

THE ROLE OF THE K-POP AND K-DRAMAS IN SOUTH KOREAS TOURISM INDUSTRY

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Annotatsiya: Maqolada K-pop va K-dramalarning Janubiy Koreya turizm sanoatini rivojlantirishdagi roli tadqiq etilgan. Koreys to‘lqini yoki Hallyu hodisasining global miqyosda keng tarqalishi koreys ommaviy madaniyatini mamlakatning xalqaro imiji va turistik jozibadorligining muhim tarkibiy qismiga aylantirdi. K-pop musiqasi, koreys teleseriallari, san’atkorlar, aktyorlar, suratga olish joylari, konsertlar, muxlislar hamjamiyatlari va madaniy tadbirlar xalqaro auditoriyaning Janubiy Koreya haqidagi tasavvuriga tobora kuchli ta’sir ko‘rsatib, mamlakatga sayohat qilish istagini shakllantirmoqda. Tadqiqotda K-pop va K-dramalarning turizmga ta’sir qilish mexanizmlari, jumladan, turistik destinatsiya imijini shakllantirish, hissiy bog‘liqlik, madaniy qiziqish, sayohat motivatsiyasi, media ta’siridagi turizm va destinatsiya brendingi masalalari tahlil qilingan. Ayniqsa, K-dramalarda namoyish etiladigan suratga olish joylari va K-pop bilan bog‘liq turistik obyektlarning yangi turistik tajribalarni shakllantirishdagi ahamiyatiga e’tibor qaratilgan. Zamonaviy ilmiy tadqiqotlar Hallyu Janubiy Koreyaning turistik imiji va mamlakatga tashrif buyurish niyatiga ta’sir ko‘rsatishi mumkinligini ko‘rsatmoqda. Biroq ushbu ta’sir turistlarning madaniy qiziqishlari, koreys ommaviy madaniyatiga jalb etilish darajasi va mamlakat haqidagi dastlabki bilimlariga qarab farqlanadi. Maqolada K-pop va K-dramalarni turistik talabni belgilovchi yagona omil sifatida baholash to‘g‘ri emasligi ham ta’kidlangan, chunki turistlar milliy taomlar, xarid qilish, shahar ko‘ngilochar xizmatlari, an’anaviy madaniyat va zamonaviy tajribalarga ham qiziqadilar. Tadqiqot natijalariga ko‘ra, koreys ommaviy madaniyatini turistik destinatsiya marketingi, madaniy turizm va barqaror turizm boshqaruvi bilan strategik jihatdan birlashtirish Janubiy Koreya turizm sanoatining xalqaro raqobatbardoshligini oshirishga xizmat qilishi mumkin.
Kalit so‘zlar: K-pop, K-dramalar, Hallyu, Koreys to‘lqini, turizm sanoati, madaniy turizm, destinatsiya imiji, media ta’siridagi turizm, destinatsiya brendingi, Janubiy Koreya.

Abstract: This article examines the role of K-pop and K-dramas in the development of South Korea’s tourism industry. The global expansion of the Korean Wave, or Hallyu, has transformed Korean popular culture into an important component of the country’s international image and tourism attractiveness. K-pop music, Korean television dramas, artists, actors, filming locations, concerts, fan communities and cultural events increasingly influence how international audiences perceive South Korea and motivate them to consider the country as a tourism destination. The study analyzes the main mechanisms through which K-pop and K-dramas influence tourism, including destination image formation, emotional attachment, cultural curiosity, travel motivation, media-induced tourism and destination branding. Particular attention is given to the role of K-drama filming locations and K-pop-related attractions in creating new tourism experiences and encouraging visitors to explore places that they have previously encountered through audiovisual media. Recent academic research demonstrates that Hallyu can influence destination image and travel intentions, although its effect differs according to tourists’ cultural interests, levels of engagement and previous familiarity with Korean popular culture. The article also emphasizes that K-pop and K-dramas should not be considered isolated determinants of tourism demand because tourists may simultaneously be motivated by gastronomy, shopping, urban entertainment, traditional culture and immersive experiences. The study concludes that the strategic integration of Korean popular culture with destination marketing, cultural tourism and sustainable tourism management can strengthen South Korea’s international tourism competitiveness.
Keywords: K-pop, K-dramas, Hallyu, Korean Wave, tourism industry, cultural tourism, destination image, film-induced tourism, destination branding, South Korea.

