

The Korean Wave in the Minds of Pakistani Students in Korea

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Being a part of a government strategy, South Korea's cultural diplomacy in terms of the Korean Wave promotes South Korean culture around the world. Taking into consideration the popularity of the Korean Wave and the dearth of empirical evidence on the influence of Korean Wave among the Pakistani community, this study analyzes the perceptions of Pakistani students/alumni to understand the widespread popularity of the Korean Wave among them and its influence on them. This study aims to examine the role of service quality by analyzing empirical evidence on the relationships among the Korean Wave, destination image, and behavioral intentions. For this purpose, a quantitative approach was used to collect data from (N = 403) Pakistani students/alumni in Korea. To measure the data, multi-variate techniques were used including reliability, multiple regression, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM). The findings showed a positive relationship among all constructs, namely behavioral intentions, the Korean Wave (including cultural products, K-pop, K-dramas, K-sports, tourism and heritage), service quality, and destination image. Indirect effects indicated that service quality mediated the relationship between destination image and the Korean Wave. This study proposes that service quality varies depending upon the involvement of cultural products, K-pop, K-dramas, K-sports, tourism and heritage, and these in turn, influence the behavioral intentions to visit in the future or recommend Korea to others.

Keywords: destination, Korean Wave, service quality, mediation, tourism

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Introduction

The significant role of culture has been opened by globalization in modern international politics. Cultural diplomacy is a tool of considerable importance for the transference of culture and national values. In global politics, the cultural dimension plays a dominant role in enhancing the significance of intangible resources (soft power) as opposed to tangible resources (hard power). Under this genre of cultural diplomacy, the global information space has been amplifying the importance of cultural actors in fostering relations between different cultures and states. Cultural diplomacy is used to influence foreign audiences through cultural products. Many states have been taking advantage of its increasing significance. In the case of South Korea (hereafter Korea), the efficacy of cultural diplomacy is due to the growing overseas popularity of the Korean Wave which has been recognized as a part of Korean cultural policies. The government has embraced cultural diplomacy as a mainstay of its diplomatic activities. In compliance with this, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) executes several cultural diplomatic pursuits to promote Korea's national brand value and its prestige in foreign countries (Pallangyo 2015). Considering the importance of cultural diplomacy in international relations, Bound, et al. (2007) believe "cultural diplomacy, which is about the quest for the tourist dollar as well as the battle for hearts and minds, is a competitive marketplace... It is not so much a discrete policy owned by any given department, as bound up within foreign policy, the presentation of domestic policy overseas, and internal control." In this reference, Korea utilizes the Korean Wave to advance its cultural diplomacy, promote its national image, engage with foreign public, and enhance its destination image across the borders.

The Korean Wave, or Hallyu, is conceptualized as the spread and popularity of Korean culture abroad. Purportedly, it started with the exportation of Korean dramas in the 1990s; with films and popular music becoming a large part of the cultural export industry by the early 2000s (Huat and Iwabuchi 2008, p. 15). Walsh (2014) explains that the Korean Wave's other production forms include fashion, high-tech lifestyles, cosmetics, video games, food (K-cuisine), and its traditional language. However, numerous segments are integrated into a single production through place branding together with marketing components to promote Korea and Korean society through tourism promotion and the use of various Korean products. Additionally, service quality is a major reason for the competitiveness of

Korean products. The evaluation of success and competitiveness is pronounced by providing quality service. From this angle, the service quality of Korean products satisfies consumers, and prompts an intention to further prefer products from Korea. Ultimately, the Korean Wave brings in profits for companies, contributes to gross domestic product (GDP), and boosts the Korean economy.

Korea became a member of the “advance nations’ assistance club” known as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1996, and the Korean Wave persuades Asian states that Korea is verily part of the advanced world. It has a significant impact on soft power that is utilized abroad for cultivating national interests in various sectors including diplomacy, investment, education, and trade. In terms of the Korean Wave as a unique cultural phenomenon, Kim (2013, p. 10) defines it as being about the promotion of soft power, nation branding, and sustainable growth at its core. The broader popularity of Korean culture attracts foreign travelers to visit the shooting sites of TV dramas and movies as tourist destinations. Further, the development of digital media forms like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter are playing a pivotal role in stepping up “digital *hallyu*” to Asia, the US, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and elsewhere. King (2018, p. 312) argues that unanticipated change in digital technology, the realization of globalization, and its upshot in Asia following the 1997 IMF crisis contributed to the increase and flow of the manufacture of Korean cultural products within Asia.

Initially, the Korean Wave spread to China and Japan, then to Southeast Asian and European countries across the world. As Song and Pornsima (2017, p. 154) outline, the term “*hallyu*” coined by the Chinese media shows how China, Taiwan, and Vietnam followed South Korean culture. Today, the phenomenal growth of the Korean Wave has given rise to the use of the term “Korean Fever” by media in European and the US, including the *New York Times*. In connection, Marlinda et al. (2021) identify Korea’s push to build an image of a Muslim-friendly state that bolsters its economic growth as an export destination and boosts cooperation and diplomatic relations with non-traditional states.

Pakistan is an agricultural country that is concurrently becoming a semi-industrialized country; its exports depend on its agricultural and manufacturing sectors. In terms of purchasing power parity (PPP), Global Tenders (2021) reports its economy is the 26th largest in the globe and the 40th largest in terms of GDP. Home to more than 220 million people, Pakistan’s GDP per capita amounts to 1,260 US dollars. Pakistan is regarded

as an underdeveloped state and is among the Next Eleven, the 11 states that, together with BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), have the capacity to become some of the largest economies in the world. Syed and Ying (2020) discuss the Chinese government's interest in the country through the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project and the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the region, saying that connecting the two via Pakistan's Gwadar port would enhance the transnational prosperity of some 65 countries around the world, a key indication of the country's economic and social development. Over the past two decades, Pakistan's economic development has been moving steadily due to firm macroeconomic policies and several other factors. According to the Asian Development Bank (2021) as of the 2020 fiscal year, macroeconomic stability is improving following the IMF-Extended Fund Facility. Further, Pakistan's economic growth is hoped an increase by 2% in 2021 and 4% by the year 2022. Pakistan has been involved in bilateral, preferential trading agreements, and free trade agreements (FTAs) with many countries; and is pursuing FTAs with Turkey, Thailand, and Korea. Due to the interest of Korea and Pakistan on collaborating in the tourism industry, this study provides a concise synthesis of the specialized literature regarding the influence of the Korean Wave on Pakistani consumers. The Korean Wave is steadily gaining popularity among Pakistanis, but research on the influence of the Korean cultural economy has been scarce in this domain.

