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The Threats of North Korea's Missile and Visitors' International Conference Choice Behavior

Pam Lee, Chulmo Koo and Namho Chung *

College of Hotel & Tourism Management, Kyung Hee University, 26 Kyunghee-daero, Dongdaemun-gu, Seoul 02447, Korea; pampam@khu.ac.kr (P.L.); helmetgu@khu.ac.kr (C.K.)

* Correspondence: nhchung@khu.ac.kr; Tel.: +82-2-961-2353; Fax: +82-2-961-9557

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Abstract: The popularity of hosting international conferences has increased, as their positive economic and social effects are now widely recognized. The Korean government selected the international conference industry as one of the new industry engines in propelling the economy. This study examines the factors of participation in international conferences from the value perspective. To this end, a value-based adoption model (VAM) is employed to test our research model using empirical data. A total of 192 questionnaires which were acquired from International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS) 2017 in Seoul were coded for analysis. The research findings reveal that technical support, program usefulness, and perceived threats are predictors of perceived value with significant positive influence and, moreover, the perceived threats are affected by media exposure of North Korea missile threats. Perceived value is found to exert significant effects on revisit intention. The major contribution of the paper is to discuss both the practical and theoretical implications, providing information to destination marketers, and employing VAM in international conferences research.

Keywords: value-based adoption model (VAM); international conference; technological support; media exposure; North Korea Missile

1. Introduction

As the economic, sociocultural, and political value in hosting conferences has become widely recognized, it is known to guarantee profit for the tourism industry due to the mass bulk flows of attendees visiting the host destination [1]. Seoul, through a joint effort with its central government (Korea Tourism Organization), has been striving to promote the advantages of hosting an international conference, along with providing financial and resource support. According to a UIA report (Union of International Associations, 2018), South Korea won first place as a result of its decade's long effort, hosting 12.6% of the whole global associations' meetings. Notably, Seoul ranked third for three consecutive years in 2017 by hosting 688 international conferences, followed by Brussels and Singapore.

Although Seoul shows remarkable achievement, the city has been struggling with its unpredictable political tension, which is a major challenge when it comes to inducing visitors. Korea obviously remains in a war zone without any guarantees for public safety. North Korea's test-launching of an intercontinental ballistic missile on November 2017 raised security issues, resulting in life-threatening stress for potential visitors. Due to the deployment of a U.S. anti-missile terminal high-altitude area defense (THAAD) battery in South Korea, China's government practically prohibited the country's tour agencies from offering group tours to Korea in March 2017, which caused severe damage to the entire Korean tourism industry. However, since the historic summit meeting took place in Panmunjom last April 2018, and because the Koreas' Panmunjom Declaration announcement led to many international expectations regarding denuclearization, political circumstances in Korea were left hanging by a thread,

i.e., due to complicated political interests across the neighborhood countries and North Korea nuclear ambitions, the political conditions and tourism industry remain sensitive and unpredictable.

In fact, tourism is often described as a powerful mix of cultural, economic, and political phenomena; however, it typically remains all-too political. For instance, how does tourism and its related sectors deal with passports, borders, mobility, and the politics of exclusion in light of increased travel security measures? In addition, natural disasters, war, terror, economic crises, medical issues, and national interest resulting in political confrontation could be underlying factors that are crucial in the decision-making process of conference participants and impel a destination to lose competency. Therefore, it is imperative to look into conference participants' expectations and frustrations. Recently, there has been growing acknowledgment in the importance that conference-related research considers participant perspectives, the majority of behavior studies being on motivation focus in regard to the concept of perceived constraints and facilitators. Nevertheless, those convention-related researches are limited in certain topics and need to expand the range of its keywords and theories [2]. Here, in this study, we employed a value-based adoption model (VAM) and classified the motivations and constraints based on the evaluation of the benefits and sacrifices of attending. VAM is constructed on the theory of consumer choice and decision-making from economics and marketing research suitable for explaining voluntary adoption and usage behavior [3]. The perceived value of a conference is divided into benefit and sacrifice in order to examine what component of a conference adds or subtracts value for attendees.

This paper questions the often-stated claim of tourism as the world's peace industry and whether there exists a causal relationship between tourism and political tensions on the subject of international conference business. To accomplish the study's purpose, we conducted a review of the relevant literature and developed a research model, which we tested with data from a survey of n = 192 collected at the site of International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS) held in Coex, Seoul (12–14 December 2017). ICIS is a renowned international conference in the field of management information systems (MIS), which started in 1980. We explored the relationship between destination competitive factors, perceived value, and revisit intention. We examined attendees' reasons for attending international conferences and whether these reasons lead to repeated visits to a destination. Further, this study assessed the influences of political tensions raised in a hosting country due to the underlying factors (e.g., political issues and terrorism) being considered crucial motivations in the decision-making process.

This study differentiates itself from the existing research in that it examines the latter half sequence of the conference attendees' experience, whereas, to the best of our knowledge, most related studies focused on the attendees' decision-making process, including travel planning decisions and motivations for attending. Investigating the effect of technology support usage by attendees and its relationship to perceived value is a new attempt as well. Moreover, this study is expected to offer actionable implications for the Convention Visitors Bureau (CVB) and Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) to design competitive promoting strategies and use media channels more effectively.

2. Conceptual Background

2.1. Value-Based Adoption Model

The theory of value is used in diverse fields of studies, although the main notion is alike, as the contexts for each term vary. Due to the fact that value is the consequence of a cognitive comparison process [4], evaluating the value with only one feature, e.g., price, can be misleading and does not consider the multidimensionality of decision-making [5]. Through the merger of literature in technology adoption and value, extracted from the marketing field, consumer choice, and decision-making in the economic field, Kim and Malek [5] developed the value-based adoption model (VAM) theory in order to examine the consumers' voluntary adoption of technology within the perspective of value in decision-making, i.e., to describe the adoption of technology from the value maximization perspective.

The VAM theory differentiates itself from other adoption models existing in the technology adoption research field by not examining the standard user perspective, where the adoption is mandatory, but rather by examining the consumer perspective in which adoption is voluntary.

In marketing and economics literature, with the concept of value as a perception of a trade-off between gain and loss, they explored the cost–benefit paradigm and introduced the prospect theory to demonstrate that customers make choices depending on what they think would be the best give-and-take. Prebensen, Woo, Chen, and Uysal [6] extend this notion to identify perceived value. Woodruff (1997) explains perceived value as the consumers' observation of the combination of benefits that are given on behalf of the investments. The VAM model is divided into two constructs, i.e., benefit and sacrifice. For previous studies in using the constructs of value as benefit and sacrifice, the benefit component will be what one gains from the trade, and sacrifice would be what they lose. Depending on the study, the definitions vary; in this study, we use the term as benefits being a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic attributes of the product/service, perceived quality, and other high-level abstractions and sacrifice being perceived monetary price and nonmonetary price.

2.2. International Conference: Motivations and Participations

The official definition of "conference" is a meeting designed to bring people together for the purpose of exchanging information. The conference sector is a main driver in the tourism industry due to the many aspects. It interacts with global or local transportation, food and beverage businesses, and accommodations. The conference industry is recognized as a key driver in the tourism industry, with the sector's remarkable development [7]. Participants in international conferences are known to spend more money than average tourists. According to a 2015 report by the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, travel expenditures of international visitors are found to be highest in the groups that visit for meetings or conventions and second in incentive tours. With general tourists spending $1715 per person, participants of conferences spend the most at $3127 per person. Destinations that recognize the profit of hosting international conferences invest in hosting more conferences and marketing to potential consumers such as conference planners.

