

Projected and Perceived Destination Image on Social Media: Comparing Perception of Destination Image between Official DMO in South Korea and Chinese Travelers

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Introduction

Since fierce competition over tourism industry increasingly intensifies, lots of countries try to build strong destination image by advertising their destination to attract visitor. For example, France could be considered as gourmet and romantic destination while Australia could be viewed as wild and nature to the tourists. Previous destination image studies mentions that aligning projection of destination image and consumers' perceptive image in harmony is imperative to build and strengthen relationship between destination and tourists (Andreu, Bigne, & Cooper, 2000; Beerli & Martin, 2004). Therefore, if there is a difference between the projected and perceived destination image gap, it should be understood and needs to be measured. South Korea is an appealing example for examining the destination image gap as little research in the example of South Korea has been conducted to clarify the projected and perceived image simultaneously.

South Korea is a popular tourism destination for Chinese tourists due to close geographical location, relatively fair price and similar cultural background. According to the South Korean government, in 2018 March, over 0.4 million Chinese tourists travel to South Korea. It indicates that Chinese tourists play a significant role in Korean tourism industry. Therefore, the researchers want to use the South Korea as an example to explore the differences in destination images between the pictures in the official Korean tourism websites and the photographs generated by Chinese tourists. Difference between destination image projected by DMO and that perceived by tourists may influence tourists' satisfaction and loyalty, which would affect decision process of potential tourists. Accordingly, the aims of this research are to identify Chinese tourists' perceptions on South Korea and compare projected and perceived image between official DMO in South Korea and Chinese tourists. Specifically, the objectives are as follows: (1) to explore how the destination image of South Korea is projected with pictures on an official tourism website; (2) to examine how Chinese tourists perceive the destination image of South Korea on social media; and (3) to identify existing discrepancies of South Korea destination image.

Literature Review

Tourism Destination Image

Tourism destination image has had much attention in tourism marketing literature since Echtner and Ritchie's empirical study on destination image (1993), which proposed that destination image could be perceived as having attributes such as holistic impressions, functional, psychological, unique etc. They developed the destination image measurement on the basis of three continuums which are attribute-holistic, functional-psychological, and common-unique (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). In general, destination image can be defined as "the total impression represented in a traveler's memory as a result of perceived attributes associated with a tourism destination" (Wang & Hsu, 2010, p. 829). Hunter (2016) argued that destination image finally has evolved into three dimensions. The first dimension is genuine or potential topography of the destination. Second dimension is the projected destination image with purpose of generating touristic representations for destination marketing. Third dimension is about the perceived image

formulated by individual with information (Hunter, 2016). Although a lot of studies on tourism destination image have been examined, there is still ambiguous with the terms of destination image. The terms of destination image and destination brand image have been used interchangeably in the previous studies (Hankinson, 2005).

In general, there are two perspectives to analyze the tourism destination image, those are projected destination image and perceived destination image. First of all, the projected destination image can be formulated through multidimensional activities of DMO's as well as information from multiple sources such as newspaper, TV, social media. Second, the perceived destination image by tourists is formed through the process of dealing with information they receive from media, their experiences at tourism destination or word-of-mouth from others (Keller, 1993; Andreu, Bigne, & Cooper, 2000). The difference between projected destination image by DMO's and perceived destination image by visitors provide a pivotal way to determine the destination's competitiveness leading to a practical approach for analyzing image for managerial aspects (Andreu et al., 2000). In other words, from the perspective of DMO's and tourism markets' view, their ultimately goal is to match to the greatest extent as much as possible the projected and perceived destination image (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993). Although there have been previous research which concentrated on the formation process of destination image, the distinction between projected and perceived destination image has been one of the least examined area compared to other specific topics. In this study, pictures from Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) official website and from Chinese visitors can be considered as information sources.

Tourism in Social Media

With the advent of Web 2.0 technologies, social media have become the most primary sources for travelers for searching travel information. User-generated contents, so-called UGC such as blogs, social networking site (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.) have gained significant power and popularity in the Internet users (Gretzel, 2006). Through the Internet, people are connected by a set of social relationship including co-creating or exchanging information. From the perspective of visitors, they freely share their travel experience with before, during and after their trips which means such touristic activities reshape the channels for distribution of tourism information. (Park, Seo, & Kandamupully, 2016).

