Factors Contributing to Recommendation Intention of Foreign Tourists in Times of Crisis: A Moderated Moderation Analysis

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Abstract

Purpose – As a leading source of foreign exchange and investment, tourism has grown in importance as a component of international trade. Accordingly, in recent decades much attention has been directed toward attracting foreign tourists and, in turn, positively affecting the recommendation intentions of foreign tourists. Despite such interests, there remains a dearth of empirical research on this issue. Moreover, prior research has focused primarily on the simple main effect of a certain factor on recommendation intentions. Therefore, the present study aims to (1) investigate the effect of overall satisfaction on the recommendation intentions of foreign tourists, and (2) examine the potential moderating effects of personal factors (i.e., age and destination image) on the association between overall satisfaction and recommendation intention.

Design/methodology – Using a moderated moderation analysis of the data drawn from the 2018 International Visitor Survey conducted by the Korea Tourism Organization, this study proposes the three-way interaction effects of overall satisfaction, age, and destination image on recommendation intention.

Findings – The findings of the study indicate that overall satisfaction is positively associated with recommendation intention and this relationship becomes stronger among younger tourists. The findings further indicate that the moderating effect of age on the relationship between overall satisfaction and recommendation intention depends on changes in the image of the destination. Specifically, the destination image exerts a positive moderating impact on the influence of age that moderates the overall satisfaction and recommendation intention relationship.

Originality/value – Considering that the tourism economy has been severely affected by the current COVID-19 pandemic, this study contributes to a more accurate understanding of the factors affecting the recommendation intention, especially in times of crisis.

Keywords: Age, Destination Image, Moderated Moderation Model, Overall Satisfaction, Recommendation Intention

JEL Classifications: F19, L83, Z32

1. Introduction

Over the past decades, the global travel and tourism industry experienced unprecedented growth, greatly contributing to the world economy. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) indicated that there were only 25 million tourist arrivals globally in 1950; yet this figure increased to 439 million in 1990, 682 million in 2000, 950 million in 2010, and nearly 1.4 billion in 2018 (UNWTO, 2020). Additionally, according to the World Travel

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and Tourism Council's (WTTC) Global Economic Impact and Trends Report (WTTC, 2020), the travel and tourism sector supported 10.3% of global Gross Domestic Production (GDP) which is equivalent to approximately USD 9.6 trillion, and generated one-fourth of all new jobs globally (approximately 320 million jobs) in 2019. There are overarching driving forces behind the extraordinary rise of the tourism industry, including rising incomes, increasing leisure time, and falling travel-related costs.

Reflecting these tourism developments across economies, the travel and tourism industry in South Korea has emerged as one of the leading economic sectors in recent years. More specifically, the latest report, conducted by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2020), revealed that South Korea's tourism industry accounted for 4.7% of the country's GDP and represented 5.3% of total employment in 2018.

Additionally, since the late 1990s, Korean television dramas, movies, and music have gained considerable popularity around the world. This global attention toward Korean popular culture, which is generally called the Korean Wave or Hallyu, has helped attract more foreign visitors to the country. In fact, the number of international tourist arrivals to South Korea has increased dramatically from 4.3 million in 1998 to 17.5 million in 2019 (Bae Eun-Song et al., 2017).

Considering that international tourism essentially means the flow of people from one country to another (Mathieson and Wall, 1982), tourism and trade are inseparable. From the trade point of view, the economic benefits of overseas visitor arrivals can be found in the balance of payments. More precisely, as an invisible export item under the entry of international services, international tourism has a direct impact on the balance of payments.

In this context, World Bank data (World Bank, 2017a) have shown that travel represented 15% of South Korea's total service exports in 2017 and was the country's third largest export category following transportation and other business services (United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database, 2017). That year, the total tourism receipts in South Korea were approximately USD 17.17 billion (World Bank, 2017b). This implies that revenues from international tourism contribute substantially to South Korea's trade surplus.