Thus, international conferences are expected to enrich the local economy and generate revenue for related tourism facilities. Kim, Chon, and Chung [8] summarized the reasons that the convention industry generates significant economic influence. First, hosting a convention brings large bulks of participants to visit the destination. The large number of participants has a longer duration of stay than common tourists while participating in tours, which creates a flow of income for the destination. Second, in the case of international conventions, participants tend to spend more during their stay. Last, the businesses that benefit from conventions are diversified and interconnected. Thus, destinations compete to host and market themselves as a convention destination.

Since the economic, sociocultural, and political value in hosting conferences has become widely recognized, many destinations fight to bring international conferences into their cities, whereas potential conference participants experience the process of evaluating its gain and loss of participating. Leading to the fact that conference participants are in another term, consumers, and as consumers, the evaluation of gain and loss of consuming is commonly defined with the terms, benefit and sacrifice. Diversity in the conference market requires participants to weigh the cost and benefits of attending during their decision-making process [9]. Thus, the perceived value by conference participants is a crucial factor that helps examine and understand the destination's competitiveness [10]. Understanding the patterns of tourist behaviors has been the fundamental subject in the tourism sector as consumer behavior is a premise for designing marketing action. Tourists encounter numerous decision-making situations throughout the respective travel stage; Buhalis and Amaranggana [11] split tourist behaviors into three phases: before travel, during travel, and after travel, in their study, which defined how personalization of technology service supports travel activities in each phase. Before travel in the planning stage, tourists decide which destination to travel to, how to get there, and where to stay. When they arrive, during travel, where and what to eat, or what activities to do are matters of decision-making. After travel,

word-of-mouth recommendations or revisitations are activities left for tourists. As described, every part of the tourists' experience puts them in a decision-making situation to review the benefits and risks of their choice. In international conference, in 1990s, the studies have mostly focused on beneficial motivations such as destinations' attractiveness and conference usefulness [9]. However, Ngamsom and Beck [12] started evaluating constraints factors in the decision-making process of conferences. Since then, from 2000 onwards, conference attendance motivation was asserted to be diverse and many research highlight not only motivations but constraints as well [13–15]. In fact, tourism is often described as a powerful mix of cultural, economic, and political phenomena. Therefore, exploring underlying factors which are crucial to the decision-making process of conference is essential to enhance destination competency. There has been growing acknowledgment in the importance that conference-related studies consider participant perspectives, the majority of behavior studies being on motivation focus in regard to the concept of perceived constraints and motivations. Thus, it is important to identify tourism consumers' decision-making standards and in what aspects they perceive value. In order to examine the factors influencing the decision-making process of conference participation and to derive the benefit and sacrifice constructs, this study reviewed existing research and summarized the imperative motivation factors for conference participants. Table 1 shows a summary of existing studies on conference-specific factors of participation motivation.

Table 1. Summary of existing studies of conference choice behavior.

Author	Motivation Factors
Grant and Weaver (1996)	Benefits: Program Usefulness, Destination Enjoyment
Oppermann and Chon (1997)	Benefits: Program Usefulness, Destination Enjoyment
Ngamsom and Beck (2000)	Benefits: Program Usefulness, Destination Enjoyment Sacrifice: Perceived Cost
Rittichainuwat, Beck, and Lalopa (2001)	Benefits: Program Usefulness, Destination Enjoyment Sacrifice: Perceived Cost, Perceived Threat
Severt, Wang, Chen, and Breiter (2007)	Benefits: Program Usefulness, Destination Enjoyment Sacrifice: Perceived Cost
Zhang, Leung, and Qu (2007)	Benefits: Program Usefulness, Destination Enjoyment Sacrifice: Perceived Cost
Yoo and Chon (2008)	Benefits: Program Usefulness, Destination Enjoyment Sacrifice: Perceived Cost, Perceived Threat
Mair and Thompson (2009)	Benefits: Program Usefulness, Destination Enjoyment Sacrifice: Perceived Cost, Perceived Threat
Fjelstul, Severt, and Breiter (2010)	Benefits: Program Usefulness, Destination Enjoyment Sacrifice: Perceived Cost
Tanford, Montgomery, and Nelson (2012)	Benefits: Program Usefulness, Destination Enjoyment Sacrifice: Perceived Cost
Dragin-Jensen, Schnittka, Feddersen, Kottemann, and Rezvani (2018)	Benefits: Program Usefulness, Destination Enjoyment Sacrifice: Perceived Cost

With the advent of the fourth industrial revolution, the role of knowledge-based conference business has become ever more spotlighted; further, soft-infrastructure-based collaboration is the mainstream of the fourth industrial revolution, and the conference industry is the concourse of technology, human, and knowledge service based on advanced information and communication technology (ICT) social infrastructure. Thus, this study employs the theory of VAM in the tourism context, and implementation of the VAM model in the international conference context brings adjustment to the elements. The latest studies focus more on the program itself, networking, and educational purpose. Matsuo and Iwamoto [14] proposed that to reduce no-show attendees, it is imperative to promote networking opportunity as most of convention attendees are expecting to enrich their human networking. Interestingly Dragin-Jensen, Schnittka, Feddersen, Kottemann, and Rezvani [15] found that the farther away an attendee lives from the meeting location site, "loyalty" is

a more important dimension, whereas the closer an attendee lives to the meeting location, "Socializing" and "Entertainment" are the more significant dimension.

3. Hypotheses Development

3.1. Benefits

In the early stage of conference participation motivation studies, where influencing factors in the decision-making process of conference attending are categorized, one factor is identified to be consistent with intervening motivations. From then on, conference attendance motivation was asserted to be diverse and constituted beneficial results for attendees. Moreover, research in other fields with the value theory [4,16–18] identified perceived benefits to have a positive impact on perceived value. For the benefit of constructing the VAM model in international conferences, this study examined three factors selected from the research of conference-attending motivations and technology application in events. The usefulness of the conference program, destination enjoyment, and technology support through website and mobile application are selected as factors for the benefit construct.

3.1.1. Technological Support

The role of information technology and smart devices, from a user's perspective, is to connect and allow the flow of information from the supplier to the user. In the tourism context, tourists use information and communication technology (ICT) to gain information during the whole process of traveling, i.e., before travel, during travel, and after travel. Researchers have realized the development of ICT has changed the tourism and hospitality business. Studies in tourism about users' adoption and usage of technology found the technology acceptance model (TAM) factors (perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived risk, efforts, and performance expectancy) influence intentions [19].

Widespread use of technology to assist attendees during events such as festivals, conventions, exhibitions, sports events, expos, and conferences [20] has brought a new feature to investigate when measuring the factors that affect the attendees' experience. The main purposes of a convention are to educate attendees and to provide networking opportunities among them. Because technology is well-suited as a tool to assist in delivering the key purposes of conventions, it has become an important tool for convention organizers to enhance attendees' convention experience [21]. Over 90% of event professionals use mobile phone technology regularly for work; thus, fast on-line or technology connections, such as radio frequency identification (RFID), and IoT, such as beacons, (Kim, Park, Sun, and Lee [18]) are applied. These tools help accelerate registration processes, assist attendees in real-time, collect attendee feedback, and identify or track meeting attendees to gain data about events for analysis and future implementation. Live streaming or recording services of conferences are also introduced as technological support.

