



Motivational drivers of repeat tourism to South Korea: The role of *Hallyu*

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ABSTRACT

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Hallyu and revisit intentions have been highlighted as important research topics in the competitive market of tourism destinations. Despite extensive research on repeat visitors, it remains unclear why people undertake repeat visits and what characteristics define repeat visitors. Using the Stimulus-Organism-Response model, this research aims to identify the *Hallyu*-relevant factors that influence non-Korean revisit intention to South Korea. A mixed-methods design was employed, collecting 222 data points, with 88% deemed usable. An open-ended question was analyzed through thematic analysis to explore tourists' impressions after their visits. The qualitative results indicated that K-cuisine, K-drama scenery, K-pop music, and K-drama celebrities leave a strong impression on international tourists. The regression model explained 63% of the variance, demonstrating the significant influence of *Hallyu* on revisit intention. The standardized beta coefficients showed that K-beauty products (Beta = .314, $t = 4.267$, $p < .001$) and K-cuisine (Beta = .251, $t = 3.372$, $p < .001$) were the most influential predictors. From the perspective of non-Korean visitors, K-cuisine and K-beauty products are key factors driving their desire to revisit South Korea. This cultural immersion through *Hallyu* promotes sustainable tourism, supports local economies, encourages cross-cultural exchange, and redefines destination loyalty. It shifts the focus from traditional tourism to fostering repeat visits and deeper cultural connections, thereby enhancing the overall tourism experience and long-term destination appeal.

Contribution/Originality: This research builds on existing knowledge and refines the S-O-R model by providing new evidence and insights on living and traveling in a cross-cultural context. It is a recent non-Korean experience and impression, a multicultural and tourism-centric lens on *Hallyu*. It covers media influence, mobility, youth culture, and cross-cultural adaptation, and thus offers a fresh and comprehensive angle in *Hallyu* research.

1. INTRODUCTION

Like other countries, tourism has significantly contributed to South Korea's economic development by contributing to growth in foreign currency inflows, expansion of job prospects, and improvement of regional infrastructure. In recent decades, South Korea has actively promoted its cultural assets to attract tourists at an international level. The Korean Wave (K-Wave), or *Hallyu*, is at the forefront of this effort, encompassing K-pop, television dramas, fashion, beauty, and food (Jin, Kim, Choi, & Yoo, 2024). The global reach of *Hallyu* worldwide has helped position South Korea as a leading destination for cultural tourism.

Media exposure to *Hallyu* often shapes the expectations and motivations of first-time visitors. Drawing from the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), media exposure to *Hallyu* acts as a stimulus that triggers emotional and cognitive responses (organism), such as heightened curiosity, perceived destination image, and emotional connection with Korean culture. These internal states influence behavioral responses, including travel decisions, satisfaction, and revisit intention. *Hallyu* has thus popularized South Korea by fostering these emotional connections and sparking curiosity about the lives of its people. These expectations, shaped before and during travel, directly affect visitors' satisfaction and their likelihood of returning to the country.

The *Hallyu* has popularized South Korea by fostering emotional connections and sparking curiosity about the lives of its people. Based on real-life experiences during travel, these expectations influence tourists' satisfaction and the likelihood of repeat visits. This revisit intention indicates their satisfaction and loyalty to the destination (Christianingrum, Nugraha, & Irwansyah, 2024; Guo, Yang, & Xie, 2024). Returning visitors often support local businesses, engage in responsible tourism, and contribute to long-term sustainability. In South Korea's context, repeat visitation also aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11), and Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12) (Alvarez, 2025; Wani, Loganathan, & Mujalli, 2024).

Beyond *Hallyu*, Luo and Hunter (2024) stated that features such as ancient temples, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, modern cities, infrastructure, and island destinations enhance the country's image as a desirable travel destination. Additionally, Chung and Jeong (2024) observed that engagement with *Hallyu* content on digital platforms increases potential tourists' interest in *Hallyu*-themed travel packages. However, the impact of such engagement varies across cultures, indicating that tourism marketing should consider differences in motivation and cultural background. While the influence of *Hallyu* on destination image is well established, there is limited understanding of how it shapes actual travel experiences and subsequent revisit intentions. This study, therefore, aims to investigate how *Hallyu* influences international visitors and how those experiences affect their intention to return to South Korea. Through this focus, the research contributes to a better understanding of the role of cultural tourism in promoting sustainable and repeat visitation from the perspective of international tourists.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *Hallyu* and Tourism Policy