In addressing these objectives, the underlying premise of this study examines the relationship between the Korean Wave, destination image, and behavioral intentions in reference to the mediating effect of service quality. Within this frame of reference, the findings of this study can be a source for Pakistan as it seeks to enhance relations with Korea through people-to-people contact and economic opportunities for the latter. In order to accomplish this, this research has two objectives: to explore the relationship between the Korean Wave (entailing cultural products, K-pop, K-dramas, K-sports, and tourism and heritage attractions) and destination image, and to assess how destination service quality influences the relationship between the Korean Wave and destination image. This study gives two grounds for its exploration. Pakistan's so-called cradle of civilization attracts foreign tourists from across the world and allures Korean tourists particularly toward cultural tourism. Pakistan is chalking out a strategy of promoting cultural heritage tourism ensuring a peaceful environment. Doing so can enhance Pakistan's links with Korea in the technical and cultural fields, and Buddhist tourism could be a corridor of Korea and Pakistan's thriving tourism industry. Furthermore,

examining the cultural tourism (particularly educational tourism and heritage tourism) predilections and expenditure patterns of Koreans could help lay out guidelines for attracting specific groups to the Pakistani market. In view of this, the present study is designed to examine the perceptions held by Pakistani students/alumni about Korea's image and possibilities for economic opportunity.

The remainder of this study is outlined as follows: the first section attempts to lay out a literature review and discusses hypotheses. The second section examines the methods; the third section presents the results; the fourth section discusses implications and limitations; and the conclusion is provided at the end.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Cultural Diplomacy and the Korean Wave

The concept of cultural diplomacy is not new. However, it has been acknowledged as a prime tool of diplomatic pursuits with widespread popularity in the globalized world. According to Milton Cummings (2003), "Cultural diplomacy is the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their people to foster mutual understanding." Today cultural diplomacy is used to refer to any practice associated with purposeful cultural cooperation among nations. It is always associated with, and often overlaps with, soft power and public diplomacy (Donelli 2019). Cultural diplomacy is the backbone of public diplomacy with the rising significance for soft power. Joseph Nye (2004) explains soft power as "the attractiveness of a country's culture, political notions, and policies," and public diplomacy plays a key role for emerging middle powers. For many decades, cultural relations and economic ties have been showing strong connections among nations. Thus, it has become clear that cultural diplomacy promotes cultural products, improves the positive image of a country, and fosters relations between countries.

Globalization has expanded the significance of intangible forms of power with the continually increasing influence of culture. In recent years, the foreign policy system has had three interdependent pillars, namely, "politics/security, economy/trade, and culture" (Papaionnaou 2017). Considering culture as a commodity and a way of social transformation, Kang (2013) examines the multi-dimensional process of cultural diplomacy

through two models of national agendas: the socio-political (evaluated by soft power to target foreign audience) and the economic (increase market share in the global economy). Viewing cultural diplomacy as a marketing instrument for nation branding, the state's role is supported by the rules of cultural diversity which can be observed to be significantly driven by economic agendas. Thus, the state utilizes the political rhetoric of "mutual understanding" and "soft power." Given its importance, cultural diplomacy has a strong connection with economic ties and cultural relations to promote relations between culturally diverse nations.

The Korean economy started advancing cultural production and commodification of media such as films, television programming, and animation, etc., by the late 1980s. Subsequently, a rise was seen in the overseas consumption of Korean cultural products and exports including K-dramas, K-pop, and online games, particularly in China. It was the Chinese press that started calling the inundation of Korean popular culture in the country the "Korean Wave" (Kim, Lee, and Kim 2020). In this context, Huat and Lwabuchi (2008, p. 2) argue the export of Korean popular culture was made easier by the burgeoning international media market in the 1990s. The popular consumption of Korean cultural products like TV dramas, movies, pop music, and more, started gaining popularity in Asia during the early 2000s. The emergence of Koreans as international celebrities became known as the "Korean Wave" in the regional media. Thus, what started in East Asian nations progressively spread to several countries worldwide. Pratamasari, Syaifani, and Toreh (2018, p. 230) note that the birth of the Korean Wave can be ascribed to cooperation between the Korean government and Korean businesses. This collaboration is generally named as one of the economic development models such as "political business," "state capitalism," or "Korean Inc." From these angles, Marinescu (2014, p. 5) describes the glocalization of the cultural products of the Korean Wave manifests the different faces of the wave across the globe. In this light, Kang et al. (2021, p. 790) describes the Korean Wave as a global phenomenon, as it continues to gain popularity in many countries including the US, Europe, India, Thailand, and Malaysia. The popularity of Korean pop culture is based on the vitality of the Korean Wave, which is spiritual and social, that becomes linked to technical soft power and cultural diplomacy and reaches people across the globe. From another point of view, Bae et al. (2017) evaluate the increase in inbound tourism demand as being due to the influence of the Korean Wave, meaning it also boosts the Korean economy.

Based on these debates, the Korean Wave has a significant effect on

tourism demand regarding tourists from the US, China, Japan, and Hong Kong. The Korea Foundation for International Cultural Exchange (KOFICE) revealed the economic effects of the Korean Wave in 2019; related exports (games, music, tour programs, and beauty products) rose to US\$12.3 billion, up more than 22.4 percent from 2018 (*Yonhap News Agency* April 14, 2020). In 2020, exports of cosmetics products soared to US\$7.28 billion, up 16.1 percent, and ranked third in the world (Shim 2021). Ghansiyal (2019) believes that the Korean Wave has been influencing global audiences and foreign tourists since the late 1990s, attracting them through Hallyu tourism. The leverage that Korean cultural products have, brought about by the Korean Wave, has been shown to be a significant element of the tourism industry. The global popularity brought by Korean stars from actors to K-pop stars and athletes proves an effective, fruitful, and profitmaking way to attract tourists. As a corollary, the entertainment industry with its K-dramas, blockbusting K-pop, and Hallyu tourism has increased the exports of Korean cultural products.

Destination Image

Crompton (1979, p. 18) defines “destination image” as “the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination.” Mackay and Fesenmaier (1997) explain “a destination image is a composite of various products (attractions) and attributes woven into a total impression.” In this context, Bove-sans and Ramirez (2013, p. 107) find that several authors use the structured and the unstructured types of techniques to measure destination images. For the structured technique, the researcher sets attributes for a tourist destination, uses a Likert or semantic differential scale to measure the respondents’ individual perception, and uncovers the common component for destination image, using statistical analysis techniques including descriptive analysis, factorial, variance, and regression analyses.

