

Exploring touristic experiences that influence destination image modification: A case of international travelers visiting South Korea

Abstract

The importance of a destination's image is universally recognized in the tourism sector. This study attempted to examine the asymmetric and differential effects of experiential elements and destination image modifications from the perspective of the three-factor theory. The data were collected at major airports and ports in South Korea on international travelers who had completed their travel. We found that three factors influenced image modification in South Korea: excitement factors, which included food, security, and mobile/internet usage; performance factors, including public transportation and attractiveness; and communication, which is a basic factor in destination image modification. Based on the research results, this study provides practical marketing and development strategies for designing a touristic experience for foreign tourists.

Keywords: Destination Image; Touristic Experience; Destination Marketing Organization; Kano Model; Tobit Regression; South Korea

1. Introduction

With the spread of the COVID-19 virus globally since early 2020, vulnerability in the tourism industry has been thoroughly established. However, as new expectations for an endemic COVID-19 develop, industry practitioners predict that COVID-19 will be a permanent feature in our lives, while at the same time, the level of virus risk perception might be lower (Yeginsu, 2022). Amid these changes, the outlook for the tourism industry seems bright, and it is time for destination marketers to prepare to manage and promote destinations, targeting international travelers.

In order to contribute to the revitalization of international tourism amid fierce competition among tourist destinations, destination image management has received considerable attention from industry practitioners for decades. The concept of destination image has also attracted significant interest from academicians. There are streams of consensus within the destination image literature. First, favorable destinations affect destination choice, overall tourist satisfaction, and loyalty behavior (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Jeong & Kim, 2020). Second, there have been attempts to identify internal and external factors influencing destination image (Yilmaz & Yilmaz, 2020). Last, some scholars have concentrated on the destination image formation process to explain the dynamic nature of destination image (Chen, 2019; Severt & Hahm, 2020).

With regard to frameworks for destination image formation, Gunn (1988) postulated a seven-phase model, emphasizing that it is continuously modified by the difference between first-hand prospective information and touristic experiences. In other words, it suggests that destination images become more realistic, complex, and differentiated by experience at the

destination (Gallarza, Saura, & García, 2002). In line with this argument, Park and Nicolau (2019) stressed the importance of destination image variations based on the concept of expectancy and experience. Specifically, they tried to understand traveler sensitivity to variations in the destination image and the subsequent influence on destination performance (i.e., intention to revisit and overall satisfaction).

Considering destination image changes in the stages before, during, and after travel, the following crucial research question arises: *Under the premise that the travel destination image constantly changes, what touristic experience causes tourists to modify their destination image positively?* Our study aimed to investigate the differential factors influencing destination image modification by applying the three-factor theory. Suggested by Kano, Seraku, Takahashi, and Tsuji (1984), this theory proposes that there are differential effects of attributes on positive evaluation or satisfaction, which can be classified as basic factors, performance factors, and excitement factors. The theory explains the relationship between attribute satisfaction and overall satisfaction, which is linear and symmetric for performance factors, but non-linear and asymmetric for basic and excitement factors (Matzler et al., 2004).

Based on the three-factor theory, previous studies have tried to classify tourism destination attributes (Kim, 2022; Schofield, Coromina, Camprubi, & Kim, 2020). However, to the best of our knowledge, little research has been conducted to explore the experiential elements of destination image modification. Most previous studies have focused on destination images after a visit, focusing on the linear relationship between touristic experiences and destination images (e.g., Li, Liu, & Soutar, 2021). By combining the theoretical approach of the dynamics of destination image and the three-factor theory, we focused on two issues. First, this study

attempted to define and measure the gap between tourists' pre-visit and post-visit perceptions of destination image as *destination image modification*. Second, it aimed to confirm the relative importance of experiential elements on destination image modification, based on the three-factor theory.

In practice, touristic experiences are categorized with respect to the core components, known as the 6As of destinations (attraction, accessibility, amenities, availability, activities, and ancillary services) (Buhalis & Spada, 2000). This study investigated the level of satisfaction with each touristic experience at tourist destinations, including the immigration process, public transportation, getting directions, accommodation, food, shopping, tourist information services, attractiveness, communication, travel expenses, security, and mobile/internet usage.

In this study, the unit of analysis was international travelers who visited South Korea in 2018. Obviously, 2018 was before the outbreak of COVID-19 and was a period just before the pandemic with high visitor numbers, when overseas visitors could move freely without being affected by the threat of infection and changes in quarantine policies. Therefore, our study provides practical insight into predicting diverse factors in destination image modification in South Korea once the tourism industry has recovered from the effects of COVID-19. Specifically, based on the results, this study presents marketing and development strategies for attracting foreign tourists to Destination Marketing Organizations (“DMO” hereafter) and destination marketers.

2. Literature review

2.1. Destination image and its dynamics

Destination image is comprehensively defined as "the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination" (Crompton, 1979, p.18). There have been various approaches to conceptualizing tourist destinations at different stages. Gartner (1994) simplified this concept by suggesting that destination image consists of cognitive, affective, and conative components. In other words, images consist of knowing and thinking about the object (i.e., cognitive), feeling about it (i.e., affective), and acting based on this information (i.e., conative) (Boulding, 1956). Following this study, many scholars attempted to define it as several dimensional constructs and interpreted each component's role and importance differently (Agapito, Oom do Valle, & da Costa Mendes, 2013).

