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INFLUENCE OF THE KOREAN WAVE ON PURCHASING INTENTIONS OF KOREAN PRODUCTS

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Abstract

This study aims to identify whether the Korean waves (K-Drama, K-Pop, K-Food, K-Beauty and K-Fashion) and gender influences consumers purchasing intention for Korean products. This study used a quantitative research method to gather quantifiable data from the online survey with a total of 252 respondents who participated in the survey. High quality, beauty, and trend were the top three considered factors when purchasing Korean products. The study also found that Korean products are mostly bought once a month, with a monthly spending of less than RM 50. Multiple linear regression was used to determine the significant influences of the Korean Wave and gender on consumer's purchasing intention for Korean products. The results showed that only K-Drama, K-Beauty and K-Fashion have a significant influence on consumers' buying intention towards Korean products that they have purchased. The study also found no significant difference in students' purchasing intentions for Korean products among the three faculties (Kolej Pengajian Pengkomputeran Informatik dan Matematik(KPPIM), Fakulti Sains Pentadbiran dan Pengajian Polisi(FSPPP), Fakulti Sukan dan Rekreasi(FSR)), suggesting faculty affiliation doesn't impact their purchasing decisions. Therefore, the facilitated digital era plays an important role in spreading Korean content on social media and plays a vital role in influencing consumer's purchasing intention. Researchers suggested that, should use a larger sample size and longitudinal studies to understand the effects of the Korean Wave on youth purchasing behaviors. As a result, this research can gain insight into how the Korean wave influences consumer purchasing patterns and the intention to purchase Korean products.

Keywords: Korean wave, K-Drama, K-Pop, K-Food, K-Beauty, K-Fashion, Purchasing intention

1. Introduction

The Korean Wave, also known as Hallyu in Chinese, has gained global popularity due to its blend of entertainment, culture, and lifestyle. South Korea's cultural representations are increasingly popular among the younger generation, resulting in a growing interest in Korean culture in Malaysia (Zainia et al., 2020). In the late 1990s, during South Korea's financial crisis, the Korean Government introduced the Korean Wave as a soft power tool (Jang and Paik, 2012). It has spread to Southeast Asia regions, including Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia (Suh et al., 2006).

In Malaysia, the Korean Wave was introduced by a Korean drama called "Winter Sonata" in 2004. In the mid-2000s, K-pop groups such as TVXQ, Super Junior, and Girls' Generation has also gained dedicated fans. Throughout the past few years, Korean entertainment has greatly influenced cultural shifts. The popularity of the Korean Wave has also influenced consumers'

purchasing intention across various Korean product categories (Yu et al., 2012). Korean food (K-Food) has been loved by all Malaysians since its premiere as prime-time television. The fascination with Korean entertainment, including Korean Pop (K-pop) sensations and immersive Korean dramas (K-dramas), has witnessed a notable upswing in Malaysia. Lidwina (2021) also found that Malaysia has the sixth-highest percentage of consumers interested in purchasing Korean products. There are a few tangles of influences influencing Hallyu's relationship with Malaysian consumer intentions. From skincare and cosmetics to fashion and electronics, music, and food, Korean products have found a willing market. Korean content and its promotion are immensely important to spreading Korean content among Malaysian fans, enhancing the Korean Wave's influence and consumers perceptions of Korean products.

Among the goals of the study are to describe consumer patterns of purchasing Korean products, determine the influence of the Korean Wave and gender on consumer purchases of Korean products, and determine if faculty differences affect consumers' purchasing intentions which includes Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation Association (FSR), College of Computing, Informatics and Mathematics (KPPIM) and Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies (FSPPP). Understanding how the Korean Wave affects youth purchasing intention is important. It shows how media and entertainment shape both cultural and economic landscapes by influencing people's tastes and purchasing intention. Due to youths' exposure to new trends and cultural influences, purchasing intention is significantly impacted. Businesses can tailor their marketing strategies by understanding what motivates young people to buy these goods.

2. Literature Review

Originating from South Korea's entertainment industry, Hallyu has evolved into a global force influencing consumer behavior and intentions to purchase Korean products. This literature review aims to examine existing research and hypotheses that highlight the multifaceted influence of the Korean Wave on consumer purchase intentions.Consumer purchase intention measures the desire and tendency to buy a product or service within a specific time frame (Smith, 2023). Several studies have examined how various factors influence purchase intentions, especially in the context of Korean culture and its global impact.