As mentioned earlier, Seoul incorporates new technology and ideas to improve meeting productivity, knowledge, and experience, with the assistance of the nation's most advanced ICT infrastructure, super-fast internet connections, and seamless IT infrastructure to enable the international conferences to advance to the next level. Han, Park, and Chung [20] and Chung, Kim, and Lee [22] examined the use of near-field communication (NFC) by expo visitors and addressed a study of smart technology utilization. The study results showed that the positive experience in using smart technology in events increases event satisfaction as well as revisit intentions and recommendations. Moreover, Lee and Lee [23] explored convention-specific social media usage by attendees and confirmed that the most frequently used ICT device by attendees was the smart mobile phone. Moreover, the attendees requested the following functions to be provided through mobile applications: exhibitor directory search, convention floor plans, and convention itinerary planner.

Among the many ICT services, the most frequently implemented service to increase the quality of service and satisfaction, conferences apply websites and apps to support attendees' needs and wants. Even in the absence of direct service or communication, which can happen in international

events due to the large scale and language barriers, attendees can obtain necessary information on their own: The attendees who have the application are always up-to-date with the schedule changes and notifications sent by the organizer [24]. Further personalization of services and communication with the attendees can also accomplish better quality customer relationships [25]. Therefore, meeting planners now consider technology facilities to be among the most critical assessments made when choosing a venue especially for the ones in the field of business management [26,27].

Meanwhile, with the rapid pervasiveness of smartphones, it is essential to develop mobile applications to adapt to current trends and technologies, and it is the ultimate tool to secure a comparative advantage in the market. Huang, Goo, Nam, and Yoo [28] proposed that online applications and information sources, e.g., websites, are widely used by the majority and, without question, enhances the overall experience of their activities; further, the study confirms the relation of tech support and perceived value of the conference. Searching for information prior to the hosting dates, such as registration and reservations, the language barrier and physical distance make attendees rely on the Internet and especially a conference's official website. [29–31] looked into the service standards of MICE tourism and described the functions of a website in MICE tourism on the notion that information management is essential to the industry. The study elaborates that websites are more cost-effective, simultaneously reachable to worldwide users, and instantly manageable. The results highlight the use of internet as a communication tool, being an affordable and effective method of marketing leading to exceptional service standards. Additionally, the process of registration and survey can be handled through the website. Furthermore, to provide high-quality service, the information must be updated continually. In Lee and Lee's [23] study of attendees' convention social media usage, the results disclosed that attendees' second-most used information source was the website.

Research in the tourism field concurred the increase of smartphone usage facilitates to support of "micro-moment" service and has a dominant impact on visitor behaviors [32], providing personally tailored, easy to use, and practical information. The advancement and evolution of smartphones make them available to function like mobile computers, and tourists utilize the various functions to support and enrich their travel experience [32]. Based on the widespread use and high demand of up-to-date technological support by convention attendees, Lee and Lee [23] specifically explored the convention participants' perception and motives of adopting the use of convention-specific social media and mobile applications. The study identified the most-demanded features on mobile applications as exhibitor directory search, convention floor plan, and convention itinerary planner. In addition, the participants' motivation for utilizing the application was to be in communication with other participants throughout the whole event, i.e., before, during, and after. The app effectiveness is examined in previous literature with factors such as "interactivity" offering instant interaction, which intensifies the overall experience [32], "accessibility" due to the use of smartphone devices and strong internet connection [33], and "personalize" functions of mobile app services [34]. In order to see whether the use of technological assistance during the conference does indeed bring more value to the attendees, the following hypothesis is developed:

Hypothesis 1: *Technological support has a positive effect on perceived value*.

3.1.2. Program Usefulness

The benefits of participating conferences can be categorized into educational pursuits and developing information, skills, attitudes, and relationships. Participants look forward to enhancing their skills, spark creativity, and associate with other scholars in the field to benefit their careers. Therefore, the quality of the conference program is an important consideration for attendees, and this is proven in the previous literature revised, as shown in Table 1. In the context of value theory, the cost of attending must be compensated with the gain from the conference. Previous literature underlines

that provision of education, enhancement in career-related abilities, and networking opportunities must be secured and offered at the conference.

The first studies to illustrate major factors that influence participants in attending conferences and conventions in the 1990s and the studies found education, networking, career path and leadership enhancement, and employee recognition to be a major driver for attendance. Oppermann and Chon [9] executed the most referred conceptual model of the factors considered during decision-making for attendance. Out of the four factors referred to as the reasons considered during decision-making to attend, "association/conference" and "personal and business" factors are the two that are identical to program usefulness. The usefulness of the conference toward enhancing professional skills was found essential in many conference attendance motivation studies [2,9,35,36]. Education, networking, career path and leadership enhancement, and employee recognition were observed to be major factors that influence association members to attend conferences and conventions. In the case of Severt, Wang, Chen, and Breiter's [35] research, the factors for attendance in the perspective of the attendees as consumers regarding program usefulness was mentioned, e.g., "activities and opportunities," "education benefits," and "networking." Rittichainuwat, Back, and Lalopa [2] identify a factor, i.e., "business and conference activities," as attendees' motivation for conference attendance, which is measured through the quality of conference composition. Jago and Deery [37] found attendees to be time-poor and appreciate the opportunity to attend social events to concentrate on networking, therefore experiencing the conferences up to their fullest capacity will create value in attending conferences. Based on the previous studies, this study includes program usefulness as a benefit component factor; thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: *Program usefulness has a positive effect on perceived value.*

3.1.3. Destination Enjoyment

Selecting a meeting site is the most critical part of the planning process; further, the host destination is not only important for the organizer but also for the delegates. After the host destination is arranged for a conference, participants go through a decision-making process in regard to attending the conference. Previous studies highlight motivation factors of attending international conferences such as accessibility, attractiveness, scenery, and entertainment [9], outdoor recreation, and business and/or political activities [12]. Rittichainuwat, Back, and Lalopa [2] found that conferences can increase attendance by hosting major tourist destinations that offer sightseeing activities, and the dominant attendance motivation can differ depending on the conference destination. Jago and Deery [37] studied the key decision-makers in the international convention industry and found the decision for the destination was mainly focused on satisfying all the participants with culturally and personally divergent demands and requirements as well as location attractiveness. Thus, this study assumes that destination is a beneficial component of perceived value and proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: *Destination enjoyment has a positive effect on perceived value.*

3.2. Sacrifices

The sacrifice construct of the VAM model in international conferences is examined in this study with two factors, one being the risk-taking of attending a conference and political threats the other. The particular circumstances of international conferences cause destination barriers and uncertainty for the attendees. Perceived risks of safety, inconvenience, and unfamiliarity with overseas destinations, along with possible security problems of overseas destinations, inhibit attendees from participating in international conferences as well as in the process of traveling, including distance, time, and expenses [2]. According to earlier studies, inhibitors of conference attendance are proposed to be more influential in

the final stage of destination selection [38] showing the importance of attendees' perceived sacrifices in evaluating the value of a conference. In this study, we use sacrifice as being perceived as monetary and nonmonetary prices.

