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RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF CONVENTION CENTERS: A DISTANCE DECAY ANALYSIS

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Public investment in convention centers represents a relatively common approach to stimulating economic development in many large cities throughout the world. The rationale is that metropolitan authorities can thereby attract business tourists and promote positive (business friendly) images of their locality. Although the economic dimension of such spending has received some attention, especially by consultants, there has been little theorizing or empirical research that has examined residents' perceptions of such development. This is in sharp contrast to examinations of resident perceptions of leisure tourism, which has witnessed extensive academic interest. This article analyzes residents' perceptions of the Busan Exhibition and Convention Centre in South Korea. Distance decay theories, geographic decay, and cognitive decay are used to inform the analysis. The findings indicate that increasing residents' engagement with, and knowledge of, convention centers is likely to engender positive perceptions of their impacts. It is suggested that urban policymakers in many parts of the world could learn from this study and should take residents' perceptions into account when financing and managing convention centers.

Key words: Convention centers; Residents' perceptions; Geographic decay; Cognitive decay

Introduction

Many urban municipal authorities have, by highlighting what are seen as the local economic benefits of hosting conferences and conventions, justified public investment in the development of convention centers and tourist facilities more generally (Sanders, 1992). The return on investment for public expenditure of this kind has been the subject of several studies, notably by consultants (e.g., Li et al., 2013; Maritz Research Canada, 2008; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2011) and those with an interest in promoting the conference and convention sector (e.g., Union of International Associations [UIA],

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2016). Perhaps not surprisingly, such analyses tend to be sanguine, emphasizing the potentially positive contributions conventions make to local economic development. Protagonists often draw attention to the higher expenditure patterns of business tourists, compared with their holidaymaking counterparts, and the role conventions may play in creating positive images of places (Rogers, 2013).

Scholars have long argued that concentrating solely on the economic consequences of tourist development is limiting and that engaging residents in the planning process is desirable (Hall & Lew, 2009). This has led to a succession of contributions on participatory tourism planning (e.g., Hasse & Milne, 2005; Tosun, 2005) and a specific stream of research concerned with understanding residents' perceptions of tourism development (Kosmaczewska, Thomas, & Dias, 2016; Sharpley, 2014). Surprisingly, little of the latter has been concerned with business tourism even though the form of physical development and the behavior of business tourists can be radically different from their leisure counterparts (Rogers, 2013).

Taking the case of the Busan Exhibition and Convention Centre (BEXCO), South Korea, as a case study, this article examines residents' perceptions of convention centers. However, the study has resonance beyond the confines of its context because many of its characteristics are replicated in many major cities. For example, it was funded from taxation, which creates political pressure for it to benefit the local economy and its residents. Finding ways of revealing whether or not this is, or perceived to be the case, will be of interest to policymakers in many parts of the world.

Much of the study's academic value lies in its theoretical novelty. It uses distance decay theories to explain the residents' perceptions of convention centers. In doing so, it explores the influence of both geographic and cognitive distance decay on perceptions. This contrasts with previous studies that have used the former alone (Faulkner & Tideswell, 1997; Harvey, Hunt, & Harris, Jr., 1995; Ritchie & Inkari, 2006; Williams & Lawson, 2001). Further, although several studies have identified the relationship between knowledge and perceptions of tourism (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Davis, Allen, & Cosenza, 1988; Lankford & Howard, 1994), no studies have systematically evaluated the influences of both decay distances on perceptions. It is anticipated that the insights gained from this research will have consequences for urban municipal authorities in other parts of the world.

Literature and Theoretical Background

There are numerous studies of residents' perceptions of tourism and tourists (for a comprehensive review, see Sharpley, 2014). These have been conducted in the context of different countries, such as Australia (Dyer, Gursoy, Sharma, & Carter, 2007), Crete (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003), UK (Ritchie & Inkari, 2006), Poland (Kosmaczewska et al., 2016), Portugal (da Cruz Vareiro, Remoaldo, & Ribeiro, 2013), Spain (Vargas-Sanchez, Porras-Bueno & Plaza-Mejia, 2011), and St. Lucia (Nicholas, Thapa, & Ko, 2009). The perceptions of specific communities have also been studied, including work in urban (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003; Schofield, 2010) and rural contexts (Látková & Vogt, 2012; Y. Wang & Pfister, 2008). Some have traced residents' opinions over time using longitudinal approaches (Getz, 1994; Lee & Back, 2006; Ritchie, Shipway, & Cleeve, 2009), while others have added novelty by concentrating on sectors that contribute indirectly to tourism, such as the casinos (Lee & Back, 2006; Lee, Kang, Long, & Resisinger, 2010) and events (Cheng & Jarvis, 2010; Fredline & Faulkner, 2002; S. S. Kim & Petrick, 2005; Lorde, Greenidge, & Devonish, 2011; Ritchie et al., 2009; Yang, Zeng, & Gu, 2010; Zhou, 2010). Zhou (2010) suggests that research into resident perceptions of locally hosted events have tended to focus on one-off mega-events such as the Olympics, the FIFA World Cup, and world exhibitions (Lee & Taylor, 2005; Waitt, 2003; Yang et al., 2010). In spite of this collective research effort, the theoretical approaches used have been limited and the specific case of convention centers has been largely omitted (Sharpley, 2014).

When studying residents' perceptions of tourism, different impacts are normally identified but these usually coalesce around economic, social, and environmental impacts generated by tourism (e.g., Andereck et al., 2005). Perhaps somewhat crudely, impacts are often represented in binary terms as positive or negative. Positive impacts often include broad categories such as "a feeling of belonging in

my community," "clear air and water," "good job opportunities," "strengthen the local economy," "good public transportation," and negative impacts include "crowding and congestion," "crime," "drug and alcohol abuse," "increased prices," etc. (see Andereck et al., 2005).

