

## Effects of Frequency of Viewing Korean Film on Preference for Korea and Intention to Visit Korea

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ผลกระทบของความถี่ในการชมภาพยนตร์เกาหลีต่อความชื่นชอบประเทศเกาหลีและความตั้งใจที่จะเดินทางไปท่องเที่ยวประเทศเกาหลี

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### Abstract

Korean film has been very popular in many Asian countries including Thailand. Past research indicated that film could enhance destination preference and increase intention to visit to the featured destinations. Those who were exposed to film would form positive attitudes towards destinations featured in film and would be likely to visit the destinations. To date, this notion has hardly been empirically tested on the differences between viewers and non-viewers. This study included a group of non-viewers of Korean film and two groups of viewers who had low and high frequency of viewing Korean film to study the effects of frequency of viewing Korean film. Data were collected at Suvarnabhumi Airport including 610 Thai tourists who were leaving for any possible countries. This study aimed to test whether the frequency of viewing Korean film increased the preference for Korea and intention to visit Korea. The results showed that the higher the frequency of viewing Korean film, the higher the preference for Korea and the intention to visit Korea.

**Keywords :** Korean film, film tourism, destination choice

### บทคัดย่อ

ภาพยนตร์เกาหลีได้รับความนิยมเป็นอย่างมากในประเทศแถบเอเชียรวมทั้งประเทศไทย งานวิจัยในอดีตได้ระบุว่าภาพยนตร์สามารถทำให้เกิดความชื่นชอบในสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวและเพิ่มความตั้งใจที่จะเดินทางไปท่องเที่ยวยังสถานที่ที่ถ่ายทำภาพยนตร์ ผู้ที่เข้าชมภาพยนตร์จะมีทัศนคติในเชิงบวกต่อสถานที่ถ่ายทำภาพยนตร์และมีแนวโน้มที่จะเดินทางไปท่องเที่ยวยังสถานที่ถ่ายทำภาพยนตร์ ในปัจจุบันความคิดนี้ยังไม่ได้มี การศึกษาวิจัยเปรียบเทียบระหว่างผู้ที่ชมและยังไม่ได้ชมภาพยนตร์ งานวิจัยนี้จึงได้ทำการศึกษาผลกระทบของความถี่ของการชมภาพยนตร์เกาหลีระหว่างคน 3 กลุ่ม คือ กลุ่มผู้ที่ไม่เคยชมภาพยนตร์เกาหลี กลุ่มผู้ชมภาพยนตร์เกาหลีเป็นจำนวนน้อย และกลุ่มผู้ชมภาพยนตร์เกาหลีเป็นจำนวนมาก งานวิจัยนี้ได้ดำเนินการเก็บข้อมูลที่สนามบินสุวรรณภูมิกับกลุ่มตัวอย่างที่เป็นนักท่องเที่ยวชาวไทย ซึ่งกำลังจะเดินทางไปต่างประเทศซึ่งอาจเป็นประเทศใดก็ได้ จำนวน 610 คน วัตถุประสงค์ของงานวิจัยคือการทดสอบว่าความถี่ของการชมภาพยนตร์เกาหลีจะสร้างความชื่นชอบประเทศเกาหลีและความตั้งใจที่จะเดินทางไปท่องเที่ยวยังประเทศเกาหลีมีเพิ่มมากขึ้นได้หรือไม่ ซึ่งผลของการวิจัยพบว่า เมื่อความถี่ของการชมภาพยนตร์เกาหลีเพิ่มขึ้น ความชื่นชอบประเทศเกาหลีและความตั้งใจที่จะเดินทางไปท่องเที่ยวยังประเทศเกาหลีจะมีเพิ่มมากขึ้น

**คำสำคัญ :** ภาพยนตร์เกาหลี การท่องเที่ยวเชิงภาพยนตร์ การเลือกแหล่งท่องเที่ยว

## Introduction

Film tourism as a form of cultural tourism is a relatively niche tourism. Film tourism includes the visits to the destination due to the influence of television, video and DVD (Beeton, 2005). It can be used to build awareness and promote unknown tourist destinations (Connell, 2012). Film tourism can provide publicity and increase the cultural value and meanings for the filmed location (Couldry, 1998). Many filmed locations gain popularity after the film release because these places become meaningful through film narration (Busby & Klug, 2001).

