# The Phenomenon and Development of K-Pop: The Relationship between Success Factors of K-Pop and the National Image, Social Network Service Citizenship Behavior, and Tourist Behavioral Intention

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**Abstract:** This study aims to understand the impact of six success factors of K-pop on the national image of Korea perceived by global viewers and SNS citizenship behavior. In addition, this study seeks to validate the impact of the national image of Korea/SNS citizenship behavior, as defined in the foregoing, on tourist behavioral intention. Our analysis was conducted within the theoretical frameworks of the SERVQUAL, Image Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behavior. To that end, 1247 global viewers (eight countries) who have listened, watched and searched for information on K-pop are surveyed. Four statistical programs (SPSS/SmartPLS/GSCA Pro/JASP) are used for regression analysis and structural equation modeling. The results indicate the following. (1) Four K-pop success factors (producers, casting, producing/promotion, and contents) demonstrate a statistically significant positive influence on national image. (2) Two K-pop success factors (casting and producing/promotion) demonstrate a statistically significant positive influence on SNS citizenship behavior. In addition, K-pop contents has a statistically significant positive influence on SNS citizenship behavior (only in SPSS). (3) National image has a statistically significant positive influence on SNS citizenship behavior; and national image and SNS citizenship behavior have a statistically significant positive influence on tourist behavioral intention. As an exemplary cultural product, K-pop is creating economic added value. It is necessary to establish the measures to integrate K-pop in product planning and PR for sustainable marketing for Hallyu tourism.

**Keywords:** success factors of K-pop; national image; SNS citizenship behavior; tourist behavioral intention; global viewers; regression analysis; structural equation model analysis

## 1. Introduction

Korean popular music (K-pop) enjoys worldwide recognition. K-pop slowly advanced onto the international stage in the late 1990s [1]. In the beginning, K-pop was popular mainly in East Asia. For this reason, numerous media and scholars attributed K-pop success to the common culture of Confucianism at the time [2]. However, the popularity of K-pop has expanded beyond East Asia and is growing in Europe, North and South America, and Africa [3]. Due to its media-friendly nature, K-pop has proven to be resilient even during the COVID-19 pandemic. In other words, the spread of K-pop is greatly credited to its online circulation on social media and the internet [4].

In addition, digitalization had an impact on many domains including the producers and consumers of the music industry. From a macroscopic point of view, the music industry has been transformed from analogue to digital, from offline to online, from albums to singles, from division of labor to integration of companies, from domestic

distribution to international distribution, and from music to imagery. In terms of music consumption, it shifted to accessing and maximizing the synergy through integration from owning music catalogues [5]. Amid such transformation, the Korean music industry was able to improve its global competitiveness by embracing technology development and digitalization, successfully launching K-pop into the world market [6].

Along with the development of digital devices, online media such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter became extremely popular. Because the Korean music industry does not closely observe the copyright act, internet media were utilized more actively than in other countries [7]. The largest entertainment companies created YouTube channels and immediately released their new songs. As internet media targeted the global population, K-pop was widely spread and shared around the world. Furthermore, social media allowed K-pop artists to connect and build bonds with their fans, resulting in the formation of ardent fan bases without borders [8]. Thus, "social media" plays a key role in the success of K-pop.

When the internet helped K-pop spread not only in Korea but overseas, Korean entertainment companies began to look beyond the small domestic music market and take the international market into consideration. Accordingly, some companies recruited bilingual speakers or foreigners for K-pop groups [9]. Compared to the past, more companies are attempting to hold performances in other countries or collaborate with well-known artists from other countries. In short, internet media provided opportunities to learn about new markets and had a great impact on diversifying K-pop [10]. Thus, "casting" plays a key role in the success of K-pop.

To quickly produce flawless songs in the K-pop market of idol music, which has a short cycle of popularity, the music industry established a well-organized and coordinated production system that engages experts from each field for music production. Music was also merchandized by entertainment companies when the factory-style division of labor was applied as the method of producing high quality music efficiently and continuously [11]. To reflect the global trend, the companies collaborated on many songs with producers from other countries. In dance music that highlights the acoustics, the role of a composer was expanded to the producer who takes charge of the acoustics. In short, particular producers and artists continued to work together and created series of hits. This provided the opportunity for them to understand the attributes and the ideas of one another in a continuing relationship and improve the efficiency of music production and the authenticity of music [5].

In this manner, the trendy music style familiar to international audiences became more approachable through trans-country genre integration, frequent use of English lyrics, reflection of the newest global trends, and sophisticated acoustics [12]. Hook songs that repeat the motifs are very impressionable and easy to remember and sing along with even for listeners who do not know the Korean language, while establishing the identity of the artists with a clear concept [13]. The refreshing and robust lyrics not only invoked emotional empathy from international fans but also reflected the Korean sentiment [14]. The worldwide success of K-pop is not coincidental; it is a result of various attempts at international launching and continual improvement by Korean music producers. Despite the criticism that K-pop songs are very much alike in music style, K-pop has generated a new distinctive feature in the competitive music market through experimental music, integrating diverse genres using a unique concept [15]. Thus, "producing" plays a key role in the success of K-pop.