Given the significant role of the travel and tourism sector in the Korean economy, tourism management has received a great deal of scholarly attention over the past few years. In particular, several studies have been conducted to explore tourist behavioral intentions, such as revisit intention and word-of-mouth intention (Assaker, Vinzi, and O'Connor, 2011; Chi and Qu, 2008; Kozak and Rimmington, 2000; Oliver, 1997; Yoon Yoo-Shik and Uysal, 2005; Williams and Soutar, 2009).

Nevertheless, there has been a relative paucity of research on tourist recommendation intention. Since international travel generally entails a large amount of time and expenditure, choosing a travel destination is a deliberate decision. In other words, travel destination decisions are not made impulsively. In this regard, as one of the most reliable sources of information, a recommendation exerts a strong influence on destination decisions.

Moreover, since the recommendation intention is a consequence of individual assessment, it is highly subjective and context-dependent in nature. Hence, there is a possibility that tourist recommendation intention may vary depending on personal factors even during the same trip. That is, when it comes to recommendations, some people may have higher expectation thresholds and thus be more reluctant to provide recommendations.

Therefore, the primary purpose of the present study is two-fold: (1) to empirically examine overall tourist satisfaction as a strong indicator of recommendation intention; and (2) to

identify the potential moderating effects of personal factors (i.e., age and destination image) on the association between overall tourist satisfaction and recommendation intention.

2. Literature Review

It is difficult to enjoy every aspect of travel, and this implies that some travel experiences may be satisfying, while others may be less so. Therefore, overall tourist satisfaction refers to the aggregate satisfaction level attained from cumulative tourist experiences during the entire travel process (Chu and Choi, 2000). Similarly, Hosany and Prayag (2013) defined tourist satisfaction as tourists' summative evaluation of their experiences at a destination.

The fact that tourist satisfaction is considered the key to the success of the tourism business and long-term competitiveness (Sadeh et al., 2012) has attracted the attention of several researchers investigating the antecedents of tourist satisfaction. Consequently, central determinants of tourist satisfaction, including tourist expectation, destination image, and costs have been demonstrated and examined in various empirical studies (Aliman et al., 2016; Um Seo-Ho, Chon, and Ro Young-Hee, 2006).

In addition to its antecedents, the consequences of tourist satisfaction have been widely studied. In previous literature, satisfied tourists tend to stay longer, spend more, and visit the destination again (Chen and Tsai 2007; Choi and Chu, 2001; Hui, Wan, and Ho, 2007). George and George (2004) suggested place attachment as the underlying mechanism of the interplay between tourist satisfaction and behavioral outcomes, arguing that satisfactory experiences at the destination enhance tourists' level of place attachment, thereby positively affecting their subsequent behavior.

Furthermore, tourist satisfaction has been found to be associated with favorable behavioral intentions, such as intention to return and word-of-mouth intention (Assaker, Vinzi, and O'Connor, 2011; Chi and Qu, 2008; Kozak and Rimmington, 2000; Oliver, 1997; Yoon Yoo-Shik and Uysal, 2005; Williams and Soutar, 2009). More specifically, Abubakar and Mavondo (2014) posited that tourists who feel more satisfied with their travel are more likely to intend to engage in positive word-of-mouth.

Similarly, it can be expected that a high level of tourist satisfaction leads to a higher propensity to recommend the destination to others (Beeho and Prentice, 1997; Bigné, Sanchez and Sanchez, 2001; Chen and Tsai, 2007; Hui, Wan, and Ho, 2007; Li, Liu, and Soutar, 2021; Prayag et al., 2017). In support of this argument, Kozak and Rimmington (2000) found that tourists satisfied with their travel experiences in Mallorca, Spain, tended to actively recommend the destination to others, including friends and family.

It is noteworthy that word-of-mouth intention and recommendation intention are different, although they share many similarities and there is considerable confusion over these two concepts.

