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Dimensioning and Revealing Perceived Travel Experiences of International Residents in Korea by Using Semi-Structured Interviews

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ABSTRACT

This study presents the empirical findings of exploratory qualitative study which was undertaken to investigate the perceived holiday experiences international residents in Korea. Data were collected by conducting in-depth interviews with international residents who live in Korea for a long time and analyzed using CAQDAS NVivo 2. This study revealed that the people and places play an important part in shaping the travel experiences. In other words, the complex nature of travel experiences can be explained by their proximity to people: the human interactive dimension (festival & event and social experiences) and places: the spatial dimension (environment, adventure, heritage, and romantic experiences). Also there are some kinds of experiences that are more or less equally inclined to people and places- the cultural experience (urban, religious, knowledge experiences). This article, therefore, contributes to tourism market in Korea for international residents by classifying the travel experience typologies. It could extend in developing marketing strategies of creating and promoting Korean travel products not only for international residents, but also for tourists in general who visit Korea in details.

Keywords: Travel experiences, International residents, Destinations in Korea, Tourism in Korea, Qualitative study

I. Introduction

People believe that they can improve their quality of life through travel by taking advantage of physical, mental relaxation and personal time and space. Therefore, people who cannot travel are missing important parts of social rights (Richardsa, 1999). As a matter of fact, travel becomes essential part

in people's lives recently. Since various forms of tourism programs are being aired in Korea to introduce many domestic travel attractions and inform local restaurants nearby, there is an increase in the number of Koreans enjoying traveling domestic travel destinations during holidays according to Korea National Tourism Survey (2017). Last year, 89.5% of Korean aged 15 and older traveled local areas. It rose 1.6% from 2015 and 3.1% from 2014.

As the domestic travel becomes so active in Korea, the number of international workers, wedding migrants, and students from overseas including tourists are also increasing gradually. According to statistical overview of KIS statistics (2016), the number of international

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Table 1. Current status of international residents in Korea

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
International Residents	1,445,103	1,576,034	1,797,618	1,899,519	2,049,441
Total Population in Korea	50,948,272	51,141,463	51,327,916	51,529,338	51,696,216
Ratio of Residents to International Residents	2.84%	3.08%	3.50%	3.69%	3.96%

residents staying in Korea stands at 2,049,441, up to 8.5% from 2015, increasing by 9.2% annually over the past 5 years. The ratio of residents to international residents to total population is also increasing from 2.84% in 2012 to 3.96% in 2016 as shown below.

Korea has implemented policies in various forms over the past 40 years to attract international tourists and to host the domestic tourism industry. Among them, domestic tourism is recognized as a major policy tool for boosting domestic consumption. If domestic defense spending increases by 10 percent, the ripple effect of the domestic economy is estimated to amount to 2.5 trillion won. It is said that the benefits of the revitalization of the domestic tourism are significant. However, the tourism programs for international residents in Korea are not considered so far while there are numerous studies on domestic tourism targeting international visitors or Koreans.

This qualitative study conducted to understand what kinds of travel experiences contemporary international residents anticipate or expect at Korean destinations. These days the international residents have a variety of options in front of them, but due to lack of research, destination marketers in Korea do not know what the international residents seek from their holidays.

The purpose of this study is to find out what kinds of experiences international residents prefer to have in Korea through in-depth interviews with non-Koreans who have been staying and visiting various tourist destinations for a long time. By discovering perceived travel experiences of international residents, customized experiences can be staged at the destinations which can engage them mentally and physically and when they return home, those memorable events incite them to visit the destination again and recommend it to others.

II. Literature Review

A. Travel Experience

In the academic world, many scholars have stressed the importance of studying the experience. In his world renowned “Theory of Motivation”, Maslow (1943) stated that once human beings’ physiological needs, safety needs, love, and belonging needs (also known as “deficit needs”) are gratified, they seek unique experiences to satisfy their self-actualization needs (also known as “the being needs”). In early 1970s, it has been argued that since the economy is based on scarce resources, in future people would spend considerable amount of money to live amazing experiences (Toffler, 1970). Contemporary social scientists argue that businesses must orchestrate memorable events for their customers, and that memory itself becomes the product – the “experience” (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). They argue that the business houses will become stages to perform and the employees have to act like the actors to engage the future customers. The entertainment and leisure industries have already been offering experiences to their customers to earn money (Poulsonn and Kale, 2004). The most outstanding example is James Camron’s block buster movie “Avatar”. The movie is considered all-time greatest Hollywood movie not only in the US but in other parts of the world as well. According to the critics the story of the movie was not the greatest of all, but the 3-D experience made the movie super hit. People went to see the movie because they wanted 3-D experience. Other popular examples of experience economy are paragliding, rafting, bungee-jumping, opera, a visit to amusement park etc. In Korea, the karaoke or singing room culture is another example of making

money by staging experiences.

Most of the times, when we relate tourism and the experiences, we talk about the on-site experiences of the holidaymakers. We all think that tourism is concerned with an experience of places and the interaction that occur at the destinations (Ryan, 1995). We talk about the services offered at a destination and the level of perceived satisfaction to evaluate the overall experience. But a holiday maker's experiences are not limited to the destination only. They also have experiences at other stages of their travel process. The different stages as quoted by Vittersø et al (2000) of travel experience are - pre travel process, on-site experiences, and post travel processes. But they have not identified what kinds of experiences the holiday makers have at the stages.

Going on a vacation is not once a lifetime event. It is rather cyclic in nature. Past travel experiences can influence the tourist's attitude both positively and negatively (Huang and Hsu 2009). If the past experiences are positive and supplemented by good services, customers do not think of alternatives (Assael 2004). But if the past experiences are not up to the expectation, the visitors will not only avoid visiting the destination, but also tell their negative experiences to others. So it makes sense to understand the experiences and try to implement them in practice.

