

K-POP MUSIC: THE INFLUENCE OF POP-CULTURE INVOLVEMENT AND DESTINATION IMAGE ON TRAVEL INTENTION TO SOUTH KOREA

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K-POP MUSIC: THE INFLUENCE OF POP-CULTURE INVOLVEMENT AND DESTINATION IMAGE ON TRAVEL INTENTION TO SOUTH KOREA

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ABSTRACT

This study implements the concept of pop-culture involvement, specifically K-Pop music. Pop-culture involvement is classified into two categories, situational involvement, and enduring involvement. This study aims to investigate the involvement of pop-culture in shaping a destination image that will influence the intention to travel. A quantitative study by distributing questionnaire was performed on 135 Indonesian citizens aged 17 and above. The Partial Least Square (PLS) method was employed to process the data acquired. The result indicates that situational involvement has a significant influence in forming enduring involvement. Situational involvement also influences the destination image, yet enduring involvement has no effect on destination image. In addition, the result also shows that destination image does significantly affect travel intention. This study has provided a preliminary investigation on pop-culture involvement of K-Pop music. It is expected to be insights for further research specifically in the context of K-Pop music and tourism.

Keywords: K-pop music, pop-culture involvement, destination image, travel intention

INTRODUCTION

Popular culture holds a vast category of entertainment such as music, film, TV shows, literature, pop star, and sport (Lee & Bai, 2016). Through involvement, an individual will create a bond or relation with an object or activity of interest (Blackwell et al., 2012). With the different environment and nature of individual, the involvement level of an individual towards an object or activity might vary, thus it cannot be equated (Whang et al., 2016). According to Richins et al. (1992) involvement is determined by two categories, namely Situational Involvement (SI) and Enduring Involvement (EI). Situational involvement is a temporary feeling or attraction to a product or object while enduring involvement is perceived as more stable and will develop over time (Richins & Bloch, 1986). Situational involvement can stimulate the formation of enduring involvement (Whang et al., 2016). Situational involvement arises due to external factors such as ongoing situations, repeated events, or even social peer pressures (Richins et al., 1992). The formation of enduring involvement prompted by situational involvement is driven by the rapid transition of pop-culture information over the internet (Whang et al., 2016).

Korean Pop music (known as K-Pop) is a contemporary music genre popularized by famous idol singers from South Korea and widely known for its unique characteristics, such as the visual appeal of each artist, fascinating songs, and distinctive dance moves (Yoon, 2017). The quality of music and celebrity appearances are the main factors that drive consumers' interest in K-Pop (Bang et al., 2021). The popularity of K-Pop music stems from the attractive appearances of K-Pop artists and the outspread access where fans can interact with the preferred K-Pop artists through the internet (Bang et al., 2021). In recent years, the tourism industry has experienced content a trend where tourism players are utilizing the effect of popular culture to promote tourist destinations (Whang et al., 2016).

Enjoying South Korean cultural products such as K-Pop music, can change the image of South Korean destinations to be more positive and has the potential to attract prospective tourists in visiting South Korea (Kim et al., 2008). Bae & Kim (2017) stated that an individual's involvement and association with K-Pop is influential towards the formation of South Korea's image. Along with the public's knowledge of South Korea's popular culture, people who are deeply involved as well as not involved, are able to form the image of South Korean destinations well (Bae & Kim, 2017). The image of South Korea formed due to a preference for K-Pop music can influence a person's intention to travel to South Korea (Bang et al., 2021).

Research on pop-culture impact on South Korea's destination image has been widely conducted, which only focuses on the influence of aspects of South Korean dramas and films (Tang, 2014; Jin & Yoon, 2014) in shaping the destination image. There is few research on pop-culture involvement, specifically K-Pop music in the context of tourism. Thus, this study aims to examine: (1) the influence of situational pop-culture involvement of K-Pop music towards the enduring pop-culture involvement; (2) the influence of situational pop-culture involvement of K-Pop music towards South Korea's destination image; (3) the influence of enduring pop-culture involvement of K-Pop music towards South Korea's destination image, and (4) the influence of South Korea's destination image towards travel intention to South Korea.

