

The Experience of Watching Baseball Games in Korea:
An Analysis of User-Generated Content on Social Media Using Leximancer

Weisheng Chiu

Department of Sport Industry Studies

Yonsei University

Jung-sup Bae

Department of Sport Industry Studies

Yonsei University

Doyeon Won*

Department of Sport Industry Studies

Yonsei University

*Corresponding author: dwon@yonsei.ac.kr

Abstract

The current study explores international tourists' experiences of watching professional baseball games in Korea. Total 152 reviews posted by tourists on TripAdvisor were analyzed through Leximancer, a computer program used in the qualitative content analysis. The software identified three dominant themes of tourist experiences: the distinctive atmosphere of Korean professional baseball games, the diverse services in the stadium, and fanatical cheering behavior for the team. Moreover, it revealed that international tourists were generally positive toward the culturally distinctive style of Korean professional baseball games. This study suggests that the professional sports of a travel destination can be a form of providing international tourists with pleasurable experiences and a way to learn about the distinctive Korean baseball culture.

KEYWORDS: Sport events, baseball games, international tourists, tourist experience, Leximancer

Introduction

Attending sport events is considered to be one of the most popular leisure experiences while traveling around the world. This type of activity can also be an important tourist attraction while visiting certain destinations and can build the destination's image (Chalip & Costa, 2005). Moreover, sport events have the potential to attract large numbers of diverse groups of tourists who are prepared to spend their discretionary incomes during their trips. Their visit to a destination for a particular event has significant influences on the economy both inside and outside the sporting arena (Zimbalist, 2010). For example, the 2002 FIFA World Cup brought enormous economic benefits for South Korea, generating an economic impact of US\$307 million of income and US\$713 million of value added from sport tourists' expenditure (Lee & Taylor, 2005). Thus, organizers of sport events have acknowledged the importance of sport tourists and the economic impact they can have on a community.

While the extant literature on event-related sport tourism has mainly focused on international or mega events (e.g., Getz & Page, 2016; Gibson, 1998), only a few studies have investigated the role of professional sport events in sport tourism (e.g., Taylor & Young, 2005). Professional sport events could be one of the key attractions for tourists. For instance, according to the results of Travel Activities & Motivation Survey (TAMS) in 2007, 12.5% of adult Americans and 11.7% of adult Canadians attended a professional sport event while on an out-of-town, overnight trip of one or more nights (TAMS, 2007a, 2007b). Another example from a European destination is that Manchester United Premier League games played at Old Trafford. These games regularly attract between 4,000 and 6,000 international tourists to the Greater Manchester area (Stevens & Williams, 2001).

Questions relating to the prominence of professional sport teams at a destination and the status of such professional sport events as tourist attractions currently remain largely unanswered (Hinch & Higham, 2008). Furthermore, how sport tourists perceive professional

sport events is still not clear in the literature of sport tourism. Attending such events while on trips mainly falls under experience-based tourism. Therefore, an individual's tourist experience of a professional game could be a critical antecedent of positive word-of-mouth and future behaviors (Pigeassou, 2004). It could be critical for destination marketers and policy planners of the local community to understand the demand of sport tourists.

The present study seeks to identify the potential role of professional sport events as a tourist attraction and explore the perspectives of international tourists toward these events at a destination. In this study, we selected Korean professional baseball as the site. These particular baseball games were selected for three reasons. First, the Republic of Korea (hereafter referred to as Korea) is now one of the most popular destinations in Asia. According to a report by the Korea Tourism Organization, the number of annual international visitor arrivals reached a historic high in 2014 with over 14 million arrivals (Korea Tourism Organization, 2014). In particular, the recent popularity of the Korean wave (a.k.a., "Hallyu") has been a key factor for the increased tourist arrivals.

Second, Korea has solidified its destination as a top sport tourism destination since holding the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games and the 2002 FIFA World Cup Championship (Lee & Taylor, 2005). Korea was nominated by World Travel Awards as Asia's leading sport tourism destination in 2012 (World Travel Awards, 2012). Furthermore, professional baseball is the most popular sport event in Korea and has become the biggest attraction for residents and international tourists (Tourist Attractions in South Korea, n.d.). However, there has been relatively little to no attention devoted to the experience of international tourists who attend sport events, though the event itself is recognized as a particular motive (Kim & Chalip, 2004).

Third, for various reasons international tourists have seldom been specifically considered as research respondents in the literature of sport tourism. By understanding their

reactions to this significant professional sport event, it may be possible to better assess the preferences of this growing number regarding other potential sport tourism destinations in Asia. Accordingly, the current study intensively focused on one specific sport (baseball) as a tourist attraction in Korea. The judicious selection of a key case study can provide insightful information beyond the particular attraction and apply to many analogous situations (Mason, 2002).

