

Wu, Jia-Lin; Kim, Bong-Seok

Article

Soft power of Seoul City: The perceived image of Seoul by Chinese visitors

Global Business & Finance Review (GBFR)

Provided in Cooperation with:

People & Global Business Association (P&GBA), Seoul

Suggested Citation: Wu, Jia-Lin; Kim, Bong-Seok (2017) : Soft power of Seoul City: The perceived image of Seoul by Chinese visitors, Global Business & Finance Review (GBFR), ISSN 2384-1648, People & Global Business Association (P&GBA), Seoul, Vol. 22, Iss. 3, pp. 19-31, <https://doi.org/10.17549/gbfr.2017.22.3.19>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/224375>

Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

Terms of use:

Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.

You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.

If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>



Soft Power of Seoul City - The Perceived Image of Seoul by Chinese Visitors

Jia-Lin Wu^a, Bong-Seok Kim^b

^aCollege of Hotel and Tourism Management, Kyung Hee University, Republic of Korea

^bCollege of Hotel and Tourism Management, Kyung Hee University, Republic of Korea

ABSTRACT

Seoul is a popular destination for Chinese tourists and Seoul's image has been a popular topic for scholars in recent years. This study aimed to examine Seoul's largest consumers, Chinese visitors, and to obtain more understanding of these visitors' perceptions of Seoul by analyzing Chinese visitors' perceived image of Seoul and identifying the soft power of Seoul city. The study is based on 103 online photographic representations from 88 blogs identified through the well-known Chinese search engine-Baidu. The study found that Chinese visitors described Seoul as a modernized city with its own authentic culture, historical changes and accessibility. The soft power of Seoul is identified in several aspects, including cultural fascination, a safe environment, tourism attractiveness, and information accessibility. Marketers should take advantage of these soft powers to maintain the tourism industry. Synecdochical features should also be used to enhance the destination image of Seoul. In light of these results, the authors discuss implications for both marketers and researchers as well as directions for further research.

Keywords: Visual Method, Soft Power, Chinese Visitors, Destination Image, Seoul

I. Introduction

In 4000BC, people began living in groups near the Han River. Before 1910, Seoul was named Han Yang. Following the Japanese invasion, Seoul's name was changed to Keijyo (경성부), and this name persisted until August 15, 1945. Seoul's Chinese name was changed from “汉城 (Hanseong)” to “首尔 (Seoul)” on January 19, 2005, indicating the Korean government's

desire to reduce the Chinese influence on Korea and to modernize the city of Seoul.

Currently, Seoul, the capital of Korea, is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Korea for international travelers. Packed with countless places to visit and sights to see such as traditional markets, shopping districts, and ancient palaces, Seoul is a city with so much to offer that a tourist might not know where to begin (Korean Tourism Organization homepage). Although the territory of Korea is not as vast as other large countries, Seoul is a magical city that attracts people from all over the world, especially Chinese tourists. In 2016, 2.81 million Chinese tourists visited Seoul, representing the highest proportion of the 6.52 million total visitors to the

Received: Jan. 13, 2017; Revised: Aug. 21, 2017; Accepted: Aug. 30, 2017

† Prof. Bong-Seok Kim, Ph.D.

Professor, Department of Convention Management, College of Hotel and Tourism Management Kyung Hee University, Republic of Korea

Tel. +82 2 9610866 Email: herz5@khu.ac.kr

city (Korean Tourism Organization homepage). Chinese tourists are also major consumers, This group spent an average of US\$2,200 in Korea in 2016 compared to the overall average of \$1,100 for all tourists (Shanghai Korean News, 2016). Based on this, Chinese tourists are therefore essential consumers who are to some extent promoting the economic development of Seoul.

According to statistics from 2011 to 2014, Chinese visitors represented the largest proportion of total international visitors: growing from 68.5% in 2011 to 79.8% in 2014 (Hlee, Lee, Joun, Chung & Koo, 2016). However, Chinese return visitors decreased from 14.8% to 11.6%, and their length of stay decreased from 10.1 days to 5.7 days (Hlee, Lee, Joun, Chung & Koo, 2016). It is important for Korean marketers to understand the attitudes of Chinese visitors, to maintain or increase the number of return visitors, and to encourage them to stay longer in Seoul.

To learn about Chinese tourists' psychological characteristics and attitude toward Seoul, this paper focuses on the largely unexplored topic of Seoul's destination image through online photographs (Govers & Go, 2004) and reveals the circular and dynamic process of the visitor experience (Gilbert & Hancock, 2006). Hence, the purposes of this research are as follows. First, this study examines the photographs posted on tourists' online blogs to determine how these photographs present a perceived destination image of Seoul. Second, a denotative and connotative analysis is conducted to identify the soft power of Seoul city through research representations.