Travel experience ultimately influences to intention to revisit or whether to recommend destinations to others in the future (Hsu, Killion, Brown, Gross, &

Huang, 2008). It is very important to find out travel experience on regular basis through measuring tourist activities, service quality, satisfaction, and intention to revisit for marketing and promotion tools (Gomez-Jacinto, Martin-Garcia, & Bertichie-Haud'Huyze, 1999 & Xu and Chan, 2010).

B. Typology Based on Travel Experience

The Leisure Motivation Scale model which was originally developed by Beard and Ragheb (1983) based on the work of Maslow. The four types of travel experience dimensions were social, relaxation, knowledge and adventure (Ryan and Glendon, 1998). The sources of different typologies based on travel experience and motivation are summarized in table 2 below.

Fodness (1994) mentioned that travel experience and motivation can be used both to identify different kinds of tourists and create a dependable profile of their travel preferences and to give tourism marketers ideas in developing tour programs and positioning. Thus, understanding tourist typologies for international residents in Korea is predominantly valuable to promote the revitalization of domestic tourism (Kim. J. & Ritchie, B., 2012). However, no known studies have used tourist typologies within international residents tourism in Korea.

Table 2. Different Typologies Based on Travel Experience and Motivation

Researcher(s)	Tourist Types
Cha et al. (1995)	Sport seekers, novelty seekers, family/relaxation seekers
Oh et al. (1995)	Safety/comfort seekers, culture/ history seekers, novelty/ adventure seekers, luxury seekers
Baloglu S and McCleary KW (1999)	Relaxation/escape, excitement/adventure, knowledge, social, prestige
Beerli, A., & Marfin, J. D. (2004)	Cultures, rest and relaxation, adventure and pleasure, visit places that friends have not visited
Andreu et al. (2005)	Fuzzy tourists, recreation seekers, active tourists, escape seekers, relax seekers
Lee, C.-K., Lee, Y.-K., & Lee, B. (2005)	Events and festivals, Unique culture, local food and beverage, cultural attractions, meeting and exhibition, convenient transportation, availability of tourist information, good quality of tourism infrastructure, ease access to tourist spots, relaxed atmosphere, fashionable location, unpolluted and unspoiled environment, exotic destination, great nightlife, gambling opportunities, diversified products for shopping

C. Tourism in Korea

There are some instances when scholars focused on foreigners to find out the hurdles or bottlenecks in international tourism in Korea. In his study, Kim (2003) highlighted the top five barriers (as surveyed by KNTO) to Korean inbound tourism as 1) Traffic congestion, 2) Language barrier, 3) Unsanitary public toilets, 4) Forced shopping and 5) taxi service. This report was based on survey conducted by KNTO in 1997. Technological advances have changed lots of things since 1997. We need to know what are the new challenges faced by international tourists in Korea. Choi, Tkachenko and Sil (2010) focused their study on Russian tourists' travel experiences in Korea and suggested that Russian tourists think that Korea lacks historical and cultural tourist attractions.

Korean destinations consist of small entrepreneurs who provide necessary services to visitors. They lack the knowledge to collect and interpret the data and develop new tourism product. According to a report published by UNWTO (2010) on the tourism labor market in Asia-Pacific, in order to make its tourism industry competitive, Korea needs 1) South East Asian language skills, 2) Marketing and promotion skills, 3) Improved communication skills for multicultural awareness and understanding, 4) customer service and service quality and 5) Technical skills.

International residents in Korea have learned that due to prevailing Confucianism in Korean society, it is considered rude to criticize someone. So when they are asked about their experiences by Korean data collectors, fearing that their views might offend the data collectors they prefer not to tell them the real problems faced by them. Also, due to cultural values, it is considered rude for Korean people to approach someone they do not know. Since international residents in Korea have better understanding of national and cultural differences compared to tourists in general, it will be very helpful to identify dimensioning and revealing perceived travel experiences from their perspectives. Due to these factors, the topic of "Travel Experiences of International Residents" is highly under-researched in Korea. Lack of research on other

nationalities decreases the likelihood of attracting researchers interested in studying about other foreign nationals, because of the lack of supporting literature.

Concerning the studies, both at home and abroad, it is indicated that the in-depth analysis of travel experience is an important field of study. In the western academia, a wide range of literature has been published on the topic of tourist experiences in various western journals, books, and in working papers however the field is under-researched (Larsen, 2007) and it needs further study (Selstad, 2007). The existing studies in the academia do stress the importance of holiday experiences at the destination, but there is not much literature written on what are the experiences that can engage the visitors and how we can understand and interpret them better. This study will fill the gap in existing literature and try to shed light on those experiences and provide the theoretical and analytical framework through which the holiday experiences can be better understood.

III. Methodology

The qualitative research, in particular, focus interviews methods were used in this study because the research question required the kind of data that could provide rich information about the participants. Focus group interview is an appropriate to capture public perceptions and to accomplish it in an interactive manner that can provide deeper meaning (Mazhenova et al, 2016). Survey questionnaires can answer the "how much" questions only. Moreover if the respondents are asked "why" questions in the questionnaire, the given choices are imposed on them. It is not like that the respondent has his or her choice, he or she must choose from the given answers. In this kind of setting the researcher's view on a situation is imposed on the respondent (Veal, 2006). It is also argued (Ryan, 1995) that the research that denies the opportunity for holiday makers to speak of their own experiences in their own words is limited. The

aim of this study is to understand and analyze the experiences of the international residents, and experience cannot be quantified. In other words, we do not want to measure how much they have experienced, but we want to understand what they have experienced. This is an exploratory study and these kinds of exploratory studies are best done with small number of respondents (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006). The study involved participants from across the world. The participants were from different countries, cultures, and races. Out of 15 participants, 9 were male and 6 were female. For more information the participants please refer to Table 3. Majority of the participants were Anglo-Saxon (7), other races involves were Africans (2), Asians (4), Hispanic (1), and South Asian (1). The participants were selected by using purposive sampling technique. Most of the participants have lived in Korea for quite a while and travelled extensively throughout Korea. These participants have been to all the famous tourist destinations. Rather than interviewing randomly many people whose holiday experiences are limited to a few destinations only, interviewing 15 people who had thorough knowledge about Korean tourism makes this study to be appropriate and sufficient.

