

Effects of Chinese Sport Tourists' Perceptions toward Service Quality in Jeju Island

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Abstract

Purpose: This study proposed a research model to examine the effect of the service quality of the sport tourism industry on Chinese tourists' satisfaction and future intention and subjective well-being in Jeju Island.

Methodology: Data were recruited from 349 Chinese tourists, who participated in sport activities in Jeju Island.

Findings: The findings indicate the physical environment quality and outcome quality have positive influences on tourist satisfaction. Tourist satisfaction significantly and positively influenced tourists' future behavioral intentions and subjective well-being. All Chinese respondents positively evaluated the service quality in Jeju Island.

Value: This study contributes to the understanding of the sports tourism industry targeting Chinese tourists in Jeju Island.

1. Introduction

Jeju Island is one of the most popular destinations for Chinese tourists. In 2014, approximately 2,859,000 Chinese tourists visited Jeju, accounting for 86% of the island's 3,328,300 foreign visitors (Jeju Tourism Organization, 2015). The sports tourism industry is also one of the major attractions in Jeju Island, offering many leisure, sports, and recreational activities, including golfing, horse riding, hunting, fishing, and mountain climbing (Jeju Special Self-Governing Provincial Tourism Association, 2015). Although sporadic studies have addressed Jeju Island as an important destination for the Korea tourism industry (Park & Njite, 2010; Seo, Park, & Yu, 2009), little attention has been paid to understanding the role of sports tourism as a destination attraction for international tourists.

Because the sports tourism industry is a service industry, it is strongly influenced by the quality of services (Thwaites & Chadwick, 2005). Many studies have suggested service quality and tourist satisfaction result in higher levels of tourist loyalty, which lead to economic gains for destination and tourism enterprises (Chen & Chen, 2010; Chen & Tsai, 2008; Hutchinson, Lai, & Wang, 2009). Similarly, it has been suggested that tourism can bring psychological benefits for tourists (Dann, 2012). However, studies examining antecedents of psychological benefits are limited (McCabe & Johnson, 2013). Also, only a few studies have investigated the economic and socio-psychological effects of service quality on tourist satisfaction and future intention to revisit Jeju Island.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore how Chinese tourists' perception of service quality toward sports activities in Jeju Island affects their satisfaction and future behavior. Subjective well-being is a socio-psychological outcome, and future behavioral intention is one of the important economic outcomes. Understanding Chinese tourists' subjective well-being and future behavioral intention can provide various implications for practitioners of sports tourism industry in Jeju Island. This study attempts to (1) explore the relationships among service quality, tourist satisfaction, and its outcomes—future behavioral intentions and subjective well-being; and (2) evaluate Chinese sports tourists' perceptions of service quality toward sports

activities in Jeju Island.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Sports Tourism

From a broader point of view (Higham, 2007; Standeven & Knop, 1998), sports tourism is described as traveling for non-commercial reasons or business. It is also defined as all forms of active and passive involvement in sports activities in a casual or organized way for non-commercial or business/commercial reasons that necessitate travel away from home and work locality (Standeven & Knop, 1998). Gibson (1998) has proposed three recognizable types of sports tourism: visiting sports-related attractions, watching sporting events, and participating sports activities. In this study, we concentrate on active participation, also referred to as “active sports tourism.”

2.2 Service Quality

Although studies on service quality in the business world began in the early 1980s, the advantages of services quality in sports and recreational industry were noticed by researchers and practitioners in recent years. Service quality has attracted significant interest in sports marketing research (K Alexandris, Dimitriadis, & Kasiara, 2001; K Alexandris, Zahariadis, Tsozbatzoudis, & Grouios, 2004). There are distinguished studies regarding service qualities within sport occasions as well (Kelley & Turley, 2001; Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008; Tsiotras, & Tsiotras, 2006).

However, valid and reliable measurement of service quality has been a controversial issue in the service marketing literature (Brady & Cronin Jr, 2001). Most studies applied the SERVQUAL model, developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985). However, some have argued the SERVQUAL model is not fully applicable to sport, leisure, and recreational settings (Kouthouris & Alexandris, 2005). An alternative model, proposed by Brady and Cronin Jr (2001) and Rust and Oliver (1993), has been extensively applied to outdoor leisure research (Alexandris et al., 2004; Theodorakis, Kaplanidou, & Karabaxoglou, 2015). Theodorakis et al. (2015) posit three-dimension assessment of outdoor leisure services: outcome quality, interaction quality, and physical environment quality. “Outcome quality” relates to the fulfillment of a customer’s expectations after participating in an activity. “Interaction quality” refers to customers’ experience with activity personnel. “Physical environment quality” relates to service components, such as ambient conditions, social factors, and design of the activity.

