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Understanding Tourists' Involvement with Pop Culture : A Case of Korean Pop Music

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ABSTRACT

While the power of pop culture has increased tourism demand in showcased destinations, there has been little empirical research investigating tourists' involvement with pop culture. Based on a survey of Chinese tourists who visit South Korea, this research seeks to identify four different levels of involvement tourist groups. More specifically, adapting the conceptual framework of Psychological Continuum Model (PCM), the research investigates the linkage between tourists' involvement with pop culture and general outcomes of tourism experiences. The findings suggest that tourists have different levels of involvement with Korean pop culture: awareness, attraction, attachment and allegiance, and the four groups have different characteristics in terms of demographics, visit purpose, tourists' fulfillment (utilitarian and hedonic value), attitude toward visiting of Korea and revisit intention to Korea.

Key words: pop culture tourism, K-pop music induced tourism, fan, involvement, motivation, psychological continuum model

INTRODUCTION

The power of pop culture has increased tourism demand in showcased destinations such as New Zealand, a filming location of *The Lord of the Rings* series (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006), Forks, WA in the USA represented by the *Twilight Saga* (Larson, Lundberg & Lexhagen, 2013), Graceland in Memphis, TN in the USA, the homeland and burial site of Elvis Presley (Gibson & Connell, 2007), or Seoul in South Korea associated with Korean pop music and Korean celebrities (Kim, Argusa, Chon, & Cho, 2008). These destinations have emerged from pop culture phenomena such as films, books and music. Accordingly, the relationship between the pop culture phenomena and tourism has received an increasing amount of attention from researchers and practitioners in the tourism industry.

The popularity of Korean pop music is unprecedented for several reasons. First, Korean pop music strongly appeals to the emotional and cultural affinity to neighboring Asian countries, and elevates a higher level of interests ranging from the fashion to the foods of Korea (Kim, Agrusa, Lee, & Chon, 2007). Second, the information technology such as social media and online videos on YouTube plays an essential role in spreading Korean pop music across the world (Murray & Overton, 2015). Third, emerging large transnational corporations or entertainment agency groups have facilitated the development of this technology, and penetrated the Asian market of the global music industry (Murray & Overton, 2015).

Despite the rising popularity of pop culture (e.g. film, music) and pop culture induced tourism on a global scale, not all tourists are equally involved with tourism experiences. Only limited studies investigated the dynamics and characteristics of tourists' involvement with pop culture, especially with fans and fan communities (Lee & Bai, 2010; Lee, Scott, & Kim, 2008).

The purpose of this survey study is to examine the relationship between tourists' involvement with pop culture and general outcomes of tourism experiences in a sample of Chinese tourists who visited South Korea. Adapting Funk and James' (2001) Psychological Continuum Model (PCM), the study examines tourists' involvement with pop culture by classifying them into four different psychological segments. Depending on

the tourists' four different levels of involvement, we tested the various outcomes of tourism experiences such as visit purpose, media use for Korean pop music, tourists' fulfillment (utilitarian and hedonic values), attitudes towards the current visit, and intentions to the future visit.

THEORITICAL BACKGROUND

To further the understanding of the relationship between pop culture phenomenon and tourism, our study extends prior research by conducting an empirical test of a conceptual framework of the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) in the sports and leisure fields (Funk & James, 2001; Funk, Ridinger, & Moorman, 2010). We used the PCM in three ways. First, the PCM offers insight to understand individuals' psychological connection to their motivation and group membership (e.g. sports team fans, music fan club). Second, the PCM model provides an avenue to assess the differential influences of various factors (e.g. visit purpose, media use for Korean pop music, tourists' fulfillment of utilitarian and hedonic values, attitudes towards the current visit, and intentions for the future visit) along a vertical continuum of four levels. Third, the PCM highlights the phenomenon of unique characteristics of "fanship," which is essential to understanding the popularity of Korean music.