Despite the different conceptualizations and measurements, there are streams of consensus within the destination image literature. First, some studies have focused on the relationship between destination image recognition and destination performance (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). More specifically, destination image has been recognized as an essential factor in travelers' emotional responses (e.g., place attachment) (Huang & van der Veen, 2019; Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Tasci, Uslu, Styliadis, & Woosnam, 2022), and loyalty behaviors (e.g., revisit intention) (Allameh, Pool, Jaber, Salehzadeh, & Asadi, 2015; Chew & Jahari, 2014; Kim, 2018; Tavitiyaman, Qu, Tsang, & Lam, 2021; Zhou, Pu, & Su, 2022). Second, there have been attempts to identify internal factors such as personality, motivation, and sociodemographic characteristics (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Khan, Chelliah, & Ahmed, 2017), and external factors such as touristic experience, intensity of visit, and destination information sources (Rodriguez, Nassanbekova,

Pérez, & Uruzbayeva, 2020; Stylidis, 2022). Regarding the antecedent of destination image, Haarhoff (2018) argued that the terms "perception" and "image" are closely related, and it can be deduced that each tourist's perception affects the destination image. More specifically, it can be explained as two kinds of perceptions; internal (such as personality, experience, and expectations) and external aspects (culture, price, and marketing) that influence the formation of the destination image.

Last, some scholars have concentrated on the dynamic and complex nature of the destination image (Chen, 2019; Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2014; Severt & Hahm, 2020). As a foundation for this literature, Gunn (1988) proposed seven phases of the travel experience. In Phase 1, the image is based primarily upon information accumulated from non-commercial sources (the organic image). In Phase 2, the image is modified by commercial sources of travel information (the induced image). Next, individuals decide to take a trip (Phase 3). In Phases 4 and 5, individuals travel to the destination and participate in various activities. After finishing the trip (Phase 6), they modify and re-evaluate their destination images based on their experiences (Phase 7). Gunn states that destination image formation can be identified at Phases 1, 2, and 7. Specifically, destination images are formed based on secondary sources of information, and experience is used to modify them. Following Gunn (1988), Chon (1991) emphasized the modification of the destination image during Phase 4 (i.e., actual travel) and Phase 6 (i.e., finishing travel). It means that the destination image may be positively reshaped or negatively influenced according to each traveler's experience.

In a similar vein, Gallarza et al. (2002) conducted a thorough review of the literature dealing with destination images and proposed a theoretical model that defines the components of

destination images in terms of four features: *complex*, *multiple*, *relativistic*, and *dynamic*. From a relativistic point of view, images always correspond to the internalization of some perceptions, which means that not everyone has the same perception. Following this literature, investigating the dynamic nature of destination image has been a crucial subject of tourism literature for destination marketing strategies. As a qualitative approach, Stylidis and Cherifi (2018) found that two groups (visitors vs. non-visitors), irrespective of nationality, have different images of London, regarding various characteristics, including dynamic (the difference in the process of before-during-after a trip), relativistic (vague-specific), and complexity/multiplicity (iconic and stereotypical image). Liu, Liu, Mo, and Ng (2020) confirmed that international and mainland Chinese tourists perceived the destination image of Macao differently when using text mining techniques; this suggests that not all images pushed by the authorities have been fully delivered to each tourist; thus, marketing organizations need to monitor each stakeholder's needs and adjust the destination image branding. Intriguingly, Ryan and Cave (2005) conducted a conventional thematic analysis using conversation data on residents and visitors and found that two dimensions of Auckland's destination image exist and that domestic and overseas visitors had different perspectives on image perceptions; specifically, they explained that for New Zealanders, Auckland represents the outside world in New Zealand, but for overseas visitors (i.e., China, Japan, and the United Kingdom), it has the image of a comfortable urban escape from that world. In a similar vein, Cheng, Wong, and Liu (2013) explored images of Hues' UNESCO world heritage sites and examined cross-cultural differences between domestic and international tourists on the destination image. These case studies analyzed differences in perceptions of destination images by classifying the characteristics of visitors (i.e., visitors versus residents) and

emphasized the importance of understanding image recognition to promote a more effective tourist destination marketing strategy.

In a quantitative approach on destination image dynamics, some researchers have emphasized that image modification should be based on tourist perceptions before and after visits (e.g., Almeida-García, Domigunez-Azcue, Mercadé-Melé, & Pérez-Tapia, 2020; Severt & Hahm, 2020). Typically, Park and Nicolau (2019) empirically verified the effect of the difference between the pre-visit destination image and the post-visit destination image. Specifically, they tried to understand travelers' sensitivity to variations of the destination image between their expectation and their experience, and the influence of image variation on revisit intention and satisfaction.

Considering these arguments, this study focuses on the following three consensus points through a theoretical lens of the destination image. First, destination image modification occurs in the difference between tourists' pre-visit and post-visit perceptions. Second, touristic experiences or destination attributes affect the formation or modification of destination images. Third, the perception of destination images varies depending on the individual's status (i.e., residents vs. international travelers).

2.2. Three-factor theory

The idea of three independent factors that influence satisfaction differently was first formulated by Kano et al. (1984) in the quality management literature. The three-factor theory is not defined as a priority because attributes vary with individual expectations and situations (Matzler & Renzl, 2007). In Kano's model, sub-attributes are located in the three categories (i.e., basic,

performance, and excitement factors) with different impacts on overall satisfaction. In other words, the three-factor theory of customer satisfaction serves as a criterion for classifying product or service attributes according to their asymmetric influences on overall satisfaction (Kano et al., 1984; Sauerwein, Bailom, Matzler, & Hinterhuber, 1996).