Most studies suggest that residents' perceptions of the economic consequences of tourism tend to be positive, focusing on such matters as employment, increased business investment, and improved standard of living (Fredline, 2005; Gilbert & Clark, 1997; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996). Related studies have also found strong negative perceptions towards economic impacts such as increased prices (Liu & Var, 1986). A similar positive picture emerges when sociocultural impacts are considered. For example, positive perceptions have been associated with cultural activities, destination's image (Cheng & Jarvis, 2010; Fredline, 2005; Gilbert & Clark, 1997), and negative perceptions concerning drugs uses and crime (Andereck et al., 2005; Gilbert & Clark, 1997; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Tosun, 2002; McCool & Martin, 1994). Generally, the literature shows that when the local residents have closer connections with the tourism industry or derive economic benefits from it, they are more likely to hold positive perceptions of the impact (Andereck et al., 2005; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; McGehee & Andereck, 2004).

Perception reflects "a mental representation from sensory inputs" and an interaction between logical inference and imagination, which is affected by both mental activities and the external environment (Reed, 1989, p. 2). In evaluations of perceptions, there are mainly two types of response—valence and strength (Olsen, 1999). Valence evaluates the direction of perceptions, that is, positively or negatively (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). "Strength" is concerned with how intensive the perception is in one direction, such as ranging from strongly agree to slightly agree (Krosnick & Petty, 1995). Most studies of residents' perceptions of tourism or events apply both valence and strength dimensions such as using Likert scale ranging from *agree* to *disagree* (Cheng & Jarvis, 2010; da Cruz Vareiro et al., 2013; Fredline & Faulkner, 2002; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004). This study also applies both valence and strength when designing the questions in the survey, in particular a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

There are two principal reasons for supposing that the perceptions of residents towards convention centers may differ from their perception of other events or tourism more generally. The first is that unlike peripatetic events, notably major iconic ones, the impact on residents may be less concentrated (Preuss, 2009). There is the possibility, at least, that convention centers spread the benefits and costs of the events it hosts more evenly throughout the year, which may influence perceptions differently from more concentrated local activity. Moreover, the sustained activity of convention centers over several years and the continued utilization of the facilities may set it apart from the perceptions associated with the physical legacies of major events, many of which become negative, especially when accompanied by influential design (Smith, 2009, 2012).

Distance Decay Theory: Geographic Distance

According to Tobler (1970), although different things are more or less related to one another, the degree of relation for "near things" is stronger than "distant things." In other words, distance decay theory suggests a positive correlation between relationship and distance—the shorter the distance, the closer the relationship. Geographic distance has been applied in various fields. For example, in urban development distance decay has been used to explain the relationship between residential location and travel behavior such as trip distance, frequency of activity participation, and trip frequencies (Næss, 2006). In criminology, distance decay suggests that most criminals tend to commit crimes nearer their own homes (Koppen & Keijser, 1997). In retailing, distance decay has illuminated consumer shopping behavior spatially—consumers are likely to be familiar with some shops in their direct environment, where they shop frequently (Timmermans, 1993). In environmental science, willingness to pay for an environmental improvement decreases when an individual lives further from the improvement (Hanley, Schlapfer, & Spurgeon, 2003). For example, a person living in London may be more willing to pay water quality improvement of the river Thames than a person living in other parts of the UK. Hanley et al. (2003) also found that distance

decay is applied more to the users of the environmental resources than nonusers.

Distance decay has also featured in research related to tourism. It was widely used in the 1960s and 1970s to inform tourism forecasts and has been used to examine relationships between tourism demand and the distance between origins and destinations (Yan, 2011), to explore the accessibility and spatial structure of the tourism market (Yao & Zhang, 2005), and to evaluate the relationship between travel distance and flow of tourists (McKercher & Lew, 2003).

Few studies have used this theoretical lens to study the relationship between perceptions of residents toward tourism development and urban space (Harrill, 2004). The limited evidence available suggests that the distance that residents live from the tourism attraction helps explain their perceptions of tourism and tourists (Jurowski & Gursory, 2004). Kline (2007) pointed out that the residents' perceived benefits of tourism diminish when the residents live further away from the tourism attraction. This article is predicated on the notion that distance decay theory can be employed usefully to explain both positive and negative perceptions towards tourism and to convention centers. Residents who live closer to the attraction potentially have more interaction with it. This may result in a more positive attitude than from those who live further away. There are existing studies that support this argument. For example, Faulkner and Tideswell (1997) suggested that residents living in the core zone of tourist activities were more sensitive to the negative side of environmental impacts. Korca (1996) found that negative perceptions toward tourism arose when distance between a resident's home and the tourism zone of the community decreased. Conversely, Sheldon and Var (1984) revealed that residents living close to tourism areas had more favorable perceptions. However, the results of some studies are ambiguous and are not necessarily susceptible to explanation using distance decay theory; Harvey et al. (1995), Ritchie and Inkari (2006), and Williams and Lawson (2001) revealed that those living further away from the tourism zone had more negative perceptions towards tourism than tourism zone residents.

By considering the original (geographic) meaning of distance decay theory and arguments in the existing literature, the following hypothesis regarding geographic decay will be tested in residents' perceptions towards convention centers:

Hypothesis 1: Respondents who live closer to the concentration of convention tourist activity than those live farther away have stronger positive perceptions of both positive and negative impacts of the center.

The study evaluates both valence (agree or disagree) and strength (agree or strongly agree, and disagree or strongly disagree) aspects of residents' perceptions towards two types of impacts—positive and negative impacts. Responses to the questions were measured on 5-point Likert-scales, where 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *Neutral*, 4 = *agree*, and 5 = *strongly agree*. Scores below 3 can be regarded as negative perceptions (in the disagree scale) and the lower of the score, then the stronger the perception is. Similarly, scores above 3 are positive perceptions (in the agree scale), and the higher the score is, then the stronger the perception is.

For example, the positive impacts include simulated local economy, improved image of the city, and provided jobs; the negative impacts include things like traffic congestions, pollutions, and crimes.

Distance Decay Theory: Cognitive Distance

The original emphasis of distance decay theory was on geographic distance but this has been extended to psychological distance, temporal distance, social distance, and economic distance (Deza & Deza, 2009). Another important type of "distance" that can potentially be used to explain residents' perceptions is cognitive distance; the degree to which people's knowledge differs (Wuyts, Colombo, Dutta, & Nooteboom, 2005).