Pop-Culture Involvement

Popular culture refers to cultural products that are produced for mass consumption to meet the commercialization objectives by being known and liked by a larger community (Brandt & Clare, 2019). In pop-culture, a reciprocal relationship between producers and consumers is formed, which can be concluded that pop-culture can influence the way individuals behave in response to certain topics (Lee & Bai, 2016; Brandt & Clare, 2019; Reichenberger, 2021). According to Lee and Bai (2016), the most commonly known pop-culture category is the entertainment category which contains music, movies, television shows, literature, pop-stars (artists, celebrities, singers), and also sports. The act of traveling to a pop-culture-related destination is mainly connected to someone's involvement in pop-culture (Whang et al., 2016). The spread of K-Pop music is supported by

tourism programs made by KNTA (Korea National Tourism Organization). The tour itself was formed to encourage more tourists to visit locations featured in K-Pop music (Trolan, 2017). According to Yeh (2013), involvement consists of several constructions, namely situational involvement, and enduring involvement.

Situational Involvement and Enduring Involvement

According to Richins & Bloch (1991), situational involvement describes a person's involvement towards an activity or object on a temporary basis (Whang et al., 2016). Situational involvement is the temporary feeling of an individual that causes the individual to be significantly involved in a particular object or activity in a period (Havitz & Mannell, 2005). In those periods, individuals can easily change their involvement of interest from one object towards another because there is no significant attachment between the object and the individual (Jang et al., 2000). In situational involvement, external factors play a major role in influencing individuals to be involved with a particular object or situation (Richins et al., 1992). External factors that influence an individual's situational involvement of a particular object or situation are the surroundings and peer pressures (Whang et al., 2016).

Enduring involvement is the state of motivation and interest upon a recreational activity caused by stimuli or situations as the main factor (Havitz & Dimanche, 1997). Individuals with enduring involvement towards a particular object tend to have a high interest in the object because they have the same understanding and relates to the object (Whang et al., 2016; Tsai, 2020). Therefore, enduring involvement represents the state of an individual's interest in a long-term and constant period. Enduring Involvement of popular culture will result in fans willing to invest the time upon interacting with the popular culture-related communities (Yun et al., 2021). Enduring involvement in the context of leisure is measured through four aspects put forward by McIntyre (1989) as enjoyment, importance, self-expression, and centrality.

Destination Image

Tourists tend to choose destinations that have the best image that affects tourists' perceptions of the location of the destination. The role of destination marketers is also required in understanding the concept of destination image. With this understanding, the destination marketers can project a positive image to the destination. (San Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008). Yin et al. (2020) explain that the image of a destination is generally related to the knowledge, ideas, feelings, or impressions that individuals have of a place.

Pop-culture contents have an important role as an informative attribute, which provides information in supporting the destination image forming process (Ko & Lee, 2011). Situational involvement and affective imagery of K-Pop can shape South Korea's specific destination image for potential travelers (Whang et

al., 2016). This is supported by Lee & Bai (2016) who explained that media and pop-culture have been the image-forming agents of South Korean destinations in recent years. Popular culture displayed in the media plays a role in transforming the image of South Korea into a friendly and attractive destination (Lee & Bai, 2016).

When tourists become familiar with the characteristics of a destination, the tourists' interest to travel to that destination will arise (Chaulagain et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021). According to Lee and Bai (2016), most of the respondents stated that the travel intention will always arise along with the emergence of new destinations introduced by K-Pop music. When fans have a positive image, their intention to travel to South Korea will be formed (Bang et al., 2021). As such, the higher the positive image of South Korea through the pop-culture involvement, especially K-Pop music, it will increase the interest of potential tourists in visiting and traveling to South Korea (Whang et al., 2016).

As such, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: Situational Involvement of Pop-Culture has a significant influence on Enduring Involvement
- H2: Situational Involvement of Pop-Culture has a significant influence on South Korea's destination image
- H3: Enduring Involvement of Pop-Culture has a significant influence on South Korea's destination image
- H4: South Korea's destination image has a significant influence on travel intention

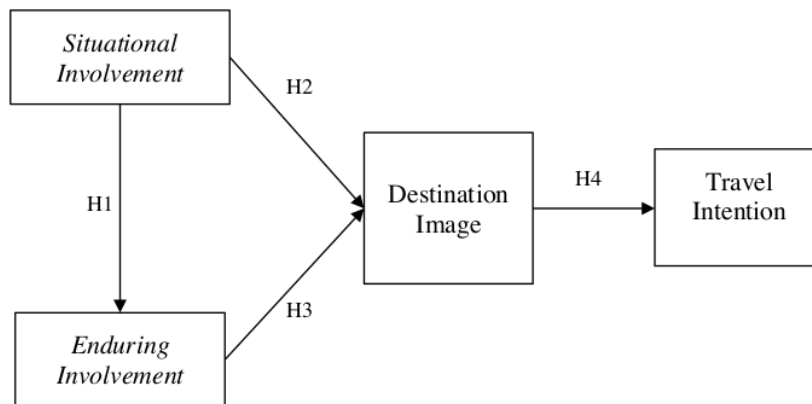


Figure 1. Research Model

METHODOLOGY

This study employed quantitative causal research. The population is Indonesian citizens who know the K-Pop music pop-culture. Non-probability sampling with convenience method was used to collect online questionnaires through Google Form from Instagram, Twitter, LINE and other social media from October to November 2021. A total of 150 respondents were collected and sorted it into 135 respondents who met the criteria.