Blogs are a type of popular social media. The increasing number of blogs not only has an effect on communication channels but also represents a new way of promoting destinations. With economic development and technological progress, tourism researchers are increasingly realizing the value of blogs as a tool for collecting data (Banyai & Glover, 2012). However, the majority of these studies are based on the researcher's own country or research on another country without using that country's native language (Sun, Ryan & Pan, 2015). Breaking language barriers is an important part of exploring international

themes, particularly the theme of tourism across nations. This study uses Chinese key words to collect data in a Chinese search engine to identify the soft power of Seoul in a more international and authentic way. This approach avoids the ambiguity of analyzing Chinese objectives using a Korean platform since Chinese people rarely post contents on Korean sites in Korean language.

This study is built on visual method and informed by the soft power theory, which involves transforming tourism destinations. By analyzing the denotative aspect of these representations, this paper classifies these representations into several categories. Following a content analysis of these categories, we identify the theoretical meaning of the soft power of Seoul. Though these steps, the paper reveals the image of Seoul as perceived by Chinese tourists and speculates about the effects of online photographs on potential tourists. Additionally, the study offers suggestions to the KTO (Korean Tourism Organization) on building a more comfortable city for international tourists and provides ideas to enhance the destination image of Seoul.

In this study, the destination image of Seoul is explored using photos posted online by Chinese tourists. The study use a sample of the first 600 online photographic representations found on Baidu, and ultimately analyzes a total of 103 representations after filtering their sources (only representations from blogs are included). Through these photographic representations, we can observe types of soft power that have replaced the role of hard military, economic or "situational command" power. This soft power represents an attractive power, such as tourism, that can benefit both local people and international tourists (Leheny, 2006). Thus, this study contributes to destination image management for a harmonious society. The research procedures are as follows:

- (1) to review past research from the destination image literature and identify theories to support a visual methods technique;
- (2) to search past research on soft power and define the types of soft power representations included in this study;

- (3) to sample and categorize the representations found online;
- (4) to use denotative analysis to classify the representations and perform content analysis on the representations;
- (5) to identify findings, implications and recommendations for future research and destination management.

II. Literature Reviews

Destination image

The study of destination image involves interpreting the representations of a destination (Gallarza, Saura & Garcia, 2002). In the last 20 years, there have been two types of literature have focused on destination image: marketing literature and tourism literature (Cakmak & Isaac, 2012). Marketing studies have revealed that in organizational buying, destination image has a relationship with the effects of a country's image and product selection decisions (Heslop, Papadopoulos, Dowdles & Compeau, 2004). Tourism studies have examined destination image as a multidimensional concept (Gallarza et al., 2002). Destination image consists of a projected image and perceived image from both the supplier's side and the consumer's side (Hunt, 1957; Goodrich, 1978). On the supplier's side, the projected image is intended to attract tourists using a promoted, developed destination image. On the consumer's side, the perceived image can be used in the consumer decision-making process regarding where to travel (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Pike & Ryan, 2004).

A perceived destination image is formed through tourists' subjective opinions and evaluations of a destination (Hunter, 2012). This image is formed through personal experience and marketing strategies (Gartner, 1993). However, the perceived image can influence tourists' travel experiences even in retrospect, and it even influences potential tourists. The perceived destination image often consists of personal experience

and direct strategies (Stabler, 1988).

To gain a better understanding of the perceived image of Seoul from the perspective of Chinese visitors, this study focuses on photographic representations collected from Baidu. These photographs may represent Chinese tourists' impressions of Seoul and their attitudes about the city. By examining these photographs, researchers can determine how Chinese tourists spend their days in Seoul. At the same time, we can learn more about Chinese tourists' opinions of Seoul's destination image. This perceived image provides information for the supplier and has an effect on potential visitors that is equivalent to that of other perceived images, and it may be even more persuasive than the image projected by the supplier.

Soft power

Harvard professor Joseph Nye first proposed the concept of soft power. He identified two types of power, hard power and soft power. Hard power involves making others do what you want, whereas soft power involves making others want what you want. Hard power includes military and economic or situational command power (Huang & Ding, 2006), which causes others to be afraid. Soft power is the capacity of nations, governments, and populations to obtain what they need using a peaceful approach rather than by employing hard power measures such as war or economic force (Nye, 2004). Soft power relates to a country's culture (in places where that culture is attractive to others), its political values (when a country lives up to them at home and abroad) and its foreign policies (when they are considered legitimate and based on moral authority) (Joseph & Nye, 2002).