Абстрактный: В статье исследуется роль К-рор и К-драм в развитии туристической индустрии Южной Кореи. Глобальное распространение корейской волны, или Hallyu, превратило корейскую массовую культуру в важнейший компонент международного имиджа страны и её туристической привлекательности. Музыка К-рор, корейские телевизионные драмы, артисты, актёры, места съёмок, концерты, фанатские сообщества и культурные мероприятия всё чаще влияют на восприятие Южной Кореи международной аудиторией и формируют интерес к посещению страны. В исследовании анализируются основные механизмы влияния К-рор и К-драм на туризм, включая формирование имиджа туристической дестинации, эмоциональную привязанность, культурный интерес, туристическую мотивацию, медиа-индуцированный туризм и брендинг дестинации. Особое внимание уделяется местам съёмок корейских драм и туристическим объектам, связанным с К-рор, поскольку они позволяют создавать новые туристические впечатления и стимулируют посещение мест, ранее знакомых аудитории по аудиовизуальному контенту. Современные научные исследования показывают, что Hallyu способен влиять на имидж Южной Кореи и намерение посетить страну, однако сила данного влияния зависит от культурных интересов туристов, степени их вовлечённости и предварительной осведомлённости о корейской популярной культуре. В статье также подчёркивается, что К-рор и К-драмы не следует рассматривать как единственные факторы туристического спроса, поскольку туристы одновременно могут интересоваться национальной кухней, шопингом, городской культурой, традиционными достопримечательностями и современными развлечениями. Сделан вывод о том, что стратегическая интеграция корейской популярной культуры с маркетингом дестинаций, культурным туризмом и принципами устойчивого управления туризмом способна повысить международную конкурентоспособность туристической индустрии Южной Кореи.
Ключевые слова: К-рор, К-драмы, Hallyu, корейская волна, туристическая индустрия, культурный туризм, имидж дестинации, медиа-индуцированный туризм, брендинг дестинации, Южная Корея.

Introduction (Kirish/Введение).

The contemporary tourism industry is increasingly influenced by cultural globalization, digital communication and the international circulation of entertainment products. Traditional tourism promotion based primarily on historical monuments, natural landscapes and conventional advertising is gradually being complemented by cultural content distributed through television, streaming platforms, social networks and digital communities. In this environment, South Korea has

developed a distinctive model of tourism promotion based on the international popularity of Korean popular culture. K-pop and K-dramas have become two of the most visible components of Hallyu and have contributed to the formation of a recognizable international image of South Korea. Through music videos, television series, concerts, performances, celebrities and fictional narratives, audiences around the world are introduced to Korean cities, cultural practices, food, fashion, architecture, lifestyles and social environments. As a result, popular culture has become increasingly interconnected with tourism.

The international development of K-pop is particularly important because it has created global communities of fans who maintain emotional and social connections with Korean artists. K-pop fandom is not limited to listening to music. Fans often follow artists' activities, visit concerts, purchase cultural products, participate in fan events and search for places associated with their favorite performers. These activities can transform cultural interest into tourism motivation. The emotional attachment between fans and artists can also influence the way South Korea is perceived as a destination. Recent research on Hallyu and South Korea's destination image demonstrates that K-pop, particularly through globally recognized artists such as BTS, can contribute to positive perceptions of the country. However, the same research indicates that celebrity participation in tourism campaigns does not automatically increase travel intentions among all audiences. The influence is stronger when audiences have meaningful emotional connections with the cultural content. [1]

K-dramas have a somewhat different mechanism of influence. While K-pop primarily operates through music, performances and celebrity fandom, K-dramas expose viewers to Korean environments through storytelling and visual representation. Viewers may become familiar with cafés, streets, palaces, universities, restaurants, markets, coastal areas and residential neighborhoods without having physically visited them. When viewers later search for information about these places, the fictional world of the drama can become connected with real tourism destinations. This phenomenon is often described as film-induced or media-induced tourism. Recent research on historical Korean dramas confirms that prolonged exposure to historical and cultural locations can stimulate intentions to visit those places, demonstrating the potential of television content to connect cultural narratives with physical tourism experiences. [2]

The influence of K-pop and K-dramas should also be considered within the broader concept of destination image. A destination is not perceived exclusively through official tourism advertisements. International audiences construct their perceptions through films, dramas, music videos, celebrity activities, online discussions and personal recommendations. Luo and Hunter argue that Hallyu functions as a cultural narrative through which South Korea's destination image is socially constructed. Their research shows that the Korean Wave has become an important representational framework for understanding Korea as a tourism destination. [3] This is particularly relevant because the image of South Korea presented through Hallyu combines modernity, technology, entertainment, traditional culture and urban lifestyles.