Basic factors are minimum requirements that lead to dissatisfaction if not fulfilled but do not trigger satisfaction; the fulfillment of basic requirements is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for satisfaction. Excitement factors increase customer satisfaction if delivered but do not cause dissatisfaction if they are not delivered; thus, a positive evaluation of satisfiers has more impact on overall satisfaction than a negative evaluation. Last, performance factors lead to satisfaction if performance is high, and to dissatisfaction if performance is low. Performance attributes proportionally affect satisfaction, which generates a linear relationship between performance attributes and overall satisfaction. Since not all attributes have the same role in satisfying customer needs, it is important to understand how their performance influences customer satisfaction (Tontini & Silveira, 2007). For this reason, in the hospitality/tourism literature there have been attempts to verify the relationship between sub-factors and satisfaction or positive evaluations by applying the three-factor theory to overall destination satisfaction (Lee & Choi, 2020) in areas including airline services (Go & Kim, 2018), the technological innovation attributes of hotels (Chiang, Chen, & Hsu, 2019), drivers of wine festival satisfaction (Velikova, Slevitch, & Mathe-Soulek, 2017), and urban tourism attributes (Yuan, Deng, Pierskalla, & King, 2018). More recently, as the touristic experience has been emphasized, studies exploring destination attributes have been conducted. However, many studies have shown that tourism research tends to focus only on positive linear relationships between touristic

experiences (or attributes) and destination images. Intriguingly, Kim (2022) applied the three-factor theory to understand potential destination attributes that affect negative memorable tourism experiences (MTEs). This approach is meaningful because it is based on the premise that the sub-attributes affecting positive and negative MTEs are different.

In the travel environment context, researchers have tried to identify destination attributes and develop a competitive destination model to evaluate destination performance (Buhalis & Spada, 2000; Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Koo, Shin, Gretzel, Hunter, & Chung, 2016). For example, Buhalis and Spada (2000) stated that destination attributes included touristic experiences with various factors. They emphasized that core components, called the 6A framework (attractions, accessibility, amenities, availability, activities, and ancillary services), led to successful destination management. Similarly, Beerli and Martin (2004) identified nine attributes affecting destination image perception. These include general infrastructure; tourist infrastructure; natural resources; culture, history, and art; tourist leisure and recreation; political and economic factors; the social environment; the natural environment; and the general atmosphere of the location. However, the literature has been relatively silent on which experiential elements affect destination image modification. Thus, this study focused on the following proposition:

There will be differences in the relative importance of the touristic experience for modifying destination image; each experiential element at the destination will be classified as a "basic", "performance" or "excitement" factor.

Fig. 1 presents the conceptual model based on the preceding literature discussed earlier. Our study considered the satisfaction provided by experiential elements at tourist destinations (including the immigration process, public transportation, getting directions, accommodation, food, shopping, tourist information services, attractiveness, communication, security, travel costs, and mobile/internet usage) as the independent variable and destination image modifications as the dependent variable. Comparing the pre-visit destination image and post-visit destination image can result in positive disconfirmation (experience exceeds expectation) or negative disconfirmation (expectation exceeds experience). It is a meaningful approach to confirm the difference in tourists' perceptions over time. Following previous research, this study operationally defined destination image modification as the gap between the pre-visit image and post-visit image and measured it using two longitudinal variables.

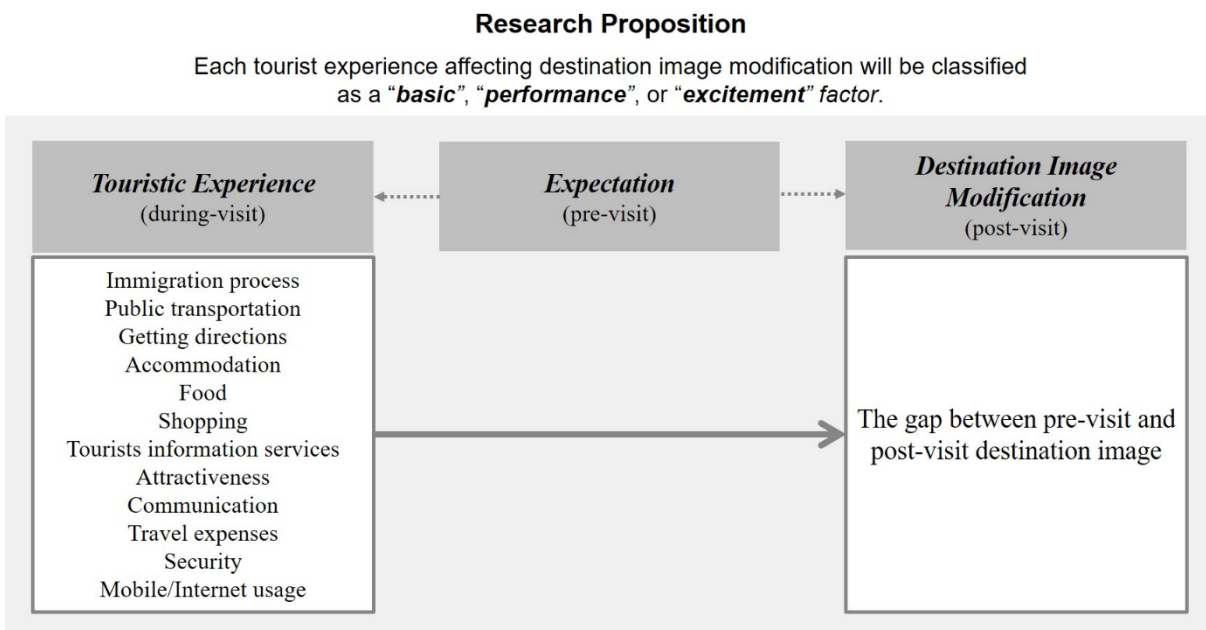


Fig. 1. Conceptual model

3. Methodology

3.1. Data collection

The data were collected using field surveys at major airports and ports in South Korea on international travelers. Specifically, individuals who had finished their trips participated in this survey at four international airports (Incheon, Gimpo, Gimhae, and Jeju) and three international ports (Incheon, Busan, and Jeju). This survey was conducted by the Korean Tourism Organization (KTO) on international travelers who visited South Korea in 2018. Obviously, 2018 was before the outbreak of COVID-19, and it was a time when overseas visitors could move freely without being affected by the threat of infection and changes in quarantine policies. The survey adopted a self-entry method using structured questionnaires and a stratified sampling method that considered the demographics of international travelers. The sample allocation involved three steps: (1) The number of samples by country was proportionally distributed based on tourist statistics from the previous year; (2) Random distribution was planned by dividing the number of samples by country as confirmed in Step 1 over 12 months; and (3) Proportional distribution by gender and age was attempted by using statistics from the previous three months in the samples obtained by country and month, as confirmed in Step 2. The total number of respondents was 16,469, and 14,187 samples were used for analysis.