Literature Review

Sport tourism and professional sport

Sport tourism is defined as “leisure-based travel that takes individuals temporarily outside of their home communities to participate in physical activities, to watch physical activities, or to venerate attractions associated with physical activities” (Gibson, 1998, p. 49). There are three distinct types of sport tourism: (1) active sport tourism where tourists participate in sport during their trips; (2) event sport tourism where tourists watch sport during their travels; and (3) nostalgia sport tourism where tourists visit sports-related attractions such as halls of fame, famous stadia, or sports-themed cruises. Among the three categories, much of the extant literature has focused on event sport tourism. In particular, many scholars of sport tourism have paid considerable attention to “hallmark sport events” that usually refer to the international sport events that are held on an annual or quadrennial basis such as the Formula 1, FIFA World Cup Championships, or the Olympic Games (Hall, 1992). Hallmark sport events are considered to help in the development of the image of the city or country and tourist activity in subsequent years (Chalip & Costa, 2005; Hall, 1992; Kim, Kang, & Kim, 2014). Although some of the literature has characterized the positive economic and social outcomes of hallmark sport events, some scholars have recently recognized the downsides associated with these mega events (Allmers & Maennig, 2009; Getz & Page, 2016; Higham, 1999; Lee & Taylor, 2005). They argued that mega events tend

to be short-lived but have long-term consequences for a community that may result in huge debts for host communities.

While tourism associated with professional sports is classified under event sport tourism, it is often overlooked in the literature of sport tourism (Kurtzman, 2005). More specifically, this kind of sport event is also part of the “small-scale sport event,” which is defined as regular and local sporting competitions such as baseball, basketball, and ice hockey leagues at the professional or collegiate level (Higham, 1999). These events usually operate within existing infrastructures and, therefore, require minimal investment of public funds. Unlike mega sport events, small-scale sport events are more manageable regarding crowding and congestion and seem to have minimum influence of seasonality because of their regular basis. In that sense, it is suggested that small-scale sport events might be more cost-effective for host communities to provide tourist attractions as compared to mega sport events (Agha & Taks, 2015; Zimbalist, 2010). Therefore, the regular based professional sport events should work more closely with tourism agencies to actively promote the event and offer more information about the destination to potential sport tourists. The professional sport event has a symbiotic relationship with local community as it helps develop the regional image among sport tourists. For example, Taylor and Young (2005) investigated the impact of the presence of an National Football League (NFL) team in a community and argued that professional sport events play a significant role in attracting non-resident visitors who spend money in the local community both at and outside of the event they visit. Furthermore, these events have the potential to increase city revenue, community spirit, and tourist awareness of the local community.

Experience studies

Experience is a complex and overarching perception of tourists (Pearce, 2011b). Many tourism scholars have identified the important role of individual experience in the area of

tourism business (Bowen & Clarke, 2009; Pearce, 2011b). Positive experiential outcomes of tourists bolster destination's businesses and communities through increased expenditure, repeated visits, and/or positive referrals (Prebensen, Woo, Chen, & Uysal, 2012; Sharpley & Stone, 2014). However, it is challenging to assess and measure an individual's experience (Sharpley & Stone, 2014). Since the way how we measure to measure experience may influence the outcomes, researchers need to consider more detailed and complex analyses to comprehensively understand tourist experience (Pearce, 2011b). It also has been suggested that experience should be analyzed from the emic perspective of tourists rather than simple and positivistic measures such as check lists (Ribeiro, 2012).

Recently, Pearce (2011a) proposed the orchestrated approach to analyzing tourist experience. This approach is built on viewing tourist experience as coexisting and multiple components varying in their importance while on a trip. That is, tourist experience can be understood as analogous to listening to a functioning orchestra that there are multiple musical instrument contributing to the overall performance (Pearce, 2011a). An orchestrated performance contributes to various senses of experience including sensory inputs, affective reactions, and cognitive mechanisms that shape participant's overall perceptions and work together to create the whole experience. Thus, the orchestrated approach focuses on multiple experiential components that are interacting and fused influences to analyze tourist experience. In the current study, the orchestrated approach to assessing experiences will be accomplished by a qualitative analysis using Leximancer. It is a software that can identify different components of tourist experience by analyzing individual narratives (See the method section for detailed information on Leximancer). For example, Pearce and Wu (2016) adopted the orchestrated approach and used the Leximancer to assessing tourist experience toward a romantic themed attraction through online reviews. The results found that tourists have different aspects of experience when visiting the attraction. Moreover, Wu, Wall, and

Pearce (2014) examined tourists' experience in the same way and found different components of tourists' shopping experience when visiting the destination. Therefore, the present study examined the tourist experience using orchestrated approach and Leximancer software. The elements constituting experience were analyzed from emic, online evaluations of the tourist attraction of interest. All these evaluations reflect to tourists' perception and experience during their trips.

