

From fans to visitors: The influence of K-pop transmedia contents on the behavioral intention of Japanese users

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the global popularity of KPOP and other forms of Hallyu culture has brought an increasing number of young people from around the world to visit Korea. According to a survey conducted by Korea Tourism Organization (2024), 31.9% of foreign tourists chose “Hallyu contents” as the reason for their interest in traveling to Korea. In addition, foreign tourists under 30 years old who visited Korea in 2023 accounted for one-third of the total (Korea Tourism Organization, 2024). In other words, Hallyu content is having a decisive influence on the visits to Korea by the world's youth.

Against this background, Japan is promoting Korean culture to Japanese youth with the fourth Hallyu boom, which has brought Hallyu content to the forefront. One of these contents is KPOP transmedia content, which is content created based on KPOP. KPOP transmedia content represents a typical storytelling method by KPOP idols who have constructed their own story world (Choi & Ko, 2021). An important element of this content is to complete a unique worldview through the continuous expansion of KPOP idol storytelling, while also fulfilling the marketing aspect of building and inducing fan immersion (Choi & Ko, 2021). Therefore, entertainment companies that produce KPOP transmedia contents are engaged in various commercial activities such as merchandising goods, holding pop-up store, and holding exhibitions of contents by amusement parks through collaborations with other companies (HYBE JAPAN Inc, 2024). In this way, KPOP transmedia content is appealing to users not only through the enjoyment of the content itself, but also through multifaceted collaboration with other content, and is bringing interest in Korea.

Nevertheless, little empirical research has been conducted in Japan on KPOP transmedia content and the behavioral intentions of its users, so we feel that more research is needed. In particular, Japan holds a significant position in the KPOP market, making it crucial to understand Japanese users' intentions toward KPOP and related content. Therefore, this study examines how KPOP transmedia content influences Japanese users' perceived enjoyment and behavioral intentions. Based on the background, this study aims to conduct a quantitative analysis of the behavioral intentions of users of KPOP transmedia content toward tourist destinations in Korea where such content is utilized.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Characteristics of KPOP Transmedia Contents. Transmedia storytelling refers to content that comprehensively develops products, services, and promotions by integrating multiple different media channels (Jenkins, 2006). KPOP transmedia content, derived from KPOP, has a short history of production and dissemination, so qualitative studies that analyze the content itself rather than empirical studies that focus on the users have been the mainstream. Wu et al. (2022) analyzed how transmedia storytelling characteristics (enjoyability, participation, immersion and emotional stimulation) correlate with idols' brand image, brand assets, and attitudes, and found positive effects on each factor.

Perceived Enjoyment. Perceived enjoyment refers to the intrinsic satisfaction or pleasure that users derive from using a system or content. Van der Heijden (2004) demonstrated that, in the context of enjoyability information systems, perceived enjoyment significantly influences users' intentions to use the system, stating that users' enjoyment strengthens their motivation for long-term use and reuse. Chen et al. (2014) analyzed the influence of blog features on users' perceived enjoyment and their behavioral intentions, finding significant positive effects for each factor. Similarly, Li and Chen (2019) examined the effects of perceived emotions in virtual reality on both perceived enjoyment and behavioral intention, and indicate significant positive effects influenced for each factor. Thus, previous research suggests that content usage significantly affects users' perceived enjoyment. Therefore, KPOP transmedia content may also have a significant positive impact on behavioral intention by influencing perceived enjoyment.

Visit Intention. Studies investigating the influence of Hallyu content on the intention to visit Korea (Kim, 2012; Lee et al., 2016) have examined how users' attitudes toward such content affect the national image and the intention to visit Korea. For example, Lee et al. (2016) found that Chinese users' satisfaction with Hallyu content significantly influenced both their perception of Korea's national image and their intention to visit the country. In other words, the use of a specific nation's cultural content contributes to shaping its brand image and has a substantial impact on consumers' consumption and behavioral intentions toward that nation. Therefore, the use of KPOP transmedia content is expected to be significantly correlated with users' intention to visit.

eWOM Intention. Word-of-mouth intention refers to the behavior of sharing an individual's experiences with a particular company, product, or service with a broad audience (Walsh & Mitchell, 2010). Chatterjee (2001) found that many users actively seek the opinions of those who have previously used a product before making a purchase decision. Moreover, users without firsthand experience tend to rely on the recommendations of experienced users, which often influences their purchasing behavior. Thus, user word-of-mouth plays a critical role in commerce. Lam et al. (2025) analyzed how Generation Z tourists' satisfaction with the homestay experiences affects their eWOM intention, finding significant positive effects.