Recently, there has been an increasing number of tourists visiting destinations featured through film. This phenomenon is called film-induced tourism or movie-induced tourism. Many countries such as United Kingdom, United States, Australia, New Zealand and Korea have benefited from attracting a large number of visitors by the release of films. Visiting filmed locations can be an all-year tourist attraction (Beeton, 2004). If this notion is empirically supported, Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) may consider employing film to increase number of tourist arrivals and tourism revenues for the destination.

Over the past several years, an increasing of Korean culture including film, television series, pop songs has been very well received by many Asian countries including Thailand. The rise of this popular culture so called 'Korean wave or Hallyu or Hanryu' has been successful cultural export for Korea. Korean film has created 'Korean fever' among Asians from food, music and ultimately their intention to visit Korea. The tourism statistics of outgoing Thai tourists visiting Korea (Department of Tourism, 2016) showed that the number of Thai tourists visiting Korea steadily increased from 44,964 in 2001 to 100,336 in 2009, an increase of 123% and dramatically increased from 100,336 in 2009 to 235,984 in 2015, an increase of 225%.

Due to the popularity of Korean film in Asia, particularly Thailand, and the increasing number of Thais visiting Korea as discussed, the research question of this study is whether the frequency of viewing Korean film can increase preference for Korea and intention to visit Korea. There are two purposes of this research. The first is to examine the effects of frequency of viewing Korean film on preference for Korea. The second is to investigate the effects of frequency of viewing Korean film on intention to visit Korea. The study would provide theoretical contributions to advance our present understanding of the effects of viewing film on tourist decision and practical contributions for Tourism Authority of Thailand to consider using film as an alternative avenue to promote Thai tourism.

## Research Hypotheses

Previous research suggested that film could enhance destination preference and increase intention to visit the destination (Riley & Van Doren, 1992; Iwashita, 2006; Hao & Ryan, 2013). Those who were exposed to film would be more familiar with destinations (Iwashita, 2008) and would be likely to visit destinations featured through film (Butler, 1990; Kim & Richardson, 2003). Two hypotheses of the study were therefore formulated as follows:

H1: Higher frequency of viewing Korean film increases preference for Korea.

H2: Higher frequency of viewing Korean film increases intention to visit Korea.

From the hypotheses formulated above, the study has one main independent variable (frequency of viewing Korean film). The study observes the influence of an independent variable on two dependent variables; preference for Korea and intention to visit Korea.

## Literature Review

Film tourism has received much attention as an emerging area in tourism research. Butler (1990) stated that film influenced travel preference of those who were exposed to the destination since film provided knowledge of destination attributes resulting in positive attitudes towards the country. Interest and positive image of the destination could lead to an actual visit to the country (Iwashita, 2006). Although past studies suggested that film could enhance the destination preference and increase the interest of visiting the destinations, there are limited studies to test the effects of viewing film on tourist decision by comparing the results of those who watch film and those who do not watch film. In addition, most of film tourism studies were conducted at filmed locations. This research questions whether it is valid to study those who had strong interest in particular film and had already decided to visit the destinations and then drew a conclusion from such findings that film had the influence on their destination choice. The study related to film tourism need to be further researched in a forward-thinking manner to provide a better understanding and valid conclusion on the influence of film on the destination choice (Beeton, 2010). The improvement of the methodological approach would provide theoretical and practical insights on the effects of film on tourist decision.

Research themes in film tourism research

The research interests in film tourism are mostly related to three main research themes; film tourists, tourism marketing and tourist decision-making (Connell, 2012).

The first research theme is related to film tourists. Past studies focused on a specific group of tourists visiting the film locations (e.g. Beeton, 2001; Busby & Klug, 2001) or explored the profiles of the film tourists (e.g. Kim et al., 2010; Kim & O'Connor, 2011) or examined tourist experience at the film locations (e.g. Kim et al., 2007; Roesch, 2009). The second research theme is tourism marketing focusing on the development of marketing ideas (e.g. Connell, 2005; Hudson & Ritchie, 2006) or the role of destination image in decision-making (e.g. Frost, 2006; Shani et al., 2009). Iwashita (2008) indicated that film could shape destination image, and influence perception of the destination while Kim and Richardson (2003) suggested that people who saw places featured in the film were more interested to visit the places than those who did not see the film. The third research theme is related to the area of tourist decision-making. Past studies showed that film could be a marketing tool to raise awareness and familiarity of the destination (Croy & Heitmann, 2011), to enhance destination image of the unknown destination to popular film destination (Frost, 2010) as well as to increase film tourism to the filmed destination (Hao & Ryan, 2013).