South Korea's press release reported that the Ministry of Culture Sports and Tourism (2023) targets 20 million tourists or USD 24.5 billion in tourism revenue by 2024 through several strategies, including boosting regional tourism with local content. The government also aims to attract more tourists from China, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia with a group electronic visa fee waiver. The report also mentioned plans for a large-scale *Hallyu* festival in September 2024 and the "K-Tourism Roadshow" marketing campaign in 25 cities, with tourism promotion offices to be established in 10 countries, including Saudi Arabia, Sweden, and New Zealand, in the same year. While *Hallyu* studies are well-established in media research, their role in regional tourism offers new research potential. Saad, Husin, and Ramlee (2022) found that through emotional connections, iconic filming locations, and popular characters, K-dramas significantly influence Malaysian tourists' decisions to visit South Korea, fostering repeat visits and destination loyalty. In another study on Malaysian travelers to South Korea, Saad, Ramlee, Husin, and Yulia (2022) applied the stimulus–organism–responses (S–O–R) model to examine how Korean popular culture, specifically cuisine, drama, and national image explains 39% of the variance in return visits, highlighting the importance of emotional and experiential engagement.

The studies by Saad et al. (2022) primarily focus on the K-drama role in attracting Malaysian tourists to South Korea, yet several gaps remain. The research is limited to Malaysian tourists, overlooking diverse international audiences and their unique preferences. Additionally, the studies on post-visit cultural immersion and its influence on repeat visits remain unexplored, limiting the scope of understanding

full impact. However, Agrawal, Madhukar, and Kulshrestha (2024) studied why young people in India perceive Korea as a potential tourist destination. Their research examined the *Hallyu's* six components: K-drama, K-pop albums, K-fashion products and cosmetics, K-cuisine, and K-games. The data reveals that K-pop albums are consumed at the highest rate among the six elements, with K-dramas being the second most consumed by Indian youth. From another point of view, Suratmi (2024) highlighted that *Hallyu* is a powerful tool for a country's image and global reputation through the rise of K-pop and K-dramas. The scholars also stated that living abroad transforms personal growth and self-discovery by pushing youths out of their comfort zones to thrive in an increasingly globalized world. Studying *Hallyu* as a cultural phenomenon is important in today's globalized world. From K-pop music and K-dramas to fashion and beauty trends, the *Hallyu* has attracted the attention and admiration of people from different countries and backgrounds. While Jin et al. (2024) empirically analyze how the *Hallyu* phenomenon affects Korea's consumer goods exports to China, the study results reveal that *Hallyu* in China significantly impacts Korea's exports of non-durable consumer goods and processed household food and beverages to China.

2.2. Revisit Intention

Revisit intention is defined as an individual's readiness or willingness to make a repeat visit to the same destination (Karakan & Birdir, 2023). Gomes and Lopes (2023) indicated that tourists' behaviors include the choice of destination to visit, subsequent evaluations, and future behavioral intentions. Those evaluations are the travel experience, perceived value, and overall visitors' satisfaction. In contrast, the future behavioral intentions refer to the visitor's judgment about the likelihood of revisiting the same destination and willingness to recommend it to others. Numerous studies identified satisfaction with travel experience as the primary antecedent of revisit intention. Rasoolimanesh, Chee, and Ari Ragavan (2025) mentioned that satisfaction positively influences tourists' repurchase intention. In comparison, Guo et al. (2024) found that the various destinations influence Chinese tourists' experience quality either positively or negatively. The quality of experience is a significant antecedent of tourists' trip satisfaction and a mediator between a destination attribute and satisfaction. The effect of trip satisfaction on the intention to revisit the destination is also significant. Their research reveals the underlying process of forming Chinese travelers' intentions for campsite tourism, considering their perceptions of destination attributes, experience quality, and trip satisfaction. However, Suyanto, Melisa, and Tanaya (2024) point out that the intention to visit South Korea is movie-related *Hallyu*, representing the country's image as the main factor. Their study results validate that four *Hallyu* traits positively affect Indonesian tourists' desire to travel to Korea. Improving the movie quality, including visuals, voice, celebrity, and language, might motivate Indonesian tourists to visit Korea. Similarly, the four *Hallyu* variables positively and significantly influence the country's image.

2.3. Destination Marketing Image

Effective marketing for a tourism destination involves reaching and engaging potential visitors who are most likely looking for information about travel and vacation options. This can include popular travel websites, social media platforms, search engines, and travel blogs. Additionally, targeting specific audiences such as families, adventure seekers, or luxury travelers can be done using industry-specific websites, forums, and trade shows catering to those specific interests. Effective destination marketing requires a study of influential factors in experiencing the destination (Buhalis, 2000).