Cognition reflects psychological activities such as rational evaluation, sense making, categorization, inference, value judgements, and emotion (Nooteboom, Haverbeke, Duysters, Gilsing, & Oord, 2007; Wuyts et al., 2005). Wuyts et al. (2005) explained cognitive distance as "people perceive, interpret, understand, and evaluate the world according to mental categories that they have developed in interaction with their physical and social

environment" (p. 2), which results in differences in people's knowledge about the world "to the extent that their cognition has developed in different conditions" (p. 2). People's cognition can be formed in different settings such as education, culture, and values (Wuyts et al., 2005). In organization and management studies, cognitive distance also refers to the "differences in levels of workforce skills, education, and exposure to new technologies and societal contexts" (Fainshmidt, White, & Cangioni, 2014, p. 189). Broadly speaking, cognitive distance is the difference in the cognitive aspects.

Cognitive distance may be understood differently in different contexts. One understanding is to connect cognitive distance with geographic distance. If geographic distance indicates actual distance, then cognitive distance means a mental representation of the real distance (Ankomah, Crompton, & Baker, 1996). In this case, cognitive distance may be different from the actual geographic distance, which can be described as cognitive distance distortion (Lloyd & Heivly, 1987). This may be due to differences developed from the "processes individuals use to code spatial information into memory, to store it, and to retrieve it" (Ankomah & Crompton, 1992, p. 325). For example, a cognitive distance perceived by a tourist between the origin and destination could be shorter or longer than the actual geographic distance.

An alternative conceptualization is to consider cognitive distance independently (i.e., not associated with geographic distance). Instead, the emphasis is on knowledge about and emotional attachment to the phenomenon being studied (Nooteboom et al., 2007), in this case a convention center. This can be achieved through engagement and interaction with the industry. This article will apply the second conceptualization to explain residents' perceptions towards convention centers. The proposition is that those who possess more knowledge about a convention center and its events are more likely to positively disposed to it. Cognitive distance forms and increases during a process of direct or indirect interaction with tourists, tourist attractions, and the tourism industry. Residents will then accumulate different levels of knowledge about convention centers, which will probably lead to different perceptions.

In the existing studies, although cognitive distance has not been applied to explain perceptions of tourism, some research has built the connection between knowledge and perceptions, and tested the effects of different level of knowledge on residents' perceptions. For example, Lankford and Howard (1994) found that there is a strong positive relation between residents' knowledge about local economy and business and their perception towards tourism. The results in Davis et al. (1988) revealed that more knowledge about the economy and industry would generate less negative perception towards the industry. Davis et al. (1988) suggested that public policies should focus on educating local residents about the positive impact of tourism. Andereck et al. (2005) also found that when residents are knowledgeable about tourism, they held stronger positive impacts of tourism, which may be because residents with more knowledge about tourism are more aware of benefits that tourism brings to economy, community, and individuals. However, the weakness in these evaluations is that it could be difficult for residents to measure their relative knowledge level compared to the other residents, which may affect the reliability of their responses.

The article will test the following hypothesis regarding cognitive distance:

Hypothesis 2: Respondents who possess more knowledge about a convention center than those with less knowledge have stronger positive perceptions of both positive and negative impacts of the center.

The final hypothesis will examine which urban space plays a more important role by comparing the impacts of geographic and cognitive distance on residents' perceptions:

Hypothesis 3: Residents' perceptions toward the impact of a convention center can be explained more by cognitive distance decay than by geographic distance decay.

Social exchange theory (SET) has been widely used to explain residents' perceptions toward tourism impacts (Choi & Murray, 2010). SET posits that individuals are more positively disposed to tourism when they perceive its outcome to be beneficial, notably to themselves (Ap, 1992). Social representation theory (SRT) has also been used to explain perceptions of tourism. SRT assumes

that individuals can be categorized into different groups based on their values, ideas, and practices (Schofield, 2010; Yutyungong & Scott, 2009). In a recent study, S. Wang and Chen (2015) identified the influence of place-based self-esteem and self-efficacy on residents' perceptions, which suggests that place identity theory can also contribute to explaining perceptions (see also McCool & Martin, 1994). Distance decay theory offers a novel way of interrogating perceptions of tourism, in this case via a study of a major convention center.

Research Design and Methods

Study Site and Background

The South Korean convention industry generated about US$41 billion and contributed 0.45% to the country's total GDP in 2007 (Joo, 2010). Busan is one of the main convention cities, which was ranked as 17th among the world cities in 2010. In 2004, the municipal authority listed the conventions sector as one of four major strategic industries (Busan Metropolitan City Government, 2009). The number of Union of International Associations' events in Busan has drastically increased since 2005, which has been attributed in large part to the Busan Convention Bureau's (BEXCO) aggressive marketing activities (Busan Metropolitan City Government, 2009).

Questionnaire and Sampling

The questionnaire consisted of two sections as part of a design that was informed by previous studies (e.g., C. W. Kim & Lee, 2010; S. S. Kim & Petrick, 2005; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Shin, 2006; Tovar & Lockwood, 2008; Zhou, 2010). The first section included 23 items representing positive and negative impacts. These items captured economic, social, and environmental dimensions. The second section consisted of questions relating to the demographic profiles of respondents. For the purpose of testing Hypothesis 1, information on the geographic location of the respondents living in Busan was asked. Testing Hypothesis 2 was more challenging as cognitive distance has seldom been applied to explain residents' perception of tourism and events. Following others (e.g., Andereck et al., 2005; Davis et al., 1988; Lankford & Howard, 1994), knowledge in this context refers to understanding the connections between the convention center with the local economy and society, being aware of the function of MICE industry, and feeling emotional attachment to the industry and its participants. Each of these, and related aspects, were asked separately. These factors included levels of educational attainment, their length of residency, occupation, whether or not they work in the industry, and their frequency of visiting the convention center. Two other demographic characteristics, gender and age, were also included to describe the profile of the sample.

