



TRANSFER PASSENGER PERCEPTIONS OF TRANSIT TOURS AT ASIAN AIRPORTS

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ABSTRACT

Waiting inside the airport for the next flight (i.e., transfer) might be very lengthy and boring. Thus, many passengers have opted to get out of the airport to participate in transit tours, which are mini all-inclusive packages of the necessary tour components. However, due to the novelty of the operation, the existing literature has not covered this issue yet. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to develop a theoretical framework to explain the transit tour concept. From there, the four cases of Seoul Incheon Airport, Singapore Changi Airport, Tokyo Narita Airport and Beijing Capital Airport were investigated to understand participants' perceptions of the transit tours. Outcomes of the analysis of reviews posted on tripadvisor.com suggested that the tours were perceived differently among airports. Based on these findings, practical implications for tour providers, airports and tourism administration organizations were discussed.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Waiting is an unavoidable phenomenon in delivering and consuming services. While waiting time for some services (e.g., bank, Internet) may be short, waiting for flights at airports is usually much longer, either before (terminating) or between flights (transfer or transit). To keep themselves busy, passengers may go for some shopping and other recreation activities (Chung et al., 2013; Torres et al., 2005). Visiting a souvenir shop and using the Internet, in particular, were found to be the most popular activities with transfer passengers at Singapore Changi Airport (Tang et al., 2017). Joining the city tours could also satisfy them. However, knowledge about the behavior of transfer passengers is still scarce.

Generally, transfer passengers are those who arrive and depart on different aircrafts (Airports Council International [ACI], 2011). Due to certain reasons (e.g., number and schedule of connecting flights), transfer passengers may have to wait a longer stretch of time compared to that of transit passengers, who arrive and depart on the same aircraft. This condition has given rise to the participation of transfer passengers in short tours (more than one hour and less than 24 hours) which are organized and delivered outside the airports. Such tours, often regarded as transit tours, are all-inclusive mini packages of necessary tour components, for example, transportation from and to the airports, attractions, restaurants and shopping options (Wang et al., 2000; Wang et al., 2007). Transit tours are now provided at many airports (e.g., Amsterdam, Bangkok, Beijing, Doha, Hong Kong, Istanbul, Salt Lake City, Seoul, Taipei and Tokyo) and are treated as supplemental or peripheral services of airports. Both

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peripheral and core (i.e., the facilities needed for the operations of airlines, passengers and other stakeholders) services can have important impacts on air passengers' evaluation of service quality, values, satisfaction and future intentions (Byon et al., 2013; Hume, 2008). However, research on airport quality has mainly focused on the core services (Bogicevic et al., 2013; Jiang & Zhang, 2016). Research on airport peripheral services in general (e.g., transportation to and from airports) (Tsamboulas&Nikoleris, 2008) and transit tour services in particular is very limited. An understanding of transit tours, therefore, is still lacking.

The implementation of transit tours has the participation of many important stakeholders, including the airport authorities, the actual tour providers, the tourism administration organizations, and in certain cases, the central governments. Nevertheless, outcomes of previous studies (e.g., Lee et al., 2011) can only be applied to tour operators, tour leaders, tour guides and other direct providers of the conventional tours. Implications for the involved stakeholders of the transit tours are still missing.

This study, therefore, aims to develop a theoretical framework to explain the transit tour concept. From there, this study investigates participants' perceptions of the transit tours (specifically, the tour elements). Findings of this study are meaningful for the management and expansion of the transit tours in the future.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A package tour is a pre-arranged combination of the tour components (Bowie & Chang, 2005; Rääkkönen&Honkanen, 2013). The number of components differentiates the two types of package tours: basic package and all-inclusive (Wang et al., 2000; Wong & Kwong, 2004). When participants choose only the transportation and accommodation elements, they buy a basic package tour. However, when they select all the necessary parts of a tour for a single price, they buy an all-inclusive package tour. One of the distinct characteristics of package tours is the participation of tour leaders and/or tour guides. Tour leaders (tour directors, tour escorts, tour managers, etc.) are those who manage an itinerary on behalf of the tour operators to ensure that the predetermined program is implemented and to give tour participants the local practical information (World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations [WFTGA], 2003). In many cases, tour leaders also perform the task of tour guides. In the others, they are assisted by tour guides, who guide the participants in the language of their choice and provide appropriate information about the local attractions (WFTGA, 2003).

