Analysis of the image South Korean university students have of Barcelona before visiting

Análisis de la imagen de Barcelona que tienen los universitarios coreanos antes de visitarla

Silvia Espinosa Mirabet [1]

Sin Gyu Kang *[2]

Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the necessity of measuring the present image of the destinations that are important in tourism marketing and then to provide fundamental material for a marketing strategy parallel to this image. In 2018, 225 thousand Korean tourists arrived in Catalonia, 60% more than in 2017. And since 2012, the number of tourists of this destination has multiplied by 4.5. This tourist flow increases year after year and Barcelona is one of the preferred destinations. Beyond this small context, the truth is that the Catalan tourism industry does not have conscientious studies that describe the image of Barcelona perceived by the Korean tourists. Therefore, statistical data have been analyzed and 340 surveys have been carried out on young Korean people in their twenties who intend to travel to Barcelona. A credibility analysis and a regression analysis were conducted to study the effects of these affective and cognitive images on South Korean students' intention to visit. As a result of this study, affective image was rejected because it did not have an impact on intention to visit, while cognitive image was found to do influence it.

Keywords: Barcelona; Korean tourists; young tourism; South Korea; tourist image

Resumen

El objetivo de este estudio es determinar la necesidad de medir la imagen actual de los destinos que son importantes en el marketing turístico y luego proporcionar materiales fundamentales para una estrategia de marketing paralela a esta imagen. En 2018 llegaron a Cataluña 225 mil turistas coreanos, un 60% más que en 2017. Y desde 2012, el número de turistas de este destino se ha multiplicado por 4,5. Este flujo turístico aumenta año tras año y Barcelona es uno de los destinos preferidos. Más allá de este pequeño contexto, lo cierto es que la industria turística catalana no cuenta con estudios concienzudos que describan la imagen de Barcelona que perciben los turistas

[1] Vicedecana de la Facultad de Turismo, Universidad de Girona, España. Id orcid: http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1935-2594. Email: silvia.espinosam@udg.edu * Autor para la correspondencia

[2] Doctor en Turismo de la Facultad de Turismo, Universidad de Girona, España. Email: spain1004@gmail.com. Id orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7864-6328.

coreanos. Por ello, se han analizado datos estadísticos y se han realizado 340 encuestas a jóvenes coreanos veinteañeros que pretenden viajar a Barcelona. Se realizó un análisis de credibilidad y un análisis de regresión para estudiar los efectos de estas imágenes afectivas y cognitivas sobre la intención de visitar de los estudiantes surcoreanos. Como resultado de este estudio, la imagen afectiva fue rechazada porque no tenía un impacto en la intención de visitar, mientras que la imagen cognitiva sí la influyó.

Palabras clave: Barcelona; turistas coreanos; turismo joven; Corea del Sur; imagen turística

1. Introduction

Tourism is perceived as an industry that has a positive impact on growth and economic development (Yiannakis, 1992; Balaguer and Cantavella, 2002; Ivanov and Webster, 2007; Such Devesa *et al*, 2009), with economic benefits which is probably the main reason why many countries are interested in developing their tourism (Brida *et al*, 2007). Indeed, tourism makes an important contribution to the world economy. Currently the second largest industry in the world (WTTC, 2003), it generates 10% of global GDP, 7% of exports and 9% of the employed population (UNWTO, 2017). More than 1.4 billion people traveled abroad for tourist purposes in 2018 and the annual increase in tourists remained stable throughout 2019.

The Asian market has long been noted for its growth (Singh, 1997) and the World Tourism Organization (2011) expects the number of international tourists to surpass 1.8 billion by 2030, due in no small part to the incorporation of travelers from emerging countries in Asia. Currently, 24% of global outbound tourism originates in countries located in the Asia-Pacific region, a very wide geographical area that contributes approximately 300 million tourists every year and is expected to generate an annual average of 17 million additional tourists over the next 15 years.

Annual barometer of shopping tourism in Catalonia of Global Blue (2020) shows that tourists from Asian nationalities have substantially increased their spending in Barcelona on their purchases. The Chinese account for 38% of total shopping revenue, after growing by 16%, while the Koreans, with more than 50%, are the ones that have grown the most in spending during the past 2019.