In order to establish residents' perceptions to BEXCO, on-site surveys were conducted between July 29 and August 2, 2011 in three locations: Centem City Subway Station ($n = 162$), which is close to BEXCO, the Seomyon commercial business district ($n = 129$) where many branches of different banks and small or medium-sized business offices are located, and in front of the Sinsegye department store ($n = 109$), which is the world largest department store. Three well-trained research assistants who worked at Busan Social Research Institute and had experience of collecting questionnaires for BEXCO projects conducted the survey. They understood the purpose of the research and each of them was assigned to different places. Data were collected from Busan city residents who were over 20 years of age. Koreans who are over 20 years of age have the right to vote and can marry without their parents' permission. This could be one of the main reasons why the research on Korean residents' opinions normally selects respondents who are 20 years-old or over (e.g., C. W. Kim & Lee, 2010; S. S. Kim & Petrick, 2005; Shin, 2006). Over the 5 days of data collection, 400 questionnaires were collected, of which 366 were usable.

Data Analysis

The research used the software package Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19 to arrange and analyze data. Frequency analysis was employed to identify the respondents' demographic and visit profiles, which was followed by exploratory factor analysis (EFA). As part of the EFA, the "principal axis factoring method" was

used to reduce the number of items and delineate underlying factors, followed by a "varimax rotation" in order to maximize differences among the factors extracted. Factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 and individual items with factor loading of 0.4 and over were selected. Each of these criteria is supported by Field (2009) and Stevens (2002), and many researchers have used these criteria for their studies (see for example, S. S. Kim & Petrick, 2005; Lee et al., 2010; Yang et al., 2010; Zhou, 2010).

To examine the perceptions of the different groups based on demographic and visit characteristics toward the factors identified through conducting exploratory factor analysis, normality test was applied to identify the appropriate tests to use (i.e., parametric or nonparametric tests). If the factor values are normally distributed, then parametric tests, such as *t* tests can be applied, otherwise the nonparametric tests such as Mann-Whitney should be applied. Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk normality tests were employed to the five factors identified, and the results of both tests indicate that all the factors are not normally distributed. As a result, nonparametric tests including the Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis tests were chosen to analyze the factors identified. The Mann-Whitney test is conducted when there are two subgroups in a demographic and visit characteristic group including gender, place of residence, and "work or not work" in the tourism and convention industry (see Table 1). If there are more than two subgroups, the Kruskal Wallis test can be applied to the demographic and visit characteristic groups containing age, education, occupation, frequency of visiting, and length of residence. If statistically significant differences are shown from the Kruskal Wallis test, the Mann-Whitney test is then applied to pairs of groups in order to identify which pairs have statistically significant differences.

Table 1
Respondents' Demographic and Visit Profiles

Variables	No. (%)
Gender	
Male	182 (49.7)
Female	184 (50.3)
Age group	
20–29	86 (23.5)
30–39	120 (32.8)
40–49	87 (23.8)
50–59	42 (11.5)
60 and over	31 (8.5)
Education level	
High School	67 (18.3)
Undergraduate students	36 (9.8)
Graduates	224 (61.2)
Masters or PhD	39 (10.7)
Length of residence	
Below 1 year	2 (0.5)
1–4 years	11 (3)
5–9 years	24 (6.6)
10–14 years	28 (7.7)
15 years and over	301 (82.2)
Occupation	
Specialist	36 (9.8)
Office worker	153 (41.8)
Civil servant	39 (10.7)
Self-employment	40 (10.9)
Housewife	41 (11.2)
Student	35 (9.6)
Others	22 (6)
Place of residence	
Core	150 (41)
Neighbor	126 (34.4)
Between	56 (15.3)
Far away	34 (9.3)
Work in the industry	
Yes	114 (31.1)
No	252 (68.9)
Frequency of visiting	
1–4 times	217 (59.3)
5–9 times	42 (11.5)
10 and over	107 (29.2)

Note. Percentages do not always total 100% due to rounding.

Results and Analysis

Demographic and Visit Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 indicates the demographic profiles of the respondents. There were slightly more females (50.3%) and 32.8% of the respondents were between 30–39 years old. The majority were university graduates (61.2%) who had been residents of Busan for over 15 years (82.2%), lived in the tourism area (75.4%), and worked as office workers (41.8%). Only one third of the residents (31.3%) either worked in or had family members who worked in the tourism or convention industries. Regarding the visit characteristics, 59.3% visited BEXCO between one and four times.

Busan is divided into 16 districts (Fig. 1) including 15 Gu (borough) and 1 Gun (county), which

