on memorable experience was not significant ($\beta = 0.055$, $p = 0.419$), all the other effects were positively significant (Explorative use of STTs \rightarrow Intrapersonal authenticity: $\beta = 0.479$, $p < 0.001$; Explorative use of STTs \rightarrow

Interpersonal authenticity: $\beta = 0.434, p < 0.001$; Explorative use of STTs \rightarrow Memorable experience: $\beta = 0.310, p < 0.001$; Intrapersonal authenticity \rightarrow Memorable experience: $\beta = 0.471, p < 0.001$; Memorable experience \rightarrow Tourist satisfaction: $\beta = 0.588, p < 0.001$; Tourist satisfaction \rightarrow Tourist revisit intention: $\beta = 0.596, p < 0.001$). The results of the mediation test were also consistent with those of the South Korea case. Intrapersonal authenticity alone appeared to partially mediate the impact of explorative use of STTs on memorable experience (Explorative use of STTs \rightarrow Memorable experience: $\beta = 0.277, p < 0.01$; Explorative use of STTs \rightarrow Intrapersonal authenticity \rightarrow Memorable experience: $\beta = 0.304, p < 0.001$). In conclusion, H1, H2, H3, H4, H6, and H7 were supported, but H5 was not supported in either model.

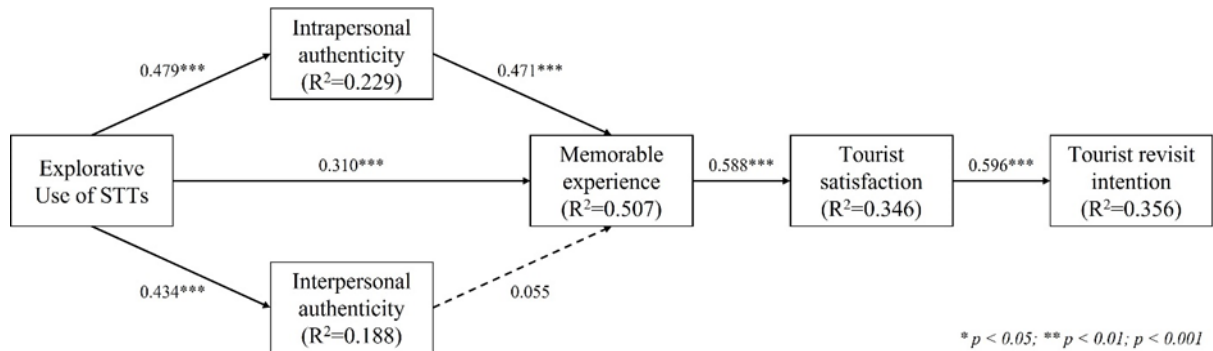


Figure 2. Results of the model tested with the sample data from China

Figure 3 presents the results of a multi-group analysis. The path coefficients of the research models tested with the Korean and Chinese samples were compared. Notably, only the impact of interpersonal authenticity on memorable experiences was not significantly different ($t = 0.704$). The positive impact of explorative use of STTs on memorable experiences ($t = 31.355, p < 0.001$), the impact of memorable experiences on tourist satisfaction ($t = 13.885, p < 0.001$), and the impact of tourist satisfaction on tourist revisit intention ($t = 27.689, p < 0.001$) appeared significantly stronger in the South Korean model. However, the positive impact of explorative use of STTs on intrapersonal authenticity ($t = -2.253, p < 0.05$), the impact of intrapersonal authenticity on memorable experience ($t = -10.614, p < 0.001$), and the impact of explorative use of STTs on interpersonal authenticity ($t = -32.497, p < 0.001$) were stronger in the Chinese model. Therefore, most relationships in the research model were examined as moderated by the traveler's cultural background, thereby partially supporting H8.

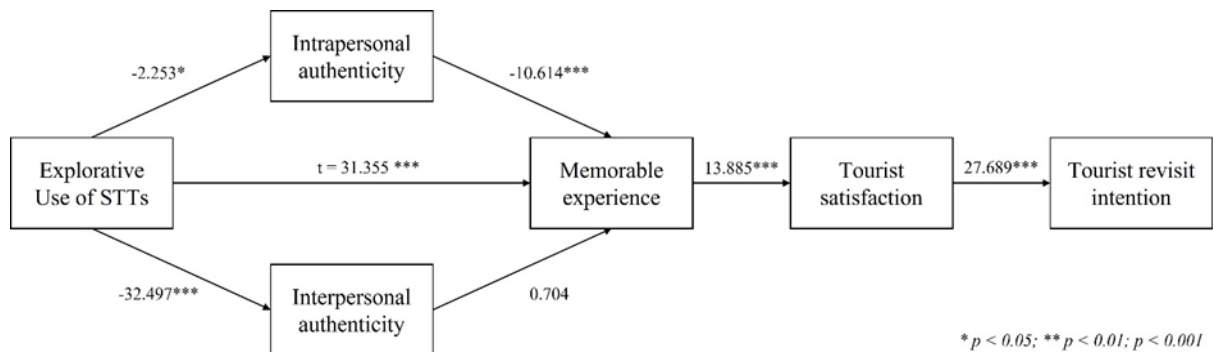


Figure 3. Results of multi-group analysis (The value on each path is the t-value of the difference between the path coefficients of South Korea's and China's models)

