



Destination attributes influencing Chinese travelers' perceptions of experience quality and intentions for island tourism: A case of Jeju Island

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationships among destination attributes, Chinese travelers' experience quality, trip satisfaction, and intention to revisit the destination, taking Jeju Island as an example. A total of 286 responses were collected using the paper-based survey. The data was analyzed utilizing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM). The results show that the various destination attributes influence Chinese tourists' experience quality either positively or negatively. The quality of experience plays a role as a significant antecedent of tourists' trip satisfaction as well as mediator between a destination attribute and satisfaction. The effect of trip satisfaction on intention to revisit the island is also significant. This research reveals the underlying process of forming Chinese travelers' intentions for island tourism taking their perceptions of destination attributes, experience quality and trip satisfaction into account. Based on the results, theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research are discussed.

1. Introduction

The word 'island' generates certain visions of being in an unusual space and deviating from a daily routine. As islands can provide dissimilar speeds of life styles from everyday life (Baldacchino, 2016), they are considered as attractive destinations among visitors. In addition, island tourism features vulnerability, isolation, and peripherality (Lim & Cooper, 2009). With such features of an island destination, tourism plays a key role in influencing international/domestic visitors on an island (Cheng & Lu, 2013), creating uncommon feelings and experiences of romance, escapism, and exoticism as well as different culture and nature to tourists (Hall, 2010; Sharpley, 2012). As such, the uniqueness of an island's culture and physiography, which are derived from its isolation of location, appears to be one of the prevailing reasons to travel the island (Harrison, 2001). On the other hand, island destinations naturally owe to several issues, such as limitation of transport and communication due to the remoteness and occurrence of natural or artificial incidents. Nevertheless, the weaknesses are ironically considered as the strengths of island destinations as they can provide exceptional traditions, cultures, and nature to tourists (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008). Sharpley (2012) also stated that the drawbacks of islands are the pull factors at the same time. To this point, such geographical distance from mainland redounds to the attractiveness and exoticism of islands (Ridderstaat & Nijkamp, 2016), which calls for the

needs of persistent management of island tourism for the long-term period.

Previous studies on island tourism center on its development and sustainability (Allahar, 2015; Lim & Cooper, 2009). To continue maintaining and improving island tourism, an island should be holistically managed since its overall attributes that organize tourists' experiences deliver powerful effect on the tourists' favorable attitudes toward the island, which in turn, elicits behavioral intentions (Cheng & Lu, 2013; Cheng, Wu, & H., & Huang, L. M., 2013). The existing studies also put emphasis on how tourists perceive the overall image of an island as a tourism or festival attraction (Hunter, 2010; Park & Njite, 2010). However, to the best of our knowledge, the existing research overlooks the effect of destination attributes on tourists' perceptions of trip experiences, which can generate their satisfaction and revisiting intention. Moreover, little research explores the aforementioned factors in a niche market (Chinese travelers) in a niche theme of tourism, especially in island tourism. To fill the research gap, this study attempts to capture how tourists perceive their experiences under the effect of island destination attributes and their relationship with trip satisfaction and intention to revisit the island. In addition, while the existing studies mostly use destination attributes in an aggregated manner to measure a single construct such as destination image and tourist experience, this study delves into how Chinese travelers' trip satisfaction and revisiting intention toward an island attribute to each destination attribute and

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dimension of experience quality. This research takes Jeju Island as an example case in island tourism as it seizes the largest portion of island tourism in South Korea, in which Chinese travelers occupy the highest proportion among international visitors (JTO, 2015).

More specifically, this study aims to 1) investigate the influence of destination attributes on experience quality perceived by Chinese travelers on an island; 2) examine the effect of Chinese travelers' experience quality on subsequent variables (e.g., trip satisfaction and intention to revisit an island); and 3) explore the mediating effect of experience quality between destination attributes and trip satisfaction. In the following sections, more details on the literature review, method, and discussion of outcomes are provided. The findings of this research will contribute to understanding the underlying process of building Chinese travelers' intentions to revisit an island destination through their perceptions of an island's attributes, experience quality and overall satisfaction with trips.