3.2.1. Perceived Cost

In studies about destination selection processes, the term of facilitators and inhibitors often appear. Facilitators are what makes participation in international conferences easier, such as money, good health, and availability. Destination accessibility is identified as a facilitator for attendance because a conference held in a location close from work or home would spare time, effort, and costs [36], which include travel distance and time [35]. Oppermann and Chon [9] found that funding is the priority reason for not being able to attend, along with conference dates not matching with the schedule or overlapping with other conference dates as the second reason. Fjelstul, Severt, and Breiter, [39] examined financial aspects such as "receiving financial support from work" and "the total cost of attending" as being influential factors. Through extensive search of what the conference attendees recognize as cost and constraints of attending, this study distinguished the cost as distance, time consumed to travel, and expenses in traveling to the destination.

Hypothesis 4: *Perceived cost has a negative effect on perceived value.*

3.2.2. Perceived Threat

Travelers are often hindered when they are at risk of experiencing life-threatening situations or even mental risks due to health, physical, and terrorism threats, which typically lead to disappointing memories [38]. Individual negative perception toward conference destinations could be a situational constraint attending a conference. Oppermann and Chon [9] found that, when unmanageable situations, e.g., social, political, and economic happenings, are unstable at the host destination, conference participants will have second thoughts about attending a conference. Notably, safety and security at the convention location are primary concerns for conference attendees [37,40]. Ramirez, Laing, and Mair [41] asked research participants about attending Santiago, Chile, for an international conference one month after an earthquake occurred at the destination. The respondents showed high concern in regard to safety and security at the conference destination. Previous research confirms that perceived threats from the destination negatively influenced the perceived value of attendance, which leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: *Perceived threat has a negative effect on perceived value.*

3.3. Perceived Value and Revisit Intention

Destination revisit intentions were studied in relation to tourist satisfaction. The satisfaction of a conference is found to influence post-behavior, such as showing loyalty and intention to revisit [35]. Previous studies elaborated that conference participants show travel intentions if they are satisfied with host location, conference activities, and cultural attractions. Oppermann and Chon [9] discuss how the host destination obtains benefit by hosting a conference, thus promoting the venue as a travel destination. Further, it is crucial to induce participants, nonparticipants, and even non-association members into having intentions to (re)visit a destination. Thus, this study suggests the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: *Perceived value has a positive effect on revisit intention.*

3.4. Exposure to North Korean News

Although Seoul has demonstrated remarkable achievement in the international conference market, the city still struggles to fight against unpredictable political tension. Korea is obviously still in a war zone without being able to guarantee public safety. North Korea is also under great stress in Far East Asia, notably in the Korean Peninsula, as it will not give up its nuclear ambitions and even test-launched an intercontinental ballistic missile on November 2017. Because tourism is a mix of culture, economics, and politics, those complicated political interests across neighborhood countries have created stress for South Korea's tourism industry, thus having a negative influence on the decision-making process of conference participants and impelling the destination to lose competency. Tourists directly/indirectly experience risk, starting from minor disappointments to serious life-threatening situations [38]. Therefore, it is imperative to design and promote the desired country image as being a safe-to-travel destination. Korea's efforts in upgrading its global image as a tourist destination began as early as 1988, with the Summer Olympics in Seoul. It was an attempt to put behind the old image of a poor and dangerous place to visit and open a new chapter in the international tourism market for Korea. Hosting a mega-sports event is an effective way to alter the perception of the host nation [42], as it draws massive media attention and is able to enhance the brand image of the host city. Thus, the role media plays on individuals' subjective perception is significant. Yoo [43] examined the convention market of Korea and explained the influence of negative media images as a weakness. In order to attain competitiveness as a convention destination, Korea has to work on rewriting the negative perceptions built on media such as issues regarding North Korea's military activities and political instability. In a study on the meeting planners' perception of convention destination attributes, Huo [44] called attention to promoting the safety of the delegates and attendees during their stay in Korea, due to the volatile political situation with North Korea.

Limited and negative information about a destination and the lack of familiarity of the destination formulates a negative perception toward the destination. This increases the likelihood that those individuals would not attend the conferences. When one does not have a decent amount of direct experience or exposure to a country, place, or culture, he or she is more prone to be influenced by media exposure, irrespective of reality. The situation at the time of research was conducted with media with negative news about North Korea prevailing. Following up on existing literature with the notion that North Korea is not an exposed country to the majority and had the greatest spotlight on the international media, this study predicts people were easily influenced by the image of North Korea portrayed through media, which was an image of threat to world peace. Further in the same context, in the case of tourists, perceptions or images of a destination are constructed and reinforced through all sorts of media. Esses, Medianu, and Lawson [45] asserted that media exposure can be abused in situations of uncertainty for certain extreme political advantages and permeate public perceptions by provoking fear and threats. People who are exposed to the news regarding South and North Koreas' political issues may sense psychological distance and create a mental barrier against traveling to Korea in terms of risk-taking. This psychological distance goes the same for participants who intend to (re)visit conferences in Seoul, even though they perceive a conference as being valuable.

Whereas media acts as a "pull" factor to a potential tourist, with its traits of being immediate and visual, the media affects people when engaging in content that stimulates emotion and behavior [46]. Lehto, Douglas, and Park [47] examined how tourists value a destination for traveling before and after a natural disaster occurred. The authors found that tourists who already perceived few benefits and little value toward a destination will perceive lower benefits and value in the case of a negative happening at a location. Chew and Jahari [48] investigated how tourists perceived value toward a destination; they found that tourists are influenced by the socio-psychological and contended importance of decreasing psychological distance. Definitely, media could play a role in minimizing psychological distance and eventually stimulate people to visit. Based on those relationships between the factors, the following hypotheses are developed:

Hypothesis 7-1: *Exposure of North Korea missile news has a positive effect on perceived threat.*

Hypothesis 7-2: *Exposure of North Korea news has a negative effect on perceived value.*

Hypothesis 7-3: *Exposure of North Korea news has a negative effect on revisit intention.*

