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Case study of a Templestay and temple visit in Korea using customer generated content to evaluate customer satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

Temple visit and Templestay is a unique cultural experience that allows individuals to take a break from their busy daily lives and immerse themselves in a peaceful and calming environment. Temple visit and stay are often associated with Buddhist practices, but temple stays are not necessarily religious in nature. Through meditation, mindfulness, and other practices, it provides individuals with an opportunity to disconnect from the stresses of modern life. Using big data analysis, this study aims to measure the satisfaction levels of Templestay participants in Korea. Specifically, this study will examine seven temples in Seoul that offer Templestay programs. Through Google Travel's online review derived from Outscraper. This study utilized R program and UCINET 6.0 in order to refine, process and visualize data in order to examine the attributes that influence customer satisfaction. The top 60 words are divided into four different clusters which are "Unique Experience", "Facility", "Value" and "Relaxing". The following step was the use of SPSS to carry out an exploratory factor analysis and linear regression analysis. The linear regression analysis indicated "relaxing" and "value" variables are positively affecting customer satisfaction.

Keywords: unique experience; temple stay; customer-generated content; visitors satisfaction

1. Introduction

With an average of 4.8% annual GDP growth, South Korea creates an average of 49,000 new jobs every year[1]. With a wide range of tourism aspects, Korea offers a plethora of unique experiences for visitors, ranging from its rich cultural heritage to modern attractions and entertainment[2]. The country's long and fascinating history has left a lasting impact on its people and culture, and visitors can immerse themselves in this history by visiting ancient temples, royal palaces, and museums[3]. Korea is also renowned for its traditional arts and crafts, including pottery, calligraphy, and paper-making, and visitors can participate in workshops to learn about these time-honoured practices. In addition, Korea is a modern and dynamic country, known for its cutting-edge technology, vibrant pop culture, and delicious cuisine[4]. With so many unique experiences to offer, Korea is a must-visit destination for anyone seeking an unforgettable travel experience.

One of the unique experiences that is available in Korea, Temple stay programs in Korea have gained popularity among tourists seeking a unique cultural experience that offers a break from their busy lifestyles[5]. The popularity of temple stay programs has led to an increase in research on the benefits and impacts of

participating in such programs. Many studies have focused on the impact of temple stay programs on participants' mental and physical health, as well as on their spiritual and cultural understanding of Korea[6,7].

The Korea Tourism Organization's website features a specific section devoted to Templestays in Korea, along with their location. In this study, temples that offer Templestay programs will be used based on the list provided on this website[8]. As the result of the 7 temples located in Seoul's online review, this study will adopt both a qualitative and quantitative analysis to determine what are certain factors that affect Templestay visitors' satisfaction. This study is conducting a semantic network analysis in order to extract high frequency words and their relationships with each other. Afterwards, a linear regression is performed to determine how the attributes influence the satisfaction of the visitors. As a result of this study, the temples will gain insight into what are the attributes that are affecting visitor satisfaction and how to better promote this unique experience.

2. Literature review

2.1. Temple stay in Korea

The term Templestay was initially created in 2002 to provide experience of Korean traditional culture to those visiting Korea at the time of the 2002 FIFA World Cup. Due to the success of this program, in 2003 they resume the program during the World University Game that includes 16 temple in Daegu and received 3755 guest in span of about 6 months. In 2004 they established The Cultural Corps of Korean Buddhism as a new semi-independent body under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism as an operative body dedicated to run Templestay. The institution has grown rapidly as the umber of temples offering Templestay has greatly increase in 2007. There are also various achievement received by Templestay for example, Templestay was awarded the grand prize at the International Tourism Fair in Berlin in 2008. Followed by in 2009, rated as a world-class cultural tourism destination by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development[9]. The numbers of participant taking part in Templestay also increases throughout the years as shown in the below **Table 1**.

Table 1. Domestic and international visitors growth.