Soft power and hard power are both based on great strength or strong points. They are equally important to comprehensive national power, but soft power is more useful in the pursuit of peace in a changing world (Joseph & Nye, 2002). From the perspective of international relations, soft power currently serves a more active and important role

than in the past.

However, soft power is no longer a tool that is used only by politicians. It is also an important factor in the area of tourism. Instead of benchmarking or hard branding, Convention & Visitor's Bureaus (CVBs) should seek a socially constructed or organic destination image (Hunter, 2016).

In this study, soft power is defined as Seoul's cultural fascination, safe environment, tourism attractiveness, and information accessibility.

Online photographs

Photographic representations are true statements because they come from real life (Denzin, 1995; Hendry, 2005; Hunter, 2012). These representations often consist of mass culture and represent the attitudes or feelings of the photographer. Consequently, we can consider photographic representations visual statements about the experiences of tourists who visited a destination that can affect tourism decisions (Holloway & Robinson, 1995, Hunter, 2012).

With the birth of the internet, digital cameras and smart phones have emerged to replace the use of traditional film cameras. Online photographs have become a communication mode for internet users. This phenomenon has completely changed the rules of photographic culture by transforming representations of an experience into a hyper-reality simulation (Hunter, 2016). A destination image is not easy to change since it is formed by historical and experiential sources, and it is unclear which online photographic representations of destinations will be influential in the vast internet world (Govers & Go, 2004). Online destination photographs no longer serve as an authoritative and glossy means of manipulating visitors' perceptions (Hunter, 2016); they are now a social construct established among tourists.

III. Methods

Visual methods-content-semiotic analysis

Visual methods are qualitative analysis approaches that are used to explain the meanings in materials such as pictures, paintings, maps, videos and diagrams (Harper, 2005, Rose, 2003). Materials such as pictures or photographs often originate from published media (Crouch & Lubben, 2006). In this type of research, online media are the environments for signs that convey denotative and connotative meanings (Hunter, 2013). Therefore, it is possible to collect materials through media by using visual methods (Pink, 2007) and interpret these materials by using semiotics analysis, content analysis or both (Rose, 2003).

Rather than verbal forms, the visual method procedure usually begins by identifying denotative elements within the photographs (Krippendorff, 2004) and then by examining connotative elements (Hunter, 2013). Denotative elements are analogous to reality and are form specific. Connotative elements are dependent on social context and are supplemental to reality (Hunter, 2013).

In this research, the first 600 visual materials were photographic representations of Seoul online. These photographic representations were output and uploaded by tourism stakeholders, including travelers who are active in or responsible for the constitution and manipulation of the destination image online (Hunter, 2013). After filtering by original URL, 103 visual materials from 88 blogs were collected as the representations of tourists' experiences.

To identify online representations and use a visual method to interpret them, this study analyzes photographic representations from a well-known Chinese search engine, Baidu. We then identify and interpret the denotative and connotative meanings of the representations. The photographic representations are approached as empirical object (Pennington & Thomsen, 2010).

The visual method includes five steps, which are presented in Table 1: (1) key word testing, (2) sampling, (3) filtering the sample, (4) classification

Table 1. Steps of the approach

(1) Key word testing; widen search by using multiple keyword variations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type keywords into Baidu in a variety of forms • Test 8 kinds of translations such as Visit Seoul / Seoul Tourism / Seoul Travel and their combination • 首尔观光 (Seoul Tourism) is selected because it covers the most comprehensive representations (129,000 representations)
(2) Sampling; check subjective bias by using multiple researchers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input 首尔观光 (Seoul Tourism) into search engine Baidu • Save the first 600 representations according to natural order since the material online is ordered by relevance, time and frequency (Hunter, 2013). • Code the URLs of these samples
(3) Filtering sample; a purposive sampling approach to collect representations of tourist experiences associated with Seoul's destination image
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open the URLs of these samples to determine their source • Retain only the representations from blogs
(4) Classification by denotative elements, generating categories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the frequency and type of denotative element found in the photographs • Identify the most suitable way to classify the representations into an appropriate number of groups • Denotative elements are interpreted literally
(5) Interpretation by connotative elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the connotative element's type by the composition of photos • Identify connotative relationships among categories • Connotative elements are supplementary to reality and interpreted theoretically

Adapted from: (Hunter, 2012; Van & Jewitt, 2001; McGregor, 2000)

by denotative elements, and (5) interpretation by connotative elements.