As a form of personal communication regarding a product, service, and related experience, Word-of-Mouth (WOM) can be either positive or negative (Berger, 2014; Vázquez-Casielles, Suárez-Álvarez, & del Río-Lanza, 2013). In contrast, the recommendation carries a solely positive connotation in most cases (Ratnasari and Prasetyo, 2019).

Nowadays, increasingly more WOM communications take place in anonymous online environments. This implies the source of the WOM could be an unknown individual (Davis and Khazanchi, 2008; Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan, 2018; Park Cheol and Lee Thae-Min,

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2009). In contrast with this type of WOM, recommendations typically occur between people who know each other and hence are more persuasive. According to Nielsen's Global Trust in Advertising Report (Nielsen, 2015), 83% of respondents say they trust recommendations about products and services from their contacts, including family members, colleagues, and friends.

Additionally, unlike WOM which is usually intended for a multitude of random people (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Yoo Chul-Woo, Sanders, and Moon Jung-Hoon, 2013), personal recommendations often target only a few people who desire to be informed.

In this sense, it is undeniable that recommendations are a major influence as a reference in the context of tourism. Moreover, considering that travel attributes cannot be evaluated prior to purchase, recommendations play a prominent role in tourism settings. Based on these factors, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Overall satisfaction is positively associated with recommendation intention.

As discussed previously, recommendation intention is not a universal phenomenon because everyone has differing degrees of recommendation intent resulting from the same travel experience. This implies recommendation intention per se is a subjective construct and thus is inherently sensitive to contextual factors.

In this regard, behavioral intention is defined as the subjective likelihood that one will perform the behavior (Sheeran, 2002). Accordingly, behavioral intention is a dynamic process rather than a static state and thus is continuously influenced by individual factors (e.g., age, gender, and personality) and subjective norms concerning the behavior (Leonard, Cronan, and Kreie, 2004; Orr, Thrush and Plaut, 2013; Tai et al, 2012; Tryon, 2014). Likewise, it is considered that recommendation intention in a tourism context is contingent on individual factors, including age and changing destination image.

Previous studies have discovered that age is a significant predictor of tourist behaviors (Book et al., 2018; Leung, Bai, and Stahura, 2015; Pearce, 2005). Specifically, the evidence showed that younger generations (i.e., Generation Yers and Millennials) actively share their personal experiences with others, while older generations (i.e., Baby Boomers and Generation Xers) are more hesitant to openly discuss their opinions (Bolton et al., 2013; Șchiopu et al., 2016). Similarly, numerous studies have consistently found that younger people generally seek social connectedness more and share personal travel experiences with their friends, family, or even their online communities, vis-à-vis older people (Benckendorff, Moscardo and Pendergast, 2010; Șchiopu et al., 2016).

One plausible explanation for this phenomenon is that older people tend to be more aware of the responsibility associated with exchanging views, ideas, and information. That is, a wide variety of life experiences during adulthood may have taught them to be more careful about how they express feelings, thoughts, or information to other people. In contrast, young people seem to be more aware of the importance of collective intelligence that emerges from active interactions (McGonigal, 2008).

Furthermore, when it comes to purchasing the product, older people are more cautious and skeptical of unconfirmed information; rather, they are heavily reliant on objective data obtained from sources that are as credible as possible (Dabija, Bejan, and Tipi, 2018). In contrast, younger people are likely to give more credence to information from friends (Dabija et al., 2017; Dabija, Bejan, and Tipi, 2018) and were found to be hugely influenced by WOM

and recommendations from friends and acquaintances compared to older people (Strategic Direction, 2015). Based on these points, the following hypothesis is proposed:

> *H2: Age negatively moderates the relationship between overall satisfaction and recommendation intention, such that younger tourists strengthen the relationship between overall satisfaction and recommendation intention.*

In the field of tourism, destination image refers to the sum of knowledge, emotions, beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a tourist has of a particular destination (Crompton, 1979). Since the formation of the destination image is a continuous mental process, it can be modified or changed by various factors during travel. That is, a destination's image following a trip can be different from its pre-travel image (Martín-Santana, Beerli-Palacio, and Nazzareno, 2017).