Research shows that destination marketing organizations (DMOs) can lead and facilitate the development and effectiveness of operational and management strategies (Sorokina et al., 2022). In analyzing tourism destination promotion through Facebook by the DMO of India, Kumar, Mishra, and Yedla Venkata Rao (2022) argued that content creators and influencers for destination marketing, specifically content related to scenic beauty, culture, and cuisine, can effectively engage users on social media. Therefore, incorporating these critical success factors into strategic planning is essential for effective destination marketing. Saad et al. (2022) further supported this view,

stating that to create successful marketing campaigns for a tourism destination, K-dramas have been proven capable of influencing tourists' perceptions of South Korea by highlighting its scenery, culture, and lifestyle. These elements contribute to a strong destination image, which encourages repeat visits. The media portrayal of South Korea plays a vital role in attracting tourists and supporting film-induced tourism. In another study, [Saad et al. \(2022\)](#) found that Malaysian travelers still desired to revisit South Korea, with 40% of the variance explained by the Korean image, cuisine, and drama. To reach potential visitors, the study suggested that destination marketing for the *Hallyu* wave can utilize various channels such as social media, travel websites, and influencer marketing. It is also emphasized that visually appealing content should be created to showcase the destination, and partnerships with popular K-pop stars and actors should be established to promote it.

2.4. First Impression and Word-of-Mouth

First impressions of a destination are crucial in tourism as they significantly influence a visitor's choice, satisfaction, and likelihood of returning. ([Deng & Chen, 2023](#)) mentioned that a positive first impression is fostered through various means, including online presence, accessible information, and the overall experience for destination selection behavior. In the Asian context, [Azmeem \(2024\)](#) noted that *Hallyu* has benefited the tourism sector, which [Cruz and Lacap \(2023\)](#) further confirmed that Korean film-induced effects (visual, vocal, and celebrity) influence viewers' first impressions of visiting South Korea. Similarly, the positive impression of destination image and word-of-mouth (WOM) influence local and international tourists' decisions to revisit the destination.

In tourism destination studies, WOM remains powerful in marketing and surpasses traditional advertising ([Chou, Tsai, Leelapattana, & Thongma, 2024](#)). [Ismail, Zainordin, and Aziz \(2023\)](#) and [Wang, Zheng, Wu, and Jiang \(2025\)](#) recognized that WOM has a positive effect on destination selection and WOM recommendations are critical in tourism ([Wang et al., 2025](#)). Supporting this view, [Huynh \(2025\)](#) also found a strong relationship between initial destination image and tourists' revisit intentions, reinforcing how first impressions translate into positive WOM and repeat visits. Based on the literature review, the proposed conceptual framework is shown in [Figure 1](#).

