

ICONSPADU 2021**International Conference on Sustainable Practices, Development and Urbanisation****OUTBOUND TOURISM: WHY DO MALAYSIANS CHOOSE
SOUTH KOREA AGAIN?**

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Abstract

This study focuses on the cultural determinants of Malaysian outbound travel to South Korea. The globalization of Korean popular culture and its acceptance was rapidly growing all over the world. The big question is whether this factor also affects the reasons Malaysian travelers in revisiting South Korea. Three-fold objectives were to explore the extent of the intention to revisit South Korea among Malaysian tourists, compare the intention to visit between frequent viewers and infrequent viewers of Korean dramas, and identify contributing factors towards Malaysian tourists' intention to revisit South Korea. Thus, using the Stimulus Organism Response, the theory explains the effect of the external environment on tourist behaviour through their personal emotion and experience at visited destinations. The findings showed that with a 39% variance explained, Korean rare image, cuisine, and drama had a significant influence on the revisit intention. Hence, tourism stakeholders should seriously promote Malaysia through SDG-11, benchmarking Korean efforts by preserving and conserving culture to maintain a people's integrity and serve as a source of national pride.

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Keywords: Outbound tourism, revisit intention, SDG-11

1. Introduction

1.1. SDG-11 and Repeat Visitation

Sustainable cities and communities in South Korea tourism and sustainable development goals (SDG) are interrelated for a more sustainable future tourism activities. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), tourism can contribute directly or indirectly to the goals stated in SDG-11, particularly to increase tourism competitiveness for sustainability. The globalization of Korean popular culture and its acceptance was rapidly growing all over the world. Its popularity, such as Korean drama (K-drama), songs, movies, and variety shows, is spread to various countries such as North and Southeast, specifically in Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, China, Thailand, Mongolia, and Vietnam (Ariffin et al., 2018). The term Korean Wave or Hallyu has been used to describe the rising popularity of Korean entertainment and culture and spreads to Malaysia: through music, drama, food, and fashion (Kim et al., 2020). Their interests in the Korean Wave consequently led to a curiosity in Koreans' society (Teh & Goh, 2016).

Repeat visitation is one of the most important subjects nowadays. Tan (2017) mentioned that repeat visitation is a cost-effective and desirable market segment for destination marketing organizations. Quintal and Polczynski (2010) documented that customer satisfaction leads to the revisit intention to the place and resulted in positive word-of-mouth. The Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) model (Figure 1) explains that the internal emotions of tourists (O) are shaped by the stimulus of the external environment (S), which later triggered the tourist's response (R). The SOR model is closely related to cognitive theory as it involves the psychological relationships suitable to explain tourist behaviour. Revisiting motivations and action in the planning of the trip are driven by destination image, relaxation, and recreation (Min et al., 2020; Som et al., 2012).

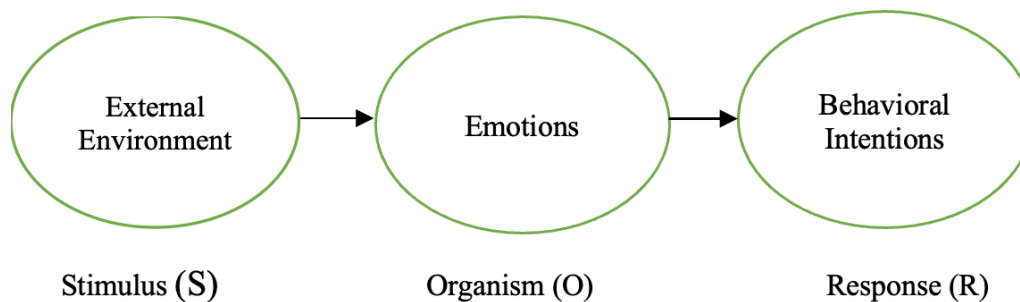


Figure 1. The Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) model

1.2. Korean Drama, Music, Cuisine, and Rare Image

Past research showed that film could upgrade destination preference and increase intention to visit the destinations. Rewtrakunphaiboon (2017) explicitly incorporated a gathering of non-viewers of K-dramas and two groups of viewers who had a low and high frequency of viewing K-dramas to concentrate on the impacts of recurrence of reviewing Korean films. The outcomes showed that the higher the

frequency of survey K-dramas, the higher the intention to visit Korea. Ahn et al. (2017) found that the frequency of viewers related to the current progression of TV innovation. Thus, we formulated a hypothesis: *H1: Intention to revisit South Korea among Malaysian Tourists can be differentiated by the frequency of watching K-dramas.*

