

From K-pop to Korean products: An investigation into the mediating effects of imitation and attitudes toward Korean culture and products

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Abstract This study investigates how the consumption of South Korean popular culture (K-pop) media content influences the behavioural intention of international audiences with respect to the purchase of South Korean products. Based on a survey of international K-pop audiences, the authors examine the mediating effects of imitation intention, attitude towards Korean culture and attitude towards Korean products. The results reveal that both frequency and the number of hours of K-pop consumption significantly predicted participants' intention to imitate their favourite K-pop celebrity, while attitude towards Korean culture and products was significantly predicted by frequency of K-pop consumption but not the number of hours of consumption. At the same time, attitude towards Korean products was found to be a strong predictor of international audiences' purchase intention, while attitude towards Korean culture was found to be a weak predictor and imitation intention was found to be an ineffective predictor of intention to purchase Korean products. This study clarifies, at the international level, the influence of K-pop media content consumption on the intention to purchase Korean products. In this way, it confirms and explains how K-pop acts as a key cultural marketing strategy for South Korea in international markets.

KEYWORDS: Korean popular culture (K-pop), imitation intention, Korean culture, Korean products, international cultural marketing.

INTRODUCTION

The influence of Korean popular culture (K-pop) now extends beyond South Korea's national borders and has made K-pop a global phenomenon.^{1,2,3} Korean music videos on YouTube have comments in multiple languages;⁴ on Facebook, fans from various continents have constructed country-specific fan pages; and tickets for K-pop concerts in non-Asian countries

are selling out in minutes.⁵ While the global influence of K-pop in terms of its music and other entertainment genres is undeniable, the full commercial impact of this *Hallye*, or Korean Wave, sweeping across the world is still unclear. The influence of exposure to South Korean culture and commercial products through K-pop is therefore worthy of investigation.

According to social learning theory, people adopt behaviours by learning from the people they see; this suggests that consumers of K-pop media might have greater intention to purchase Korean products and/or imitate the K-pop stars they see in the K-pop programmes they watch.⁶

In addition, according to the attitudinal effect of mere exposure, intense exposure to K-pop and the South Korean lifestyle may also cultivate a more positive attitude towards Korean culture and products, leading to intent to purchase Korean products.⁷

Finally, it remains unclear whether frequency or intensity (ie length of immersion sessions) of K-pop media consumption is more effective in converting the media influence into commercial value.

Thus, to confirm and explain the association between K-pop consumption and international audiences' intention to purchase Korean products, this study is designed to investigate (1) the influence of both frequency and intensity of K-pop consumption on international audiences' intention to imitate K-pop celebrities and their attitudes toward Korean culture and Korean products; and (2) the mediating effects of imitation intention and attitudes toward Korean culture and products on international audiences' consumption of K-pop media and their intention to purchase Korean products.

K-POP AS AN EXPORT-ORIENTED INDUSTRY

An understanding of the research context must begin with the assertion that K-pop, as it is seen in South Korean music, film, television dramas, celebrity personalities and fashion, is predominantly an export-oriented industry.⁸ The spread of South Korean culture beyond the country's borders is highly strategic and has led to increased global prominence.⁹ Historically, exports account for about 50 per cent of South Korea's gross domestic product, with major

contributions from car plants, steel mills and shipping yards.¹⁰ Media export revenue stands as a contrast to the heavy-industrial tradition and has demonstrated market success in periods where heavy-industrial sectors have lacked.¹¹ In fact, in 2019, South Korea was responsible for 2.8 per cent of the global cultural content market, which is an indicator of the export power of its digital content sector.¹² K-pop contributed over US\$3bn to the South Korean economy in 2011, a figure that is all the more notable because it predates the international phenomenon that was 'Gangnam Style', the iconic K-pop mega-hit that topped the music chart in over 30 countries in 2012.¹³ South Korea has invested more heavily in creative digital content than neighbouring Japan, for example, and it is clear that such creativity has demonstrated its enormous export-potential both economically and culturally.¹⁴