Year	Number of Temples	Domestic Visitors		International Visitors	
		Participants Number (per year)	**Growth Rate**	**Participants Number (per year)**	**Growth Rate**
2002	33	5196	-	6518	-
2003	16	102,755	18.7%	4755	−27.1%
2004	36	103,218	0.45%	7414	55.29%
2005	41	107,247	3.90%	11,206	51.15%
2006	50	134,613	25.52%	14,563	29.96%
2007	74	170,506	26.66%	25,560	76.13%
2008	87	225,578	32.30%	32,937	28.41%
2009	102	279,418	23.87%	31,426	−4.59%
2010	109	335,832	20.19%	30,392	−3.29%
2011	118	382,157	13.79%	37,403	23.07%
2012	109	316,303	−17.2%	40,177	7.42%
2013	114	345,579	9.26%	37,095	−7.67%
2014	110	331,620	−4.04%	42,334	14.12%
2015	122	363,124	9.50%	46,525	9.90%
2016	123	358,965	−1.15%	55,787	19.91%

Table 1. (*Continued*).

Year	Number of Temples	Domestic Visitors		International Visitors	
		Participants Number (per year)	Growth Rate	Participants Number (per year)	Growth Rate
2017	137	416,454	16.02%	70,910	27.11%
2018	135	438,327	5.25%	77,091	8.72%
2019	137	458,730	4.66%	70,520	−8.52%
2020	139	230,888	−49.67%	7500	−89.36%
2021	141	251,319	8.85%	6705	−10.60%
Total Participants		5,357,829		656,908	
Grand Total		6,014,737			

Source: Cultural Corps of Korea Buddhism 2022.

There are studies that argue that temple stay is a part of religious tourism where religious tourism define as traveling to scared places or events and participating in various activities, ceremonies and rituals[10]. Temple stay is a collaborative experience between religious, cultural and educational activities that reflect on the spiritual dimension of the individuals well-being and cultural perspective of leisure[11]. Other scholars mentioned the Temple stay is cultural tourism experience that embodies the broader representations of all Korean traditions[6]. Other scholars also try to define temple stay as a theme based tourist attraction to help visitors to better understand Buddhism and Korean cultural heritage and history[12]. Cultural Corps of Korean Buddhism define Templestay as a cultural experience program for a better understanding Korean traditional culture and Korean Buddhism[13]. Other previous study define Templestay as a program where members of the public can stay at a traditional temple and experience temple life, traditional Buddhist culture, tea ceremony, mediation and more[14].

There are various previous study covering temple stay in Korea and globally. One of the earlier study was conducted in 2010 covering the temple stay program and re-branding of Korean Buddhist temple[6]. Followed by a descriptive study about the temple stay phenomenon in Korea that results with various motivations of participating in the temple stay program, benefits joining temple stay program, and the barrier of joining temple stay program[15]. Another previous study investigating about temple stay recommendation intention and revisit intention based on the motivation and satisfaction of the temple food[16]. There is also previous study comparing the satisfaction predictor of temple stay for local and international participants, which results in not big differences[10]. Other previous study sees temple stay as a transformative travel which focus on the self-growth of participants[7]. Another study covering personal growth leisure experience in temple stay mentioned that relaxation is one of the variable that is strongly effects satisfaction and will make people recommend this temple stay program[17]. The most recent study mentioned the motivation of joining Templestay difference between foreigner and Koreans, where Koreans join Templestay mostly includes relaxation, self-growth, reflection, interaction with nature, emotional stability and stress relief through meditation, where foreigner's motivation in participating is more towards interest in learning about cultural elements[18].

2.2. Customer satisfaction

The concept of customer satisfaction has been defined in an earlier study as the feeling that experienced customers have after comparing their initial expectations with the experience that they actually received[19]. It is the perception of the actual performance of a product that forms the basis for customer satisfaction[20], as opposed to the expectations of what the customer should be receiving from the product. Essentially, satisfaction refers to the enjoyment vacationers seek from the goods, services, and locations they visit. In light of that, tourism satisfaction is likely to be influenced by a variety of factors, such as service quality and customer

satisfaction[21]. As a result, pleased visitors are expected to return and recommend the place to others, while unsatisfied visitors do not expect to return or make additional purchases, which results in a negative outcome.

