REPRESENTATIONS OF AUSTRALIA'S TOURISM DESTINATION IMAGE: REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN NARRATION THEMES AND TOPICS BY KOREAN TRAVEL AGENTS IN AUSTRALIA

Hong Chul Lee & Michael J. Gross

School of Management

University of South Australia

Adelaide 5000, Australia

Hong.Lee@unisa.edu.au

Michael.Gross@unisa.edu.au

REPRESENTATIONS OF AUSTRALIA'S TOURISM DESTINATION IMAGE: REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN NARRATION THEMES AND TOPICS BY KOREAN TRAVEL AGENTS IN AUSTRALIA

ABSTRACT

Representational narration can represent a useful tool in the interpretation of destination image formation. The purpose of this study is to examine regional differences in expressions of key themes and topics regarding images of Australia as a tourism destination represented by Korean travel agents in Australia. This study employed content analysis using NVivo in exploring the destination image of Australia through representational narrations by Korean travel agents in three major Australian cities. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 32 travel agents in 32 travel agencies in Sydney, Brisbane and Adelaide specialising in inbound travel from Korea to Australia. Representational narrations by Korean travel agents in Australia are used to reflect the views of Korean tourists visiting Australia. Significant differences were found regarding image features. Firstly, agents in Sydney commonly described the natural environment and native animals whereas Brisbane agents discussed adventure and outdoor activities and Adelaide agents were strongly reminiscent of study, comfort and relaxing. Secondly, there were significant differences in motivation for visiting these three cities: new experiences and learning (Sydney), exploration and activities for pleasure (Brisbane), and visiting friends and relatives (Adelaide). Thirdly, different age groups preferred different cities: Sydney is inclusive of all age groups while Brisbane attracts relatively young age groups and Adelaide has mainly older visitors. Lastly, the use of the internet varied among the visitors to the three cities, with the internet used most often for travel to Brisbane. The findings may be useful to destination marketers to understand how Korean visitors perceive differences between Australian destinations.

Keywords: Tourism destination image, in-depth interviews, Korean travellers, Australia, regional differences

INTRODUCTION

Since destination image affects tourists' perceptions, feelings, travel behaviour and destination choice and these emotions are subjective towards even the same destination, the importance and awareness of the tourism destination image is commonly acknowledged (Chon, 1991; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gursoy & McCleary, 2004; Kim & Richardson, 2003). In addition, tourists' images of a destination are unique, constructed from their memories and imagination of that destination (Jenkins & McArthur, 1996). Due to the importance of this information, it is necessary to research destination image and is also beneficial to determine characteristics in order to evaluate destination images.

In recent decades, various tourism researchers (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001; Castelltort & Mader, 2009; Frias, Rodriguez & Castaneda, 2007; Govers, Go & Kumar, 2007) have emphasised that tourism destination image is a valuable concept, because a good understanding of tourists' perceived image enables destination marketers to attract potential tourists. Destination image has been created by providing tourists with available information, such as communication channels (e.g. TV,

magazines), physical channels (e.g. travel agents, tourism suppliers, travel information centres) and reference groups (Cho, Wang & Fesenmaier, 2002; Lee & Park, 2003). Furthermore, the development of the internet has revolutionised the communication environment and enables tourists to form their destination images effectively by integrating online promotion activities (Lee, 2009).

South Korea has become one of the principal outbound tourist generating countries in Asia and Pacific region in recent decades (Cho, 1998), since entirely removing overseas travel restrictions in January 1989. In addition, the Korean government turned its attention to developing tourism, following decades of fostering manufacturing (Ahn & Ahmed, 1994). Consequently, the number of Korean tourists travelling overseas has increased from 725,000 in 1988 to nearly 12 million in 2008 (KNTO, 2009). The reasons are an improved standard of living, increased disposable income and increased tourism demand are key characteristics of the present tourism environment in the Korean market (Ko, 2000). In 2009, Korea's top five outbound destinations were China, Japan, Thailand, the United States and the Philippines and Australia was the thirteenth preferred destination (Australia Tourism Commission, 2010). Concurrently, as an overseas holiday and pleasure travel destination, Korea is the 5th inbound market in Australia (Australian Tourism Commission, 2010) due to strong economic growth, the liberalisation of outbound travel regulations, the commencement of direct flights between the two countries, a favourable image of Australia, and the Australian Tourist Commission's effective promotions (Cho, 1998).

Despite the importance and impact on destination image formation by Korean tourists, past research on this issue has been limited, although Australia's destination image has been studied in some research (Huang & Gross, 2010; Murphy, 1999; Ross, 1993; Son & Pearce, 2005). While admitting the necessity of the research regarding destination image by Korean tourists towards Australia, research on the topic of Korean tourists travelling to Australia as destination formation are still in their infancy. Furthermore, destination image has been measured in various ways mainly using quantitative methods. In the tourism literature various studies used qualitative research methods (Huang & Gross, 2010; Kim & Jamal, 2007; Xiao & Mair, 2006), therefore, a theoretical understanding is needed to examine how destination image is formed by Korean tourists using qualitative research methods.

The purpose of this study is to examine regional differences in expressions of key themes and topics regarding images of Australia as a tourism destination represented by Korean travel agents in Australia. Specifically, this study aimed to achieve the following research objectives: 1) to investigate key themes and topics of representations of Australia's image narrated by Korean travel agents; 2) to investigate regional differences among three state capital cities (Sydney, Brisbane and Adelaide) in Australia in representative narrations recognised by Korean travel agents.