Behavioral Intentions

Muslim et al. (2020, p. 2) outline “behavioral intention” as “an indication of individual readiness to conduct the given behavior.” In the context of tourism, behavioral intention can be regarded as desired behavior and visitors’ expectation to return again. Behavioral intentions work as an effect of the perception of destination image. Moreover, the destination image works to

measure the visitor's post-purchasing behavior intentions and leads to the future destination's choice to recommend it to others. In this way, destination image has a relationship to the perceptions and behavioral intentions of the visitors and influences the decision-making process and the choice of a destination. Bove-sans and Ramirez (2013, p. 106) believe that behavioral intentions are important in the final decision to revisit or choose a destination after visiting a particular destination.

Service Quality

Most of the definitions of service quality are framed in regard to global, overall assessments. Service quality is "the outcome of a process in which consumers' expectations for the service are compared with their perceptions of the service actually delivered" (Mangold and Babakus 1991, p. 60). Zeithaml (1988) identifies service quality as "a customer's judgment of the overall excellence or superiority of a service." Based on these explanations, tourists consider different dimensions of service and focus on their overall service experience when rating the service quality. Rust (2004, p. 32) measures service quality under the multidimensional construct and explains multi-service quality features such as reliability, tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Considering these, tourists' perceptions about a destination, such as having a good image of a destination, play a crucial role and influences travelers' final destination choice. Tourists' perceived image of a destination demonstrates its culture, natural environment, service quality, and entertainment. Destination image has unique capabilities that can increase the numbers of visitors, entice them by offering advantages, and also develop the positive image of a destination. Additionally, tourists' experience of service quality helps in the decision-making process and differentiates it from other competitors.

Relationship among Study Variables

The Korean Wave's popular cultural flow and cultural trends have expanded in such a way as a result of the convergence of digital media and popular culture. Jin et al. (2021) agree that Korean digital and popular culture have been continuing their global circulation in the early 2020s. The current circumstances appear to come up with a new impetus in which Korean content is incorporated into global viewers' daily lives. The Korean Wave was regarded as a niche market by the end of the 2010s despite its prevalence on a

global scale. Recent developments have been seen due to cultural content and celebrities that spread to mainstream media and fans around the world. The Korean Wave's extensive global rise reflects Korea as the first non-Western state to fundamentally export cultural products such as TV programs, movies, music, animation, online games, and smartphones to Europe, Asia, Africa, and everywhere else.

Service quality is a significant factor determining customer satisfaction that depends on the assessment of the product relative to the customer's prior expectation. Service quality also has an impact on products and brands as well as the customer's evaluation of the company's level of quality. A close association between service quality and consumers' satisfaction shows that a rise in service quality enhances consumers' satisfaction levels. Buzzell and Bradley (1987) demonstrate that high service quality helps to achieve a higher-than-normal market growth share. Based on these debates, Roll (2016) notes the popularity of Korean cultural products increased manifold worldwide and it has foregrounded key attributes of success as being due to superior quality, distinctive designs, and modern facet for the products and services. For this purpose, Korea has heavily invested in research and development and delivering products of high quality. This focus has been seen in entertainment products that are similar to Hollywood production value and quality. This new emphasis on quality attracts many new customers and helps in strengthening the popularity of Korean movies, K-pop, and K-dramas, the key products driving the Korean Wave followed by productive outcomes.

Continuing in this line, the impact of service quality on customers' inclination to repurchase is also enunciated through the level of service quality (Gale 1992). Customers' evaluation of higher service quality leads to favorable behavioral intentions that strengthen repurchase intentions, willingness to recommend others, and indicates that customers will remain with the company (Zeithaml and Berry 1996). Moreover, destination image influences the choice of destination and the behavioral intention of a tourist. Destination image includes visitors' and sellers' perceptions about tourist attractions in a destination that involves promoting and determining their future travel decisions. Many studies on national image explore its rise in popularity in global marketing, communication, and public relations topics in the mid-1960s. Qu et al. (2021, p. 469) describe national image is an amalgam of a state's image and nation; it is shaped by various elements including culture, history, economy, politics, and technology. Kim (2017) examines the structural relationship between destination image, tourist

satisfaction, future visit intention, and word-of-mouth publicity and presents that tourism experience influences behavioral intentions directly and indirectly through destination image and tourist satisfaction. Ekinçi (2003, pp. 21-22) presents a three-step process for the development of a successful and alluring destination image that comprises the overall destination image, destination branding, and brand personality. Their essential role is to develop a distinctive image of the destination and brand, using interactive instruments and product development ways. Taking this into consideration, several studies on the Korean Wave have analyzed its effects on Korean cultural contents and cultural products to determine tourists' choices pertaining to national image and tourism.

In this context, extant literature has shown the relationship between the Korean Wave, destination image, and behavioral intention, and the results indicate the influence of various elements on the country's image. This study has presented a brief review of relevant literature. As far as Korean cultural products are concerned, Park et al. (2021) demonstrate Korean cultural products' influence on Thai students and the impact of the Korean Wave; and perceived Korean Wave content correlated with their interest in Korean culture. By the same token, Bang et al. (2021) analyzed the factors that influence Peruvians to prefer Korean singers and songs, Korea's image, and their behavioral intentions to visit the country; results indicated that factors related to K-pop positively contributed to Korea's national image and indirectly persuaded them to visit Korea. Crompton (1997) explains the implications of a destination image on tourists and indicates that regional differences are insignificant. In addition, Halim and Kiatkawsin (2021) examine the role of female Indonesian viewers' involvement in the Korean entertainment industry, star worship, brand awareness, and Korean cultural products' service quality on purchasing intentions and behavioral intention to visit Korea and found the audience's emotional involvement, referential behavior, and celebrity-worshipping inclinations appeared as significant factors in purchasing of Korean cosmetics and products and intentions to visit Korea in the future. Likewise, Sari and Chandrabuwono (2020) explored how Indonesian students' love for the Korean entertainment industry prompted them to change their norms. Further, the use of Korean cultural products has brought a change in their style and behavior.

Apropos of this, destination image is connected to tourists' behavioral intentions. Chen and Tsai (2007) assert that a favorable destination builds more positive behavioral intentions with positive effects and could be regarded as the inclination to revisit a destination. Based on the relationship

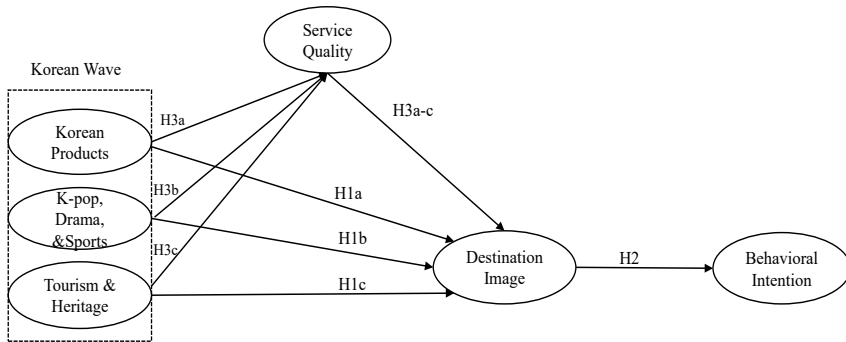


FIG. 1.—THE PROPOSED THEORETICAL MODEL

between the Korean Wave and destination image, and the relationship between destination image and behavioral intentions, the authors have proposed a theoretical model (see figure 1) and the following hypotheses:

H1a. Korean products have a significant positive relationship with destination image.