Sampling

In this analysis, the online destination image of Seoul was examined through internet websites. Timeliness is the main problem in the collection of representations obtained through an internet platform. Therefore, the researchers collected the photographs as soon as possible in case the order of the representations on the search engine changed (the representations were ordered by click rate). Two researchers performed the collection process. Inter-coder reliability was used to assess subjective bias. The two researchers collected the representations and coded them separately. After completing the classification, Holsti's coefficient was calculated. All of the reliability coefficients were above 90%, which was higher than the 85% baseline (Cho & Park, 2008). In this manner, the maximum quantity and variety of tourism information was collected with minimal

researcher bias (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Since there are many words that can reflect "travel" in Chinese, such as tourism, travel, tour, and visit, the study applied a key word testing to select the most appropriate key words to widen the search. In the key word testing presented in Table 2, 首尔观光 (Seoul Tourism) was chosen as the final search term, since the maximum representations can be found by using this approach.

By typing 首尔观光 into Baidu's search box, representations (ordered by relevance, time and frequency) were collected and coded with each URL (Uniform Resource Locator). The total number of search results via Baidu was 129,000. A sample of 600 representations was collected in the first round. A total of 103 representations on Baidu that originated from 88 blogs were sampled as the final data. Previous studies using keyword searches have collected representations from 212 websites (Stepchenkova and Morrison, 2006), 81 websites (Choi, Lehto & Morrison, 2007) or as many as 1975 websites (Hunter, 2013).

The sample in this research was sorted into several categories by its denotative elements. These categories

Table 2. Online photographs through Baidu

Key words	Total numbers
首尔观光(Seoul Tourism)	129,000
首尔旅行(Seoul Travel)	123,000
首尔旅游(Seoul Travel)	98,300
首尔观光/旅游(Seoul Tourism/Travel)	11,200
首尔访问(Seoul Visitation)	72,300
首尔观光/访问(Seoul Tourism/Visitation)	106,000
首尔旅游/访问(Seoul Travel/Visitation)	98,300
首尔观光/旅游/访问 (Seoul Tourism/Travel/Visitation)	11,200

(By author, 2013.11-2014.02)

were used to determine the ranking of the travel elements to identify the preferences of Chinese tourists and provide suggestions to CVBs to create a better destination.

IV. Results

Classifying the data by denotative elements

Using the denotative elements of the sample collected from 88 websites, the data were sorted into 5 categories, which are presented in Table 3: 1. Korean food (11), 2. shopping (23), 3. landmarks (48), 4. TV entertainment (4) and 5. travel information and others (17). The pictures in each of the category reflect homogeneity, although heterogeneity exists among all categories.

Table 3. Description of data

Type	Items	Description
Korean food	11	food/drink/people having meal
Shopping	23	shopping street/product/brand
Landmarks	48	architecture/famous scenery
TV entertainment	4	Korean star/TV program
Travel information and others	17	travel information/people/road sign

(By author)

Interpretation according to connotative elements

Sharing the same dishes (2) (3) (4) is a traditional custom in eastern countries, and the Chinese have a similar culture to that of Koreans. Thus, Chinese visitors feel comfortable with the dietary culture that involves eating together and sharing dishes. These photographs also imply that tour groups are a common way for Chinese visitors to come to Seoul.

The side dish culture (2) (4) is a special food culture in Korea. Although other countries serve side dishes during meals, Korean is the one of the best in terms of serving side dishes. Korean side dishes are varied and elegant, and they have a long history (Lee & Lee, 2013). This represents a kind of cultural and historical authenticity.

The color of Korean food (table) culture (1) (2) represents Yin-Yang and the five elements (Lee & Lee, 2013). The color of food is a representation of Korea's culture and enhances the appeal of the food. Visitors are more likely to take photos of food



Figure 1. Korean food: (1) appealing gimbalp on a mat, (2) bibimbap and soybean paste with four side dishes arranged neatly, (3) a large dish of sweet and sour shrimp, (4) people eating pork belly and drinking Sprite together around a table with a coal fire.



Figure 2. Shopping: (1) Myeong-dong Street at nightfall in winter, (2) people exiting a shopping mall and talking to each other, (3) Myeong-dong Street with lights and many people.

that looks attractive.

There are 11 famous Korean foods and coffee shops representations in this group that represent Seoul's image with regard to food. These representations show food that looks very appealing. Therefore, we can suggest that Chinese visitors want to show wholesome and delicious Korean food to tell readers that they will have a positive experience eating meals in Seoul. Only Korean food representations constitute this group, which means that Seoul's destination image related to food is pure and has its own authenticity as part of Seoul's perceived destination image. These representations show the soft power of cultural fascination.

With respect to late-night shopping (1) (3), Seoul is famous for its nightlife, and some fashion stores are open until 11:00 pm. It is convenient for travelers to shop after they have finished sightseeing for the day. Seoul's peaceful environment is an advantage because visitors can stay out of the hotel longer than in some other cities. This is a good situation for tourists that helps them to understand the destination, and stimulates consumption. Peace is a soft power of tourism, and tourism is a soft power of Seoul as it changes from a turbulent place into an enjoyable one.