Idol Brand Recognition. Brand recognition is the ability of users to identify and recall a brand (Aaker, 1996). Brand recognition also refers to the user's ability to remember information about a brand through a three-step process involving learning, consideration, and selection (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020). When users' perceptions of a brand are consistent with their personal and social self-concepts, they tend to consume that brand for purposes of self-improvement, self-expression, and social adaptation (Shavitt, 1989; Thomson, 2006). In other words, when users align with their self-image and resonate with an idol brand, they may increase their preference for that brand, which in turn may influence their use of related content.

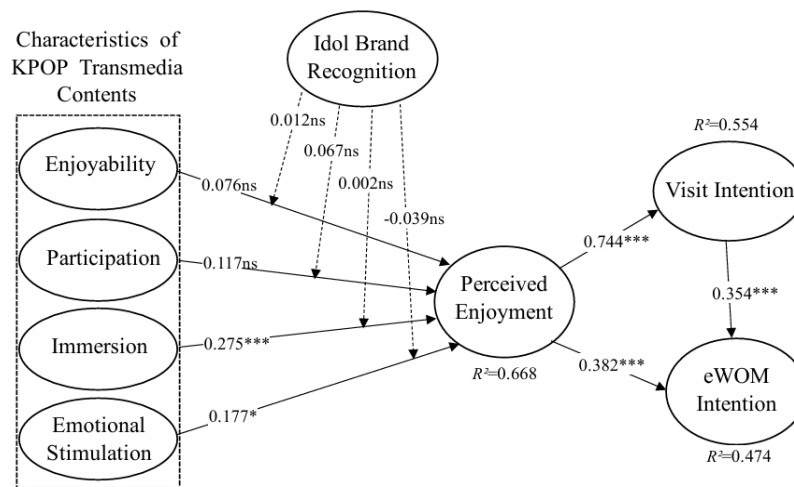
METHOD

The primary participants of this study were Japanese users, both male and female, ranging in age from teenagers to individuals in their 40s. All participants have known KPOP idol Enhypen and have experience reading KPOP transmedia content DARK MOON related to Enhypen. Data were collected in April 2025 through an online survey administered by the Japanese research company Freeasy, which ensured a balanced distribution across age and gender groups. Measurement items for the survey were formulated using a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). Additionally, SmartPLS (version 4.1.1.2) was used to perform test PLS algorithm and bootstrapping (5000 subsamples).

FINDING

After data collection, Responses with no variance across all items with a standard deviation 0 were excluded, leaving 244 valid responses from the original 286 participants. The respondents comprised 87 males and 157 females. Through analysis of the measurement model, the constructs demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.60$, CR > 0.70), convergent validity (AVE > 0.50), and discriminant validity (the square root of the AVE of each construct exceeded the inter-construct correlations). Additionally, all outer loadings were statistically significant and exceeded the threshold of 0.70. The structural model using the total sample was assessed based on PLS estimation. The standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) was 0.086, which is below the recommended threshold of 0.10, indicating a good model fit. Both inner and outer variance inflation factor (VIF) values were below 5, suggesting that multicollinearity was not a concern. The proposed research model demonstrated relatively moderate explanatory power, with R^2 values of 0.668 for perceived enjoyment, 0.554 for visit intention, and 0.474 for eWOM intention. Furthermore, results from the blindfolding procedure showed that all Q^2 values exceeded zero ($Q^2 = 0.617$ for perceived enjoyment, 0.578 for visit intention, and 0.471 for eWOM intention), indicating sufficient predictive relevance of the exogenous latent variables.

The results of the hypothesis testing are summarized in Figure 1. Among the eleven hypothesized direct paths, five were found to be statistically significant and thus supported.



Note: *** $p < 0.001$; * $p < 0.05$; ns=non-significant

Figure 1. Result of Structural Model Testing

IMPLICATIONS

This study offers an academic contribution by examining the impact of KPOP-related content on users' behavioral intentions. The analysis revealed that content immersion and emotional stimulation positively influence users' perceived enjoyment, which in turn significantly affects their behavioral intentions. This suggests that users' enjoyment of KPOP transmedia content reflects a broader interest in Korea, including the content itself, and that such enjoyment may lead to behaviors like eWOM and potential visits to Korea. Meanwhile, the moderating effect of idol brand recognition was not significant. This implies that users perceive KPOP transmedia content as a separate cultural experience, independent of their recognition of the idol featured in the content.

From a practical perspective, the following two aspects could be taken into consideration. First, marketing using KPOP transmedia content has application potential for promoting cross-border tourism. Second, understanding the characteristics of Japanese user about KPOP transmedia content can help inform marketing strategies in the Japanese market.

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