K-dramas became a phenomenon in neighboring countries, then spread to Southeast Asia (Kim et al., 2008). The drama and storyline based on the lifestyle, stereotype, and cultural enclosure become word of mouth among the audiences, especially the housewives. Consequently, they are inspired to consume cultural products and have the intention to visit (Kim et al., 2020). Kim et al. (2019) revealed that the effects of emotional interaction with TV drama stars and behavioural interaction with TV drama stars on purchasing celebrity-related products and visit intention were significant. K-drama factor such as Korean TV drama, emotional and behavioural involvement in terms of TV drama celebrities and TV drama, mass media, and consumption of TV dramas did portray it influenced the visit or revisit intention to Korea (Halim & Kiatkawsin, 2021). Thus, *H2a: K-drama significantly influences the intention to revisit South Korea.*

Ramli (2016) stated that 10,000 fans attended the Big Bang World tour concert in Kuala Lumpur. Cultural dance or music performed by BTS pop star groups influenced tourism behaviour intention, influencing tourists' interest to buy any Korean cultural products (Kim et al., 2008; Kwak et al., 2019). Kim et al. (2021) reiterated that except for producers, the five K-pop success factors, casting, training, producing/promotion, social media, and content, are crucial to sustainability and increasing tourist intention. However, Korean popular music did not affect Korea's image in the study of Sydney, Hong Kong, Bangkok, and Dubai (Lee et al., 2015). Thus, we design a hypothesis, *H2b: Korean music affects Malaysian travellers with the intention to revisit South Korea.*

Korean cuisine gained popularity among foreign markets and these trends became the driving force for tourists to experience authentic food. The uniqueness of Korean cuisine and the image of destinations can also be connected to the Korean cuisine aspect (Kim et al., 2012). Seo et al. (2017) determined the relationship between the cognitive image of the destination and the affective image of the destination with the food testing intention at the destination. Kim et al. (2008) discovered that Korean cuisine impacted the visit intention to Korea with a 62.3% agreement. Jeong's (2018) historical analysis of food television showed that food testing intention at the destination is positively affected by the preference of the tourist destination. The attitude towards cuisine should be viewed in the Korean aspect, as Kim and Kwon (2018) found positive relationships between mental image, affective image, attitude towards the country, attitude towards the product, and attitude towards the cuisine on revisit intention. Based on these arguments, we design the following hypothesis, *H2c: Korean cuisine affects Malaysian travellers with the intention to revisit South Korea*

Another interesting factor that makes most Malaysian tourists intend to revisit is Korean rare images (Saad et al., 2022). The images are hardly found except in South Korea. Korean beauty products gained popularity as the extension of the Korean Wave phenomenon as people nowadays are attracted to "made in Korea" labelled when involving K-beauty products, which products have penetrated the Swedish market and attracted millennial women due to their attributes, image, and quality (Ingels, 2020). As an extension of the Korean beauty standard, South Korea is also known for medical tourism for

cosmetic surgery which is common in Korea's entertainment industry (Lee, 2019). Lee (2019) stated that cosmetic surgery is almost nothing and passable among residents since it can boost women's confidence of women. The Seoul Metropolitan Government realised the obsession with K-beauty can create a beauty tourism attraction or interactive which is called Seoul Beauty Road where tourists can experience the popular makeup styles of Korean idols and actors and check out the latest beauty trends in the country by walking (Jeong, 2021). Another rare image of Korea is known as the fastest internet connection speed with 5G networks and mobile internet is faster than the world average Mbps (Pulse, 2020). Faster speed of internet connection would ease the activities of e-word of the mouth of sharing tourists' experiences with their friends. The formulated hypothesis is then, *H2d: Korean rare image affects Malaysian travellers with the intention to revisit South Korea*. The previous studies have investigated factors determining the intention to revisit Korea for example, drama (Kim et al., 2019), music (Kim et al., 2021), cuisine (Seo et al., 2017), and rare images (Ingels, 2020; Jeong, 2021; Lee, 2019; Pulse, 2020). To our knowledge, there is no such study that combines all these factors. Thus, we are filling this research gap to study these four factors altogether in relation to Malaysian tourists' intention to revisit South Korea.