Despite the benefits of film on tourism promotion, empirical studies to examine the effects of film on the tourist decision are still very limited. The present understanding of this area is still lacking. Connell (2012) commented that more work should be further validated on the film tourists versus the non-film tourists so as to generalise the findings on this respect.

#### Korean film tourism research

From the late 2000s, there were several research papers published in international journals focusing on Korean film. Kim et al. (2007) found that drama series helped forming the image of Korea. Kim and O'Connor (2011) compared the profiles of international film tourists induced by drama series of 'Daejanggeum'. Kim and Wang (2012) found that the level of media exposure influenced audience involvement and film location experience. The results of Rajaguru (2014) showed that the visual and vocal effects influenced intention to visit Korea. Rittichainuwat and Rattanaphinanchai (2015) indicated that specific film tourist showed higher travel motivations associated with a particular film than the general film tourist. Emotional attachment to film would turn viewers into specific film tourists (Kim, 2012).

Due to the popularity of Korean film in Thailand, several past studies provided insights into the impact of Korean film on Thai viewers in many ways. Inchan (2013) found that most Thai respondents liked the plot and film setting of Korean film while Chuttsakulphairatch (2014) indicated that the continuity of watching and the duration

of watching significantly related to culture imitation and value assimilation. Korea was perceived as a famous film setting in which many Thai tourists want to visit (Bunnag & Sabaiwan, 2016) and the exposure to Korean film influenced on the intention to travel to Korea (Suebsawasde, 2008).

Although there is a progress in Korean film research in Thailand, it is observed that studies on the frequency of viewing Korean film on tourist decision are still limited. Moreover, there are two suggestions to advance research on the effects of film on tourism. First, the research design should be further developed to examine the effects of film on the actual choice of destination. Second, data should be collected from the potential tourists who have resources to purchase the overseas trips in order to truly examine the actual destination choice (Butler, 1990).

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a cross sectional survey adopting the fundamental concepts of a three-group between subject quasi-experimental design. In this study, viewing film did not occur in the controlled lab experiment but was a natural treatment in which the respondents viewed Korean film during their own free time. An independent variable is the frequency of viewing Korean film which has three levels; do not watch Korean film (None), low frequency of viewing Korean film (Low) and high frequency of viewing Korean film (High). Classification of these levels will be discussed in the next section. The study observed the influence of an independent variable on the two dependent variables, namely, preference for Korea and intention to visit Korea.

### **Sample and Data Collection**

Data were collected at Suvarnabhumi International Airport and the sampling frame of the study was Thai tourists aged at least 20 years old who were leaving for any possible overseas destinations. The sample size was 610. This study employed a multi-stage sampling technique to collect data. First, simple random sampling technique was used to select 7 days in a month to collect data. Second, systematic random sampling was used to collect data for every other departure gate for each day of data collection. Third, systematic random sampling was used to select every fifth passenger to complete the questionnaire. The researcher requested the permission from Airport Authority of Thailand to collect data in front of the departure gates. The completion of the self-reported questionnaire did not take longer than 12 minutes. A total of 700 questionnaires were distributed to the voluntary participants and 620 questionnaires

were returned. The response rate was 88.57%. There were only 610 questionnaires usable for data analyses.

#### Instrument

This study used a questionnaire survey as a measurement. Measurement scales from past studies were adopted for the study and panel of experts were also consulted to check content validity and to review the scales. Furthermore, the questionnaire was approved by University Ethics Committee for Human Research before collecting data.

In this study, the measurement of frequency of viewing Korean film was adopted from Kim & O'Connor (2011) using one item to ask for the number of Korean film the respondents had viewed from television, DVD, cable TV, satellite TV, internet or cinema. The measurement of preference for Korea, the strengths of attitude towards Korea as a tourist destination, was adopted from Kim et al. (2008). This study developed three items by asking the respondents to rate on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from agree the least (1) to agree the most (5) on the three statements; (a) I think Korea is an interesting destination (b) Whenever I would like to travel overseas, I will think of Korea and (c) I think Korea is an attractive tourist destination. The reliability of this scale was tested and Cronbach alpha was 0.88, showing the internal consistency of the scale. Intention to visit Korea, perceived likelihood of visiting Korea for holiday, was developed from past studies (Hahm & Wang, 2011; Kim, 2012) using three items. Similarly to the measurement scale of preference for Korea, the respondents were also asked to rate on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from agree the least (1) to agree the most (5) on the three statements: (a) I intend to travel to Korea for my holiday (b) I plan to visit Korea and have information about Korea and (c) I have the tendency to visit Korea. The reliability of this scale was tested and Cronbach alpha was 0.92, showing the internal consistency of the scale.

