

Article

What Does Northern European Travel Means to South Koreans? Focusing on Travel Decision Process

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Abstract: The main purpose of this study is to analyze different types of information that may have diverse effects on the travel decision-making process. We collected the most frequently used words related to “Northern European travel” from Korean news sources and blogs, to determine whether there were any systematic differences through network text analysis and CONCOR analysis. We found that Koreans are exposed to words such as “nature” and “cruise activities”, which may lead them to perceive traveling in Northern Europe as a special experience. While political and diplomatic issues are frequently discussed in the news, practical information is discussed in blogs.

Keywords: Northern Europe travel; South Korean travelers; travel information sources; travel decision process; network text analysis



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1. Introduction

The role of travel information has been of interest in many prior studies (Bieger and Laesser 2004; Choi et al. 2012; Fodness and Murray 1997; Jacobsen and Munar 2012). When people plan for a trip, they seek to collect information from diverse sources to make the travel experience better. In this process, destinations, transportation options, and accommodation businesses compete fiercely to provide attractive features for potential visitors.

Among the various sources, private ones such as social networking services or blogs, have attracted people's attention more than public ones such as news and other types of public communication methods as Internet technology advances (Schmallegger and Carson 2008). Online word-of-mouth plays an important role in consumer decision-making (Arenas-Márquez et al. 2021; Arasli et al. 2021), and this may make tremendous differences from just using traditional news services. However, prior studies have not made enough contributions by identifying how private sources of information would have different characteristics from private ones. For example, Huang et al. (2010) found that people tend to collect specific information from private sources even though they have already collected information from public sources. No and Kim (2015) found that the roles of public and private sources of information on travel decisions are different, while Choi et al. (2012) found that tourists utilize different sources of information at different stages of travel decision-making.

However, what we could not hear from these studies was how the private and public sources are different, and without testing real and specific models we might not be able to get the answer. This study aims to find the answer by examining how the words frequently searched for in the news (public sources) and in blogs (private sources) are different. Online text analysis enables us to do this work (e.g., Brochado et al. 2019). Especially, this study used the term of “Northern European travel” to see the difference between Korean news

(public sources) and blogs (private sources) by comparing key concepts the two sources produce for Korean potential tourists.

On the largest Korean portal site, Naver, we found 10,481 words on news pages and 9190 words on blog pages. The top 92 words were selected in order to measure the degree of centrality and betweenness centrality among selected keywords. Additionally, CONCOR analysis was conducted to determine whether clusters with different meanings were formed between the two groups. Then, we discussed the results and suggested the implications of the study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Information Sources in Travel Decision Processes

Tourism is an intangible service that receivers consume upon production (Munar 2012). Because of this characteristic individual lifestyles greatly influence tourism, and tourism is closely associated with information search and storytelling (Jacobsen 1994, as cited by Munar 2012). In the past, tourists obtained travel information from recommendations by people they knew and kept records of their travels in the form of a journal or photo album.

When purchasing a product, consumers use multiple channels to gather information, such as sellers, shopping sites, reviews, online communities, and blogs (Hyde 2008). Likewise, in the tourism industry, potential tourists use multiple sources of information on travel destinations. The main motivation for potential tourists to search for information is to improve the quality of travel and reduce the related risks (Jacobsen and Munar 2012). For example, travelers tend to invest a great deal of money, time, and mental energy in planning their summer vacation. They make a serious effort to search for information that can help them lower various risks and maximize their satisfaction.

Potential tourists initially decide on their travel destinations based on their own experience and knowledge (Fodness and Murray 1997). However, if they believe they do not have enough experience and knowledge, they seek out external sources, such as news or advertisements (Fodness and Murray 1997). Other external sources of information potential tourists can use include recommendations from family and friends as well as travel books, travel agencies, and expert advice (Baloglu 2000). Vogt and Fesenmaier (1998) classified various sources of travel information into social, personal, corporate and editorial-oriented sources, whereas Fodness and Murray (1997) classified travel information based on the type and source of information, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Classification of tourism information sources.

Source of Information	Type of Information Impersonal	Personal
Commercial	Brochures Guide books Local tourist offices State travel guides	Auto clubs Travel agents
Noncommercial	Magazines Newspapers	Friends or relatives Highway welcome centers Personal experience

(Source: Fodness and Murray 1997).

In recent years, with the growth of the Internet, it has become the key source for travel information (Jacobsen and Munar 2012). According to a previous study, people who book travel services online highly trust them and use vast amounts of online tourist information (Morrisonn et al. 2001). Furthermore, as a growing number of travelers purchase travel products directly on the Internet, the power of travel service providers such as airlines has risen (Buhalis and Licata 2002). With the advent of social media, the influence of electronic word of mouth has also grown in the tourism decision-making process (Huang et al. 2010). The development of social networking services has led to the creation of new communities,

enabling more diverse social interactions (Munar 2010). It has also allowed people to record and share their travel experiences in “real time”, and such advances in social media have brought changes to the development and management of online tourism content. Tourist-generated content and corporate-generated content are now in direct competition with each other (Schmallegger and Carson 2008). No and Kim (2015) classified online travel information sources into personal blogs, public sources, company sources, and social media websites and compared their characteristics. They found that potential tourists want more up-to-date and useful travel information, while tourism information sources are becoming increasingly diverse to meet these demands.

Travel decision-making is the process by which travelers select and purchase travel products to satisfy their needs. It is a multifaceted decision-making process that occurs while traveling to and staying at a destination. Earlier studies on travel decision-making were traditional consumer behavior studies (Choi et al. 2012). Van Raaij and Francken (1984) proposed a travel decision-making process based on prior studies of consumption decisions, which are generic decisions on expenditure, information acquisition, joint decision-making, vacation activities, satisfaction, and complaints. Woodside and Lysonski (1989) described travel destination selection as a process of destination awareness, preferences, intentions, and the final choice.

To travel, it is necessary to decide on various items in addition to the destination. Dynamic and multistage contingent decision processes include scheduling, budgeting, finding, accommodation, planning routes, and finding companions (Choi et al. 2012). Fesenmaier and Jeng (2000) proposed three levels of a travel decision model in which all sub-decisions, including destination selection, have different levels of importance: the core decisions that are predetermined before the travel (e.g., destination, travel date, companions), the predetermined decisions that are flexible to change (e.g., secondary destination, activity, tourist attractions), and the route decisions that are made at the destination and actively seek alternatives (e.g., restaurants, rest areas, shopping places).