Accordingly, due to its role in providing information, DMO and tour in operators both public and private sector are increasingly their website as a way to build their branding. Tourism industry has appeared to be well-fitted for social media marketing because of their attributes such as intangibility and high level of involvements (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2006).

Considering the fact that the Website has great impact on potential travelers' perceptions, the Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) which is nationally official DMO in South Korea has developed their own website since 1995. The government of South Korea increasingly tries to provide travelers with up-to-date and in-depth information with attractive visual materials through the website (www.visitkorea.or.kr). Therefore, KTO has uploaded many different pictures which can represent destination image of South Korea to attract both existing and potential visitors.

Inbound Tourism Market in South Korea

Tourism has been considered as one of the growing strategic industry to play an important role in the development of the national economy in South Korea. Surprisingly, tourism in South Korea has grown in spite of unprecedented global disasters such as MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome). According to the annual report by Korea Tourism Organization (KTO), the inbound tourists totaled 15,456,810 in 2016. This number of incoming visitors to South Korea grew by 30.3% in the previous year. The countries for inbound tourists in South Korea were comprised of 7,752,022 Chinese, with 2,270,396 Japanese, and 823,417 Taiwanese, 811,417 American travelers. The most important inbound tourists were from Asian countries such as China, Japan and Taiwan.

Table 1. Purpose of Visit to South Korea

Division	2016	2015	2014	2013
Leisure/Recreation/Holiday	59.8%	56.6%	58.1%	48.2%
Business or Professional Activities	15.5%	18.7%	19.9%	23.4%
Shopping	12.7%	10.0%	10.0%	10.6%
Visiting Friends or Family	7.4%	9.1%	6.5%	9.7%
Education	4.0%	3.6%	3.6%	5.9%
Asthetic/Health/Medical Treatment	0.6%	1.1%	1.0%	1.0%
Religion of Pilgrimage	0.4%	0.7%	0.9%	1.0%
Other	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%

(Source: 2016 International Visitor Survey by Ministry of Tourism in South Korea)

Destination Image Measurement and its Dimensions

The research method frequently used to measure destination image is content analysis. Lian and Yu (2017) defined the content analysis as “an objective, systemic, and quantitative research approach to analyzing information contents in order to reveal their varying patterns” (Lian & Yu, 2017, p. 1066). By adopting the content analysis which identifies informative contents, researchers can handle with the original information with categorizing them into variables for the further analysis. Also, as not only each picture can be analyzed as a single unit of content, but also text can be examined by virtue of content analysis, many researchers have selected it as the research method. For example, the seminal study conducted by Choi, Lehto, and Morrison (2007) made effort to explore the representative destination image of Macau on the Internet analyzing the contents of web sources, primarily Macau official tourism website, travel agents’ websites, and online travel magazines. They used both qualitative and quantitative method to analyze textual information and visual information. In terms of analysis of visual information with photographic images, they categorized total 11 different themes such as Historic buildings and heritage, Cultural events and facilities, Parks and gardens, Shopping, Entertainment and gaming, natural view. Also, Stepchenkova and Zhan (2013) developed 20 categories to represent all essential features of the image of Peru, which includes Nature& Landscape, People, Archaeological Sites, Way of Life, and Traditional Clothing etc. In a study concerned with the destination image of Eastern Taiwan, Mak (2017) evaluated the destination image dividing into two dimensions which were cognitive dimension and affective dimensions. The cognitive dimension refers to the knowledge or information an individual has of the attributes of a specific destination while the affective dimension is closely related to an individual’s feelings toward a

specific destination. As displayed in Table 2, the categories of destination image using content analysis comprehensively cover (1) Nature & Landscape, (2) Traditional & Heritage, (3) Recreation & Adventure activities, (4) Urban Landscape, and (5) Local people & Local food.