A complete study on Asian tourist flows arriving in Catalonia by Casa Asia (2017) showed spectacular growth among the South Korean tourist group. In 2018, 225 thousand Korean tourists arrived in Catalonia, 60% more than in 2017. And since 2012, the number of tourists from this country has multiplied by 4.5, according to Tourism of Catalonia (2018)

The latest Casa Asia (2017) report revealed that Catalonia absorbed a good part of these arrivals, ahead of Madrid and Andalusia. As Amadeo Jensana, director of Casa Asia's Department of Economics and Business, told the press: "South Korea is probably the market that in recent years has best shown the opportunities that Asia offers for our tourism sector." (Rovira, 2017).

According to the World Tourism Organization, in 2009 the total value of the international youth travel market was estimated at 190,000 million US dollars. By 2017, this figure has grown to 280,000 million and is expected to continue increasing, reaching 400,000 million dollars and 370 million young tourists in 2020. In addition, Yun (2018) point out that Korean university students will be the niche in the population that will occupy the attribute of more travelers among the majority of Korean tourists.

In this context, the present article aims to provide an understanding of their interests and image before traveling to Barcelona.

To achieve this, statistical data have been cross-referenced with the results of a survey conducted on 340 university students in the city of Seoul, in order to determine their perceptions of Barcelona before traveling to the Catalan capital.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Approach to the concept of destination image

The concept of tourist destination image has been defined by many scholars. It is generally referred to as "The total impression that a destination makes in the mind of the tourist." (Ditchter, 1985:75). Assael (1985) defined the image of a tourist destination as the general perception of the destinations formed in the process of obtaining information through various sources of information. According to Gartner (1993:193) "the image of the destination becomes an important component in selecting a destination" and Reilly (1990) referred to the general impression as an image of a tourist destination.

The image concept used in tourism is expressed as "destination image" (Tosun ve Temizkan, 2004:350). Destination image is tourists' point of view about a place which includes their beliefs, thoughts and impressions (İlban, Köroğlu and Bozok, 2008:108). Mossberg and Hallberg support this idea and define destination image as the impression the tourists have in mind about a special place, the picture in their minds related to that place (Watkins, Hassanien and Dale, 2006:323). Changes in tourism sector the competition between the products and destinations and all of the tourist expectations and changes in their habits make tourist destinations be considered as a brand that requires the tourist destinations to be managed with a strategic point of view. From this point of view, image plays an important role in destination marketing (Beerli and Martin, 2004:623-636).

Destination image can be defined as the subjective interpretation of the reality by the tourists (Bigne *et al*.., 2000:607). Destination image is a crucial concept in choosing destination (Watkins, Hassanien and Dale, 2006:321). The image of touristic places can be different from what they are in real. The bigger is the difference between the image and the real condition that is, the expectations and the experiences, the more unsatisfied the tourists will be. (Avcıkurt, 2003:24). The tourist's image about the destination is more important than the real condition of that place. Destination should be introduced with the image in the way how it is wished to be remembered by the tourists and this image should be the key of how the tourist will remember that place (Doğanlı, 2006:85). Because image is a fact that helps destinations become different from each other and it affects the decision process of the tourist (Tarakçıoğlu and Aydın, 2003:170).

As mentioned earlier, the image of a tourist destination is the general impression of the place, combining the physical characteristics of the place itself and the psychological characteristics of the tourist. Thus, an image of the tourist place is established by adding together the environmental attributes and the characteristics of the tourist destination.

It is important to note that the accurate measurement of tourist destination image is considered an important source of effective marketing strategies for correcting tourists' negative impressions and creating more positive images (Pike and Ryan, 2004). Therefore,

it can be said that the tourist image of a place is a decisive factor in the choice of destination and, according to the above authors, managing and measuring this image is essential.

2.2. Components of destination image

Gunn (1972:120) was the first to propose the process of forming the image of the tourist destination as "the theory of the seven phases". Since then, there have been many studies on the image of the tourist destination (Pike, 2002). Specifically, the elements believed to form the image of the tourist destination generally include social and psychological aspects that influence the tourist, such as excitement about the trip, the desire to escape or rest and also physical and environmental aspects, such as the weather, the landscape, culture and facilities of the chosen place.