The exploration and selection of tourism information is a key element of travel decision-making and a continuous activity in the travel process. Bieger and Laesser (2004) classified the travel decision-making process based on “decisions that are difficult to change once made”. Additionally, they analyzed the information sources used in pre- and post-decision-making. They found that the pattern of using information sources in both stages differed depending on the individual and travel characteristics. Choi et al. (2012) divided the travel decision-making stage into four levels based on purchases for the vacation trip and analyzed differences in the information used in each level. As a result, prior to purchase, recommendations from relatives and public media such as TV/radio commercials had a significant impact. After a purchase, experience-based information and private information such as travel guidebooks and tour guides became important sources of information.

Based on Choi et al.’s (2012) findings, the current study identifies differences in information that have diverse effects on the travel decision-making process. More specifically, text analysis is used to differentiate public travel information and private travel information and suggest implications.

2.2. News vs. Blogs

Today, we live in the Web 2.0 era, which is characterized by a hybrid media system. The Web 1.0 era was dominated by mass media, but the Web 2.0 era has witnessed the emergence of blogs and social networking sites (Chadwick 2014). These days, news spreads quickly through various online media platforms without being bound by time and space constraints. However, the process of generating news on online platforms is not much different from the traditional process. Through editorial meetings, the media generates information that is unilaterally given to readers (Lewis 2012). The vast majority of major online news providers still belong to offline news media groups (Ceron 2015). Moreover, the editorial desks of online news sources rely on information that is selected according to the reliability and authority of the source (Hermida et al. 2014). These similarities between

traditional and new media have led consumers to assume that online news is as reliable as offline news (Ceron 2015).

Tourism-related information provided by the news media can have a strong influence on the notoriety and perception of travel destinations (Yoo and Kim 2013). For example, research on the impact of the Tiananmen Square conflict on tourism showed that the media has a significant influence on people's perception of the region (Gartner and Shen 1992). Peel and Steen (2007) pointed out that print media takes great interest in issues where tourism can have a positive impact on the local economy, and negative reports on local crimes significantly affect the perception of a region. Stepchenkova and Eales (2011) classified reports related to Russia that appeared in British newspapers from 1993 to 2007 into seven categories, including culture, economy, society, and tourism. Their results confirmed the impact of media on tourism. Yoo and Kim (2013) studied the characteristics and effects of press releases and tourism information distributed by U.S. state tourism offices via news media. They emphasized the importance of official materials and the need for more user-friendly content.

With the emergence of social media, traditional media has gradually lost its domination over the production and distribution of information. Social media provides a convenient environment for users to create content and share information. It allows users to avoid going through the information-generation system that traditional media relies on (Hermida 2010). Information created through social media is considered organic and personal (Jacobsen and Munar 2012). Murray (1991) argued that regarding services, consumers prefer personal information to impersonal information and this is also applicable to the process of selecting travel destinations (Prebensen et al. 2010).

A blog is an online communication tool and a social networking service through which users can directly produce information (Hur and Byun 2012). Blogs enable real-time communication and can reach thousands of readers simultaneously (Munar and Jacobsen 2013). Blogs convey emotion and allow users to talk about their feelings using emojis and informal language (Munar and Jacobsen 2013). Like blogs, personal media is an important tool for interpersonal communication in modern society (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010); users utilize personal media to obtain the information they want without encountering any advertising messages or irrelevant information (Bacile et al. 2014). The content found on travel blogs, in particular, is composed of information on areas that potential travelers are interested in. By examining such blogs, the preferences of tourists can be better understood (Sasaki and Nishii 2012).

With the growing influence of blogs in the tourism industry, research is increasingly being conducted on travel blogs. Huang et al. (2010), for instance, argued that travel blogs play a positive role in advertising. They offer advantages for tourism marketing because they serve as a communication tool. Blog users exchange information besides typical information such as the weather conditions at the travel destination and the recommended itinerary (Huang et al. 2010). Schmallegger and Carson (2008) discussed how to create and utilize tourism content through a case analysis of travel blogs used as a strategic marketing tool. Meanwhile, Volo (2010) analyzed the impact of blogs on the travel experience of tourists and on their decision-making. Mack et al. (2008) examined the reliability of travel blogs using a scenario-based approach and found that users did not trust blogs as much as traditional word-of-mouth sources.

Online news is an impersonal channel and a blog is a personal channel, but both are important sources of travel information. Nevertheless, few studies have conducted a text comparison of the differences between travel information provided by news articles and blogs. Therefore, the current research is an empirical study that involves text analysis of the type of information tourists obtain from both channels. Information provided in South Korean news articles and blogs about traveling in Northern Europe is analyzed to examine Koreans' perspectives. Furthermore, we suggest practical implications that can be used in tourism marketing in Northern Europe.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Questions

Recently, long-distance travel has been attracting travelers' interest, with the rise in popularity of keywords such as "work-life balance", "leisure", and "break". Thus, it appears that the number of potential tourists interested in traveling to Northern Europe has been growing in South Korea. There has not been much research on the destination image or major issues that Koreans have with traveling in Northern Europe. Additionally, to analyze the differences between news articles and blogs as information channels, this study asks the following research questions:

Q1. How can we describe the difference between private and public sources for travel?

Q2. What are the main issues in Korean news articles and blogs, respectively, associated with traveling in Northern Europe?

Q3. What are the implications of the types of information that may have different effects on the travel decision-making process?

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

The scope of this study included news articles and blogs registered on Naver, the largest portal site in Korea. We analyzed news reports and blogs published over the course of one year, from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2019. To select the analysis target, we searched "Northern European¹ travel" on Naver, and then we collected the top 1000 articles and posts that were sorted by relevance. Text mining and network text analysis (NTA) were conducted to find words related to traveling in Northern Europe, and a comparative analysis was conducted of the different characteristics of news articles and blogs.

Text mining is an analysis method used to discover new knowledge or patterns by extracting key concepts from a large amount of text data using a computer (Hearst 1999). This is distinct from general data mining in that text mining processes unstructured data such as emails and newspaper articles (Fan et al. 2006). Text mining involves a pre-processing step in which documents are collected using search terms, and the collected documents are analyzed using multiple tokens to remove unnecessary words. In this study, text mining was performed using the TEXTOM program, an online unstructured data collection program that supports English, Chinese, and Korean and is capable of processing data. Following this, a network analysis was conducted.