Table 3. A brief summary of the participants

Sr. No	Gender	Age	Nationality
1	Male	29	American
2	Male	35	Canadian
3	Male	26	American
4	Female	28	Mexican
5	Male	26	Chinese
6	Female	24	Lithuanian
7	Male	33	El Salvadorian
8	Female	25	Thai
9	Female	27	South African
10	Female	26	Russian
11	Male	28	Indian
12	Male	26	Nigerian
13	Male	28	Cameroonian
14	Male	26	Finnish
15	Female	28	Chinese

This study used semi-structured interviews to collect data on experiences. Semi-structured interviews are used when a focused exploration about a specific topic is needed. Interviews are considered to be useful for getting the story behind a participant's experience (McNamara, 1999). The primary aim of interviewing is to generate data which gives an insight into people's "experiences" (Silverman, 1993). Interviews provide in-depth information about the experiences and viewpoints of a participant on a particular topic (Turner, 2010).

Data collected from the participants in form of audio files (MP3 Format), when transcribed into text format (RFT), yielded almost 36,000 words. The transcribed interviewed were imported in the software and were coded not only once but three times. The coding process of qualitative data solely depends on the judgment and analytical skill of the researcher. The Nvivo just executes the command and allocates the text a code which is pre-defined by the researcher. In qualitative analysis, coding refers to organizing and managing data (Gibbs 2007). Coding is central to the research that uses interviews as input. The codes start to emerge in the mind of researcher in data collection stage. In qualitative research, there is no separation of data collection and data analysis (Gibbs, 2007). The three tier coding that was applied in the data analysis namely *Open Coding*, *Axial Coding* and *Selective Coding*, was proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990).

Open Coding involves the researcher breaking down the data into parts and looking for similarities and differences. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), through this process, one's assumptions about the phenomena are questioned and explored, leading to new discoveries. *Axial Coding* takes place when a category is studied in detailed and compared with another. *Selective Coding* results in the emergence of theory.

IV. Findings and Discussion

The qualitative study to explore the travel experiences of international residents at Korean destinations revealed that the people and the physical places play an important role in shaping the travel experience. A key finding, which emerged from the data analysis, is that the nature of travel experiences can be understood by placing perceived travel experiences on a 2 dimensional frame. In other words, the complex nature of travel experiences can be explained by their proximity to people: The human interactive dimension and places: the spatial dimension. In Figure 1, the travel experiences are placed on a grid that can simplify the holiday experiences. There is some area on the grid which is overlapping. The overlapped area is cultural experience at Korean destinations.

According to the grid shown above, some people want their holidays in the proximity of people and some people want their holidays in the proximity of places. The various dots shown in the figure represent the kind of experiences an international

resident seeks when he or she goes on holidays. Key findings are discussed below.

A. Spatial Experience

Cluster on the left side of the grid shown in figure 1 is comprised of 4 experiences; representing Environment, Adventure, Heritage and Romantic experiences. These dots are placed high on the spatial dimension. The reason for placing them high is, that international residents who seek these experiences during travel, does not want to be in the proximity of people. He or she goes out with a few people or sometimes alone and wants to spend more time close to tourist attractions. It is worth noting that the tourist attractions that fall in the domain of spatial experiences are tangible physical structures. These attractions are either natural or manmade. This part of the study will explain the travel experiences of the holidays in left hand side cluster in more details with the support from the data collected for the study.

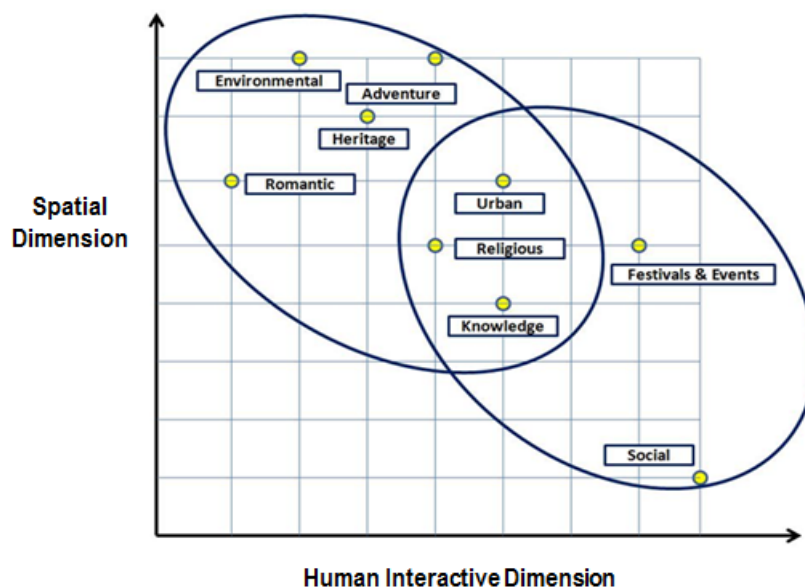


Figure 1. Human Interactive and Spatial Dimensions of Travel Experiences

1. Environmental

Environmental experiences are the experiences that take place in the natural setting of a destination. The tourism activities of international residents basically draw on the natural environment as the primary attraction (Kuenzi and McNeely 2008). Nature based tourism attractions has been the motive of traveling since the beginning of modern civilization. Natural and scenic beauty of a place has inspired many people to venture out to faraway places. Environmental tourism or nature based tourism is one the most popular form of tourism. This form of tourism has experienced a boom in Korea in the last decade, making mountain hiking one of the most popular leisure activities in Korea. Korea has been successful in harnessing its natural resources like mountains to market this form of tourism. Mountains located in the middle of the cities are also very popular destinations for outdoor leisure recreation. Since Korea has lots of natural resources, this kind of tourism has huge potential to grow in future. The data collected from the interviews show that the international residents in Korea are keen at spending holidays at natural attractions like beaches, mountains and on islands. As one of the participants said, "Natural things attract me more. By natural things I mean natural sites like falls, the mountains, view of landscape, sea shore and beaches." (male, 28). This shows the power of natural environment. People living in a particular region are always curious to go and visit the landscape that is different from their own. A lot of foreigners go to natural attractions because the landscapes in their home countries are different from Korea. One of the participants said:

Mountains and sea could be really attractive destinations for people like me. I live in a place which is flat; no sea and no mountains. That is the reason why I choose the place with mountains and sea. I prefer mountains and sea than other destinations. (male, 26)

In the above mentioned interview, the participant maintained that the reasons why he chooses mountains and beaches, is that he does not have them in his

own country. It is also worth noting that people who grew up in a particular landscape have the tendency to experience the same kind of landscape where they grew up. After living in a place which is different from their own, people travel to the landscape which is similar to their own. One participant from El Salvador said:

I enjoy the beaches in Busan. I love Busan because back home I live just 20 minutes away from the beach. I am very used to go to the beach all the time. Here (in Suwon) I need to be in contact with water. One of the best times I had here was at the beaches in Busan. (male, 28)

This shows that natural attractions can attract the people who are not used to them and also those who are very used to them. People seeking these experiences are more inclined to indulge with the physical characteristics of the place itself.

2. Adventure

Human desires to experience the unknown initiates adventure (Quinn 1990). In simple terms adventure can be defined as a recreational activity in outdoor setting which involves some sort of skill. However this definition is very broad and vague. In context of this study, I think the adventure can be an outdoor activity about which the participant is uncertain about the outcome and it involves some sort of risk. Traveling to a destination which is not familiar to the traveler can also be an adventure as one participant from the United States said:

I have been going out with other foreigners. We are just kind of exploring. Nobody really knows where we are going or what we are going to see. It is kind of hit or miss, like -let's walk this way and we see something. (male, 26)

It is clear from the above narrative that a casual or loose approach associated with the outdoor activity in the unknown place is part of adventure. Korean outdoors has been considered safe by most of the international residents living in Korea. The relative safer environment at the destinations makes Korea an ideal place for those who want to seek adventurous

experience. In my opinion, the friendly behavior of local people at the outdoor destinations like mountains is praiseworthy. It is commonly believed that men are more likely to seek adventurous experiences than women. However, the propensity of taking risk depends on individual personality and character not on the gender as one female participant said:

Last time, I spent night on a mountain. My friend and I are a little bit crazy and we wanted to have some new experience. We spent whole night talking and looking at the stars. (female, 28)

Since the adventure is an activity in outdoor setting, I have put it in the grid (Figure 1) where involvement of places is higher and usually the involvement of people is lower. If there are many people going out seeking adventure, the uncertainty of outcome decreases and so does the meaning attached to it. People seeking outdoor adventurous experiences need more space as they encompass land, air and water based activities and in some cases mixture of land, air and water (Pomfret, 2006). The most common type of adventure activity in Korea is mountain hiking. Stakeholders in tourism have realized the potential of a mountain as a tourist attraction. The most popular mountain, mentioned by participants is Mount Seorak in Gangwan-Do. Everybody has heard about it. They have either visited it or going to visit it. Another famous mountain mentioned by the participants is Mount Bukhan. Mount Bukhan is popular among the tourists because of its convenient location and accessibility. Being located in Seoul, it is easy and convenient to do some sort of adventurous activity like hiking on Mount Bukhan. Unfortunately, other forms of adventurous tourism are not popular among the tourists in Korea.

3. Romantic

The romantic experience has been placed on the grid in high proximity with spaces and less involvement of people. A romantic experience is an experience that a couple seeks when they go travel. The motive behind this experience is to get close to the loved ones and spend some moments away from the everyday's

chaotic environment. People out to seek this experience prefer to spend time in proximity with natural attractions (refer to Figure 1). In context of Korea, beaches in Busan and Jeju Island are considered the paradise for romantic experience seekers. Jeju Island is considered as a romantic gateway in Korea. The beaches, mountains and other small islands around it make it a perfect destination for those who want to get closer to their loved ones. This kind of holidays has the potential to strengthen the relationship between the lovers as one participant said:

I usually travel with my wife. When my wife is with me, I like to share the moments with my wife (male, 28).

People seeking romantic experiences on holiday seem to enjoy the natural places and do not want to be disturbed by other people. Romantic experience refers to doing things and exploring destination together with the loved ones. Romantic experience seekers tend to do many things together with their loved ones. Another reason could be the understanding between the couples, reduces the chances of conflict at the destinations. If there are many people involved in decision making, there could be a clash of interests and the whole holiday can be spoiled as one female participant said:

I like to travel more with my boyfriend because if you go with your friends, sometimes you depend on them and especially on their mood, especially the girls. If they (girls) are in bad mood, they don't want to talk. They want something else. It is better to travel with one person (female, 26).

Here the participant has mentioned the problem of traveling with her other female friends. The participant prefers to travel with her boyfriend because she must have experienced the sudden change in mood of her friend which had spoiled the whole holiday. People want to be free when they go on vacation. They want to be independent.