Experience of professional sport events

In a similar vein, the experience of sport event consists of various constituent elements. Based on the review of literature related to sport and tourism service, the experience of sport event can be primarily divided into two levels: core experience and peripheral experience (Byon, Zhang, & Baker, 2013; Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 2014; Lee & Won, 2012; Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2014). More specifically, the core experience of sport events is game itself (i.e., baseball game), indicating the performance of players. On the other hand, the peripheral experience of sport events is not directly related to the core elements but dose enhance the core value of a sport event and influence the spectators' overall game experience inside the stadium. This includes entire physical and social environment and various entertainment activities experienced by a spectator attending a sporting event. However, it should be noted that different kinds of sport events have different characteristics, and as such the core and peripheral experience may be varied as well. Tourists would have different experiences when attending different sport events. Understanding tourist experience of sport events has become a critical issue for marketers.

Internet information and user-generated content

With the rapid development of web 2.0 and Internet technology, individuals can easily access voluminous information and increasingly participate in two-way communication in the

digital world. The role of Internet users is not only to consume but also to create information on various websites. This phenomenon has resulted in the explosion of online user-generated content (UGC) on websites that host travel communities (e.g., Lonely Planet), tourist reviews (e.g., TripAdvisor), and social networks (e.g., Facebook). UGC, a part of big data, is described as “creative work that is published on publicly accessible websites and is created without a direct link to monetary profit or commercial interest” (Lu and Stepchenkova, 2015, p. 120). UGC websites empower individuals to add their “digital footprint” in different ways such as reviewing hotels and restaurant services, providing customer feedback, uploading pictures and videos, or recording travel experiences. The huge volume of UGC is suitable for tourism and hospitality research (Baka, 2016).

UGC is also considered to be an electronic form of word-of-mouth (eWOM; Baka, 2016) that has initially been defined as the extent to which an individual positively or negatively informs his or her friends, relatives, and peers of an event that has created a certain level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Baka, 2016). UGC is extensively used by customers of tourism and hospitality services both as information sources for making decisions (Barreda & Bilgihan, 2013; Song & Yoo, 2016). More importantly, it has substantial influence on the travel planning behavior of tourists (Baka, 2016; Song & Yoo, 2016; Wilson, Murphy, & Fierro, 2012). Individuals are increasingly seeking information from UGC websites to plan their trips and shape images and perceptions about destinations. For instance, a recent survey in the UK found that most tourists use online reviews from UGC websites to obtain information for planning their itinerary (eMarketer, 2015). Therefore, many tourism operators have been integrating these websites into their online business strategies. At the same time, UGC has been a significant source of data for researchers to collect and analyze tourist experiences and behavior (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015).

It is worth noting that some researchers are concerned about the credibility and validity

of UGC because of the subjective nature of online travel opinions and evaluations from complete strangers (Leng, 2013). However, evidence from many studies suggests that UGC has a higher level of trustworthiness of expressed opinions in comparison with commercial tourism information sources such as travel agents or accommodation operators (Barreda & Bilgihan, 2013; Wilson et al., 2012). The reason is that tourists spontaneously generate or share their experiences and views without monetary profit or commercial self-interest; therefore, UGC is considered to be unbiased and capable of offering real voices and insightful implications from the insiders' perspectives (Barreda & Bilgihan, 2013). Additionally, it provides rich, authentic, and numerous perceptions of a destination (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015). It can help tourism marketers to better understand tourist opinions, experiences, and attitudes toward destinations (Baka, 2016; Wu et al., 2014). Moreover, UGC also has some advantages for researchers, including data availability, speed, and simplicity of data collection. Given these features, the current study collects and analyzes UGC to gain valuable insights into tourist behavior.

Research Context and Method

Research context: Korean professional baseball games

The Korean Professional Baseball League, governed by the Korean Baseball Organization (KBO), is the most popular professional sport in the country. Since its introduction in 1982, this league has drawn more than 100 million spectators. In particular, the excellent performance of international competitions has taken the popularity of Korean professional baseball to the next level. The number of baseball fans attending the stadiums has surpassed 6 million between 2011 and 2015. Although the role of Korean professional baseball games as an attraction for international tourists is still not clear, Kwon, Lee, and Cho (2012) argued that the atmosphere, service, and performance provided at the games could be essential factors that affect their intent to watch. The current study selected Jamsil Stadium

located in Seoul City for four reasons. First, Jamsil Stadium is a landmark of Korean baseball and the home of two professional teams, LG Twins and Doosan Bears. Second, its annual attendance accounts for over 30 percent of the total attendance of the Korean Professional Baseball League. Third, it is the most accessible stadium for international tourists due to its convenient location. Fourth, according to TripAdvisor, visiting Jamsil baseball stadium to watch baseball games has been recognized as one of the must-do activities while traveling in Korea (TripAdvisor, 2015).