The implications of this study were derived through NTA and CONCOR (CONvergence of iterated CORrelations) analysis. NTA is one of the text analysis methods derived from social network analysis (SNA), which is used in social science research (Kim and SeokLee 2019). In network analysis, the network between keywords implies symbolism and characteristics of the connection, and thus it is possible to draw meaningful results (Prezenza and Cipollina 2010). Additionally, centrality analysis is a method that analyzes the degree to which nodes are centrally located in the network as a means of grasping the connection between words (Bhat and Milne 2008). Through this, the structure between a specific central word and the surrounding words can be examined. In the case of CONCOR analysis, it is possible to form a cluster of similar words within a network and visually derive a connection pattern to examine the relationships between groups (Kim and SeokLee 2019).

In this study, a matrix of the frequency of co-occurrence of words was derived using TEXTOM for network analysis. Furthermore, centrality analysis and CONCOR analysis were carried out using the UCINET 6 program, and visualization was performed using Netdraw. Data collection methods are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Data collection.

Items	Details
Collection Range	Naver news articles, Blog
Period	1 January 2019–31 December 2019
Data-mining tool	TEXTOM
Keyword	Northern European travel
Analysis tool	UCINET 6

4. Results

4.1. Text Frequency Analysis

In this study, text frequency analysis was conducted using data collected by searching for “Northern European travel”. A total of 10,481 words were found in news articles about traveling in Northern Europe, and 9190 words were found on blogs about traveling in Northern Europe. The top 96 keywords among them—excluding the terms used in the search, such as “Northern Europe”, “travel”, and “Northern European travel”—are summarized in Table 3.

The words that appeared with the highest frequency, except for country names and geographical names, were “nation”, “nature”, “traveler”, “Scandinavian mood”, and “region”. In the blogs, “cruise”, “design”, “Scandinavian mood”, “backpack”, “accommodation”, and so on appeared most frequently. The results of the frequency analysis showed that both news articles and blogs mention the unique aspects of Northern Europe, such as its grand natural environments, the characteristics of North Europeans, and cruises.

Regarding the differences among the keywords found in the news articles and blogs, political and diplomatic issues indicated by words such as “nation”, “President Moon”, and “presidential visit to Northern Europe” were frequently discussed in the news. “Bon Voyage” was also founded from the news articles. *Bon Voyage* is a travel entertainment program featuring a famous K-pop idol group called BTS. Its first season was filmed in Northern Europe in 2016, and “Bon Voyage” continued to be mentioned even in 2019 when the fourth season aired. Additionally, “welfare”, “environment”, and “education” were frequently mentioned in the news articles. This indicates an interest in Northern Europe’s welfare states.

In the case of blogs, words representing practical information necessary for planning and preparing for a trip, such as “weather”, “schedule”, “preparation”, “recommendation”, and “information”, were extracted. This shows the function of blogs that share personal travel experiences and recommendations for potential travelers. “Price” and “toilet” were mentioned in relation to unfamiliar situations to Korean travelers, such as having to pay to use a toilet. Words that were not mentioned in the news, such as “minimalism” and “practical”, were derived from blogs, revealing the perspectives of Koreans toward Northern European designs.

Table 3. Frequency of top 96 keywords.

News Rank	Keywords	Frequency	Rank	Keywords	Frequency	Blog Rank	Keywords	Frequency	Rank	Keywords	Frequency
1	Finland	184	49	relax	25	1	Norway	201	49	South Korea	16
2	Nation	154	50	culture	24	2	Iceland	151	50	capital city	16
3	Sweden	142	51	Iceland	24	3	Sweden	128	51	photo	16
4	Norway	126	52	building	24	4	Finland	119	52	trekking	15
5	Nature	104	53	Christmas	23	5	Copenhagen	112	53	schedule	15
6	Europe	102	54	lake	23	6	Denmark	111	54	preparation	15
7	Denmark	100	55	Balkan Peninsula	23	7	cruise	105	55	people	15
8	traveler	66	56	Western Europe	23	8	design	92	56	story	15
9	Scandinavian mood	59	57	Stockholm	23	9	Russia	84	57	sightseeing	15
10	New Zealand	57	58	the United States	23	10	Scandinavian mood	67	58	minimalism	15
11	region	54	59	the Mediterranean Sea	23	11	Oslo	65	59	scenery	15
12	city	53	60	book	22	12	Helsinki	63	60	tour	15
13	cruise	53	61	author	22	13	Stockholm	62	61	friend	14
14	Russia	52	62	scenery	21	14	Ring road	53	62	white night	14
15	aurora	51	63	travel	20	15	back pack	53	63	travelogue	14
16	summer	49	64	art gallery	20	16	accommodation	50	64	information	14
17	winter	46	65	fine dust	20	17	hotel	49	65	price	14
18	destination	46	66	happiness	20	18	nation	47	66	charm	13
19	travel product	45	67	popularity	20	19	Bergen	45	67	glacier	13
20	overseas travel	42	68	landscape	19	20	nature	42	68	National Park	13
21	BTS	42	69	life	19	21	city	37	69	Flam	13
22	President Moon	38	70	Bergen	19	22	move	37	70	recommendation	13
23	Hawaii	38	71	hotel	19	23	Europe	32	71	practical	13
24	people	38	72	Germany	18	24	Estonia	32	72	traveler	13
25	presidential visit to Northern Europe	37	73	Asia	18	25	summer	29	73	destination	13
26	Copenhagen	36	74	gift of nature	18	26	weather	28	74	Viking	13
27	South Korea	36	75	direct flight	18	27	brand	28	75	world tour	12
28	design	34	76	furniture	18	28	fjord	27	76	plane	12
29	welfare	34	77	safety	18	29	independent tour	26	77	Germany	12

Table 3. Cont.