In the hospitality industry, many studies investigate the satisfaction of guests in hotel and restaurant, however, the satisfaction study towards special unique experiences is not widely conducted yet. According to previous study, Templestay satisfaction can be defined as an overall assessment of the total purchase and consumption experience with a Templestay program[22]. It has also been noted in previous studies that emotional and functional value both play an important role in visitor satisfaction[11]. A previous study examined satisfaction items encompassing four major domains of religion tourism activities: (1) being in nature, (2) self-growth and reflection, (3) education, and (4) relaxation 22. A more recent interesting study that tries to evaluate customer satisfaction of a unique cultural travel motivation in Turkey results in that motivation is one of the key determinant for visitors to visit and earn satisfaction from their visit[23]. Despite this, little research has been conducted in order to determine the attributes that contribute to Templestay satisfaction.

2.3. Customer generated content

Customer generated content also known as electronic word-of-mouth, online recommendations, or online opinion. They are becoming more and more important with the rapid development of technology[24]. Due to the significant development of word-of-mouth communication online, customers generated content is one of the main source of information acquiring. Recently, research using text mining has been conducted in the hospitality industry. A number of studies have been conducted utlizing customer generated content, including one about vegetarian customers' perceptions of restaurant satisfaction attributes[25], another concerning coffee shop industry[26], and another investigating factors related to Korean wellness tourism satisfaction[27]. Thus, online reviews are widely recognized as having significant significance in the literature.

Information provided by customer generated content is considered to be more detailed and reliable than that offered by the company itself[28]. For prospective customers seeking information about restaurants and tourist destinations, online reviews serve as a new source of information[29]. Reviewers can serve as opinion leaders, even if they do not intend to do so by collecting and analyzing online reviews, it is possible to understand the emotions, perceptions, and results of each person's travel experience, thus providing a service customer satisfaction[30]. It is imperative to understand accurate customer trends, and big data analysis through customer generated content is being introduced to the travel industry in order to accomplish this goal[30]. The purpose of the study is to understand the main concerns and influences of customer satisfaction in Templestay, based on consumer-generated content available in Google reviews.

3. Methodology

Data was gathered by Google Maps using Outscrapper, an API application for data scratching[31]. The information gathered comprises the name, assessment, and review of the temple. Without text reviews, reviews with only ratings, emoticons, and weird letters were excluded in this process. This study's data purification and scraping results contained a total of 7221 online reviews. This study consists of data processing, data analysis, and data collection. Using text mining algorithms created by R Studio, the obtained data was pre-processed. The frequency of single words in text-based reviews was also taken into account when grouping them into categories[32].

Words that are frequently used as keywords were extracted based on their associations with the research topic. After selecting the keywords, CONCOR (Convergence of Iterated Corration) and KH coder Co-occurrence network analysis was used. In order to illustrate a more intuitive visualization of the segmentation of the top frequency words are belonging the certain category and What are other words is belonging in the

group, the results of the segmentation of the top frequent words. There will be 2 different software utilize to create the visualization, which are Netdraw for CONCOR analysis[33] and KH Coder for the Co-occurance network analysis[34].

The CONCOR analysis identified the relationships between words. Through this, it helped to understand people's perception of temple and temple stay in Korea. It demonstrated the key elements as well as their connections to and effects on one another. Similar with CONCOR, the Co-occurance network used to connect the top key words based on the minimum frequency of occurrence and frequently appearing words with lines or edges[35].

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Quantitative analysis

We are utilizing two different software to create the CONCOR visualization analysis which are UCINET 6.0 and KH Coder. With these two software we will be able to see the groups created based on the top key words that appears in the online reviews. There are the top 10 most frequently mentioned words in the online reviews: "Temple", "place", "city", "good", "Seoul", "nice", "center", "quiet", "visit", and "Buddhist". These top 10 words are all derived from different words that are associated with Templestay in Seoul.