Table 2. Destination Image Categories or Dimensions in Previous Research

Author	Destination Image Categories or Dimensions	
Choi et al.(2007)	Historic building and heritage, Cultural events & facilities, Parks & gardens, Shopping, Tourism facilities & infrastructure, Entertainment & gaming, Bird's eye or natural view, Local cuisine & dining, Sport/recreation activities & festivals, People & local resident, Others	
Stepchenkova & Zhan (2013)	Nature & Landscape, People, Archaeological sites, Way of life, Traditional Clothing, Architecture/Buildings, Outdoor/Adventure, Wild life, Art object, Tourism facilities, Urban landscape, Domesticated animals, Plants, Festivals & Rituals, Leisure activities, Food, Country landscape, Transport/Infrastructure, Tour, Other	
Mak (2017)	Cognitive Dimension	Natural environment, Infrastructure, Culture & Art, Specific activities, Food & Beverage, Flora & Fauna, People, Transportation, Information, Accommodation, Tourist attraction
	Affective Dimension	Pleasant, Relaxing, Arousing, Exciting, Unpleasant, Gloomy, Sleepy, Distressing

Based on the aforementioned discussion, the following research questions were developed:

RQ (1) Does the projected destination image from official DMO in South Korea match the one perceived by Chinese tourists?

RQ (2) If not, what is the major difference between them?

Methodology

Data Collection

Projected images of South Korea come from pictures represented by the official South Korea tourism website (www.visitkorea.or.kr). The photo gallery of the website contains 213 pictures, which were downloaded for further study. Perceived images of Chinese travelers defined as pictures from Chinese UGC tourism website (www.mafengwo.cn). Mafengwo is a platform for tourists to share their travel experience, which was established in 2006. This website allows travelers to write articles and upload pictures. People can communicate with others and get destination information. As of December 2012, it became the most popular UGC tourism website in China. The researchers downloaded pictures that users uploaded from March 2015 to September 2018. In total, 777 pictures were collected.

Category Development and Data Coding

Researchers should establish categories from samples to conduct content analysis. Based on the categories of previous studies, the coding book contains 13 categories of this research is established. They are (1) traditional activities, (2) historic buildings & heritage, (3) traditional clothing, (4) nature & landscape, (5) urban landscape, (6) built-in environment, (7) way of life,

(8) shopping, (9) recreational activities, (10) people, (11) food, (12) transportation, (13) other. Each picture can be classified into three categories at most.

1. Traditional activities: This category of pictures presents people participating in South Korean traditional activities or festivals. Traditional activities and shows are also included.
2. Historic buildings & heritage: Pictures in this category depict ancient buildings, heritage or remnants such as ancient tools, paintings, and ancient buildings.
3. Traditional clothing: This category contains travelers or local people wearing traditional Korean clothing. Displaying of traditional clothing is also classified into this category.
4. Nature & landscape: This category includes animals and nature landscapes. Such as mountains, grasslands, forest, ocean, lake, etc.
5. Urban landscape: It includes modern buildings and bird viewing of a city.
6. Built-in environment: This category includes artificial attractions, such as museums, sculptures, street paintings, and other landmarks. Tourist service facilities such as hotels and visitor center are defined as built-in environment.
7. Way of life: Way of life refers to how local people live and shows their housing, beliefs, and daily life. Pictures in this category may include houses or architectures of local people, street scenes in local communities, local markets, etc. Way of life also includes activities such as people making crafts, cooking, and eating in a local restaurant.
8. Shopping: Shopping refers to where tourists shopping and what they buy. Shopping includes shopping malls and street with stores.
9. Recreational activities: Recreational activities means that tourists join in recreational activities such as golf, skiing, going to sea, watching a live show, etc.
10. People: This category includes local people and travelers. Some pictures may contain people but are not the center of the photo (too small or hardly distinguishable), then they are not coded into this category.
11. Food: Food refers to different types of foods and beverage.
12. Transportation: Transportation refers to roads, bridges, and different types of vehicle. Internal transportations of an attraction also included.
13. Other: Pictures cannot be classified into categories above.