News Rank	Keywords	Frequency	Rank	Keywords	Frequency	Blog Rank	Keywords	Frequency	Rank	Keywords	Frequency
30	route	33	78	environment-friendly	18	30	book	26	78	interior	12
31	environment	33	79	history	17	31	Scandinavian style	26	79	road	12
32	education	32	80	society	17	32	tour package	25	80	museum	12
33	forest	32	81	comfort	17	33	aurora	24	81	toilet	12
34	Alaska	32	82	Moomin	17	34	Saint Peterburg	24	82	Western Europe	12
35	representative	32	83	Incheon	17	35	art gallery	23	83	the Little Mermaid	12
36	purity	32	84	boarding	17	36	Moscow	23	84	sky	12
37	Helsinki	31	85	independent tour	16	37	plan	22	85	god of Northern Europe	12
38	Scandinavian style	31	86	program	16	38	winter	22	86	myth	12
39	Eastern Europe	30	87	Spain	16	39	Reykjavik	22	87	church	12
40	Finnair	28	88	passenger	16	40	introduce	22	88	Eastern Europe	12
41	tour package	28	89	Busan	16	41	booking	21	89	Jokulsarlon	11
42	Malta	28	90	brand	16	42	July	21	90	port	11
43	Switzerland	27	91	travel to Europe	16	43	bus	21	91	culture	11
44	booking	27	92	flight	16	44	Tallin	18	92	blue	11
45	Bon Voyage	27	93	Australia	15	45	waterfall	18	93	food	11
46	Oslo	27	94	freedom	15	46	airport	17	94	ferry	11
47	Caucasus	26	95	Scandinavia	15	47	pleasure craft	17	95	Scandinavia	11
48	Canada	26	96	fjord	15	48	Greenland	17	96	healing	11

4.2. Degree of Centrality of Keywords

Degree centrality is the measure of the degree to which a specific word is directly connected to another word in a network (Yan and Ding 2009). The higher the degree centrality, the closer the word is to the center of the network, and the stronger its influence is as an important discussion point (Freeman 1978).

In the case of degree centrality of the news, the mean was 0.021, the median was 0.015, and the standard deviation was 0.019. As you can see in Table 4, the country that showed the highest level of degree centrality of the news was Finland, followed by Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, suggesting that these countries were identified as top travel destinations. Furthermore, the degree centrality of words such as “nature”, “purity”, and “fine dust” was high. This shows that Koreans admire and think highly of Northern Europe’s well-preserved natural environment, which contrasts with Korea’s own environment, with its serious air quality problem.

As for the degree centrality of the words extracted from blogs, the mean was 0.010, the median was 0.006, and the standard deviation was 0.012. The country with the highest degree centrality was Norway, followed by Denmark, Sweden, and Iceland. Words related to traveling in Iceland, such as Iceland, Ring Road, and Reykjavik, had high degree centrality. This was because *Youth Over Flowers—Iceland Edition*, a travel entertainment program that aired in 2016 in Korea, caught the attention of Koreans as a travel destination in Northern Europe. According to prior research on tourism marketing, publicity through mass media has a positive effect on reliability and purchase intention (Loda et al. 2005). In fact, shortly after the broadcast of *Youth Over Flowers—Iceland Edition*, inquiries regarding traveling in Northern Europe skyrocketed, increasing by more than 10 times the previous number (Ki 2016).

In the case of both news articles and blogs, “museum”, “art gallery”, and “culture” displayed low degree centrality, whereas “aurora”, “forest”, and “lake” showed relatively high levels of degree centrality. Based on this, it appears that Koreans are more interested in natural scenery than cultural experiences when it comes to visiting Northern Europe. Furthermore, “Russia” was a non-Northern Europe country mentioned frequently both in the news articles and blogs in connection with Northern European travel. This was likely because there are not many direct flights between Korea and Northern Europe, which necessitates transit through Russia.

Table 4. Degree centrality of top 96 keywords.

Rank	Keywords	Degree Centrality	News			Blog					
			Rank	Keywords	Degree Centrality	Rank	Keywords	Degree Centrality	Rank	Keywords	Degree Centrality
1	Finland	0.113	49	direct flight	0.015	1	Norway	0.07	49	book	0.005
2	Sweden	0.083	50	South Korea	0.014	2	Denmark	0.051	50	plan	0.005
3	Norway	0.083	51	relax	0.014	3	Sweden	0.048	51	winter	0.005
4	nature	0.077	52	Western Europe	0.014	4	Iceland	0.042	52	airport	0.005
5	nation	0.075	53	gift of nature	0.014	5	Copenhagen	0.042	53	preparation	0.005
6	Denmark	0.066	54	boarding	0.014	6	Finland	0.04	54	minimalism	0.005
7	Europe	0.064	55	presidential visit to Northern Europe	0.013	7	cruise	0.032	55	tour	0.005
8	New Zealand	0.042	56	design	0.013	8	Russia	0.03	56	white night	0.005
9	region	0.042	57	Oslo	0.013	9	Oslo	0.028	57	information	0.005
10	traveler	0.04	58	Caucasus	0.013	10	design	0.027	58	recommendation	0.005
11	Russia	0.032	59	Stockholm	0.013	11	Stockholm	0.022	59	world tour	0.005
12	city	0.031	60	Incheon	0.013	12	Helsinki	0.019	60	Germany	0.005
13	purity	0.031	61	Iceland	0.012	13	Scandinavian mood	0.018	61	museum	0.005
14	cruise	0.03	62	the United States	0.012	14	Ring road	0.018	62	blue	0.005
15	Hawaii	0.03	63	travel	0.012	15	Bergen	0.017	63	pleasure craft	0.004
16	Scandinavian mood	0.028	64	happiness	0.012	16	accommodation	0.015	64	trekking	0.004
17	route	0.026	65	comfort	0.012	17	hotel	0.015	65	sightseeing	0.004
18	travel product	0.025	66	passenger	0.012	18	nation	0.015	66	friend	0.004
19	overseas travel	0.025	67	building	0.011	19	back pack	0.014	67	travelogue	0.004
20	destination	0.024	68	scenery	0.011	20	nature	0.014	68	charm	0.004
21	Switzerland	0.024	69	life	0.011	21	move	0.014	69	National Park	0.004
22	BTS	0.023	70	Asia	0.011	22	city	0.012	70	Flam	0.004
23	summer	0.022	71	safety	0.011	23	Estonia	0.011	71	traveler	0.004
24	tour package	0.022	72	Busan	0.011	24	fjord	0.01	72	road	0.004
25	winter	0.021	73	flight	0.011	25	Moscow	0.01	73	sky	0.004
26	welfare	0.021	74	culture	0.01	26	summer	0.009	74	port	0.004
27	Finnair	0.021	75	the Mediterranean Sea	0.01	27	weather	0.009	75	culture	0.004
28	Copenhagen	0.02	76	Spain	0.01	28	brand	0.009	76	Scandinavia	0.004
29	aurora	0.019	77	freedom	0.01	29	aurora	0.008	77	Greenland	0.003

Table 4. Cont.