Seoul has a female-centered shopping culture (2) (3). In the pictures, we can observe that many of the customers are women. These streets offer an appealing atmosphere for women to shop. In this aspect, Seoul has a distinctive gender characteristic that differs from other destinations.

The shopping guide culture (1) involves a shopping guide who stands in front of a door to welcome customers. This is a common scene in most of the cosmetic shops. The shopping guide often carries samples to offer to travelers to encourage them to come into the shop and make purchases.

Of the 103 analyzed representations, there are 23 representations of shopping; thus, shopping ranks second after landmarks. By interpreting these representations, we discover that Seoul is an excellent city for night shopping. Even in the evening, shopping guides stand in front of cosmetic shops encouraging people to buy products. This characteristic gives Seoul a convenient, vibrant and safe image among both visitors and potential visitors. Another observation that can be made about this category of representations is that most of the shopping pictures are of women visitors. Seoul presents special characteristics that appeal to these target consumers. Therefore, a safe environment is very important to these consumers.

In this category of representations, we observe crowded streets and happy consumers. These photos suggest that shopping in Seoul made these people happy and satisfied. Shopping is a sign that relates to modernism and a high-level life style; it is what Chinese visitors seek. The 23 representations in this group illustrate that Chinese visitors like to shop in Seoul. This group enhances Seoul's destination image in a modernized way. This modernized destination image is based on safe environment which is one of the soft powers of Seoul. At the same



Figure 3. Landmarks: (1) blue clouds flow over the nighttime waters of the Han River as shining skyscrapers mark the prosperity of Seoul, (2) a flash of red at sunset and Namsan Tower enhance each other's beauty, (3) a traditional performance at Gyeongbokgung Palace, (4) people go for a walk or take photos at Cheonggye Stream.

time, the crowded streets demonstrate that these shopping streets are popular with visitors. However, the crowded streets may cause an inconvenience for visitors.

This category of representations has the highest quality among the collected photos (1) (2) (4), and most of these photographs were taken by photographers who traveled to Seoul. These photographs also indicate that landmarks in Seoul are very attractive.

Of the 103 representations, there are 48 photographs of landmarks, which is a much higher number than for the other categories such as Korean food, shopping, TV entertainment and travel information. Landmarks are the most popular travel element that Chinese tourists enjoy photographing. Because of the impressive frequency of landmark photographs, they may also have the potential to offer Chinese free independent travelers (FITs) a dynamic reason to visit Seoul.

The 48 representations of landmarks are composed of modern landmarks (26), traditional cultural landmarks (18) and nature scenery (4). Modern landmarks mostly

focus on the aerial panorama of Seoul, Han River, Seoul Tower and Cheonggye Stream. Traditional landmarks include Gyeongbuk Palace, the city gates (Hunter, 2012) and other aspects of Korean heritages. These are most popular attractions for Chinese tourists. There are 11 pictures related to aerial urban panoramas of Seoul. Showing tall buildings and the bustling scene of modernized Seoul are the main ideas of these aerial panoramas. Pictures of the traditional landmarks show a more peaceful environment compared with the modern attractions. Only 2 pictures showed visitors taking photos with an attraction.

The perceived image of Seoul in this group is very similar to the projected image offered by the official website. Thus with regard to attractions, tourism marketers promote an authentic projected image to a certain extent. The representations in this group convey the message that the experience and promotion involve a dynamic circular process. Since the Cheonggye Stream and the historical gates are the key representations of the city that have survived



Figure 4. TV entertainment (1) Stars filming a show, (2) Jang-Keun-suk in a drama.

despite war and foreign occupation, these tourism attractions can be understood as the main soft power of Seoul for Chinese tourists. Therefore, we can see how the soft power of tourism produces a peaceful destination image through these representations.

Among the 103 photographs, there are only 4 photographs in the category of TV entertainment. The photos are all from TV programs or dramas. No photographs contained real experiences of visitors in this group and there were no photos of tourists

with Korean celebrities. It seems that Chinese tourists have little opportunity to take photos with or even meet Korean star. This finding also suggests that very few tourists traveled to Seoul because of Korean dramas or programs within the group of tourists who posted the analyzed pictures. Most of the tourists' activities in Seoul were not related to celebrities. Tourists may come to Seoul because of a celebrity, but they may not spend their days in Seoul doing activities related to celebrities.



Figure 5. Travel information and others: (1) warm and clean Korean traditional hotel with convenient infrastructure, (2) street view and traffic light, (3) Seoul tour bus waiting for people, (4) tour route on subway line 1.