4. Heritage

Heritage includes all natural and manmade places, areas buildings or sites that have historical significance

(Kapiti Coast District Council, 1999). In simple words, any structure manmade or natural, which is significant to the people living there, is a heritage. Since the heritage is more inclined towards the place, I have placed it closer to the spatial sector and far from the social sector (see figure 1). In Korea, the famous places for heritage experiences include old palaces, museums and other structures built in the olden days. Heritage experience is a part of urban experience, but the difference is the significance of the place. Visiting a nightclub in Gangnam is not a heritage experience, whereas visiting Geongbuk Palace is. In simple words heritage experience seekers are more focused on the historic centers of the country. In Korea one of the most significant heritage sites is DMZ lines. DMZ (De Militarized Zone) is an area on 38th parallel, bordering North Korea and South Korea. For an international visitor DMZ is of a great significance because of historical reasons. On DMZ one of the participants said:

I think they must see (places in Korea) are DMZ Lines. DMZ is very famous throughout the world. It is the most heavily guarded area in the world. Just be nice kind of get there and see what is actually happening. (male, 26)

Another famous heritage sites in Korea are UNESCO World Heritage Sites, which include palaces of Korean kings. The palaces attract visitors who are out to learn more about the older generations by observing the places that were handed over to next generation as one of the participants said:

I would like to see some of the palaces again and the Seoul City bus tour. The architecture of Seoul palaces is really great. The palaces are different and majestic. I really like seeing that because you can see Korean architecture. (female, 27).

People like to visit those historical sites because they tell a lot about the history. For tourists, it is a great experience to observe the historical site and draw a picture of history of the place in his or her mind.

B. Human Interactive Experience

Travel experiences in the human interactive domain are those that have high social involvement. The main motive of people seeking these experiences is to get closer to other people. In the era of modernization, people are busy making their living. Since man is by nature a social animal, he or she seeks the company of other human beings to socialize with each others. Even though the importance of places cannot be ruled out, these experiences are more inclined to social dimensions. Traveling for the purpose of making new friends, meeting people with same interest and preferences are the main motives for going out on holidays. Korean society is a collective society which has lots of room for foreigners and Korean Government is also taking lots of initiative to integrate the foreigners and the local Koreans by the virtue of festivals and events. Modern societies face many problems like violence, exclusion, nationalist radicalism, religious fundamentalism (Herrero et al. 2007) and the experiences in social domain in the form of festivals and events and other social experiences have the potential to bring the different societies closer and resolve the conflicts by understanding each other.

In the grid, I have placed the two kinds of experiences (figure 1) in the social domain. The one being: festivals and events and the other experiences are social experiences. People travel for various reasons to get social experiences. Some foreigners travel to meet and communicate with Koreans and some foreigners travel to meet people from their own countries. These experiences are explained in details below.

1. Festivals and Events

The term “festival” in English is derived from the Latin word *festivitas*, which means a social gathering for purpose of celebrating some event (Waterman 1998). Festivals can be in the form of arts events, community celebrations or any political or commercial event designed to promote some idea or product (Richards, 2007). Since the festivals and

events can be better enjoyed with the company of other people and the success of the festivals depend on the enthusiasm of the local community, I have put them in the social domain (Figure 1). Festivals do not rely on the physical development of the destination (Gursoy et al, 2004). Some of the most famous festivals in Korea that draw international visitors are Busan Film Festival, Mud Festival, Lantern Festival, Kimchi Making Festival etc. These festivals are promoted by some Government or Non Government Organizations to bring the communities on the common stage so that they can socially integrate with each other. One participant who was impressed with the festivals said:

I love Busan Film Festival. You can see lots of movies there (female,25).

Another participant who was impressed by a unique experience at one festival said:

The Ice Fishing Festival (must see event according to her) in the winter. I went there in January. There is a lake which is frozen in winter and they made a hole and we can catch fish. I think that is must see because it is new and fresh. (female, 25)

Festivals and events in a particular social setting have a huge potential in drawing people who want to socialize with others. Since the festivals can attract large audiences, festivals and events can play a major role in attaining economic and social goals (Herrero et al., 2007). When people attend a festival, they spend a considerable amount of money at the site, helping local economy.

2. Social

Social experiences, by traveling mean to those experiences where the sole purpose of the travel is to meet people. In the grid (figure 1), I have placed these experiences at the extreme right bottom of the grid, very close to the social dimension. When people go out to seek these experiences, the places are not very important. People can travel to meet at any place but the motive is not to appreciate the place but to appreciate the company of people. In this kind of holiday experiences, people themselves are the

tourism offerings or the tourism products. There is a common bond between the participants or the experience seekers which brings them on a common stage. An outing by the members of a special interest clubs is a typical example of social experience. One participant explained his social experience through traveling like this:

In Korea, basically I travel with my friends and classmates. Sometimes I travel with the people that are not from my school, but it is not the general rule. It is more like that we go and they join us. People from the other universities join our group. I also have other friends that I met from my other interests. I dance Latino, and by doing that I met a Korean community of dancers and they sometimes arrange trips and we sometimes go with them. (male, 33)

In a country like Korea, where the society is formed on the fundamental principal of "living collectively", there are many clubs and associations of people who travel on special days with people who share the same interest. For people, seeking these experiences there is no importance in "I", "I" becomes "We" and all the activities are done together on collective basis not on individual basis. Another important discovery in the domain of social experiences is the role of social network websites. These websites are the future of marketing. People from all walks of life have contacts online and they almost do everything online. One of the most interesting findings in the study is a website called www.couchsurfing.org. Members of this website offer free place to sleep to other members. These kinds of innovations have changed the face of modern lodging industry. People do not need to book expensive hotels anymore. You make friends online and you can visit their countries and they offer you free place to sleep. The website has its strong presence in Korea as one participant said:

Usually when I travel I check www.couchsurfing.org. It is a group of people on the Internet. You can ask people can I come and stay in your place. Like can I come and visit your house and sleep at your place. I really enjoy this webpage. Before I travel, I try to find places where I can sleep. I have tried it in Busan and in Seoul. (male, 26)

These new advances in the information technology have helped people living in the different parts of globe to communicate with each other. People no longer have to worry about their accommodations at the destinations. This new form of social experience seekers are the travelers who are not concerned about the physical aspects of the destination, all they want to experience is the company of people.