Information source and data collection

The voluntary reviews of tourists on TripAdvisor were collected for this study. Among the various sites (e.g., Google reviews, Lonely Planet, and Virtual Tourists), TripAdvisor, the largest travel community in the virtual world, was selected as the source of data because of its high website traffic, which reaches 375 million unique monthly visitors with more than 250 million reviews and opinions. More importantly, TripAdvisor's terms of use allow for the use of its content for research purposes (TripAdvisor, 2015).

Tourists' reviews of their experiences of watching Korean baseball were collected for this study. There were 244 reviews in various languages on TripAdvisor on December 31, 2015, with the earliest review posted on January 26, 2011. After removing the non-English reviews, 152 reviews remained for further analysis. Besides the content of the reviews, additional information on the satisfaction level of the tourist, date of the post, and country of origin based on TripAdvisor's classification were also collected for analysis. Each review was coded as a case in an Excel document. Consequently, this resulted in 152 review units with a total of 15,218 words (see Table 1). In this study, the number of reviews is adequate for Leximancer analysis because of the large volumes of words in the data set (Pearce & Wu, 2016).

[Insert Table 1]

Data analysis through Leximancer

The data collected from TripAdvisor were analyzed by Leximancer (version 4.0), which is a relatively new computer-assisted qualitative analysis software and increasingly used in recent research. Leximancer is a text analytics tool that analyzes the content of textual documents in electronic format and explores the extracted information statistically and visually. It has significant advantages over other qualitative analysis software packages for analyzing textual documents. First, the technique can analyze large volumes of textual data in an efficient way. Second, Leximancer can quickly identify the concepts and themes in an exploratory way. Third, it can analyze the data without pre-existing assumptions about the meaning of the words, and therefore, it reduces the possible subjective bias from the researcher. Fourth, due to the minimal manual intervention from the researcher, the outcomes from the Leximancer may, therefore, offer different ways of looking at the data which researchers could not discover in a manual coding style (Angus, Rintel, & Wiles, 2013; Sotiriadou, Brouwers, & Le, 2014). Given the advantages of Leximancer approach, it overcomes some common problems of qualitative research, such as subjective coding, doubtful inter-coder reliability and disputable interpretations because it is highly consistent in the analytical process and requires minimal manual intervention from researchers.

Leximancer is a software designed to analyze the text “from words to meaning to insight.” The Leximancer analysis is technically carried out in an unsupervised way, and the method can be considered a form of text mining. This program helps researchers efficiently gain insight and comprehension of natural language text data (e.g., interviews, reviews, and focus group transcript). In essence, Leximancer uses a quantitative way to conduct qualitative analysis. The analytical procedure of Leximancer includes three phases. First, it identifies a ranked list of concepts using semantic and relational extraction from the information text by calculating the frequency and the co-concurrence of words. Second, the

program uses these concepts to propagate a thesaurus of words that is closely related to the concepts, and thereby producing semantic and relational content around the concept. Third, Leximancer groups the concepts into theme level based on how often they occur together in the block of text (Angus et al., 2013; Crofts & Bisman, 2010; Smith & Humphreys, 2006). Figure 1 illustrates the simplified process of semantic pattern extraction and the relationship between words, concepts, and themes in Leximancer analysis. This approach has been used in 1,050 academic publications to date (till December 2015, see <http://info.leximancer.com/>) and in numerous tourism research (Pearce & Wu, 2016; Tseng, Wu, Morrison, Zhang, & Chen, 2015; Wu et al., 2014).

[Insert Figure 1]

The final output of Leximancer provides an overarching conceptual map that visually represents the main concepts contained within the text data and information about how they are associated (Crofts & Bisman, 2010). In the concept maps, the concepts are shown as small gray nodes, and they are grouped into themes as the larger colored circles (see examples in Figures 1). The relative position of the circles and dots and their distance from each other indicates the strength of the semantic and relational connections between those concepts in the textual document (Leximancer, 2015). However, it should be noted that the size of the colored circles does not imply the importance of the theme. It has been argued that visual concept maps and statistical outputs generated from Leximancer help in gaining greater insights and comprehension of the textual data of tourists, such as reviews or comments.

Findings

Thirty-four concepts were extracted by the Leximancer program from 152 reviews of TripAdvisor in the first stage. Stemming algorithm was employed to identify the headword for initial thesaurus items, and then the concept list was generated. However, not all these

concepts are presented in the following results as it was necessary to refine the major concept list (Crofts & Bisman, 2010). According to the guidelines by Wu *et al.* (2014), the co-occurrence frequency and meaning of concepts generated from the analysis should be carefully assessed, and only significant concepts should be retained. Researchers should remove the concepts that were deemed to be unhelpful in addressing the research questions. Accordingly, concepts that were simply destination labels (e.g., Seoul and Jamsil) were not considered as meaningful for assessing tourist experiences. Similarly for some descriptive words about the time of the performance (e.g., “during,” “take,” and “time”), and others that were not meaningful or were misleading (e.g., “won” and “bring”). Finally, 22 major concepts remained for further analysis (see Table 2).