An all-inclusive package tour usually lasts for several days. A transit tour, however, only takes a few hours

(more than one hour and less than 24 hours). Yet, a transit tour can be considered a mini all-inclusive package tour since it consists of almost all the necessary components of a tour, such as transportation, attractions, restaurants and shopping (Wang et al., 2000; Wang et al., 2007). While the elements of a traditional all-inclusive package tour can be located in different areas, those of a transit tour must be close by the airport so the transfer passengers can visit them within their short budget of time. The accommodation element, therefore, may be excluded from the transit tours. However, a transit tour also consists of the three major phases of an all-inclusive tour (before, en route/on-site and after tour) which produce the holistic experiences for its participants (Rääkkönen&Honkanen, 2013).

In the transit tours, the tour participants and the tour program are managed and guided by the same person: the tour provider. The role of a tour provider is to select, coordinate, organize and deliver separate elements of the tours to his/her participants. Since transfer passengers do not have much time and their schedule is very tight, tour providers can help eliminate the unwanted incidents and time consumption, for example, getting lost, language barrier, and attraction and activity selection (Bowie & Chang, 2005). However, the time limit generates a big pressure on service quality, especially when tour operators don't have enough time to get familiar with their customers, the participants may be very diverse in terms of nationalities and sociocultural backgrounds, and the weather and traffic conditions are uncontrollable.

A transit tour usually requires a fee as it is an independent service (e.g., Amsterdam Schiphol, Beijing Capital and Bangkok Suvarnabhumi). However, with the increasing support from other parties (e.g., the national air carriers, the national tourism administration bodies and even the central governments), some transit tours may be given for free (e.g., Seoul Incheon, Singapore Changi and Tokyo Narita).

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research Purpose and Approach

The aim of this empirical research is to examine participants' perceptions of the transit tours (specifically, the tour elements). Considering the difficulty of approaching transfer passengers in a direct way (Tang et al., 2017; Torres et al., 2005), this study adopts the indirect approach, which is to analyse participants' reviews about the transit tours. Tripadvisor.com was chosen as the source of the review data because this platform houses a large pool of topics, including those outside the airports. Other review sites (e.g., airlinequality.com, sleepinginairports.net) were overlooked since they only focus on services inside the airports.

3.2 Site Selection and Data Collection

Prior to this study, there is a lack of literature examining tour participants' reviews in general and transit tour in particular. Therefore, the research group decided to implement the study in two phases. In the preliminary phase, a single case study (Eisenhardt, 1989) of Seoul Incheon Airport was selected because (a) it topped the search result of transit tours on tripadvisor.com, and (b) it was one of the first to provide transit tours in Asia. A total of 101 reviews written in English and posted between August 2011 and July 2015 were collected in August 2015. They were then inductively analysed (Elo&Kyngeäs, 2008) to identify the elements which are included in the tours.

In the secondary phase, four cases were examined, including two free tours and two paid tours. The number of cases helps guarantee one condition of the validity of the reviews: the diversity (Kassarjian, 1977). Three keywords were used in the search of the cases as suggested by the results of the prior analysis. Using the first keyword (transit tour), the research group found that the threads of "Incheon Airport Transit Tour" and "Free Singapore Tour" had the largest numbers of review. Further examination revealed that the tours were freely provided by the involved stakeholders at Seoul Incheon Airport and Singapore Changi Airport (e.g., airport and national tourism board). Consequently, these two free cases were chosen. In addition, when using the second and third keywords (layover tour and stopover tour), the research group found that the threads about the tours at Beijing Capital Airport dominated the search result. After quickly reading the most recent reviews in each thread, the research group chose the thread "Airport Layover Tour" because its reviews were closest to the transit tour concept adopted in this study. However, these tours are not provided by the airport authority and/or other related stakeholders. They are delivered by some independent tour guides and/or transit tour companies and require a fee. From this observation, the research group scanned the search outcome again and found a similar thread at Narita Airport under the title "Narita Rainbow Tour." These tours are offered by an independent provider and also require a fee for participation. They are different from the free tours mentioned in the thread "Narita Transit Program" which had less than 30 reviews at the time of collection (May 2017) and thus was considered an insufficient source of data. Finally, "Airport Layover Tour" at Beijing Capital Airport and "Narita Rainbow Tour" at Tokyo Narita Airport were added as the paid cases in the secondary study. It should be noted that the two paid tours started several years later than the two free ones.