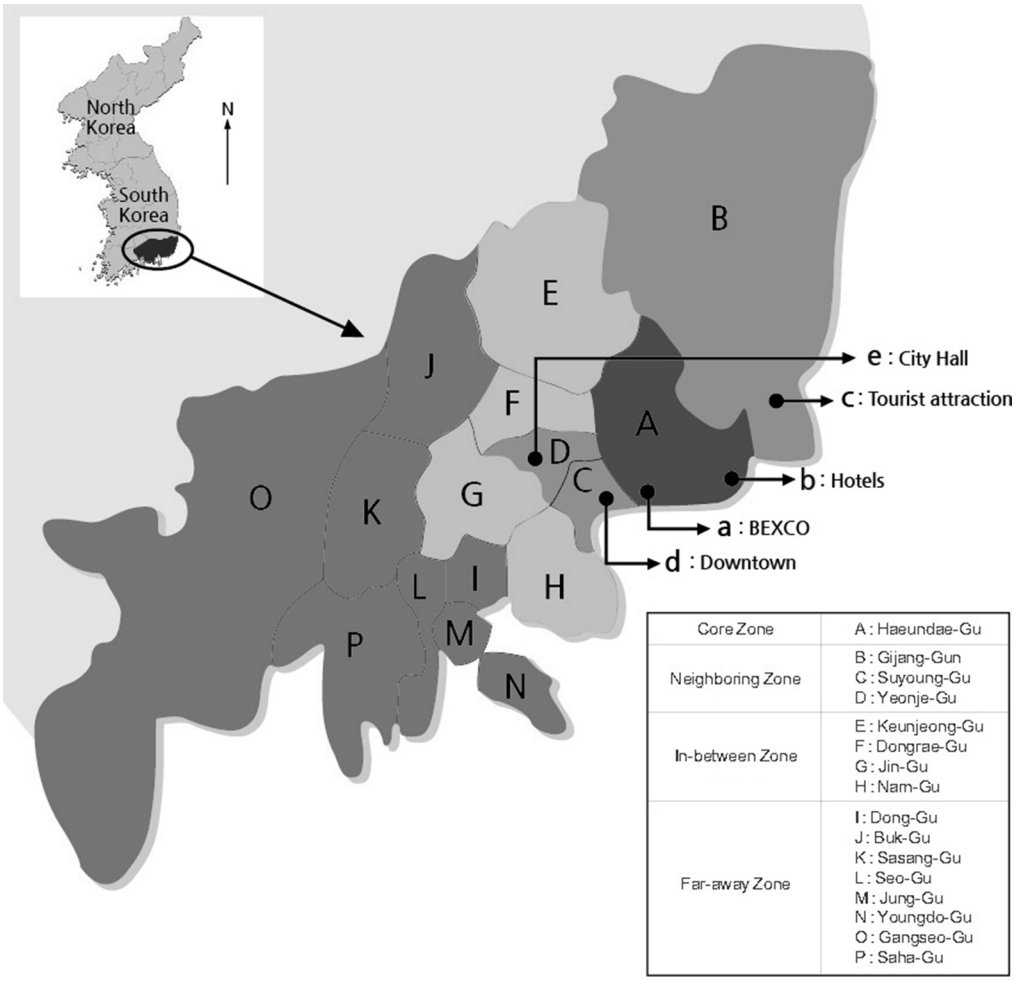

Figure 1. The four zones of Busan.

are marked with 16 letters. For the purpose of this research, the urban space of Busan has been divided into four zones: core, neighboring, in-between, and far-away zones. Faulkner and Tideswell (1997) divided their study site—the Gold Coast—into tourism zones, which includes areas within 4 km of concentrated tourist activity concentration, and nontourism zones with areas outside 4 km. Most BEXCO events attendees stay at hotels at point b (Fig. 1) and thus both points a (BEXCO) and b (hotels) contain concentrated attendee activity and Haeundae-Gu District (A) is a "Core Zone." Zone B (Gijang-Gun County) includes a number of tourist attractions (point c) such as traditional temples and a famous golf course. Zone C (Suyoung-Gu District) is the downtown area (point d) and Zone D (Yeonje-Gu District) has attractions (point e) where attendees may visit. Points c, d, and e are within 4 km of concentrated attendee activity and thus the districts (B, D, C) where these points are located are labeled a "Neighbor Zone." The four districts (E, F, G, H) separating the Core and Neighbor Zones with the "Far-Away Zone" is called the "In-Between Zone."

Underlying Factors of Residents' Perceptions

The exploratory factor analysis was conducted with 23 items. As a result, two items that did not load onto any factors were excluded from the study.

These were "increased the price of properties that are close to the center" and "improved public transportation and road conditions." Five factors were identified from the rest of the 21 residents' perceptions items (Table 2). Factor 1 labeled "physical and environmental costs" consists of 6 items, which are physical and environmental problems caused by hosting the meetings, incentives, conferencing, and exhibitions in BEXCO. Factor 2 named "business and economic benefits" incorporates five statements such as promoting the tourism industry and stimulating the economy. Factor 3 termed "social benefits" consists of four items such as offering local residents opportunities to participate in various events and to meet new people, and improving the image of the city. The fourth factor, which contained three items including damage to local identities, increased conflicts, and higher crime, is described as "social costs." The last factor is associated more with personal economic benefits, such as providing jobs and increasing incomes.

Using Geographic Distance Decay to Explain Residents' Perceptions of BEXCO: Testing Hypothesis 1

The results support Hypothesis 1. When comparing perceptions of residents living in different spatial zones, statistically significant differences are found in Factors 1 and 3 only. The average scores for the two factors are all above point 3, which indicates that these groups averagely hold positive perceptions and then supports the valence aspect of Hypothesis 1. The results shown in Table 3 compare the strength of perceptions, which support the strength aspect of Hypothesis 1.

Respondents living in the Neighboring and Core Zones were more supportive to the statements of Factor 3 "social benefits" than respondents living in the Far-Away Zone. This means that respondents who live closer to the concentration of convention tourist activity agree more with statements such as the events at the center "offered local people

Table 2
Results From the Factor Analysis

Factors/Statements	Loadings	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
Factor 1. Physical and environmental costs		3.164	15.069
Caused speculation on properties near the center	0.539		
Increased the local prices of some goods and services	0.716		
Unevenly distributed welfare across the local communities	0.783		
Caused traffic congestions	0.617		
Environmental pollutions	0.809		
Damaged natural environment near the center	0.744		
Factor 2. Business and economy benefits		2.593	12.347
Stimulated the local economy	0.720		
Encouraged business investment of the local area	0.688		
Promoted tourism industry in the local area	0.759		
Increase international recognition of the city of Busan	0.611		
Promoted the development of shopping centers and hotels	0.404		
Factor 3. Social benefits		2.495	11.883
Offered local people opportunities to participate in various events	0.726		
Offered local residents' opportunities to meet new people and share their cultures	0.728		
Improved the image of the city of Busan	0.676		
Improved living standard of local residents through the facilities of BEXCO	0.649		
Factor 4. Social costs		2.077	9.891
Damaged local identities because of influx of events tourists to BEXCO	0.759		
Caused conflicts and antagonism between events tourists and local residents	0.828		
Caused higher crime levels in the area	0.660		
Factor 5. Opportunities for business and jobs		2.020	9.617
Provided jobs for local residents	0.886		
Increased the incomes of local residents	0.773		
Provided local business opportunities	0.646		
Total			58.807

Table 3
Comparison of Perceptions for Residents of Different Place of Residence

Place of Residence (Zone)	*N*	Mean Rank
Factor 1. Physical and environmental costs		
In-between	56	51.48
Far-away	34	35.65
Sig. (two-tailed)	0.005**	In-between > Far-away
Factor 1. Physical and environmental costs		
Core zone	150	98.45
Far-away	34	66.26
Sig. (two-tailed)	0.001**	Core zone > Far-away
Factor 1. Physical and environmental costs		
Neighboring	126	86.99
Far-away	34	56.44
Sig. (two-tailed)	0.001**	Neighboring > Far-away
Factor 3. Social benefits		
Neighboring	126	86.25
Far-away	34	59.18
Sig. (two-tailed)	0.002**	Neighboring > Far-away
Factor 3. Social benefits		
Core zone	150	97.17
Far-away	34	71.88
Sig. (two-tailed)	0.012*	Core zone > Far-away

Note. Results that are statistically significant at the 5% or 1% levels are shown.
*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$.

opportunities to participate in various events" and "to meet new people and share their cultures."