2. Problem Statement

Statista (2021) reported a significant increase in Malaysian tourists to South Korea since 2012. Within five years, the numbers were doubled in 2016. As many reported that the reason for traveling to South Korea was due to their interest and the influence of the Hallyu, this study is to investigate if Hallyu plays the same role for Malaysian travelers to revisit the country.

3. Research Questions

Three-fold questions were:

- i. what is the tendency of Malaysian tourists to have the intention to revisit South Korea?
- ii. Is there a significant difference between frequent and infrequent viewers' intention to revisit South Korea?
- iii. What is the most significant factor among Malaysian tourists in their intention to revisit South Korea?

4. Purpose of the Study

This study focuses on the cultural determinants of Malaysian outbound travel to South Korea.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Population and Sampling

The quantitative technique was chosen for this study for its emphasis on numbers in data collecting and analysis. According to Statista (2021), more than 311,000 Malaysians visited South Korea in 2016.

The estimated sample size is 384 based on the given population (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The population of this study was Malaysian tourists who have visited South Korea, at least once. Using a purposive sampling approach, we gathered 186 respondents who fitted the criteria.

5.2. Instrument Development and Data Analysis

The data were collected through an online questionnaire developed by adapting a pre-established online questionnaire from Teh and Goh (2016) for K-drama, Joo et al. (2017) for culture, Ahn et al. (2017) and Lee et al. (2015) for music and Jeong (2018) for Korean cuisine. The items of revisit intentions were from Som et al. (2012) and Joo et al. (2017). This study computed the descriptive statistics to evaluate the respondents' profiles as well as to explain the nature of the data distribution. Then, we proceeded with ANOVA to compare the revisit intentions among the respondents who frequently watch K-drama with those who watched the drama less frequently, and multiple regression analyses to examine the factors that contributed to the revisit intention to South Korea.

6. Findings

6.1. The Descriptive Statistics

The participants in this study were 186 Malaysian tourists who have visited Korea. A majority (68%) were between 18 to 24 years old. About a quarter of the tourists were between 25 to 35 years old. Only about 7% of the tourists were 36 years and older. The demographic data also showed that the tourists' highest level of education was a doctoral degree (one respondent). Most participants had a bachelor's degree (70%). As shown in Table 1, one dependent variable (labeled DV, i.e., Revisit Intention) and four independent variables (labeled IV) were included in this study. Revisit Intention had a mean score of 5.33 with a standard deviation of 1.079. The IV Korean Music had the lowest mean score ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.893$). Korean Cuisine had the highest mean score among the IVs ($M = 5.22$, $SD = 1.019$).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
Revisit Intention (DV)	5.33	1.079	1-6	-2.055	4.665
K-drama (IV1)	4.65	1.149	1-6	-.407	-.178
Korean Music (IV2)	3.08	1.893	1-6	.388	-1.326
Korean Cuisine (IV3)	5.22	1.019	1-6	-2.005	5.200
Korean Rare Image (IV4)	5.00	1.185	1-6	-1.456	2.164

n=186

The skewness and kurtosis values of 0 show that a dataset has characteristics similar to a normal distribution (Blanca et al., 2013). The positive values of the kurtosis indicate that the curve is more peaked than the normal distribution and the negative ones are flatter than the normal ones. Griffin and Steinbrecher (2013) suggested that acceptable values of skewness fall between -3 and +3, and kurtosis is appropriate from a range of -10 to +10.

6.2. Level of Intention to Revisit Korea

The first inquiry is expressed in Research Question 1: *What is the tendency of Malaysian tourists to have the intention to revisit South Korea?* We examined the data using the frequency analysis on the item “I am willing to revisit South Korea.” A majority of the participants (61.8%) strongly agreed with the statement. An additional 20.4% also expressed agreement have an intention to revisit Korea.