H1b. K-pop, K-dramas, and K-sports have a significant positive relationship with destination image.

H1c. Tourism and heritage attractions have a significant positive relationship with destination image.

H2. The destination image has a significant positive relationship with behavioral intentions.

The Mediating Role of Destination Service Quality

Improved service quality contributes to elevating the positive image of the destination and influences tourists' behavioral intentions and decision-making process for future visits. Augustyn and Ho (1998) argue that service quality is a necessary and winning strategy in the tourism sector for the twenty-first century. With respect to destination image, Schwaighofer describes two types: a so-called stereotype image and a more individual image. From this perspective, functional characteristics include service quality, climate conditions, prices, transportation, accommodation facilities, entertainment possibilities, and security standards (2013, pp. 38-39). Eventually, a distinctive tourist destination strives to develop attractive packages and offers to visitors, and ensures service quality. In this vein,

the tourism sector has a strong relation to service providers improving the level of their service quality. Moreover, the government provides funds for promotional activities, advertisements, and scholarships to students.

Lee, Petrick, and Crompton (2007) reveal that service quality predicts tourist behavioral intentions to revisit the destination, while perceived values serve as a key predictor of behavioral intentions, and several dimensions of service quality had a significant influence to determine perceived service quality. Similarly, Bolton and Drew (1991) develop a model analyzing consumers' prior experiences and expectations through service quality. Results showed that perceived performance levels have a significant direct effect on service quality. In a similar fashion, Moon et al. (2013) find the perceived values' positive influence on destination image but negative influence on behavioral intention. However, the image of destination mediated the relationship between service quality and behavioral intentions, and the relationship between perceived values and destination image. Furthermore, Jingyi, Sinnappan, and Periyayya (2021) surveyed Malaysian youth to examine the influence of K-dramas on behavioral intentions toward Korea, with findings indicating a significant positive influence of Korean drama viewing, likings, and positive attitudes toward the country, as well as showing the indirect effect of viewing and liking K-dramas as a partial mediator. Another study by Lee and How (2021) discusses Hallyu tourism as a combination of film tourism, celebrity-induced tourism, food tourism, and cultural tourism. They revealed that Hallyu contributed to inbound tourists and foreign inbound tourism from Asia to Korea. A conceptual model has been offered by Jin, Lee, and Lee (2012) to analyze visitors' perceptions of the 2011 IAAF World Championship in Daegu, and explored mega-sports event quality and its perceived values significant effect on behavioral intentions and a direct effect on the image of the destination, whereas the effect of destination image showed an insignificant effect on behavioral intentions. Based on work and testimonies by researchers, Korean Wave factors are getting recognition in Hallyu tourism. Only a handful of research examines the relationship and the mediating role of service quality between destination image and the Korean Wave (cultural products, K-pop, K-drama, K-sports, tourism, and historic attractions).

In this context, this study examines destination service quality's mediating role for destination image. From this consideration, authors' proposed hypotheses were as:

H3a. The destination service quality mediates the relationship between

destination image and Korean products.

H3b. The destination service quality mediates the relationship between destination image and K-pop, K-dramas, and K-sports.

H3c. The destination service quality mediates the relationship between destination image and Korean Wave entailing tourism and heritage attractions.

Methods

Survey Instruments

In this study, the survey questionnaire consisted of variables tied to the Korean Wave entailing Korean products, K-pop, K-dramas, and K-sports, as well as those tied to tourism and heritage attractions, destination service quality, destination image, and behavioral intentions. Many measured items included in the questionnaire were taken from past studies. Among those factors of Korean products with five items suggested by Kim, Lee, and Kim (2020) which comprise “Korean products are popular among consumers; The brand image of Korea influences the purchase of Korean products; Korean manufacturers do not compromise the excellence of products; Korean products are distinguished with reference to their design, service, and quality; and I prefer Korean products when they are similar in price and function.” In regard to K-pop, K-dramas, and K-sports: “The appearance of K-pop artists attract a large audience; I recommend people in my country to watch K-pop music videos; K-drama attracts a large audience, and people are taking interest in K-Sports.” In terms of destination image: “Koreans are respectful and friendly; Korea is emerging as an educational hub in Asia; The Korean economy has potential to compete with the world-leading economies; Korean products are of superior quality; My positive image of Korea motivates me to buy Korean products; Korean culture is increasingly getting global recognition; Korea’s historic heritage sites are famous and worth visiting.” Regarding the destination service quality: “Korea has a very advanced and modern infrastructure; Korea is an investing opportunity; Buyers choose Korean products due to their authenticity and reliability; and Korea attracts a large number of tourists due to its diverse touristic activities.” With regard to behavioral intention, “I prefer to continue my education after completing my current degree; I recommend studying in Korea to people in my country; I feel pride being a buyer of a high-

end Korean brand; I recommend Korean products to people around me; I'm influenced by the fashion and make-up of people around me; I enjoy Korean cultural activities like exhibitions, concerts, etc.; and Korea is comparatively affordable for tourists." Participants responded to all items on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5). The questions were also employed to collect the demographic characteristics of respondents.

Reliability

A pretested and validated questionnaire consisting of 31 items was conducted among Pakistani students/alumni in Korea. The questionnaire was prepared by using Google Forms and disseminated through WhatsApp, email, and social media such as Facebook. The pilot test was conducted using a sample of Pakistani students in Korea. Cronbach's alpha value indicated an acceptable level to estimate the internal consistency of the questionnaire for the constructs Korean products ($\alpha = 0.839$), K-pop, K-dramas, and K-sports ($\alpha = 0.851$), tourism and heritage attractions ($\alpha = 0.794$), destination service quality ($\alpha = 0.863$), destination image ($\alpha = 0.858$), and behavior intentions ($\alpha = 0.886$).