Some might argue that K-pop has become South Korea's most significant export, even when compared with its more 'traditional' revenue streams like automobiles and digital technological products. Indeed, *Time* magazine has described K-pop as 'South Korea's greatest export'.¹⁵

The very composition of prototypical K-pop lends itself to outside consumers. K-pop songs are stylistically similar to genres such as pop, R&B, electronic music and hip hop that are popular in the West and other areas.¹⁶ The music industry not only infuses foreign techniques and musical elements but also attracts international producers and songwriters.¹⁷ K-pop songs tend to combine a catchy, repetitive melody with both easy-to-pronounce Korean words and English words.¹⁸ The tendency to utilise styles and strategies that the international market is familiar with provides further indication of the export-oriented nature of K-pop.

The success of K-pop as a major export commodity is not accidental. After noting some significant breakthroughs in Asia and in the Western mainstream market, the

South Korean government made strides to develop the economic potential of K-pop.¹⁹ Governmental encouragement has included the supporting the K-pop media sector to embrace the latest technology.²⁰ K-pop has also been used as a vehicle for public diplomacy, intended to cultivate positive attitudes towards South Korea.²¹ The country is now enjoying a tourism boom fuelled by international consumers fascinated by South Korean culture thanks to their exposure to K-pop.²²

Korean products and international markets

The export nature of K-pop has created a unique space for growth in international markets. The spread of K-pop in other Asian countries is well established and referred to as *Hallyu*. This wave of Korean culture and products that traditionally referred to intra-Asian countries has now become a global phenomenon.²³ Since the mid-2000s, the emergence of *Hallyu* outside of Asia has been driven by K-pop and K-dramas which have exposed international markets to Korean culture and products.²⁴

K-pop has long relied on social media as a vehicle for international prominence. A strong presence on platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook has helped K-pop go global.²⁵ YouTube, in particular, has been a channel of emphasis for South Korean content producers.²⁶ For instance, 'Gangnam Style' by Psy, was the most watched YouTube video in 2012, gaining international viral success.²⁷ YouTube offers several benefits for K-pop producers, who are including YouTube in their strategy in order to reach a global audience and avoid distribution fees, despite the lower profit margins.²⁸ YouTube also serves as a platform for K-pop associated products and culture such as Korean beauty products. Traditional Western news and entertainment sources are increasingly including coverage of K-pop, which is a further indicator of its

sustained rise into mainstream international markets.²⁹

K-pop consumerism is heavily concentrated in the USA, Europe, Southeast Asia, Japan and China, with particular success in Japan.³⁰ The success of K-pop internationally is also due to a passionate and active fanbase.³¹ Even in Spain, where K-pop is often stereotyped and marginalised by non-fans, the fans create distinct and strong identity groups organised around K-pop culture.³² K-pop personalities are often referred to as idols and have garnered dedicated devotees. Even South Korean television dramas have accrued huge international followings.³³

K-pop fandoms exhibit some variation by country due to local factors influencing consumer behaviour.³⁴ In some countries, like Taiwan, consumers have a more discerning palate and tend to focus more on the quality of the product. Other markets, like the Philippines, give more consideration to outside context and focus more on what is popular. In Latin America, many K-pop fans do not have the financial ability to travel and experience K-pop in its country of origin, so their consumer habits are reliant on digital media.³⁵

K-pop and attitude towards Korean culture

Among neighbouring Asian countries and Western audiences, South Korea is known for being an exporter of music, television shows and films. The exportation of K-pop has allowed for the South Korean media industry to define what other Asian countries watch, listen to and play.³⁶ The spread of K-pop became very prominent in 2010. It is believed that it was heavily promoted because the South Korean government wanted to increase its ability to shape the media preferences of other countries and increase the country's cultural exports.³⁷ This promotion led to the worldwide spread of K-pop and, as a

result, many different cultures developed an interest in South Korean culture. Moreover, K-pop spread seamlessly because of how inclusive the brand was. Many K-pop stars have been praised for not singing about sex or violence and many stars present a respectful demeanour. These unique qualities have been embraced by a multitude of cultures.³⁸