According to the PCM, an individual's decision to become involved consists of four segments of association between the individual and the object (e.g. a favorite sports team): 1) *awareness* that an individual first learns that an object exists, but does not have a specific favorite, 2) *attraction* that an individual acknowledges an object based on demographic motives, 3) *attachment* that an individual creates various degrees of association between the individual and the object (e.g. favorite team), and 4) *allegiance* that an individual has become a loyal fan of the sport or team. Adapting the PCM model, this study explores: 1) the key factors of tourists' involvement with pop culture during the trip to a destination 2) the differences in four segments of tourists' involvement 3) the relationship between tourists' perceptions about a destination and their actual participatory behaviors.

METHODS

Participant Selection. The target population of this study was Chinese tourists, who visited Seoul, South Korea from July through August of 2014. Data collection took place in several popular shopping districts of Seoul, and in front of buildings of Korean entertainment agency groups such as the SM Entertainment, JYP Entertainment and Cube Entertainment in Seoul. The questionnaire was written originally in English and translated into Chinese by several Chinese graduate students in South Korea. Using the convenience sampling and a self-administered, on-site survey method, out of the 700 distributed questionnaires, 540 were collected, and 527 usable surveys were analyzed.

Measurement. The questionnaire was composed of seven dimensions measuring a conceptual framework: 1) demographic profiles, 2) tourists' involvement with Korean pop music (i.e. motivation and behaviors associated with music), 3) travel characteristics (i.e. visit purpose), 4) media use for Korean pop music, 5) tourists' fulfillment of utilitarian value and hedonic value, 6) attitudes toward the current visit, 7) intentions to the future visit. The measurement items mostly come from previous research with minor wording modifications to this study context.

Data Analysis. The data analysis followed a two-stage procedure. First, respondents were classified as four levels of involvement with Korean pop music based on their percentage for the two constructs: Korean pop music induced tourism (e.g. whether Korean pop music motivates you to decide to visit South Korea or not) and fan club (e.g. whether you are a member of Korean celebrity fan club). Second, series of chi-square tests and one-way ANOVA tests were conducted to examine differences among four segments based on visit purpose, media use for Korean pop music, tourists' fulfillment of utilitarian and hedonic values, attitudes towards the current visit, and intentions for the future visit. For ANOVA tests, once a significant F was obtained, pair comparisons between the segments' means were conducted using post hoc Tuckey HSD and LSD tests.

FINDINGS

Demographic Profiles. 66.9% of total participants were 20-34 years old. The sample included many more females (93.7%) than males (6.3%). Over one third of participants (69.2%) were students. Many participants had a college degree or were undergraduate students (62.7%). Nearly half of participants (43.9%) had visited South Korea more than once. Among repeat visitors, 63.5% visited Korea 1-4 times while 23.5% visit Korea 5-9 times. 44.7% of total participants said that they spent \$1,000 to \$2,000 in total during the trip to South Korea. Near half of participants (44.6%) said that they are members of a Korean pop music celebrity fan club.

Tourists' Involvement with Korean Pop Music. The respondents showed significant involvements with Korean pop music among the four groups, $\chi^2(1, n=519) = 82.67$, $p < .001$ (Table 1).

Table 1. Classification of Tourists' Involvement with Korean Pop Music

Tourists' Involvement with Korean Pop Music		Behavior: Fan Club Membership	
		Yes	No
Motivated to Korean Pop Music	Yes	Allegiance (41.0%) <i>Highest</i>	Attachment (31.2%) <i>High</i>
	No	Attraction (3.5%) <i>Low</i>	Awareness (24.3%) <i>Lowest</i>

Note: The percentage of respondents is in parenthesis. The degree of tourists' involvement with Korean pop music is italicized.

Travel Characteristics. The visit purpose demonstrates the factor that distinguishes the awareness group from the other three groups (Table 2). The awareness group is more likely to be drawn to the extrinsic features such as family/friends visit and experience in Korean culture.

Media Use for Korean Pop Music. The media platform used for access of Korean pop music is the factor to differentiate the awareness group from other three groups (Table 3). The awareness group is more likely to rely on Korean TV drama and entertainment shows on air (13.6%) compared to other media such as celebrities' brochures/magazines (2.5%) and social networking sites (2.9%).