3.2. Survey measurements

Survey questions were conducted similarly to the 2017 International Visitors Survey. KTO conducted this survey after evaluating face/content validity and the pre-test process through discussions with tourism practitioners and researchers. The survey involved questions relating to

demographics, travel behavior, and destination evaluation (see Appendix A). Three demographic questions (i.e., age, gender, and nationality) were included. With regard to travel behavior, the respondents were asked about their travel experiences in South Korea, including the types of travel (independent, flight-hotel packages, and group package tours), the purpose of travel (i.e., leisure/amusement/relaxation, business/professional activities, education, religion/pilgrimage, and others), and the time of year in which they visited (i.e., first, second, third, or fourth quarter of the year). The final part of the survey related to the destination evaluation. Twelve elements of touristic experience under the 6A concept (immigration process, public transportation, getting directions, accommodation, food, shopping, tourist information services, attractiveness, communication, travel expenses, security, and mobile/internet usage) were investigated (i.e., “please rate your satisfaction with each activity you experienced during this trip to South Korea”), along with two types of perceptions of the destination image (i.e., “What did you think about South Korea before / after your trip? ” A scale ranging from “very positive” to “very negative” was used, with a 5-point Likert scale, in line with the previous literature (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Park & Nicolau, 2019).

The main purpose of this study was to identify the differential factors that influence change in perception of the destination image. Thus, we computed the gap between the pre-visit and post-visit destination images, making it a new variable and defining it operationally as *destination image modification*. Methodologically rigorous studies require longitudinal data to allow for the measurement of within-sample change over time. Many scholars agree to separately measure expectation before consumption, and satisfaction with post-consumption experiences (Pizam & Milman, 1993; Weber, 1997). However, this requires matched pre-and post-trip

samples, which is particularly time-consuming, especially in the case of international travel, and it is challenging to track travelers. As an alternative, some scholars suggest the retrospective pre-post questionnaire approach, in which both the expectation and experience data are collected at the end of the trip (Davis, 2002; Pratt, McGuigan, & Katzev, 2000; Park & Nicolau, 2019). The current study also attempted to pay attention to each traveler's subjective evaluation in the large-scale sample.

3.3. Demographics

A total of 14,187 available samples were analyzed. Female respondents accounted for 55.2% of the overall sample. Approximately 33.7% of the respondents were between 21 and 30 years of age, 25.4% were between 31 and 40, and 17.6% were between 41 and 50. With regard to nationality, China accounted for 18.0%, Japan 10.6%, and Taiwan 7.9%. Concerning travel experiences in South Korea, 79.2% of the respondents visited South Korea for leisure, amusement, and relaxation purposes. About 80.9% of the respondents were undertaking independent travel. Each quarter of the year had a similar visitor proportion (24.4, 25.8, 24.8, and 25%). Detailed demographics of the respondents are reported in Table 1.

Table 1 Profiles of respondents (n = 14,187)

Variable		Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Female	7825	55.2
	Male	6362	44.8
Age	Under 20 years	620	4.3
	21-30 years	4774	33.7

	31-40 years	3608	25.4
	41-50years	2492	17.6
	51-60 years	2266	16
	Over 61 years	427	3
Nationality (Top seven)	China (Mainland)	2551	18
	Japan	1509	10.6
	China (Taiwan)	1122	7.9
	China (Hongkong)	930	6.6
	USA	847	6
	Thailand	825	5.8
	Vietnam	634	4.5
	Other	5769	40.6
Purpose of Travel	Leisure, amusement, relaxation	11233	79.2
	Business/professional activities	2429	17.1
	Education	446	3.1
	Religion/pilgrimage	53	0.4
	Others	26	0.2
Type of Travel Visit	Independent travel	11478	80.9
	Flight-hotel package	1917	13.5
	Group travel (package tour)	792	5.6
Visit Quarter	First quarter	3468	24.4
	Second quarter	3657	25.8
	Third quarter	3522	24.8
	Fourth quarter	3540	25

3.4. Variables

Dependent Variables The dependent variables in our model were the gaps between pre-visit and post-visit destination images, i.e., *destination image modification*. Items were rated on a scale from 1 to 5; thus, the difference between the two variables had the following range (-4, 4). In this study, there were two dependent variables: the range of the dependent variable *positive*

destination image modification, which reflects a positive evaluation by an individual, is (0, 4), and the range of *negative destination image modification*, reflecting a negative evaluation, is (-4, -1). We included a value of zero in the positive variations because a zero value means that it is a minimum tolerable level of evaluation under the concept of the “zone of tolerance” in consumer behavior (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1993).

Independent Variables The independent variables in our model were the level of satisfaction with experiential elements relating to the immigration process, public transportation, getting directions, accommodation, food, shopping, tourist information services, attractiveness, communication, travel expenses, and mobile/internet usage.

Control Variables We included the following two control variables in our model: *number of visits to South Korea* and *duration of stay in South Korea*. Prior experience influences the post-visit perceived image of the destination (Beerli & Martin, 2004) because situations are interpreted in comparison with past experience (Schreyer, Lime, & Williams, 1984). Therefore, we included two variables in our model to control these contextual variables, which could influence the destination evaluation. Table 2 presents the descriptive analysis results of these variables.