The image of the tourist destination is "a visual and mental impression of places, products and experiences formed by ordinary people" (Milman and Pizam, 1995:21) and is the general impression of the tourist attractions shaped through real experience acquired at several information and tourism points before visiting the tourist place. Thus, the image of the tourist destination is a set of perceptions about tourist places formed by tourists' search for proactive and passive information over a long period of time (Assael, 1998).

There is a certain consensus in the literature regarding the dimensions that integrate the image of a tourist destination, and these can be grouped into two broad perspectives: The cognitive component and the affective component.

1) Cognitive component: The image of a tourist destination based on cognitive perception can be defined as the way in which the tourist perceives the physical attributes or characteristics of a tourist area (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Beerli and Martín, 2004). As physical attributes we can name: the landscape of the place, nature, its attractions and the built environment. The extent to which the tourist is seduced by the destination will be determined by the beauty of its architectural and natural landscapes and the comfort of its facilities. Therefore, a negative perception of the destination will generate unfavorable attitudes towards the place, and a positive perception will generate favorable attitudes towards the place (Yuksel and Akgul, 2007).

2) Affective component: Most research has defined affection as a feeling of the tourist towards the place (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997) and not as a feeling that the place expresses towards the tourist. Therefore, depending on the affection that the place produces, the tourist will be encouraged to a greater or lesser extent through the desire to return to the destination. Traditionally, it has been established that the image of a tourist destination is based on the individual's beliefs and knowledge about the attributes of that place (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997). Today, however, there is a growing conviction of the presence not only of beliefs, which determine the cognitive component of the image, but also affective assessments in the individual's perception of the tourist destination (Kim and Richardson, 2003; Pike, 2004).

The coexistence of cognitive and affective dimensions in the study of the tourist destination's image allows to better explain the tourist's representation of a place, which is not limited to physical properties (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997).

3. Methodology

In order to meet our research objectives of compiling a profile of Korean tourists and determining their interests and perceptions of Barcelona prior to travel, we decided to cross-reference statistical data obtained from different sources, referenced above, with the results of a survey of 340 university students in Seoul.

We used "Naver Forms"[3] to construct the survey, which was answered by 340 students enrolled on summer courses at three universities in Seoul: Kyongki, Myungji and Sahmyook. These schools represent the lifestyle of different social profiles in the Korean capital. Students were surveyed at street level and responded through a digital tablet. Four tourism students collected the sample. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, young people of this age comprise a group of travelers with important potential (Allende, 2018) and are also the ones who will be traveling to Spain in the coming years.

The survey was conducted for one week, in person, between 30 July and 6 August, 2018. A total of 340 surveys were distributed. Of the responses obtained, only 318 were used for the present investigation, 22 being rejected due to content errors.

The 340 surveys were distributed among the following universities:

1) Kyongki University. A total of 115 surveys were administered to the university population, which comprises 2,822 students, 54% of whom are women and 46% men. Students from neighborhoods with differing economic profiles attend this university.

2) Sahmyook University. Middle class students. 115 surveys. The university has 7,382 students, 49% of whom are women and 51% men.

3) Myungji University. Upper class students. 110 surveys. This is the largest university in the study, with 9,809 students, 31% of whom are women and 69% men. Of the 340 students surveyed, 165 were female and 175 male. Six of the questionnaires distributed among female students were invalid, while among men the figure was sixteen.

Data analysis was carried out based on descriptive statistical functions using version 22 of the SPSS program. A frequency analysis was performed to examine the general characteristics of the sample. In addition, a factor analysis and a credibility analysis were performed to identify factors that measure tourist image and intention to visit. Finally, a regression analysis was also conducted to verify the hypotheses.

The survey model is of the authors' own creation. A review of promotional material for the city of Barcelona was carried out prior to designing the questionnaire in order to identify the most relevant attributes of this destination. Scales and hypotheses from previous works were also reviewed (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Beerli and Martín, 2004; Bigné and Sánchez, 2001; Castaño *et al.*, 2006; Moreno, Beerli and Martin, 2004; San Martín, Rodríguez and Vázquez, 2006), this allowing us to identify image attributes and incorporate them in the questionnaire.