2.3 Tourist Satisfaction

Satisfaction may be the most comprehensively researched variable in tourism literature. Satisfaction has been defined as the discrepancy between perceived performance and prior expectation after consumption (Oliver, 1980). According to Chen and Chen (2010), within the context of tourism, satisfaction is defined by the gap between pre-travel expectations and post-travel evaluations.

Satisfaction is viewed as a separate, but related, concept of service quality (Spreng & Mackoy, 1996). Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2006) assert satisfaction is the consumer fulfillment response. It is a judgment that a product, service feature, or the product or service provides a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment (Zeithaml et al., 2006, p.86). Various studies in the service marketing literature have demonstrated these constructs are closely related (Alexandris et al., 2001; Spreng & Mackoy, 1996).

2.4 Future Behavioral Intentions

In the tourism literature, it is an acceptable notion that, when the product, services, or other resources offered by travel destinations satisfy tourists, this could result in repeated visits and positive spoken words that influence colleagues and/or relatives (Meng, Tepanon, & Uysal, 2008). Several practitioners and researchers have closely examined the effect of tourist satisfaction on future behavioral intentions, and customer dissatisfaction and satisfaction have come to be seen as the driving force that shapes customers’ future behaviors and attitudes (Cole & Scott, 2004).

2.5 Subjective Well-being

Subjective well-being (SWB) has been defined as a broad concept that includes individual affective and cognitive reactions to their daily life (Deiner, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Myers & Diener, 1995; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Specifically, SWB includes individual emotional responses (e.g., happiness), satisfaction with specific life domains, and satisfaction (overall or general life satisfaction) (Deiner et al., 1999; Dolan, Peasgood, & White, 2008; Frijters, Johnston, & Shields, 2008).

The extensive review of SWB studies has proven that many factors specifically affect SWB (Deiner et al., 1999;

Myers & Diener, 1995; Ryan & Deci, 2001). The processes that support the relationship between SWB and leisure have also been described (Brajša-Žganec, Merkaš, & Šverko, 2011).

Higher levels of sport and leisure participation have been linked to greater levels of SWB (Lemon, Bengtson, & Peterson, 1972). Earlier studies demonstrated a positive relationship between SWB and participation in physical leisure activities (Leung & Lee, 2005) and health-associated quality of living (Vuillemin et al., 2005).

The conceptual model and hypotheses were proposed based on the literature review (Figure 1).

Hypothesis 1: Physical environment quality will significantly influence tourist satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Interaction quality will significantly influence tourist satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: Outcome quality will significantly influence tourist satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4: Tourist satisfaction will significantly affect future behavioral intentions.

Hypothesis 5: Tourist satisfaction will significantly affect subjective well-being.

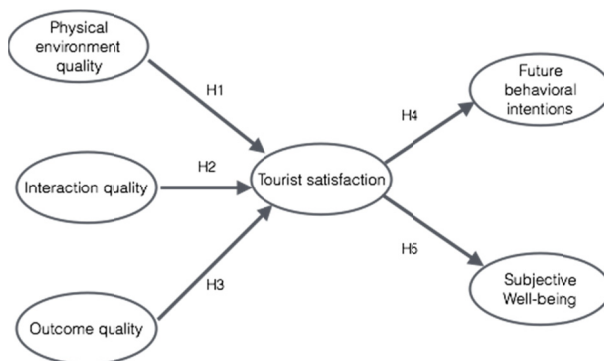


Figure 1. Conceptual mode

3. Method

3.1 Research Participants and Procedure

Chinese tourists, who have either recently or in the past participated in sports activities in Jeju Island (such as hiking, horse riding, or golfing) were targeted in this study. Data were collected in two stages by onsite and online surveys. The pilot survey was conducted in September 2015; 120 questionnaires were distributed, and 110 were selected as a final valid sample by removing the ten questionnaires with insufficient answers. The major survey was conducted from October to November 2015. The online survey was an Internet questionnaire distributed through the Chinese website <http://www.sojump.com>, and the onsite survey was conducted in Jeju Island. After removing 32 invalid questionnaires because of missing information, 349 questionnaires were selected as the final valid sample.