Figure 1 is CONCOR result from Netdraw Based on the top frequency words, four clusters are identified based on the CONCOR analysis. The CONCOR analysis shows the relationship between words and forms clusters that include words that have a number of similarities. A total of four clusters have been identified in this study, namely Facility, Location, Value, and Relaxation & Nature. As part of the Relaxation & Nature cluster, words such as mountain, scenery, mind, and calm are included, which are representative of the Templestay program. In another study about Templestay[17], this specific cluster is also considered to be one of the satisfaction clusters. **Figure 2** generated from KH Coder shows a similar groupings which are facility, nature & relaxation, temple and event. We can see that in the nature & relaxation group, similar word with the group generated by UCINET 6.0 which is "mind" appears.
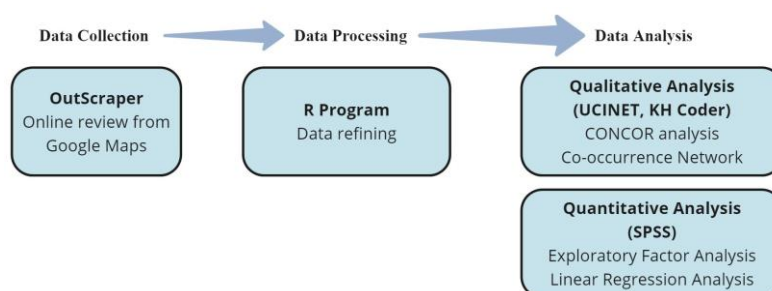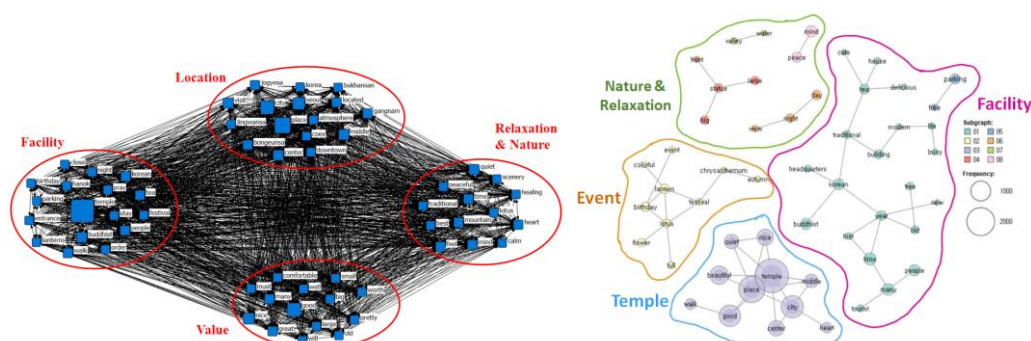

Figure 1. Research process.

Figure 2. Visualization of CONCOR Analysis through Netdraw and KH Coder.

The top 60 words in the CONCOR analysis are as shown in the **Table 2**.

Table 2. Frequency of top keywords.

Rank	Words	Freq	Rank	Words	Freq
1	temple	3553	31	korea	195
2	place	1749	32	lotus	178
3	city	1261	33	stay	175
4	good	1179	34	pretty	173
5	seoul	795	35	atmosphere	172
6	nice	641	36	night	171
7	center	584	37	scenery	167
8	quiet	516	38	big	167
9	visit	508	39	downtown	159
10	buddhist	495	40	lanterns	155
11	middle	444	41	jingwansa	154
12	feel	370	42	large	153
13	walk	368	43	will	152
14	great	353	44	old	149
15	located	343	45	bukhansan	148
16	bongeunsa	329	46	comfortable	146
17	many	317	47	festival	146
18	time	309	48	calm	143
19	mind	294	49	small	141
20	people	288	50	coex	141
21	korean	280	51	close	140
22	jogyesa	251	52	best	137
23	heart	245	53	worth	135
24	tea	237	54	traditional	134
25	gangnam	234	55	well	130
26	mountain	224	56	healing	129
27	parking	215	57	pray	126
28	peaceful	215	58	entrance	125
29	birthday	205	59	must	122
30	order	195	60	hanok	121

The comparison of frequency and centrality of words are shown in the **Table 3**. The Freeman degree and eigenvector centrality shows the relationship between words. Based on the analysis result, the top 3 words are high in frequency and also in the centrality, which means it is frequently mentioned and mentioned together or have a high correlation.