The Korean Wave first began in Asian countries. Early studies of the Korean Wave focused on its influence in Malaysia. Cho,³⁹ for example, discussed how Malaysians had adopted Korean cultural and economic practices. Cho's article describes how Malaysians learned Korean, watched and listened to Korean music and television, and incorporated Korean foods into their diet. Cho argued that because Malaysia is a particularly diverse country in terms of races and cultures, this facilitated acceptance of the Korean Wave, suggesting a strong possibility for the Korean Wave to go global and be similarly successful in Western countries.⁴⁰

This universal appeal of K-pop has encouraged the cultivation of positive attitudes towards South Korean culture and an increase in the purchase of Korean products. Cultural dissemination is the transmission and adoption of new practices, products and ideas throughout social systems.⁴¹ The successful dissemination of Korean culture is perhaps best illustrated by Psy's 'Gangnam Style' music video, which went viral in 2012 and became the most watched video on YouTube that year.⁴² This video quickly spread across the world and increased people's fascination with Korean culture and allowed for many cultures to begin to mimic and idolise Korean culture.

This idolisation has encouraged the growth of K-pop fandoms in non-Asian countries. A study done by Otmazgin and Lyan investigated the K-pop fandoms in Israel and Palestine.⁴³ This study found that the K-pop fanbases in these territories consisted of members from different

ethnic and national backgrounds, but who shared a common interest in K-pop. When referencing the attitudes of family and friends, Otmazgin and Lyan found that those who were unsupportive of the fandoms had little to no knowledge of the Korean culture while those that were supportive had knowledge of Korean culture and viewed it in a positive light. These fandoms allowed for citizens with common interests to come together and become more accepting and educated regarding cultures they were not directly associated with. These fandoms also supported the extended contact effect. This is the idea that if an in-group member has a close relationship with an out-group member, the relationship can lead to more positive attitudes for the in-group and reduced negative attitudes for the out-group participants.⁴⁴ In the context of K-pop, the in-group, people with positive attitudes regarding K-pop, can have a positive effect on the out-group, or those who do not have exposure to K-pop. This effect allows for people less in-tune with Korean culture to become more familiar with and less likely to have negative attitudes surrounding K-pop or Korean culture.

Thus, this study examines the influence K-pop has on people's attitudes surrounding Korean culture and also examines the relationship between these attitudes and the purchase of Korean products by proposing the following hypotheses:

H_{1a}: Frequency of K-pop consumption positively associates with positive attitudes towards Korean culture.

H_{1b}: Number of hours of K-pop consumption positively associates with positive attitudes towards Korean culture.

H_{1c}: Attitude towards Korean culture positively associates with higher purchase intention of Korean products.

K-pop and attitude towards Korean products

People make purchase decisions on a daily basis. Some decisions are made based upon how that person feels towards a certain product, brand or company. Feelings are fluid and highly influential, meaning they have the ability to change. The attitudinal effects of mere exposure explores the idea that the more people see, hear, smell or taste something, the more likely they will over time develop their liking of it;⁴⁵ this is because it is the nature of humans to be fond of things that are familiar to them and 'like repetition, duration of exposure is an effective agent for promoting affective responses'. There is an intimate relationship between the frequency of seeing certain words and their meaning, which can be explained by the relationship between mere exposure and attitude enhancement.⁴⁶ These relationships are dependent on one another to produce a specific outcome, such as which products to buy.

K-pop not only has global influence within the music industry, but its impact also extends to the commercial world by 'contextualising and visualising this new cultural and entertainment export with increasing global appeal'.⁴⁷ The more hours and the more times someone engage with K-pop are important factors for determining whether someone will develop a positive attitude towards and purchase Korean products. As Williams and Ho point out: 'the strength of brand attitude can anticipate customers' behaviours and behaviours of interest to firms, including brand consideration, purchase intention, purchase behaviour, and brand choice'.⁴⁸ It is vital for companies to provide exceptional service because positive feedback from their consumers is what drives new business and keeps existing consumers coming back. If the consumer is not satisfied with what they purchased, they will most likely not purchase that product again, not recommend it to anyone, and possibly talk negatively about

the product, potentially influencing others not to buy it.