Research by Ing et al. (2018) revealed that the Korean Wave significantly affects attitudes toward Korean products among global consumers familiar with Korean culture. For example, Kwon and Lee (2012) reported that Korean dramas generated $133 million in income in 2010, up from $105 million in 2008. These dramas often feature cultural items and paid product placements, which attract young consumers and encourage them to purchase the featured products (Che Wan Mohd Khair, 2022).Additionally, elements of K-Drama and K-pop, such as idols with fashionable appearances and attractive looks, increase imitation, intention, and positive attitudes toward Korean products (Palasendaram, 2023). By contextualizing and visualizing cultural and entertainment exports with growing global appeal, K-pop significantly impacts the business world (Janiszewski, 1993).

Korean cuisine's popularity in Asia has grown due to international trade, globalization, immigration, and tourism (Verbeke and Poquiviqui Lopez, 2005). The rising demand for convenient home meal replacement products has made Malaysia an emerging market for K-Food (Osman et al., 2014). Platforms like YouTube and TikTok have become crucial channels for promoting K-Food culture (Ingrassia et al., 2022). Korean Beauty (K-Beauty) has also gained popularity due to trends such as the 10-step skincare program, glass skin, and snail mucin Ramaholimihaso. The rising popularity of K-Pop and K-Drama has further boosted the demand for Korean beauty products (Lim et al., 2020). A study by Gerstle (2016) indicates that K-Beauty products are the most popular among Malaysians, driving Korean cosmetic brands into

the market and increasing purchase intentions. K-fashion, a South Korean fashion trend that combines traditional and innovative styles, significantly influences Korean fans and is shaped by popular artists. Jobst (2021) found that 54.2% of Malaysians consider Korean fashion popular, with 48.3% favoring Korean-designed items. Gender differences also affect consumer behavior, with distinct views on trust, social influence, and performance expectations influencing purchasing intentions (Hwang and Lee, 2017). Agrippina (2020) found a positive correlation between gender and the intention to purchase Korean music-related products, with women more likely to engage with Korean pop culture. In summary, the study examines how various factors, such as K-Beauty, K-Fashion, K-Drama, K-Pop, K-Food, and gender, influence the independent variable of purchase intention.

3. Methodology

This exploratory research design aimed to uncover insights and generate new ideas about a problem without providing a final solution. A quota sampling technique was employed, focusing on specific strata to ensure the inclusion of subgroups with different characteristics. Respondents were selected from three faculties at University Technology MARA (UiTM) Negeri Sembilan Branch, Seremban Campus: FSR, KPPIM, and FSPPP. The sample consisted of 52.69% FSR students, 26.7% KPPIM students, and 20.6% FSPPP students.

The study aimed to gather data on the purchasing patterns of students at UiTM Negeri Sembilan Branch, Seremban Campus. The target population included 3,161 students from FSR, 1,602 students from KPPIM, and 1,236 students from FSPPP. The sample quota was set at 127 FSR students, 64 KPPIM students, and 49 FSPPP students. The questionnaire for this study was adapted from past research by (Sunhwa, 2021) and (Osman and Ismail, 2022). An online survey was chosen for its cost-effectiveness, speed, accuracy, and flexibility. The research tools included a demographic survey, patterns of respondents purchasing Korean products, and the influence of the Korean Wave on respondents' intention to buy Korean products. Data analysis employed Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) and Kruskal-Wallis test using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

To achieve the first objective, descriptive analysis was used to understand consumer patterns of purchasing Korean products at UiTM Negeri Sembilan Branch, Seremban Campus. Descriptive statistics described the main purposes, frequency of purchases, and monthly spending on Korean products using frequency tables. The second objective involved using MLR to analyze the significant influences of the Korean and demographic factors (gender) on consumer purchasing intentions regarding Korean products. The model assumed a linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables, with a p-value less than 0.05 indicating a significant relationship. The third objective of the study was to examine differences in consumers' purchasing intentions between the faculties (FSR, KPPIM, FSPPP) using the Kruskal-Wallis test, due to the non-normal distribution of the data. This test assessed the influence of faculty exposure to Korean Wave elements and gender on purchasing intentions for Korean products. The Kruskal-Wallis test calculated the sum of ranks for each group, with N as the total number of observations, k as the number of groups, R_i as the sum of ranks for each group, and n_i as the number of observations for each group. The p-value, determined by comparing the test statistic to the chi-square distribution with k-1 degrees of freedom, indicates significance if it is less than 0.05. A significant p-value indicates that at least one faculty group has a different median from the others (Smalheiser, 2017).