BACKGROUND

Theoretical application of tourism destination image

The concept of destination image has received considerable attention by researchers in tourism literature (Choi, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007; Frias et al, 2007; Gallarza, Saura & Garcia, 2002; Huang & Gross, 2010), however, due to the characteristics of the tourism product, such as complexity (Smith, 2005), intangibility (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991) and multidimensionality

(Gartner, 1993), Gallarza et al (2002) acknowledged that research on tourism destination image faces many difficulties when attempting to measure it. In spite of these difficulties, researchers have made efforts to propose a definition of destination image (Alhemoud & Armstrong, 1996; Gunn, 1972; Walmsley & Jenkins, 1984). Until the 1990s, it is noted that scholars defined destination image as the process of decision making (Alhemoud & Armstrong, 1996), simplified impressions (Mayo 1973), mental representation (Fridgen, 1987), travel experience process (Gunn, 1972) and a product of the mind (Walmsley & Jenkins, 1984). However, from the end of the 1990s researchers have tried a new approach to destination image. Gallarza et al (2002) emphasised tourism destination image should be defined as a more comprehensive theoretical framework and a conceptual model. The impact of the internet means the focus of the research trend in tourism destination images is internet related. Tourism destination images are becoming increasingly fragmented and ephemeral in nature (Governs et al, 2007). Destination image has been examined comprehensively due to its complex nature and its important role, however, research on the internet is still at an infancy stage (Choi et al, 2007).

Researchers Dilley (1986), Jenkins (1999) and Xiao and Mair (2006) adopted qualitative research methods in order to identify destination image. Dilley (1986) and Jenkins (1999) tried to introduce a new approach. Dilley (1986) analysed the images using brochures from 21 countries. All brochures were analysed and images were categorised according to the type of information. This study found clear regional patterns in the images projected with brochures. Jenkins (1999) suggested construct elicitation techniques, such as free-elicitation, photo elicitation, interactive interviews and focus group interviews to measure destination image as qualitative methods.

In tourism literature, research on representational narration is still in the infant stage. Xiao and Mair (2006) used representational narration methods identifying China as s tourism destination. They analysed tourism destination images of China using the representational narrations of thirty-five articles from twenty-four major English newspapers for five years (1999-2003). They used an inductive content analysis, which aims at identifying patterns and categories through a coding of the text for qualitative data analysis. Specifically, they identified the descriptors on cultural attractions of relics, heritage sites and historical remains in China. Moreover, China's stabled image was characteristically represented in 'the durable', 'the mysterious', 'the exotic' and 'the splendid'. The finding provides an alternative to the interpretation of representational narrations in the discourse regarding the portrayal of culturally different tourist destinations.

Australia's destination image has been studied in previous researches (Huang & Gross, 2010; Murphy, 1999; Ross, 1993; Son & Pearce, 2005). Ross (1993) and Murphy (1999) used backpackers' samples to identify Australia's destination image, however, their results were slightly different: Ross identified that that most prominent images were friendly, local residents, high quality tourist information, freely accessible accommodation and the destination's authenticity as Northern Australia's destination images. In contrast, Murphy pointed out natural attractions, friendly people, safety, climate, and language as Australia's major strengths in image. In addition, unique elements were kangaroos, the Great Barrier Reef, the Outback, Aboriginal culture, and Ayers Rock.

Huang and Gross (2010) and Son et al (2005) analysed Australia's destination image using multi-sensory components. The former identified destination images of Australia by using mainland Chinese tourists. They found that kangaroos and koalas, Australia's natural environment, and iconic attractions such as the Sydney Opera House were cognitive image

features, relaxing were affective image attributes and visual, auditory were multi-sensory image features. Son et al (2005) explored international students' images of Australia and indicated South American respondents had the most favourable impression of Australia as a tourist destination and Asian respondents had the least favourable impression.

Consequently, destination image has become a much more complex process than ever before due to the unique characteristics and proliferation of the internet. Various researchers noted that while the concept is widely used in the tourism context, it still requires a solid conceptual framework.

Factors influencing the formation of destination image

Several factors play a noteworthy role in the image formation process: stimulus factors and personal factors. Stimulus factors mention information sources or previous experiences, whereas personal factors are symbolised by motivations and socio-demographic characteristics (Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Based on their model, Beerli and Martin (2004) developed an advanced model including information sources and personal factors. In the same context, Cho et al (2002) built up a destination image formation process including virtual tours.

Specifically, according to Baloglu and McCleary (1999) and Beerli and Martinl (2004), travel motivations, past experiences, socio-demographic variables and information sources influence the formation of destination image in a visitor. Firstly, the majority of tourism motivations have revolved around the concepts of "pull" and "push" motivations (Crompton, 1979; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Secondly, past travel experiences may be more important and credible than other information sources (Fodness & Murray, 1999; Mazursky, 1989). The reason for this is that tourists who have experiences at a certain destination are more familiar than first time visitors, so the need to receive information from external sources becomes weaker. Thirdly, most image formation models have integrated socio-demographic variables as usual features (Friedmann & Lessig, 1986; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Although socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, education, income, occupation and marital status have been suggested as factors influencing image, age (Fridgen, 1987; Husbands, 1989) and level of education (Husbands, 1989) appeared to be major determinants of image. Fourthly, various information sources contribute to destination image formation (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004). Lastly, the significance of the internet as an information source has been well recognised in previous studies (Choi et al, 2007; Governs et al, 2007; Law, Leung & Wong, 2004).