Worse than an individual consumer being dissatisfied with a product or service is the situation when a negative event happens and tarnishes the image of an item or a culture. Lee describes a significant example of this:

'negative feelings towards the French rose in Australia after the 1996 French nuclear test and that consumers' response (willingness to buy, pride in ownership) to French products dropped. According to their findings, imports from France to Australia decreased both in absolute terms and in relation to other countries'.⁴⁹

Having products that are considered worth purchasing is beneficial to any business. In the past few years, South Korea has made huge strides in rebranding the country's reputation for producing quality goods by launching premium cosmetic products in prestigious international markets. 'These high-quality made-in Korea cosmetic brands have resulted in a positive brand image worldwide and a more flourished economy for Korea'.⁵⁰

The international popularity of K-pop music suggests it has the potential to influence demand for Korean products, and consumers who are satisfied with these products will keep coming back for more. Thus, based on previous literature, the present study examines how the number of hours and frequency that someone consumes K-pop influences their attitude towards Korean products, and how this attitude can be effective when it comes to intention to purchase such products. The following hypotheses are proposed:

H_{2a}: Frequency of K-pop consumption positively associates with positive attitude towards Korean products.

H_{2b}: Number of hours of K-pop consumption positively associates with positive attitude towards Korean products.

H_{2c} : Attitude towards Korean products positively associates with higher purchase intention of Korean products.

Imitation through K-pop consumption

Purchase decisions are informed by both conscious and unconscious motivators, for example, whether the purchase meets a specific need that the consumer was looking to satisfy, or whether the purchase is prompted by a certain advertisement viewed by the consumer. Regular consumers of K-pop media content that showcases Korean lifestyle and Korean commercials might be prompted to imitate the media personas they watch. One potential enhancer of this effect on consumer brand perception and purchase intention is celebrity endorsement. Previous literature has found that celebrity endorsement for a product may increase purchase intention.⁵¹ Through their clothing, lifestyles and advertisements, K-pop celebrities might be both intentionally and unintentionally endorsing Korean products. Audiences who are engaging with K-pop are being exposed to the many endorsements these K-pop stars are making, and depending on their positive or negative attitude to K-pop, could be swayed either to purchase Korean products or to avoid them.⁵²

To understand why celebrity endorsements and advertising cause such an impact on consumers, it is pertinent to consider simple human functions. According to social learning theory, one of the most basic human functions is learning, and one of the first ways humans learn is through imitation.⁵³ Bandura's social learning theory suggests that humans learn vicariously through observing and imitating the behaviours of others.⁵⁴ As people age, the ways in which they imitate others evolve. For young children, imitation may simply entail physical movements such as walking and talking; for adults, meanwhile, imitation may evolve to include such things as the way they dress or what they eat.

As K-pop is spreading into countries with little prior exposure to Korean culture,⁵⁵ this burst of popularity is triggering the inherent human function of learning and encouraging people to take an interest in South Korea and its culture. According to social learning theory, these consumers who have formed a positive regard for K-pop following their exposure to it are more likely to imitate the K-pop celebrities they see and buy those Korean products used by these stars. Thus, based on social learning theory and previous literature on the influence of K-pop on commercial industries, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_{3a} : Frequency of K-pop consumption positively associates with higher imitation intention

H_{3b} : Number of hours of K-pop consumption positively associates with higher imitation intention

H_{3c} : Imitation intention positively associates with purchase intention of Korean products

Proposed research model

Based on previous literature, the research model illustrated by Figure 1 was proposed to investigate how K-pop consumption influences international audiences' intention to purchase Korean products. Frequency of consuming K-pop and number of hours of consuming K-pop are behavioural antecedents of the model. Attitude towards Korean culture and products, and intention to imitate K-pop celebrities are mediators between the behavioural antecedents and the outcome variable, purchase intention of Korean products.