In the preliminary phase, the reviews posted on and before July 2015 in the "Incheon Airport Transit Tour" thread were used. Therefore, the research group decided to collect the reviews from August 2015 from all the

four cases to avoid the reuse of the data in the secondary phase. A twenty-month period (August 2015 to March 2017) was determined to ensure the other condition of data validity: the length of time (Kassarjian, 1977).

4. DATA ANALYSIS

A total of 351 units of data were collected in early May 2017 (Beijing = 88; Seoul = 89; Singapore = 133; Tokyo = 41) and then analysed. The analysis was implemented and mastered manually in an Excel file because the reviews are short or very short (approximately 94% have less than 300 words).

The analysis procedure was a deductive one (Elo&Kyngeäs, 2008). Specifically, a coding scheme was developed based on the outcome of the preliminary phase and the review of the existing literature (Räikkönen&Honkanen, 2013; Wang et al., 2000; Wang et al., 2007). This scheme consisted of ten tour elements (pre-tour information quality, tour registration, immigration procedure, airport/tour company staff, transportation to/from airport – including drivers, touristic sites, touristic activities, itinerary, tour guide and supplementary) and two post-tour intentions (to return and to recommend).

Each coding element was given a column in the master Excel file. The existence of each element within a review was coded, with 1 represents the positive perception and/or intention, -1 the negative evaluation and/or intention, and 0 no perception and/or intention. The positivity or negativity of each tour element and/or intention was determined through an analysis of sentiment (Liu, 2010). Initially, the opinion words that are attached to each element and/or intention were identified with reference to an online dictionary (<https://www.oxforddictionaries.com/>). The opinion words (e.g., like/hate, good/bad) were used by the reviewers to express their feelings. Based on these words, the sentiment (positivity or negativity) of each element and/or intention could be determined (Kontopoulos et al., 2013). However, there are cases in which opinion words were absent or when a tour element was mentioned more than once. In these cases, the review tone was considered to attribute the sentiment to the elements (Perrine, 1963). It should be noted that only the explicitly stated opinions (Liu, 2010) were counted.

At the beginning of the analysis, one researcher coded all the reviews alone. The coding was undertaken twice, with the second implemented a week after the first to ensure the intra-coder reliability (Given, 2008). After that, approximately 20% of the reviews (n = 70) were randomly selected by SPSS and sent to the other researcher for crosschecking. The inter-coder reliability (Given, 2008) was then calculated on a web service portal available at <http://dfreelon.org/> (Freelon, 2010). It was found that all the Krippendorff's alphas ranged

from 0.70 to 1.00. In other words, the coding of the first researcher could be considered reliable (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007).

The data were then analysed (in SPSS). Initially, descriptive analysis was implemented to understand the frequency of the data. Next, cross-tabulation was undertaken to check the co-occurrences between perceptions of the tour elements and the intentions. Finally, Mann-Whitney test was carried out to see whether there are differences in perceptions of the tour elements among airports. Since the data were categorically coded (-1, 0, 1), the selected methods were appropriate (Hair et al., 2010; Smalheiser, 2017).