Rank	Keywords	News				Blog					
		Degree Centrality	Rank	Keywords	Degree Centrality	Rank	Keywords	Degree Centrality	Rank	Keywords	Degree Centrality
30	environment	0.019	78	fjord	0.01	30	Saint Peterburg	0.008	78	South Korea	0.003
31	Helsinki	0.019	79	hotel	0.009	31	introduce	0.008	79	photo	0.003
32	education	0.018	80	Germany	0.009	32	Europe	0.007	80	schedule	0.003
33	Alaska	0.018	81	environment-friendly	0.009	33	independent tour	0.007	81	people	0.003
34	Eastern Europe	0.018	82	Scandinavia	0.009	34	Scandinavian style	0.007	82	story	0.003
35	fine dust	0.018	83	Scandinavian style	0.008	35	tour package	0.007	83	price	0.003
36	representative	0.017	84	booking	0.008	36	Reykjavik	0.007	84	destination	0.003
37	Malta	0.017	85	Christmas	0.008	37	booking	0.007	85	plane	0.003
38	Bon Voyage	0.017	86	book	0.008	38	July	0.006	86	Western Europe	0.003
39	independent tour	0.017	87	popularity	0.008	39	bus	0.006	87	church	0.003
40	Canada	0.016	88	Moomin	0.008	40	Tallin	0.006	88	healing	0.003
41	Balkan Peninsula	0.016	89	program	0.008	41	waterfall	0.006	89	art gallery	0.002
42	landscape	0.016	90	author	0.007	42	capital city	0.006	90	toilet	0.002
43	Australia	0.016	91	furniture	0.007	43	scenery	0.006	91	god of Northern Europe	0.002
44	President Moon	0.015	92	history	0.007	44	glacier	0.006	92	Eastern Europe	0.002
45	people	0.015	93	art gallery	0.006	45	practical	0.006	93	food	0.002
46	forest	0.015	94	society	0.006	46	Viking	0.006	94	interior	0.001
47	lake	0.015	95	brand	0.004	47	the Little Mermaid	0.006	95	myth	0.001
48	Bergen	0.015	96	travel to Europe	0.004	48	ferry	0.006	96	Jokulsarlon	0

4.3. Betweenness Centrality of Keywords

Betweenness centrality is a measure of the degree to which a word acts as an intermediary between other words in the network (Freeman 1978). Words with a high degree of betweenness centrality play an important role in the flow of discussion on the network (Yan and Ding 2009). This is an important analysis concept because, without going through a specific node, it may not be possible to connect certain nodes irrespective of the degree of connection within the network (Lim et al. 2020).

The results of analyzing betweenness centrality of words used in the news articles showed the mean as 0.747, median as 0.318, and standard deviation as 1.103. As you can see in Table 5, words that objectively refer to the object, such as “travelers” and “destinations”, topped the list. This suggests that news media is leading discussions on travel in Northern Europe regarding “travelers” and “travel destinations”. Furthermore, “travel product”, “tour package”, and other words related to group travel through travel agencies showed a high degree of betweenness centrality. Keywords such as “happiness”, “life”, “culture”, and “book” had lower values than the median in degree centrality but had higher values than the median in betweenness centrality. Based on this, it can be inferred that these words influence the flow of discussions regarding traveling in Northern Europe.

Meanwhile, the mean betweenness centrality in the case of blogs was 0.811, the median was 0.392, and the standard deviation was 1.206. Capitals of Northern European countries such as Copenhagen, Helsinki, Oslo, and Stockholm recorded high betweenness centrality. City-level information seemed to have an impact on the overall flow of discussion on blogs. Additionally, the fact that “summer” and “July” showed a high degree of betweenness centrality suggests that Koreans believe the best time to travel in Northern Europe is during summer.

Figures 1 and 2 are Venn diagrams that show the intersections of words ranking high in degree centrality and betweenness centrality². Among the words with high values of both degree centrality and betweenness centrality, the ones that were not directly related to the keyword “travel” were “Scandinavian mood” and “design”. “Scandinavian mood”, in particular, was ranked high in both news articles and blogs. This is in line with the fact that Korean consumers are highly interested in Scandinavian interior design and Nordic style (Lee 2015). In fact, the concept of “Scandinavian mood” has led trends in several areas such as fashion and interior design in Korea, and it is now often mentioned in the field of travel as an influential keyword. Thus, “Scandinavian mood” is a notable concept from the Northern Europe tourism marketing perspective. “Scandinavian mood”, which is said to be nature-friendly, comfortable, simple, and pragmatic (Kang and Kwon 2016) is applied to the field of travel. This travel concept is drawing Koreans’ interest because it is geared toward enjoying nature to the fullest and exploring the everyday lives of local people.

Table 5. Betweenness centrality of top 96 keywords.

News			Blog								
Rank	Keywords	Betweenness Centrality	Rank	Keywords	Betweenness Centrality	Rank	Keywords	Betweenness Centrality	Rank	Keywords	Betweenness Centrality
1	Finland	5.49	49	landscape	0.307	1	Norway	8.485	49	plan	0.39
2	Norway	4.795	50	hotel	0.281	2	Sweden	4.766	50	people	0.386
3	region	3.952	51	President Moon	0.271	3	Iceland	3.585	51	church	0.382
4	Sweden	3.84	52	flight	0.271	4	Denmark	3.526	52	Aurora	0.332
5	nature	3.741	53	Balkan Peninsula	0.266	5	Copenhagen	3.207	53	sky	0.316
6	traveler	3.329	54	Eastern Europe	0.265	6	Finland	2.947	54	brand	0.314
7	Europe	3.318	55	purity	0.255	7	nature	2.38	55	god of Northern Europe	0.284
8	destination	3.121	56	author	0.254	8	nation	2.151	56	information	0.275
9	nation	2.681	57	comfort	0.252	9	Helsinki	2.092	57	healing	0.25
10	Scandinavian mood	2.372	58	history	0.243	10	Oslo	2.086	58	Moscow	0.247
11	Denmark	1.995	59	Australia presidential visit	0.237	11	design	2.021	59	white night	0.237
12	city	1.529	60	to Northern Europe building	0.237	12	cruise	1.864	60	capital city	0.227
13	travel product	1.456	61	Christmas	0.218	13	summer	1.757	61	airport	0.226
14	South Korea	1.425	62	Hawaii	0.215	14	Scandinavian mood	1.748	62	blue	0.222
15	New Zealand	1.334	63	Finnair	0.214	15	Stockholm	1.712	63	Saint Peterburg	0.216
16	Russia	1.122	64	Booking	0.212	16	Russia	1.655	64	winter	0.216
17	tour package	1.097	65	independent tour	0.205	17	July	1.641	65	waterfall	0.211
18	overseas travel	0.996	66	program	0.204	18	accommodation	1.599	66	museum	0.209
19	summer	0.92	67	Scandinavia	0.2	19	hotel	1.422	67	ferry	0.208
20	Western Europe	0.916	68	passenger	0.198	20	Europe	1.349	68	back pack	0.203
21	Cruise	0.896	69	Stockholm	0.193	21	city	1.213	69	Viking	0.193
22	Helsinki	0.883	70	Caucasus	0.188	22	move	1.154	70	schedule	0.191
23	Route	0.767	71	lake	0.173	23	charm	1.12	71	glacier	0.186
24	life	0.723	72	Aurora	0.172	24	tour package	1.06	72	Western Europe	0.175
25	the United States	0.713	73	Moomin	0.169	25	Bergen	0.895	73	world tour	0.174
26	Oslo	0.686	74	the Mediterranean Sea	0.165	26	story	0.867	74	Tallin	0.173
27	culture	0.673	75			27	road	0.778	75	trekking	0.16

Table 5. Cont.