Of the respondents, 113 (32.4%) were male, and 236 (67.6%) were female. Most respondents (85.7%) were between 20 and 29 years of age ($n = 245$, 70.2%). Hiking was the most popular sporting activity among the respondents, cited by 42.0% ($n = 268$), followed by biking ($n = 74$, 11.6%) and swimming ($n = 63$, 9.9%). For participation spending, 32.7% of respondents spent less than 500 RMB (approximately 78 USD) on participation, and 28.7% spent 500–1000 RMB (approximately 78–157 USD). Finally, most respondents were first-time visitors to Jeju Island ($n = 272$, 77.9%), and the length of stay for most respondents was from 4 to 6 days ($n = 201$, 57.6%).

Table 1. Demographic information

	Concepts	N	%
Gender	Male	113	32.4
	Female	236	67.6
Age	Under 20	12	3.4
	20's	245	70.2
	30's	54	15.5
	40's	19	5.4
	Over 50	19	5.4

	Hiking	268	42.0
	Golfing	15	2.4
	Horse riding	37	5.8
	Biking	74	11.6
	Shooting	14	2.2
Participation activities (Multiple responses)	Speed driving	16	2.5
	Swimming	63	9.9
	Surfing	30	4.7
	Scuba diving	27	4.2
	Fishing	30	4.7
	Sky diving	14	2.2
	Others	50	7.8
		Below 500	114
Participation cost (RMB)	500–1000	100	28.7
	1000–1500	45	12.9
	Above 1500	90	25.8
Number of visits	None	272	77.9
	1–3 times	74	21.2
	Over 4 times	3	0.9
Length of Stay (days)	1–3	119	34.1
	4–6	201	57.6
	Over 7	29	8.3

3.2 Research Instrument

The survey questionnaire was composed of 27 items. The service quality variable was measured by an 11-item and 3-dimension scale proposed by Alexandris et al. (2004) and Brady and Cronin Jr (2001). The scale of tourist satisfaction was a three-item measure developed by Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, and Bryant (1996). Future behavioral intentions (3 items) were adopted and modified from Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, and Zeithaml (1993). A three-item scale of subjective well-being developed by Theodorakis et al. (2015) was used to assess the perception of experiential purchases on people's happiness. All scale items were evaluated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree*. Also, six items with demographic information questions were included. One open-ended question "What disappointed you most during your sports tour in Jeju Island?" was included in the questionnaire.

To increase the accuracy of the translation, a professional translator translated the original English version into Chinese, and other translators did a back translation into English from Chinese. In addition, native speakers checked the Chinese and English versions. This procedure was performed following the guidelines for blind back translation by Hsu, Kang, and Lam (2006).

3.3 Data Analysis

In the data analysis procedures, descriptive, inferential, and thematic analyses were employed to answer the research questions. The SPSS 20.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) program and AMOS 19.0 (Analysis of Moment Structure) software were used to analyze the data.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Confirmatory Factor Analyses

The measurement model revealed an adequate model fit and satisfied all criteria suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999), $\chi^2 = 422.729$, $df = 155$, $\chi^2/df = 2.727$, CFI = .957, TLI = .947, RMSEA = .070.

Next, the reliability of the structural model was examined by CR and AVE values (Table 2). All CR values satisfied the criterion (0.70) set by Fornell and Larcker (1981). The CR values ranged from 0.820 (physical environment quality) to 0.922 (subjective well-being). All AVE values were also above 0.50, which exceeded the recommended level proposed by Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham (2006). The AVE values ranged from 0.536 (physical environment quality) to 0.798 (subjective well-being). Therefore, the structural model showed adequate reliability. Also, discriminant validity was examined by correlation analysis among the latent variables

(Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The correlation analysis results (Table 3) showed none of the correlations were above the suggested 0.85 cut-off value (Kline, 2016). The highest correlation was 0.794 between subjective well-being and tourist satisfaction, showing the structural model had good measurement properties.