5. FINDINGS

Table 1. Transit Passengers' Perceptions of Transit Tours (n = 351)

	Not mentioned	Mentioned	Positive	Negative
Pre-tour information quality	307 (87.5%)	44 (12.5%)	31 (8.8%)	13 (3.7%)
Tour registration	274 (78.1%)	77 (21.9%)	65 (18.5%)	12 (3.4%)
Immigration procedure	311 (88.6%)	40 (11.4%)	20 (5.7%)	20 (5.7%)
Airport/tour company staff	321 (91.4%)	30 (8.6%)	23 (6.6%)	7 (2.0%)
Transportation to/from airport	274 (78.1%)	77 (22.0%)	74 (21.1%)	3 (0.9%)
Touristic sites	188 (53.6%)	163 (46.4%)	157 (44.7%)	6 (1.7%)
Touristic activities	269 (76.6%)	82 (23.4%)	80 (22.8%)	2 (0.6%)
Itinerary	256 (73.0%)	95 (27.0%)	78 (22.2%)	17 (4.8%)
Tour guide	119 (33.9%)	232 (66.1%)	223 (63.5%)	9 (2.6%)
Supplementary	294 (83.7%)	57 (16.3%)	56 (16.0%)	1 (0.3%)
Intention to return	283 (80.7%)	68 (19.4%)	64 (18.2%)	4 (1.1%)
Intention to recommend	203 (57.9%)	148 (42.1%)	144 (41.0%)	4 (1.1%)

Moreover, the cross-tabulation analysis suggested that the perception of tour guide could significantly enhance both participants' intentions to return ($r = 0.119$, $p < 0.05$) and to recommend ($r = 0.152$, $p < 0.05$). The intention to return might further be contributed by the positive perceptions of pre-tour information quality, airport/tour company staff and touristic sites although

The descriptive analysis of the data revealed that tour guide and touristic sites are the most well-recalled tour elements (Table 1). These elements were mentioned by 66.1% and 46.4% of the reviewers respectively. The next popular elements, which were recalled by more than 20% of the reviewers, are tour registration, transportation, touristic activities and itinerary. The remaining ones were reproduced by approximately 10% of the reviewers, including pre-tour information quality, immigration procedure, airport/tour company staff and supplementary. In all cases, the positive perceptions outnumbered the negative perceptions. The number of participants who stated an intention to recommend the tours (42.1%) nearly double that of the intention to return to the host city and/or country (19.4%).

the correlations only had marginal significance levels ($p < 0.10$). Furthermore, the intention to recommend might be significantly or marginally strengthened by the positive perceptions of pre-tour information quality ($r = 0.113$, $p < 0.05$), tour registration ($r = 0.158$, $p < 0.05$), supplementary ($r = 0.134$, $p < 0.05$) and itinerary ($r = 0.101$, $p < 0.10$). The details are provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlations between Tour Elements and Intentions

	Intention to return	Intention to recommend
Pre-tour information quality	$r = 0.099$; $p = 0.065$	$r = 0.133$; $p = 0.013$
Tour registration	$r = 0.030$; $p = 0.570$	$r = 0.158$; $p = 0.003$
Immigration procedure	$r = 0.063$; $p = 0.237$	$r = 0.050$; $p = 0.346$
Airport/tour company staff	$r = 0.099$; $p = 0.064$	$r = -0.011$; $p = 0.833$
Transportation to/from airport	$r = 0.079$; $p = 0.141$	$r = 0.069$; $p = 0.194$
Touristic sites	$r = 0.090$; $p = 0.094$	$r = 0.020$; $p = 0.710$
Touristic activities	$r = 0.057$; $p = 0.283$	$r = 0.088$; $p = 0.101$
Itinerary	$r = 0.037$; $p = 0.489$	$r = 0.101$; $p = 0.059$
Tour guide	$r = 0.119$; $p = 0.026$	$r = 0.152$; $p = 0.004$
Supplementary	$r = -0.010$; $p = 0.847$	$r = 0.134$; $p = 0.012$

Finally, the Mann-Whitney tests showed that the transit tours at Beijing Airport had more positive perceptions of all of the ten tour elements as compared to Seoul Airport and Singapore Airport. Tokyo Airport also outnumbered the latter although differences were not observed in certain elements (e.g., immigration procedure, airport/tour company staff and supplementary). Between Tokyo and Beijing, the former

had less positive perceptions in five elements, including pre-tour information quality, tour registration, touristic sites, touristic activities and supplementary. Between Seoul and Singapore, the latter received more positive evaluations in four elements, including airport/tour company staff, touristic sites, touristic activities and supplementary. The descriptive and comparative data are displayed in Table 3 and Table 4 respectively.