## Research Findings

### Sample Profiles

The sample consisted of 610 respondents. Two-thirds of the respondents (65.9%) were female. A little over half of the respondents (55.2%) fell between the age range between 20 and 39 years old. Almost half of the respondents (47.0%) was single and almost the other half (47.7%) was married. Regarding education background, over two-thirds of the respondents (77.7%) held at least a bachelor degree. For occupation, a little over half of the respondents (55.7%) worked in the business sector. Over half of the respondents (54.7%) had monthly income between 20,001-60,000 baht.

#### Frequency of viewing Korean film

Around one-third of the respondents (31.3%) did not watch Korean film while around two-thirds (68.7%) of the respondents watched Korean film. The number of film watched ranged from 1 to 100 films. The mean of number of film watched was 9.20 (SD=13.49). To prepare the main independent variable for statistical analyses, the number of Korean film watched was divided into three groups; 'none' group - did not watch Korean film (31.3%), 'low' group - watched 1-5 Korean films (39.7%) and 'high' group - watched more than 5 Korean films (29%). Each group consisted of approximately one-third of the total respondents.

#### Effects of frequency of viewing Korean film on destination preference and intention to visit

One way MANOVA was used to test the two hypotheses. The first hypothesis predicted that higher frequency of viewing Korean film increased preference for Korea. The second hypothesis predicted that higher frequency of viewing Korean film increased intention to visit Korea. The multivariate results were significant, Wilk's Lambda=.86,  $F(4, 1212)=23.08, p=.00$ .

For the first hypothesis, follow-up univariate ANOVAs showed that there were significant differences between the three groups on preference for Korea,  $F(2, 607)=40.18, p=.00$ . The mean ratings for three groups were non-viewers group ( $M=2.98, SD=0.89$ ), viewers with low frequency group ( $M=3.42, SD=0.67$ ) and viewers with high frequency group ( $M=3.67, SD=0.68$ ). The results suggested that those who watched Korean film had higher preference for Korea than those who did not watch Korean film. Scheffe post hoc tests were conducted in all possible pairwise contrasts. Three pairs of groups were found to be significant ( $p=.00$ ). Those who watched Korean film perceived higher preference for Korea than those who did not watch Korean film. The mean difference between those who did not watch Korean film (None) and those who watched 1-5 Korean films (Low) was 0.44. On the other hand, the mean difference between those who did not watch Korean film (None) and those who watched more than 5 Korean films (High) was 0.69. This revealed that the frequency of viewing Korean film had a significant effect on preference for Korea. The tests also showed that those who watched more than 5 Korean films (High) perceived higher preference for Korea than those who watched 1-5 Korean films (Low). The mean difference between these two groups was 0.25. Therefore, higher frequency of viewing Korean film increased preference for Korea and thus the first hypothesis was accepted. Table 1 shows mean differences for preference for Korea.

Table 1 Mean differences for preference for Korea

Group	Mean	Low - None	High - None	High - Low
None	2.98	-	-	-
Low (watch 1-5 film)	3.42	.44*	-	-
High (watch more than 5 film)	3.67	-	.69*	.25*

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

For the second hypothesis, follow-up univariate ANOVAs showed that there were significant differences between the three groups on intention to visit,  $F(2, 607)=45.43, p=.00$ . The mean ratings for three groups were non-viewers group ( $M=2.69, SD=0.99$ ), viewers with low frequency group ( $M=3.26, SD=0.86$ ), viewers with high frequency group ( $M=3.55, SD=0.83$ ). The results suggested that those who watched Korean film had higher intention to visit Korea than those who did not watch Korean film.