Sampling Technique and Sample Population

Among prevalent nonprobability sampling techniques, convenience sampling/opportunity sampling was used. Researchers chose this method due to the convenience of access such as geographical proximity and respondents' willingness to participate (Rose, Mckinley, and Baffoe-Djan 2020, p. 161). As far as its merits are concerned, it can be informative and can yield interesting and useful results (Paltridge and Phakiti 2018, p. 58). Convenience sampling has the advantage of ready accessibility but all qualified participants have not equal opportunities in the sample population and results are not generalized to the population. Hence, an increase in sample size is followed by the increased statistical power of convenience sampling (Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim 2016). To meet the challenge of scientific generalizability, in-depth interviews were conducted before administering the online survey questionnaire. For this, it was attempted to access participants staying in various cities in Korea. An appropriate sample size ($N = 403$) was used from the target population that included Pakistani students/alumni in Korea.

(1) Data Collection

An integrated approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods yields valuable results and takes advantage of the strengths of both approaches (Thyer 2001, p. 482). To understand smaller population viewpoints, in-depth interviews are useful for obtaining detailed information about individuals' perceptions and their behaviors to analyze new issues. Interviews provide context to data, and they are employed to refine questions for future surveys of a particular group (Boyce & Neale 2006). Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection, in-depth interviews were conducted (12 participants) with external members to assess their opinions about the subject in the first, discovery phase of research. In the second phase, the validation phase, in-depth interviews responses were employed to establish a survey (Keyserling 2022) which validated the finding from discovery phase using a sufficient representative sample ($N = 403$).

Google Forms is useful for disseminating short questionnaires, exporting the responses to a spreadsheet, and organizing the results. Some advantages are associated with conducting an online survey including access to a unique sample, storing of data, visualization of data, collaboration on research, time efficiency, and cost effectiveness. However, a poor response rate is an important issue when it comes to online surveys when questionnaires are distributed using several platforms (Nayak and Narayan 2019). Considering the merits, the authors collected the opinions of Pakistani students/alumni by distributing the survey form via WhatsApp groups, Facebook, and emails to participants. The authors' personal network also shared the survey link with their networks in their respective universities. To eliminate missing data, "forced responding" was enabled, requiring respondents to answer all items before moving onto the next section. A total of 419 responses were received from April 19, 2021 to May 21, 2021. Regarding sampling issues, the poor response rate was a challenge such as among total responses; 403 were original entries while 16 were duplicate entries. Thus, the authors only considered original entries for the final results.

This study used a statistically sufficient sample size in order to assess the designed hypotheses. For that purpose, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to test the validity of the variables of measurement, and structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to analyze the conceptual model. Multiple regression was performed to examine the mediating role of destination service quality among Korean products, K-pop, K-dramas, and K-sports, tourism and heritage attractions, destination image, and behavioral

intentions. The maximum likelihood estimation method in SEM was employed.

(2) Data Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis was used to analyze the influence of the Korean Wave, destination service quality, destination image, and behavioral intentions. Confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling were employed to test the proposed theoretical model, and multiple regression was used to measure the mediating role of the destination service quality.

(3) Testing the Destination Service Quality Model

A structural equation model test was employed to measure the collected data and test the destination service quality model in which eight hypotheses were designed. Measures of overall model goodness of fit and measurement model fit were analyzed to examine the acceptance of the proposed theoretical model.

Results

Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The respondents' profiles (see table 1) shows that there were more males 80.6% than females 19.4%. In terms of age groups, those under the age of 20 represented only 0.2% of the sample; a greater proportion of the sample (55.6%) was held by the 21-30 years old group; while those 31-40 years old represented 38.7%, and those 41-50 years old represented 5.5% of the sample. At 54.1%, most respondents had graduate degrees. The proportion of those with a master's was 19.4%, postgraduate 22.3%, undergraduate 2.2%, and other educational level 2%. Regarding field of study, the overwhelming majority had studied engineering 56.6%, whereas the smallest group was humanities and arts 4.7%. Other groups represented medical science 8.7%, information technology 19.6%, and social sciences 10.4%. According to the length of stay, the greatest percentage (34.7%) of respondents had been in Korea for three years, while others had resided for four years 33.5%, two years 14.9%, more than four years 9.2%, and one year 7.7%.

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE SAMPLE (N = 403)

Variables	Category	Frequency	n (%)
Gender	Male	325	80.6
	Female	78	19.4
Age (in years)	Less than 20	1	.2
	21-30	224	55.6
	31-40	156	38.7
	41-50	22	5.5
Highest Level of Education	Undergraduate	9	2.2
	Master	78	19.4
	Graduate	218	54.1
	Postgraduate	90	22.3
	Other	8	2
Field of Study	Medical Science	35	8.7
	Engineering	258	56.6
	Information Technology	79	19.6
	Humanities and Arts	19	4.7
	Social Science	42	10.4
Length of Stay in Korea (in years)	One	31	7.7
	Two	60	14.9
	Three	140	34.7
	Four	135	33.5
	More than Four	37	9.2

Measurement Model

The convergent validity of the measurement scale was analyzed to determine the proper evaluation of the proposed theoretical model. For each variable, the *t* value was significant for each of the factor loading at the $p < 0.001$. The calculated eigenvalue, variance explained, construct reliability, standardized factor loadings, and commonalities were examined (see table 2). The overall model fit indices of the measurement model showed the adequacy of the hypothesized construct; $\chi^2 = 1081.221$, $df = 419$, $\chi^2/df = 2.58$, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.889, the Tucker Lewis index (TLI) = 0.877, normed fit index (NFI) = 0.832, incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.890, goodness of fit index (GFI) = 0.853, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.063, and Hoelter's critical N ($\alpha = .05$) value = 175.334.

TABLE 2
CFA RESULTS OF KOREAN WAVE (N = 403)

Factors	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)	Cronbach's α	Factor loadings	Communalities
<i>F1 Behavior Intentions</i>	6.24	20.15	.886		
I prefer to continue education in Korea after completing my current degree				.653	.467
I recommend studying in Korea to people in my country				.650	.489
I feel pride being a buyer of a high-end Korean brand				.744	.569
I recommend Korean products to people around me				.813	.685
I share my experiences of buying Korean products with my friends				.782	.666
I influence by the fashion and make-up of people around me				.796	.661
I enjoy Korean cultural activities like exhibitions, concerts, etc.				.747	.558
Korea is comparatively affordable for tourists				.738	.550
<i>F2 Destination image</i>	4.67	15.09	.858		
Koreans are respectful and friendly				.772	

Factors	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)	Cronbach's α	Factor loadings	Communalities
Korea is emerging as an educational hub in Asia				.728	
The Korean economy has potential to compete with the world-leading economies				.673	
Korean products are of superior quality				.713	
My positive image of Korea motivates me to buy Korean products				.683	
Korean culture is increasingly getting global recognition				.666	
Korea's historic heritage sites are famous and worth visiting				.697	
<i>F3 Tourism and Heritage attractions; F3Destination Service Quality</i>	3.78	12.22	.837		
Korea and Pakistan can work together to plan tourist packages for promoting tourism				.667	.604
Pakistan should invest more for peaceful environment to attract Korean tourists				.663	.596
Korea has a very advanced and modern infrastructure				.649	.509