Table 3. Frequency of Tour Elements and Intentions among Airports

	Seoul (n = 89)			Singapore (n = 133)			Tokyo (n = 41)			Beijing (n = 88)		
	Negative	N/M	Positive	Negative	N/M	Positive	Negative	N/M	Positive	Negative	N/M	Positive
Pre-tour information quality	6	82	1	7	122	4	0	40	1	0	63	25
Tour registration	8	73	8	4	116	13	0	32	9	0	53	35
Immigration procedure	7	78	4	7	119	7	0	41	0	6	73	9
Airport/tour company staff	3	72	14	4	121	8	0	40	1	0	88	0
Transportation to/from airport	2	73	14	1	115	17	0	30	11	0	56	32
Touristic sites	2	67	20	3	85	45	0	3	38	1	33	54
Touristic activities	2	68	19	0	126	7	0	14	27	0	61	27
Itinerary	4	70	15	12	106	15	1	27	13	0	53	35
Tour guide	2	41	46	7	54	72	0	6	35	0	18	70
Supplementary	0	72	17	1	121	11	0	37	4	0	64	24
Intention to return	1	73	15	3	104	26	0	30	11	0	76	12
Intention to recommend	2	58	29	2	88	43	0	20	21	0	37	51

Table 4. Comparison of Airports

	Seoul vs. Singapore		Seoul vs. Tokyo		Seoul vs. Beijing		Singapore vs. Beijing		Singapore vs. Tokyo		Tokyo vs. Beijing	
	z	p	z	p	z	p	z	p	z	p	z	p
Pre-tour information quality	-0.858	0.391	-1.733	0.083	-5.518	0.000	-5.721	0.000	-1.005	0.315	-3.410	0.001
Tour registration	-1.258	0.209	-2.662	0.008	-5.261	0.000	-5.431	0.000	-2.270	0.023	-1.980	0.048
Immigration procedure	-0.735	0.463	-0.639	0.523	-1.173	0.000	-0.693	0.000	0.000	1.000	-0.559	0.576
Airport/tour company staff	-1.960	0.050	-1.526	0.127	-2.780	0.000	-0.963	0.000	-0.136	0.892	-1.465	0.143
Transportation to/from airport	-0.328	0.743	-1.655	0.098	-3.285	0.000	-4.173	0.000	-2.185	0.029	-1.065	0.287
Touristic sites	-1.732	0.083	-7.403	0.000	-5.170	0.000	-3.994	0.000	-6.536	0.000	-3.652	0.000
Touristic activities	-3.061	0.002	-4.930	0.000	-1.622	0.000	-5.115	0.000	-8.530	0.000	-3.756	0.000
Itinerary	-1.624	0.104	-1.917	0.055	-3.675	0.000	-5.437	0.000	-3.188	0.001	-1.032	0.302
Tour guide	-0.135	0.893	-3.687	0.000	-3.941	0.000	-3.981	0.000	-3.630	0.000	-0.788	0.431
Supplementary	-2.472	0.013	-1.340	0.180	-1.285	0.000	-3.842	0.000	-0.418	0.676	-2.238	0.025

6. DISCUSSION

The transit tours are indeed mini all-inclusive packages, which include such basic and important elements as pre-tour information, staff, touristic sites and activities, itinerary, tour guide and other supplementary ones. However, different from the conventional all-inclusive tours, transit tours have some distinct characteristics, for example, registration and immigration procedures at airports. These characteristics involve and are induced by the fact that transfer passengers, who are not necessarily domestic ones, must get out of the airports to participate in the tours.