Table 2 Descriptive analysis

Variable	PV model (positive variation)			NV model (negative variation)		
	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error
Immigration process	4.38	0.71	0.01	4.07	0.82	0.03
Public transportation	4.38	0.71	0.01	3.9	0.98	0.03

Getting directions	4.12	0.84	0.01	3.68	1.02	0.04
Accommodation	4.34	0.7	0.01	3.97	0.85	0.04
Food	4.29	0.75	0.01	3.76	0.96	0.04
Shopping	4.37	0.68	0.01	3.97	0.89	0.04
Tourist information services	4.19	0.77	0.01	3.79	0.94	0.04
Attractiveness	4.32	0.71	0.01	3.91	0.86	0.04
Communication	3.7	0.95	0.01	3.14	1.11	0.05
Travel expenses	3.99	0.8	0.01	3.49	0.89	0.04
Security	4.48	0.65	0.01	4.19	0.77	0.03
Mobile/internet usage	4.38	0.72	0.01	4.01	0.94	0.04
Destination image modification	0.28	0.52	0.00	-1.18	0.48	0.02
Visit times	3.33	6.35	0.05	2.89	5.35	0.23
Visit duration	9.47	12.66	0.11	9.94	14.07	0.59
Observation	13627			560		

3.5. Data analysis

The Tobit model, also called a censored regression model, is designed to estimate linear relationships between variables when there is left- or right-censoring in the dependent variable (Tobin, 1958). We consider the Tobit model to be suitable for several reasons. First, dependent variables (e.g., destination image modification) have a lower and upper limit, which range from -4 to 4. Second, as suggested in a previous empirical study (Park, Lee, & Nicolau, 2020), the Tobit model is considered more advantageous than Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression when the value of 0 can be interpreted as a significant value.

Considering our research design, we separated the dataset into two samples based on the value of the dependent variables (i.e., 0 or more vs. less than 0), and we developed two model

specifications. First, the positive variation model (“PV” hereafter), in which the dependent variable ranging from 0 to 4 is defined as follows:

$$(1) PV_i = \alpha_{PV} + \sum_{k=1}^K \beta_{PV,k} x_{ki} + \sum_{j=1}^J \gamma_{PV,j} z_{ji} + \varepsilon_{PV,i}$$

The negative variation model (“NV” hereafter), in which the dependent variable ranging from -4 to -1 is defined as follows:

$$(2) NV_i = \alpha_{NV} + \sum_{k=1}^K \beta_{NV,k} x_{ki} + \sum_{j=1}^J \gamma_{NV,j} z_{ji} + \varepsilon_{NV,i}$$

Specifically, where α is a constant term, β_k is the coefficient related to the k -th individual prior experience (control variables; visit times and visit duration) x_{ki} for individual i , γ_j is the coefficient related to the j -th satisfaction of experiential element (independent variables; immigration process, public transportation, getting directions, accommodation, food, shopping, tourist information services, attractiveness, communication, travel expense, security, mobile/internet usage) z_{ji} for individual i , and ε_i is an error term following a normal distribution. We assume that the parameters α , β_k , and γ_j are different for each model, and the subscript PV and NV represent the model to which they belong.

We tested these two models and tried to compare the satisfaction with the experiential elements affecting the dependent variables in each model. To this end, the differentiated impact

of the same variables on the PV model versus the NV model were observed. Specifically, to test the potential asymmetric effects of independent variables on destination image variation, this study investigated the estimated significance parameters using the Wald test.

4. Results

Because multicollinearity is an issue between independent variables, tests of the values of VIF (variance of inflation factor) for each variable were conducted. The VIF values of each variable were below 5.0. The PV model in Table 3 presents the results for positive variations of destination image (destination image modification). With regard to independent variables, we found public transportation ($\beta = 0.0856$, $p < 0.01$), food ($\beta = 0.0800$, $p < 0.01$), attractiveness of destination ($\beta = 0.1416$, $p < 0.001$), security ($\beta = 0.1446$, $p < 0.001$), and mobile/internet usage ($\beta = 0.0644$, $p < 0.05$) had positive and significant effects on destination image modification.

On the other hand, shopping ($\beta = -0.0592$, $p < 0.1$), tourist information services ($\beta = -0.0995$, $p < 0.01$) and communication ($\beta = -0.0554$, $p < 0.05$) were determinants with negative effects. In relation to prior trip experience, visit duration ($\beta = 0.0059$, $p < 0.001$) had positive effects, and visit time ($\beta = -0.0666$, $p < 0.001$) had negative effects on destination image modification.

The NV model in Table 3 provides the results for destination image modification (negative variates). For independent variables, public transportation ($\beta = 0.0803$, $p < 0.001$), attractiveness ($\beta = 0.1050$, $p < 0.001$), and communication ($\beta = 0.0223$, $p < 0.001$) are determinants. Also, tourist information service ($\beta = -0.0969$, $p < 0.001$) negatively affected destination image modification. With regard to prior trip experience, visit duration and visit

times were not significant. In summary, we found the differences in the experiential elements in the two models were as follows:

PV model: Public transportation, Food, Attractiveness of the destinations, Security, and Mobile/Internet usage

NV model: Public transportation, Attractiveness of the destination, and Communication

Table 3 Determinant factors for dependent variables

Variable	PV model (positive variation)			NV model (negative variation)		
	Coefficient	Std. error	p-value	Coefficient	Std. error	p-value
Immigration process	-0.0219	0.0306	0.4739	0.0149	0.0282	0.5954
Public transportation	0.0856	0.0331	0.0096**	0.0803	0.0266	0.0026**
Getting directions	-0.0301	0.0275	0.2729	-0.0154	0.0275	0.5742
Accommodation	-0.0083	0.0315	0.792	0.0306	0.0266	0.2511
Food	0.08	0.0288	0.0054**	0.0157	0.0239	0.5123
Shopping	-0.0592	0.0327	0.0704	0.0337	0.0266	0.205
Tourist information services	-0.0995	0.0305	0.0011**	-0.0969	0.0288	0.0007***
Attractiveness	0.1416	0.0331	0.0000***	0.105	0.0287	0.0002***
Communication	-0.0554	0.0229	0.0158*	0.0858	0.0223	0.0001***
Travel expenses	-0.0108	0.0281	0.7009	-0.0357	0.0266	0.1804
Security	0.1446	0.036	0.000***	-0.0049	0.0306	0.8718
Mobile/internet usage	0.0644	0.0297	0.0303*	-0.0104	0.0238	0.6609
Visit times	-0.0666	0.0051	0.0000***	-0.0028	0.0036	0.4364
Visit duration	0.0059	0.0013	0.0000***	-0.0006	0.0014	0.6692