The relationship between Hallyu and tourism is also strengthened by digital platforms. International audiences can watch K-dramas and K-pop content online and immediately search for additional information about South Korea. Digital platforms reduce the distance between cultural consumption and tourism planning. A viewer who becomes interested in a particular drama location can search for its exact location, read reviews, watch travel videos and develop a personal itinerary. Similarly, a K-pop fan may discover a concert announcement, search for transportation and accommodation, and subsequently travel to South Korea. Thus, the contemporary Hallyu tourism process is characterized by the interaction of cultural consumption, information search, emotional engagement and tourism behavior.

However, it would be inappropriate to assume that K-pop and K-dramas are the only or even universally dominant factors influencing tourism to South Korea. Recent research based on YouTube travel videos about Seoul found that vloggers frequently emphasize shopping, dining, nightlife and immersive urban experiences, while Korean pop culture itself appeared less central to the destination image than expected. [4] This finding is important because it suggests that Hallyu should be integrated with broader tourism experiences rather than being considered independently. Tourists may initially become interested in Korea through K-pop or K-dramas, but their actual travel experience is shaped by transportation, accommodation, food, shopping, cultural attractions, entertainment and interaction with local communities.

The tourism significance of Hallyu is reflected in the increasing diversification of the Korean Wave itself. According to the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and the Korea Culture Information Service Agency, recent global Hallyu analysis shows that Korean cultural influence is expanding beyond music and dramas into literature, film, tourism and consumer activities. The 2025 analysis used a large volume of international media and social-media data to examine global Hallyu trends. [5] This development demonstrates that tourism is increasingly becoming an integrated component of Korea's wider cultural economy.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to analyze the role of K-pop and K-dramas in South Korea's tourism industry, identify the main mechanisms through which Korean popular culture affects destination image and tourist motivation, examine the contribution of filming locations and K-pop-related experiences to cultural tourism, and formulate recommendations for improving the integration of Hallyu with sustainable tourism development. The research also seeks to provide a balanced interpretation by considering both the positive tourism effects of Korean popular culture and the limitations associated with celebrity-centered destination promotion.

Literature review (Mavzuga oid adabiyotlar tahlili/Обзор литературы).

Recent academic literature demonstrates that the relationship between Hallyu and tourism has become increasingly complex. Earlier research often focused on the general popularity of Korean culture, whereas recent studies increasingly investigate specific mechanisms such as destination image, emotional attachment, social media engagement, media-induced tourism and travel intentions. This development reflects the transformation of Hallyu from a cultural phenomenon into a multidimensional tourism and destination-branding resource.

Luo and Hunter examined the social construction of the Korean Hallyu narrative and its relationship with tourism destination image. Their 2024 study demonstrates that Hallyu operates as a cultural and semiotic narrative through which international audiences interpret South Korea. Rather than representing only music or television entertainment, Hallyu combines different cultural meanings and social representations. The authors emphasize that Hallyu has become a foundational representation of Korea's destination image because it incorporates various cultural and social narratives associated with contemporary Korean society. [3]

Chung and Jeong investigated the relationship between social media engagement and the purchase intention of Hallyu tourism packages. Their study, published in 2024, applied the uses and gratifications theory and examined entertainment and information-seeking motivations associated with Hallyu content on YouTube. The results indicate that the relationship between social media engagement and tourism behavior is not simple or automatic, but cultural background and the type of engagement play important roles. This research is valuable because it demonstrates that the tourism effects of Hallyu depend not only on exposure to Korean cultural content but also on how audiences interact with that content. [6]

Suyanto, Melisa and Tanaya examined the relationship between movie-related Korean Wave content and intentions to visit South Korea. Their 2024 research focused on visual, vocal, celebrity and language elements of Korean media and considered country image as an important mediating factor. The study highlights the importance of media representation in shaping perceptions of Korea and demonstrates that audiovisual cultural products can contribute to international tourism intentions. [7] This research supports the argument that Korean popular culture can influence tourism not only through direct promotional campaigns but also through the broader representation of Korean society.