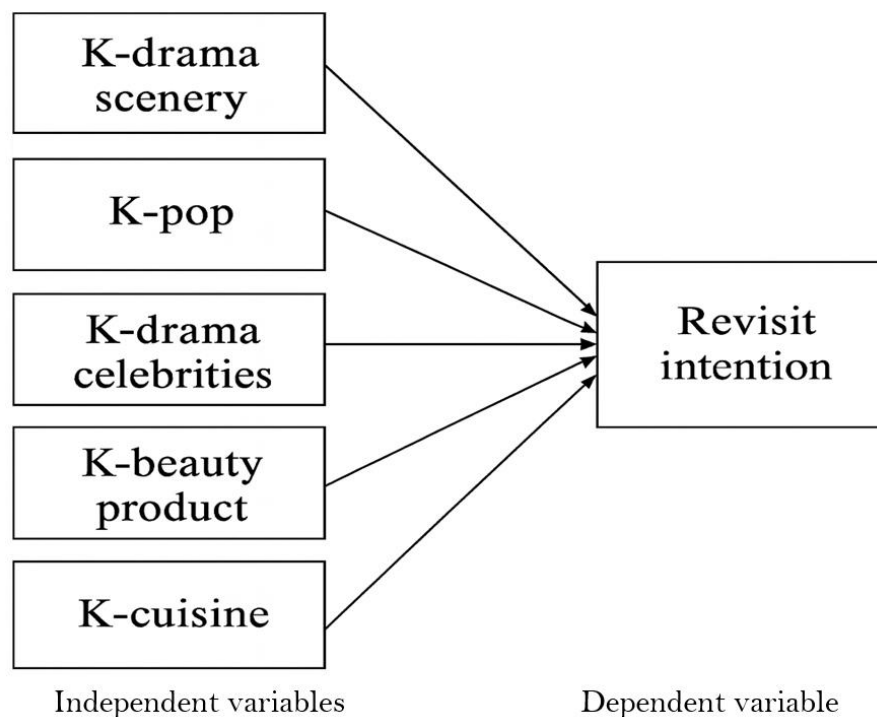


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed design of open-ended and structured instruments to investigate the relationship between cultural tourism motivators and revisit intention among international tourists in South Korea. The design was chosen to capture tourists' perceptions, motivations, and behaviors simultaneously, aligning with prior research in destination image and tourist loyalty (Nguyen, Viet, & Dang, 2020; Zhang, Fu, Cai, & Lu, 2014). A structured questionnaire was developed to collect data on key independent variables: K-drama scenery, K-pop music, drama celebrities, K-cuisine, K-beauty products, and the dependent variable, revisit intention.

3.2. Sampling Procedure

The target population comprised international tourists and expatriates who had visited or resided in South Korea for tourism, business, or other purposes. A cluster sampling technique was employed to ensure participants had direct experience with Korean tourism and culture. Among 222 self-administered questionnaires distributed, a total of 196 usable questionnaires were obtained, representing an 88% response rate. The sample size of 196 was deemed adequate for multiple regression analysis, meeting the minimum recommended ratio of 10–15 cases per independent variable (Hair Jr, Page, & Brunsveld, 2019; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2021).

3.3. Instrument

The questionnaire was divided into four main sections: demographic profile, motivations for travel, perceptions of the tourism experience, and revisit intention. Items were measured using a six-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree) to reduce neutral bias and capture a more discriminating level of agreement (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011). The scale items for cultural attractions were adapted from validated instruments in previous tourism research (Cetin & Bilgihan, 2016; Seyfi, Hall, & Rasoolimanesh, 2020). For the qualitative instrument, open-ended questions were asked to understand respondents' perceptions of tourism in South Korea.

3.4. Data Collection

Data were collected using an online self-administered survey distributed through international student groups, expatriate networks, and travel forums from April to May 2025. Respondents were required to confirm that they had physically visited or were currently residing in South Korea due to the purpose of their visit. Ethical clearance was obtained, and participation was voluntary, anonymous, and conducted according to research ethics protocols (Emami, Rezaei, Sangani, & Goh, 2019; Fennell & Malloy, 2007).

3.5. Pilot Test

All instruments were validated and checked for internal consistency. The internal consistency of the items in the instrument was analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha analysis (Taber, 2018). All variables (refer to Table 1) show values of more than 0.70 indicate strong internal consistency for measuring the construct.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha.

Variable	Item	Cronbach's alpha value
Korean drama scenery	4	0.827
Korean pop music	3	0.917
Korean drama celebrities	4	0.889
K-cuisine	4	0.911
Korean beauty product	6	0.928
Revisit intention	5	0.956

The research instrument was structured into four main sections, each aligning with the study's objectives and variables. The first section captured demographic details such as gender, age, and nationality.

The second section addressed motivations for travelling to Korea, including specific attractions like K-drama scenery, K-cuisine, K-pop music, K-beauty products, and celebrities, with respondents selecting predefined options or indicating other reasons.

The third section measured behavioural aspects such as length of stay, enjoyment of local travel, and reasons for choosing Korea, alongside reliance on translation apps and trusted travel information sources. The final section utilised a six-point *Likert* scale to assess the level of agreement with various tourism attributes, including the influence of cultural elements and the respondents' revisit intention, which was later analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression. In the qualitative part, the respondents' perceptions of destination loyalty were assessed in the subsequent part.

3.6. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation) were used to profile respondents and examine general trends.

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to test the predictive power of the five independent variables on revisit intention using SPSS Version 29.

The model's assumptions (linearity, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, normality) were verified before interpretation.

A significance threshold of $*p < .05*$ was used to determine the strength of associations, consistent with prior studies on tourist behavioural intentions (Bayih & Singh, 2020; Concato & Hartigan, 2016).

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1. Respondents' Response Rate

The study achieved a high response rate of 88%, with 196 out of 222 distributed questionnaires completed and returned. Table 2 indicates the response rate of the research.

Table 2. Response rate.

Sample size	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
222	196	88%

The demographic profile of the respondents (see Table 3) reveals that the majority were female (62.2%), while males constituted 37.8% of the sample. In terms of nationality, the sample was highly diverse, comprising participants from over 20 countries, with the largest group being Chinese (27.6%), followed by Malaysians (12.8%), Uzbeks (10.7%), and Nepalese (10.2%).

Smaller representations were observed from countries such as Bangladesh, Korea, Indonesia, and the United States, reflecting a multicultural respondent base.