Table 3. Comparison of frequency and centrality of words.

	Freq		Freeman Degree Centrality		Eigenvector Centrality	
	Freq	**Rank**	**Coef.**	**Rank**	**Coef.**	**Rank**
temple	3553	1	22.30	1	0.50	1
place	1749	2	12.50	2	0.32	3
city	1261	3	11.22	3	0.31	2
good	1179	4	8.03	4	0.28	19
seoul	795	5	7.58	5	0.21	5
nice	641	6	6.49	7	0.21	4
center	584	7	5.20	11	0.19	9
quiet	516	8	5.07	9	0.17	7
visit	508	9	5.03	6	0.14	23
buddhist	495	10	4.68	10	0.14	11
middle	444	11	4.56	15	0.14	6
feel	370	12	4.23	12	0.13	10
walk	368	13	4.05	8	0.13	15
great	353	14	3.96	13	0.12	8
located	343	15	3.90	17	0.11	29
bongeunsa	329	16	3.49	20	0.10	12
many	317	17	3.39	18	0.10	17
time	309	18	3.15	16	0.09	13
mind	294	19	3.11	21	0.08	26
people	288	20	2.77	30	0.08	18
korean	280	21	2.75	25	0.08	16
jogyesa	251	22	2.61	26	0.08	28
heart	245	23	2.42	23	0.08	20
tea	237	24	2.25	14	0.07	30
gangnam	234	25	2.23	19	0.07	21
mountain	224	26	2.17	22	0.07	25
parking	215	27	2.16	29	0.06	22
peaceful	215	28	1.98	24	0.06	14
birthday	205	29	1.95	27	0.05	24
order	195	30	1.63	28	0.05	27

4.2. Qualitative analysis

In addition to a qualitative analysis, a quantitative analysis using factor analysis is also conducted to explain the correlation between various independent variables and the dependent variable observed in this study. Through factor analysis, the 60 total top keywords in CONCOR were reduced to 12 words. All of the factor loading are above 0.4 which is acceptable in social science study[36]. There are each three words including in each dimension. In the Temple dimension the words Jogyesa which is a name of a temple, Gangnam, a name of the temple location and the word temple itself appears. The next dimension being facility which includes the words parking, stay and lantern which are the words that are related to the facility the temple gives. The third dimension being value which includes words such as old, comfortable and large. The

last dimension being relax includes the words healing, peaceful and calm which all describe the relaxing feeling the visitors feels when visiting the temple. The KMO (Kaiser Meyer Olkin) value obtained from the factor analysis in **Table 1** was 0.731, which is above the standard acceptable for this study with an overall significance of the correlation matrix ($p < 0.001$). This data set does not produce an identity matrix, and its distribution is multivariate normal. Following the result of the factor analysis, there are four factors affecting Visitors Satisfaction (VS): "Temple (T)", "Facility (F)", "Value (V)", and "Relaxation (R)".

Exploratory factor analysis was also conducted as shown in **Table 4** below. It shows that the KMO and Bartlett chi-square both fulfil the minimum requirements. As for the factor loading all of the value also appears to fulfil the standard value and so these are the groups that appears through the EFA. The four groups are "Temple", "Facility", "Value" and "Relaxation".

Table 4. Factor analysis result.

Factor	Words	Factor Loading	Eigen Value	Cum. Variance
Temple	Jogyesa	0.995	2.950	24.586
	Gangnam	0.989		
	Temple	0.988		
Facility	Parking	0.698	1.1346	35.805
	Stay	0.652		
	Lantern	0.625		
Value	Old	0.706	1.230	46.057
	Comfortable	0.654		
	Large	0.547		
Relaxation	Healing	0.670	1.135	55.512
	Peaceful	0.643		
	Calm	0.520		
KMO (Kaiser Meyer Olkin) = 0.731				
Bartlett chi-square (p) = 47,537.573 ($p < 0.001$)				