METHOD

Sampling

Given the geographic freedom of its sampling, an online survey offers the best approach to reach international K-pop

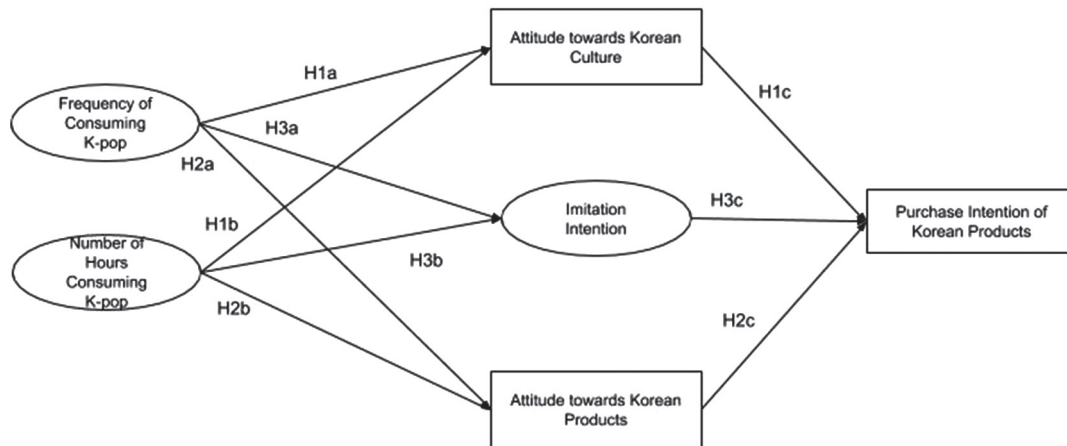


Figure 1: Proposed research model

audiences. Participants of the study were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk, an online sampling platform with a global presence. Ten filter questions were asked to make sure participants were consumers of K-pop media content. Each participant was paid US\$0.30 as compensation. A total of 536 participants were recruited. Given that the study focuses on the international audience of K-pop, 76 local audiences (South Korean participants) were excluded from the study. To ensure high validity of the research outcomes, participants who completed the study within five minutes were excluded from the study. Cases with excessive missing data were also taken out, leaving a final sample size of 380.

Measures

Independent variables

To capture participants' consumption of K-pop accurately, the study measured both the frequency and number of hours of their consumption of K-pop media.

Frequency of consuming K-pop

To measure the frequency of the participants' K-pop media content consumption, four dimensions of media content were examined. Using a seven-point scale (1 = never, 2 = once a year, 3 = once a month, 4 = once a week, 5 = 2–3 times a week, 6 = 4–6 times a week,

and 7 = daily, $M = 4.13$, $SD = 1.25$, $\alpha = 0.81$), participants were asked: 'How often do you do these activities?', and provided the following options: 'listen to Korean music', 'watch Korean dramas', 'watch Korean music videos' and 'watch Korean entertainment shows'.

Number of hours consuming K-pop

Participants were asked 'How many hours do you spend on these activities during a typical week?', and provided a slider from 0 to 70. The options included: 'listen to Korean music', 'watch Korean dramas', 'watch Korean music videos', 'watch Korean entertainment shows' and 'consume other Korean media content' ($M = 14.80$, $SD = 14.91$, $\alpha = 0.91$).

Mediators

Imitation intention

This variable is a latent measure of participants' intention to imitate their favourite K-pop celebrity. Participants were asked: 'Think of your favourite K-pop artist/group. Have you ever imitated his/her/their — opinion/hairstyle/clothing/makeup/lifestyle?' ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.15$, $\alpha = 0.89$).

Attitude towards Korean culture

Using a five-point scale from 'extremely bad' to 'extremely good', participants were asked 'How do you feel about Korean culture?' ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.80$).