Previous research indicated that most tourism industries had used brochures to promote travel related products (Holloway & Plant, 1992; Yamamoto & Gill, 1999). With the development of the internet in the 1990s many tourists utilised internet sources (Lee, 2009; Ryan, 2001) and as a result, strategies for distributing promotional messages have changed (Choi et al, 2007). Therefore, it is necessary to research and redefine the role of the internet in shaping destination image.

METHEDOLOGY

Data collection process

This study employed a series of in-depth personal interview techniques to obtain representational opinions, key themes and topics. Data for this study were collected from 32 agents in 32 Korean travel agencies specialising in inbound travel from Korea to Australia.

Table 1. Qualitative Data Sample

Location	Number of Sample
Sydney	19
Brisbane	8
Adelaide	5
Total	32

Representational narrations were used as a method of identifying the views held by Korean tourists through the travel agents who acted as the tourists' representatives. Before in-depth interviews were conducted, a pre-test for these interview questions was conducted and tested with five Korean academics. This test helped resolve any inadequacies before the administration of the instrument through focus group interview. Data for the main study were collected in three state capital cities in Australia: Sydney, Brisbane (including Gold Coast) and Adelaide.

Table 2. Sample Profile

N	Gender	Age	Position	Experience (Year)	Location	N	Gender	Age	Position	Experience (Year)	Location
1	Female	20's	G.M	3	Sydney	17	Female	20's	G.M	4	Sydney
2	Female	20's	G.M	4	Sydney	18	Male	40's	Director	11	Sydney
3	Male	50's	Owner	21	Sydney	19	Male	40's	Owner	15	Sydney
4	Female	30's	Director	8	Sydney	20	Male	30's	Director	10	Brisbane
5	Male	40's	G.M	11	Sydney	21	Male	30's	Owner	10	Brisbane
6	Female	30's	G.M	8	Sydney	22	Female	20's	G.M	5	Brisbane
7	Male	50's	Owner	28	Sydney	23	Female	30's	G.M	8	Brisbane
8	Female	30's	G.M	7	Sydney	24	Female	30's	G.M	7	Brisbane
9	Female	20's	G.M	5	Sydney	25	Female	20's	G.M	3	Brisbane
10	Female	30's	G.M	9	Sydney	26	Male	40's	Owner	10	Brisbane
11	Male	40's	Owner	17	Sydney	27	Male	40's	Owner	12	Brisbane
12	Female	20's	G.M	5	Sydney	28	Male	30's	Owner	8	Adelaide
13	Female	30's	G.M	6	Sydney	29	Female	40's	Director	6	Adelaide
14	Male	40's	Owner	12	Sydney	30	Male	40's	Owner	10	Adelaide
15	Male	40's	Owner	10	Sydney	31	Male	30's	G.M	5	Adelaide
16	Male	50's	Owner	15	Sydney	32	Male	30's	G.M	5	Adelaide

Sydney is the largest city in Australia and around 100,000 Korean residents live there. Sydney has been recognised as the most popular iconic symbol of Australia by Korean tourists. In Korea, Brisbane is renowned for various activities, especially ocean sports. Sydney and Brisbane have regular direct flights from Korea to Australia and as most Koreans chose Adelaide as VFR (visiting friends & relatives), a destination of immigration or the city in which to study, Adelaide

was selected as the last city. Thirty-two participants in Korean travel agencies were interviewed in these three Australian cities.

Data analysis

Qualitative data were analysed using NVivo 8.0 which provides tools for managing data records for browsing and coding categories accurately, and it helps to synthesise the researcher's ideas. NVivo was also used to assist data sorting and to categorise the quotes from each of the transcripts. Following this procedure, data were identified, categorised and coded as tree nodes. With the creation of these tree nodes, topics mentioned in the interviews were categorised into key themes to construct Australia's destination images. Based on the interviews, data indicating the representative narrations used in the structure of Australia's destination images were categorised and coded (Kim & Jamal, 2007) according to interview questions. To accomplish the research purpose, this study analysed 86 topics in the six key themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Categorisation of topics and key themes

Six decisive key themes and 86 topics were identified by 32 agents based on the representational narrations of Korean tourists to analyse data. These key themes were: representative images of Australia, travel motivations, past experiences, socio-demographic variables, other information sources and the internet sources. As can be seen in Appendices 1 - 6, these travel accounts selected for analysis have touched upon numerous images.

Regional differences among three state capital cities

Theme 1: Representative images of Australia

Representative images of Australia were generated primarily through the representational narrations by Korean travel agents and within this key theme 26 topics (Appendix 1) were discussed. Nature was discussed by the interviewees in 26 sessions. Frequently mentioned images were 'nature', 'native animals', 'composure' and 'the Opera House & Harbour Bridge'. Significant differences were identified depending on the location. When asked what image of Australia is represented as a tourism destination, most respondents replied 'nature' without any hesitation, especially by the travel agents in Brisbane. It seemed that television programs in Korea had prompted Korean potential tourists to associate Australia as a nature oriented country. Native animals, such as kangaroo and koala were also acknowledged by Korean agents as the typical image of Australia. This result has a consistency with Huang & Gross (2010) and Murphy (1999). Huang & Gross (2010) pointed out salient image features of Australia were kangaroos and koalas, Australia's natural environment and the Sydney Opera House. Additionally, Murphy (1999) identified that exceptional image elements in Australia included kangaroos, the Great Barrier Reef, the Outback, Aboriginal culture and Ayers Rock. One of the agents in Brisbane commented:

Agent # 23: Many customers usually said: I really want to feel the genuine nature of Australia, because I saw many programs about Australia in TV. When I travel to Australia, I feel greatness of nature. In addition, most tourism destinations in Korea, they were all artificial attractions, but Australia has totally different environment. Also I'd like to touch Kangaroo, Australia's icon…,

animals are unique and famous in Korea. Whenever most Korean visitors consider about Australia, the frequently reminded image were nature and unique animals…

Iconic attractions such as the Opera House and Harbour Bridge were frequently mentioned by agents, especially in Sydney. Most agents in Brisbane frequently mentioned beaches and activity. Agents in Adelaide mentioned composure, clean environment, boring and quietness. One agent in Adelaide suggested:

Agent # 30: The characteristics of Korean tourists visiting Adelaide are different from other cities. They mostly have VFR purpose or working holiday. A few days ago, KBS broadcasted Adelaide as potential tourists' destination. In there, Adelaide was described as quiet place and a good place for study. And every place is very clean. Some of my customers always said Adelaide is very boring place compared with Sydney.

Due to the media in Korea and the Australian Tourist Commission's effective promotions, such as brochures and events, Australia is one of the most popular destinations and most Koreans have a favourable image of the country. This study identified further image features by employing a qualitative method. Specific representational narrations also found that commercial programs on television affect Korean tourists in formulating an image of Australia.

Theme 2: Travel motivations

This key theme, travel motivations, also presented significant differences among three state capital cities and 15 topics (Appendix 2) were identified through the representative narrations. Although the representative image of Australia has been affected by the media, this key theme is strongly associated with personal attributes. Moreover, the findings identified motivations by Koreans are impressively related to cognitive image components rather than affective image components which were argued by Gartner (1993) and Dann (1996). Image attributes were recognised as organic image by Gunn (1972). Besides, the respondents depicted 15 topics which can be mainly discussed as internal or emotional aspects recognised as push motivations (Crompton, 1979; Yoon & Aysal, 2005). The frequently mentioned topics in this theme were 'new experiences', 'learning', and 'rest'. As mentioned above, travel motivations are different from their purpose of visiting. However, many interviewees considered common motivations of the Korean tourists are strongly related to 'new experiences' and 'learning' regardless of their purpose. This is one of the interview contents by one of the Sydney agents:

Agent # 7: Our customers who are usually first-time visitors visit Australia to have new experiences in the new world. In Australia, there are so many experiential programs and attractions, such as Opera House and many activities. And some travellers visit Australia to study something, especially English. In Korea, English became the crucial skill to succeed in their social life. Currently, some Koreans visit Sydney to explore, because they want to settle in Sydney. In other words, they selected Sydney as a new residence for several reasons.

The principal distinction is many agents in Sydney stressed 'exploration' and 'prepare new life' compared with Brisbane and Adelaide agents. Some Koreans visit Sydney with the motivation of exploration for immigration for their new life. Other motivations of Sydney visitors were mainly 'new experiences' and 'learning'. It is assumed that Sydney is renowned as a must–visit place for Korean tourists and first time visitors tend to travel to this city first in Australia. In contrast, the

majority of Brisbane agents stated ‘activity’ and ‘enjoy holiday’ while Adelaide agents pointed out ‘VFR’ and ‘education’. These characteristics are consistent with prior research (Lee, 2009) which identified travel motivations by Korean tourists. Lee (2009) argued travel motivations and characteristics of destinations have powerful relationships, such as, VFR, study, immigration and activities. Based on this result, these three state capital cities were clearly segmented by Korean tourists according to visiting purpose and motivations.

Theme 3: Past experiences

This key theme illustrated the clear distinctions among three state capital cities similar with the Internet sources. As overall features, the 18 topics (Appendix 3) were drawn from the narrations. Most agents stated there are remarkable distinctions between the first-time visitors and repeat-visitors. Both Baloglu and Mangaloglu (2001) and Baloglu and McCleary (1999) found the differences between visitors and non-visitors in terms of cognitive and affective image components. In addition, Huang & Gross (2010) emphasised repeat visitors seemed to grasp more multi-sensory image clues. These findings are consistent with this study which pointed out repeat visitors usually have a clearer image on Australia than first visitors, because it can be assumed direct experience can influence to form their destination image and preferred to visit less renowned destinations while the first time visitors preferred to visit famous destinations, such as Sydney and Brisbane which are popular and famous destinations. In addition, repeat visitors typically have clear purposes and a positive image which was formed in past experiences. Contrary to repeat visitors, the first time visitors preferred to use group tours, especially package tour programs, since they do not have confidences and their attitude is relatively passive. Moreover, they need to have a basic level of counselling and do not have enough information (Lee, 2009). With the impact of the internet, the majority of first time visitors searched for travel information, however, they cannot use these appropriately and some information is not relevant. In this key theme, an unusual feature was that the agents from Adelaide were not able to identify their customers. One of Adelaide agents emphasised:

Agent # 29: Adelaide’s Korean community is different from that of other cities. Most customers visit and issue their tickets and programs. The biggest problem is the lack of communication with customers. Most travel agencies in Sydney and Brisbane are now running their own website, but we do not have our website, because it cannot make any profit. I can answer in other questions, but in this question, I cannot provide suitable answer, because I cannot recognise who my customer is first time visitor or repeat visitor.