Research on Korean historical dramas provides further evidence of the relationship between audiovisual content and tourism. A 2025 study investigated whether historical Korean television series can increase intentions to visit the country and its cultural sites. Using responses from

291 Western participants, the research confirmed important relationships between featured places and intentions to visit, while also finding that celebrity attachment was not significant for general tourists. [2] This finding is particularly relevant because it suggests that the location and cultural narrative of a drama may be more important than the celebrity itself for some tourist groups.

Mirzamurodova’s 2025 research analyzed 25 YouTube travel vloggers and examined the destination image of Seoul presented through travel videos. The study found that shopping, dining and nightlife in vibrant urban districts produced strong emotional responses, while Korean pop culture appeared less central than commonly assumed. [4] This study introduces an important critical perspective to the Hallyu-tourism literature. It suggests that although K-pop and K-dramas can attract initial attention, tourists ultimately seek a broader set of experiences that includes food, shopping, entertainment and interaction with urban environments.

A 2025 study of repeat tourism to South Korea provides another perspective by examining the role of Hallyu in tourists’ intention to revisit the country. The research identified K-cuisine, K-drama scenery, K-pop music and K-drama celebrities among the cultural elements that leave strong impressions on international visitors. The findings also indicate that Korean food and beauty products can be particularly influential in shaping repeat-visit intentions. [8] This demonstrates that Hallyu tourism can extend beyond the initial decision to visit and may contribute to destination loyalty and repeat tourism.

Kulik and Geyer’s 2026 study provides one of the most recent analyses of K-pop and destination image. Focusing on BTS fans and non-fans, the research found that fans already had positive perceptions of South Korea and that parasocial relationships played an important role in their emotional connection with the destination. However, BTS’s participation in tourism campaigns had limited direct influence on non-fans. The authors therefore argue that celebrity endorsements are most effective when they are meaningfully integrated into destination storytelling and when audiences have an emotional connection with the celebrity. [1]

Recent research also demonstrates that the role of Hallyu in tourism should be examined within a changing global cultural environment. The Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism reported in 2026 that Hallyu is expanding beyond its traditional concentration on music and dramas toward literature, cinema, tourism and other consumer activities. The analysis was based on a very large dataset of foreign media and social-media content collected from multiple countries. [5] This suggests that the future of Hallyu tourism may increasingly depend on the integration of different cultural sectors rather than on K-pop or K-dramas alone.

Finally, research on Seoul’s destination branding demonstrates that K-pop continues to occupy an important position in official tourism communication. Recent analysis of Seoul tourism campaigns indicates that K-pop idols represent a substantial share of celebrity appearances in promotional tourism videos. This demonstrates the institutional importance of K-pop as a communication mechanism for connecting Seoul with international audiences. At the same time, the effectiveness of such campaigns depends on whether celebrity participation is connected with authentic places, narratives and experiences. [9]

Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrates that K-pop and K-dramas influence tourism through several interconnected pathways. These include destination-image formation, emotional attachment, cultural curiosity, media-induced tourism, celebrity influence, filming-location tourism, social-media engagement and repeat-visit motivation. However, the literature also demonstrates that the strength of these effects varies among tourist groups. Therefore, effective Hallyu tourism policy should combine popular culture with authentic cultural experiences, gastronomy, shopping, urban tourism, historical attractions and sustainable destination management.

Methods (Tadqiqotni amalga oshirishda foydalanilgan usullar/ Методы).

The study employed a qualitative research approach based primarily on systematic literature analysis. Recent academic publications concerning K-pop, K-dramas, Hallyu, cultural tourism, media-induced tourism, destination image and tourist behavior were reviewed in order to identify the principal mechanisms through which Korean popular culture affects tourism. Priority was given to studies published during 2024–2026 because the rapid transformation of digital media and global entertainment consumption makes recent evidence particularly relevant to the contemporary tourism environment.