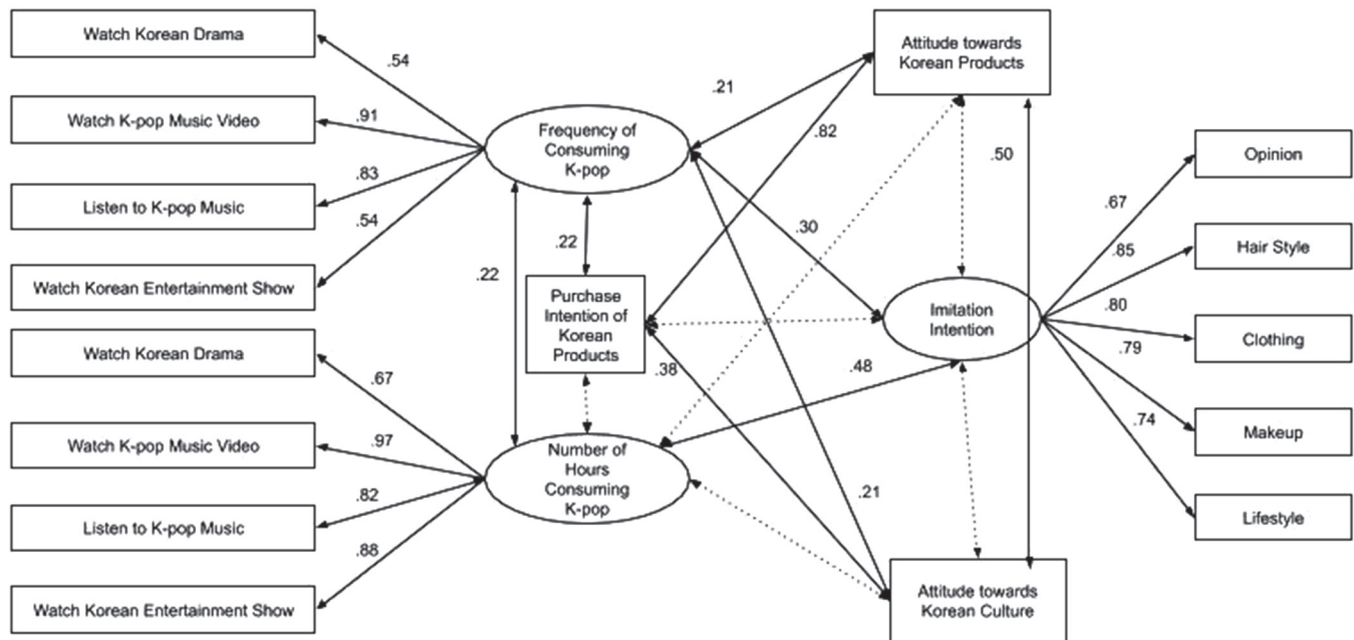


Figure 2: Confirmatory factor analysis of research model

$\chi^2(80) = 225.779$, $\chi^2/df = 2.822$, CFI = 0.960, TLI = 0.941, RMSEA = 0.069; Estimator = MLM; $n = 380$, All significant paths are at the level of $p < 0.001$. Insignificant paths are in dotted lines.

Attitude towards Korean products

Using a five-point scale from 'extremely bad' to 'extremely good', participants were asked 'How do you feel about Korean products?' ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.90$).

Dependent variable

Intention to purchase Korean products

Using a five-point scale from 'definitely not' to 'definitely yes', participants were asked 'Are you interested in purchasing Korean products?' ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.94$).