6.3. Revisit Intention and Its Influencing Factors among K-drama Viewers

The second research question was: *Is there a difference between frequent and infrequent viewers' intention to visit South Korea?* We performed the ANOVA to evaluate mean differences across two or more groups (Thompson, 2006). The frequencies were categorized into four groups: everyday, 1-3 days per week, once a while, and uncertain. The results in Table 2 indicate that there was no statistical significant difference between the frequencies of watching K-drama in tourists' revisit intention ($F(3,182) = .946; p > .05$). This result suggests that the frequency of watching K-drama has no effect on tourists' revisit intention.

Table 2. ANOVA Results

	N	M	SD	95 of CI	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Everyday	30	5.53	1.074	5.13	5.93
1-3 days per week	38	5.47	.830	5.20	5.75
Once a while	64	5.28	1.161	4.99	5.57
Uncertain	54	5.19	1.134	4.88	5.49

$F(3,182) = .946; p = .419$

The third research question was: *What is the most significant factor among Malaysian tourists in intention to visit South Korea?* We performed a multiple regression analysis to investigate the relationships between four IVs and one DV. As shown in Table 3, collectively, there was a statistical significant association between the four IVs on tourists' revisit intention to Korea ($R^2 = 38.5\%; F(4, 181) = 28.271; p < .05$). The R^2 value shows that the four IVs explained for 38.5% variance in revisit intention to Korea among Malaysian tourists ($F(4, 181) = 28.271; p < .05$).

Table 3. Multiple Regression Results

	B	Std. Error	b	t	P	95% CI	
						LB	UB
K-drama	.129	.059	.138	2.199	.029	.013	.246
K-Music	.044	.035	.077	1.249	.231	-.025	.113
K-Cuisine	.280	.065	.264	4.284	.000	.151	.409
K-Rare Image	.354	.061	.389	5.781	.000	.233	.475

$R^2 = 38.5\%$, Adjusted $R^2 = 37.1\%$, $p < .001$, $N = 186$, $CI =$ Confidence Interval, $LB =$ Lower Bound, $UB =$ Upper Bound

Zooming into the influence of individual IVs on revisit intention, K-drama ($b = .138, p < .05$), Korean Cuisine ($b = .264, p < .05$), and Korean Rare Image ($b = .389, p < .05$) had a statistical significant influence on revisit intention. However, Korean Music did not have a significant association with revisit intention ($b = .077, p = .231$). Further, H2a states there is a significant relationship between K-drama and revisit intention. According to the multiple regression results, K-drama yielded a statistically significant regression coefficient ($b = .138, p < .05, CI = .013 - .246$). Our results did not support H2b as Korean Music did not have a significant relationship with revisit intention ($b = .077, p = .231, CI = -.025 - .113$). As for Korean Cuisine, results confirmed hypothesis H2c ($b = .264, p < .05, CI = .115 - .409$). H2d states there is a significant relationship between Korean rare image and revisit intention. The results confirm the hypothesis in which the beta value was statistically significant ($b = .389, p < .05, CI = .233 - .475$). Korea's rare images yielded the largest beta value in the model and the range of the 95% CI for the beta was also narrow. To conclude, Korea's rare image, Korean cuisine, and K-drama were factors that significantly influence tourists to have an intention to revisit Korea. Korean music, however, was not a significant factor in revisiting Korea among Malaysian tourists.

7. Discussions

Our main findings reveal that the majority of Malaysian tourists have a very high tendency to repeat their visit to South Korea, particularly the younger generation of female Malaysian tourists, and this scenario is similar to Nguyen et al. (2020) for repeated tourists from China and Vietnam. The interest of Malaysian tourists to travel again to South Korea was influenced by the travelling experience on the first visit. In our study, interestingly we found that Malaysian tourists would not repeat the visit to South Korea due to the number of K-dramas that they had watched, and the results are contradicted the previous study. The discrepancies in the findings between the tourists from Thailand and Malaysia could be due to the behaviour in which, in the present study, we specifically looked at the revisit intention, unlike the study by Rewtrakunphaiboon (2017) who investigated the intention to visit South Korea for the first time. Importantly, with 39% variance in the regression model, K-drama, cuisine, rare image, and music, the model has indicated a strong motivation for them to travel again to South Korea.