Destination image can be both positive and negative. In this respect, the perception of safety and security and the inclusion of cultural values strengthen the positive image of a destination, whereas the perceived risks and travel constraints have negative impacts on destination image (Chen and Tsai, 2007; Kani et al., 2017; Khan, Chelliah and Ahmed, 2017).

Not surprisingly, a plethora of studies have found that destination image is an important factor in various tourist behaviors, including destination loyalty, tourist satisfaction, and tourist complaints (Chen and Hsu, 2000; Court and Lupton, 1997; Marques, da Silva and Antova, 2021; Schroeder, 1996; Tasci and Gartner, 2007; Wang et al., 2009).

Additionally, destination image has been empirically proven to have a pronounced effect on the behavioral intentions of tourists (Jalilvand and Heidari, 2017; Kaur, Chauhan, and Medury, 2016; Nazir, Yasin, and Tat, 2021; Souiden, Ladhari, and Chiadmi, 2017). More importantly, according to several studies, destination image positively relates to the intention to recommend (Afshardoost and Eshaghi, 2020; Hahm and Severt, 2018).

In this sense, a substantial body of research has considered gratitude as one of the key triggers of recommendation intention (Chawdhary and Dall'Olmo Riley, 2015).

Appreciation is an emotion associated with the perception of benefits received, and gratitude is closely linked to reciprocity (Palmatier et al., 2009; Soscia, 2007). Indeed, several studies have confirmed the connection between gratitude and reciprocity, insisting that gratitude promotes reciprocal behaviors as well as reciprocal behavioral intentions even in situations where direct reciprocity is not feasible (Emmons and Mishra, 2011; Froh, Bono, and Emmons, 2010; McCullough et al., 2001; Syropoulos et al., 2020).

This positive relationship between gratitude and reciprocity is deeply ingrained in human psychology (Becker, 1986; Buck, 2004; Dahl, Honea, and Manchanda, 2005). More specifically, when people receive a benefit, they feel compelled to return the favor. While this act of reciprocating cultivates feelings of pleasure, the failure to reciprocate leads to feelings of indebtedness or even feelings of guilt in some cases (Palmatier et al., 2009). Similarly, Komter (2004) stated that gratitude is "an imperative force, a force that compels us to return the benefit we have received... (and is) part of the chain of reciprocity."

In this context, several studies have demonstrated that customers who feel grateful tend to reciprocate by increasing positive WOM (Bartlett and DeSteno, 2006; Raggio et al., 2014; Soscia, 2007; Xia and Kukar-Kinney, 2013).

The same thing may happen in tourism settings. If tourists are satisfied with their travel experiences, they develop a greater appreciation for the destination, and in turn, are likely to feel obligated to return based on their satisfaction.

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Furthermore, especially when the destination image is improved, the degree of gratitude would be increased and consequently, recommendation intention in response to overall satisfaction would be more intensely elicited.

In essence, destination image may act as a moderator through gratitude-based reciprocal behaviors. Similarly, many studies have identified the moderating effect of destination image in various contexts (Al-Ansi and Han Hee-Sup, 2019; Kuhzady et al., 2020; Line and Hanks, 2016). Based on these discussion points, the following hypothesis is proposed:

> H3: *Destination image positively moderates the effect of age such that an improved destination image strengthens the moderating effect of age on the relationship between overall satisfaction and recommendation intention.*