The systematic literature review was supplemented by comparative analysis. The tourism effects of K-pop and K-dramas were examined separately and then compared in terms of their influence on destination image, tourist motivation, emotional attachment and travel intentions. K-pop was primarily considered from the perspective of music fandom, celebrity influence, concerts, cultural events and emotional relationships, whereas K-dramas were examined through visual storytelling, filming locations, cultural representation and media-induced tourism.

Content analysis was used to identify recurring themes within the selected academic literature. The principal analytical categories included destination image, Hallyu, cultural curiosity, tourist motivation, celebrity attachment, filming locations, social media engagement, travel intention, repeat tourism and destination branding. This approach made it possible to identify common findings as well as differences between studies.

The research also applied inductive and deductive methods. Through inductive analysis, recurring relationships between Korean popular culture and tourism behavior were identified across different studies and tourist groups. Deductive reasoning was then used to connect these findings with broader concepts of cultural tourism, destination marketing and consumer behavior. Logical analysis and generalization were used to formulate conclusions and practical recommendations.

A critical comparative perspective was maintained throughout the research. This was necessary because the literature does not provide evidence that K-pop and K-dramas influence every tourist in the same way. Some studies identify strong relationships between Hallyu engagement and travel intentions, while others demonstrate that shopping, food, nightlife, traditional culture and immersive urban experiences can be more important for tourists. The methodology therefore treats K-pop and K-dramas as important components of a broader tourism ecosystem rather than as independent or universal determinants of tourism demand.

Analysis and rezults (Tahlil va natijalarlar /Анализ и результаты).

The analysis of recent academic studies demonstrates that K-pop and K-dramas have become important cultural factors influencing South Korea’s international tourism attractiveness. The results indicate that Korean popular culture contributes to tourism through several interconnected mechanisms, including destination image formation, emotional attachment, cultural curiosity, travel motivation, media-induced tourism and destination branding. However, the strength of these effects differs among tourist groups and depends on the level of engagement with Korean popular culture. Therefore, the relationship between Hallyu and tourism should be understood as a multidimensional process rather than as a simple direct relationship between media consumption and travel behavior.

One of the most important results is the contribution of K-pop to the formation of South Korea’s destination image. International audiences increasingly associate South Korea with K-pop artists, music, performances, concerts and fan communities. Recent research on BTS demonstrates that strong emotional and parasocial relationships between fans and artists can influence how fans perceive South Korea as a tourism destination. The study found that BTS fans developed stronger emotional connections with South Korea than non-fans, while the direct effect of celebrity participation in tourism campaigns was more limited among people who did not already have an emotional connection with the artists. This finding demonstrates that the effectiveness of K-pop tourism promotion depends not only on celebrity popularity but also on the relationship between the celebrity and the target audience.

The analysis further demonstrates that K-pop can generate a form of niche tourism based on fandom. Dedicated fans may travel to South Korea to attend concerts, visit locations connected with artists, participate in fan events, purchase official products and experience places that have symbolic importance within the K-pop community. In this context, the tourist destination becomes more than a geographical location. For highly

engaged fans, South Korea can represent a culturally and emotionally meaningful space associated with music, artists and personal experiences. This creates a distinctive form of cultural tourism in which emotional attachment becomes an important component of travel motivation.

The findings concerning K-dramas demonstrate a somewhat different but equally significant mechanism. K-dramas introduce international viewers to Korean locations through visual storytelling. Streets, cafés, restaurants, palaces, markets, beaches, universities and residential neighborhoods presented in popular dramas can become recognizable tourism attractions. The analysis indicates that viewers may develop a desire to visit these locations because they have already encountered them through fictional narratives. Recent research on historical Korean television series also indicates that exposure to drama content can influence intentions to visit Korea and its cultural sites, demonstrating the potential of television narratives to transform media consumption into tourism motivation. This phenomenon represents an important dimension of media-induced tourism.