Among the airports examined in this study, those with the free tours (Seoul and Singapore) were perceived to have more faults than those with the paid tours (Beijing and Tokyo). Thus, there is a possibility that the free tours were disregarded as compared to the paid tours. It should be noted that, Beijing and Tokyo only provide the site for transactions; the actual tours were carried out by independent tour providers and required a fee. In addition, the tours were provided in Beijing and Tokyo several years after those in Seoul and Singapore.

6.1 Implication for tour providers

In an earlier study in Scandinavia, Bowie, and Chang (2005) found that the performance of the tour leaders is one of the most important external antecedent of the tour participants' satisfaction. In this study, it was observed that tour guides received the biggest number of positive perceptions from the transit tour participants. This element might also have some contribution to the participants' intention to redo the tours. However, tour guides should take into account several issues when delivering the transit tours. First, since the participants only have a limited budget of time, tour guides' punctuality must be strictly ensured. In addition, participants may arrive late due to the cancellation and/or delay of their flights. In such cases, the sympathy and extended waiting of the tour guides are emotionally appreciated. Second, many participants may not dress properly since they arrive from different climates. The supply of some supplementary elements (e.g., jackets and umbrellas) are also cherished. The following quotations from the participants' reviews help clarify these points:

- Nickname poilippus: *Our flight was late and the 72-hour visa line absurdly long and slow, but S.[the tour provider] was waiting for us and efficiently took us to all the sites.*

(reviewed on 7 January 2017 about Beijing Capital Airport)

- Nickname minnesotans4: *We had arrived from Cambodia which had 90 degree weather so we were not prepared for the 30 degree weather in Seoul. We so appreciated the warm winter jackets that were provided on the bus.* (reviewed on 15 January 2017 about Seoul Incheon Airport)

The transit tours, nevertheless, have their flaws. Problems and failures may arise at any phase of the tours due to the nature of the production and delivery of services (Parasuraman et al., 1985). To eliminate mistakes, careful planning (pre-tour information and registration) and a flexible itinerary are necessary. In this regard, the paid tours seem to do better than the free tours. This is the result of a customized orientation where information and introduction about the tours are sufficiently provided during the registration period. In addition, the sites and activities included in the tours are those requested or preapproved by the participants. Moreover, the tour itinerary can be flexibly adjusted considering the arrival time of the transfer passengers and the actual time that they can spare for the transit tours. The following quotations are selected from the participants' reviews to demonstrate these issues:

- Nickname Michael_K_SNJ: *I had some free time in Narita and searched online for tour options. The best values and reviews came from Narita Rainbow Tours, so I reached out to them. K. [the tour provider] reached out to me almost instantly, giving me his cell # to chat. We discussed a tour option and price... and after squaring away details via email, I looked forward to my trip.* (reviewed on 20 March 2016 about Tokyo Narita Airport)
- Nickname lyndeleigh: *We had an 8 hour layover in Beijing and decided to make the most of it with the Great Wall airport layover tour. T. [the tour provider] was super responsive and helpful with booking the tour, providing all the information for a smooth 72 hour visa approval. Our flight out of Bangkok to Beijing was delayed an hour and we weren't able to access email to alert T. of the delay. We worried that we would be unable to attend the tour, but our guide S. was still waiting when we finally arrived 40 minutes past our scheduled meeting time. She informed us our time would be short on the wall but we could still make it.* (reviewed on 25 March 2017 about Beijing Capital Airport)

6.2 Implications for airports

The free tours, nonetheless, received more compliments for the front staff at airports. Yet, many transfer passengers complained that they had to wait too long to clear the immigration procedures. Some of them suggested that the airports may give the transit-tour

participants a separate line to shorten the immigration time and to lengthen the tour time:

- Nickname Shantylee827: *I think the organizer should reconsider the whole thing, because it is really a waste of time on the immigration & custom. They should let the transit tour travelers use crew lane on high season.* (reviewed on 5 January 2017 about Seoul Incheon Airport)

This recommendation is worth a consideration since transfer passengers may count for more than 50% of total passengers at some airports, such as Doha, Abu Dhabi, Atlanta and Addis Ababa (Maertens&Grimme, 2015). Among them, those who get out of the airports can create some spillover effects to the host societies and economies. For example, each passenger who left Singapore Airport during the transfer time spent on average 150 dollars, which brought in a revenue of approximately 61 million dollars to the country in 2002 (The Straits Times, 2004). Thus, the delivery of the transit tours can give an airport some advantages in their nonstop competition with other airports, especially those in the same area or region (de Barros et al., 2007; Ishii et al, 2009).