Age-wise, nearly half of the respondents (47.2%) were between 18 and 24 years old, followed by 34.9% aged 25 to 34, indicating a predominantly young adult population.

Only a small proportion were aged 45 and above (5.1%), suggesting that the sample primarily represents younger demographics, which is relevant for studies focused on youth or early adulthood behaviors.

Table 3. Profile of Respondents.

Item		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	74	37.8
	Female	122	62.2
Nationality	Chinese	54	27.6
	Malaysian	25	12.8
	Uzbek	21	10.7
	Bangladeshi	14	7.1
	Korean	11	5.6
	Nepalese	20	10.2
	Jordan	2	2
	Indonesian	6	3.1
	Russian	3	1.5
	Mexico	2	1
	USA	4	2
	Canadian	1	0.5
	Portuguese	3	1.5
	French	3	1.5
	Indian	5	2.6
	Vietnamese	2	1
	Pakistani	4	2
	Nigerian	3	1.5
	Singaporean	1	0.5
	Others (Filipino American, Ethiopia, UK, Latvia, Thailand, Hungarian, Yemen)	10	5.1
Age	18 to 24 years old	92	47.2
	25 to 34 years old	68	34.9
	35 to 44 years old	25	12.8
	45 to 54 years old	9	4.6
	55 years old and above	1	0.5

Note: N = 196.

4.2. Reasons for Travelling to South Korea

The descriptive findings further elaborate on respondents' motivations, behaviors, and preferences regarding their experience in Korea.

As shown in Table 4, nearly half of the participants (46.9%) reported being attracted to Korea due to a combination of popular elements such as K-drama scenery, K-cuisine, K-pop, beauty products, and celebrity culture. In comparison, 18.9% noted specific attractions that aligned with, but were not limited to, the listed categories. Regarding the length of stay, 38.3% had lived in Korea for less than two years, 37.2% between two and four years, and 24% for more than four years, suggesting a relatively balanced distribution of short- and long-term residents.

Travel enthusiasm within Korea was notably high, with 51% strongly agreeing and 26% agreeing that they enjoy traveling during their free time. When asked about their primary reason for choosing Korea, half (50%) cited traveling, followed by business opportunities (16.8%), and beauty enhancement (5.6%). A considerable proportion (27%) did not specify a particular reason.

Language support appears essential, as 42.6% of the respondents strongly agreed and 24.6% agreed that they rely on translation apps, indicating the prominence of language barriers and the necessity of technological assistance for communication.

In terms of travel information, the most trusted sources were travel applications (42.6%) and Google (26.2%), with lesser reliance on travel vlogs (14.9%), blogs (11.3%), and advertisements (5.2%).

Table 4. Reasons for traveling to Korea.

Item		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Korean Attraction	K-drama scenery	16	8.2
	Korean pop music	19	9.7
	Korean drama celebrities	1	0.5
	K-cuisine	17	8.7
	Korean cosmetics, make-up techniques, hair style quality	14	7.1
	All of the above	92	46.9
	Other reasons that are stated above	37	18.9
Main reason for choosing Korea	Traveling	98	50
	Business opportunity	33	16.8
	Beauty enhancement	11	5.6
	Work	1	0.5
	Not specify	53	27
I am using a translation app	Strongly disagree	14	7.2
	Disagree	6	3.1
	Partial disagree	15	7.7
	Partial agree	29	14.9
	Agree	48	24.6
	Strongly agree	83	42.6
The most reliable source for travel	Google	51	26.2
	Travel applications	83	42.6
	Travel blogs	22	11.3
	Travel vlogs	29	14.9
	Advertisement	10	5.2

4.3. Respondents' Experience of Coming to Korea

An open-ended item invited participants to describe tourism in Korea based on their personal experience. A total of 196 valid responses were collected. The data revealed a wide range of descriptions, with most terms mentioned only once. Only a few descriptors appeared more than once, including “Culture” (3.6 percent), “Good” (2.6 percent), “Beautiful” (1.0 percent), “Convenient” (1.0 percent), “Modern” (1.0 percent), “Interesting” (1.0 percent), and “Yes” (1.0 percent). The remaining 190 responses, which accounted for 96.9 percent, were unique expressions provided by individual respondents. Figure 2 shows a word cloud of the responses from the respondents.

**Figure 2.** Word Cloud.

A thematic analysis of these responses identified five main dimensions that reflect how tourists perceive Korea (see Table 5).