In summary, the tourism industry differs from other industries in that it does not only cover hardware, products, and facilities but also software via service and experience. Therefore, emotional and social values should not be neglected in measuring the value of tourism experiences [49]. Therefore, the conventional VAM model applies the same standards and constructs to include emotional and social values. Considering our previous arguments, we develop the VAM for international conferences, as shown in Figure 1. Based on the aforementioned theoretical and empirical research, a set of hypotheses have been examined in this study. Within the context of conference experience, perceived value is selected as the main theory, and the benefits and sacrifices are identified as technology support, program usefulness, and destination enjoyment for the benefit factors and perceived cost and threat as the sacrifice factors. The relationship between perceived value of the conference attendance and host destination revisit intention is investigated as well. Additionally, the effect of media exposure regarding North Korean missile news was studied, with relations traced to perceived threat, perceived value, and revisit intention.
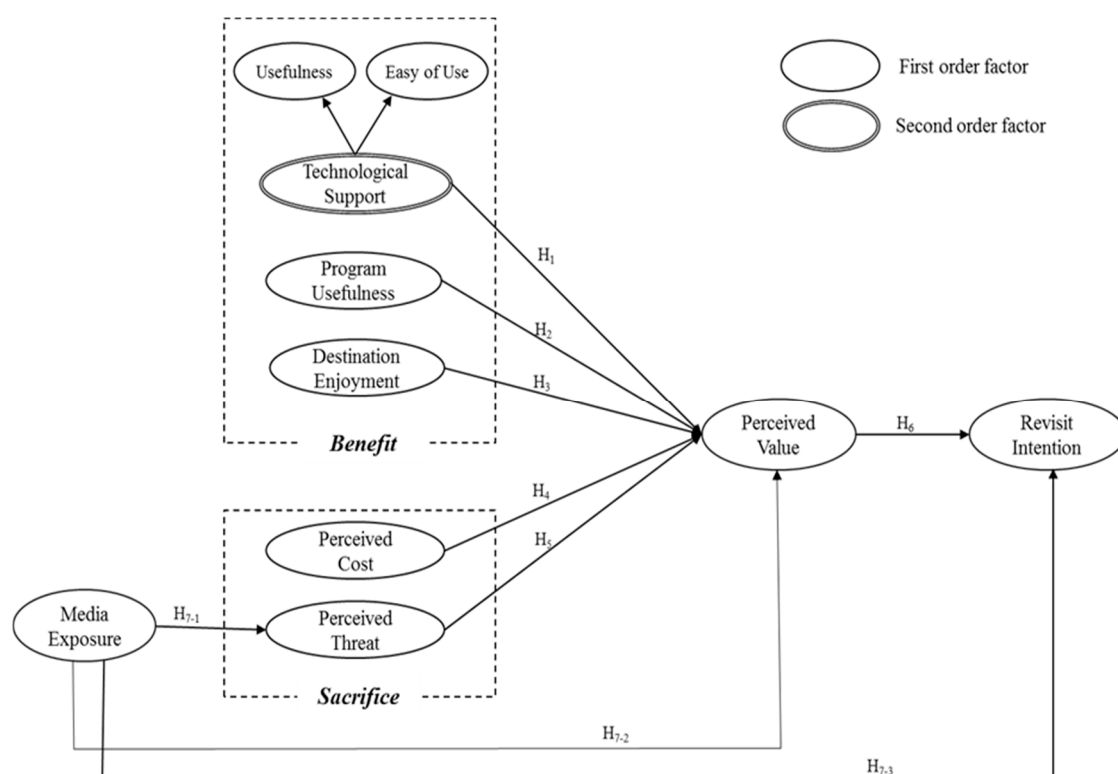

Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

4. Methodology

4.1. Participants

The target participants of this study are of non-Korean origin, as we aim to figure out the perceptions toward South Korea as a destination under the limited information given via media and subjective interpretation through visiting experience.

Data were collected at the site of ICIS held in Coex, Seoul, South Korea (12–14 December 2017). ICIS is a renowned international conference in the field of management information systems that started in 1980 and first held its international conference in 1990. The conference annually has an average number of 270 presentations and rotates its destinations among the Americas, Europe, Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Australia. As one of the largest and most active international conferences in its field among academics and practitioners, ICS 2017 has been held in Seoul, where it has been rapidly growing over the last 10 years and is in the mature stage as a top conference destination. By completing the questionnaire, participants gained a $5 US voucher that can be exchanged for products at the specified coffee franchise.

4.2. Measures

This study has adopted extant validated scales and measured and defined the variables based on previous literature. As presented in Figure 1, the measurement model was assessed using the first-order model or the second-order model. From international conference participant perspectives, perceived value generates from comparing sacrifice and benefit, the construct compares (1) benefit: technological support, program usefulness, and destination enjoyment; and (2) sacrifice: perceived cost and perceived threat. The construct of technological support was adopted from Law, Qi, and Buhalis [50]. Program usefulness was adopted from Grant and Weaver [51]. For destination enjoyment, we adopted the construct from Go and Zhang [52]. The perceived cost was adopted form Ngamsom and Beck [12], and the perceived threat was adopted from Roehl and Fesenmaier [53] and Sönmez and Graefe [38]. The construct of perceived value was adopted from Kim, Chan, and Gupta [4], and revisit intention was adopted from Chi et al. (2008). Exposure of North Korea news was adopted from Jennings and Weiler [54]. All variables were measured by the first-order model. But, the remaining inherent variable, i.e., technological support, was measured with sub-constructs, using a second-order model. Also, we used a 7-point Likert with 1 for "strongly disagree" and 7 for "strongly agree," which was adopted to measure these eight constructs. Including demographic questions, 33 questions were asked in total. Table 2 shows the operational definitions of each construct and reference.

Table 2. Operational definition of constructs.

Construct	Operational Definition	Reference
Technological Support	Effectiveness of information technology related service which provided via website and mobile application	Law, Qi and Buhalis (2010)
Program Usefulness	Conference participants' overall perceptions towards conference program's professionalism and expertise	Grant and Weaver (1996)
Destination Enjoyment	Conference participants' enjoyment and delight felt while being in the destination	Go and Zhang (1997)
Perceived Cost	An individual's perception of cost caused from geographic distance	Ngamsom and Beck (2000)
Perceived Threat,	An individual's perception of insecurity and danger due to destination's political risk	Roehl and Fesenmaier (1992) Sönmez and Graefe (1998)
Perceived Value	An individual's perception of value regarding achieving initial purpose of participating	Kim et al. (2007)
Media Exposure of North Korea News	The intensity of media exposure regarding North Korea missile threats	Jennings and Weiler (2006)

4.3. Analytical Method

This study deployed a structural equation modeling (SEM) approach to test the conceptual framework. SEM is developed to evaluate how well a proposed model or hypothetical construct

explains the collected data. SEM employs a two-step hybrid method by specifying a measurement model in the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and further tests a latent structural model extracted from the measurement model. As this study aims to examine the structural relations between constructs based on extant research, SEM proved an appropriate analytical technique to evaluate the data. The software package employed was AMOS 18.0.

5. Data Analysis and Results

5.1. Data Cleaning and Sample Profile

A total of 206 questionnaires were distributed and identified 14 outliers. Thus, 192 questionnaires were coded for analysis. The distribution of respondents' gender was mostly male (male: n = 135; proportion = 70.3). Approximately 66.8% of respondents were under 40 years old, and they were mostly working in academia (graduate students: n = 89; proportion = 46.4; professor: n = 93; proportion = 48.4). The respondents came from Europe (n = 62; proportion = 32.3), North America (n = 32; proportion = 16.7), Asia (n = 23, proportion = 12), and other countries. Most of the respondents (n = 148, proportion = 77.1) said it was their first-time visiting Seoul. Detailed descriptive statistics of the respondents' characteristics are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Demographic characteristics of respondents.

Measure	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender			
	Female	57	29.7
	Male	135	70.3
Age			
	20–29	66	34.4
	30–39	66	34.4
	40–49	31	16.1
	50–59	19	9.9
	Above 60	10	5.2
Job			
	Graduate student	89	46.4
	Professor	93	48.4
	Others	10	5.2
No. of time to visit Seoul			
	First time	148	77.1
	Second time	22	11.5
	Third time	10	5.2
	More	12	6.3
Nationality			
	Asia	23	12
	America	32	16.7
	Europe	62	32.3
	Others	75	39
		N = 192	(%) 100.0

5.2. Nonresponse Bias

To evaluate for potential nonresponse bias, early and late respondents were compared in regard to demographic variables and measurement items. The results show similarities between each of the early first and late last 10% of respondents about socio-demographic factors, e.g., gender, educational,

job profiles, and frequency of visiting Seoul. Male, professional workers, doctorate degree, and first visiting in Korea are in the majority; therefore, nonresponse bias was not a major issue.