Respondents living in the Far-Away Zone were less inclined to agree with Factor 1 regarding "physical and environmental costs" than respondents living in the other three zones. It could be that people who live in the tourism area are more sensitive to the physical and environmental costs (Faulkner & Tideswell, 1997) and also understand more about the social benefits. These findings can be explained by geographic distance decay: respondents who live closer to the concentration of convention tourist activity were likely to have more interaction with events and attendees at the center and have stronger positive perceptions of the center.

Using Cognitive Distance Decay to Explain Residents' Perceptions of BEXCO: Testing Hypothesis 2

The results support both valence and strength aspects of Hypothesis 2. These results will be shown in two parts because of the different statistical tests applied: Mann–Whitney for the first (which has two items) and the Kruskal–Wallis test, as a pretest before Mann–Whitney *U* test, for the second.

Three statistically significant differences were identified between the subgroups of respondents who work (not work) for the convention sector in terms of Factors 1, 2, and 5 (Table 4). Respondents who work in or have family members who work in the tourism or convention industries had more positive perceptions on Factor 2 "Business and economy benefits" and Factor 5 "Opportunities for business and jobs," suggesting that conventions at BEXCO "Encouraged business investment," "Promoted the tourism industry," "Stimulated the local economy," and "Increased the incomes of local residents." Respondents and their family who did not work in the tourism or convention industries were more likely to agree with Factor 1 "Physical and environmental costs," stating that events at BEXCO "Caused speculation on properties near the center" and "Increased the local prices of some goods and services."

These results can also be explained by cognitive distance decay theory. Cognitive distance exists between those who work and those who do not work in the convention industry. Whether residents employed in the industry is an important factor

Table 4
Comparison of Perceptions for Responses Who Work or Do Not Work in the Industry

	Factor 1: Physical and Environmental Costs	Factor 2: Business and Economy Benefits	Factor 3: Social Benefits	Factor 4: Social Costs	Factor 5: Opportunities for Business and Jobs
Mean rank					
W: Work in the industry	146.76(W)	204.18(W)	171.72(W)	171.46(W)	199.93(W)
NW: Not in the industry	200.12(NW)	174.15(NW)	188.83(NW)	188.95(NW)	176.07(NW)
Mann–Whitney *U*	10176.000	12007.000	13021.000	12991.000	12491.000
Z	**−4.468**	**−2.515**	−1.433	−1.465	**−1.998**
Sig. (two-tailed)	**0.000****	**0.012***	0.152	0.143	**0.046***

Note. The higher mean rank indicates more support of the subgroup on this factor.
*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$.

affecting the perception as working in the industry can help to generate a sense of belong to the community and understand the industry (Gu & Ryan, 2008). If respondents work in the convention industry, they may understand the influences of this industry on the local economy and society and also feel emotionally attached to this industry (Gu & Ryan, 2008). Residents working in the industry may also develop stronger positive group identities (Wu & Chen, 2015). If their family members work in the industry, respondents may gain knowledge indirectly about tourism through communications with their family. Both these situations lead to stronger positive and weaker negative perceptions toward BEXCO. These findings support Hypothesis 2 in that respondents who possess more knowledge about a convention center have stronger perceptions of the positive impact but weaker perceptions of the negative impact of the center.

A two-stage test was applied to compare perceptions toward the five factors when more than two subgroups existed within one characteristic group. The first stage is the pretest and the Kruskal–Wallis test was applied. The results are shown in Table 5. Second, the significant differences shown in Table 5 were further investigated using the Mann–Whitney U test and the full statistical results are presented in Table 6. This test examines which two subgroups have statistically significant differences.

Table 7 summaries the orders of significant differences among subgroups in terms of age,

Table 5
Comparison of Residents' Perceptions Toward Different Factors (Pretest)

	Factor 1: Physical and Environmental Costs	Factor 2: Business and Economy Benefits	Factor 3: Social Benefits	Factor 4: Social Costs	Factor 5: Opportunities for Business and Jobs
Demographic: Education (*df* = 3)					
Chi-square	10.310	23.019	2.462	4.518	2.776
Sig.	**0.016***	**0.000****	0.482	0.211	0.427
Demographic: Occupation (*df* = 6)					
Chi-square	47.036	24.860	9.189	9.281	17.271
Sig.	**0.000****	**0.000****	0.163	0.158	**0.008****
Demographic: Length of residence (*df* = 2)					
Chi-square	22.998	1.755	1.567	0.706	0.370
Sig.	**0.000****	0.416	0.457	0.702	0.831
Visit characteristics: Frequency of visiting (*df*= 2)					
Chi-square	94.846	2.653	7.426	0.603	15.039
Sig.	**0.000****	0.265	0.024	0.740	**0.001****

Note: The results of the Kruskal Wallis test, which is the first stage of the two-stage test.
*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$.

Table 6
Comparison of Perceptions for Different Demographic and Visit Characteristics Subgroups (>2)