4.3.1. Cultural Appeal

Participants frequently highlighted Korea's cultural richness, using terms such as "culture," "traditional culture," "heritage," "Korean language," "cultural tourism," and "cultural experience." This suggests that cultural identity is a central factor influencing tourist impressions and overall satisfaction. This supports the goals outlined in South Korea's 4th Basic Plan for Cultural Policy (2023–2027), which promotes the globalization of *Hallyu* and increased support for local cultural tourism. The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST) has allocated substantial funding to programs such as the Visit Korean Heritage Campaign, aiming to connect cultural heritage sites with tourism circuits. These findings underscore the importance of expanding heritage tourism trails and investing in multilingual cultural interpretation.

4.3.2. Influence of Popular Culture and Modernization

Many responses referenced Korean popular culture through terms like "K-pop," "K-drama," "entertainment," "technology," and "fashion." These references indicate that Korean media and entertainment have played a significant role in shaping Korea's image as a contemporary and globally connected destination.

4.3.3. Natural and Scenic Attractions

Descriptions such as "beautiful scenery," "nature," "healing," and "relaxing place" reflect an appreciation for Korea's natural landscapes. Respondents valued the opportunity to engage with both rural and urban environments that offer aesthetic and calming experiences. This aligns with the Ministry of Environment's Eco-Tourism Promotion Policy, which integrates environmental protection with sustainable rural tourism. Moreover, Korea's Wellness Tourism Strategy, launched in partnership with the Korea Tourism Organization (KTO), directly targets this niche by promoting "healing forests," "temple stays," and "wellness villages" (Korea.net, 2019). Policymakers should strengthen inter-ministerial collaboration to ensure that infrastructure development in scenic regions does not compromise ecological integrity.

4.3.4. Tourist Convenience and Urban Infrastructure

Several respondents used terms like "convenient transportation," "clean," "tidy," "compact," and "comfortable" to describe the quality of infrastructure and services. This indicates a general satisfaction with the accessibility, cleanliness, and efficiency of Korea's tourism support systems. In addition to cultural exports, Korea's emphasis on digital transformation has further enhanced this modern image. National efforts to promote smart urban infrastructure, such as those outlined in the Smart City Korea initiative, reflect the government's commitment to integrating advanced technologies into everyday life and the tourism experience (Ministry of Land Infrastructure and Transport, 2025).

4.3.5. Shopping and Culinary Experiences

However, many of the respondents emphasized shopping and food as key tourism elements. Phrases such as "shopping destination," "food and culture," "gastronomy," and "street food" illustrate that Korea's retail and culinary offerings are important to the overall travel experience. This observation is consistent with national efforts to develop wellness tourism, in which culinary and consumer experiences are central. Government initiatives have identified 77 tourism sites nationwide to promote food, rest, and health-focused travel, further embedding gastronomy into Korea's strategic tourism portfolio (Korea.net, 2019).

Table 5. Tourism perception in Korea.

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Culture & tradition	39	31.2%
Nature & scenery	24	19.2%
Food & shopping	23	18.4%
Convenience & hospitality	20	16.0%
Entertainment & modern attractions	19	15.2%

Even though the overall sentiment was highly positive, a few responses reflected neutral or critical perspectives, such as “expensive and boring,” “not worthy,” or “no experience yet.” These accounted for less than two percent of the total responses, indicating that the overwhelming majority of participants viewed Korean tourism favorably.

This variety in perception highlights that Korea offers a multidimensional tourism experience. It combines rich heritage, global pop culture, modern infrastructure, and diverse activities. These findings align with previous studies that emphasize the role of cultural content and modern media in strengthening destination branding and influencing tourist behavior.

4.4. Mean Level of All Variables

The mean scores derived from the descriptive analysis offer a clear indication of the respondents’ levels of agreement with each destination attribute. In this study, a six-point Likert scale was employed, where a higher mean represents stronger agreement and thus a greater level of importance or appeal attributed to the respective attribute.

The highest mean was recorded for revisit intention ($M = 4.956$, $SD = 0.128$), signifying that respondents overwhelmingly expressed a strong willingness to return to South Korea in the future (see Table 6). This finding reflects a positive overall tourist experience, indicating a high degree of destination loyalty. Close to this, K-beauty products received the second-highest mean score ($M = 4.910$, $SD = 0.179$), suggesting that South Korea’s reputation in skincare, cosmetics, and beauty-related innovation significantly contributes to its attractiveness as a tourism destination. This aligns with previous findings that highlight beauty and wellness as prominent lifestyle-related motivators in travel decision-making.