News				Blog							
Rank	Keywords	Betweenness Centrality	Rank	Keywords	Betweenness Centrality	Rank	Keywords	Betweenness Centrality	Rank	Keywords	Betweenness Centrality
28	design	0.604	76	Alaska	0.164	28	independent tour	0.676	76	plane	0.153
29	winter	0.602	77	Incheon	0.147	29	scenery	0.654	77	pleasure craft	0.152
30	representative	0.582	78	fine dust	0.14	30	introduce	0.611	78	friend	0.144
31	environment	0.536	79	art gallery	0.129	31	travelogue	0.595	79	food	0.125
32	book	0.524	80	brand	0.12	32	bus	0.59	80	price	0.102
33	Asia	0.477	81	Canada	0.12	33	photo	0.565	81	art gallery	0.086
34	travel	0.458	82	scenery	0.112	34	fjord	0.554	82	myth	0.083
35	happiness	0.455	83	gift of nature	0.104	35	tour	0.544	83	Scandinavia	0.08
36	welfare	0.454	84	boarding	0.104	36	destination	0.541	84	port	0.078
37	people	0.448	85	fjord	0.102	37	Ring road	0.524	85	toilet	0.069
38	Iceland	0.416	86	freedom	0.084	38	weather	0.51	86	the Little Mermaid	0.06
39	Switzerland	0.372	87	BTS	0.08	39	Estonia	0.485	87	Germany	0.045
40	Scandinavian style	0.371	88	Germany	0.072	40	South Korea	0.48	88	National Park	0.045
41	relax	0.361	89	furniture	0.066	41	preparation	0.467	89	Reykjavik	0.034
42	Busan	0.355	90	safety	0.064	42	traveler	0.464	90	Greenland	0.033
43	Bergen	0.35	91	travel to Europe	0.062	43	sightseeing	0.453	91	Eastern Europe	0.031
44	forest	0.342	92	education	0.05	44	booking	0.446	92	interior	0.029
45	Copenhagen	0.34	93	Bon Voyage	0.05	45	recommendation	0.429	93	Flam	0.024
46	direct flight	0.338	94	Spain	0.021	46	Scandinavian style	0.405	94	practical	0.018
47	society	0.336	95	environment-friendly	0.019	47	book	0.4	95	minimalism	0.01
48	popularity	0.329	96	Malta	0.003	48	culture	0.394	96	Jokulsarlon	0

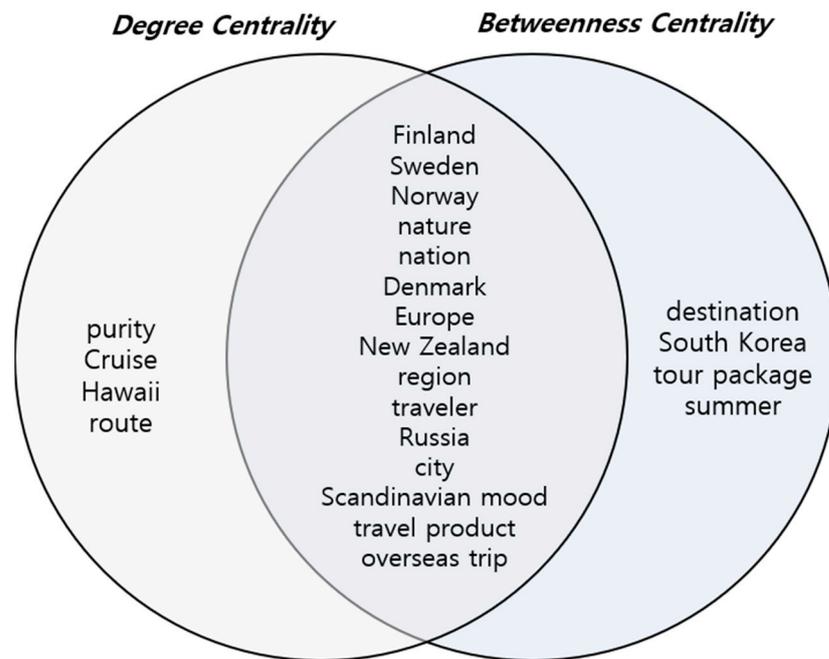


Figure 1. Centrality Venn diagram of news articles.

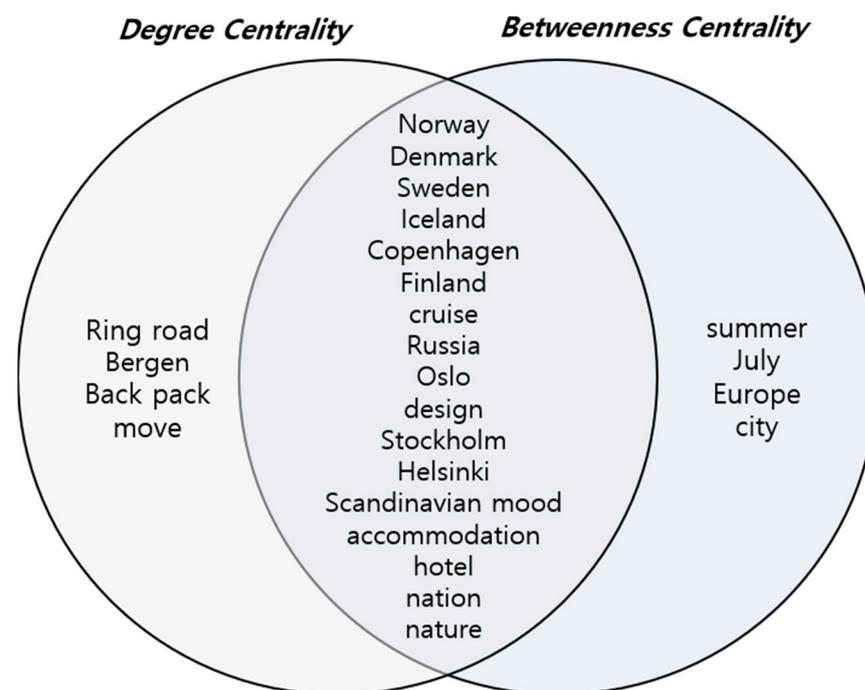


Figure 2. Centrality Venn diagram of blogs.