6. Discussion

According to the results of this study, it was identified that the process of predicting the influence of travelers' use of STTs on their satisfaction and intention to revisit. Through the use of smartphones to access explorative information and services, travelers' intrapersonal authenticity, interpersonal authenticity, and memorable experiences regarding their destinations were all positively impacted. Moreover, travelers' memorable experiences were observed to be directly affected by their perceived intrapersonal authenticity, while travelers' interpersonal authenticity had no impact on the formation of these memorable experiences. Additionally, travelers' satisfaction with their destinations could be positively evoked by the accumulation of memorable experiences, prompting their intention to revisit. The results of the proposed model, when used on both Hainan Island and Jeju Island, yielded consistent results, affirming that the final structured framework contributed to helping to understand the influence of domestic travelers' explorative use of STTs on their satisfaction and intention to revisit.

Explorative use: The explorative use of STTs was demonstrated to have a positive relationship with travelers' memorable experiences, in addition to affecting their satisfaction, which had further implications for their intention to revisit. In other words, H1, H6, and H7 received support, and these results were the same for both islands. These findings were consistent with Huang et al.'s (2017) findings that travelers use smartphones to find suitable places to visit, along with the crucial tourism information necessary for a memorable travel experience. Moreover, the identification of a link between memorable tourism experiences impacting satisfaction corresponds with previous studies (Jeong & Shin, 2020; Padrón-Ávila et al., 2021; Sangpikul, 2018). It is evident that tourist satisfaction significantly impacts the intention to revisit. These outcomes prove that the explorative use of smartphones for both islands was significant in improving the quality of travel experiences, thus fulfilling the sequential relationship (i.e., Explorative use of STTs → Memorable experience → Tourist satisfaction → Tourist revisit intention).

Intrapersonal authenticity: Regarding the mediating impact of authenticity, the findings indicated that intrapersonal authenticity significantly mediated the impact between the explorative use of STTs and memorable experience. The findings align with previous studies indicating that the use of smartphones is a prominent factor in enhancing the authenticity of the destination, thereby improving the tourists' travel experiences (Kim & Law, 2015; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2013). It can be implied that for both destinations, Jeju Island and Hainan Island, smartphones act as important resources for finding destination-related information while also serving as an amplifier in gaining a more authentic experience about the destination.

Interpersonal authenticity: Conversely, interpersonal authenticity was shown to be significantly affected by the explorative use of STTs. However, it did not correlate with retrieving memorable experiences. The relationship between the explorative use of STTs and interpersonal authenticity can be explained by travelers' usage of smartphones and their possibility of sharing places they visit. According to Tan and Lu (2019), travelers often tend to use their smartphones to acquire knowledge about their destinations and share this information with their friends and families, particularly when there is a variety of attractions and activities available for enjoyment. In this sense, domestic travelers to both destinations in the current study are likely to contact people at the destinations to obtain information about entertaining and engaging activities. However, it was surprising to find that interpersonal authenticity was irrelevant to travelers' memorable experiences. Wang (1999) highlighted that interactions with relatives and local communities will bestow tourists with unforgettable experiences. Research by Yang et al. (2013) also determined that travelers' interactions at their destination could have a positive impact on their satisfaction. Numerous studies have

also established the influence of travelers' interactions on the quality of their travel experiences, satisfaction levels, and revisit intentions (e.g., Selstad, 2007; Su & Wall, 2010). The result of this study contradicted that of the previous studies. It is possible that the insignificant relationship between interpersonal authenticity and memorable experiences may be attributed to travelers' explorative use of smartphones. Smartphone usage is an extension of tourists' daily lives, and it serves as a source of social connectivity and communication during their stay at the destination (Tan & Chen, 2021; Tan & Lu, 2019). Hence, one's interpersonal authenticity, attributed to the explorative use of STTs, may not contribute to an unforgettable travel-related experience.