Factors	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)	Cronbach's <i>a</i>	Factor loadings	Communalities
Korea is an investing opportunity				.744	.690
Buyers choose Korean products due to their authenticity and reliability				.783	.719
Korea attracts a large number of tourists due to its diverse touristic activities				.800	.723
<i>F4 K-pop, K-drama, K-sports</i>	2.01	6.50	.851		
Korean culture is getting recognition in Pakistan				.570	.647
The appearance of K-pop artists attract a large audience				.774	.697
I recommend people in my country to watch K-pop music videos				.846	.754
K-drama attracts a large audience				.822	.741
People are taking interest in K-sports				.748	.727
<i>F5 Korean products</i>	1.62	5.24	.839		
Korean products are popular among consumers in Pakistan				.678	.540
Brand image of Korea influences the purchase of Korean products				.775	.697
Korean manufacturers do not compromise the excellence of products				.781	.618

Factors	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)	Cronbach's α	Factor loadings	Communalities
Korean products are distinguished with reference to their design, service, and quality				.783	.652
I prefer Korean products when they are similar in price and function				.749	.607

Model fit indices: (M_r) $\chi^2 = 1081.221$, $df = 419$, $\chi^2/df = 2.58$, CFI = 0.889, TLI = 0.877, NFI = 0.832, IFI = 0.949, GFI = 0.853, RMSEA = 0.065.

Structural Model Parameters: H1 and H2

The findings show SEM with estimated path coefficients and test results. It indicated, $\Delta R^2 = 0.472$ for H1a-c (see table 3). The Korean Wave entailing Korean products has a significant positive relationship with destination image (H1a: $\beta = 0.397$, $t = 9.87$, $p < 0.001$), which offered support for H1a. The Korean Wave entailing K-pop, K-drama, and K-sports has a significant positive relationship with destination image (H1b: $\beta = 0.271$, $t = 6.83$, $p < 0.001$), which supported H1b. The Korean Wave entailing tourism and heritage attractions has a significant positive relationship with destination

TABLE 3
SEM WITH ESTIMATED PATH COEFFICIENTS AND T-RESULTS ($N = 403$)

Paths	Estimate Std.	t -value	Results
H1a. KP \rightarrow DI	.397	9.87	Acceptable
H1b. KPDS \rightarrow DI	.271	6.83	Acceptable
H1c. TH \rightarrow DI	.282	7.49	Acceptable
H2. DI \rightarrow BI	.681	18.64	Acceptable

Model fit indices: Model₁. $\chi^2 = 243.224$, $df = 101$, $\chi^2/df = 2.408$, CFI = 0.948, TLI = 0.939, NFI = 0.915, IFI = 0.949, GFI = 0.932, RMSEA = 0.059. Model₂. $\chi^2 = 534.983$, $df = 101$, $\chi^2/df = 5.296$, CFI = 0.862, TLI = 0.836, NFI = 0.836, and IFI = 0.862, (GFI) 0.862, RMSEA = 0.103. Model₃. $\chi^2 = 166.625$, $df = 62$, $\chi^2/df = 2.687$, CFI = 0.953, TLI = 0.941, NFI = 0.927, and IFI = 0.953, (GFI) 0.942, RMSEA = 0.065.

KP = Korean products; KPDS = K-pop, Drama, & Sports; TH = Tourism and Heritage; DI = Destination Image; BI = Behavioral Intentions.

image (H1c: $\beta = 0.282$, $t = 7.49$, $p < 0.001$), which supported H1c. Results indicated $\Delta R^2 = 0.462$ for H2, which also supported that the destination image has a significant positive relationship with behavioral intentions ($\beta = 0.681$, $t = 18.64$, $p < 0.001$).

Mediating Role of Service Quality: Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects

Mediation analysis showed an indirect effect of Korean products on destination image through relationship destination service quality, $\beta = 0.301$, 95% BCa CI [0.218, 0.382], the indirect effect of K-pop, drama, and sports on destination image through relationship destination service quality, $\beta = 0.236$, 95% BCa CI [0.165, 0.311], and the indirect effect of tourism and heritage through relationship destination service quality, $\beta = 0.592$, 95% BCa CI [0.421, 0.781]. However, the direct effect of Korean products on destination image indicated $\beta = 0.434$, 95% BCa CI [0.533, 0.186], with highly significant $t = 8.608$, $p = 0.001$; and K-pop, drama, and sports on destination image $\beta = 0.271$, 95% BCa CI [0.188, 0.353], $t = 8.608$, $p = 0.001$; as compared to tourism and heritage on destination image, $\beta = 0.409$, 95% BCa CI [0.219, 0.601], with significant $t = 8.608$, $p = 0.001$ (see table 4). Hence, H3a-c were supported.

TABLE 4
MEDIATING ROLE OF SERVICE QUALITY (DIRECT, INDIRECT, AND TOTAL EFFECTS)

Effect	Relationship path	B	t-value	95% confidence Interval (LL)	UL
Indirect	KP → DSQ → DI	.301		.218	.382
	KPDS → DSQ → DI	.236		.165	.311
	TH → DSQ → DI	.592		.421	.781
Direct	KP → DI	.434	8.608	.533	.184
	KPDS → DI	.271	6.459	.188	.353
	TH → DI	.409	4.227	.219	.601
Total	KP → DSQ → DI	.734	13.872	.838	.312
	KPDS → DSQ → DI	.506	10.711	.423	.599
	TH → DSQ → DI	1.002	9.301	.789	1.213

KP = Korean products; DSQ = Destination Service Quality; DI = Destination Image; KPDS = K-pop, Drama, Sports; TH = Tourism and Heritage.

Competing Models Parameters: H3

The objective of developing competing models was to examine the best fitting model from three models and to compare the proposed theoretical model with a set of models that worked as an alternative description to MT. Three alternative models were developed: M_1 , M_2 , and M_3 . M_1 added the path between Korean products and destination image (see figure 2). M_2 added a path between K-pop, K-dramas, and K-sports, and destination image (see figure 3). Moreover, M_3 added a path between tourism and heritage attractions, and destination image (see figure 4).