[Insert Table 2]

Tourists’ overall experiences of watching Korean professional baseball games

Figure 3 demonstrates the concept map produced by Leximancer. The theme map consists of the 21 concepts (shown as small gray nodes) that are grouped into three dominant themes (indicated by the larger colored circles). The three themes and their connectivity rates (in parentheses) were “game” (100%), “stadium” (63%), and “team” (51%) in order of importance. These three dominant themes represent tourists’ baseball spectating experiences in Seoul. The connectivity rate percentages from Leximancer were calculated using the connectedness of concepts within these themes and indicated the relative importance of these themes within the dataset (Leximancer, 2015).

[Insert Figure 2]

“Game” was the most significant theme found in the narratives of international tourists who watched a Korean baseball game. This single word was mentioned 201 times in the 152 reviews. It described the general characteristics of Korean baseball games. It was not surprising as the data were taken from reviews of baseball games. As such, the comments

revolved around the game itself, including the concepts of “game,” “baseball,” and “Korean.” Moreover, this theme included the concepts of “fans,” “sports,” “experience,” and “love.” Multiple reviews revealed that watching a Korean baseball game is a must-do activity to experience Korean culture and enjoy the fun atmosphere for both sports fans and non-sports fans. The following comments are some typical examples from tourists’ reviews:

If you have never been to a Korean Baseball game, this is a MUST see thing to do. The Korean baseball experience is a bit different.

Attending a Korean baseball game is an experience unlike any other baseball game you have ever attended. The Koreans redefine the idea of exuberant fans and the atmosphere in the stadium is absolutely amazing.

Even if you are not a sports fan you must go to at least one game to experience something truly cultural in Korea.

What an atmosphere. Koreans definitely take their baseball games in differently from Americans.

This was one of the more astounding activities I took part in. I loved the in-game experience, so different than anything in Canada or the US.

The second theme suggested by Leximancer was “stadium,” which links to the concepts of “food,” “tickets,” “beer,” “seats,” “cheap,” “prices,” and “people.” The word “stadium” was mentioned 113 times in the 152 reviews. This theme demonstrated the comfort level of

watching baseball games in the stadium. For example, tourists can purchase cheap food and drink outside or inside the stadium while watching a game. Moreover, many tourists mentioned that the stadium facilities provide excellent value for the price, and they are surprised that the ticket prices for seats with a good view are inexpensive. In general, watching baseball games in the stadium offers great value to tourists. Some examples of reviews concerning the stadium were as follows:

Also, plenty of food and alcohol is on sale both inside and outside the stadium, and you get in and out privileges, and, you can bring alcohol from outside into the stadium!

Clean and spacious stadium. Unlike stadiums in some countries, this stadium allows you to bring in your own food and drink.

The stadium was full packed and accommodated a large number of people. Stalls of food items were present and amazingly you can get any food item of your choice from the stalls set up there.

The tickets are cheap (compared to US prices), and the stadium itself feels intimate even in the outfield. (The outfield tickets are only 8,000 won, and it's free seating wherever you'd like in the section!)

What a great experience to watch baseball at this stadium. The tickets are cheap (About \$8) and once you get inside there is no issues with exorbitant drinks and food prices.

“Team” emerged as the last theme in the tourist experiences of watching Korean

professional baseball games. This theme was used 61 times in the reviews and highly connected to the concepts of “home,” “cheering,” “cheerleaders,” and “crowd.” It generally relates to various team-based cheering behaviors in the crowd. In particular, the cheerleaders of the home team lead the crowd to perform different organized cheers during the game. Many tourists were impressed with fanatic cheering behavior, including chanting songs and dancing, for supporting a favorite team. It led to a different cultural experience of entertainment for tourists even though they did not know the Korean language. Some tourists also mentioned that they did not experience such a cheering style while watching baseball games in the USA. Typical reviews included:

Regardless of the fact that I never know who any of the players are, the real action is in the crowd and the energy generated by the cheerleaders, particularly the male cheerleader who leads crowd chants. Every player has a song and the crowd never seems to stop making noise, whether it's singing, clapping noisemakers, or cheering for a hit.

Watching Korean baseball is an interesting cultural experience for an American. The Korean fans are continually cheering for their team and are organized with a leader, drums, dancing girls and noise makers.

The atmosphere at the park is a lot of fun. There are unified cheers that are led by the team's sponsored cheerleader (usually a guy dressed up in the team's uniform with white gloves and a whistle) and a lot of the fans get involved in the cheers.