Table 2. Percentage of Visit Purpose

Visit Purpose	Involvement Levels				χ^2
	Allegiance	Attachment	Attraction	Awareness	
To visit entertainment agency**	25.9%	11.1%	0.4%	1%	122.06
To support fan club**	13.4%	1.9%	0.4%	0%	80.09
To attend a K-pop concert**	23.3%	7.8%	0	0.4%	125.50
To meet with K-pop celebrities**	17.3%	3.3%	0.4%	0.2%	98.30
To visit family and friends*	2.9%	0.6%	0.4%	2.5%	9.61
To experience Korean culture**	12.5%	12.1%	1.9%	12.5%	16.67

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 3. Percentage of Media Use for Korea Pop Music

Media Use	Involvement Levels				χ^2
	Allegiance	Attachment	Attraction	Awareness	
Korean TV drama and entertainment shows**	29.0%	23.7%	2.7%	13.6%	14.16
K-pop stars' own brochures and magazines**	13.8%	8.0%	0.6%	2.5%	23.22
Photographic portraits of Korean celebrities**	10.7%	4.9%	0%	2.1%	21.00
Social networking sites**	14.2%	7.0%	0.6%	2.9%	22.87
Internet search engine*	9.1%	8.4%	0.4%	3.5%	7.56
Third party groups (family and friends)**	14.6%	5.6%	0.6%	5.4%	16.66

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Tourists' Fulfillment. The extent to which tourists fulfilled utilitarian value (e.g. knowledge, learning) and hedonic value (e.g. entertainment, escape) was examined, using one-way ANOVA tests. The Table 4 reveals that statistically significant differences were found in both utilitarian value ($F(3, 518) = 30.84, p < .01$) and hedonic value ($F(3, 518) = 29.52, p < .01$) among the four segments.

In terms of utilitarian values, the post hoc Tuckey HSD and LSD tests showed that the allegiance group significantly differed from the other three groups. However, no significant differences between attachment and attraction groups were found. We also found no significant differences between attraction and awareness groups.

By contrast, in terms of hedonic values, the post hoc Tuckey HSD and LSD tests showed that four groups are significantly different. The one exception is that the difference in attachment and attraction groups was not statistically significant.

Table 4. Mean Differences in Tourists' Fulfillment Using One-Way ANOVA test

Tourists Outcomes	Involvement Levels				F-value
	Allegiance	Attachment	Attraction	Awareness	
Utilitarian value**	3.93	3.54	3.25	3.10	30.84
Hedonic value**	3.91	3.48	3.30	2.86	65.52

Note: ** $p < .01$. Values are reported on a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Tourists' Attitudes and Revisit Intentions. We used one-way ANOVA tests to examine the degree of tourists' outcomes such as tourists' attitudes towards the current visit (e.g. memories, experiences) and intentions for the future visit (e.g. destination preference, recommendations, revisit intentions) among four segments. The Table 5 shows that statistically significant differences were found in attitudes towards the current visit ($F(3,515)=29.14$, $p < .01$), and intentions to the future visit ($F(3,515)=12.18$, $p < .01$).

However, the post hoc Tuckey HSD and LSD tests showed that not all the segments were significantly different from each other. The allegiance group had more positive attitudes towards the current visit and revisit intentions than other attachment and awareness groups. On the other hand, the awareness group did not significantly differ in both attitudes and revisit intentions.

Table 5. Mean Differences in Tourism Outcomes Using One-Way ANOVA test

Tourists Outcomes	Involvement Levels				F-value
	Allegiance	Attachment	Attraction	Awareness	
Attitudes towards the current visit**	3.78	3.20	3.20	2.84	29.14
Intentions to the future visit**	4.11	3.87	3.63	3.62	12.18

Note: ** $p < .01$. Values are reported on a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

IMPLICATIONS

From a theoretical point of view, the research contributes to the literature on pop culture induced tourism by extending the PCM model to the pop culture and tourism

context. From a practical point of view, it introduces the group segmentation in the market of film/music-induced tourism. The findings suggest that practitioners need to target four distinct groups and develop strategies according to their different travel characteristics.

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