It is assumed that the average consultation hour with customers is not enough and that there is a lack of interaction between agents and customers. This situation can be found in the trait of the Korean community in Adelaide. Most Korean residents in Adelaide consist of overseas students, working holiday and guardian visa holders. So, their main concern is not travel and according to the interview with agents, their main revenue sources are air tickets and day tour programs compared with other cities. Especially, residents in Sydney and Brisbane are mainly immigrants and permanent residents, so they would like to travel frequently, both domestically and internationally.

Theme 4: Socio-demographic variables

Contrary to above findings, in this key theme no significant differences were found depending on three state capital cities. In this theme, five topics (Appendix 4) were discussed: age, income, gender, occupation and education. According to previous research, age (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Husbands, 1989; Walmsley & Jenkins, 1984), gender (Beerli et al, 2004; Walmsley & Jenkins, 1984) and education level (Husbands ,1989) appear to be major determinants of image. All agents acknowledged age as peculiar features in this theme. In addition, 22 interviewees stated Koreans' travel patterns and attitudes towards travelling are strongly related to the income level. This means most agents in Korean travel agencies recognised that age and level of income are the most influential features to decide their travel trends and patterns. However, many agents did not consider gender, occupation and level of education as important factors to determine Koreans' travel trends and patterns. One of the interviewees in Brisbane stated:

Agent # 25: According to the age, there are significant differences in the travel. In our company, most customers consist of 20s and 30s. Due to this impact, the focuses of our products are adventure seeking tour programs, because the younger generations usually seek adventure or backpack travel. However, the older generations prefer to have a comfortable travel, such as package tour program. They need to have tour guide and a good quality of meals… Besides, I think depending on the income, travel pattern and attitude are different. Our customers who have higher income never consider price, always think about comfortable.

To illustrate regional differences, Sydney is inclusive of all age groups and Brisbane attracts relatively younger age groups (usually 20s and 30s), while Adelaide has comparatively older (over 40s) age groups. It is assumed that this group of visitors to Adelaide are 'VFR' travellers, who visit children who have attended primary or high school. According to the level of income, travel pattern and attitude can be different. It is suggested that the distance from Korea to Australia is relatively far from other popular destinations and the average cost of travel is much higher than to other destinations. In addition, tourists who have a relatively high level of income usually seek quality and satisfaction focused travel instead of considering the price of the tour programs.

Theme 5: Other information sources

In the formation of destination images, various information sources can contribute to the process of destination images (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Phelps 1986). Phelps (1986) categorised information sources into primary and secondary images. A primary image formation resulted from the experience of a place and a secondary image was formed as result of formal sources, such as travel related brochures and guide books, and informal sources, like conversation with friends or word-of-mouth. Fakeye and Crompton (1991) emphasized that people will develop a naïve or factual image of destinations based on information from formal sources (TV, magazines and travel agencies) and informal sources (word-of mouth from their friends and relatives). In this study, 11 topics (Appendix 5) were identified in this theme: the most frequent media source is recommendation from other people, because this information could be the most reliable source. The next sources were visual sources such as TV, information books, Korean community magazines and travel agencies. However, no regional differences were found in this theme. One of the agents in Sydney emphasised;

Agent # 9: Recently, potential tourists obtain so much information because they can contact with usable information sources. Among them, they pursuit reliable information sources, so they

usually trust recommendation from acquaintances. Besides, customers in nowadays know specific contents about their travel… and also, influential and useful media is visual media, especially TV. During watching TV programs, potential travellers build up their decision to travel in the next time… Above all, recommendation and TV can give more trust than any other media…

There are variety of sources of information that contribute to the development of destination images (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli et al, 2004). Therefore, this result can identify recommendation and virtual media could be the most reliable source to choose their destination. And they are the most powerful and influential information source to form their destination image. However, most tourists did not use only one information source but usually two or three information sources together.

Theme 6: The internet sources

This key theme showed the most significant differences along with past experiences. This result showed Korean tourists travelling to Brisbane rely highly on Internet sources, while Adelaide visitors showed a relatively low rate of internet usage, because Brisbane visitors consist of the younger generation, whilst Adelaide visitors are relatively the older generation. One agent in Sydney mentioned in this regard:

Agent # 3: Clear evidence that customers use several information sources is some of them already know specific things… They use travel agency to double-check their knowledge… And also, due to the impact of the Internet and more information, most travel agencies have a critical moment, because a lot of customers have had much information about their destination. In addition, some customers knew more than us…., Internet messenger and search engine, such as Nate on, Naver or Google provide them good quality's information…

In addition, one of the agents in Brisbane commented:

Agent # 26: Nowadays, most Koreans use the Internet and its influence transcends imagination, because everything is made up of the Internet. Travelling is also same… They can book their ticket and exchange their opinions… After travelling, some of them open their own blog and upload postscripts and pictures. Potential tourists decide their mind after discussing opinions with blog owners; especially the younger generation use the Internet. Due to the impact of the blog, they can give and take their opinions on the internet… Through the Internet, they can have accurate information conveniently. In addition, they can search latest information compared with printed media…

With the proliferation of the Internet, tourism destination images are becoming increasingly fragmented and ephemeral in nature (Governs et al, 2007). The Internet sources can enable potential tourists to have more interaction and thereby create a greater and more lasting impression and have become more complex since the Internet arrived (Choi et al, 2007).