RESULTS

Demographics

Among the 380 participants, 220 (57.9 per cent) were males, and 160 (42.1 per cent) were females. The age range was from 18 to 81 years. The majority were young people: 306 (80.5 per cent) participants were aged from 21 to 37 years. In terms of nationality, 217 (57.1 per cent) of the participants were

American, 98 (25.8 per cent) were Indian, 16 (4.3 per cent) were Chinese, 7 (1.8 per cent) were Canadian, and 42 (11 per cent) were from other countries. As for educational background, 186 (48.9 per cent) of the participants had undergraduate degrees, 140 (36.8 per cent) had master's degrees, 41 (10.8 per cent) had high school diplomas, and 13 (3.4 per cent) had doctoral degrees. For monthly income, 74 (19.5 per cent) of the participants earned between US\$500 to US\$1,000, 72 (18.9 per cent) had monthly income lower than US\$500, 71 (18.7 per cent) had between US\$1,000 to US\$1,500, 48 (12.6 per cent) had between US\$1,500 to US\$2,000, 59 (15.5 per cent) had between US\$2,000 to US\$3,000, and 56 (14.7 per cent) had over US\$3,000 monthly income.

CFA results

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted on SPSS AMOS to investigate the validity of the research model. As indicated in Figure 2, the model displays good fit, χ^2

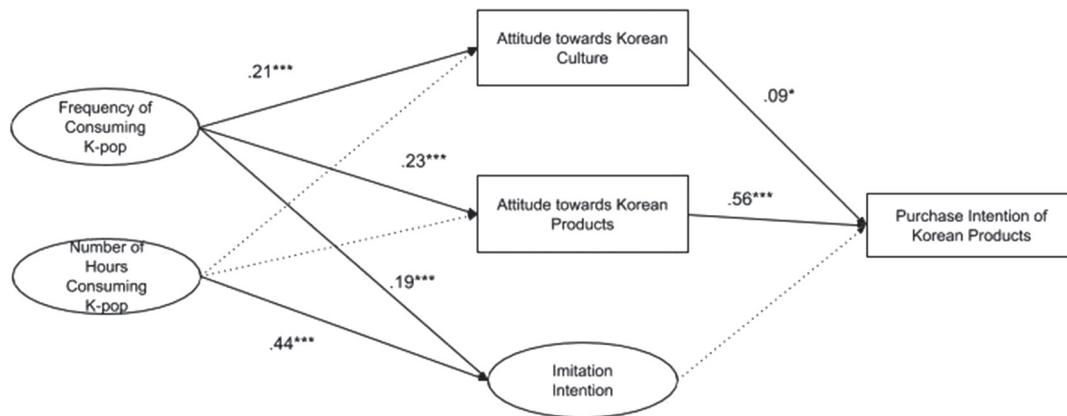


Figure 3: SEM results predicting purchase intention of Korean products

$\chi^2(81) = 209.067$, $\chi^2/df = 2.580$, CFI = 0.965, TLI = 0.948, RMSEA = 0.065; Estimator = MLM; $n = 380$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Insignificant paths are in dotted lines.

(80) = 225.779, $\chi^2/df = 2.822$, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.960, Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = 0.941, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.069. Factor loadings for each latent variable were displayed as well. For frequency of K-pop consumption, two items displayed low loading. This is because the measure is not a latent variable with similar items, but a variable measuring frequency of consuming different forms of K-pop content. The variation was derived not from a poor measure, but naturally from the different frequency of consuming different media content.

SEM results

To test the research question and hypotheses of the study, structural equation modelling (SEM) was performed on SPSS AMOS. As indicated in Figure 3, the model displays a good fit, $\chi^2(81) = 209.067$, $\chi^2/df = 2.580$, CFI = 0.965, TLI = 0.948, RMSEA = 0.065. Frequency of K-pop consumption positively and significantly predicted attitude towards Korean culture ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.001$), imitation intention ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.001$) and attitude towards Korean products ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1a, H3a and H2a. Number

of hours consuming K-pop significantly predicted imitation intention ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$), but not the other two mediators. Thus, H1b and H2b were rejected and H3b was supported. Attitude towards Korean culture was found significantly predicting purchase intention of Korean products ($\beta = 0.09$, $p < 0.05$), so was attitude towards Korean products ($\beta = 0.56$, $p < 0.001$), but not imitation intention. Thus, H1c and H2c were supported, while H3c was rejected.