The analysis of destination image also reveals that Hallyu contributes to both cognitive and affective perceptions of South Korea. A recent study involving respondents from Spanish-speaking countries found that attitudes toward Hallyu influenced cognitive perceptions of South Korea as a country and as a tourism destination, as well as affective perceptions and the overall country image. However, the study did not identify a direct effect of Hallyu attitudes on the overall destination image. This result is particularly important because it suggests that Korean popular culture can influence individual components of destination perception without necessarily determining the complete tourism image of South Korea. Other factors, including natural attractions, infrastructure, safety, gastronomy, hospitality, cultural heritage and tourism services, continue to influence the final destination evaluation.

Another important result concerns the difference between initial tourism motivation and actual destination choice. K-pop and K-dramas can function as an initial gateway through which international audiences discover South Korea. However, once interest has been generated, potential tourists usually seek additional information about accommodation, transportation, food, shopping, cultural attractions, costs and activities. Therefore, popular culture may create the initial emotional motivation, while practical tourism information contributes to the final decision. This interpretation is supported by recent research on Seoul’s destination image through YouTube travel videos. The study found that travel vloggers placed considerable emphasis on shopping, dining, nightlife and immersive urban experiences, while Korean pop culture itself played a less central role than might traditionally be expected.

The results also demonstrate that the combination of K-pop and K-dramas with other components of Korean culture can produce stronger tourism effects. Tourists attracted by a K-drama may subsequently become interested in Korean cuisine, traditional clothing, beauty products, shopping, historical architecture or local festivals. Similarly, K-pop fans may extend their interest from music to Korean language, food, fashion and cultural experiences. Consequently, Hallyu tourism should be viewed as an interconnected cultural ecosystem rather than a collection of independent products. This integrated approach increases the possibility that visitors will spend more time in the destination and explore a wider range of tourism services.

A further result concerns the role of national image. Recent official Korean research demonstrates the growing importance of cultural content in shaping Korea’s international reputation. According to the 2025 national image survey, cultural content was identified as the most influential factor contributing to Korea’s favorability abroad, while video platforms and social media were among the main channels through which international audiences engaged with Korea. K-pop, dramas and films therefore contribute not only to entertainment consumption but also to the broader international image of the country.

The 2026 global Hallyu survey provides additional evidence of the continuing importance of K-pop. Among people with previous experience of Korean cultural content, K-pop was reported as the first image associated with Korea. This result indicates that K-pop has developed into one of the strongest symbolic representations of South Korea internationally. At the same time, the expansion of Hallyu beyond music and dramas toward tourism, literature and film demonstrates that the Korean cultural economy is becoming increasingly diversified.

The analysis also identifies differences between highly engaged Hallyu audiences and general tourists. Highly engaged K-pop fans are more likely to develop emotional relationships with artists and to attach personal meaning to Korean destinations. General tourists, by contrast, may be attracted to South Korea because of a combination of factors such as food, shopping, entertainment, historical attractions, urban experiences and the general international image of the country. This difference suggests that tourism organizations should segment their international audiences instead of applying a single Hallyu marketing strategy to all potential visitors.

Another significant result is the importance of authenticity. Popular culture can create attractive images of South Korea, but tourists may compare these media representations with their actual experiences after arrival. If filming locations are presented as completely idealized or if tourism campaigns show only carefully staged environments, visitors may experience a gap between expectations and reality. Therefore, tourism promotion should combine attractive visual storytelling with practical and authentic information about destinations. The use of local people, real restaurants, transportation systems, markets, cultural activities and everyday urban environments can make promotional content more credible and useful.

The findings indicate that K-drama filming locations can also support regional tourism development. Popular dramas frequently feature destinations outside the most internationally recognized areas of Seoul. When these places become associated with successful television productions, they can attract visitors who might otherwise not have included them in their travel plans. This creates opportunities for local governments and tourism businesses to develop new tourism products, improve infrastructure and promote local culture. At the same time, destination managers should prevent excessive concentration of tourists in a small number of filming locations by developing alternative attractions and distributing tourism flows across different regions.

Conclusion and Recommendations (Xulosa va takliflar/Выводы и предложения).

The research demonstrates that K-pop and K-dramas have become significant cultural resources for South Korea’s tourism industry. Their contribution extends beyond entertainment because they help international audiences construct perceptions of South Korea, develop cultural curiosity and imagine potential tourism experiences. K-pop creates emotional connections through artists, music, performances and fandom, while K-dramas provide visual narratives that expose audiences to Korean cities, cultural attractions, landscapes, food, lifestyles and historical environments. Together, these cultural products contribute to the international visibility of South Korea as a contemporary tourism destination.