C. Cultural Experience

The area in the grid that is overlapping is common between left cluster and right cluster. It is called as cultural experience (figure 1) because people seeking experiences in this cluster are more or less equally inclined to people and spaces. Therefore, places and people are equally important part of a cultural experience. For example; if you think that only people are needed to provide a cultural experience, then think of 'Korea Towns'. These are the places set up by Koreans around the world. But a visit to a Korea Town in the Manhattan is totally different than visiting Seoul. Even though the shops are same and the shopkeepers and the buyers are Koreans, you will not have the same feeling because the "Korea Towns" are not set up in Korea. So the importance of place cannot be ruled out. Places alone cannot provide cultural experiences to the visitors. People visit places so that they can interact with locals as well. Since there is a strong link between the cultural consumption and the education, young travelers, particularly the students show keen interest in this form of experience (Richards, 2007). Cultural attraction plays a major role in both the construction of perceived image of destination and supporting tourism. Tourists travel to see different architecture, taste different food and experience a different culture from their homeland (Wu & Kim, 2017). In the data that I collected, a female participant from Europe, who is an exchange student in Korea, said:

I like to travel because I want to know about the people, the culture and to see where they live, how they live, and to see new places to widen my

horizon, and of course take pictures and have fun. (Female, 24)

In the above excerpt, the female visitor indicated that she wants to get cultural experience by learning more and having fun. She mentioned the places and the people as well. This indicates that the cultural experiences are in harmony with spatial dimensions and human interactive dimensions as well. In this study, there are 3 kinds of experiences that a holiday maker seeks when his motive is to consume cultural product. These are called - religious experience, entertainment and knowledge which are shown in figure 1. People seek to explore the cultural practices of the local people to learn about them. The effect of Hallyu on Korean tourism industry can be understood by this cluster, which explains the reason why so many foreigners travel to watch a Korean artiste performing in Korea. Watching the performance on TV and watching it live are not the same. When you watch it on TV you miss the setting, the atmosphere and the enthusiasm of other fans. You can learn a lot of things from books, TV, Internet and other form of media, but actually traveling to learn is different experience. For example you can learn many things about The Great Wall of China from different sources, but when you actually travel to it, the knowledge acquired is much more different than it is from other sources.

For these very reasons the religion, the urban and the knowledge experiences are overlapping because the people and the places both play an important role. The overlapping cluster, which we call Cultural Experience, is explained in more details below.

1. Urban

Tourism is one of the most salient features of major cities around the world. All the major cities around the world are known for their touristic attractions. In Korea, being the biggest city, Seoul has the honor to offer youthful urban experiences to the visitors. In the interview data, the word "Seoul" was mentioned for more than 80 times. This shows the popularity of Seoul among the tourists visiting

Korea. For tourists staying in Seoul, visiting a touristic attraction is very common. In context with the spatial dimensions; the iconic 63 Building and Seoul Tower are the two most commonly visited places in Seoul. Whereas in context of social dimensions; Myeongdong and Gangnam areas are the most visited places in Seoul. Insadong is regarded as a special area of interest. People living in Seoul are themselves tourism products. Tourists thrive to Seoul to experience the dynamic urban lifestyle of Seoul. Urban tourism is a mixture of arts, architecture and culture. That means the urban experience provides a cultural experience and it is in the proximity of both people and places. People visiting Seoul are fascinated by the use of technology in public areas, high rise buildings and shopping centers, which all together offer a unique cultural experience to the visitors. One participant said:

Metropolitan Seoul city is awesome. My country does not even have subway system. It does not have skyscrapers - only 15. And here they (skyscrapers) are everywhere. So it is like a traveling experience that is different from my own country. (Female, 24)

Popularity of Seoul, especially among the young foreigners can be explained partly by its nightlife culture. Many people regard Seoul as must see destination in Korea. About the nightlife of Seoul, one participant said:

Some places in Seoul have a unique vibe. When you go out in Hongdae or someplace like that, it is cool because all the bars has different theme from each other. Whereas anywhere else you go the bars are the same.

Urban tourism in Seoul has a lot of things to offer to the visitors. Being the capital city in Korea, Seoul's historical, economical, political and cultural assets (tangible or intangible) makes it the number one urban tourism destination in Korea. It should also be kept in mind that Seoul is also the most diverse city in Korea, where you can find people from all around the globe.

2. Religious

In the modern era, it is difficult to define the religion in simple terms. According to Richards and Fernandes (2007), religion is a system of beliefs in a higher being that are held with faith and commitment. Traveling for religious experiences means a visit to religious ceremonies and conferences or a visit to any religious center (Rinschede, 1992). In figure 1, the religious experiences have been placed with almost the same proximity from the places and the people because both places and people form an integral part of the religious experience. Imagine going to an empty temple, or meeting a group of monks on a street. What would you think? Do you feel the religious experience? Perhaps no! If you want the religious experience, you actually have to travel the religious place and see what activities and practices people perform at the place. However it may be noted that you do not have to be a believer to have a religious experience. A tourist might be attracted to a religious site because of its architecture, some kind of art collection, association of the site with a historical event or some kind of spectacular view from the terrace (Nolan and Nolan, 1992). According to Korean constitution, Korea is a secular country, yet the Buddhism used to be state religion in the old days. The form of Buddhism that is practiced in Korea is different from the other countries. There are lots of Buddhist temples in Korea, which draw lots of visitors. Some of the most renowned Buddhist temples are located in the Southern part of Korean peninsula. One participant in the interview had mentioned Daegu in her interview. She said "A place near Daegu. I don't remember the name of the place. There is a famous Buddha in the mountains. I recommend it to all my friends." (female, 28).

