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The Moderating Roles of Destination Regeneration and Place Attachment in How Destination Image Affects Revisit Intention: A Case Study of Incheon Metropolitan City

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Abstract: We aimed to elucidate both the relationship between destination image and revisit intention and the importance of destination regeneration and place attachment in that relationship. Data were collected from a consumer who visited the destination, after which a total of 200 usable surveys were analyzed. In order to examine the data, we employed structural analysis using AMOS. Based on the results, first, there is a positive relationship between destination image and revisit intention. In addition, there are significant moderating effects of destination regeneration and place attachment between destination image and revisit intention. Those significant findings could contribute to destination development from destination regeneration and place attachment.

Keywords: destination image; revisit intention; destination regeneration; consumer



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1. Introduction

With the development of the tourism market, the destination industry has become essential for economic revitalization [1]. When choosing destinations, tourists typically consider the total of all the factors influencing the appeal of the destinations [2,3]. In turn, those factors affect tourist satisfaction, which, consequently, has a positive effect on tourists' intention to recommend and revisit certain destinations [4,5]. Tourist satisfaction with their destinations is, thus, a critical goal of tourism activities [6,7] and has proven to be vital in operating tourist destinations [8–10].

However, little research has been conducted to identify factors that link destination image to revisit intention [11–14]. Moreover, the majority of such research has examined the effects of tourist satisfaction, loyalty, and revisit intention on consumer perception [15–17] or the role of moderating factors, including destination regeneration and place attachment, in the relationship between destination image and revisit intention [10,18–22].

Therefore, the purpose of our study was to explore-investigate between destination image and revisit intention, specifically whether the former influences the latter and whether destination regeneration and place attachment moderate that relationship. In order to investigate the research objectives, we focused on the tourist destination of the Incheon Metropolitan City, or Incheon for short, the third-most populous city in Korea and the part of the Seoul Capital Area that includes the Incheon International Airport, the Port of Incheon, and the Incheon Free Economic Zone—although Incheon already has many tourist resources and historical attractions, regenerating it as a destination stands to attract more tourists.

2. Hypotheses Development

2.1. Destination Image

Destination image refers to a visual and mental impression of a place or experience formed by an individual [9]. Destination image is the overall perception that tourists form

and hold about a destination based on all of the information that the destination presents to tourists [1]. As such, destination image greatly influences tourists' selection of their destinations [23], and for the destinations whose primary purpose is to attract tourists, it can be a pivotal element in their marketing strategies [24].

Given the destination image's multifaceted and growing influence on whether tourists visit a destination [25], the concept has been studied in various fields and shown to influence tourists' decision-making processes [26]. In particular, as tourists recall their experiences at destinations and reinterpret their meaning of the destinations, a destination image forms [27]. Because tourism products are intangible products whose value is difficult to evaluate without experiencing them firsthand, and because destination image is formed based on personal experiences instead of tangible products, the image formed plays a major role in cultivating other images and in the revisiting intention [28–30]. In considering that dynamic, destinations could encourage tourists to develop positive destination images and induce them to visit in the future. Thus, Hypothesis 1 (H1) expected that:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *The destination image has a significant positive effect on the revisit intention.*

Hypothesis 1a (H1a). *The destination image of "Naturalness" has a significant positive effect on the revisit intention.*

Hypothesis 1b (H1b). *The destination image of "Attractiveness" has a significant positive effect on the revisit intention.*

Hypothesis 1c (H1c). *The destination image of "Diversity" has a significant positive effect on the revisit intention.*

2.2. The Role of Destination Regeneration and Place Attachment

Destination regeneration is defined as the strengthening of the destination capacity, the introduction of new functions, and the utilization of resources to revitalize aging tourist destinations, including cities, due to population decline, changes in industrial structure, and the aging of the residential environment [18,20,31]. Destination regeneration also involves recreating physically outdated or functionally obsolete destinations in order to make them sustainable, attractive places to live in and visit [32–34], as well as revitalizing the destinations by improving their facilities and service programs and, thereby, increasing their use [35]. In that light, destination regeneration can be understood as a comprehensive strategy to respond to the declining industrial structure of tourist destinations, including cities such as Incheon [31,36,37]. Thus, Hypothesis 2 (H2) expected that:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *The destination regeneration significantly moderates the relationship between the destination image and revisit intention.*

Meanwhile, place attachment is a comprehensive concept regarding how residents and tourists interact with a place [38,39] and is one able to justify the residents' attitudes toward the development of the destinations where they live. Place attachment reflects the characteristics of the region of the destination and captures the psychological solidarity formed by living there [40,41]. Given past findings that the greater the place attachment, the more positive the attitude toward tourism development [32,42], place attachment likely has an effect on the development of tourist destinations. Thus, Hypothesis 3 (H3) last hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *The place attachment significantly moderates the relationship between the destination image and revisit intention.*

3. Method

In order to investigate the relationship between destination image, revisit intention, destination regeneration, and place attachment (Figure 1), we developed a questionnaire containing items based on the mentioned operational definitions of those four aspects and previous studies. First, the destination image was measured using seventeen items [2,17], the destination regeneration using nine items [32,34], and the place attachment was measured with five items [25,42]. Participants responded to all of the items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree). Lastly, our questionnaire collected data about the participants' sociodemographic variables.