The resulting proposed three-way interaction model of recommendation intention is shown in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1. Hypothesized Moderated-moderation Model
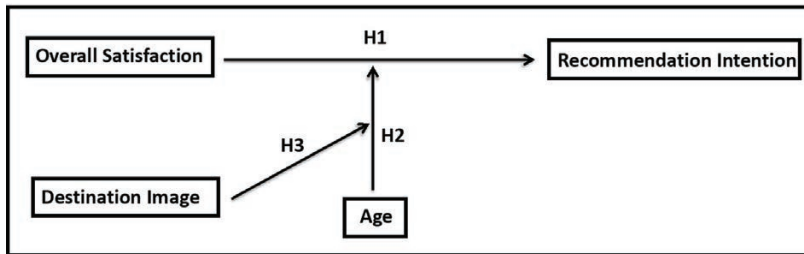
3. Methodology

The main aim of this study was to determine the differential effect of overall satisfaction on recommendation intention in age while examining the potential moderating role of the destination image. Thus, a three-way interaction model was adopted (Hayes, 2017).

The data used in this study was adapted from raw data from the 2018 International Visitor Survey conducted by the Korea Tourism Organization (Korea Tourism Organization, 2020a). The survey targeted foreign tourists departing South Korea. Of the total respondents ($n = 16470$), this study analyzed 4585 respondents who filled out all questions which fit the aim of the research.

3.1. Overall Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction was measured with a single item that asked participants to "Rate your overall satisfaction with this trip to South Korea." Responses were provided using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). Therefore, a high score indicated a higher level of overall satisfaction.

3.2. Recommendation Intention

Prior studies have conceptualized recommendation intention as a tourist's willingness to

recommend a destination to others (Lee Sang-Jae, Jeon Sun-Gil, and Kim Do-Young, 2011; Oppermann, 2000; Prayag et al., 2017).

In line with previous scholars, recommendation intention was measured using a single item, asking "Will you recommend South Korea as a tourist destination to other people?" Responses were provided using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely). Therefore, a high score indicated a higher level of recommendation intention.

3.3. Age

Age was measured with a single item that asked, "What is your age range?" Responses were provided using a six-point scale with the following options: 1 (15 to 20 years old); 2 (21 to 30 years old); 3 (31 to 40 years old); 4 (41 to 50 years old); 5 (51 to 60 years old), and 6 (61 years old or more).

For the analysis, those aged between 15 and 30 years old were coded as 0, those aged between 31 and 50 years old were coded as 1, and those 60 or more years old were coded as 2.

3.4. Destination Image

Destination image was measured with a single item that asked, "Has your impression of South Korea changed positively after this visit?" Responses were provided on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Therefore, a high score indicates a more positive destination image.

For the analysis, the mean was calculated ($\mu = 4.38$); then, those below the mean were coded as 1 and those above the mean were coded as 2.

4. Results

In general, as shown in Fig. 2, a three-way interaction model is expressed by the following equation:

$$Y = i_1 + b_1 X + b_2 M + b_3 W + b_4 XM + b_5 XW + bx_6 MW + b_7 XMW + e_Y \qquad (1)$$

Where:
Y is a dependent variable
X is an independent variable
M is a moderator
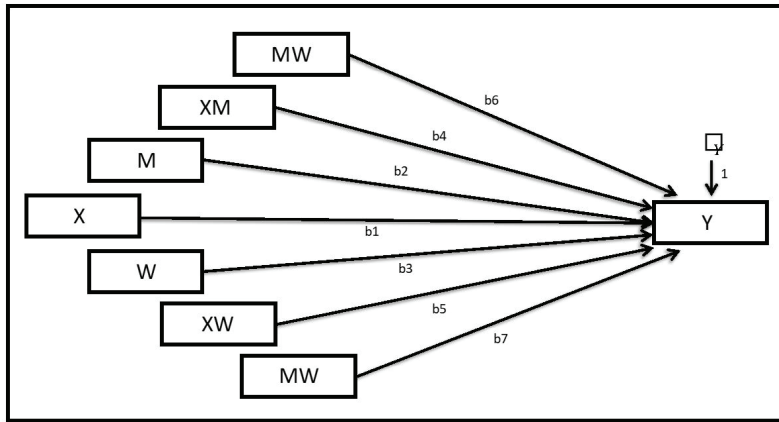W is the moderator of moderation