However, as a peripheral service, the failure of the transit tours may hurt the main services and the image of the airports (Hess, 1999). Thus, an airport must carefully consider their appropriate level of participation: (a) providing the transaction site (Beijing and Tokyo), (b) delivering the tours (Seoul and Singapore), or (c) mixing (a) and (b).

6.3 Implications for Tourism Administration Organizations

The tourism administration organizations play an important role in the operation of the transit tours. They advise their governments on the ease of immigration requirements, coordinate the involved stakeholders (e.g., airlines, airports and immigration bureaus), advertise the concept and finance its operation. If their purpose is to promote the image of the host city and country, the transit tours may have fulfilled their task. However, if the purpose is to attract more visits and revisits, other methods should also be considered because the transit tours alone cannot ensure that. Evidence is illustrated by the following quotations:

- Nickname jeniycrawford: *You get to see a little sneak peak of Singapore and it made us want to stay longer in Singapore. Defiantly worth it if you have some time to spare.* (reviewed on 6 January 2017 about Singapore Changi Airport)
- Nickname nikme44: *You get a bit of everything with this tour. I was in awe from our first stop to feed the fish to the ramen meal (not included in the tour). Narita is not just an airport town and is not to be missed. I recommend this tour to everyone!* (reviewed on 26 October 2016 about Tokyo Narita Airport).

Consequently, the tourism administration organizations should reconsider their current purposes and approaches. They may not need to finance the transit tours to make them free to everyone. Instead, they may outsource the implementation of such tours to professional tour companies. Transfer passengers, thus, need to pay the fee on their own; yet, they will get better services. The tourism administration organizations, then, can spread their promotion and coordination efforts to a wider network of airports in other big cities and tourist centers. By doing so, they can create more spillover effects to the host cities and countries.

7. CONCLUSION

Waiting inside airports for the next flight might be very lengthy and boring. Thus, many passengers have opted to get out and participate in the transit tours in the airports' surrounding areas. The transit tours have provided an alternative for transfer passengers, and consequently have diversified their behaviors. Fortunately, the transit tours at the four Asia airports (Beijing, Seoul, Singapore and Tokyo) have added some positive elements to transfer passengers' experiences.

Airports other than the four cases examined in this study can consider adopting the transit-tour concept to provide another explicit distractor from passengers' waiting time (Antonides et al., 2002). However, it should be noted that the implementation of transit tours needs the participation of many stakeholders, including the airports, the tour providers, the national tourism

administration organizations, and even the central governments. The level of participation and the coordination among the stakeholders must be carefully considered in order to make the transit tours a successful operation.

7.1 Limitations and Future Directions

Despite its efforts, this study could not avoid some limitations. Specifically, the attribution of the sentiment to each tour element was only the interpretation of the research group. The outcomes, therefore, might be subjective. In addition, this study could only cover four airports in East and Southeast Asia. The situations in other regions remain unknown.

To address these limitations, future studies may consider the traditional method of questionnaire survey to collect a more complete database, and thus, produce a less biased and generalizable findings. Under this approach, other visitor-related issues (e.g., expectation vs. satisfaction) could also be taken into account. In addition, customers' perceptions of free and paid services should be studied in a more thorough manner in order to provide a reliable reference for the implementation of price-based promotional campaigns in the future. Moreover, participants' reviews about transit tours in other airports and regions should be investigated. The insights of tour providers' operation should also be examined to develop a finer theory on transit tours.

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