Table 2. Summary results of measurement model

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's alpha	Factor loadings	CR	AVE
PQ	4	.810	.671–.750	.820	.536
IQ	4	.914	.807–.882	.904	.703
OQ	3	.902	.854–.893	.916	.783
SAT	3	.886	.793–.883	.886	.721
FBI	3	.919	.849–.918	.920	.793
SWB	3	.910	.841–.937	.922	.798

Note: PQ: physical environment quality; IQ: interaction quality; OQ: outcome quality; SAT: tourist satisfaction; FBI: future behavioral intentions; SWB: subjective well-being

Table 3. Factor correlations between constructs

Factor	PQ	IQ	OQ	SAT	FBI	SWB
PQ	1					
IQ	.682***	1				
OQ	.744***	.740***	1			
SAT	.751***	.742***	.779***	1		
FBI	.688***	.634***	.724***	.743***	1	
SWB	.692***	.665***	.777***	.794***	.771***	1

****p* < .001

4.2 Structural Equation Modeling Analysis

To examine the relationships between service quality, tourist satisfaction, and its outcomes—future behavioral intentions, and subjective well-being, structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed. The results showed the conceptual model demonstrated an adequate fit with $\chi^2 = 348.490$, $df = 160$, $\chi^2/df = 2.178$, CFI = .970, TLI = .964, RMSEA = .058 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The results of hypotheses testing are reported in Table 4.

These results revealed physical environment quality and outcome quality significantly affect tourist satisfaction, supporting H1 and H3. This finding partially followed prior studies that service quality is a significant antecedent influencing customer satisfaction (Brady & Cronin Jr, 2001; Clemes, Brush, & Collins, 2011; Cronin Jr & Taylor, 1994; Rust & Oliver, 1993).

However, the path from interaction quality to tourist satisfaction was not significant, and H2 was not supported. This finding contradicts previous studies that personnel quality positively influenced satisfaction (Brady, Voorhees, Cronin Jr, & Bourdeau, 2006; Theodorakis, Kambitsis, & Laios, 2001; Yoshida & James, 2010). This may be attributed to the language barrier between Chinese tourists and Korean locals staff and residents. Many Chinese tourists do not feel comfortable communicating with staff in English or Korean. It is necessary to provide tourist information (e.g., maps, guides) in Chinese. (Lee, 2015). The other possible reason could be that interaction between sports tourists and the staff was limited. This is consistent with some previous findings (Theodorakis et al., 2015; Theodorakis, Tsigilis, & Alexandris, 2009) that interaction quality did not affect skiers' psychological attachment or loyalty to the ski center, unlike the physical environment and outcome quality. Also, Theodorakis et al. (2015) found an interaction component examined in the study had no significant effect on event satisfaction because runners in 5 km and 10 km races had little time to interact with event personnel. Therefore, it can be concluded that the interaction between Chinese sports tourists and service providers (e.g., Korean staff) in Jeju Island was limited due to the language barrier and the nature of the sports activities.

This study also found tourist satisfaction was a significant predictor of future behavioral intention and subjective well-being, consistent with previous findings (Chen & Chen, 2010; Chen & Tsai, 2008; Cronin Jr & Taylor, 1994; Hutchinson et al., 2009). In the sports tourism context, Clemes et al. (2011) found professional rugby spectators were more eager to recommend the activity to others, with a higher level of satisfaction. This is also consistent with Theodorakis et al.'s (2015) recent finding that highly satisfied sports event participants would be happier if they invested their leisure time and resources in similar future events.

Table 4. Results of structural equation modeling of the hypotheses

Hypothesis	Path	Standardized coefficient (β)	t-value	Empirical result
H1	PQ \rightarrow SAT	.561	3.492***	Supported
H2	IQ \rightarrow SAT	.084	1.066	Not supported
H3	OQ \rightarrow SAT	.329	2.515*	Supported
H4	SAT \rightarrow FBI	.864	18.195***	Supported
H5	SAT \rightarrow SWB	.912	19.054***	Supported

*** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$

4.3 Chinese Sports Tourists' Evaluation of Service Quality

In this phase, how Chinese sports tourists evaluate the service quality of sports activities in Jeju Island was investigated. As reported in Table 5, the mean score for the overall scale of service quality was 4.01 (between “agree” to “strongly agree”), indicating respondents held a relatively positive attitude toward service quality.