Equation (1) shows that the effect of X on Y is moderated by M, W, and $MW (b_1 + b_4 M + b_5 W + b_7 MW)$. More specifically, the conditional effect of X on Y is as follows:

$$\theta_{X^2 \to Y} = b_1 + b_4 M + b_5 W + b_7 MW \qquad (2)$$

$$Y = i_1 + (b_1 + b_5 W)X + [(b_4 + b_7 W)M]X + b_2 M + b_3 W + bx_6 MW + e_Y \qquad (3)$$

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Fig. 2. Three-way Interaction Model

In the equations above, b_1, b_2, and b_3 represent simple effects, indicating that b_1 is the effect of X on Y when M and W are 0, b_2 is the effect of M on Y when X and W are 0, and b_3 is the effect of W on Y when X and M are 0. On the other hand, b_4, b_5, and b_6 present interaction effects, showing that b_4 is the interaction effect between X and M when W is 0, b_5 is the interaction effect between X and W when M is 0, and b_6 is the estimate of the interaction effect between M and W when X is 0.

Given Equation (3), the effect of X on Y is $b_1 + b_5 W$ and $b_4 + b_7 W$, which is different across the levels of M. That is, the moderation effect of M controlling the effect of X on Y varies according to W. This phenomenon that a two-way interaction effect is modified by another variable is called the three-way interaction or moderated moderation (Hayes, 2017).

The primary results of this study's moderated moderation model are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of Moderated Moderation Analysis

	β	SE	t value	Significance	95% CI	
Constant	2.4511***	.0840	29.1876	.0000	2.2865	2.6157
Overall Satisfaction	.6747***	.0605	11.1472	.0000	.5561	.7934
Age	.1885**	.0736	2.5632	.0104	.0444	.3327
Image Transformation	.8588***	.0593	14.4876	.0000	.7426	.9750
Overall Satisfaction × Age	−.1132**	.0533	−2.1261	.0335	−.2176	−.0088
Overall Satisfaction × Age × Destination Image	.0612*	.0334	1.8314	.0671	−.0043	.1268

Note: $*p < .1$, $**p < .05$, $***p < .01$.

Algebraically, the equation for the estimation of the three-way interaction effect of age (M) and destination image (W) on the relationship between overall satisfaction (X) and recommendation intention (Y) is:

$$Y = 2.4511 + 0.6747X + 0.1885M + 0.8588W - 0.1132XM \\ - 0.2028XW - 0.1088MW + 0.0612XMW \tag{4}$$

Hypothesis 1 (H1) addressed that overall satisfaction would be positively associated with recommendation intention. As a result of analysis, the regression coefficient of overall satisfaction (X) was found to be a statistically significant and positive value ($b_1 = 0.6747$, $p < .001$), supporting H1.

Next, Hypothesis 2 (H2) was that age negatively moderates the relationship between overall satisfaction and recommendation intention. The two-way interaction effects of overall satisfaction and age (XM) were found to be a statistically significant and negative value ($b_4 = -0.1132$, $p = .0335$). This indicates that age had a negative effect on the relationship between overall satisfaction and recommendation intention. More concisely, the strength of the association between overall satisfaction and recommendation intention strengthened as age decreased. Accordingly, H2 was supported.

Lastly, Hypothesis 3 (H3) predicted how changes in destination image might influence the extent to which a tourist would have recommendation intentions when they were satisfied, depending on age. More specifically, enhanced destination image positively moderated the conditional influence of age in the relationship between overall satisfaction and recommendation intention.