Inter-rater Reliability

Classification reliability refers to the consistency of coding completed by different coders. The purpose of reliability test is to identify whether the content-encoding can accurately reflect the definitions of categories. Therefore, before formal encoding test, a training of coding was implemented. We randomly select 50 pictures for testing: 20 from DMO, 30 from Chinese travelers. After the training of coding, two raters will discuss their disagreement on pictures with different categories. The inter-rater agreement and contingency table of pictures were computed after two raters' discussion. For all categories, the inter-rater reliability for the raw percentage agreement was greater than 0.94. The agreements of different categories are relatively high so the coding book is suitable and can be used for further study.

Results

Chi-square was used to compare the categories of photographs between South Korea DMO and Chinese tourists. According to the results (Table 3), Historic buildings & Heritage, Nature & Landscape, Way of Life, People, Food and Transportation are detected statistical difference between projected and perceived destination images. In South Korea DMO, the top three categories are Nature & Landscape, Historic Buildings & Heritage and People. The top three categories from Chinese tourists are Food, People, and Nature & Landscape. These findings indicated that while Korean official DMO tended to feature their history and heritage, Chinese tourists were more interested in Korean foods and taking portrait photos.

Table 3. Attribute Frequency: Chi-Square Analysis

Category		South Korea DMO		Chinese Tourists		P Value
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
1	Nature & landscape	147	0.690	138	0.178	< 0.001
2	Historic buildings & heritage	57	0.268	93	0.120	< 0.001
3	People	30	0.141	173	0.223	0.009
4	Food	26	0.122	192	0.247	< 0.001
5	Way of life	23	0.108	36	0.046	0.009
6	Urban landscape	17	0.080	81	0.104	0.290
7	Built-in environment	15	0.070	80	0.103	0.153
8	Recreational activities	11	0.052	24	0.031	0.146
9	Traditional clothing	6	0.028	21	0.027	0.941
10	Transportation	6	0.028	70	0.090	0.003
11	Traditional activities	5	0.023	18	0.023	0.641
12	Other	3	0.014	41	0.053	0.015
13	Shopping	2	0.009	17	0.022	0.237
	Total	345		984		

df = 1 in all tests

Conclusion

Chinese tourists' perceptions of cognitive destination image attributes include safety, friendly people, and unpolluted environment. Besides, cultural and historical attraction, food variety and natural attractions are identified among Chinese tourists' perceptions (Zeng et al., 2015). Therefore, our results proved Zeng et al.'s (2015) research that the percentage of Food, Nature & Landscape and Historic Buildings & Heritages occupies above 55% of total pictures.

According to the attribute frequency result (Table 2), in Mafengwo, Food, People, and Transportation are overrepresented, but Nature & Landscape, Historic buildings & Heritage and Way of Life are underrepresented when comparing with photos from South Korea DMO.

The percentage of Food occupies 24.7% that indicates tourists from China are most interested in South Korea foods. In China, Korean foods such as Korean style BBQ, Bu-dae jji-gae, and Tteogbokki (fried rice cake), are very popular in metropolis such as Beijing and Shanghai. Therefore, when Chinese tourists travel South Korea, they pay much attention to authentic Korean foods. Photos record tourists' experience during their trip. Therefore, photos depicting people are much more in Mafengwo than in official website of South Korea DMO. Natural attribute is attractive for Chinese tourists, although this category is underrepresented compared to South Korea DMO. For some Chinese tourists, South Korea is also a perfect place for skiing.

However, South Korea DMO tends to feature Historical Buildings & Heritage, in Mafengwo, photos are underrepresented in this category. Chinese tourists may consider South Korea's culture is similar with Chinese culture. Therefore, they do not pay much attention to South Korea's historical buildings and heritage. There is another result that does not match with our initial thought. At the beginning, researchers thought tourists' photographs will include many shopping activities, because lots of Chinese tourists travel to South Korea for shopping. But, finally, shopping activities only has 2.2% of entire photographs. The potential reason is that pictures can depict portrait photos merchandises but hardly depict dynamic activities.

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