2. Literature review

2.1. Jeju Island

Jeju Island is the largest island located in the Southwestern part of South Korea with over 620,000 residents as of 2015. Fig. 1 displays the location of the island in South Korea. The reputation of the island as a fascinating tourism destination has been growing across the world. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) chose Jeju Island as a World Natural Heritage Site in 2007 and a Global Geopark in 2010. In particular, tourists from the region that contains China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan occupied the highest portion of all international visitors to Jeju Island, at an average of 87.7% in 2014 (JTO, 2015). As the scale of Chinese travelers on the island has been phenomenally expanding, Jeju Island has been continuously attempting to open its tourism opportunities by manufacturing brochures/pamphlets for individual travelers from China (KTO, 2015). To this end, Jeju Island has been actualizing the potential of island tourism in South Korea based on its natural resources and incessant endeavors.

The previous studies related to Jeju Island have concentrated on tourists' perceptions of destination image, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions (Hunter, 2010; Park & Njite, 2010). Based on low cost carriers (LCCs), the remarkable tourism growth in Jeju Island has been



Fig. 1. Location of Jeju Island, South Korea. Source: NordNordWest, 2015.

given attention by Chung and Whang (2011). Kang, Scott, Lee, and Ballantyne (2012) investigated visitors' experiences in terms of dark tourism by carrying educational and emotional experiences to visitors based on past affairs. Furthermore, an island's environments and attractions, which form the island's image, are the impactful antecedents of tourists' satisfaction (Park & Njite, 2010). Due to the notable development of the island's tourism and the high volume of Chinese travelers to Jeju Island, this study takes this island as an example and examines how the island's attributes transpire in Chinese travelers' experiences and trip satisfaction, which consequently generates intention to revisit the island.

2.2. Destination attributes

Destination is described as "amalgams of tourism products, offering an integrated experience to consumers" (p. 97), which also can be subjectively perceived by tourists (Buhalis, 2000). As a destination is considered a combination of its unique sources, travelers can experience a variety of natural/artificial attributes of the place (Hu & Ritchie, 1993). Earlier, Lew (1987) elaborated on destination attributes as a collection of the various components of a destination, containing not only physical and natural environments, but also services and amenities, which mesmerize tourists. Andriotis, Agiomirgianakis, and Mihiotis (2008) accounted for a destination as a place that embraces a group of attractions, facilities, and services for tourists. Previous research uses multiple destination attributes to capture perceived destination image (Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Ramseook-Munhurrin, Seebaluck, & Naidoo, 2015) and tourist experience (Kim, 2014; Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018). As such, a destination's unique features encompass a variety of attributes including its landscapes and activities. Based on the prior studies (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Kim, 2014), this study also adopts multiple destination attributes (i.e., local culture/history, activities and events, hospitality, infrastructure, destination management, accessibility, quality of service, physiography, superstructure, and quality of shopping) to capture Chinese travelers' perceptions of trips in an island destination.

These multiple attributes of a destination are also found to be critical antecedents of tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Ekanayake & Gnanapala, 2016; Eusébio & Vieira, 2013; Kim & Brown, 2012; Sangpikul, 2018). Authentic local experiences such as communicating with local people, exploring their culture, and facing their everyday atmosphere are one of the major themes in formation of travelers' memorable tourism experiences (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013). Tourists who had satisfying destination experiences including entertainment and attractions tend to organize positive perceptions of the destination (Ramseook-Munhurrin et al., 2015). The factors such as events and entertainment in a destination are verified as enticements for visitors (Mikulić, Krešić, Miličević, Šerić, & Ćurković, 2016). Ekanayake and Gnanapala (2016) mentioned that the quality of attractions, service, and infrastructure of a destination builds up tourists' experiences and loyalty. Another study showed that tourists have positive attitudes toward an island when they are content with its natural environment, local hospitality, safety, entertaining activities, and signage/information (Alegre & Cladera, 2009). Shopping is also articulated as a primary activity that tourists can do in a destination, which affects their satisfaction (Wong & Wan, 2013). Furthermore, Kim (2014) also addressed the effect of destination attributes on travelers' unforgettable experiences. As such, destination characteristics play a pivotal role in correspondence with visitors' experiences and reactions.

Nevertheless, there is a huge research gap in exploring the relationship between destination attributes and tourists' perceptions of experience quality. While the current research shows the direct effect of destination attributes on tourists' positive attitudes and behavioral intentions toward a destination, only a few studies investigate tourists' perceived experience quality and its effect on satisfaction and behavioral intentions (e.g., Chen & Chen, 2010; Jin, Lee, & Lee, 2015). As

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