Korean music, however, had an inconsistent result with Nguyen et al. (2020). K-pop wave impact on Malaysian tourists was not evident here. In our study, casting, promotion, and content of music, popularity of the singers, and dance choreographers failed to drive Malaysians to travel to South Korea. Interestingly, Korean rare image had almost 40% influence, compared to Korean cuisine (26%) and K-drama (14%). The rare image may include K-Beauty products (Ingels, 2020), cosmetics surgery (Lee, 2019), walking beauty street (Jeong, 2021), and the 5G, the fastest internet speeds on earth (Pulse, 2020). The uniqueness of the food could be a rare experience for the non-Korea. Korean food has been screened in all K-dramas and movies not only displaying people eating but names of the dishes have been mentioned and became part of the scenes, perhaps reminding the tourists of the food they have tried while in South Korea. The availability of Korean food outlets in Malaysia is giving chances of eating the food frequently. Korean cuisine has been on TV reality shows and proven by Kim et al. (2012), Kim and Kwon (2018), and Seo et al. (2017). Malaysians who have watched the K-drama are affected by the storyline that is based on the lifestyle, stereotype, and cultural enclosure become the word of mouth among K-

drama lovers. The result from the current study displayed that emotional involvement and behavioural interaction of the Malaysian with the K-drama stars positive and significantly influenced the visit intention to the destination consistent with Halim and Kiatkawsin (2021), Kim et al. (2008), and Kim et al. (2019).

7.1. Implications

Theoretically, this study supports the SOR model, which is suitable to link to the Malaysian tourist's behaviour in choosing South Korea for subsequent travelling destinations. The influence on the travelling experience of Malaysian tourists to South Korea is similar to Min et al. (2020), which explains the SOR. Secondly, our findings enrich the literature by adding the critical factors of the Korean Wave to South Korea. A study on the Korean Wave continues, but our findings add to the fact that though K-pop is very popular with most of Korean and its international tourists, Korean music did not have an influence on Malaysians to repeat their visit to the country. Thirdly, K-drama in the research of Halim and Kiatkawsin (2021), Kim et al. (2008), and Kim et al. (2019) have shown a great impact to visit intention, but for this study, it has the great impact for the frequent travelers to South Korea. Similar results apply to the cuisine.

From the practical point of view, the results of this study have shown that South Korea was a choice relating to SDG-11, because the country is developed, but sustains the cities and communities through the tourism activities platform, resulting in the benefit of South Korea's economy. The help from the allocated budget in preserving the world's cultural and natural heritage should be appreciated and admired by other countries. We found that Korean Wave could sustain the development and reshape the nation's economy through the activities of sustaining gastronomy, K-dramas, and culture's rare image through the effort of tourism activities. We believed that our findings would be able to implicate the Malaysian marketers and travel agencies, hoteliers, food and beverages sector, park and recreations, and any related businesses to the hospitality and tourism industry. These tourism companies should seriously benchmark South Korea on preserving and conserving culture in order to maintain a people's integrity and serve as a source of national pride. Also, to preserve security and foster peace, the government can invest in supporting infrastructure and amenities such as a police station or recruit security personnel. The relevant department should also regularly maintain notice boards or stands in tourist areas, allowing travellers to receive practical advice and accurate information.

7.2. Limitations and Future Directions

Probably the Korean Wave interests the younger generation, thus, the snowballing was through their friends at almost the same age. Due to that, the results could only be generalised to the generation. Future researchers could examine the tourists' behaviour during the first and repeat visits if the driving factors are different from the study. Researchers may also want to investigate the influencing factors for a virtual tour, and if the virtual tour experience is compatible with the physical trip.

8. Conclusion

Overall findings of the present study reveal an interesting note that the repeat travellers to South Korea were from the young generations who were impacted by the experience of the culture's rare image as attractions, cuisine, and drama. This group of tourists would repeat their visit regardless of how frequently they watched the K-dramas. We concluded from the findings, based on the SOR model, rare image, cuisine, and drama acted as an external environment able to affect the behavioural intention of tourists through their personal emotions and experience.

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