Singing, dancing and cheering for their team in a way that I did not experience when

watching Yankees in NY. In Seoul the supporters spread the joy really well and I found myself singing (as well as I could) to several team songs – in Korean.

Each team has its own cheer squad which adds to the event, there are the traditional "cheerleader" girls but also men, drums, costumed mascots and that sort of stuff. I found it made the experience a lot more interesting and wish I'd asked for seats closer to them.

In sum, the findings showed that, at an overall level, international tourists had pleasurable experiences of watching Korean baseball games. As reported in Table 1, most tourists rated their experiences as “very good” and “excellent.” More importantly, many international tourists recommended watching baseball games as the must-do cultural activity in Korea even though they did not understand Korean. The stadium provided a comfortable environment for tourists to enjoy food and drink while watching a game. Moreover, the unique cheering style and enthusiastic spectators added value and an entertainment factor. Generally, tourists felt that the experience of watching a baseball game in Korea was truly worth the ticket price.

Discussion and conclusion

Event sport tourism is considered one of the most important elements of many tourist experiences. However, the role of professional sport events of a destination in attracting international tourists is still not clear. This study primarily explored international tourists' experiences of attending sport events. More specifically, the study adopted an emic research style to approach international tourists' experience from their perspective of attending local professional sport events. The case considered was of Korean professional baseball games, a popular spectator sport in Korea. The voluntary reviews of tourists posted on TripAdvisor

were collected as the data source. Leximancer software was adopted to analyze the unstructured language. While the collected narratives were analyzed inductively using Leximancer, we have been able to interpret the results with the help of the existing theoretical knowledge related to overall tourist perception and experiences.

This study provides evidence that professional sport events can be significant tourist attractions for a destination and offer pleasurable experiences for international tourists who like baseball or sport in general. The Leximancer analysis found that their experiences were built on three significant themes, “game,” “stadium,” and “team.” Moreover, most of concepts of these themes are mainly relevant to the core and peripheral elements of sport events (Byon et al., 2013; Kotler et al., 2014; Lee & Won, 2012; Mullin et al., 2014). First, the theme “game” pertains to the core elements of sport events, indicating the distinctive atmosphere of watching Korean professional baseball games. International tourists are especially impressed with the unique special features during the game and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. It results in positive emotions and satisfactory viewership. Additionally, the event provides a way to better understand Korean culture for international tourists who may be sport fans or non-sport fans.

The second theme “stadium” refers to the physical environment and several services in the stadium which are related to various peripheral elements of sport events (Byon et al., 2013; Kotler et al., 2014; Lee & Won, 2012; Mullin et al., 2014). For example, the concepts of stadium and seats represent the experience of physical surrounding and facility qualities. Many international tourists are satisfied with the convenient and comfortable facilities of the stadium and surprised at the inexpensive ticket price (approximately US\$10), which is much cheaper than the price at American major league games (approximately US\$25). Moreover, international tourists are favorably impressed by concessions in the stadium. They are delighted with various food choices inside and outside the stadium.

Finally, the theme “team” represents the fanatical and enthusiastic cheering behavior for a favorite team. In particular, the cheerleaders play a critical role in leading and entertaining the crowd with dances and chants during the match. Although foreign tourists may not understand Korean, they can still participate in different forms of cheering behavior with local fans. For example, each player in the Korean professional baseball league has his own cheering song. It engages attendees in ardent cheering battles driven by cheerleaders. The team-based cheering behavior may break the language barrier to let the international tourists get involved in the game. These findings suggest that baseball may be a powerful symbol of Korea’s culture. Although the history of baseball in Korea is mainly influenced by America and Japan, from the perspective of international tourists, it seems that Korean baseball has its own characteristics. The experience of sport culture could influence the choice of the destination and intentions of (re)visiting and recommending to others (Pigeassou, 2004).

The findings are closely related to the core and peripheral attributes contributing to the overall experience of international tourists. However, it should be noted that tourists usually post the experience that is particularly impressive for them. As such, tourists may not share the experience that is regarded as minor for them. In sum, this study identifies the more terms contributing to their experience that tourists use through online communication as compared to traditional structured questions of surveys. The orchestrated approach to examining tourists’ experience of attending baseball games contained various terms relating to a range of emotional terms, perception, and information of tourists’ recall. Moreover, these terms connected to each other and together contributed to the overall tourists’ experience as illustrated in Figure 1. This approach simultaneously explores the multiple and coexisting experiential components of tourists and may indeed provide researchers a better understanding of tourist patterns toward a destination. A possible stimulus to this field might lie in measuring the experiential comments and subcomponents separately and then

determining how each component influences overall tourist satisfaction because of most of tourists' reviews were positive in this study.