Constant	-1.974	0.1684	0.0000***	-1.9253	0.1446	0.0000***
Log sigma	0.4578	0.0149	0.0000***	-0.7855	0.0298	0.0000***
Log likelihood	-10680			-354		
Df	16			16		
Observation	13627			560		

In order to test the asymmetric effects of experiential elements on destination image modification, this study compared the variables using the Wald test as shown in Table 4. Public transportation was a positive and significant parameter in both the PV Model and the NV model. Statistically, it had similar parameters in both models (Wald test = 0.0128) and had a symmetric effect with the same direction. Also, food was a positive and significant parameter in the PV model but insignificant in the NV model. However, it also had a symmetric effect with the same direction (Wald test = 2.4911). The attractiveness of the destination was a positive parameter in both models; it had a symmetric effect with the same direction (Wald test = 0.6072).

Table 4 Comparison between the parameters of models

Variable	Wald test	p-value	Result (Asymmetry: Y)
Immigration process	0.7257	0.3942	N
Public transportation	0.0128	0.9099	N
Getting directions	0.1429	0.7053	N
Accommodation	0.7611	0.3829	N
Food	2.4911	0.1144	N
Shopping	4.0365	0.0445	Y
Tourist information services	0.0037	0.9509	N
Attractiveness	0.6072	0.4358	N
Communication	18.9102	0.0000***	Y

Travel expenses	0.3935	0.5304	N
Security	8.5974	0.0033**	Y
Mobile/internet usage	3.1679	0.0750*	Y
Visit times	75.5108	0.0000***	Y
Visit duration	11.785	0.0005***	Y

⁺ = prob < 0.1; * = prob < 0.5; ** = prob < 0.01; *** = prob < 0.001

In contrast, communication was a negative parameter in the PV Model and a strong positive parameter in the NV Model (Wald test = 18.9102; $p < 0.001$). Security was a positive parameter in the PV Model, but insignificant in the NV Model (Wald test = 8.5974; $p < 0.01$). Mobile/Internet usage was a positive parameter in the PV Model, but an insignificant parameter in the NV Model. With regard to control variables, visit duration had positive effects in the PV Model, and was insignificant in the NV Model. Also, visit times had negative effects in the PV Model, but were insignificant in the NV Model. These variables had asymmetric effects in both models. We found asymmetric and symmetric relationships for each parameter in the two models as follows:

Symmetric effects: Food, Public transportation, and Attractiveness of the destination

Asymmetric effects: Security, Mobile/Internet usage, and Communication

In summary, each of the experiential elements affecting destination image modifications was classified using two analyses (Tobit regression, Wald test). The significance of the elements classified as positive determinants in both models was compared through the Wald test, and the three factors were classified. We found that food, security, and mobile/internet usage were excitement factors, public transportation and attractiveness were performance factors, and that

communication is a basic factor, as shown in Table 5 and Fig. 2.

Table 5 Differential effects of attributes on destination image modification

Factors	Tobit regression	Wald test	Dimension
Food	Determinant factor in PV Model	Symmetry	Excitement Factor (Satisfier)
Security	Determinant factor in PV Model	Asymmetry	
Mobile/Internet usage	Determinant factor in PV Model	Asymmetry	
Public transportation	Determinant factor in PV Model & NV Model	Symmetry	Performance Factor
Attractiveness	Determinant factor in PV Model & NV Model	Symmetry	
Communication	Determinant factor in NV Model	Asymmetry	Basic Factor (Dissatisfier)