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The Questionnaire items were mostly adapted from the prior studies and modified to fit in this study context. The questions items related to situational and enduring involvement were adapted from Whang et al. (2016), Havitz and Mannell (2005), and McIntyre (1989). While the items of destination image and travel intention were obtained from Whang et al. (2016), Yin et al. (2020) and Chaulagain et al. (2019). All questions in the questionnaire were answered based on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). All collected responses were processed and analyzed using Smart -PLS statistic technique. The Partial Least Square (PLS) used in this study consisted of both the inner model and the outer model. The relation between latent variables is represented by the structural model. T-values were generated by employing the bootstrap procedure with a 5000-subsample method (Hair et al., 2017) to test the hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Profile of Respondents

Most respondents are dominated by women with 100 respondents (74.1%), while male respondents contributed to 35 respondents (25.9%). Based on the age cohorts, most of the respondents were ranging from 17 to 22 years (74.1%) followed by 23-28 years (16.3%) with the occupations was students (77%). The education of the majority of respondents were high/vocational school (66.7%) with an average monthly income was under IDR 3 million, follow by IDR 3-6 million.

Measurement Model

The validity test is conducted using convergent validity test, while to test the reliability of the indicator, composite reliability test is used. The result summary can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The Result Summary of Reflective Constructs

Measurement items	Factor Loading	AVE	CR	α
Situational Involvement				
I know South Korean music (K-Pop)	0.470	0.541	0.909	0.873
I have a good impression of South Korean music (K-Pop)	0.585			

I want to travel to South Korea due to listening to South Korean music (K-Pop)	0.733				
I am interested in South Korean music (K-Pop)	0.844				
I enjoy South Korean music (K-Pop)	0.783				
I feel that listening to South Korean music is the right activity for me	0.863				
I feel South Korean music (K-Pop) describes me well	0.821				
I feel my involvement in South Korean music (K-Pop) is not wasting my time	0.696				
Enduring Involvement					
I truly enjoy listening to South Korean music (K-Pop)	0.810	0.703	0.955	0.947	
I feel that South Korean music is important to me	0.777				
I am a fan of South Korean music (K-Pop)	0.880				
I spent most of my days enjoying South Korean music (K-Pop)	0.850				
I like South Korean music (K-Pop)	0.845				
I have high concerns about South Korean music (K-Pop)	0.862				
I always follow South Korean (K-Pop) music's trend	0.809				
I am really interested in South Korean music (K-Pop)	0.889				
I have full knowledge of South Korean music (K-Pop)	0.818				
Destination Image					
South Korea is an interesting tourist destination	0.872	0.738	0.918	0.882	
South Korea is an enjoyable tourist destination	0.890				
South Korea is a charming tourist destination	0.851				
South Korea is a tourist destination that has a good overall impression	0.823				
Travel Intention					
I am willing to travel to South Korea in the future	0.849	0.684	0.896	0.848	
I intend to travel to South Korea in the future	0.874				
I predict that I should travel to South Korea in the future	0.806				
I have the motivation to work hard to travel to South Korea	0.777				

Convergent validity test is conducted using outer loading score and average variance extracted (AVE). According to Hair et al. (2017), loading factor values ranging from 0.4 to 0.7 are still acceptable. Indicators are considered to be removed if they can increase the value of composite reliability and AVE when the indicator has been eliminated (Hair et al., 2017). Table 2 shows the result of convergent validity tests from all indicators which were declared as valid because the loading factor value for each indicator is greater than 0.4. As for the AVE score, each of the indicators showed results above 0,50, which can be considered valid. With all scores above 0,7, all the variables were also concluded as reliable based on the composite reliability test.

Structural Model

According to the value of R-Square (R^2) obtained, the analysis from the coefficient of determination showed results that situational involvement has a significant influence on enduring involvement by 73.3%. The analysis of situational involvement and enduring involvement has a significant influence on destination image by 7%. The result of coefficient determination showed from the effect the destination image towards travel intention has a significant influence by 36.8%.