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[3] Naver is the most popular search engine in Korea. It is used worldwide by both young and old and is the Korean equivalent to Google. We chose the Naver Form because it is more familiar to Koreans.

Likert scales were used to measure the attributes of Barcelona in the survey [4]. Regarding the content of the questionnaire, the survey model was based on four fundamental questions:

1) The general image of the city. Open and closed questions were designed to address this theme, such as: "What is your general impression of Barcelona?", "Do you think Barcelona is attractive for tourists?" (1-5 Likert scale).

2) The affective image. One question using a Likert scale (1 to 5) to rate fourteen aspects: Beautiful, Gorgeous, Interesting, Exotic, Powerful, Passionate, Fun, Special, Modernistic, Fresh, Free, Different, Cheap, Comfortable.

3) The cognitive image of the city. One question using a Likert scale (1 to 5) to rate twelve aspects: Good weather, Clean environment, Kindness, Food, Infrastructure, Cultural attractions, Public safety, Tourism products, Crowded, Accommodation, Transportation system, City of tourists.

4) The intention of visit. Three statements were designed to measure this (1-5 Likert scale): "I would like to visit Barcelona if I have the opportunity", "Barcelona would be worth the trip", "I would recommend Barcelona as a tourist destination to the people around me". To ascertain the effect of image on intention to visit, the following hypothesis was established:

Table 1. Hypotheses for the research model

| Hypotheses	Content
H1	Effect of affective image on intention to visit
H2	Effect of cognitive image on intention to visit

Source: Author's own data

4. Survey results

4.1 Frequency analysis

The results of the survey were used for two purposes. On the one hand, to reaffirm or contrast some of the adjectives used in the initial questions and, on the other, to serve as a basis for diagnosing the needs and expectations of Korean tourists who travel to Barcelona. These could then be used to propose future measures to improve the competitiveness of the destination and turn it into a pole of attraction for these types of travelers.

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[4] Likert scales are psychometric instruments that require the respondent to indicate their agreement or disagreement regarding a statement or item on an ordered one-dimensional scale (Bertram, 2008). They are recognized as being among the most widely used measuring instruments in the Social Sciences (Osinski and Sánchez-Bruno, 1998; Dawes, 1975). This type of scale was first used in 1932, when Rensis Likert (1903-1981) published a report explaining how to use an instrument for measuring attitudes (Likert, 1932; Edmondson, 2005).

Figure 3. The image of Barcelona
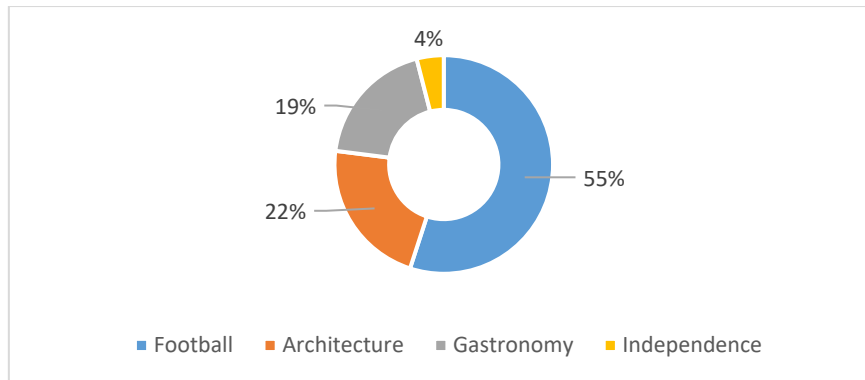
Source: Author's own data

The majority (55%) of students' associate Barcelona with football, due to the great popularity of the team that boasts the city's name. The next best-known aspects are Catalan architecture and gastronomy. Finally, due to the prominence of recent Catalan political events in the international press, a small percentage of students relate Barcelona to the Catalan independence movement.