5.3. Reliability and Validity of Instruments

The constructs used in this study were assessed in terms of reliability and validity. First, the content validity of our survey was established from the existing literature, and our measures were constructed by adopting constructs validated by other researchers. Second, we employed SPSS 21 and AMOS 18 to perform exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to determine the scope of the measured item. CFA involves the revision of the measurement model by identifying and eliminating items that share a high degree of residual variance with other items. We eliminated a total of two items that shared a high degree of residual variance. The χ^2 fit statistic was 1.163(χ^2/d.f) ($p < 0.001$).The goodness-of-fit index (GFI), which describes how well the model fits its data was 0.889, the adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) was 0.857, the normed fit index (NFI) was 0.893, the comparative fit index (CFI) was 0.983, and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.029. All statistics favorably supported the overall measurement quality given the number of indicators. Third, convergent validity was assessed by using three other criteria. First, the standardized path loading of each item must be statistically significant and greater than 0.7. Second, the composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's for each construct must be greater than 0.7. Third, establishing validity requires that the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct must be more than 0.5. As shown in Table 4, the standardized path loadings were all statistically significant and greater than 0.7. The CR and Cronbach's for all constructs exceeded 0.7, and the AVE for each construct was greater than 0.5. Thus, each construct satisfied the requirements adequately. Finally, to assess the discriminant validity, the square root of the AVE associated with a particular construct must be greater than its correlations with other constructs. As shown in Table 5, all the research variables demonstrate that the square root of the AVE for each construct was sufficiently greater than the corresponding off-diagonal elements. Thus, discriminant validity was established.

5.4. Common Method Bias

As the data were gathered in a cross-sectional single setting, common method bias (CMB) may exist. Therefore, we performed a statistical analysis to address this issue. Harman's one-factor test, which is recommended by Prdsakoff and Organ [55], was conducted by all items in exploratory factor analysis (EFA) without any rotations. Prdsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff [56] explained that the threat of CMB with a single variable or one latent variable clarifies a majority of the covariance among manifest factors. As the results of the test, which show that the eight factors with eigenvalues greater than one emerges, i.e., combined account for 75.94% of total variances, and no single factor accounts for the majority of the covariance, i.e., a factor with the greatest eigenvalue explains 22.49%. Thus, it indicates that CMB is not a major threat to our research.

5.5. Hypothesis Testing

The proposed structural model was evaluated, and Table 6 presents the results. The χ^2 statistic fit was 464.226, with 303 degrees of freedom ($p < 0.000$; χ^2/d.f. = 1.532). The GFI was 0.855, the AGFI was 0.819, the NFI was 0.855, the CFI was 0.943, and the RMSEA was 0.053. These multiple indicators suggested that the model had a favorable fit, justifying further interpretation.

Table 4. Measurement items and results of validity and reliability test.

Constructs	Items	Factor Loading	CR	AVE	Cronbach's α
Technological Support-Usefulness	The website/app of this conference enables me to search useful information faster	0.882	0.919	0.791	0.904
	The website/app of this conference enables me to find useful information in time	0.916			
	The website/app of this conference enhances my effectiveness searching useful information	0.858			
Technological Support-Ease of Use	The website/app of this conference is easy to use	0.897	0.862	0.676	0.848
	The website/app of this conference is easy to become skillful at using it	0.814			
	My interaction with the website/app of this conference is clear and understandable	0.852			
Program Usefulness	Attending this conference helps me to enhance my knowledge	0.829	0.889	0.730	0.815
	Attending this conference helps me to do my academic job better	0.847			
	I find this conference useful for my personal or professional achievement	0.740			
Destination Enjoyment	Seoul has wonderful tourist attractions	0.862	0.914	0.782	0.895
	Visiting Seoul is fun and exciting	0.826			
	I expect Seoul to be an enjoyable place to visit	0.842			
Perceived Cost	I think the distance to this conference location is too far	0.906	0.821	0.615	0.823
	I think the travel time to get to this conference location takes too long	0.889			
	I think the expense for traveling Seoul is too high	0.740			
Perceived Threats	Because of North Korea, traveling to Seoul should be avoided	0.904	0.903	0.757	0.913
	Traveling to Seoul is risky due to confrontation over Korea peninsular	0.895			
	I think I cannot enjoy my trip to Seoul due to North Korea	0.905			
Perceived Value	Attending this conference is a good idea	0.836	0.896	0.743	0.831
	I think my decision to attend this conference is the right decision	0.727			
	Attending this conference is a pleasant experience	0.830			
Revisit Intention	If I get the chance to travel, I intend to revisit this destination, Seoul.	0.856	0.925	0.805	0.905
	When I go on travelling, the probability that I revisit Seoul is high	0.843			
	I would positively recommend Seoul to other people	0.796			
Media Exposure of North Korea News	I see news about North Korean missile issue via traditional media (TV, newspaper, magazine).	0.771	0.751	0.507	0.847
	I see news about North Korean missile issue via internet (including social media).	0.792			
	I pay much attention to the news about North Korean missile lately	0.809			

Notes: $\chi^2 = 464.226$. df = 303b(χ^2/df = 1.532), $p = 0.000$, GFI = 0.855, AGFI = 0.819, NFI = 0.855, RMSEA = 0.053, CFI = 0.943 Two items were deleted from confirmatory factor analysis: "Attending this conference increases my productivity" and "I am enjoying my time during my stay in Seoul".

Table 5. Correlation analysis between the variables.

	TSU	TSE	PU	DE	PC	PT	PV	RI	ME	Mean	S.D.
TSU	**0.889**									3.498	0.841
TSE	0.314	**0.822**								3.630	0.833
PU	0.247	0.224	**0.885**							4.130	0.653
DE	0.159	0.104	0.396	**0.884**						3.854	0.808
PC	0.065	0.069	0.102	0.035	**0.784**					2.147	0.722
PT	0.142	0.046	0.038	0.042	0.040	**0.870**				2.495	0.986
PV	0.336	0.0173	0.383	0.056	0.051	0.063	**0.862**			3.870	0.639
RI	0.113	0.201	0.445	0.492	0.040	0.082	0.037	**0.897**		3.846	0.799
ME	0.016	0.016	0.000	0.006	0.004	0.048	0.025	0.025	**0.713**	3.971	0.733

Notes: The diagonal elements in boldface in the 'correlation of constructs' matrix are the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) TSU = Usefulness of Technological Support, TSE = Ease of Use of Technological Support PU = Program Usefulness, DE = Destination Enjoyment, PC = Perceived Cost, PT = Perceived Threat, PV = Perceived Value, RI = Revisit Intention, ME = Media Exposure of North Korea.

Table 6. Hypothesis testing results.

H.	Paths	Estimates (t-Value)	Results
H1	Technological Support → Perceived Value	0.277 (2.942)	Supported
H2	Program Usefulness → Perceived Value	0.475 (4.469)	Supported
H3	Destination Enjoyment → Perceived Value	0.074 (0.989)	Not supported
H4	Program Cost → Perceived Value	−0.002 (−0.024)	Not supported
H5	Program Threats → Perceived Value	−0.160 (−2.274)	Supported
H6	Perceived Value → Revisit Intention	0.218 (2.624)	Supported
H7-1	Media Exposure of North Korea → Program Threats	0.198 (2.251)	Supported
H7-2	Media Exposure of North Korea → Perceived Value	0.157 (1.935)	Not supported
H7-3	Media Exposure of North Korea → Revisit Intention	0.120 (1.392)	Not supported

Hypothesis 1 addresses the structural relationships between technological support and perceived value for attending the international conference taken place in Seoul. Technological support has a positive effect on perceived value for attending the international conference in Seoul ($\beta = 0.277$; t-value = 2.942) and was statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, supporting Hypothesis 1.