Scheffe post hoc tests were conducted in all possible pairwise contrasts. Three pairs of groups were found to be significant ( $p=.00$ ). Those who watched Korean film (Low and High) perceived higher intention to visit Korea than those who did not watch Korean film (None). The mean difference between those who did not watch Korean film (None) and those who watched 1-5 Korean films (Low) was 0.57. On the other hand, the mean difference between those who did not watch Korean film (None) and those who watched more than 5 Korean films (High) was 0.86. This revealed that the frequency of viewing Korean film had a significant effect on intention to visit Korea. The tests further showed that those who watched more than 5 Korean films (High) had higher intention to visit Korea than those who watched 1-5 Korean films (Low). The mean difference between these two groups was 0.29. In other words, higher frequency of viewing Korean film increased intention to visit Korea. Therefore, the second hypothesis was accepted. Table 2 shows mean differences for intention to visit Korea.

Table 2 Mean differences for intention to visit Korea

Group	Mean	Low - None	High - None	High - Low
None	2.98	-	-	-
Low (watch 1-5 film)	3.42	.44*	-	-
High (watch more than 5 film)	3.67	-	.69*	.25*

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

## Discussion

The findings supported the two proposed hypotheses predicting that the higher the frequency of viewing Korean film increased preference for Korea and intention to visit Korea. Those who did not watch Korean film perceived the lowest preference for Korea as well as intention to visit Korea. Preference and intention to visit increased in the groups who watched Korean film. Furthermore, the higher the number of Korean films the respondents viewed, the higher preference for Korea and intention to visit Korea perceived. The results showed that the frequency of viewing Korean film had a significant effect on both preference for Korea and intention to visit Korea.

Past studies conducted at filmed locations (e.g. Kim et al., 2010; Kim & O'Connor, 2011) provided evidences that film could increase tourists to filmed locations. The results confirmed past studies that exposure to film could enhance preference and interest to visit the destination (Butler, 1990; Iwashita, 2006; Hao & Ryan, 2013). Past studies, however, only included film viewers or students as the sample in which Connell (2012) criticized that such designs would lead to the misleading results. The present study made attempts to improve the research design by including a group of non-viewers and collecting data from those who have the potentials and resources to travel overseas. This study empirically supported the notion that viewers who saw the destinations featured in film were more likely to visit the destinations than those who had never watched the film (Kim & Richardson, 2003). This study provided further insights to the present understanding of the effects of viewing film that as the number of film viewed increased, the destination preference and intention to visit Korea would increase.

## Conclusion

This study showed that the frequency of viewing Korean film had a significant effect on both preference for Korea and intention to visit Korea. It further found that the higher the frequency of viewing Korean film increased preference for Korea and intention to visit Korea. This study provides contributions in three folds. First, it provides theoretical contribution to the present understanding of the effects of film on tourist decision. Past studies suggested that film could enhance preference and increase intention to visit. To date, this notion has hardly been tested on the differences between viewers and non-viewers. This study provides further evidence that there is a significant difference between viewers and non-viewers on destination preference and intention to visit. Second, it provides methodological contribution by introducing an alternative research design to test the effects of film to support the results of past studies which

their methodological issues remain questionable. This study included a group of non-viewers of Korean film and two groups of viewers who had low and high frequency of viewing Korean film. The difference between the results of two groups can be compared and the effects of viewing Korean film can be drawn from such a design. Third, the study provides practical contributions for DMOs that film has the effects on destination selection. Those who were exposed to the film tended to favour the destinations and were likely to visit the destination. This study also reveals that the frequency of the exposure with the destination through film can increase destination preference and intention to visit.

### **Recommendations**

Recommendations for future studies can be on replication of the study with different nationalities of tourists or at different geographical locations. Research design can be further developed by using the true experiment design. Future studies include the pre-test, the treatment and the post-test. Recommendations for Tourism Authority of Thailand and Ministry of Tourism and Sports would be on the benefits of film as a powerful marketing strategy for tourism product placement. Film can be used to build awareness of destination and provide knowledge of destination attributes such as scenery, nature, culture, food and people. Consistently providing the potential tourists with positive destination image can help the potential tourists form positive attitudes towards the featured destination. Lesson learned from Korean film can provide insights for Thailand and other countries to consider using film to promote both known and unknown tourist attractions.

### **Acknowledgements**

This paper is part of the research report on “Effects of frequency of viewing Korean film on destination choice” funded by Bangkok University. This research was presented in 12th Asia Pacific CHRIE 2014 Conference. The researcher would like to thank Bangkok University for funding this research project, Bangkok University Ethics Committee for Human Research, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yothin Sawangdee and all reviewers for their valuable comments.

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