K-drama scenery ($M = 4.800$, $SD = 0.327$) and K-cuisine ($M = 4.795$, $SD = 0.199$) were also evaluated positively, indicating that visual and gastronomic experiences remain integral components of Korea’s cultural tourism appeal. These elements not only reflect the influence of popular media but also provide tangible and immersive experiences that enhance the overall travel encounter.

K-drama celebrities received a mean of 4.733 ($SD = 0.245$), suggesting moderate agreement among respondents regarding the influence of celebrity culture. Although still favorable, this result implies that personal engagement with celebrities is a secondary factor compared to broader cultural or experiential elements. K-pop music, with the lowest mean score among the attributes ($M = 4.337$, $SD = 0.107$), was still positively viewed but ranked relatively lower. This may reflect variations in musical preferences or indicate that pop music alone does not serve as a primary motivator for travel, especially when compared to more immersive or lifestyle-related experiences.

Table 6. Descriptive analyses of all variables.

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Korean drama scenery	4.800	0.327
Korean pop music	4.337	0.107
Korean drama celebrities	4.733	0.245
K-cuisine	4.795	0.199
Korean beauty product	4.910	0.179
Revisit intention	4.956	0.128

The consistently high mean scores across all variables reveal strong and positive perceptions of South Korea's tourism offerings. The results highlight that revisiting intention and lifestyle-related attributes, particularly beauty products and food culture, serve as key elements influencing tourist satisfaction and loyalty. These findings underscore the importance of aligning tourism development strategies with user-driven experiences that blend cultural content with contemporary trends.

4.5. Inferential Analysis between the Independent Variables on the Dependent Variable

A multiple linear regression analysis examined the influence of five independent variables: K-drama scenery, K-pop music, K-drama celebrities, K-cuisine, and K-beauty products on revisit intention. The overall model (refer to Table 7) was statistically significant, $F(5, 190) = 65.091$, $p < .001$, indicating that the combination of these predictors significantly explained the variance in revisit intention among tourists.

Table 7. Model summary^b.

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R-squared	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics			
					R square change	F change	Df 2	Sig. F change
1	0.795 ^a	0.631	0.622	3.64213	0.631	65.091	190	<.001

The model summary (Refer to Table 8) revealed a strong coefficient of determination, with R-squared equal to 0.631. This suggests that the predictors included in the model can explain approximately 63.1 percent of the variance in revisit intention. The adjusted R-squared value was 0.622, indicating a well-fitted model that remains reliable when accounting for the number of predictors.

The analysis of variance confirmed the overall significance of the model. The regression sum of squares was 4317.195, substantially higher than the residual sum of squares, which was 2520.371. This indicates that the independent variables explained a large portion of the variability in revisit intention.

Table 8. ANOVA^a.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4317.195	5	863.439	65.091	<0.001 ^b
	Residual	2520.371	190	13.265		
	Total	6837.566	195			

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Revisit Intention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Korean Drama Scenery, Korean Pop Music, Korean Drama Celebrities, K-cuisine, Korean Beauty Product.

As shown in Table 9, the standardized beta coefficients indicate that K-beauty products ($\beta = 0.314$, $t = 4.267$, $p < 0.001$) and K-cuisine ($\beta = 0.251$, $t = 3.372$, $p < 0.001$) are the most significant predictors of revisit intention. These results highlight that tourists are particularly attracted to Korea's beauty and culinary offerings, which strongly influence their intention to return.

Although the standardized coefficients for K-drama celebrities ($\beta = 0.149$, $t = 1.708$, $p = 0.089$) and K-drama scenery ($\beta = 0.126$, $t = 1.750$, $p = 0.082$) were positive, their associated p-values exceeded the conventional alpha threshold of 0.05. This suggests that, after accounting for the other variables in the model, there is insufficient statistical evidence to conclude that these predictors exert a meaningful influence on revisit intention in the broader population. Similarly, K-pop music ($\beta = 0.064$, $t = 1.070$, $p = 0.286$) demonstrated the weakest relationship with revisit intention, with a p-value that further indicates a lack of compelling empirical support for its predictive utility in this context. While these variables may still hold conceptual or practical interest, the current data do not support rejecting the null hypothesis of no effect for these specific attributes.

Table 9. Coefficient summary.

Model	Standardized coefficient (Beta)	t-value	Significance
(Constant)		1.070	0.286
TOTB (Scenery)	0.126	1.750	0.082
TOTC (Music)	0.064	1.070	0.286
TOTD (Celebrities)	0.149	1.708	0.089
TOTE (Beauty)	0.314	4.267	< 0.001
TOTF (Cuisine)	0.251	3.372	< 0.001

Note: TOTB = K-drama scenery, TOTC = K-pop, TOTD = K-drama celebrities, TOTE = K-beauty products, TOTF = K-cuisine.