Figure 4. Attractive image for tourists
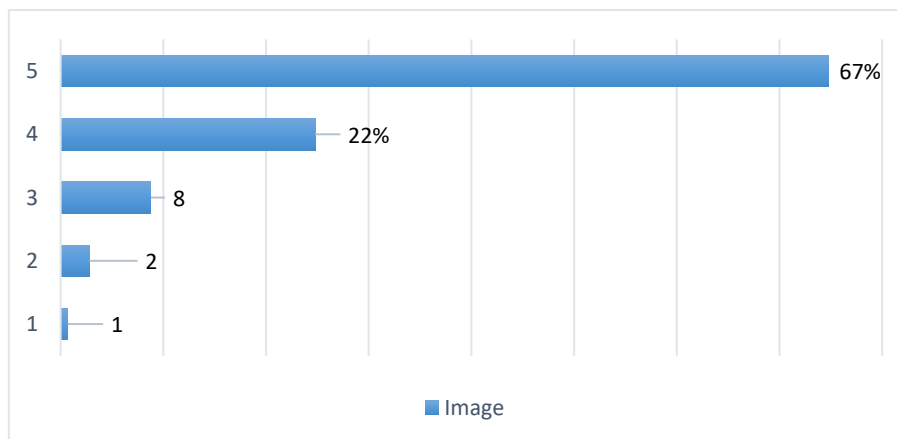
Source: Author's own data

Next, a Likert scale was used to gauge the students' perceptions regarding the attractiveness of Barcelona, with scores from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive). When asked to respond to the statement "Barcelona is a charming city as a destination", 67% of Korean university students scored it as "Very charming (5 points)" and only 1% "Not charming at all" (1 point). Figure 4 shows that Korean students are (positively) attracted by Barcelona as a travel destination.

Table 2. Affective image of Barcelona

	Attributes	Avg.	Mini.	Max.	Type deviation
1	Passionate	3.62	1.0	5.0	.883
2	Gorgeous	3.82	1.0	5.0	.847
3	Comfortable	2.71	1.0	5.0	.820
4	Exotic	3.68	1.0	5.0	.876
5	Powerful	3.65	1.0	5.0	.806
6	Fresh	3.53	1.0	5.0	.801
7	Fun	3.61	1.0	5.0	.817
8	Special	3.60	1.0	5.0	.933
9	Modernistic	3.56	1.0	5.0	.860
10	Beautiful	**3.89**	1.0	5.0	.791
11	Free	3.38	1.0	5.0	.945
12	Different	3.35	1.0	5.0	.910
13	Cheap	2.76	1.0	5.0	.887
14	Interesting	3.73	1.0	5.0	.854

Source: Author's own data

The participants were then asked for their affective image of Barcelona (Table 2), making it possible for us to determine how young Koreans perceive the city before visiting it in person. The highest mean is for "Beautiful" and then, in this order, "Gorgeous", "Interesting", "Exotic" and "Powerful". Generally speaking, Korean university students describe Barcelona in positive terms.

Table 3. Cognitive image of Barcelona

	Attributes	Avg.	Mini.	Max.	Type deviation
1	Barcelona is a crowded city	3.55	1.0	5.0	.845
2	The average Barcelona citizen is friendly	2.81	1.0	5.0	.854
3	Barcelona is a safe city	**2.79**	1.0	5.0	.903
4	Tourist facilities in Barcelona are well organized	3.47	1.0	5.0	.847
5	Good accommodation in Barcelona	3.25	1.0	5.0	.855
6	Barcelona is a city of tourists	3.57	1.0	5.0	.841
7	Barcelona has a good climate	3.19	1.0	5.0	.821
8	Barcelona has a good transportation system	3.12	1.0	5.0	.900
9	Barcelona has an authentic culture	**3.63**	1.0	5.0	.799
10	The city and tourist areas of Barcelona are clean	2.92	1.0	5.0	.940
11	Barcelona has many tourism products	3.03	1.0	5.0	.893
12	Barcelona has a variety foods	3.20	1.0	5.0	.834

Source: Author's own data

According to the cognitive image survey, Korean university students award Barcelona the attributes of "Authentic culture" and "City of tourists". These are the most common characteristics, with 3.63 and 3.57 means, respectively. On the other hand, it received the lowest average in "safe city".