Physical environment quality. The Chinese respondents considered the environment in Jeju Island visually attractive and gave it high scores ($M = 4.34$). However, there is room to improve the quality of the physical environment in Jeju Island. The Chinese sports tourists, who answered the questionnaire, gave relatively low ratings for the item “the facilities prepared were adequate” ($M = 3.76$). Thus, the facilities in Jeju Island were still not well-equipped for Chinese tourists. As reported Table 6, facility shortcomings in the ratings could have reflected the inconvenience of transportation, which elicited the most complaints from Chinese respondents (19.4%). In Jeju Island, aside from renting cars privately, buses and taxis are the primary means of public transportation. As shown in Figure 2, there are 12 intercity bus routes around Jeju Island. Many locations have only one bus line, and stops are far between, especially in the central island. In addition, intervals between each bus are around 10 to 20 minutes or as long as 1 hour (All about Jeju Island, 2014). Improving the transport infrastructure in Jeju Island should be of decisive importance and urgency.

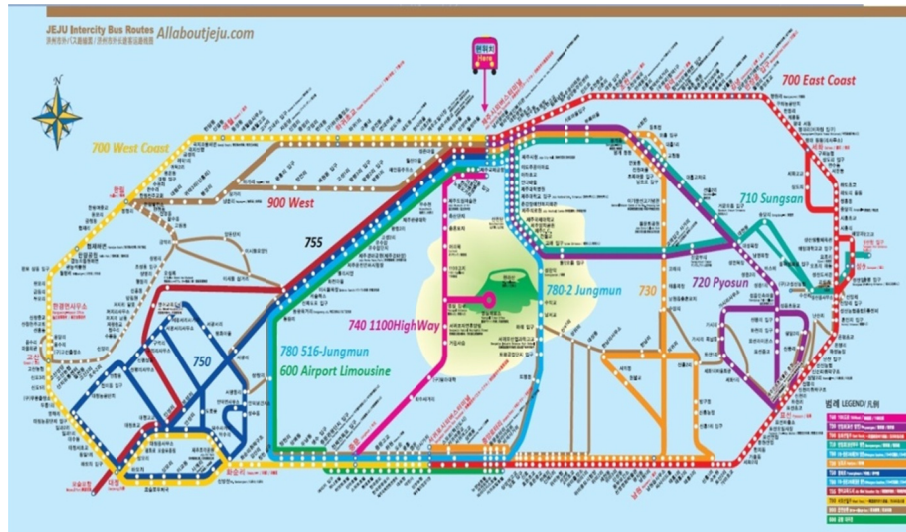


Figure 2. Jeju bus routes

(Data from All about Jeju Island (2014) <http://allaboutjeju.com/jeju-bus-routes/>)

Interaction quality. Many Chinese respondents gave relatively higher scores for the item “Staff were courteous” ($M = 4.04$) but lower scores for “staff were knowledgeable” ($M = 3.93$). As previously noted, there are a variety of service suppliers in the sports tourism sector (Chan, Hsu, & Baum, 2015; Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008; Thwaites, 1999). Sports tourists will probably encounter different service suppliers, including security employees, instructors, and tour guides. In the current context, knowledgeable staff might also refer to knowledge in a variety of areas, such as foreign languages and professional sports skills. The language barrier may be the biggest obstacle to the interaction between Chinese sports tourists and Korean staff in Jeju Island, since many Chinese respondents complained the “Servers providers could hardly understand Chinese, and there were huge difficulties in communication” (18.4%). To provide better service for Chinese tourists, we recommend destination marketers should expand their staff training and education in language and services for Chinese tourists (Lee, Jeon, & Kim, 2011).

Outcome quality. Outcome quality received the highest rating among the three predictors of service quality ($M = 4.12$). This suggests respondents were more conscious of what they gained from the sports tourism experience than of the physical environment or interaction factors. Several studies have noted outcome quality is close to the quality of experience (Kouthouris & Alexandris, 2005). Sports tourists could be considered “experience consumers,” and tourism organizations should consider themselves “experience providers,” and service providers should focus their marketing on the experience offered rather than the price (Chan et al., 2015). For example, destination marketing organizations (DMOs) could design new sports programs with more entertainment or open cultural arts festivals to provide memorable experiences for tourists in Jeju Island.