$$H = \left(\frac{12}{N(N+1)} \sum_{i=1}^{k} \frac{R_i^2}{n_i} \right) - 3(N+1)$$

(1)

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. *Descriptive Analysis*

Table 1 presents the main reasons for purchasing Korean products, categorized by gender, revealing distinct preferences. High quality is identified as the most significant reason, especially among males, with 29.93% (41 respondents) citing it as their primary motivation. In contrast, beauty is a major consideration for females but significantly less so for males, with only 8.03% (11 respondents) indicating it as a key factor. Both genders consider good packaging, although it does not dominate their decision-making process. Low price is a less compelling factor for females, with only 5% (19 respondents) noting it as a primary consideration, and it is not a significant priority for males. Increasing confidence is relatively more important for females, with 15% (36 respondents) citing it, compared to 10% (11 respondents) of males. Interestingly, trends are the least compelling reason for both genders, showing the lowest percentages overall. These findings suggest that while quality is paramount for all consumers, gender differences are evident in considerations related to beauty, confidence, and price.

Table 1: Main Purposes when Purchasing Korean Products based on Gender

Purpose	Female (%)	Male (%)
Low Price	3.97	2.19
Beauty	28.81	21.90
Good Packaging	13.5	14.60
High Quality	27.97	29.93
Increasing Confidence	18.16	23.36
Trend	7.52	8.03

Table 2 presents the purchasing behavior of consumers with respect to Korean products over various time frames. The data reveals that the highest percentage of respondents, 34.52%, corresponding to 87 individuals, purchase these products once a month. This indicates a significant portion of consumers engage in regular monthly shopping. Conversely, the lowest percentage, 6.35%, consists of respondents who purchase Korean products more than three times a month, highlighting a smaller yet more dedicated group of frequent buyers.

Table 2: Number of Respondents based on the Frequency of Korean Products Purchases

Frequency	Percentage (%)
2-3 times a month	21.83
More than 3 times a month	6.35
Once a month	34.52
Once in a year	16.67
Once in three months	20.63

Table 3(a) illustrates the distribution of respondents based on their spending per transaction on Korean products, while Table 3(b) depicts their average monthly spending on categories such as food, music, cosmetics, and clothing. Analysis of these tables indicates consistent spending patterns among the respondents. Specifically, 85.71% of respondents spend less than RM 250 monthly on Korean products. For per-transaction spending, the majority are in the

lower brackets, with 42.46% spending less than RM 50 and 41.27% spending between RM 50 and RM 100. Both tables show a small percentage of high spenders: only 1.19% of respondents spend more than RM 550 monthly, and merely 3.17% spend more than RM 200 per transaction. In summary, the data suggest that most respondents prefer modest spending on Korean products, favoring frequent, smaller purchases over occasional large expenditures. This indicates a market trend towards affordability and regular buying behavior.

Table 3: Number of respondents based on their spending on Korean products

3(a): Based on average spending in a month 3(b): Based on spending at a time

Spending (RM)	Percentage (%)	Spending (RM)	Percentage (%)
Less than RM 250	85.71%	Less than RM 50	3.17%
Between RM 250 - RM 300	6.35%	Between RM 50 - RM 100	9.92%
Between RM 301 - RM 350	5.56%	Between RM 101 - RM 150	41.27%
Between RM 401 - RM 450	0.79%	Between RM 151 - RM 200	42.46%
Between RM 500 - RM 550	0.40%	More than RM 200	3.17%
More than RM 550	1.19%		

4.2 *Testing the reliability of the instrument*

On 2 April 2024, the researchers has conducted a pilot study that involved 20 respondents who are students from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Negeri Sembilan Branch, Seremban Campus. The results of this study showed that each item in the questionnaire has a Cronbach's Alpha value greater than or equal to 0.7. Table 4.1 shows the result of the reliability test for each variable. Based on the table, it indicates that the consistency of the items in the scale are acceptable.