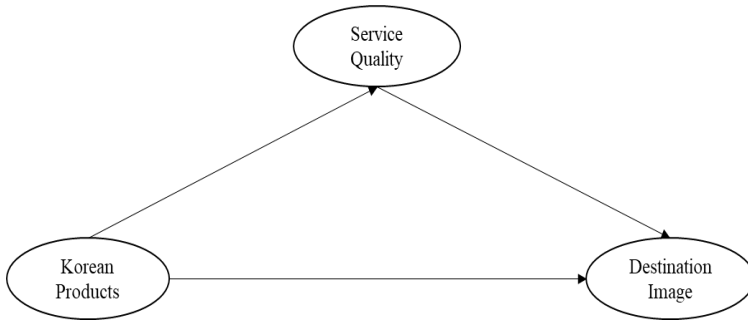


FIG. 2.—COMPETING MODEL 1 (M_1)

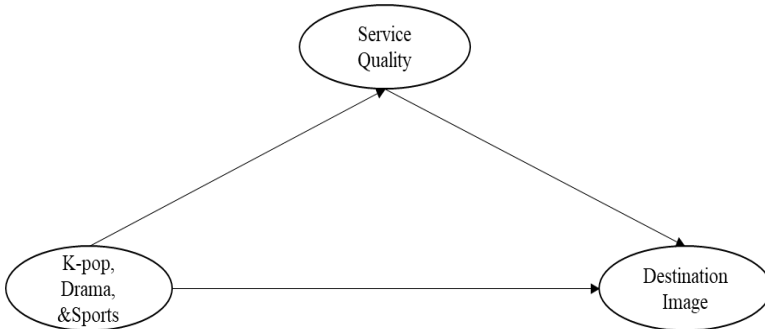


FIG. 3.—COMPETING MODEL 2 (M_2)

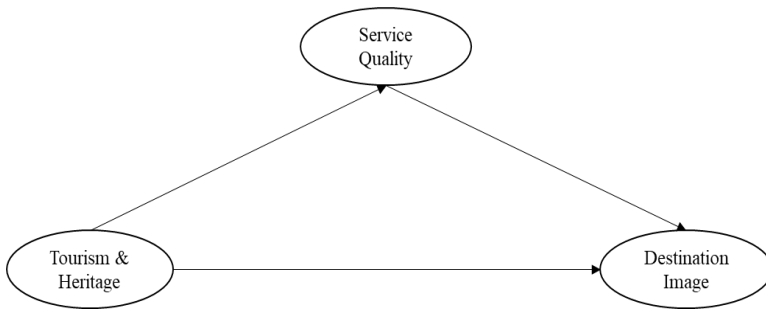


FIG. 4.—COMPETING MODEL 3 (M₃)

(1) Competing Model 1

The model 1 fit indicates the degree to which the items showed the hypothesized variables; $\chi^2 = 243.224$, $df = 101$, $\chi^2/df = 2.408$; Other indices assessed CFI = 0.948, TLI = 0.939, and NFI = 0.915, IFI = 0.949, GFI = 0.932, Hoelter’s critical N (a = .01) value = 227.949; supported for the model. RMSEA = 0.059 was also used to assess the model fit (see table 5). It also provided a measure of fit.

TABLE 5
FIT INDICES FOR COMPETING MODELS AND MEASUREMENT MODEL

	M _T	M ₁	M ₂	M ₃
Chi square	1081.221	243.224	534.983	166.625
Degree of freedom	419	101	101	62
CFI	0.889	0.948	0.862	0.953
TLI	0.877	0.939	0.836	0.941
NFI	0.832	0.915	0.836	0.927
IFI	0.890	0.949	0.862	0.953
GFI	0.853	0.932	0.862	0.942
RMSEA	0.063	0.059	0.103	0.065

CFI = Comparative Fit Index, TLI = Tucker Lewis Index, NFI = Normed Fit Index, IFI = Incremental Fit Index, GFI = Goodness of fit index, RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

(2) Competing Model 2

The Model 2 fit indicates the degree to which the items showed the hypothesized variables; $\chi^2 = 534.983$, $df = 101$, $\chi^2/df = 5.296$; other indices assessed including CFI = 0.862, TLI = 0.836, NFI = 0.836, and IFI = 0.862, (GFI) 0.862, and Hoelter's critical N ($\alpha = 0.01$) value = 104.179; supported for the model. RMSEA = 0.103 was also used to assess the model fit (see table 5).

(3) Competing Model 3

The Model 3 fit indicates the degree to which the items showed the hypothesized variables; $\chi^2 = 166.625$, $df = 62$, $\chi^2/df = 2.687$; other indices assessed including CFI = 0.953, TLI = 0.941, NFI = 0.927, and IFI = 0.953, (GFI) 0.942, and Hoelter's critical N ($\alpha = 0.01$) value = 220.613; supported for the model. RMSEA = 0.065 was also used to assess the model fit (see table 5). It also provided a measure of fit.

(4) The Theoretical Proposed Model

To analyze the mediating role of destination service quality and to assess the differences among variables that include the Korean Wave and destination image, three competing models were conducted before the final theoretical model. To that purpose, chi-square was used to test the differences in individual paths and also three competing models. The results showed that destination service quality was a significant mediator between the Korean Wave (i.e., Korean products) and destination image (M_1), and also a significant mediator between the Korean Wave (i.e., tourism and heritage attractions) and destination image (M_3); overall model fit showed performing

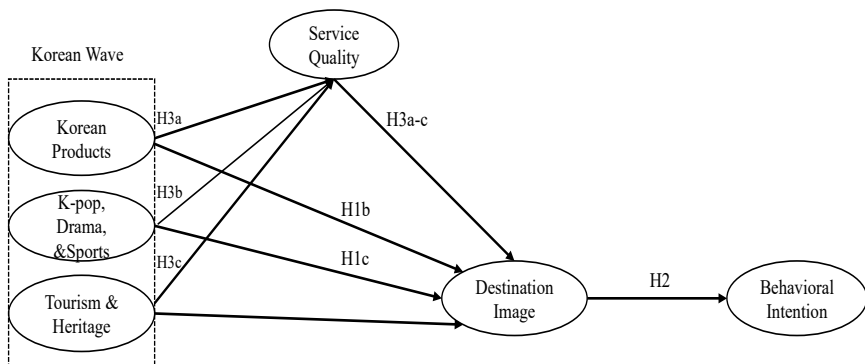


FIG. 5.—MEASUREMENT MODEL (M_T)

significantly better than M_2 ; as destination service quality was not a significant mediator between the Korean Wave (i.e., K-pop, K-dramas, and K-sports) and destination image like other two competing models. However, the χ^2 difference test between the competing models M_1 , M_2 , and M_3 favored the measurement model and supported H3a, H3b, and H3c (see figure 5). Though, insignificant results were found related to H4.