In Gyeongju, the Bulguk Sa and Sokkuram Grotto are the most famous examples of Buddhist art and architecture. These two and Tripitaka Koreana (a collection of wooden block Buddhist scriptures) are UNESCO World Cultural Heritage. These temples draw lots of international visitors. One participant who says she is fascinated by the Buddhism in Korea

because they do not have the beautiful Buddhist temples in her country. She said “The holy places to go here are temples. We have Churches (in Europe) but if you are in Korea, you go to see temples, to see different forms of Buddha and the mountains.” (female, 24). For a Western visitor, who has grown up in a Christian society, Buddhist temples in Korea have something unique to offer. These temples not only tell about the contemporary Korean society’s religious practices but also the religious practices and beliefs of ancient people who had built those temples.

3. Knowledge

Traveling is learning. Throughout the history, people have been traveling to faraway places in search of new knowledge. Traveling is a relatively easier form of learning. You can read a lot of things about Pyramids of Giza, but when you visit them personally, the knowledge you gain is much more authentic. When a traveler goes to a place that is different from his own, he learns lots of new things. Whether the travelers agree or not, they do learn a lot of things about people or places. In the modern era, the electronic media provides countless resources of learning new things, but for some contemporary travelers, learning itself is a sole motive for their holidays. Imagine the difference between learning about Korean culture on a TV channel and actually going to Korea and learning about Korean culture. There is a lot of difference between the two. In figure 1, I have placed the knowledge experience in the overlapping cluster i.e. cultural experiences. People are kind of curious about other people and places. They want to know how other people’s life different from their own and how other places are different from those they already know.

In the data most of the participants acknowledged that whenever they travel, they learn lots of new things. One of the participants said:

If you do not travel in your spare time and stay home, you will have the mentality that Koreans do not really interact with foreigners. The more you

travel, the more you understand the culture. If I had not been to Everland, I would not have known that Koreans also employ foreigners at touristic sites. So my perception about Korea in that aspect really changed a lot. (Male, 26)

The above participant maintained that he would not have learned about it, if he had not gone out. Korea is a dynamic country and Korean society is undergoing a dynamic change. By traveling you can observe this. It is the best way to learn the culture. Another participant said:

I travel to understand the culture. In Korea, I study here and I need to communicate with Koreans. Sometimes it is difficult for us to understand Korean people’s activities or actions. Through traveling we can kind of understand the things they do and understand their culture. It makes easy for us to communicate with them and helps with study. I travel to seek experience. If you want to improve your ability and knowledge, I think it is important to get more experience including travel. I travel to learn new things. (Female, 28)

Traveling constitutes an integral part of international students’ learning experiences in Korea. Especially for those, who are learning Korean language, they travel to learn new dialects and new cultural practices.

D. Negative Experiences

1. Spatial Dimension

As mentioned earlier, experiences in the spatial domain are those that are more inclined towards places, rather than people. Korea has lots of natural and manmade tourist attractions that provide the spatial experiences to the visitors. Despite having all the resources, some of the participants complained about their negative experiences at the destinations. A negative experience in spatial domain occurs when the physical characteristics of an attraction fails to satisfy the needs or not up to the expectations of the visitors. When a visitor complains about a negative experience in the spatial context, he or she evaluates

the physical attributes of the destination with the other destinations, most probably the one that he or she has already visited. The negative aspects of travel experiences in spatial domain are discussed below.

Lack of variety

Destinations in Korea that fall in the spatial domain are lack variety. Most of the Korean destinations either look the same or they are too similar that a tourist cannot distinguish between them. This is especially in the case of Buddhist temples and the palaces. As one participant said:

They (Korean destinations) are not diverse. Every place is similar. There is nothing new, nothing exciting for me. Actually they are not the same, but many common things. So if I go to a destination, it does not feel like a new place. It feels the same everywhere. (female, 25)

I think because of the homogeneity of Koreans, the architecture in the old buildings is the similar to each other. In order to overcome this problem, the destinations must represent themselves in a way that they look a little bit different from the others. Another challenge being faced by Korean destinations that fall in the heritage category- museums, palaces and historic sites; is that at international level, they are historically not very important as compared to historical sites in other countries.

Concentration in one region

Another reason that destinations in Korea sometimes are not up to the expectations of the visitors is, that most of the destinations are concentrated in one region. Seoul being the economic and political capital of Korea, most of the tourist attractions are concentrated in or around Seoul. Too much concentration in one region has its pros and cons as well. If the destinations are closely located, people can save time getting to the destinations, but on the other hand if they are concentrated in one region, visitors do not have the chance to see other places. Most of the international tourists in Korea prefer to stay in Seoul only, because most of the destinations are concentrated in Seoul.

They do not have the chance to visit other parts of Korea because Seoul offers everything.

2. Human Interactive Dimension

Negative experiences in human interactive domain are those experiences that occur because of people. People, being part of the tourism product in social domain can sometimes be the cause of negative experience. Korean's friendliness is no doubt the most important asset in attracting the visitors in this domain; there are some participants whose holiday experiences turned sour because of the attitude and presence of people. The causes of negative experiences in this domain are discussed below.

Attitude

Koreans are generally educated and sophisticated people. They do respect your privacy and try to maintain distance. But not all the people are same. Some of the respondents mentioned they have had bad experience because of the bad and negative attitude of the senior citizens as one participant said, "Every now and then some of the older generation Koreans will give me an old stink eye." (male, 25). The respondent was mentioning that because he is American, some of the Koreans look at him in dubious way and give him a feeling that he is not welcomed here. Another example about the attitude of the people was highlighted by one female respondent. She said:

Sometimes they (Korean) have negative attitude. I have a Western boyfriend and I look like Korean because I am Asian. When we go together we hold hands. People stare at us. Once at subway station, one elderly man came and swore at me. He used the bad language. I think this attitude must be changed. (female, 25)

There are other examples in the data that indicate that some of the older generation Koreans behave in a way that can turn the good experience in to a bad experience. This was mention by several participants who are from Asian origin.