Table 4. Result of intention to visit

	Attributes	Avg.	Mini.	Max.	Type deviation
1	I would like to visit Barcelona if I have the opportunity	4.03	1.0	5.0	.912
2	Barcelona would be worth the trip	3.94	1.0	5.0	.881
3	I would recommend Barcelona as a tourist destination to the people around me	3.42	1.0	5.0	.936

Source: Author's own data

In the frequency analysis regarding intention to visit, the highest mean value was for the item "I would like to visit Barcelona if I have the opportunity", with 4.03. This was followed by the items "Barcelona would be worth the trip" and "I would recommend Barcelona as a tourist destination to the people around me".

4.2. Factor and credibility analysis

The factor analysis of the 14 affective images revealed a KMO value of 0.859, while the total variance explanation power was 66.714%. The 14 variables were classified according to the following three categories: "Attractiveness", which included "Beautiful", "Gorgeous", "Interesting", "Exotic", "Powerful", "Fun" and "Fresh"; "Relaxation", which included four variables: "Free", "Different", "Cheap" and "Comfortable"; and finally, "Sensitivity", with three variables: "Passionate", "Special", and "Modernistic".

Table 5. Factor and credibility analysis of affective image

Factor	Measurement items	Factor loading	α	Eigen vallule	Variance
Attractivenes	Beautiful	.840	.860	3.825	39.402
	Gorgeous	.785			
	Interesting	.748			
	Exotic	.744			
	Powerful	.726			
	Fun	.676			
	Fresh	.637			
Relaxation	Free	.840	.873	2.904	15.768
	Different	.829			
	Cheap	.807			
	Comfortable	.752			
Sensibility	Passionate	.923	.880	2.424	11.544
	Special	.891			
	Modernistic	.883			
Total variance explanation power (%): 66.714, KMO:.856, Bartlett χ2 =2366.437, P=.000					

Source: Author's own data

The factor analysis of the 12 cognitive images revealed a KMO value of 0.859 and the total variance explanation power was 66.299%. Nine variables were classified according to the following two categories: "Tourism infrastructure", which included the five variables "Barcelona has a good transportation system", "Barcelona has many tourism products", "The city and tourist areas of Barcelona are clean", "The average

Barcelona citizen is friendly" and "Barcelona is a safe city; and "Tourism environment", which included the four variables "Barcelona has an authentic culture", "Barcelona has a good climate", "Barcelona has a variety of foods" and "Barcelona is a city of tourists".

Table 6. Factor and credibility analysis of cognitive image

Factor	Measurement items	Factor loading	α	Eigen vallule	Variance
Tourism infrastructure	Barcelona has a good transportation system	.843	.870	3.292	51.893
	Barcelona has many tourism products	.824			
	The city and tourist areas of Barcelona are clean	.823			
	The average Barcelona citizen is friendly	.791			
	Barcelona is a safe city	.775			
Tourism environment	Barcelona has an authentic culture	.840	.821	2.609	14.406
	Barcelona has a good climate	.829			
	Barcelona has a variety of foods	.807			
	Barcelona is a city of tourists	.752			
Total variance explanation power (%)= 66.299, KMO:.859, Bartlett χ2=1446.431, P=.000					

Source: Author's own data

The factor analysis of the 3 items related to intention to visit, χ^2 = 484.851 (p <.001), revealed a KMO value of .698, while the total variance explanation power was 78.610%, as shown in Table 7. In addition, the confidence coefficient was high, at .862.

Table 7. Factor and credibility analysis for intention to visit

Factor	Measurement items	Factor loading	α	Eigen vallule	Variance
Intention to visit	Barcelona would be worth the trip	.925	.862	2.358	78.610
	I would like to visit Barcelona if I have the opportunity	.892			
	I would recommend Barcelona as a tourist destination to the people around me	.841			
Total variance explanation power (%)= 78.610, KMO:.698, Bartlett χ2=484.851, P=.000					

Source: Author's own data

4.3. Hypothesis verification

A regression analysis was conducted to analyze the effect of image on intention to visit. The analysis showed that R = 0512, R² = .262, F = 55.850, and p-value = .000. Specifically, the hypothesis test revealed that hypothesis H1 "Effect of affective image on intention to visit" was not included within the interval p. <05 and its significance level

was low. In addition, we also verified that hypothesis H2, " Effect of cognitive image on intention to visit", had a significant effect on the level of significance p.001.