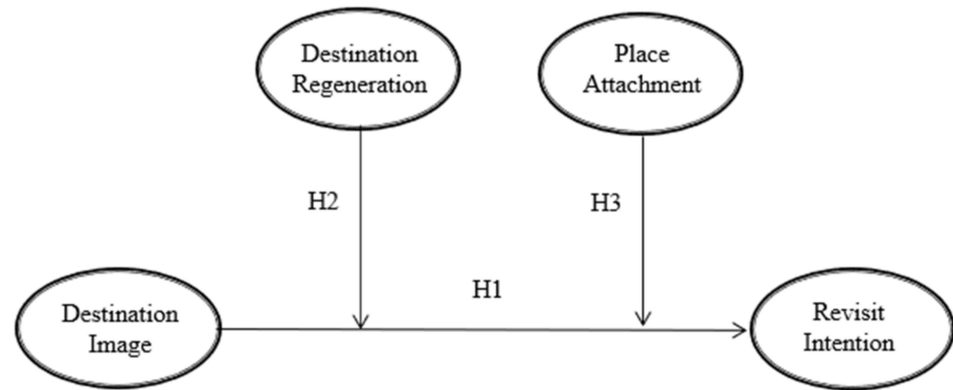


Figure 1. The proposed model.

For the data collection, our survey was conducted in August 2020 through an online survey. More specifically, we administered the questionnaire among tourists who had visited Incheon and whose participation was incentivized by souvenirs. Due to the difficulty of obtaining permission from every tourist, we employed convenience sampling to collect the data by using random sampling techniques. Altogether, the completed questionnaires of 200 such tourists were subjected to analysis. In terms of gender, 100 respondents (50.0%) were women, whereas 100 (50.0%) were men and, in terms of age, 43 (21.0%) were in their 50s, 64 (32%) in their 40s, 53 (26.5%) in their 30s, and 40 (20.0%) in their 20s. Among these, 75.5 of the respondents were national tourists, and 24.5% were international tourists. In regard to marital status, 110 respondents (55.0%) were married, whereas 89 (44.5%) were single, while in terms of occupation, 105 (52.5%) were office or technical workers, 17 (8.5%) were homemakers, 20 (10%) were self-employed, and 16 (8.0%) were professionals or public servants. Lastly, by average monthly income, 86 respondents (43.0%) earned 4.0–4.9 million won, while 37 (18.5%) earned 3.0–4.9 million won. In terms of reasons for traveling, 45.8% of respondents said that it was for leisure purposes. Regarding the determinants of visiting the destination, natural environment and historical culture were the largest response (58.2%).

In order to test our hypotheses, we employed the SPSS and structural equation modeling in Amos 25 and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. First, we used descriptive statistics to define a demographic profile. Second, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was then used to examine the suitability of the measurement model and to check the indicator variables. Lastly, we employed path analysis and multiple group analysis in structural equation modeling (SEM) in order to investigate the hypothesized relationships among the variables.

4. Results

4.1. Measurement Models

We confirmed the convergent validity by checking the factor loadings to determine whether the different variables used to measure the same factor were correlated [43]. All

factor loadings (0.561–0.715) were statistically significant and thus indicated that the results demonstrated convergent validity. Table 1 provides results of factor analysis.

Table 1. Results of factor analysis ($n = 200$).

Item	Standardized Loading	AVE	Composite Reliability
Naturalness			
The environment in this place is safe.	0.667	0.721	0.829
This place is comfortable.	0.613		
The atmosphere is quiet and comfortable.	0.566		
The environment is neat.	0.643		
Attractiveness			
The scenery is nice.	0.642	0.715	0.687
There is a scenic road here.	0.598		
There is a picturesque park.	0.561		
Diversity			
There are various shows/exhibitions.	0.715	0.687	0.654
The cultural events and festivals are alluring.	0.708		
There are various programs that you can enjoy at night.	0.688		
Various recreational activities are available.	0.655		

Note. Standardized factor loadings were all significant at $p < 0.001$. AVE = average variance extracted.