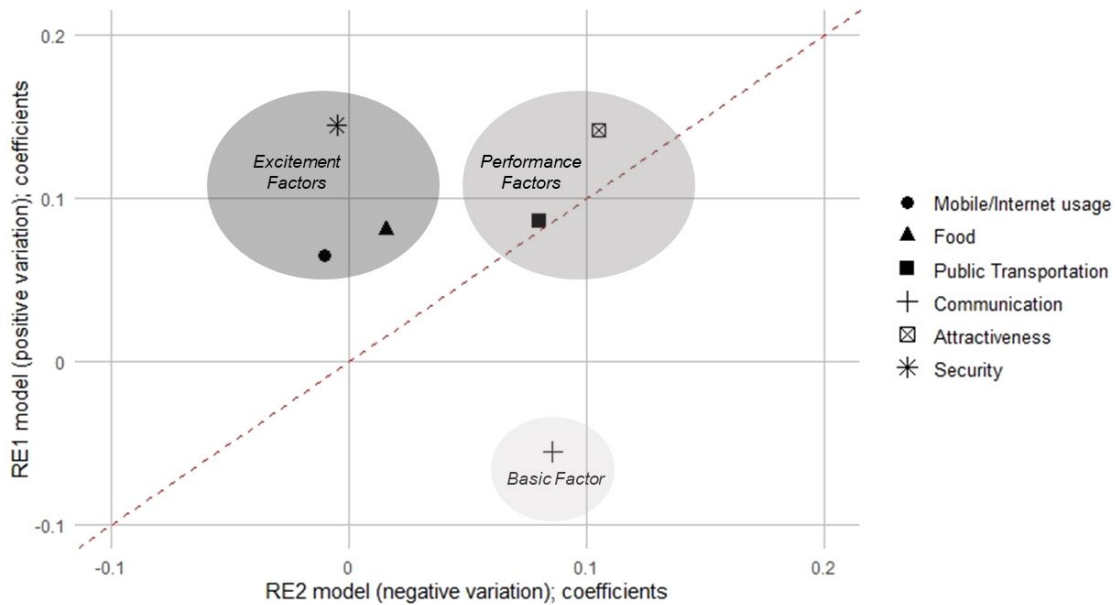


Fig. 2. Classification of three factors

5. Discussion and implications

5.1. Discussion

In line with its “With Corona” strategy, South Korea has been evaluated as a representative country that appropriately responded to virus threats (Bailey, 2022), and K-culture's global popularity has been steadily climbing (Lee & How, 2021). Thus, the development and management of various destination attributes based on expectation psychology is an essential issue because it has a vast impact on the nation's economy in terms of tourism growth. Although extreme competition among destinations is increasing, researchers have focused on confirming the effectiveness of destination images or attempted to verify a linear relationship between various sub-factors and destination images. In order to suggest guidelines to manage destination image efficiently, we measured the differences in the change in tourists' perceptions and verified the experiential elements of destination image modifications.

There are several key findings from the analysis. First, we found common factors that positively influenced destination image modification in the two models: ***Public transportation and Attractiveness***. As a result of comparing the parameters in the two models, it was verified that the two factors were similar parameters. In other words, for international travelers visiting South Korea, evaluation of public transportation and attractiveness can be understood as performance factors that have a linear relationship to destination image variations. With regard to transportation in tourism research, Virkar and Mallya (2018) suggested that well-developed transportation systems and infrastructure in a destination attract tourists and can create a favorable destination image. Also, transportation may lead to the cognitive aspects of one's experience, such as individual satisfaction (Loi, So, Lo, & Fong, 2017), and increase the flow of

tourism development (Nazneen, Xu, & Din, 2019; Yang & Li, 2020).

Although there is a conflicting argument that transportation may or may not have an impact on tourists' destination evaluation (Danaher & Arweiler, 1996), we verified that transportation could play a role in creating positive evaluations and basic factors to decrease negative evaluations of a destination image. Also, with regard to attractiveness, many researchers suggested and emphasized that this is the main factor leading to positive attitudes towards a destination (Reitsamer, Brunner-Sperdin, & Stokburger-Sauer, 2016; Yin, Cheng, & Ni, 2020).

Second, we found excitement factors (satisfiers) influencing destination image modification: ***Food, Security, and Mobile/Internet usage***. The growing popularity of food tourism has inspired many marketers and tourism researchers. On a practical level, the South Korean government has implemented food tourism strategies to attract visitors. Similarly, with research related to food tourism (Chang, 2021), it appears that K-food or food quality in South Korea can improve destination image with sensory experiences. Security has also been treated as a critical factor in tourism sectors (Fourie, Rosselló-Nadal, & Santana-Gallego, 2020; Sonmez & Graefe, 1998). This is because travel means moving to a place where travelers do not live, so safety and security matters such as terrorism, war, crime, and political unrest can be significant motivators influencing the selection of destinations (Ghaderi, Saboori, & Khoshkam, 2017). Also, because of the development of ICT, mobile/internet usage and digital accessibility during travel are now powerful tools for tourists and were verified as strong motivators that promote the improvement of South Korea's image. The three factors can be summarized as satisfiers that induce a positive evaluation of South Korea. Further, we verified that ***communication*** is a basic factor that should be provided to tourists, although it does not induce a positive image

evaluation.

Intriguingly, *tourism information service* was identified as a negative factor affecting destination image modification in both models. From a psychological point of view, Helson (1964) emphasizes that the hedonic state decreases as the level of adaptation to a particular stimulus increases. Similarly, Kwon and Lee (2020) argued that a lot of preparation, such as acquiring tourist information, prevents lasting happiness being gained from travel. Applying this to our results suggests that even if satisfaction with tourism information services is high (i.e., stimulus), this can lower the emotional evaluation of tourist destinations.

Last, with regard to the control variables, the visit number was verified as a negative factor, and the visit duration was identified as a positive factor in the PV model. Several researchers have reported conflicting results for the visit effect (i.e., number of previous visits, length of stay) on the destination image (e.g., Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Hu & Ritchie, 1993; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997). To explain these mixed results, Tasci (2006) emphasizes that the visitation influence may vary depending on the degree to which an individual is familiar with the destination or the characteristics of the destination. In the context of South Korea, our results indicate that the longer the visit duration, the better destination image modification is. In contrast, as the number of visits increases, positive image improvement does not occur due to the increasing familiarity of the tourist destination.

5.3. Implications

We propose the following theoretical implications as a result of verifying differential effects on destination image modification. First, we used the three-factor theory, involving basic,

performance, and excitement factors, to understand asymmetric and symmetric effects on destination image modification. Although many researchers have tried to identify these factors in the tourism context, to the best of our knowledge, studies that identified and classified factors affecting destination image modification were limited. Further, most studies have focused on the linear relationship between experiential factors and the destination image.

Second, we applied the concept of destination image modification based on Gunn's (1988) study and empirically measured it using a large data set. Within tourism literature, many scholars have emphasized the importance of destination image perception before and after travel, but only a few studies have attempted to measure and verify it empirically. To respond to this research call, following Park and Nicolau's (2019) study, we investigated image variations before and after travel and explored the experiential factors affecting destination image modifications. We believe these theoretical approaches are meaningful in identifying each factor, understanding the phenomena, and expanding existing theories in the tourism context.