Table 5. Descriptive analysis of service quality

	Items	Mean	SD
Service quality ($M = 4.01$, $SD = .741$)	Factor 1: Physical environment quality ($M = 3.93$, $SD = .760$)		
	The environment in Jeju Island was visually attractive	4.34	.875
	The facilities prepared were adequate	3.76	.923
	Sport programs and events were well designed	3.78	.961
	Other customers did not affect the service negatively	3.85	1.042
	Factor 2: Interaction quality (Mean = 4.00, $SD = .866$)		
	Staff were responsive	4.03	.997
	Staff were courteous	4.04	.986
	Staff were knowledgeable	3.93	.925
	Staff provided prompt service	3.98	.976
	Factor 3: Outcome quality (Mean = 4.12, $SD = .844$)		
	It was a great sport tourism experience	4.07	.921
	Participating in the activities improved my health/sport skills	4.13	.953
	Participating in the activities made this trip more interesting	4.17	.893

Table 6. Categorized themes of open-ended question

Theme	N	%
1. Traffic inconvenience	20	19.4
2. Language barrier	19	18.4
3. Sport Activities content	15	14.6
4. High price	13	12.6
5. Food	8	7.8
6. Infrastructure	7	6.8
7. Staff/Tour guide	6	5.8
8. Shopping	6	5.8
9. Crowded	5	4.9
10. Climate	4	3.9
Total	103	100%

5. Implications

The current study investigated the relationships between service quality, tourist satisfaction, and its outcomes (i.e., future behavioral intentions and subjective well-being) to understand the role of service quality in participating sports activities in Jeju Island. Several theoretical and managerial implications emerged from the findings and are discussed below.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

First, the findings provide insight from the perspective of active sports tourists, unlike most previous studies that only focused on spectators of various sports (Brady et al., 2006; Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008; Theodorakis et al., 2001; Yoshida & James, 2010). This study targeted active sports tourists to investigate their perceptions of service quality in Jeju Island to expand the literature on sports tourism.

Second, the results contribute to the literature by revealing the dynamic interplay among service quality components and how they drive tourist satisfaction. While some studies have shown that evaluating service quality in the sports recreation industry is a multi-dimensional structure (Brady & Cronin Jr, 2001; Thwaites,

1999), few studies have explored each dimension specifically.

Third, the current study also provides an empirical investigation of the socio-psychological outcomes (e.g., subjective well-being) of sports tourism in Jeju Island. We must emphasize the role of sports tourism marketing as a key factor in enhancing tourists' subjective well-being by satisfying their needs (Theodorakis et al., 2015).

5.2 Managerial Implications

The main managerial implication of this study is that tourism organizations, particularly DMOs, in Jeju Island must provide high-quality services to attract more Chinese tourists. Highly-perceived quality of services helps foster greater tourist satisfaction, which improves tourist behavioral intentions and subjective well-being.

On the other hand, Chinese tourists' travel behaviors and lifestyle are rapidly changing, particularly among the younger generation (Lee et al., 2011). Having a thorough understanding of the culture of Chinese tourists and grasping new trends in this population are essential for encouraging more Chinese tourists to visit Jeju Island (Lee, 2015). One of the best ways to do this would be to highlight Jeju Island's unique cultures, such as Korean wave (Hallyu) culture (Zeng, Chiu, Lee, Kang, & Park, 2015). Not only does Hallyu culture influence many Asian countries, including China, but it is also a crucial tool for attracting potential tourists and enhancing the local image (Kim, Lee, & Chon, 2010). Recent Internet technologies are playing an essential role in Chinese outbound tourism (Huang, Keating, Kriz, & Heung, 2015). We recommend DMOs incorporate mobile applications (e.g., WeChat) into sports tourism marketing in Jeju Island.

6. Limitations and Suggestions

This study has limitations. The first limitation is its unique focus on actual trip behaviors and its distinction of sports tourists from other tourists. While this group might include regular visitors, classified as sports tourists in this study, they may not have participated in sports activities (e.g., hiking) with the goal of doing sports. Second, this study investigated the perceptions of Chinese sports tourists generically, without considering differences between those on package tours and independent tourists. The two travel modes had different characteristics (Becken and Gnoth, 2004; Vainikka, 2014), which may have led to different perceptions among the tourists. Third, previous studies showed the difficulty of defining tourist satisfaction in outdoor leisure services, because tourists may be satisfied with the service in sports programs but not with their participation experience (Alexandris et al., 2004; Chan et al., 2015). Therefore, a deeper exploration of tourist satisfaction in the sports tourism context is needed in future research.

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