The travel information and others category includes accommodations, tour buses, maps, road views and other pictures. Since this type of photo represented 16.5% of the analyzed data, we can speculate that visitors enjoy sharing their experiences in Seoul with others via online social networks or blogs. This information helps other tourists gather travel information comfortably and quickly. At the same time, this information supplied by visitors is reliable. In other words, these shared photos contain the real perceived image of Seoul by Chinese visitors. On the one hand, this supports the soft power that attract Chinese tourists to Seoul; on the other hand, since an online search is an effective way for FITs to gather information, there will be an increasing number of FITs traveling to Seoul instead of tour groups. Therefore, information accessibility is a kind of soft power of Seoul's perceived image.

V. Discussion

This research is based on online photographs of Seoul city, which are identified as representations of Seoul image from the perspective of Chinese visitors based on both denotative and connotative themes. A total of 600 pictures were saved from the Chinese search engine Baidu according to their natural search order. Of these, 103 pictures related to the theme that originated from blogs were gathered as final representations. By conducting denotative and connotative analysis, this research identified the image of Seoul perceived by Chinese visitors in connection with the theory of soft power. Based on the denotative and connotative analysis, the theoretical and practical implications are proposed.

In the denotative analysis, the representations were sorted into 5 categories: Korean food (11), shopping (23), landmarks (48), TV entertainment (4) and travel information and others (17). The perceived image of Seoul is defined as a modernized city with its own cultural authenticity, historical changes and

accessibility.

These two types of analysis indicated that Seoul's online perceived image focuses on Korean food, shopping, the city's historical elements and modernization; these are the ways that Chinese visitors view, experience and remember the city. These representations present an overall image of Seoul through a juxtaposition of Seoul's past, present and future. This finding is similar to Hunter's research on Seoul's projected destination image in 2012.

Although Seoul's destination image as perceived by Chinese visitors seems to be a dynamic circle in which each element is closely related to the others, a synecdoche of the destination should also be noted. Maintaining the city's image with a balanced level of tourism elements is important, but choosing synecdochical features of the destination includes both risks and benefits (Hunter, 2012; Hunter, 2013). A destination synecdochical feature means that a synecdoche can represent a city by acting as a brand or logo. The synecdoche makes the destination easily recognizable such that "a single image... stands for the whole or a whole... stands for a part" (Hunter, 2013). Therefore, destination marketers should carefully select synecdochical features to present a destination image without misrepresentation or weakening other features. The dynamic circle of Seoul's destination image should be maintained as a basis for selecting synecdochical features until the appropriate synecdoche is recognized over time. In addition, selecting the synecdochical features does not mean that only one synecdoche should be chosen. To build a better ecosystem for tourists, a diversity of destination images should be provided to vary their experience (Judd & Fainstein, 1999). For this reason, a limited but sufficient variety of synecdochical features should be cultivated (Hunter, 2012).

In the connotative analysis, the soft power of Seoul was identified as cultural fascination, safe environment, tourism attractiveness, and information accessibility.

Seoul's overall perceived image by Chinese visitors has implications for the theory of soft power. First, the primary soft power of Seoul comes from cultural fascination. The cultural fascination in this research

comes from the Korean food culture, Korean traditional architectural culture and Korean modern fashion culture. Cultural fascination plays a major role in both the construction of Seoul's perceived image and supporting tourism. Therefore, KTO should consistently maintain and take advantage of Korean culture. Tourists come to Seoul to see different architecture, taste different food and experience a different culture from their homeland. For this reason, marketers should make use of culture to provide experiences that are new and worthy of exploration. Holding Korean culture related events or designing culture-related experiences are good ways to attract visitors interested in culture.

Shopping is also a highlight, particularly fashion culture. For Chinese tourists, shopping is an important part of travelling to Seoul. This finding is consistent with the study by Sun et al. (2015). A study of the Korean Wave (Hlee et al., 2016) also notes that Chinese tourists in Korea have a high interest in shopping and fashion. This is because according to Chinese Li (propriety) culture, it is very important to bring back gifts for relatives and friends when traveling (Mok & Defranco, 2002). Overseas gifts are appreciated by the Chinese since many Chinese have no opportunity to engage in international travel (Yu & Weiler, 2001). However, our study proposes another reason that Korean fashion culture is attractive to Chinese visitors, especially female Chinese visitors. By analyzing the representations, we can see visitors talking to each other and smiling while shopping. This kind of happiness reflects more than simply buying gifts for friends. This is why other research has discussed the Chinese "craze for shopping" (Sun et al., 2015). Marketers should be aware of this preference of Chinese visitors and make use of it. One suggestion is to provide more information about cosmetics and fashion and to develop themes in collaboration with actors. This could increase Chinese visitors' desire to shop. A long-term suggestion is to return to the original cultural fascination itself. Maintaining the culture's authenticity can help to increase the attraction of shopping. Another study stated that the Korean Wave is transitioning from

entertainment to beauty, fashion and culture (An & Lee, 2015). Therefore, identifying a new Korean Wave is a task for the culture's soft power. In addition, as mentioned, capacity problems should be considered by the KTO.