Discussion

This study explores the relationship between the Korean Wave, destination image, and behavioral intention in view of the mediating effect of destination service quality from Pakistani students/alumni perspectives. Results indicated a positive relationship between the Korean Wave, destination image, and behavioral intention. This finding builds on the prior literature particularly with the mediating role of destination service quality.

This study has shown main findings; H1a-c were supported and contributed to previous findings (Park, Simon, and Kazimoto 2021; and Bang et al. 2021) revealing that the Korean Wave has a significant effect on destination image, and also showed a positive relationship between the Korean Wave and destination image. Particularly, the Korean Wave entailing Korean products, tourism, and heritage attractions, were significant. Likewise, the findings for H2 reveal that destination image had shown a significant positive effect on behavioral intentions which also supported past findings which indicated a favorable destination image builds more positive behavioral intentions and has a positive effect (Chen and Tsai 2007). Furthermore, H3a-c show that destination service quality had a different perception of the Korean Wave and destination image. Based on these findings destination service quality indicated a mediating role between the Korean Wave, destination image, and behavioral intentions.

Implications

The present study's findings have significant implications. Taking the theoretical context into consideration, the Korean Wave matters in the tourism industry that involves Korean products, K-dramas, K-pop, and K-sports, as well as historic and heritage attractions. Korean popular culture entices audiences and fans and enhances profit in the national economy. In 2019, the number of foreign tourists in Korea was some 17.5 million, an

annual record breaking the previous record of 17.24 million inbound tourists in 2016 (Seung-woo 2019). This trend shows that the Korean Wave's popularity attracts a number of tourists' intention to visit Korea and shooting sites in the entertainment industry. However, a decrease (39.3 trillion won) has been seen in the amount of consumer spending in the tourism and leisure sector from January 2020 to June 2021 in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (*Yonhap News Agency* October 1, 2021).

By integrating the present study's findings through empirical evidence, it shows particularly how Pakistani students view Korea. In recent years, the Hallyu phenomenon has increased the number of Muslim tourists in Korea. Eventually, the Korean government started to advance a Halal tourism environment for Muslim tourists and shifted its focus from Chinese to Muslim tourists by providing a Muslim-friendly tourism environment. Building on the findings, marketing Korea as a Muslim-friendly state and its Muslim tourism policies are attracting Pakistanis, particularly students and workers, and raising their interest in Korean culture and tourism. For example, the provision of various facilities that adhere to Islamic rules, such as Halal food and Halal restaurants, for Muslim visitors has steadily increased the number of Pakistani visitors to Korea. However, Korea lacks a welcoming, Muslim-friendly environment and anti-Muslim sentiment continues to prevail among nationals who oppose the government's policies regarding Muslims.

By examining destination service quality, the study explores how destination service quality mediated the relationship between the Korean Wave and destination image in regard to Pakistani students in Korea. A few researchers have investigated that the service quality is a significant contributor regarding destination, and service quality has also become a predictor of outcome, playing its mediating role to consider the destination image. In essence, maintaining a level of service quality of destination plays a significant role in the behavioral intentions of tourists. Likewise, service quality affects the future purchasing intention of consumers and offers economic outcomes. Pakistani consumers' satisfaction with the service quality of the Korean Wave indicates their positive perceptions toward Korean cultural products, showing a positive relationship between their satisfaction and willingness to repurchase as well as their loyalty to the destination.

Destination image is regarded as a crucial predictor of behavioral intentions. Visitors' perceptions of a destination have a significant impact on their experience and reflect destination image's usefulness as a key tool for

understanding behavioral intentions. In this context, Pakistani students had positive image of Korea as a destination, which shows Korea's advanced level of tourism infrastructure, a result of the Korean government's focus on investing in the cultural, entertainment, and historic attraction sites to attract visitors. There is a need to continue investing in the tourism sector to maintain high service quality, a safe and peaceful environment, and visitors' satisfaction—which can positively influence the destination image of Korea and also contributes to the country's economic growth. Overall, Pakistani students give the impression of being satisfied with the service quality in Korea. To compete at the global level in the tourism industry, training courses for tour operators and their employees help to measure tourists' future intentions and service quality should be considered. These measures would enhance the competitiveness of the Korean Wave and its influence through the convergence of digital media and popular culture. Korea as a Muslim-friendly country and Pakistan as the "cradle of civilization" can offer tourist packages to foster friendly ties through person-to-person contact. The Korean Wave can work as a long-term marketing strategy to influence Pakistani perceptions and boost the economic relations between the two states.

Limitations of the Study

In respect to data collection, the sample population used in this study was Pakistan students/alumni in Korea. A hybrid approach that combined in-depth interviews and an online survey was used to provide qualitative and quantitative insights to ascertain valuable results. Considering that in-depth interviews are vital for qualitative research, interviewing some people from the target population supported a distinctive place and fulfilled the major objective of qualitative research in gaining a deep understanding of interviewees' behavior and their attitude formation. All participants selected for in-depth interviews had experienced Korean culture at least for five years and they were excluded from participation in the online survey. The convenience sampling method was used despite its limitations such as nonrandom selection of respondents and the difficulty to generalize the results to a larger population. To find useful information and avoid the risk of scientific generalizability; after conducting in-depth interviews, a large number of individuals were accessed to participate in the online survey. Regardless, the findings may not be generalized to all Pakistanis who have not visited Korea and they may have different perceptions. To overcome this

limitation, future research could be conducted in Pakistan with a similar survey questionnaire to examine the influence of the Korean Wave in the country. The findings of both studies can be compared to see the similarities and differences. Moreover, to assess Pakistani students' perceptions, a survey was administered online, thus there might be different perceptions in regard to actual perceptions of Pakistanis. Additionally, the survey was administered only to students/alumni, it is suggested that future studies could be assessing the perceptions of Pakistani workers in Korea as they have a higher number relative to students.

Conclusion

This study assesses the influence of the Korean Wave on Pakistani students/alumni in Korea. In addressing these objectives, it examined the relationship between the Korean Wave, destination service quality, destination image, and behavioral intentions. This study revealed that the Korean Wave has a significant and positive impact on the destination image. Likewise, destination image has a positive impact on behavioral intentions. Furthermore, the service quality of destination products plays a mediating role between the Korean Wave and destination image in the case of Pakistani students' perceptions. Thus, the findings indicated policymakers could focus attention on the Korean Wave's attributes in Pakistan for economic opportunities. Pakistani students' behavioral intentions indicate repeat purchase intention in the consumption of Korean cultural products due to its service quality. Pakistani nationals who are staying in Korea demonstrate a positive image of Korea, and the Korean Wave has an influence on them. Therefore, Korean manufacturers could utilize the opportunity presented by the popularity of the Korean Wave to export Korean products to Pakistan due to increasing demands of consumers in the market.

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