Table 4: Reliability test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha value	Reliability
K-Drama	0.915	Reliable
K-Pop	0.975	Reliable
K-Food	0.928	Reliable
K-Beauty	0.942	Reliable
K-Fashion	0.968	Reliable
Purchasing Intention	0.784	Reliable

4.3. *Significant of the Korean Wave and gender on consumer purchasing intention*

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the Korean wave and gender had a significant effect on consumer purchasing intentions. MLR analysis was conducted to confirm these assumptions. Initially, all assumptions were met except for normality and outliers. Thus, removing the outlier was considered to be taken in action to fulfill the assumption. After removing the observation, the data finally satisfied all of the assumptions. To ensure assumptions were met, the process was reanalyzed multiple times.

After all the assumptions are satisfied, MLR were done. Regression analysis produced the following output shown in Table 5. The effects of K-Pop, K-Food, and gender on consumers' purchasing intentions on Korean products are not significant since the p-value exceeds alpha (0.05). In other words, these factors do not statistically influence whether or not people purchase Korean products. Different consumers have different preferences and interests. Not everyone who enjoys K-Drama, K-Beauty or K-Fashion will necessarily be interested in K-Pop or K-Food. This variability can dilute the overall impact of these factors on purchasing intentions. The study also revealed that purchasing intentions for Korean products are not heavily influenced by gender. Hence, marketing strategies might not need to differentiate between male and female consumers as both genders have similar attitudes and behaviors towards these products, leading to gender not being a significant factor.

Table 5: Summary of variable significance

Variable	P-value	Significance
K-Drama	0.018	Yes
K-Pop	0.095	No
K-Food	0.114	No
K-Beauty	< 0.001	Yes
K-Fashion	< 0.001	Yes
Gender	0.323	No

4.4. *Differences of consumer purchasing intention between faculties*

As part of this study, the researchers also investigated differences in consumer purchasing intentions between students from three faculties: KPPIM, FSPPP, and FSR. The data were carefully prepared and analyzed using Kruskal-Wallis test which ensured independent observations within each group.

The Kruskal-Wallis test was done and obtained a p-value of 0.135, as shown in Table 6, which is greater than the common alpha level of 0.05, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in consumer purchasing intentions between the students from the three faculties (KPPIM, FSR, and FSPPP). These findings suggest that differences in faculty do not significantly affect student's purchase intentions on Korean products. There is a possibility that students across a range of faculties consume media in a similar manner, leading to a homogenous exposure to Korean products through K-dramas, K-pop, social media, and advertisements. Compared to an older age group with more diverse tastes and preferences, UiTM Seremban students may have more homogeneous tastes as they generally fall within similar age range. It is common for younger consumers to have similar interests and to be influenced by popular culture in similar ways.

Table 6: Krukal-Wallis test

Test statistics	df	P-value
4.010	2	0.135

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1. *Conclusion*

This study examines the influence of the Korean Wave on purchasing intentions for Korean products, focusing on K-Drama, K-Pop, K-Food, K-Beauty, and gender as independent variables. Descriptive statistics indicate that the primary motivators for purchasing are low price, beauty, and increased confidence, with most respondents spending between RM 50 to RM 100 per purchase and maintaining monthly expenditures under RM 250. MLR analysis revealed that while linearity and multicollinearity assumptions were satisfied, initial violations of normality and homoscedasticity were corrected following outlier removal. Nonetheless, the analysis determined that the Korean Wave and gender do not significantly influence purchasing intentions, suggesting no need for gender-specific marketing strategies. Furthermore, Kruskal-Wallis test showed no significant differences in purchasing intentions among students from three different faculties, indicating that faculty affiliation does not impact purchasing intentions for Korean products.

5.2. *Recommendation*

The Korean Wave, encompassing K-drama, K-beauty, K-pop, and other cultural exports, has significantly influenced global consumer choices. To better understand its impact, future research should include larger, balanced sample sizes to ensure more generalizable and accurate results, despite the higher costs and time requirements. Longitudinal studies are recommended to observe changes in youth purchasing behaviors over time, revealing the lasting effects of the Korean Wave. Additionally, methods such as in depth interviews and focus groups can uncover the emotional connections consumers have with Korean products. Researchers should also explore how knowledge of Korean culture and media influences brand preferences and trust, providing valuable insights for effective marketing strategies.

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