The regression coefficient of the three-way interaction effects of overall satisfaction, age, and destination image (XMW) was found to be a statistically significant and positive value ($b_7 = 0.0612$, $p = .0671$). This demonstrates the moderating effect of age, which controls the influence of overall satisfaction on recommendation intention and is moderated by destination image. In short, when the destination image is improved, a two-way interaction effect of age is amplified as expected. Consequently, H3 was supported.

Table 2 summarizes the research hypotheses as well as the hypotheses testing results.

Table 2. A Summary of Research Hypotheses and Test Results

The Hypotheses	Test Results	β and p value
H1: Overall satisfaction is positively associated with recommendation intention.	Supported	β = 0.6747, p = .0000
H2: Age negatively moderates the relationship between overall satisfaction and recommendation intention, such that younger tourists strengthen the relationship between overall satisfaction and recommendation intention.	Supported	β = -0.1132, p = .0335
H3: Destination image positively moderates the effect of age, such that an improved destination image strengthens the moderating effect of age on the relationship between overall satisfaction and recommendation intention.	Supported	β = 0.0612, p = .0671

5. Discussion

Thanks to the rise of globalization and technological advances, the global tourism industry has demonstrated decades of nearly uninterrupted growth. This is despite occasional shocks, such as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak of 2003 and the global financial crisis of 2009.

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Considering that the global tourism industry is inextricably linked to international situations, it is apparent that the current global spread of coronavirus has constituted an immense shock to the travel and tourism industry (Jelilov et al., 2020). In other words, the spread of COVID-19 led to a global travel collapse. According to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer (UNWTO, 2021), international tourist arrivals declined globally by 73% in 2020 and 71% in 2021, compared to 2019.

Although South Korea has until recently enjoyed the benefits of the Hallyu boom as a travel destination, it is not free from damage caused by the pandemic. In fact, the number of international tourists to South Korea plunged from a record high of 17.5 million in 2019 to 2.52 million in 2020 and 0.97 million in 2021 (UNWTO, 2021).

However, this is not the first crisis for the South Korean tourism industry. International visitors, particularly those from China, nearly halved in 2018 compared to the previous year primarily due to the dispute between China and South Korea over the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system (Korea Tourism Organization, 2020b).

Therefore, by analyzing 2018 tourism data, this study aimed to investigate the relationship between overall tourist satisfaction and recommendation intention in the wake of the crisis. Additionally, it attempted to examine the potential moderating effects of age and destination image in association with overall satisfaction and recommendation intention.

The findings indicated that overall satisfaction is positively related to recommendation intention and this relationship becomes stronger when tourists are younger. When they are satisfied with the travel, younger tourists exhibit higher recommendation intentions than their older counterparts. This implies age negatively changes the effect of overall satisfaction on recommendation intention.

A possible interpretation of this finding is that people generally become diffident about making a recommendation and exerting influence over someone else's decisions as they age. Another interpretation is that younger people engage in social interactions more often than older people and thus are less reluctant to exchange personal travel experiences with those around them.

The findings of the study further illustrated that the negative moderating effect of age on the relationship between overall satisfaction and recommendation intention depends on the image of a destination. That is, older tourists' recommendation intentions are more directly relevant to negative changes in destination image after travel compared to those of younger tourists. Thus, destination image moderates the two-way interaction effects of overall satisfaction and age on recommendation intention.

6. Implications, Limitations, and Directions for Future Research

Recommendations play a decisive role in choosing a travel destination. This assertion is supported by multiple studies that have revealed that recommendations from family and friends are perceived to be the most credible and useful source of information during the psychological process of travel destination selection (Agapito, Do Valle, and Mendes, 2012; Berhanu and Raj, 2020).

More importantly, in general, the importance of recommendations to the destination

selection process becomes more salient in times of crisis. While a crisis per se is neither good nor bad, it inherently involves risks and uncertainties, and in turn, makes recommendations profoundly significant as a reliable information source. That is, the greater the uncertainty involved in the crisis, the greater the reliance on recommendations.