Cross-country comparison: Although the structured model was the same for both island destinations, this study still identified some differences when comparing the impact of STTs on tourists' satisfaction and intention to revisit. For instance, the results showed that domestic travelers to Jeju Island experienced a more significant outcome in terms of memorable experiences, tourist satisfaction, and intention to revisit compared to visitors to Hainan Island. This phenomenon was intensified for domestic travelers to Jeju Island who seek more travel experiences using smartphones than an authentic relationship with the scenery and local people. The tourist-oriented businesses on Jeju Island offer unique accommodations, services, and a myriad of restaurants and cafes (Um & Chung, 2021). In their pursuit to maintain competitiveness, these tourism businesses use smartphone channels to relay information that appeals to experienced travelers. Thus, utilizing smartphones can assist domestic travelers in accessing reliable information about various attractions. This will result in a more desirable and memorable visit to Jeju Island.

In addition, the perception of authenticity by domestic travelers to Hainan Island was intensified when exploring the impact of using STTs. Moreover, the influence of explorative use of smartphones on perceptions of intrapersonal and interpersonal authenticity among Chinese domestic travelers to Hainan Island is more pronounced than their counterparts to Jeju Island. In other words, Chinese domestic travelers are more likely to utilize smartphones to acquire knowledge and experience natural, cultural, and human attractions on Hainan Island. Also, tourism on Hainan Island seems to have been more attentive to providing authentic experiences for travelers. As the island features a tropical climate and clusters of the minority Li and Miao ethnic groups, Hainan province has promoted its culture and tradition. This promotion has led to the development of folk villages, theme parks, and festivals (Xie, 2003; Xie & Wall, 2002). By enjoying these attractions, the authenticity perceived by domestic travelers can create unforgettable moments, contributing to a favorable evaluation of the destination and encouraging future visits to Hainan Island. Moreover, after 2018, with the establishment of the Free Trade Zone (Wu et al., 2020), duty-free shopping has become more attractive to Chinese domestic travelers, giving them opportunities for explorative smartphone usage. Aside from travelers utilizing a smartphone to check the duty-free prices of the products they want, they can also use it to contact the sellers for after-sale service or other consumers for joint orders.

7. Conclusion

This study explored how the use of STTs influences the satisfaction and revisit intentions of travelers visiting island destinations. It expanded on Wang's (1999) term 'existential authenticity' to determine its potential mediating effect in seeking tourism authenticity through the use of smartphones. By merging authenticity with a memorable experience, this study built a theoretical framework. Six out of seven hypotheses were supported, demonstrating the mediating role of intrapersonal authenticity and a memorable experience when forming tourist satisfaction that could stimulate intentions to revisit. The findings were in line with previous studies that confirmed the impact of smartphones on travelers' memorable experiences, satisfaction levels, and intentions to revisit the destination (e.g., Huang et al., 2017; Koo et al., 2015; Torabi et al., 2022; Wong et al., 2020). However, although evoked by their explorative use of smartphones, travelers' interpersonal authenticity was found to have no impact on their memorable experiences, although their memorable experiences had a positive impact on both satisfaction and revisit intentions. In addition, the structured framework was effective for both Hainan Island and Jeju Island, identifying different behaviors and eliciting further insights. Notably, when traveling with smartphones, the role of authenticity was highlighted by Chinese domestic travelers to Hainan Island. At the same time, the sequential process from the explorative use of smartphones to tourist revisit intention through a memorable experience and tourist satisfaction was more influential among Korean domestic travelers to Jeju Island.

7.1. Theoretical Implications

This study was conducted in a smart tourism context, adding a theoretical framework for understanding the impact of STT usage on domestic travelers' behaviors. It aimed to examine the behaviors of tourists visiting domestic island destinations to identify authentic moments that could increase their satisfaction levels and intentions to revisit (Ramkissoon, 2015; Tian et al., 2020; Wang, 1999). Furthermore, the role of existential authenticity was used as a mediating variable to explore its correlation with the use of smartphones in creating memorable experiences. This framework addresses a research gap identified by previous scholars (Jeong & Shin, 2020; Viñan-Ludeña, 2019) by testing the effect of smartphones on domestic travelers' memorable experiences, tourist satisfaction levels, and intentions to revisit. Previous studies employed existential authenticity to examine cultural motivations for visiting and loyalty to a destination, but they did not investigate the traveler's memorable experience (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Yi et al., 2017). Therefore, this study establishes that the use of smartphones has a positive impact on individuals' intrapersonal authenticity, consequently enhancing their memorable experiences. The findings suggest that the use of smartphones amplifies the authentic experience of a destination, contrasting with previous studies that solely relied on physical and mental sensations (Brown, 2013; Kim & Jamal, 2007; Wang, 1999). This consistent result also extends to domestic travelers' explorative use of smartphones. Although it had a positive effect on their interpersonal authenticity, it did not necessarily result in the retrieval of memorable experiences. This phenomenon implies that using smartphones to contact and interact with others during their tour has become an ordinary habit, and as a result, such interactions may not lead to the pursuit of memorable experiences. Overall, this finding highlights the essential role of smartphone usage for travelers to island destinations, providing further insights into the unique ability of smartphones to enhance authentic experiences and influence various tourist behaviors.