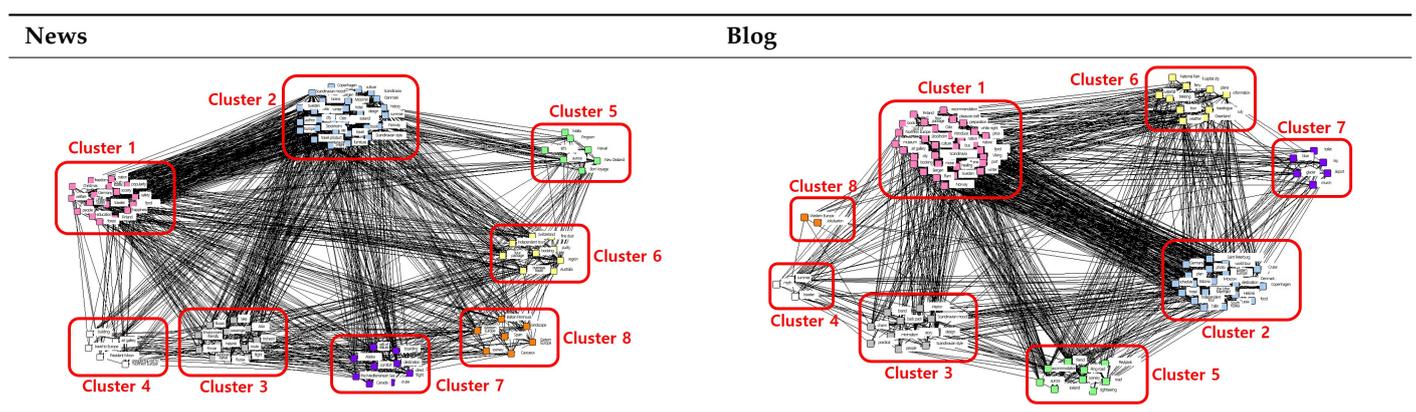
4.4. CONCOR Analysis Results

With CONCOR analysis, it is possible to see how words, each with a different meaning in the centrality analysis, are clustered within the network to form a topic. As a result of CONCOR analysis, eight clusters were derived from the news articles and blogs. Each word is shown in Table 6, and the visualization results are shown in Table 7.

Table 6. CONCOR analysis results.

Cluster	News	Blog
1	freedom, welfare, nation, education, Christmas, South Korea, popularity, society, safety, Germany, the United States, people, forest, happiness, traveler, Finland, fjord	Scandinavia, Sweden, Norway, Finland, recommendation, book, tour package, pleasure craft, god of Northern Europe, Oslo, preparation, white night, introduce, Stockholm, museum, art gallery, culture, bus, nation, price, nature, fjord, city, booking, move, Europe, Viking, port, winter, healing, Bergen, Flam
2	Scandinavian mood, design, Scandinavian style, furniture, culture, brand, history, Moomin, author, city, Europe, Scandinavia, Denmark, Sweden, Copenhagen, Iceland, Norway, relax, winter, hotel, summer, Oslo, Stockholm, Bergen, city, life, book, environment, travel, travel product,	Saint Peterburg, Russia, Cruise, plan, schedule, hotel, independent tour, food, photo, world tour, Estonia, Moscow, Eastern Europe, destination, Denmark, Copenhagen, Helsinki, the Little Mermaid, Tallin, South Korea, Germany
3	Finnair, Helsinki, representative, environment-friendly, route, flight, passenger, Russia, Busan, Incheon, lake, Asia	Scandinavian mood, Scandinavian style, design, interior, back pack, brand, charm, practical, story, minimalism, people
4	President Moon, presidential visit to Northern Europe, travel to Europe, art gallery, building	summer, traveler, myth
5	BTS, Bon Voyage, program, Hawaii, Malta, New Zealand, aurora	Iceland, Reykjavik, Ring road, aurora, friend, road, accommodation, scenery, sightseeing
6	purity, fine dust, Switzerland, Australia, overseas travel, tour package, independent tour, booking, region	travelogue, information, capital city, plane, ferry, weather, tour, July, Greenland, trekking, waterfall, National Park
7	cruise, the Mediterranean Sea, Canada, Alaska, comfort, boarding, gift of nature, direct flight, destination	airport, blue, sky, glacier, church, toilet
8	Western Europe, Spain, Balkan Peninsula, Eastern Europe, Caucasus, scenery, landscape	Western Europe, Jokulsarlon

Table 7. CONCOR analysis visualization.



Regarding the results of the news articles’ analysis, Cluster 1 consisted of issues related to politics and society in Northern Europe, with words such as “welfare”, “freedom”, “nation”, and “society”. The quality of education and social safety of Northern European countries is well-known, as indicated by welfare states being a part of the discussion. Cluster 2 was composed of words that provided a glimpse of Northern European culture and Koreans’ perception of Northern Europe. Words such as “Scandinavian mood”, “design”, “Moomin”, “book”, and “author” showed Koreans’ interest in the Northern European style, which is gaining popularity in Korea. As for Cluster 3, it consisted of words related to flight, such as “Finnair”, “Helsinki”, and “Route”, along with a discussion of the first direct flight connecting Busan, the second-largest city in Korea, to Northern Europe. Cluster 4

contained words related to President Moon Jae-in's visit to countries in Northern Europe in June 2019, whereas Cluster 5 contained words such as "Hawaii", "Malta", and "New Zealand", related to BTS' travel entertainment program. Cluster 6 had words representing different types of travel such as "independent tour" and "tour package" along with words pertaining to the natural environment, such as "fine dust" and "purity". It showed that Koreans often plan a trip to Northern Europe to witness the beauty of nature. Cluster 7 contained words related to cruise trips, suggesting an interest in cruise travel, although cruises are rare in Korea. Lastly, Cluster 8's words were related to neighboring countries in Europe, implying Koreans' tendency to travel to multiple countries when taking a trip to Europe.