Moreover, the findings imply that tourism marketers should not neglect the existing professional sport events as a way to attract international tourists. These events operate with existing infrastructures and at minimal cost, and therefore, the tickets price may be cheaper and more affordable for international tourists as compared to mega sport events. Moreover, professional sport events usually have a longer regular season, and therefore, international tourist can attend these events with smaller influence of seasonality. In addition, because the professional league of a destination usually plays an important role in destination's culture, it provides a medium for international tourists to experience local culture. Although the game experience is not new for domestic fans, it could be a featured attraction for international tourists. Consequently, it results in more beneficial outcomes for the local community (Lee & Taylor, 2005). It must be noted that the style, characteristics, image, and promotion could influence the status of a professional league as a tourist attraction (Hinch & Higham, 2008).

However, this study is not without limitations. Because of the limitation of Leximancer, only reviews written in English were analyzed in this study. Thus, it did not consider the experiences of tourists who have submitted reviews in different languages. It is possible that these visitors are from a different region and may offer a different perspective because of cultural differences. Without diversity in the sample, there may be limited opportunities to seek out deviant cases and identify a full range of factors and characteristics for this study (Mason, 2002). The second limitation is missing tourist information of gender and age, and thus, this study did not examine diverse subjects across these parameters. Lastly, the use of TripAdvisor data may be subject to self-selection bias.

In summary, the current study provides the further understanding for the extant knowledge from the context of a professional sport, such as Korean professional baseball,

that international tourists are impressed by and enjoy the games offered as part of the Korean cultural style of sport tourism. For many international tourists, local professional sport events may offer a pleasurable experience while on their trips to a destination. Therefore, tourism marketers should cooperate with professional event organizers to come up with strategies for attracting international tourists.

References

- Agha, N., & Taks, M. (2015). A Theoretical comparison of the economic impact of large and small events. *International Journal of Sport Finance*, 10(3), 199-216.
- Allmers, S., & Maennig, W. (2009). Economic impacts of the FIFA Soccer World Cups in France 1998, Germany 2006, and outlook for South Africa 2010. *Eastern Economic Journal*, 35(4), 500-519.
- Angus, D., Rintel, S., & Wiles, J. (2013). Making sense of big text: A visual-first approach for analysing text data using Leximancer and Discursis. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 16(3), 261-267.
- Baka, V. (2016). The becoming of user-generated reviews: Looking at the past to understand the future of managing reputation in the travel sector. *Tourism Management*, 53, 148-162.
- Barreda, A., & Bilgihan, A. (2013). An analysis of user-generated content for hotel experiences. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 4(3), 263-280.
- Bowen, D., & Clarke, J. (2009). *Contemporary tourist behaviour: Yourself and others and tourists*. Wallingford, Oxon: CABI.
- Byon, K. K., Zhang, J. J., & Baker, T. A. (2013). Impact of core and peripheral service quality on consumption behavior of professional team sport spectators as mediated by perceived value. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 13(2), 232-263.
- Chalip, L., & Costa, C. A. (2005). Sport event tourism and the destination brand: Towards a general theory. *Sport in Society*, 8(2), 218-237.
- Crofts, K., & Bisman, J. (2010). Interrogating accountability: An illustration of the use of Leximancer software for qualitative data analysis. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, 7(2), 180-207.
- eMarketer. (2015). Online reviews influence travel-related purchases in the UK. Retrieved September 3, 2015, from <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Online-Reviews-Influence-Travel-Related-Purchases-UK/1012664#sthash.Nx8AmooV.dpuf>
- Getz, D., & Page, S. J. (2016). Progress and prospects for event tourism research. *Tourism Management*, 52, 593-631.
- Gibson, H. J. (1998). Sport tourism: A critical analysis of research. *Sport Management Review*, 1(1), 45-76.
- Hall, C. M. (1992). *Hallmark tourist events: Impacts, management and planning*. London, UK: Belhaven Press.
- Higham, J. (1999). Commentary-sport as an avenue of tourism development: An analysis of the positive and negative impacts of sport tourism. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 2(1), 82-90.
- Hinch, T., & Higham, J. (2008). Sport tourism: A framework for research. In M. Weed (Ed.), *Sport & Tourism: A Reader* (pp. 40-56). New York: Routledge.