Hypotheses 2 and 3 address the structural relationships among program usefulness, destination enjoyment, and perceived value for attending an international conference in Seoul. Program usefulness has a positive effect on perceived value ($\beta = 0.475$; t-value = 4.469; $p < 0.001$), while destination enjoyment has a negative, insignificant effect on perceived value ($\beta = 0.074$; $t = 0.989$, n.s); thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported, whereas Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Hypotheses 4 and 5 address the structural relationships among perceived cost, perceived threat, and perceived value in regard to participating in an international conference held in Seoul. Analysis results show that perceived cost has no effect on perceived value ($\beta = -0.002$; $t = -0.024$, n.s), while perceive threat has a negative effect on perceived value ($\beta = -0.16$; $t = -2.274$; $p < 0.05$); thus, Hypothesis 4 was not supported, whereas Hypothesis 5 was supported.

Hypotheses 6 suggests that positive relationships exist between perceived value and revisit intention. Perceived value has a positive effect on revisit intention ($\beta = 0.218$; $t = 2.624$; $p < 0.01$). Thus, Hypotheses 6 was supported.

Finally, Hypotheses 7-1, 7-2, 7-3 address the structural negative relationships among perceived threats, perceive value, revisit intention, and exposure of North Korean news. Exposure to North Korean news has an effect on perceived threat ($\beta = 0.198$; $t = 2.251$; $p < 0.05$) while there was significant effect neither on perceived value ($\beta = 0.157$; $t = 1.935$, n.s) nor revisit intention ($\beta = 0.12$; $t = 1.392$; n.s). Therefore, Hypotheses 7-1 was supported, whereas Hypotheses 7-2 and 7-3 were not supported. The results are shown in Figure 2.
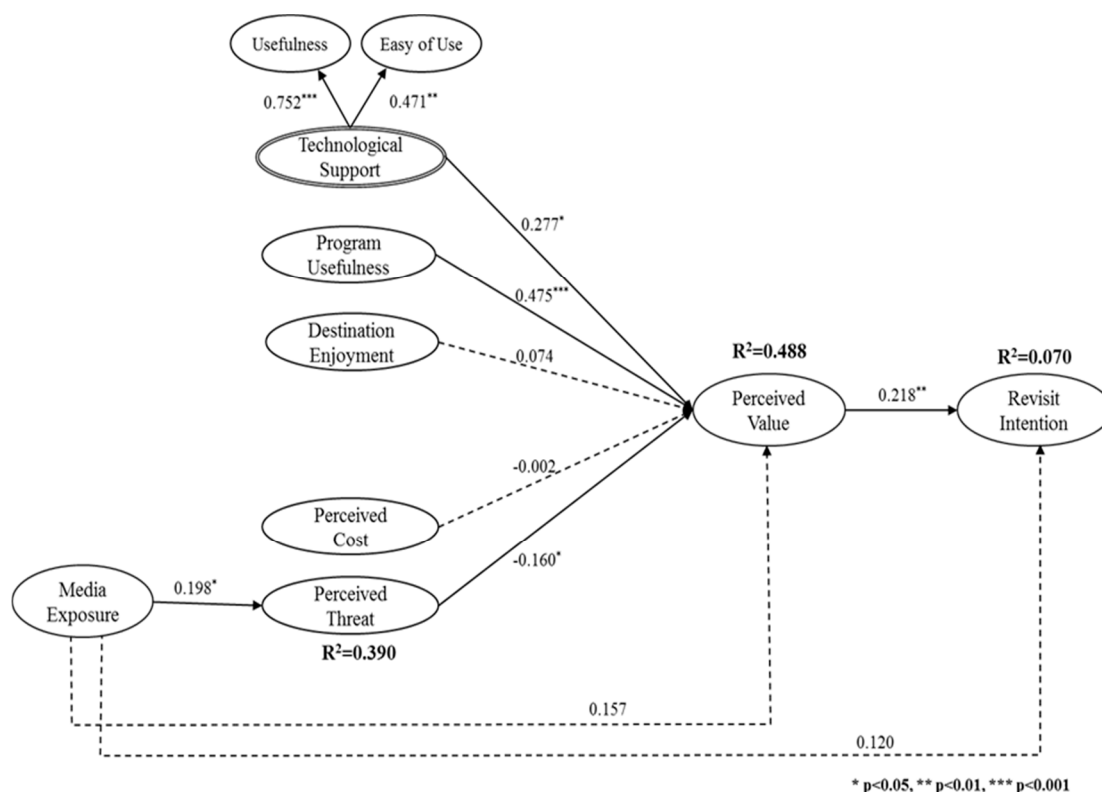
Figure 2. Results of the structural model.

6. Discussion and Implications

6.1. Discussions

The conference industry is recognized as a key driver in the tourism business with the sector's remarkable development [7]. Because it interacts with global or local transportation, food and beverage business, and accommodations, the conference sector has become a main driver in the tourism industry. Besides, participants in international conferences are known to spend more money than average tourists. Thus, international conferences are expected to enrich local economies and generate revenue for related tourism facilities. According to Crouch, Del Chiappa, and Perdue [57], imperative attributes that influence site competition as a conference destination are flight schedules, risk of disruption, inbound travel barriers, accommodation, cost of the convention facility, whether or not the association held its convention at the site previously, and more. According to the 2015 report by the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, travel expenditures for international visitors are found to be highest in the groups that visit for meetings or conventions and second in incentive tours. The majority of Korea's central and local governments selected the international conference industry as one of the new industry engines in propelling the economy, and national and local governments have begun to develop international-scale conference facilities to promote their city as a conference destination. Moreover, the assistance of the nation's most advanced ICT infrastructure, super-fast internet connection, and seamless IT infrastructure enable international conferences to be different from others. Seoul strives to induce international conferences and provide diverse support for stakeholders. They design and develop a handful of unique experiences, ranging from shopping to venues, and its energy-efficient working environment makes sustainable meetings possible. Consequently, Seoul ranked third for three consecutive years in 2017, followed by Brussels and Singapore.

As a convention destination, it is essential to consider various factors for success. Unexpected happenings, man-made or natural, are prone to happen. Natural disasters, terror, economic, and medical issues can shift the paradigm of tourism at a certain scale and affect the destination's conference market.

Besides national interests, which may result in political confrontation, could also be underlying factors that are crucial to the decision-making process of conference participants and impel a destination to lose competency. In Seoul, the confrontations with North Korea lead to headaches in promoting South Korea as a safe and fun destination to visit. In 2017, North Korea' hostile acts resulted in the worse tension in recent years on the Korea Peninsula. Because North Korea's nuclear tests and missile technology have improved, following the launch of what appeared to be an intercontinental ballistic missile resulted in fatal threats not only to South Korea but also neighborhood nations due to the provocations that increase and aggravate regional tensions. Thus, potential visitors experience life-threatening effects as a result of the Korean Peninsula's unpredictable political tension; thus, it became a personal sacrifice to attend meetings held in Seoul.

Thus, it is essential to understand visitors' decision-making processes in regard to conference participation and figure out how the participants value a conference in order to retain its competitiveness under political threats. The majority of behavior studies on motivation focus on the concept of perceived constraints and perceived facilitators. This paper questions the causal relationship between perceived value and destination-specific political tensions on the subject of the international conference business. To this end, a value-based adoption model (VAM), the theory of consumer choice, and decision-making from economics and marketing research are employed. In this study, the meaning of adoption is changed to the destination term, and intentions would be traveling and visiting a specific destination. We refer to the perceived value of the international conference as the attendee's overall perception of the conference based on the benefit and sacrifice components.