Factor 1 (Demographic—Education: [1] High School, [2] Undergraduate students, [3] Graduate, [4] Masters/Ph.D.)						
Group	[1]:[2]	[1]:[3]	[1]:[4]			
Mean rank	56.70:43.25	172.04:138.21	59.39:43.38			
Sig.	0.029*	0.004*	0.010*			
Factor 2 (Demographic—Education)						
Group	[1]:[3]	[1]:[4]	[2]:[3]	[2]:[4]	[3]: [4]	
Mean rank	114.63:155.38	44.49:68.97	104.94:134.61	29.83:45.54	127.75:156.41	
Sig.	0.001*	0.000**	0.028*	0.002*	0.03*	
Factor 1 (Demographic—Occupation: [1] Specialist, [2] Office worker, [3] Civil servant, [4] Self-employment, [5] House wife, [6] Student, [7] Others)						
Group	[1]:[2]	[1]:[3]	[1]:[6]	[2]:[3]	[2]:[4]	
Mean rank	125.56:87.81	32.72:42.87	41.14:30.71	85.25:140.62	91.63:117.55	
Sig.	0.000**	0.044*	0.033*	0.000**	0.009**	
Group	[2]:[5]	[3]:[4]	[3]:[6]	[3]:[7]	[5]:[6]	
Mean rank	88.89:129.63	46.56:33.60	46.62:27.34	34.67:24.50	44.2:31.83	
Sig.	0.000**	0.012*	0.000**	0.032*	0.015*	
Factor 2 (Demographic—Occupation)						
Group	[2]:[4]	[2]:[5]	[2]:[6]	[2]:[7]	[3]:[5]	
Mean Rank	101.49:79.83	105.53:67.54	100.66:67.56	91.35:64.68	46.15:35.12	
Sig.	0.029*	0.000**	0.001**	0.021*	0.034*	
Factor 5 (Demographic—Occupation)						
Group	[1]:[2]	[1]:[7]	[2]:[3]	[2]:[4]	[3]:[7]	[4]:[7]
Mean rank	77.92:99.02	26.06:35.14	102.43:73.23	102.50:75.95	27.05:38	27.98:37.91
Sig.	0.037*	0.047*	0.003**	0.007**	0.021*	0.038*
Factor 1 (Demographic—Length of residence: [1] Less than 10 years [2] 10–14 years [3] 15 years +)						
Group	[1]:[3]	[2]:[3]				
Mean rank	107.27:177.15	115.71:169.58				
Sig.	0.000**	0.004**				
Factor 1 (Visit characteristics—Frequency of visiting : [1] 1–4 times, [2] 5–9 times, [3] 10 times+)						
Group	[1]:[2]	[1]:[3]				
Mean rank	139.49:80.95	196.90:92.73				
Sig.	0.000**	0.000**				
Factor 5 (Visit characteristics—Frequency of visiting)						
Group	[1]:[3]					
Mean rank	148.34:191.21					
Sig.	0.000**					

Note. The results of the Mann–Whitney *U* test, which is the second stage of the two-stage test. The results in the table compare the mean ranks between subgroups. Only the results with significant differences are displayed.
*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$.

education levels, frequency of visiting, and length of residence groups based on Table 6.

Regarding education levels, differences were found between the groups with higher level of education than the groups with lower levels. High school graduate respondents answered that they were more inclined to be concerned about Factor 1 "physical/environmental costs." On the other hand, the more educated the respondents were, the stronger their perceptions towards Factor 2, suggesting that BEXCO brought "business and economy benefits." Thus, it can be stated that the more educated the respondents were, the more positive and the less negative they were toward the impacts of the center. With respect to frequency of visiting BEXCO, the respondents who visited BEXCO over 10 times were more supportive about Factor 5 that BEXCO created "Opportunities for business and jobs." However, the respondents who visited BEXCO 1–4 times had stronger perceptions toward Factor 1 "physical and environmental costs." This could be due to the fact that many respondents who have frequently visited BEXCO may work in the tourism and convention industries and their visits

Table 7
Subgroups Orders With Mean Ranks According to Statistically Significant Differences

Factor	Subgroups Order
Factor 1. Physical and environmental costs (Demographic—Education: [1] High School, [2] Undergraduate students, [3] Graduate, [4] Masters/Ph.D.)	[2], [3], [4] < [1]
Factor 2. Business and economy benefits (Demographic—Education: [1] High School, [2] Undergraduate students, [3] Graduate, [4] Masters/Ph.D.)	[1], [2] < [3] < [4]
Factor 1. Physical and environmental costs (Demographic—Length of residence: [1] Less than 10 years, [2] 10–14 years, [3] 15+ years)	[1], [2] < [3]
Factor 1. Physical and environmental costs (Visit characteristics—Frequency of visiting: [1] 1–4 times, [2] 5–9 times, [3] 10+ times)	[2], [3] < [1]
Factor 5. Opportunities for business and jobs (Visit characteristics—Frequency of visiting: [1] 1–4 times, [2] 5–9 times, [3] 10+ times)	[1] < [3]

enable them to understand more about the center. Thus, residents with higher frequency of visits have more positive and less negative perceptions of BEXCO.

Cognitive distance decay theory can be employed to explain these findings. Higher cognitive distance is identified between the older and younger groups regarding Factor 1, between groups with higher and lower levels of education regarding Factors 1 and 2, and groups with higher and lower frequency of visits regarding Factors 1 and 5. The results imply that the younger groups and residents with higher levels of education and groups who visited the center frequently were likely to obtain more primary or secondary information about BEXCO. The residents with more knowledge about BEXCO were inclined to hold more positive and fewer negative views. In turn, this suggests that BEXCO would be well advised to develop a strategy to communicate knowledge about its activities as well-informed residents tend to view the center more positively. These results also support Hypothesis 2.

Because of the small number involved, three subgroups of residents staying at Busan for less than 1 year, 1–4 years, and 5–9 years (see Table 1) were merged into one subgroup labeled "less than 10 years" (see Table 7). The respondents who had lived in the city for more than 15 years were more sensitive to the negative impacts (Factor 1). One reason why long-term residents may have more negative perceptions could be associated with them experiencing stronger community attachment than those living in the city for less than 15 years.

Comparison of the Influence of Geographic and Cognitive Distance on Residents' Perceptions of BEXCO: Testing Hypothesis 3

In order to test whether geographic or cognitive distance decays can better explain residents' perceptions toward BEXCO (Hypothesis 3), responses with two combined demographic characteristics were compared. The two characteristics are place of residence, which can be explained by geographic distance decay, and whether residents work or do not work in the industry, which can be explained by cognitive distance decay. Results are only shown in Figure 2 when they are statistically significant at the 5% or 1% levels. Figure 2 is divided by dotted lines into three parts with each showing the comparisons of perceptions towards Factors 1, 2, and 4, respectively. Comparisons of perceptions towards Factors 3 and 5 are not displayed as the results are not statistically significant. From the inner to the outer of the circle represents four zones, which match the zones in Figure 1: Core Zone, Neighbor Zone, In-Between Zone, and Far-Away Zone.