PLS analysis was performed to find out the causal relationship between pop culture involvement, destination image, and travel intention. The calculated PLS model was shown to correspond to the acceptable value. Based on the goodness of fit indexes of the structural model, the hypothesized were tested and the result can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Path Coefficient among Constructs

Hypotheses	Path Coefficients	T-Values	P-Values	Decision
Situational Involvement →Enduring Involvement	0.856	35.636***	0.000	Supported
Situational Involvement →Destination Image	0.398	2.236*	0.027	Supported
Enduring Involvement →Destination Image	-0.156	0.894	0.373	Not Supported
Destination Image →Travel Intention	0.606	11.001***	0.000	Supported

***Significant at $p < 0.001$ level.

*Significant at $p < 0.05$ level.

DISCUSSION

The situational pop-culture has a positive and significant influence on the enduring involvement. The result is in-line with Whang et al. (2016) who proves that the level of situational involvement can significantly affect the level of enduring involvement. Enduring involvement can be formed due to the individual being involved situationally towards an object. By knowing South Korean music (K-Pop), individuals tend to get interested and enjoyed. Having involved situationally towards K-Pop music, there is a possibility that the involvement will turn into enduring involvement. This stems from the peer pressure of the social environment to acknowledge K-Pop continuously.

Situational pop-culture involvement significantly influences the destination image. This result confirms findings from Whang et al. (2016) which stated that situational involvement had an impact on destination image. This result implies that individuals that are situationally involved with K-Pop tend to develop a positive destination image of South Korea. This can happen due to the recent successful outcome of K-Pop emerging within the global music industries which indirectly provides insights of South Korea as an advanced and modern nation. Thus, situational involvement with K-Pop can easily form a positive image of South Korea due to the resemblance of its culture with K-Pop music. K-Pop music has an important role in introducing and promoting tourist destinations in South

Korea. The dance and musical performance brought by the idol group BTS also plays a role in shaping the positive image of South Korea (Kwak et al., 2019).

Enduring involvement of K-Pop has a negative relationship with the destination image of South Korea. This is the opposite of the previous study by Whang et al. (2016) which stated that enduring involvement has a significant and positive effect on the image of South Korean destinations. Differences in results with previous studies could be caused by the demographic differences of respondents and different contexts of pop-culture. The respondents in this study did not focus on K-Pop fans only but rather the general public. In this case, it is known that the Indonesian citizens tend to feel that K-Pop music is not relevant, since the majority of the public still does not know the intricacies of South Korean music very well. Music is a small part of South Korea's popular culture that influences the image of the destination. The low level of enduring involvement rate of K-Pop music does not contribute highly enough to the formation of South Korea's destination image. In Indonesia, the majority of the public tends to easily recognize South Korean popular culture, typically by food, drama series, and South Korean films.

The destination image of South Korea significantly influences the visit intention to South Korea. The result is in-line with Whang et al. (2016) that the destination image portrayed by individuals can affect the travel intention to the related destination. The recent growth of media and the internet have an important part in developing South Korea's destination image. Since the majority of respondents in this study ranged from 17 to 28 years old, it can be interpreted that the society in the related range of age tends to be easily exposed to the pop-culture information especially K-Pop music. Exhibiting a positive destination image can actually generate a significant increase in travel intention (Chaulagain et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

The current study provides a further understanding of the influence of situational and enduring pop-culture involvement towards the destination image in influencing travel intention to South Korea. It can be concluded that situational pop-culture involvement positively and significantly affects enduring pop-culture involvement. The result shows that when an individual is situationally involved in enjoying K-Pop music, there is a potential to be deeply involved in enjoying K-Pop music. Furthermore, situational pop-culture involvement has a positive and significant effect on South Korea's destination image. When an individual is situationally involved in enjoying K-pop music, then the destination image of South Korea will be shaped positively. Enduring pop-culture involvement has no significant effect on the destination image of South Korea. The result indicates that being deeply involved in pop-culture did not influence the formation of perceptions regarding South Korea's destination image. South Korea's destination image is proved to have a positive and significant effect on the travel intention to South Korea. This shows that the more positive the image of the destination that someone has towards South Korea, then one's intention to travel to South Korea will increase.

Further research is expected to conduct with more diverse South Korean pop-cultural products such as food, fashion, drama, and films. The pop-culture phenomenon can be adopted from the pop-culture of other countries such as China, Japan, and others. Furthermore, since the application of the involvement concept is rarely known, extending the research by implementing the involvement concept into various fields of research is recommended. The following research should assess other cohorts to obtain further validity, especially from those who are deeply involved in K-Pop music to re-evaluate the influence of enduring pop-culture involvement towards destination image from the perspective of K-Pop music fans.

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