- Kim, J., Kang, J. H., & Kim, Y.-K. (2014). Impact of mega sport events on destination image and country image. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 23(3), 161.
- Kim, N.-S., & Chalip, L. (2004). Why travel to the FIFA World Cup? Effects of motives, background, interest, and constraints. *Tourism Management*, 25(6), 695-707.
- Korea Tourism Organization. (2014). Tourism statistics. Retrieved January 27, 2015, from <http://kto.visitkorea.or.kr/kor/notice/data/statis/profit/board/view.kto?id=423369&isNotice=false&instanceId=294&rnum=1>
- Kotler, P. T., Bowen, J. R., & Makens, J. (2014). *Marketing for hospitality and tourism* (6th ed.). MA, Boston Pearson.
- Kurtzman, J. (2005). Sports tourism categories. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 10(1), 15-20.
- Kwon, K.-W., Lee, K. Y., & Cho, K. M. (2012). Factors affecting foreign spectators' intention to attend the Korean professional baseball league games. *International Journal of Human Movement Science*, 6(1), 175-186.
- Lee, C.-K., & Taylor, T. (2005). Critical reflections on the economic impact assessment of a mega-event: The case of 2002 FIFA World Cup. *Tourism Management*, 26(4), 595-603.
- Lee, C., & Won, D. (2012). Understanding segmented spectator markets of a Minor League Baseball (MiLB) team. *Event Management*, 16(4), 351-362.
- Leng, H. K. (2013). Methodological issues in using data from social networking sites. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 16(9), 686-689.
- Leximancer. (2015). Leximancer FAQ. Retrieved July 15, 2015, from <https://www.leximancer.com/faq/>
- Lu, W., & Stepchenkova, S. (2015). User-generated content as a research mode in tourism and hospitality applications: Topics, methods, and software. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 24(2), 119-154.
- Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative researching* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Mullin, B. J., Hardy, S., & Sutton, W. (2014). *Sport Marketing* (4th ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Pearce, P. L. (2011a). *Tourist behaviour and the contemporary world*. UK, Bristol: Channel View Publications.
- Pearce, P. L. (2011b). *Tourist behaviour and the contemporary world* (Vol. 51): Channel View Publications.
- Pearce, P. L., & Wu, M.-Y. (2016). Tourists' evaluation of a romantic themed attraction: Expressive and instrumental issues. *Journal of Travel Research*, 55(2), 220-232.
- Pigeassou, C. (2004). Contribution to the definition of sport tourism. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 9(3), 287-289.
- Prebensen, N. K., Woo, E., Chen, J. S., & Uysal, M. (2012). Motivation and involvement as antecedents of the perceived value of the destination experience. *Journal of Travel*

- Research*, 0047287512461181.
- Ribeiro, N. F. (2012). Using concomitant freelisting to analyze perceptions of tourism experiences. *Journal of Travel Research*, 0047287511431322.
- Sharpley, R., & Stone, P. (2014). *Contemporary tourist experience: Concepts and consequences*. NY: Routledge.
- Smith, A. E., & Humphreys, M. S. (2006). Evaluation of unsupervised semantic mapping of natural language with Leximancer concept mapping. *Behavior research methods*, 38(2), 262-279.
- Song, S., & Yoo, M. (2016). The role of social media during the pre-purchasing stage. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 7(1), 84-99.
- Sotiriadou, P., Brouwers, J., & Le, T.-A. (2014). Choosing a qualitative data analysis tool: A comparison of NVivo and Leximancer. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 17(2), 218-234.
- Stevens, T., & Williams, C. (2001). Stadia and tourism-related facilities. *Travel & Tourism Analyst*, 2, 59-73.
- TAMS. (2007a). Canadian activity profile: Attending professional sports events while on trips. Retrieved December 9, 2015, from http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/research/travel_activities/CDN_TAMS_2006_Professional_Sporting_Events_Nov2007.pdf
- TAMS. (2007b). U.S. activity profile: Attending professional sports events while on trips. Retrieved December 9, 2015, from http://culture.alberta.ca/tourism/research-and-statistics/research/travel-activities-and-motivation-survey-national/pdf/us_tams_sports_July2007.pdf
- Taylor, S. L., & Young, M. (2005). A preliminary investigation of NFL games and self-drive tourism: Marketing opportunities for accommodation providers. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, 6(3), 47-63.
- Tourist Attractions in South Korea. (n.d.). *Detination 360*. Retrieved December 8, 2015, from <http://www.destination360.com/asia/south-korea/things-to-do>
- TripAdvisor. (2015). TripAdvisor website terms, conditions and notices. Retrieved July 12, 2015, from <http://www.tripadvisor.com/pages/terms.html>
- Tseng, C., Wu, B., Morrison, A. M., Zhang, J., & Chen, Y.-C. (2015). Travel blogs on China as a destination image formation agent: A qualitative analysis using Leximancer. *Tourism Management*, 46, 347-358.
- Wilson, A., Murphy, H., & Fierro, J. C. (2012). Hospitality and travel: The nature and implications of user-generated content. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 53(3), 220-228.
- World Travel Awards. (2012). Asia's leading sports tourism destination 2012. Retrieved December 2, 2015, from <http://www.worldtravelawards.com/award-asias-leading-sports-tourism-destination-2012>
- Wu, M.-Y., Wall, G., & Pearce, P. L. (2014). Shopping experiences: International tourists in

Beijing's Silk Market. *Tourism Management*, 41, 96-106.

Zimbalist, A. S. (2010). *May the best team win: Baseball economics and public policy*:
Brookings Institution Press.