In addition, information through the Internet can be provided instantly to potential tourists anywhere in the world, and they play a more active role in the search for information. Intrinsic attributes on the internet are giving information and provide these instantly. On account of this reason, blogs were the most useful internet sources (Carson, 2007; Lee, 2009). The younger

generation can exchange their opinions through blogs which they create and maintain themselves, however the internet has caused travel agencies to make critical changes in the way they service their customers. It is now necessary for travel agents to provide their customers with different services and to form appropriate strategies in order to survive in the internet environment.

CONCLUSION

This study identified six decisive key themes and 86 topics. To examine regional differences in the six key themes, this study analysed data through the representational narrations by Korean travel agents. Firstly, in key themes of representative images of Australia, significant differences were identified: most respondents alluded to 'nature' or 'natural environment', and 'The Opera House & Harbour Bridge' was frequently mentioned by Sydney agents. Agents in Brisbane pointed out 'nature' or 'natural environment', 'beaches' and 'activity', whereas many agents in Adelaide stated 'composure', 'clean environment', 'boring' and 'quietness'. These findings have had consistency with the findings in Huang and Gross (2010). Huang and Gross (2010) identified Australia's salient image by Chinese tourists is animals, like kangaroo and koala. In spite of employing different approaches, such as MIS framework and the representational narration framework and using different samples, like Chinese and Korean tourists, both findings have indicated the similar context towards Australia's destination image. It is assumed that the characteristics of image are statics and their respondents are Chinese and Koreans, so they have had similar cultural background and perspectives towards Australia.

Secondly, in the travel motivation section, the most frequently mentioned topics were 'new experiences', 'learning', and 'rest'. This key theme also illustrated strong evidence in differentiations which explained why many agents in Sydney stressed 'exploration' and 'prepare new life' compared with Brisbane and Adelaide agents. In contrast, the majority of Brisbane agents stated 'activity' and 'enjoy holiday' while Adelaide agents pointed out 'VFR' and 'education'. The main characteristics of this study is that Korean tourists have shown more personal attributes, cognitive image components (Dann, 1996; Gartner, 1993) and internal motivation aspects (Crompton, 1979; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). This seemed to have a strong relationship between motivation and regional features.

Thirdly, an unusual feature was found in Adelaide agents: they find it difficult to interact with their customers because of the advent of the internet. In addition, most agents stated there are remarkable distinctions between the first-time visitors and repeat-visitors. Usually, the first time visitors preferred to visit famous destinations, such as Sydney and Brisbane, whereas repeat visitors preferred to visit less renowned destinations. Since past travel experiences may be more credible than other information sources (Fodness & Murray, 1997; Mazursky, 1989), it is presumed that obvious distinctions have existed between visitors and non-visitors.

Fourthly, in socio-demographic the theme, contrary to other findings, no considerable differences were found depending on three state capital cities, while prior research stressed that age (Husbands, 1989), gender (Beerli et al, 2004) and education level (Husbands, 1989) can be key determinant factors of image formation. It is assumed that all agents acknowledged age as peculiar features in this theme. In addition, Koreans' travel patterns and attitudes towards travelling are strongly related to the income level.

Fifthly, no regional differences were also found in the other information theme, as well as in the socio-demographic theme. The most frequent information source is recommendation from other people, because this source could be the most reliable source (Lee, 2009) and the next sources were visual sources such as TV (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli et al, 2004; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). Lastly, the Internet source and the past experience themes showed the most significant differences, depending on the three state capital cities. Specifically, the younger generations utilise travel blogs (Carson, 2007). In accordance with these results, this study revealed most Korean potential tourists highly rely on the Internet and its special features, and the distinctive tools are blogs and bulletin boards. This result showed Korean tourists travelling to Brisbane rely highly on the Internet sources, while Adelaide visitors showed a relatively low rate of the Internet usage.

It is apparent from the results of this study that differentiated marketing and management strategies are necessitated in the aspects of destination practitioners and academics towards different cities in Australia. Most Korean tourists have had different motivations (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli et al, 2004; Um & Crompton, 1990), purpose and past experiences (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001; Fakeye & Jenkins, 1991) according to the different cities. Moreover, they have used different information sources including the Internet sources according to ages and level of income. This study suggested it is necessary to examine market segmentations depending on target markets to Korean tourists. Furthermore, this study recommends that it is needed for promotion strategies to attract more Korean tourists to Australia; specifically different approaches are necessitated among different cities, such as Sydney, Brisbane and Adelaide in Australia.

This study has two possible limitations which affect the findings of this study. Firstly, since this study uses a small sample size and is exploratory in nature, these results might not be a generalisation of Korean tourists travelling to Australia. Secondly, the data may be subject to bias as the viewpoints may vary according to coders, although researchers try to remain objective. In the future, it is necessary to analyse package and individual tourists separately, because they might show significantly different behaviour and use information sources diversely. Moreover, it is necessary to study targeting Australian tourists travelling to Korea. If so, future researcher can contribute to the tourism industry, especially between Korea and Australia. Lastly, this study can contribute for future studies to further theorise understanding destination image studies in tourism literature. Furthermore, even if the number of Korean tourists travelling to Australia has been increasing dramatically, there will need to be further research contributions analysing the Korean market.

REFERENCES

Ahn, J. Y., & Ahmed, Z. U. (1994). South Korea's: Emerging tourism industry. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 35*, 84–89.

Alhemoud, A. M., & Armstrong, E. G. (1996). Image of tourism attractions in Kuwait. *Journal of Travel Research, 34*(4), 76–80.