Table 8. Hypothesis test result

Route	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	S.E.	t	Verification result
H1: Affective image ▷ intention to visit	.160	.107	.100	1.606	Dismissed
H2: Cognitive image ▷ intention to visit	.563	.433	.087	6.507	Adopted
R=.512, R² = .262, Modified R² = .257, F=55.850, p=.000					

Source: Author's own data

To conclude our hypotheses, the affective image of the two factors measuring tourist image was found to have no effect on intention to visit, while hypothesis H2 was adopted because cognitive image factors were found to have a significant effect on intention to visit.

5. Conclusion

In 2018, 225 thousand Korean tourists arrived in Catalonia, 60% more than in 2017. And since 2012, the number of tourists from this country has multiplied by 4.5, and Barcelona is one of the preferred destinations between Catalonia according to Tourism of Catalonia (2018).

In this context, the present article aims to describe a profile for Korean tourists and provide an understanding of their interests and image of Barcelona before traveling. To this end, statistical data were cross-referenced with the results of a survey conducted on 340 university students in the city of Seoul, in order to determine their perceptions of Barcelona before traveling to the Catalan capital.

Based on the data obtained in this study, we can state that Koreans like to travel to Barcelona because it is an artistic and contemporary city that is full of culture and has a unique gastronomy.

The results of a frequency analysis conducted on Korean university students' affective image about Barcelona were the terms "Beautiful", "Gorgeous", "Interesting", "Exotic" and "Powerful". And after analyzing the cognitive image, Korean university students defined Barcelona as having an "Authentic culture" and being a "Tourist city".

A credibility analysis and a regression analysis were conducted to study the effects of these affective and cognitive images on South Korean students' intention to visit. Affective image was rejected because it did not impact on intention to visit, while cognitive image was found to affect it.

The lowest score Barcelona received on the cognitive image survey was for the attribute "safe city", with a mean response of only 2.79. Many participants deemed the item "safety" to be less than positive. This negative image may be related to news of thieves, pickpockets and other bad experiences published on blogs and websites specializing in tourism in South Korea, which highlight these aspects for reasons of precaution. An infinite number of ideas and comments on travel can be found in the

Korean blogosphere. The blogs regarding visits to Barcelona consulted for this article have been read by many Korean Internet users and are a reference point for young people wishing to travel (KTO, 2017).

Gutierrez *et al*. (2013) consider Internet use to be of crucial importance in the study of tourist experiences and that tourists, especially younger ones, use this technology to obtain information about travel and share their experiences. Thousands of young South Koreans head for Europe on independently organized trips each year, without the rigidity of the itineraries established by tour operators. They therefore use the Net to seek advice or express their experiences.

This aspect is also observed in the consulted statistics. According to KTO (2018), each year Korean tourists suffer thefts or robberies during their visits to Spain or Barcelona. In this regard, it is worth noting the recent robbery involving a high-ranking South Korean government official in Barcelona. According to the newspaper La Vanguardia (2019), Hyewon Kim was seriously injured on June 23, 2019 after suffering a street robbery in Barcelona, and she died on June 27. Furthermore, the most consulted online Korean platforms post regular alerts regarding this issue.

The leading specialized tourism website Spainzzang, the most read in Korea with 39,787 followers, associates Barcelona with phrases such as: "Be careful with pickpockets", "I was robbed", "New forms of pickpocket"[5], etc. According to the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2017), around 50% of the cases of passport theft reported to the Korean Embassy in Spain occur in Barcelona (Sim, 2016).

Finally, it would be advisable for businesspeople in the Barcelona and Catalan tourism sector and the political institutions that govern the city to take into account the interests of Korean young tourists traveling to Barcelona, and level of security one of their most important fears. Whether accurate or not, the latter is a perception that is very present in all of the online sources that 77.4% of Koreans consult before planning a vacation (Kim, 2019). In respect of this, as already mentioned, the death of a high-ranking South Korean government official following a robbery in Barcelona (El Mundo, 2019) causes harm to the sector.

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