According to the results of the blog analysis, Cluster 1 consisted of words representing travel information related to Scandinavia. In addition to geographical names such as "Sweden" and "Norway", words related to attractions, such as "pleasure craft", "museum", and "art gallery", as well as informative words, such as "price" and "bus", were found. This showed that practical information necessary for traveling is found on blogs. In Cluster 2, there were words related to "Russia", a major transit point between Korea and Northern Europe. There was also information on planning an independent tour, such as "schedule", "hotel", and "food". In the case of Cluster 3, words such as "Scandinavian mood", "design", and "minimalism" were derived. This was a discussion topic related to the image of Northern Europe that was similar to Cluster 2 in the news articles. In Cluster 4 "summer", considered as the best time to travel to Northern Europe by Koreans, and Northern European "myths" formed a cluster. Cluster 5 was formed under the theme of traveling to Iceland. Cluster 6 consisted of information about the kind of travel that would allow one to experience nature, such as "trekking", "waterfall", and "national park". In Cluster 7, words such as "blue", "sky", and "glacier" were derived together and reaffirmed the perception of Northern Europe as a clean destination among Koreans. Lastly, Cluster 8 consisted of "Western Europe" and "Jokulsarlon".

5. Conclusions and Implications

In this study, we collected information from Korean news and blog sites to determine whether different sites provide diverse types of information that affect the travel decision-making process. Specifically, we asked three research questions and used several methodologies. Our results are summarized below.

First, we confirmed that different sources of travel information focus on different aspects of travel. For example, the CONCOR analysis shows that BTS' travel entertainment program cluster was formed in the news, and the Iceland cluster, which was the destination of Youth Over Flowers, was formed in the blog (Tables 8 and 9). In the case of the news articles, the density was the highest for Clusters 5–6 (3.111). The connection between Cluster 5, consisting of words related to the travel entertainment program featuring BTS, and Cluster 6, pertaining to traveling to enjoy a clean natural environment, was the strongest. From this, it can be inferred that the program captured the exquisite natural environment of Northern Europe, and as a result the number of potential travelers interested in traveling to Northern Europe grew. In the case of the blogs, the density value was the highest for Clusters 5–6 (1.685); these two clusters displayed the highest degree of connection, consisted of information related to traveling in Iceland and traveling to experience nature. Based on this, it can be speculated that a significant number of viewers of Youth Over Flowers are interested in nature travel. Exposure through mass media will help to recognize Northern Europe as a tourist destination for potential travelers. The main contribution of this study to prior research lies in showing this empirical and clear distinction between difference travel information sources.

Table 8. News density matrix.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	4.184							
2	2.133	3.007						
3	1.034	0.961	4.455					
4	0.718	0.733	0.6	3.6				
5	0.202	0.543	0.012	0	16.19			
6	0.889	1.07	0.38	0.511	3.111	9.333		
7	0.569	0.93	0.926	0.244	1.27	0.432	6.361	
8	0.378	1.205	0.75	0.771	0.061	0.667	0.905	4.81

Table 9. Blog density matrix.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	2.071							
2	1.350	2.976						
3	0.565	0.463	5.018					
4	0.740	0.317	0.727	0.333				
5	0.622	0.370	0.202	0.222	7.500			
6	0.427	0.413	0.068	0.194	1.685	0.667		
7	0.406	0.437	0.000	0.167	0.352	0.222	2.000	
8	0.156	0.167	0.091	0.167	0.111	0.083	0.000	0.000

Second, whereas the main issues associated with traveling in Northern Europe in Korean news articles include political, educational, and environmental issues, those in Korean blogs include the weather, schedules, preparation, and recommendation (see Tables 4 and 5). The former source of information, news articles, is what Koreans are inadvertently exposed to, and the latter source, blogs, is what Koreans intentionally use for information search.

Third, in our CONCOR analyses, public information (e.g., news) had three clusters (cluster 1, about political subjects; cluster 4, about President Moon's visit; and cluster 5, about BTS's tour) out of eight that were not relevant to travel. On the other hand, private information (e.g., blogs) had only one cluster (cluster 3, about general Scandinavian mood) out of eight clusters that was not relevant to travel (see Table 7). This means that Koreans are exposed to traveling in Northern Europe when they read news about political and cultural topics. When they are motivated to search for more information about traveling in Northern Europe in blogs, they find more direct information.

This study has the following theoretical implications: While many prior studies (Bieger and Laesser 2004; Choi et al. 2012; Fodness and Murray 1997; Jacobsen and Munar 2012) suggest that potential tourists collect information from diverse channels, this study empirically showed how the difference exists and may affect travelers' decision making. By analyzing the difference between travel-related words that can be obtained from public and private channels through text analysis, this study found empirical evidence supporting the claim that travelers are exposed to different types of information from different sources.

Several important managerial implications can be found in this study. First, public channels collectively exposing diverse information can be useful to increase the awareness of tourist destinations; on the other hand, it is possible to establish a differentiated marketing strategy that utilizes private channels for specific information to sell tourism products.

Additionally, Northern Europe, although an attractive tourist destination, hides still many unexplored areas for Koreans who are reluctant to navigate them due to long-distance flights and lack of information. Northern European tourism developers, therefore, need to further emphasize the image of clean nature and promote tourism programs centered on the natural landscape.

This study has some limitations. First, in the study, news articles represented public information and blogs represented private information. However, there are other information sources that can be defined as public or private information sources. Therefore, future studies can collect and analyze data from other information sources such as Facebook and Twitter. Recently, video clips such as on YouTube have become an important source of travel information, so follow-up research on these new information sources should be conducted.

Second, in this study, the travel information search stage was classified into “prior to purchase” and “after purchase”. However, exploration of tourism information is a continuous action that occurs even at the travel destination. In the future, we want to analyze further levels of the decision-making process for travel.

Special remarks: This study has a limitation that it was conducted based on data collected before the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a great impact on the global tourism industry. However, interest in travel is growing again as the pandemic turns into an endemic. A survey on leisure activities after the coronavirus shows that Koreans are more interested in ‘tourism and travel’ than in ‘society, culture, and art’ by 20 percent ([Consumer Insight 2022](#)). In this respect, even though the data used were outdated, this study may offer better implications for, hopefully, ‘normal’ travel situations after the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Notes

- ¹ The Korean expression for “Northern European” refers to Northern European, Scandinavian, and Nordic countries without any distinction.
- ² Although these Venn diagrams were based on the top 20 words, 19 words were extracted from the news articles and 21 were extracted from blogs to prevent omission of words with the same value of degree centrality.

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