Hence this study classifies the motivations and constraints in the concept of benefit and sacrifice, including the perceived value of conference participation as the participant's overall perception of the conference based on the evaluation of the benefits and sacrifices of attending. The effect of technology-support usage by attendees and its relationship to perceived value are investigated as a new attempt. Moreover, media exposure of those "political threats" leads to even further "psychological distance," therefore it is becoming an influence on decision-making processes.

The findings indicate that technology support and program usefulness are predictors of perceived value with significant positive influence. This result supports previous studies; many of the conference attendees' motivation studies remain parallel, with the result of program usefulness positively affecting the value of conferences. They highlighted program usefulness as a main driver of attending a conference [9]. However, the rejection of destination enjoyment was an interesting finding compared with motivation studies that show importance in destination selection. The data were collected at the highly academic characteristic conference; in addition, the majority of participants are professors and graduate students (94.8%). Thus, participants might not consider destination enjoyments as a facilitator. There is a relatively higher voluntary participation rate in academic association meetings due to professional self-enhancement purposes.

For the sacrifice component, only perceived threat has a significant effect on perceived value. This result is confirmed by previous studies that proposed unmanageable political circumstances at host destinations; thus, conference participants will have second thoughts about attending a conference [9,37,40], whereas the finding shows that perceived cost has no significant effect on perceived value. Participants did not consider travel cost and time as barriers against attending a conference. This result confirms Mair, Lockstone-Binney, and Whitelaw's [58] argument that conference attendance are more influenced by motives than barriers and Pandža Bajs's [59] argument that destination visitors' perceptions are influenced most by destination appearance, emotional experience, and service quality perception, while costs did not matter. In this study, due to either most of participants being funded by their organization or the conference is the most renowned conference in the discipline, perceived cost probably was not considered as a constraint factor. However, it offers an imperative message to destination marketers that they should focus on providing more attractive benefits—and not on simply reducing costs and organizing more renowned international conferences.

In regard to the effect of media exposure of North Korea missile threats, the finding show that attendees are influenced by the exposure of North Korean news in regard to a perceived threat, whereas there is no significant influence on either perceived value or revisit intention. Due to the survey being conducted to participants who have come to Seoul in spite of political threats, the respondents did not consider North Korean-related news as an inhibitor because they found greater benefits in participating in conferences in Seoul. This result is confirmed by previous studies that revealed in the final destination-selection process that sacrifices are more important than benefits, and travel will take place only when facilitators are calculated to exceed inhibitors [38]. Revisit intention was confirmed to be affected by perceived value, as an existing study identified in their study of conference brand equity based on attendees, when an attendee recognizes value, he or she unfurls commitment [60].

6.2. Implications and Limitations

The theoretical implication of this study is the employment of the VAM model in the tourism domain to explain conference participants' perceptions of the value of attending conferences. The model could be extended to employ various conference characteristics in future research. Thereby, discrete values that influence decision-making processes of conference participants can be extracted.

From a practical perspective, this study implies that meeting planners should compete to design a more creative and informative conference program to attract more participants. For instance, inviting popular and notable speakers trending in the field for the conference program is found to also increase the attendance rate [39]. Leastwise, hosting an iconic conference, within the field of the profession, accommodating benefits for gaining advantage in career development is found to attract better participation. Therefore, cities and various stakeholders should work closely to host international conferences in specific domains to build a competitive image as a conference destination. The result shows that exposure to negative news has no influence when it comes to perceived value and revisit intention; while Kim [46] contends that media affects people when engaging in contents that stimulate emotion and behavior. This indicates green lights for destinations that confront political issues, e.g., Seoul. However, it is a predictor of perceived threat, i.e., destinations still need to minimize the effect of media exposure of negative news, including the South Korea Tourism Organization (KTO); furthermore, relevant organizations should focus on delivering messages that Seoul is a safe city via diverse channels and organizing promotional activities.

Although the findings suggest considerable implications for international conference research, this study still has several limitations. First, the study is conducted in Seoul, South Korea; hence, the results may not easily extend to other cases, as destination characteristics may differ among countries and destinations. Second, the survey is conducted with participants of international conferences held in Seoul; therefore, the respondents are considered to have gotten over the political threats in the Korean Peninsula and are not significantly influenced by "perceived sacrifice."

Future empirical research could have the overseas invitees who are on their decision-making process to examine a comparison between perceived benefits and sacrifice. Therefore, the research could be deployed with the ultimate goal of using the VAM model in the international conference domain. Furthermore, with the political situation in North Korea rapidly changing nowadays, further research in comparing the circumstances of when missile threats are eliminated could offer significant insight into the relationship between political situations and conference attendance.

7. Conclusions

The conference market became even more overheated and aggressive due to the increasing number of destinations investing in developing outstanding convention infrastructure and providing diverse packages in order to retain competitiveness in the market. With the diverse distribution of unique heritage culture with modern pop culture, Seoul has been acknowledged as a best "willing-to-visit" destination, and more. Seoul has been striving to promote the advantages of hosting an international conference, along with providing financial and resource support for the stakeholders: Seoul offers a

handful of unique experiences, ranging from shopping to venue. Moreover, Seoul incorporates new technology and ideas to improve meeting productivity, knowledge, and experience, with the assistance of the nation's most advanced ICT infrastructure, super-fast internet connection, and seamless IT infrastructure to enable the international conferences to get to the next level. Nevertheless, Seoul faces its greatest challenge in gaining destination competence because of the unpredictable political tension on the Korea Peninsula—the Korean War started in 1950, the country was devastated, but its division has remained for over a half-century. North and South Korea has continued a military standoff with periodic clashes. As the circumstances and environment for tourism could be unstable depending on unpredictable political tension, the participants to a conference in Korea experience life-threatening effects as a result of the North Korea missile threats. Therefore, it is imperative to understand if there exists a causal relationship between international conference business and political tensions.

- This study classifies the motivations and constraints in the concept of benefit and sacrifice, including the perceived value of conference participation as the participant's overall perception of the conference based on the evaluation of the benefits and sacrifices of attending.
- The target participants of this study are of non-Korean origin, as we aim to figure out the perceptions toward South Korea as a destination under the limited information given via media and subjective interpretation through visiting experience.
- The findings indicate that technological support, program usefulness, and perceived threats are predictors of perceived value while destination enjoyment and perceived cost have no significant effect on perceived value.
- However, perceived value is influenced by media exposure of North Korea missile threats and the perceived value has significant influence on revisit intention.

The results imply that meeting planners should compete to design and develop a more creative and informative conference program rather than focusing on frilled destination enjoyment related services and products. For instance, hosting an iconic conference, within the field of profession, accommodating benefits for gaining an advantage in career development is found to attract better participation. Furthermore, the findings suggest that destinations like Seoul where confronts unstable political issues still need to mitigate the effect of negative news on media and promote the destination as a safe city via diverse channels and developing promotional activities with National Tourism Organization (NTO). Last but not least, with the recent political state in the Korean Peninsula, South and North both look forward to a peaceful resolution to the longstanding truce, and interest is rising, as more people are willing to participate in the conferences held in Seoul under the condition of "war-is-over" or denuclearization.

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