Nevertheless, as noted, there has been a relative paucity of empirical work on this subject. Considering the importance of recommendation to travel decision-making, empirically clarifying the role of overall satisfaction as a key determinant of recommendation intention is theoretically valuable.

Moreover, as the expression of gratitude and reciprocity, recommendation intention is highly complex and varies among individuals. In other words, people may differ in the degree to which they feel pressure to reciprocate in each circumstance.

Regardless, there has been a lack of academic effort to investigate contextual variables that might influence the relationship between overall satisfaction and recommendation intention. By examining the potential moderating effects of age and destination image in the association between overall satisfaction and recommendation, this study bridges the research gap and extends our theoretical understanding of recommendation intention.

This study also provides critical managerial implications. Particularly, tourism bureaus and tourism suppliers should make a special effort to enhance their destinations' images. This is because when the destination image is improved, satisfied tourists tend to display higher recommendation intentions regardless of age.

Promoting destination characteristics can be achieved through various activities. For instance, creating an outstanding informational travel website can contribute to a positive destination image. This is because destination image as a cognitive and affective evaluation of a place is largely based on a person's available information (Jeong Chul et al., 2012). Additionally, creating a solid brand identity that differentiates a destination from the competition can lead to a positive destination image (Manhas, Manrai, and Manrai, 2016).

Furthermore, the results of this study suggest practical solutions for how tourism bureaus and tourism suppliers should deal with the situation in which destination image is worsened. For example, when the destination image worsens, extra rewards can be offered to tourists, especially those who are younger. This is because young tourists' recommendation intentions are less likely to be reduced by the deteriorated destination image, relative to their older counterparts.

Although this study yields valuable information regarding the effects of overall satisfaction and potential moderators (i.e., age and destination image) on tourists' recommendation intentions, particularly in times of crisis, several limitations raise opportunities for future research.

Given that crises are usually characterized by ambiguity of cause (Pearson and Clair, 1998), attributes relevant to the THAAD crisis may seem different from those relating to the coronavirus crisis. To elaborate, since the dispute over THAAD in 2017 was caused by the triangular relationship between the United States, China, and South Korea, its impact appears to be limited to those regions. Meanwhile, the current COVID-19 pandemic has had a global impact, causing a major reduction in tourism activity globally. Hence, it can be argued that the use of 2018 tourism data may limit the applicability of the findings to the current situation.

Yet, the findings of this study can still be considered useful. This lies in the fact that the South Korean tourism industry has long relied on Chinese tourists to a great extent. In fact,

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data from the Korea Tourism Organization showed that South Korea's top inbound arrival has continuously been China for the past decades (Korea Tourism Organization, 2020b).

As previously stated, a decline in overall tourist arrivals in 2018 was closely coupled with a tremendous reduction in Chinese tourist numbers because of the THAAD issue. Similarly, a recent drop in the number of international tourists to South Korea results primarily from China's strict COVID-19 containment policy which caused a massive reduction in Chinese tourists.

It is not surprising therefore that there are remarkable similarities in terms of causes between South Korea's Chinese travel slump following the THAAD dispute and the recent travel plunge. In conclusion, the present study provides practical and evidence-based guidance for attracting foreign tourists during an economic recovery by examining factors influencing recommendation intention. Accordingly, the findings of the study are expected to offer some insight into crisis management in the post-COVID-19 period and eventually contribute both directly and indirectly to South Korea's current account surplus.

In this light, numerous scholars have stressed the importance of crisis management in the tourism industry, arguing that the travel and tourism sector is highly sensitive to delicate diplomatic situations (Faulkner, 2001; King, 2002; Ritchie, 2004; Wen, Huimin, and Kavanaugh, 2005).

Lastly, it would be beneficial to explore the moderating role of other contextual factors that may impact the relationship between overall satisfaction and recommendation intention. This would enable the development of a deep and precise understanding of recommendation intention in a tourism context.

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