Australian Tourism Commission. (2010). *The South Korean traveller: Segmentation of the South Korean market.* Retrieved from http://www.tourism.australia.com/en-au/documents/Corporate%20-20Research/Research_Segmentation_Study_South_Korean.pdf

Baloglu, S., & Mangaloglu, M. (2001). Tourism destination images of Turkey, Egypt, Greece, and Italy as perceived by US-based tour operators and travel agents. *Tourism Management, 22,* 1–9.

Baloglu, S., & McCleary, K. W. (1999). A model of destination image formation. *Annals of Tourism Research, 26,* 808–889.

Beerli, A., & Martin, J. (2004). Factors influencing destination image. *Annals of Tourism Research, 31,* 657–681.

Bigne, J. E., Sanchez, M. I., & Sanchez, J. (2001). Tourism image, evaluation variables and after purchase behavior: Inter- relationship. *Tourism Management, 22,* 607–616.

Carson, D. (2007). The 'blogosphere' as a market research tool for tourism destinations: A case study of Australia's Northern Territory. *Journal of Vacation Marketing, 14*(2), 111–119.

Castelltort, M., & Mader, G. (2009). Press media coverage effects on destinations – A monetary public value (MPV) analysis. *Tourism Management.* doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2009.06.007.

Cho, B. H. (1998). Segmenting the younger Korean tourism market: The attractiveness of Australia as a holiday destination. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 7*(4), 1–19.

Cho, Y. H., Wang, Y., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2002). Searching for experiences: The web-based virtual tour in tourism marketing, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 12*(4),1-17.

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,* 118–129.

Chon, K. S. (1991). Tourism destination image modification process. Marketing implications. *Tourism Management, 12*(1), 68–72.

Crompton, J. L. (1979). An assessment of the image of Mexico as a vacation destination and the influence of geographical location upon that image. *Journal of Travel Research, 17*(4), 18–23.

Dann, G. M. S. (1996). Tourists' image of destination - An alternative analysis. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing, 5*(1/2), 41-45.

Dilley, R. S. (1986). Tourist brochures and tourist images, *The Canadian Geographer, 30*(1), 59–65.

Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. R. B. (1993). The measurement of destination image: An empirical assessment, *Journal of Travel Research , 31*(4), 3–13.

Fakeye, P. C., & Crompton, J. L. (1991). Image differences between prospective, first-time, and repeat visitors to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. *Journal of Travel Research, 30*(2), 10–16.

Fodness, D., & Murray, B. (1999). A model of tourist information search behaviour. *Journal of Travel Research, 37,* 220–230.

Frias, D. M., Rodriguez, M. A., & Castaneda, J. A. (2007). Internet vs. travel agencies on pre-visit destination image formation: An information processing view. *Tourism Management*, *29*(1), 163–179.

Fridgen, J. D. (1987). Use of cognitive maps to determine perceived tourism regions. *Leisure Sciences, 9,* 101–117.

Friedmann, R., & Lessig, V. P. (1986). A framework of psychological meaning of products. *Advanced in Consumer Research, 13,* 338–342.

Gallarza, M. G., Saura, I. G. & Garcia, H. C. (2002). Destination image; Toward a conceptual framework. *Annals of Tourism Research, 29*(1), 56–78.

Gartner, W. C. (1993). Image formation process. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing, 2*(2/3), 191–215.

Governs, R., Go, F. M., & Kumar, K. (2007). Promoting tourism destination image. *Journal of Travel Research, 46,* 15–23.

Gunn, C. A. (1972). *Vacationscape: Designing tourist regions.* Austin, TX: Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas.

Gursoy, D., & McCleary, K. W. (2004). An integrative model of tourists' information search behaviour. *Annals of Tourism Research, 31,* 353–373.

Huang, S., & Gross, M. J. (2010). Australia's destination image among mainland Chinese travellers: An exploratory study. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 27,* 63–81.

Holloway, J. C., & Plant, R. V. (1992). *Marketing for tourism* (2nd ed.). London, England: Pitman.

Husbands, W. (1989). Social status and perception of tourism in Zambia. *Annals of Tourism Research, 16,* 237–253.

Jenkins, O. H. (1999). Understanding and measuring tourist destination images. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 1,* 1–15.

Jenkins, O. H., & McArthur, S. (1996). Marketing protected areas. *Australian Parks and Recreation, 32*(4), 10–15.

Kim, H., & Richardson, S. L. (2003). Motion picture impacts on destination images. *Annals of Tourism Research, 30*(1), 216–237.

Kim, H., & Jamal, T. (2007). Touristic quest for existential authenticity. *Annals of Tourism Research, 34*(1), 181–201.

KNTO. (2009). *2009 Korea annual statistical report on tourism*. Seoul, Korea: Ministry of Culture and Sports, Korea National Tourism Organisation.

Ko, T. G. (2000). The issues and implications of escorted shopping tours in a tourist destination region: The case study of Korean package tourists in Australia. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, *8*(3), 71–80.

Law, R., Leung, K., & Wong, J. (2004). The impact of the internet on travel agencies. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *16*(2), 100–107.

Lee, H. C. (2009, November 13-15). *Conceptualisation of tourism destination image: The representational narratives of Korean travel agencies in Australia*. Paper presented at the 10th International Joint World Cultural Tourism Conference, Bangkok, Thailand.

Lee, H. C., & Park, C. H. (2003). *Internet & tourism information*. Seoul, Korea: Namdu Publishing Company.