Congestion

Another issue that needs serious attention of stakeholders is the congestion at the destinations. Korea is a densely populated country. As I have mentioned earlier, Koreans like to do many activities collectively. This poses a challenge for foreigners in social domain. Since Korean follow a similar lifestyle, their leisure habits are also similar. In other words most Korean go on vacation at the same time. Concentration of too many people at the same time at a particular destination makes a destination lesser popular among foreigners who are used to follow a more individualist lifestyle. One participant who did not like the destination because of too many people said:

We went to 63 Building and could not go to the observation deck because it was too busy. There are always many people wherever you go. We went to a club in Busan and there were so many people that we could not even walk. Everyone was pressed too tight. It was ridiculous. I did not know where those people came from (female, 27).

Other visitors are part of the attraction itself, but if there are too many people, the visitor kind of feels insecure and congested. As mentioned earlier this problem occurs because the destinations are concentrated in one region.

3. Cultural Dimension

The negative experiences at the destination within the cultural domain occur when the hosts and the guests are culturally far away from each other. People have unpleasant experiences when there is either a communication barrier or lack of understanding about the culture of the other party. It is difficult to overcome this limitation in short span of time. The reasons for negative experiences in this domain are discussed below.

Communication

Communication has long been an issue with the promotion of Korean destinations. Since the majority of visitors at the destinations are Koreans, the

foreigners sometimes have hard time in communicating or getting the information from the help desk as one participant said, "I don't speak Korean and they sometimes don't speak English, so the communication sometimes is frustrated" (male, 33). Even though Korean Government has provided a lot of resources that can help the foreigners to get information not only in English, also in other widely spoken international languages, there is still a lot of room for improvement. This problem is more serious at lesser popular destinations, where not many foreigners visit, or the destinations that not in the periphery of Seoul. There is a need to improve the signage and establish more information desks that can speak multiple languages so that they can provide basic information to the visitors.

Lack of understanding of other cultures

In order to make Korea an ideal travel destination, the stakeholders in Korean tourism need to understand the other cultures. Due to lack of understanding of culture, Korean hosts sometimes fail to provide a guest the experience he or she has anticipated. One of the participants who feels that people in tourism sector must understand the culture of the guests, said:

Some of my friends are Muslim and they are strict and they only eat at Hallal restaurant. It is a big problem to travel in Korea. At home it is okay but when they travel, it is a big problem. They only eat Bibimbap, Daeng Jang Chiggay, Sun-Dubu Chiggay (kinds of Korean food with no meat) kind of stuff. When we go to a restaurant where beef or chicken is served, they cannot eat. (female, 25)

Similar problem has been mentioned by other participant who is from India. He said:

Since I am a vegetarian, it is a big problem here. When a vegetarian person is here, he hardly gets something to eat. He just has to depend on fruit all the time and bread. Everything has meat in it. When I have time I bring my some sandwiches from home. I have to depend on the fruit, milk and bread. This problem is quite big for me and for my other friends. (male, 28)

As we can see, there are several problems in cultural

domain that need to be addressed. It is not easy to find a solution for these problems in a short run. People employed in tourism sector should be educated about the different cultural values of the visitors, so that the inconvenience or the negative experiences can be minimized. If these problems can be solved, definitely Korea will be able to stage a memorable experience at the destination which will result into recommendations to others and re-visitation.

V. Conclusion and Implications

The enthusiasm of international tourists to travel and revenue generated by international tourism are growing at a staggering rate. Tourism industry in Korea has emerged as one the most important segments for revenue generation. However, the marketing campaigns initiated by DMOs (Destination Marketing Organizations) have been successful in attracting international tourists who come to Korea for a short time of period and Korean only. The lack of proper understanding of perceived travel experiences of international residents at the destinations has been an obstacle in diversifying the Korean inbound tourism market. This study was conducted to understand the anticipated travel experiences of the international residents so that the customized travel experiences can be staged for them.

This qualitative study was used on international residents living in Korea using in-depth semi-structured interviews as the methods of data collections and harnessing CAQDAS (Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software) NVivo for data analysis. The results showed that the best way to understand the travel experiences of the international residents, is to look at them through the 2-D framework namely-human interactive and spatial dimensions. The travel experiences are either inclined to the human interactive dimension - festivals and events, and social experiences, or inclined to spatial dimension - Environment, Adventure, Heritage and Romantic. However, there

is overlapping area which is named as Cultural Experience i.e. experiences equally inclined to human interactive dimension and the spatial dimension.

By looking the travel experiences in this 2-D framework, we can have better understanding of the perceived travel experiences of the international residents. The study also highlighted the challenges faced by the Korean tourism industry in staging these experiences.

The findings of this study recommend some useful implications for international residents in Korea. First, destination marketers should create different kinds of marketing strategies for international residents because they are not identical but rather various with different motivations for traveling in Korea may vary in socio-demographics, travel characteristics, and destination preference (Kim. J. & Ritchie, B., 2012). Second, since travel experiences positively influence satisfaction, marketers should work to meet tourist expectations. Consequently, providing good travel experiences is an effective tool to increase the satisfaction level and to encourage re-visitation and recommendation, thus ultimately reducing marketing costs.

VI. Limitations

There are two limitations to this research. First, the results should be verified using more representation sample if possible in terms of age, occupation and nationality. Second, since the in-depth interviews were conducted with no prior information regarding the questions given to the interviewees, the interviewees may have forgotten potentially important details of their tourism experiences. The depth and clarity of their responses may have been increased if they were given an opportunity to reflect on their travel memories as opposed to providing immediate feedback. This study provides the conceptual, theoretical and practical framework in understanding international residents' needs, demands and preferences in a way

so that adequate measures can be taken and appropriate marketing campaigns can be formulated. It is also worth noting that the proposed framework is at its pre-mature stage and needs further attention from scholars so that the limitations can be overcome.

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