Other important soft powers found in the shopping representations group and the landmark representations group are a "safe environment" and "tourism attractiveness". These are concepts of peaceful soft power instead of hard power like war or economics. A safe environment is the foundation for tourism development, and tourism attractiveness is the foundation for the development of a destination. Therefore, marketers should aim to maintain a safe environment and tourism attractiveness to develop a stable foundation for tourism, especially for South Korea. As mentioned, Korea suffered aggression from Japan and still has problems with North Korea. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare as the political situation changes worse. The KTO should continue working on soft power elements related to global values. Participation in international organizations and the production of international events will enhance the country's soft power, which includes a safe environment and tourism attractiveness.

Considering the proportion of the representations in the last category, the soft power of information accessibility can be identified. Chinese tourists play a positive role in helping the KTO advertise Seoul abroad via Chinese online marketing, even though they may not realize the importance of what they are doing. According to rich information online, researchers speculate that increasing numbers of FITs will come to Seoul based on this information. Consequently, tourism marketers should take a closer look at the online destination photographs, develop an official center to provide information online, and maintain contact with current and potential visitors. An official information center online could increase interaction with unofficial information platforms and resolve visitors' misunderstandings of the destination. In short, this is an effective way to manage the country's destination image online. By doing so, the tourism industry in Seoul will form a healthy ecosystem.

This virtuous circle will generate sustainable development within the tourism industry and even the economy in Seoul.

VI. Future Research

It is appropriate to examine a destination image through visual research, especially in an international case. Visual methods can express the stories implied in photos and can explain individual stories as well as a larger story. By retelling these stories, denotative and connotative messages are generated. Therefore, this is a valuable method to explore and identify a destination's image. This study used 103 photographs from Chinese tourists' blogs showing their experiences during trips to Seoul. Further research should collect more information by using different representations from other online sources. A study contrasting different sources would also provide an interesting topic for further research.

In visual research, even one picture can reveal a person's inner world. It would be helpful to expand the number of representations to identify the details and the overall story of this topic.

The networked world is changing constantly. Because data found online are so vast and frequently updated, it may be difficult for researchers to keep pace with trends among tourists. Future research should analyze these data as soon as possible. A stage analysis is also recommended to cover changes in trends for this topic.

It is evident that many tourists do not use blogs or social networking, and readers' boundaries are limited. Therefore, conducting research using personal interviews would be an effective means of exploring this theme.

References

- An, S. H., & Lee, C. K. (2015). Estimating the economic impacts of Korean Wave (Hallyu) tourism using an input-output model. *Journal of Tourism Sciences*, 39(5), 57-70.
- Baloglu, S., & McCleary, K. W. (1999). A model of destination image formation. *Annals of tourism research*, 26(4), 868-897.
- Banyai, M., & Glover, T. D. (2012). Evaluating research methods on travel blogs. *Journal of Travel Research*, 51(3), 267-277.
- Çakmak, E., & Isaac, R. K. (2012). What destination marketers can learn from their visitors' blogs: An image analysis of Bethlehem, Palestine. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 1(1), 124-133.
- Cho, K. I., & Park, J. A. (2008). Mass media's reporting tendency toward leisure and tourism. *Journal of Tourism Sciences*, 32(4), 389-410.
- Choi, S., Lehto, X. Y., & Morrison, A. M. (2007). Destination image representation on the web: Content analysis of Macau travel related websites. *Tourism Management*, 28(1), 118-129.
- Denzin, N. K. (1995). The poststructural crisis in the social sciences: Learning from James Joyce. *Postmodern representations: Truth, power, and mimesis in the human sciences and public culture*, 38-59.
- Gallarza, M. G., Saura, I. G., & García, H. C. (2002). Destination image: Towards a conceptual framework. *Annals of tourism research*, 29(1), 56-78.
- Gartner, W. C. (1994). Image formation process. *Journal of travel & tourism marketing*, 2(2-3), 191-216.
- Gilbert, D., & Hancock, C. (2006). New York City and the transatlantic imagination French and English tourism and the spectacle of the modern metropolis, 1893-1939. *Journal of Urban History*, 33(1), 77-107.
- Goodrich, J. N. (1978). The relationship between preferences for and perceptions of vacation destinations: Application of a choice model. *Journal of Travel research*, 17(2), 8-13.
- Govers, R., & Go, F. M. (2004). Projected destination image online: Website content analysis of pictures and text. *Information Technology & Tourism*, 7(2), 73-89.
- Harper, D. (2005). What's new visually. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 3, 747-762.
- Hendry, J. (2005). *Reclaiming culture: Indigenous people and self-representation*. Springer.
- Heslop, L. A., Papadopoulos, N., Dowdles, M., Wall, M., & Compeau, D. (2004). Who controls the purse strings: A study of consumers' and retail buyers' reactions in an America's FTA environment. *Journal of Business Research*, 57(10), 1177-1188.
- Hlee, S. Y., Lee, J. M., Joun, Y. H., Chung, N. H., & Koo,