After factor analysis, linear regression is utilized to analyze guest experience and satisfaction. The result of the linear regression can be found in the equation above. All the four independent variables explain the variance as much as 0.07% ($R^2 = 0.007$). The full linear regression analysis result is shown in **Table 5**. Out of four independent variables, three variables are significantly affecting satisfaction level. The most statistically significant variables are Relax and Value which are both linear with previous study. There are many reviews mentioning words related to relaxation such as "It is quiet and good for prayer. A place to relax, a place to calm your mind." and "A beautiful temple full of beautiful people, and a very welcome place of peace in the heart of the hustle and bustle of Seoul. The guide at the gate rushed out to give us an English map and his recommendations with a lot of humor and soul. Once you've looked around the temple complex, don't miss out on a relaxing and delicious tea ceremony with Korean rice sweets". The value cluster is also statistically significant since there are many reviews mentioning the value they feel by joining or visiting this Templestay program such as "Whenever I go there, I feel comfortable".

Based on the standardized β, the regression equation can be expressed as follows:
$$VS = 4.492 - 0.01 \times (Temple) + 0.002 \times (Relaxation) + 0.001(Facility) + 0.002 \times (Value) + \varepsilon \tag{1}$$

Table 5. Linear regression analysis result.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-value
	β	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	4.492	0.000	-	12795.214
Temple	0.001	0.000	0.035	2.948*
Relax	0.002	0.000	0.053	4.492*
Facility	0.001	0.000	0.026	2.249
Value	0.002	0.000	0.052	4.391*

Notes: Dependent Variable: Visitors Satisfaction (VS); $R^2 = 0.007$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.007$; $F = 13.096$; ***$p < 0.001$.

5. Conclusion, implication and limitation

Despite the breadth of research in the field of there have been a decreasing amount of studies regarding Templestay due to the decreasing number of interest shown by the public. However, it is an important part of South Korea that could draw in more tourism and a unique way to promote Korea's culture to the visitors. It is also a inbound travel choice for the locals in Korea. This study provides an insight of what are the attributes effecting visitors' satisfaction in Templestay program in the temples in Seoul. As Templestay is one of the most popular unique experiences amongst Koreans and foreigners visiting Korea, it is important that stakeholders recognize and understand the attributes for a better understanding of how they should improve and focus their promotional efforts. A major finding of this study indicates that the words that represent Templestay programs are highly frequent, indicating a high level of awareness of these programs.

The results of this study are in line with previous study that mentioned escape and entertainment experiences are both important to create visitors satisfaction[11]. Also indicate that temple facilities do not significantly influence people's satisfaction in any significant way. It is the temple itself, the relaxation the Templestay program provides, and the value that visitors experience that contributes most to the level of satisfaction of visitors. Templestay in Seoul, South Korea is the focus of this study, which is currently experiencing a decline in interest based on the most recent statistics. As a result of this study, stakeholders will be able to gain a greater understanding of the changes in the environment and determine the factors affecting customer satisfaction significantly. It is important to pay attention to the satisfaction level of visitors, since this may result in the spread of word-of-mouth recommendations or even the intention of returning in the future.

The decrease of study conducted regarding Templestay are shown due to the lack of interest of the public. However previous research on Templestay covers the history of Templestay, re-branding of Templestay image, motivation to visit and revisit intention. Another specific study also covers the satisfaction indicators for foreigner and Koreans. Based on the CONCOR and Co-coccurence network analysis, we can see that there are four different clusters that contributes to the satisfaction of Templestay visitors. As one of tourism aspect which is consumer based industry, it is important to know the variables that contributes to the satisfaction of visitors to increase revisit intention and to encourage the urge to spread word of mouth.

This study focuses on finding the variables contributing to visitors satisfaction of Templestay, and it has identify it. The use of big data analysis approach in this specific papers might overshadows the other factors of visitors satisfaction and the point of view of potential visitors. This study also only includes the temples that are located in Seoul based on the recommendation of Korea Tourism Organization. There are still many temples outside Seoul that offers such program and might offers a more traditional near nature experience. A study towards motivation to visit Templestay in Korea has not been widely explored and it will help understand the Templestay industry. By understanding the industry furthermore, it could help the industry to grow and might earn more economic benefit.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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