In practice, although our results suggested the direction of tourism planning and management for DMOs and destination marketers in the South Korean context, in general, DMOs should consider the hardware and software facilities of the destination and establish the direction of tourism resources' development by considering the specific destination's unique personality and characteristics. In this way, based on our results, it is necessary to prioritize what experiential elements should be developed and improved. Specifically, intensive management of excitement/performance factors that positively affected image modification should be taken care of. For example, it should be recognized that K-food is in the spotlight worldwide and that the popularization of food culture may provide a significant reason for visiting South Korea. That is

to say, considering these points, when designing various tourism products or services, the development of food-related tour programs may be a priority to improve favorable destination images. In addition, security and hygiene issues could be strong motivators that determine the popularity of destinations during COVID-19 pandemic situations. Thus, promoting destinations that could strengthen awareness of safe, clean, and hygienic countries to travel to seems to be necessary.

Interestingly, our results showed that the satisfaction of *tourism information services* hinders the improvement of the destination image. As discussed in previous sections, facing serendipity and unexpected coincidence during travel have been regarded as crucial concepts that cause emotional arousal. That means information services could motivate travelers' cognitive needs and wants, but at the same time, they could be a hindrance to enhancing a favorable destination image. Given this, tourism marketers should consider designing information and content that may induce a traveler's emotional arousal to improve the destination image.

On the other hand, our findings of South Korea seemed to be a specific destination case, which is generalized in a limited way to other countries' destinations (Song, Mo, Liu, Niu, & Haung, 2022). However, our theoretical approach to understanding the differential effects of experiential factors on destination image modifications could be applied to other destinations. In doing so, applying the experiential elements that are classified based on the three-factor lens as the direction of tourism development for foreign tourists, our research could contribute immensely to improving destination image and reinforcing tourism revitalization.

5.4. Limitations and future research

This research has several limitations that suggest directions for future study. First, data from the current study were not longitudinal and were collected at the same time (i.e., when international travelers finished their trips). However, longitudinal research requires obtaining matched pre-and post-trip samples, which makes it particularly time-consuming and challenging to track travelers. Although, in order to derive accurate research results and reduce bias in individual perceptions, data should be obtained at different times (Rabeeu, Ramos, & Rahim, 2022; Song, Park, & Park, 2021). Second, this study did not consider individual differences, such as demographics and purpose of visit. Reisinger and Turner (2002) argue that culture has complex relationships with many different components and can be a crucial factor in people's perceptions, impressions, and interpretations of other places. Thus, future research should consider cultural differences (e.g., Hofstede's dimensions of culture) or nationality to gain valuable insights into how to target specific travelers in destination promotion. In addition, as a crucial factor, differences according to type of travel (i.e., pleasure vs. business) may also provide more meaningful implications (Tasci, 2006; Lee, Koo, & Yang, 2022). Finally, since the data collection took place in 2018, additional data collection and comparative studies are needed to confirm any changes that have occurred after the pandemic. Aebli, Volgger, and Taplin (2021) verified that health/safety risks and risks during the travel experience are dominant travel demotivators. Considering that the perspective of tourism may have changed in the pandemic situation, it is necessary to explore the effects of hygiene and safety, which have gained prominence since COVID-19 started, on destination image.

6. Conclusion

Almost all countries, including South Korea, are adopting strategies to live with COVID-19 (the "With Corona" strategy in South Korea) (Pym, 2022). Thus, destination marketers should prepare for valuable insights when positive views on inbound travel increase, considering the endemic period. Accordingly, we analyzed the international traveler data in 2018 from the Korean Tourism Organization (KTO) because that was when overseas visitors could move freely without being affected by the threat of infection and changes in quarantine policies. In the tourism literature, the destination image is a crucial concept, but it is unclear which experiences are more important in modifying the destination image. Thus, this study tried to explain the differential factors in destination image modification, based on the literature regarding the dynamics of destination image and the three-factor theory. Although our sample was limited to foreign tourists visiting South Korea, our approach to understanding the relationship between satisfaction with experiential elements and modifying the image of tourist destinations should also apply to other countries and cities. In summary, this study contributes by adding a new "what" (touristic experience on destination image modifications) to an existing theory in order to describe "how" (using three-factor theory) the relationship unfolds and "for whom" (international travelers) the relationships are likely to manifest (Whetten, 1989).

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Appendix A

Survey for international travelers visiting South Korea

Part1. Respondent Information

Entry Date (YYYY-MM-DD)		Departure Flight Number			
Country and City of Residence		Gender		Year of Birth	

Part2. Travel Preparation and Behavior

Q1. How many times have you visited Korea (including this one)? _____

Q2. Select one main purpose for your visit to Korea.

- ☐ Leisure, amusement, relaxation
- ☐ Business or professional activities
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Religion and pilgrimage
- ☐ Other: _____

Q3. Which type of arrangements did you make for your visit to Korea? Please select only one answer.

- ☐ Independent Travel: make all arrangements yourself (such as itinerary, accommodation, etc.)
- ☐ Air-tel Package (flight-hotel package; semi-package): Only purchase flight and lodging packages through travel agencies and airlines and travel without a tour guide
- ☐ Group Travel (package tour): a guided tour (such as incentive travel) where you purchase travel packages from travel agencies

Q4. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with this trip to Korea?

	1	2	3(Neutral)	4	5	
Very Unsatisfied	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Very Satisfied

Q5. Please rate your satisfaction with each activity you experienced during this trip to Korea.

Item	Very Unsatisfied (1)	Unsatisfied (2)	Neutral (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very Satisfied (5)	N/A
Immigration process	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Public transportation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Getting directions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Accommodation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Food	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Shopping	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tourist information services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Attractiveness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communication	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Travel expenses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Security	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mobile/internet usage	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q6. How did you think about Korea before and after this trip?

Before the trip				
Very Negative (1)	Negative (2)	Neutral (3)	Positive (4)	Very Positive (5)
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



After the trip				
Very Negative (1)	Negative (2)	Neutral (3)	Positive (4)	Very Positive (5)
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