- C. M. (2016). Korean Wave (Hallyu) Tourism information policy for potential foreign tourists: Analysis of the language-specific issue and its requirements. *Journal of Tourism Sciences*, 40(2), 11-35.
- Holloway, J. C. Robinson, C. (1995). *Marketing for Tourism*. London: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Huang, Y., & Ding, S. (2006). Dragon's underbelly: An analysis of China's soft power. *East Asia*, 23(4), 22-44.
- Hunt, J. D. (1975). Image as a factor in tourism development. *Journal of Travel research*, 13(3), 1-7.
- Hunter, W. C. (2012). Projected destination image: A visual analysis of Seoul. *Tourism Geographies*, 14(3), 419-443.
- Hunter, W. C. (2013). China's Chairman Mao: A visual analysis of Hunan Province online destination image. *Tourism Management*, 34, 101-111.
- Hunter, W. C. (2016). The social construction of tourism online destination image: A comparative semiotic analysis of the visual representation of Seoul. *Tourism Management*, 54, 221-229.
- Judd, D. R., & Fainstein, S. S. (1999). *The tourist city*. London: Yale University Press.
- Krippendorff K. (2004). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*[M]. Sage.
- Korea Tourism Organization (2012). *The research of long-term plan for Korean Wave tourism*. Seoul.
- Lacey, A., & Luff, D. (2001). *Qualitative data analysis* (pp. 320-357). Sheffield: Trent Focus.
- Lee, S. E., & Lee, H. G. (2013). A color study of Korean traditional table Arrangements. *Bulletin of Korean Society of Basic Design & Art*, 14(3), 223-230.
- Leheny, D. (2006). A narrow place to cross swords: Soft power and the politics of Japanese popular culture in East Asia. *Beyond Japan: the dynamics of East Asian regionalism*, 211-233.
- Lübben, N., & Crouch, D. (2003). *Visual culture and tourism*. Berg.
- McGregor, A. (2000). Dynamic texts and tourist gaze: Death, bones and buffalo. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(1), 27-50.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage), 310-340.
- Mok, C., & DeFranco, A. L. (2000). Chinese cultural values: Their implications for travel and tourism marketing. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 8(2), 99-114.
- Nye Jr, J. S. (2002). The information revolution and American soft power. *Asia Pacific Review*, 9(1), 60-76.
- Nye, J. S. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. PublicAffairs.
- Pennington, J. W., & Thomsen, R. C. (2010). A semiotic model of destination representations applied to cultural and heritage tourism marketing. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 10(1), 33-53.
- Pike, S., & Ryan, C. (2004). Destination positioning analysis through a comparison of cognitive, affective, and conative perceptions. *Journal of travel research*, 42(4), 333-342.
- Pink, S. (2013). *Doing visual ethnography*. Sage.
- Rose, G. (2012). *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials*. Sage.
- Stabler, M. J. (1988). The image of destination regions: theoretical and empirical aspects. *Marketing in the tourism industry*, 133-161.
- Stepchenkova, S., & Morrison, A. M. (2006). The destination image of Russia: From the online induced perspective. *Tourism Management*, 27(5), 943-956.
- Sun, M., Ryan, C., & Pan, S. (2015). Using Chinese travel blogs to examine perceived destination image the case of New Zealand. *Journal of Travel Research*, 54(4), 543-555.
- Van Leeuwen, T., & Jewitt, C. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of visual analysis* (pp. 134-156). SAGE Publ.
- Yu, X., & Weiler, B. (2001). Mainland Chinese pleasure travelers to Australia: A leisure behavior analysis. *Tourism Culture & Communication*, 3(2), 81-91.
- Baidu Homepage: <http://www.baidu.com>
- KTO Homepage: <http://kto.visitkorea.or.kr/kor.kto>
- Shanghai Korean News: <http://blog.naver.com/shkonews/220590760539> 2016.01.07