One of the most important findings is that K-pop and K-dramas influence tourism through different but interconnected mechanisms. K-pop is particularly effective in developing emotional attachment and fan-based tourism. Concerts, fan meetings, artist-related locations and cultural events can encourage international fans to travel to South Korea. K-dramas, in contrast, often influence tourism through place representation. Viewers become familiar with locations through narratives and visual scenes and may subsequently seek to visit those locations in person. Historical dramas can be particularly valuable for connecting entertainment with cultural heritage and historical tourism.

At the same time, the research demonstrates that celebrity promotion should not be considered a universal solution for destination marketing. Recent research on BTS indicates that celebrity involvement can have a limited direct effect on non-fans, while emotional and parasocial relationships are much more important among dedicated fans. [1] Therefore, tourism campaigns should not simply place famous artists or actors in promotional materials. Instead, celebrities should be integrated into meaningful narratives that connect them with real destinations, local communities, cultural experiences and tourism products.

The second recommendation is to develop specialized K-drama tourism routes. Tourism authorities and local governments can identify important filming locations and transform them into well-managed cultural tourism attractions. Such locations can include cafés, streets, parks, historical buildings, restaurants and natural landscapes featured in popular dramas. However, the commercialization of filming locations should be balanced with the interests of local residents and environmental protection. Visitor management, interpretation services and multilingual information can help transform temporary media popularity into sustainable tourism development.

Another recommendation is to expand K-pop tourism products beyond concerts. International fans should have opportunities to participate in music-related cultural experiences, including visits to entertainment districts, music museums, cultural exhibitions, dance experiences, fan events and artist-related attractions. These products can encourage tourists to extend their stays and explore different parts of South Korea rather than concentrating only on Seoul.

The integration of K-pop and K-dramas with gastronomy, fashion, beauty and shopping should also be strengthened. Hallyu is not limited to music and television content. International audiences often develop interest in Korean food, cosmetics, clothing and lifestyles after exposure to Korean media. Recent research on repeat tourism shows that Korean cuisine and beauty products can be particularly influential in encouraging tourists to revisit South Korea. [8] Therefore, integrated tourism packages combining K-drama locations, Korean cuisine, shopping and cultural activities could provide more comprehensive tourism experiences.

Digital technologies should also play an increasingly important role in Hallyu tourism. Tourism organizations can use social-media analytics, artificial intelligence and digital platforms to identify international audience interests, monitor popular filming locations, analyze visitor feedback and develop personalized tourism recommendations. The large-scale analysis of foreign media and social-media data conducted by Korean cultural authorities demonstrates the growing importance of digital information in understanding global Hallyu trends. [5]

Sustainability should be incorporated into the future development of K-pop and K-drama tourism. When a drama becomes internationally popular, a previously quiet location can suddenly receive large numbers of visitors. Similar situations can occur around celebrity-related places and cultural events. Therefore, local authorities should distribute tourism flows across multiple destinations, encourage visits outside peak periods, improve public transportation and protect residential areas. This approach can help ensure that Hallyu tourism generates economic benefits without creating excessive pressure on local communities.

The final recommendation is to maintain a balance between popular culture and authentic Korean cultural heritage. K-pop and K-dramas are powerful tools for attracting attention, but long-term destination competitiveness requires more than entertainment. Tourists should have opportunities to experience Korean history, architecture, traditional culture, cuisine, local communities, natural landscapes and contemporary urban life. The strongest tourism strategy is therefore one in which Hallyu functions as an entry point to a much broader Korean tourism experience.

In conclusion, K-pop and K-dramas have significantly expanded the cultural dimensions of South Korea’s tourism industry. They have contributed to destination-image formation, cultural curiosity, emotional engagement and the development of new forms of media-induced and fandom-based tourism. Nevertheless, their impact varies among tourist groups and should not be overstated. The future effectiveness of Hallyu tourism will depend on the ability of tourism organizations to connect popular culture with authentic experiences, digital technologies, local communities and sustainable destination management. Such an integrated approach can strengthen South Korea’s international tourism brand and contribute to the long-term development of its cultural and tourism economy.

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