This study identified significant differences in how domestic tourists in South Korea and China perceive their destinations through the use of STTs. While Korean domestic tourists are more inclined to enhance their memorable experiences directly through smartphone usage, Chinese domestic travelers also tend to amplify their authenticity through

smartphone usage. This study offers a novel perspective by demonstrating how tourists from different nationalities utilize smartphones to perceive the authenticity of the destinations they visit. Furthermore, it addresses an existing research gap by directly comparing tourists from two Asian countries, as previous research on smartphone usage mainly focused on comparisons between tourists from eastern and western nations (Shin et al., 2021). As a result, this research lays the foundational framework for understanding the impact of smartphones on travelers' authenticity and their behavioral assessments and intentions toward the destination.

7.2. Practical Implications

This study determined that STTs have become essential tools in island tourism. Generally, the use of smartphones to access destination-related information and services can engender unforgettable experiences among island travelers. When developing smartphones for tourists, technology operators should emphasize both the quantity and quality of destination-related information. When travelers are satisfied with the information obtained from the explorative use of smartphones, they will be more inclined to consider the trip a memorable one, leading to a positive evaluation and an intention to revisit. The experience facilitated by smartphones can be enhanced by providing information that conveys the authentic atmosphere of the island. To ensure that domestic travelers who use smartphones evaluate their trips favorably and plan to return to the destination, the development of travelers' memorable experiences, along with their intrapersonal authentic experiences, should be prioritized when preparing tourism-related information and services through smartphones.

Korean travelers to Jeju Island and Chinese travelers to Hainan Island reported different travel experiences resulting from their use of STTs, leading to the conclusion that there are diverse implications for the Korean and Chinese tourism industries. For Korean travelers to Jeju Island, the use of smartphones has a stronger impact on their memorable experiences of their visits. In other words, smartphones hold great significance in the experience and evaluation of Jeju Island for Korean travelers. A smart and user-friendly platform where travelers can access large amounts of high-quality information will create a favorable impression and the intention to revisit. Thus, smartphone developers and operators who provide tourism-related services and activities on Jeju Island should prioritize delivering a positive user experience.

When it comes to Hainan Island, the effects of the explorative use of STTs had a more powerful impact on travelers' perception of existential authenticity. Chinese domestic travelers visiting Hainan Island value the perceived authenticity of the island's residents, culture, entertainment, and nature through their use of smartphones. Hence, smartphone developers and providers of tourism-related services should emphasize information and activities that showcase the aesthetic sensuality of Hainan Island. To create these authentic perceptions, the provision of service information about Hainan Island's culture and transportation is recommended. Typically, involvement in activities associated with the traditional Li and Miao ethnic minorities and folk villages, as well as Hainan Island's high-speed train line, is highly recommended. These measures can contribute to improving travelers' experiences, increasing their satisfaction levels, and encouraging revisit intentions.

7.3. Limitation and Future Research

This study still has several limitations that can serve as directions for future research. Given the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the potential for better comprehension of travel-related information provided through smartphone usage among native speakers, the study's sample was limited to domestic travelers. As both Hainan Island

and Jeju Island are considered international tourism destinations in their respective countries (Kim et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2020), there is a compelling need for further research to explore the perceptions of international travelers and the impact of smartphone usage on their travel behaviors, particularly once travel restrictions are lifted. Additionally, while this research focused on Hainan Island and Jeju Island, other smart cities with different tourism features could be considered when conducting cross-cultural comparisons between countries other than China and South Korea. Lastly, when exploring the impact of smartphone use, users' characteristics associated with technology use as well as their perceptions of smartphones might affect their comprehension of the information obtained from their explorative use of smartphones (Shin et al., 2021). Future studies could delve into how users' attitudes toward and use of smartphones influence their travel-related intentions and behaviors.

Appendix: Types of STTs usage during travel

STT Applications used	Total (n = 480)		South Korea (n = 210)		China (n =x 270)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Lodging applications	394	82.08	155	73.81	239	88.52
Ride sharing	342	71.25	132	62.86	210	77.78
Mobile payment	354	73.75	91	43.33	263	97.41
Parking apps	68	14.17	39	18.57	29	10.74
City guide applications	372	77.50	134	63.81	238	88.15
Charging station	128	26.67	10	4.76	118	43.7
Emergency alert system	57	11.88	19	9.05	38	14.07
Wi-Fi	303	63.13	136	64.76	167	61.85
Virtual reality	75	15.63	10	4.76	65	24.07
Bike-sharing	194	40.42	13	6.19	181	67.04
Augmented reality	49	10.21	8	3.81	41	15.19
Translation application	88	18.33	17	8.10	71	26.3
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0

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