Mayo, E. J. (1973). *Regional images and regional travel destination*. Paper presented at the Fourth Annual Conference of TTRA, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA.

Mazursky, D. (1989). Pastexperience and future tourism decisions. *Annals of Tourism Research 16, 333–344.*

Murphy, L. (1999). Australia's image as a holiday destination—Perceptions of backpacker visitors. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, *8*(3), 21–45.

Phelps, A. (1986). Holiday destination image - The problem of assessment: An example developed in Menorca. *Tourism Management*, *September*, 168–180.

Ross, G. F. (1993). Destination evaluation and vacation preferences. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 20, 477–489.

Ryan, C. (2001). Virtual reality in marketing, *Direct Marketing*, *63*(12), 57–62.

Smith, M. (2005). Spotlight events, media relations, and place promotion: A case study. *Journal of Hospitality and Leisure Marketing*, *12*(1/2), 115–134.

Son, A., & Pearce, P. (2005). Multi-faceted image assessment: International students' views of Australia as a tourist destination. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, *18*(4), 21–35.

Um, S., & Crompton. J. L. (1990). Attitude determinants in tourism destination choice. *Annals of Tourism Research, 17,* 432–448.

Walmsley, D. J. & Jenkins, G. J. (1984). *Human geography: Behavioral approaches*. New York, NY. Longman.

Woodside, A. G., & Lysonski, S. (1989). A general model of traveler destination choice. *Journal of Travel Research, 27*, 8–14.

Xiao, H., & Mair, H. L. (2006). A paradox of images: Representation of China as a tourist destination. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, *20*(2), 1–14.

Yamamoto, D., & Gill, A. M. (1999). Emerging trends in Japanese package tourism. *Journal of Travel Research ,38*(2), 134–143.

Yoon, Y., & Uysal, M. (2005). An examination of the effects of motivation and satisfaction on destination loyalty. *Tourism Management*, *26*, 45–56.

APPENDIX

Appendix1. Topics on representative images of Australia

	Sydney	Brisbane	Adelaide	Total
Nature	15	8	3	26
Animal	5	4	2	11
Composure	6	2	3	11
Opera House & Harbour Bridge	7	1	2	10
Clean Environment	3	2	4	9
Beach	3	5	0	8
Different environment	4	3	1	8
Boring	4	0	3	7
Activity	0	6	0	6
Many experiences	3	2	0	5
Big country	4	1	0	5
Rest	1	2	2	5
Comfortable	1	1	2	4
Safety	0	2	2	4
Different season	2	1	1	4

Good weather	1	2	0	4
Quietness	0	0	3	3
Negative Image	2	1	0	3
Kind people	1	0	2	3
Different environment	2	0	1	3
Good place for study	0	0	2	2
Long Distance from Korea	2	0	0	2
Sydney	2	0	0	2
Different culture	2	0	0	2
Event	1	0	1	2
Peace	2	0	0	2
Eco-system	1	1	0	2

Appendix2. Topics on Travel Motivation

	Sydney	Brisbane	Adelaide	Total
New experiences	11	4	4	19
Learning	7	3	3	13
Rest	6	3	1	10
Exploration	5	2	2	9
VFR	3	1	5	9
Have a time with family	4	2	2	9

Activity	0	7	1	8
Education	3	1	3	7
Enjoy holiday	3	4	0	6
Prepare new life	5	0	0	5
Honeymoon	5	0	0	5
Memory	3	2	0	5
Escape the stress	2	0	0	2
Refill the energy	1	1	0	2
Make foreign friend	1	1	0	2

Appendix3. Topics on Past Experiences

First Visitors	1	2	3	Total	Repeat Visitors	1	2	3	Total
Visit famous site	6	3	1	10	Clear Purpose	8	5	1	14
					Positive image	7	3	0	10
Anxiety	3	2	2	7	Much information	3	2	3	8
Give much information	3	2	1	6	Deep counselling	4	2	0	6
Package tour	3	2	0	5	Stability	3	2	0	5
Basic counselling	1	1	2	4	Various destination	3	1	1	5
External features	3	0	0	3	Have acquaintances	1	3	1	5
Caution	2	1	0	3	Activity	2	1	0	3
Only travel	3	0	0	3	Individual travel	2	1	0	3
Passive	2	1	0	3					

Appendix4. Topics on Socio-demographic variables

	Sydney	Brisbane	Adelaide	Total
Age	19	8	5	32
Income	15	6	1	22
Gender	5	3	1	9
Occupation	4	4	0	8
Education	4	1	1	6

Appendix5. Topics on other information Sources

	Sydney	Brisbane	Adelaide	Total
Recommendation	10	6	2	18
Visual sources	10	3	5	18
Information book	8	4	2	14
Korean Community Magazine	7	3	3	13
Travel Agency	4	3	3	10
Brochure & Print media	3	1	1	5
Mass Media	3	1	1	5
Information Centre	1	1	1	3
Movie & Drama	0	1	1	2
Tourism Authority	1	0	0	1
Word-of-Mouth	1	0	0	1

Appendix6. Topics on the Internet Sources

	Sydney	Brisbane	Adelaide	Total
Giving information	9	6	3	18
Blog	6	4	0	10
Exchanging opinions	2	6	1	9
Search Engine	5	3	1	9
Giving Visual information	2	4	2	8
Indirect experience	2	5	0	7
Giving convenience	3	4	0	7
Organising associations	0	5	1	6
Official Website	2	2	2	6
Messenger	1	5	0	6
Banner	2	0	1	3