DISCUSSION

This study confirms and explains the process of how international audiences' intent to purchase Korean products may be stimulated by the consumption of K-pop media programmes. In terms of fostering positive attitude towards Korean culture and products, the study finds that a higher frequency of consuming K-pop media programmes is more effective than longer hours of immersion. The study also investigated the potential mediating effects of international audiences' intent to imitate South Korean celebrities and found that although imitation intention can increase through higher frequency and more intense K-pop consumption, it did *not* significantly

predict international audiences' intent to purchase Korean products.

Attitude towards Korean products vs attitude towards Korean culture

Both attitudes towards Korean culture and Korean products were found to be significant mediators between international audiences' frequency of consuming K-pop media content and intention to purchase Korean products. More than just catchy tones and simple dance routines, K-pop provides a channel to disseminate Korean culture. Echoing previous findings, K-pop was found not only to be able to shape the media preference of other countries,⁵⁶ but also to be effective in sharing and embedding a deeper impression of an exotic culture, influencing areas beyond the music and entertainment industries, such as diet.⁵⁷ This influence has the potential to further boost the sales of Korean products.

While both mediators were found effective in the model, attitude towards Korean products was found to be a much stronger mediator than attitude towards Korean culture. This indicates that although cultural influence was found in K-pop, a more positive attitude towards Korean products is more important in linking K-pop and the sale of Korean products. Thus, based on the findings, Korean media producers and practitioners in the field of advertising and public relations are advised to highlight the positive aspects of Korean products through product-centric advertisements and/or seamless endorsement within export-oriented K-pop media programmes.

Imitation intention among international audiences

Imitation intention was not found to be significantly influenced by the duration or frequency of K-pop media consumption. The more intensively and frequently international audiences consume K-pop

media, the more likely they will start to imitate their K-pop idols in terms of their makeup, clothing and lifestyle. This echoes with social learning theory that people learn from imitating other people.⁵⁸ The findings in this study build on previous literature by confirming that this effect is valid for international audiences of exotic media programmes. However, imitation intention was not found to be a significant predictor of purchase intention of Korean products by international audiences. There might be several reasons behind this finding. First, the accessibility of Korean products varies from country to country. In East Asian countries, Korean products are a lot more accessible than in Europe and the Americas. Secondly, imitation intention might be subconscious, so a self-reported survey research may be less likely to identify the link between imitation intention and purchase intention. According to Hurley and Vonnegut, people may pick up violent behaviours from media when such intentions bypass the conscious control of human brains.⁵⁹

Frequency vs number of hours

Frequency and duration of media consumption are two separate things when it comes to media effect studies. Previous studies have differentiated the two.^{60,61} The present study found that the frequency of international audiences' consumption of K-pop related media significantly predicted all three mediators: attitude towards Korean culture, attitude towards Korean products, and imitation intention. By contrast, duration of consumption was found to be a significant predictor of imitation intention only. This indicates that consistent and frequent audience attention is needed to convert the international traffic brought by K-pop into commercial value. Longer immersion in K-pop content might be able to increase the intentional and unconscious urge to imitate K-pop celebrities featured in media programmes, but the urge might not

be strong enough or effective enough to be converted into intention to purchase Korean products.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Although providing valuable insight into the cultural marketing of Korean products through K-pop, this study contains several limitations. First, the sample was recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk using convenience sampling. To confirm the relationships found in the current model, future studies using a representative sample are recommended. Secondly, the model in this study focuses on the psychological process of international audiences' inclination to purchase Korean products due to the influence of K-pop media content. In reality, however, multiple extraneous variables might also influence purchase intention, such as the availability of Korean products in local markets, the digital visibility of Korean products in international markets, and peer influence through social networks and social media. Thirdly, the study does not specify the types of Korean products in the investigation. Future scholars are encouraged to test the model in specific commercial categories, such as cosmetics, clothing, automobiles and digital technology. Finally, cultural marketing takes a long time for its results to be visible. The current study is a cross-sectional design. Longitudinal studies are encouraged to be conducted to identify the long-term effects of cultural marketing of K-pop.

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