W refers to respondents who work in or have family members who work in tourism or the convention center. N refers to respondents who do not work in or have no family members working in the tourism or convention industries. From 1 to 4 represents Core, Neighbor, In-Between and Far-Away Zones, respectively. The combination of W/N with a number indicates respondents with both demographic characteristics. For example, W1 means that respondents who work in the industry and live

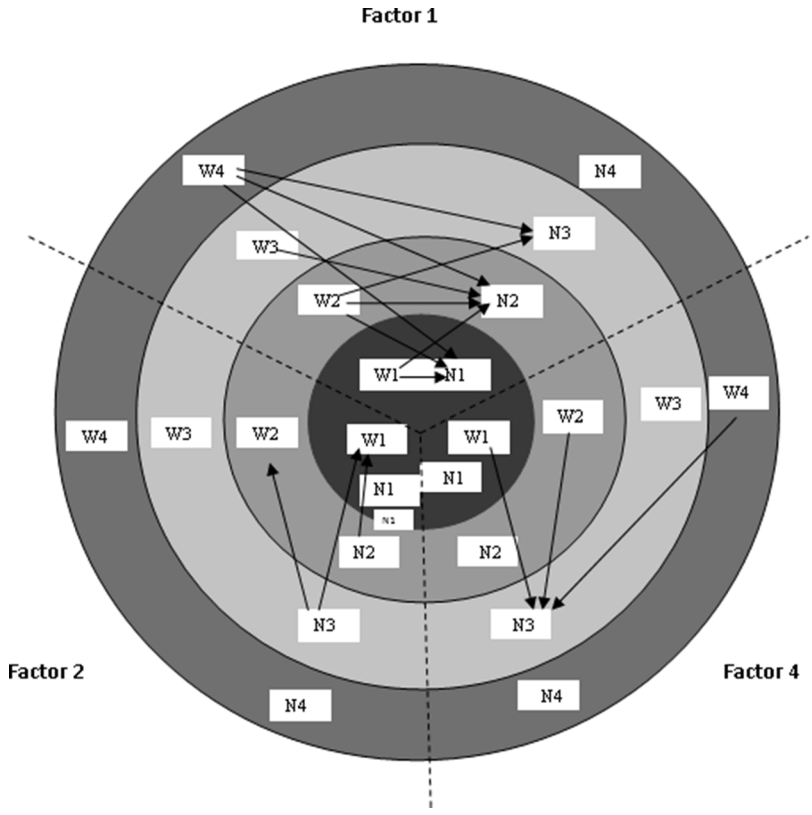

Figure 2. Comparison of perceptions of residents with combined characteristics.

in the Core Zone. The arrows in the figure indicate the comparison of the mean rank for each group with the arrow pointing to the larger mean rank. For example, when comparing perceptions toward Factor 1, W1 → N2 in Figure 2 illustrates that the mean rank of perceptions of respondents with N2 characteristics is larger than that of respondents with W1 characteristics. In other words, residents who do not work in the industry and live in the Core Zone have stronger perceptions towards Factor 1 "Physical and environmental costs" than residents who work in the industry and live in the Neighbor Zone, which can be explained by cognitive distance decay but not supported by geographic distance decay. The arrows in Figure 2 are only applied to the pairs that are statistically significant.

All results shown in Figure 2 can be explained by cognitive distance decay—respondents who work in the industry had stronger sense of the positive impacts (Factor 2: Business and economy benefits) but weaker perceptions of the negative impacts (Factor 1: Physical and environmental costs and Factor 4: Social costs) than those who do not work in the industry. Although the comparison for perceptions toward Factor 2 are supported by geographic distance decay—respondents who live closer to BEXCO agree more that BEXCO brings "Business and economy benefits"—this decay does not support the results for comparing perceptions towards Factor 4 and does not fully support those for Factor 1. This implies that cognitive distance explains more residents' perceptions toward the impact of a convention center than geographic distance decay. This supports Hypothesis 3.

Concluding Comments

This article has explored the relationship between urban space and the perceptions of residents towards convention centers via a case study

in South Korea. It uses distance decay theories to explain perceptual differences. The article makes two contributions to the wider planning literature. First, as few studies have investigated the impact of convention centers, it represents an initial step to gaining an understanding of residents' perceptions towards convention centers. More specifically, the findings provide local policymakers and the managers of BEXCO with practical information on how Busan residents perceive the impacts of this major facility. Therefore, they are in a better position to develop strategies to maximize positive perceptions in that metropolitan area. Second, this study shows that urban space, including both geographic and cognitive distances, plays an important role in explaining the differences of perception between contrasting social groups. Therefore, it makes a theoretical contribution by extending the original meaning of cognitive distance used in psychological studies to studies of this kind.

As was noted in the literature review, it has long been recognized that geographical distance affects residents' perceptions towards tourism; generally, the closer the residents live to tourism areas, the more negative their perceptions (Harrill, 2004). However, as it is not always feasible to build convention centers (or tourist facilities) a significant distance away from local residents, the findings of this article are suggestive of alternative practical solutions to this issue. The results show that residents' perceptions of the impact of a convention center can be explained more by cognitive distance decay than by geographic distance decay. Therefore, when the physical location of a convention center cannot be changed, residents' perceptions toward the center might be influenced—on this evidence—by changing the cognitive distance. For the purpose of increasing positive and reducing negative perceptions, the local authority, together with the convention center, could "educate" local residents by promoting the center and organizing events for residents. Although the data analyzed in the study were collected in 2011, their use is appropriate because they reveal important relationships when using such a novel theoretical approach.

Convention centers such as BEXCO are normally financed by municipal authorities because of their potentially positive contribution to urban economies. Although central and local governments in South Korea have established and managed local convention centers for many years, they have not fully considered local perceptions. This research suggests that they should conduct surveys of local opinion and take actions to maximize the perceived benefits and minimize the concerns of residents over possible negative impacts. If this is undertaken, it will be much easier for policymakers to draw upon local support and cooperation, which is critical for the effective sustenance of convention centers.

In a globally competitive market for international conventions, the need for investment in infrastructure, facilities, and promotion is evident. The research presented in this article suggests that there are lessons for policymakers and academics that extend beyond direct financial concerns. For the former, it demonstrates the importance of engagement with local residents and the need to examine the peculiarities of different contexts. For the latter, it suggests that broadening the current research agenda would lead to a more complete understanding of business tourism than currently exists.

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