4.2. Structural Model

We employed structural equation modeling with a maximum likelihood estimation in order to investigate the hypothesized relationships in the overall model. Figure 2 shows structural model results. Based on the results, the fit indices of the overall model indicated its representation of the hypothesized constructs ($\chi^2 = 2.598$, $df = 135$, $p < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.045; CFI = 0.909; and TLI = 0.904). The results revealed that the destination image was positively influenced on the revisit intention: naturalness (H1a: $\beta = 0.311$, $p < 0.05$), attractiveness (H1b: $\beta = 0.302$, $p < 0.05$), and diversity (H1c: $\beta = 0.267$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, Hypotheses 1 was supported.

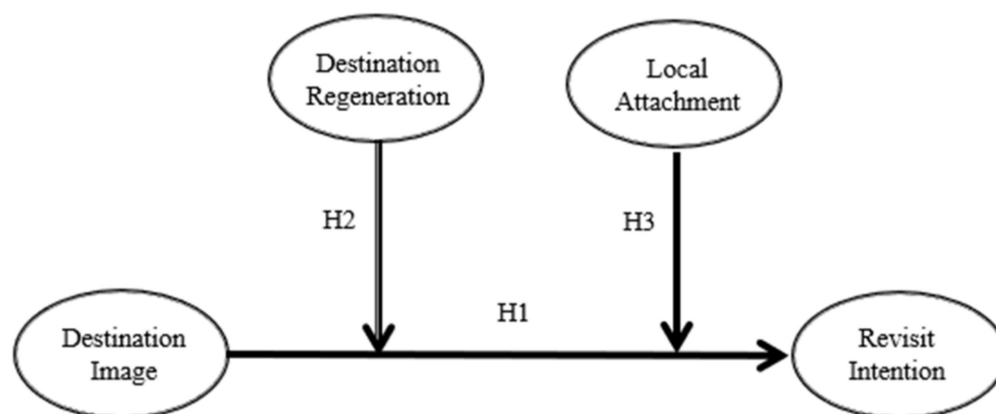


Figure 2. Structural model result.

4.3. Relationships between Groups in Structural Equation Modeling

In order to investigate the moderating effects of destination regeneration and place attachment, we conducted a multigroup analysis to adapt the proposed structural model to two groups (Byrne, 2001). A chi-squared (χ^2) test, used to categorize differences in individual paths, showed that destination regeneration was a significant moderator in the relationship between the destination image and revisit intention (H2: $\Delta\chi^2(12) = 22.5$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the results supported H2.

In terms of place attachment, a chi-squared (χ^2) test, used to categorize the differences in the individual paths, revealed that the place attachment significantly moderated the relationship between the destination image and revisit intention (H3: $\Delta\chi^2(14) = 25.5$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the results supported H3 as well.

5. Discussion

In our study, we examined the relationship between destination image and revisit intention, as well as the influence of destination regeneration and place attachment as moderating variables in that relationship. Among the results, we first found that the destination image, indeed, significantly affected the revisit intention, which relates to the positive influence of a destination image's naturalness, diversity, and attractiveness [2]. That result suggests that revisit intention can be increased by continuously engaging in activities to build the destination image by enhancing those factors.

We also found that destination regeneration had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between the destination image and revisit intention. That finding indicates the need to develop the value of destinations by engaging in destination regeneration and revitalization in order to increase the number of potential tourists. Moreover, place attachment had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between the destination image and revisit intention, meaning that it is necessary to attract potential tourists by providing various experience-based opportunities that can activate an emotional response [1]. Beyond that, destination regeneration exerted a significant moderating effect on the relationship between the destination image and revisit intention and, thus, seems to play a key role in revisit intention [35]. Given that finding, destination marketers should consider engaging in destination regeneration as a marketing strategy [5], for it could contribute to the economic and cultural revitalization of destinations.

Lastly, the degree of the place attachment between the destination image and revisit intention had a significant effect on the destination image. Place attachment has several definitions, including one focusing on the interests of tourists and one focusing on the interests of destination residents [41]. Our finding can guide the revitalization of destinations and has the potential for the application of an interactive method that can increase the degree of the place attachment, from the tourist's perspective and for the community of the place, via destination regeneration. In addition to that, destination marketers could consider consumers' characteristics as a way to engage in market segmentation.

As for our study's limitations, our findings are difficult to generalize to tourists as a whole because our study was conducted as a panel survey. In future studies, researchers should consider forming larger samples of tourists who have actually visited the destination being examined. Another limitation is that we used moderating effects (i.e., destination regeneration and place attachments), whereas researchers in the future should consider testing a variety of variables for their potential moderating roles in the relationship between destination image and revisit intention.

6. Conclusions

In order to test our hypotheses, we formed a sample of 200 tourists who completed a questionnaire about tourism in Incheon, South Korea. Among our results, we found that the destination image positively impacted the revisit intention. In turn, we propose that destination regeneration and place attachment play moderating roles in destination image and revisit intention. The findings encourage destination marketers and players to prioritize destination regeneration and place attachment as a means of destination revitalization.

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