In contrast, all five attributes demonstrated positive associations with revisit intention; K-beauty and K-cuisine were the strongest predictors. These results emphasize the need for tourism marketers and destination planners to prioritize beauty and food-related offerings when designing promotional strategies aimed at encouraging return visits.

5. DISCUSSION

Several interesting findings were captured in this study. First, this study involved over 20 nationalities, mainly from China, Malaysia, Uzbekistan, and Nepal. Interestingly, their opinions are also reflected in their real-life experiences in Korea since many reside there for educational purposes. In line with most respondents (80% aged between 18 and 34), this study captures contemporary youth behavior after interacting with *Hallyu* through technology, travel, and consumer culture. The widespread use of translation apps (67%) acknowledges a functional adaptation of tourists and residents. These primary drivers from a younger demographic confirmed that *Hallyu* remains relevant. The results highlight the evolving motivations for tourism among international visitors, indicating that experiences centered on lifestyle, particularly K-beauty products and K-cuisine, are the most significant predictors of the intention to revisit. This suggests a shift from conventional sightseeing motivations towards more immersive, sensory-driven experiences influenced by *Hallyu*. In agreement with Saad et al. (2022) and Choe, Lee, and Park (2023), the impact of cultural immersion through K-dramas and K-cuisine fosters emotional connections and enhances the perception of the destination. Nevertheless, while the influence of K-pop culture is notable, this study uncovers a more complex hierarchy within *Hallyu* elements, revealing that K-pop and celebrity figures exert a relatively lesser effect on revisit intention. This finding aligns with Gomes and Lopes (2023), who contend that emotional engagement and the perceived value of local experiences are more critical in establishing destination loyalty than mere fandom. Notably, qualitative feedback indicated that infrastructure, convenience, and cultural richness are also vital to positive tourism experiences, emphasizing the role of functional attributes in determining overall satisfaction.

Moreover, the strong R^2 value (63.1%) validates the robustness of the model and corroborates earlier studies (e.g., Pavesi, Denizci Guillet, Smith, and Law (2022)), suggesting that revisit intention is predominantly influenced by satisfaction with lifestyle and identity-related tourism. However, a significant gap identified is the insufficient exploration of the effects of intercultural adaptation and language accessibility. Although 42.6% of participants utilized translation applications, this aspect is not included in the regression model, despite its importance in enhancing satisfaction. As noted by Kim and Jeon (2023), cultural familiarity boosts tourists' confidence and attachment to the destination, thereby increasing the likelihood of return visits. Consequently, forthcoming destination marketing strategies ought not only to enhance the allure of beauty and gastronomy as attractions for tourism but also to incorporate support for intercultural communication. Tourism authorities may utilize digital platforms to offer multilingual assistance, encourage local engagement, and develop culturally adaptable experiences, thereby reinforcing destination loyalty that transcends the mere aesthetic charm of *Hallyu*.

This study theoretically highlights immersive tourism motivations within *Hallyu* toward Korean lifestyles. Specifically, the trend in K-beauty products and cuisines emphasizes the evolving nature of cultural immersion within

the *Hallyu* framework. Practically, this result also urges tourism stakeholders to improve K-beauty and K-cuisine experiences, their infrastructure, and support intercultural communication.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study primarily involves a young, multicultural demographic analyzed through the S-O-R model to investigate factors influencing repeat visitation to South Korea. Destination attributes such as K-drama scenery, K-pop music, K-drama celebrities, K-cuisine, K-beauty products, and the quality of make-up and hairstyling services serve as external stimuli. These *Hallyu* factors reflect the admiration for South Korea's aesthetic experience, as evidenced by open-ended feedback that shapes international visitors' internal responses, including perceptions, emotions, and destination evaluations. The findings suggest that the destination image, from the perspective of youth behavior and formed through these cultural and experiential features, is the most influential factor driving repeat visits; it also aligns with the response of the S-O-R model. Applying the S-O-R model helps explain how specific attractions contribute to positive tourist experiences, leading to a stronger intention to revisit South Korea. Therefore, targeted marketing strategies should be intensified to further develop this market segment among youth. Consequently, destination developers should consider attributes that position South Korea as a repeat tourism destination to enhance revisit intentions and gain competitive advantages. This study focused solely on international visitors to *Hallyu*, capturing data from more than 20 nationalities; however, the findings are limited as they may not reflect the full range of visitor experiences across various countries. Future research could examine how destination image varies between first-time visitors and foreign residents or focus on specific regional tourism to better understand perceptions and preferences.

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