In addition, the music industry, which used to be sub-divided into different domains such as scouting, producing, recording, and managing, was radically transformed by the development of hardware and the advent of the internet. The development of hardware helped mass-produce songs and records more quickly and easily while the internet brought about a fundamental change in marketing and promotion [16]. Using the internet, entertainment companies could communicate with the public and learn in depth what the market desires in terms of singers and bands. The entertainment companies directly recruited

promising trainees as needed and provided training programs [13]. To maximize the net worth of the singers or the groups that they had been training, entertainment companies with bargaining power managed the performance schedule. In short, specialties of the music industry have become integrated [17]. Thus, "producers and promotion" plays a key role in the success of K-pop.

Consumers want K-pop content that they can relate to. Therefore, it is necessary to consider whether K-pop contains content that demonstrates an understanding of and relates to the lives of consumers worldwide [18]. Seeking pure aesthetics is one of the main reasons for creative work. An important lesson here is that consumers value relatable content much more than aesthetics that are far from reality [19]. Meanwhile, it is crucial to pay attention to the fans or the consumers of K-pop and strive to take their feedback to heart. Unlike the past, "domineering stars" no longer receive a warm welcome. Consumers want artists who can be in touch with them from their own perspective. In short, it is necessary to obtain universal popularity that transverses nationalities [20,21].

K-pop is also a comprehensive art. It is cultural merchandise packaged with diverse factors rather than one simple song sung by a singer. The state-of-the-art lyrics, arrangement, and colorful performance were consistent with the "era of enjoying music visually" beyond just listening when the field of cultural production actively integrated with information technology [9]. In particular, K-pop came to have a strong brand image in the world market of pop culture as the infinitely expandable information technology was combined with the charm of idols with outstanding vocals and extraordinary choreography [12].

Strictly speaking, the popularity of K-pop idol groups in the international market, including the USA, was credited to the regimented performances and musical melodies that allowed a successful entry to the global market of pop music [9,12]. Unlike K-pop with its lively dance performances, music genres such as sentimental ballads that deal with emotions must be sung in the language of the audience in order to appeal to them. However, by naturally exposing music consumers to the songs in their language, it is possible to expand the soft power of K-pop [22]. Approximately 75% of the market for K-pop merchandise is the international music market. This is the reason for producing K-pop in English and local languages [23]. Thus, "content" plays a key role in the success of K-pop.

Nevertheless, what matters the most is the "skills" development as mentioned earlier. The reason for the worldwide adoration of Hallyu (the Korean wave) contents such as K-pop, dramas, and movies are the performers' outstanding artistic skills. The artists excel in singing, acting, telling stories, and filming. Authenticity and communication are based on the foundation of such skills [17]. In short, entertainment companies make a long-term investment to produce the best entertainers and bear the burden of investing huge amounts of time and money for training [24]. Thus, "training" plays a key role in the success of K-pop.

The performance and entertainment business has turned its attention to various online platforms such as YouTube [25]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, which mandates "social distancing," online platforms became the second-best option to live concerts. BTS's online concert, "Bang Bang Con" is a well-known example [26]. In line with the non-contact mandate, "Bang Bang Con" tied together the conventional concert, fan interaction, and live performance. In April 2020, Big Hit Entertainment also hosted a BTS concert and streamed it online. During this event, over 750,000 fans from 107 countries went online simultaneously, generating a minimum of 21.7 billion KRW from online ticket sales [26].

Along with the enhancement in national image and brand image, K-pop's overseas expansion had a ripple effect by increasing attraction to various Korean industries including merchandise, health care, tourism, Hangul, foods, and fashion [27]. It is not difficult to find research reports indicating that many Korean industries benefited from K-pop's overseas expansion and the second Korean Wave (or Hallyu). Thus, K-pop's continuous expansion in the overseas market has had a positive effect not only on the development of the Korean music industry but also on the national economy, which needed a new driving force for growth [17,28,29].

As mentioned earlier, global fans of K-pop actively used social media and expedited the spread of K-pop [17,30,31]. Thus, the global audience for K-pop shifted from passive consumers to proactive participants. Furthermore, there was interactive communication and information sharing between K-pop idols and their fans on social network service (SNS). In addition, the influence of new media such as YouTube and SNS changed the paradigm of K-pop distribution and encouraged active participation of fans [17,30,31]. Global fans of K-pop naturally manifested SNS citizenship behavior of sharing information on SNS. Thus, the success factors of K-pop exert a great impact on the national image, SNS citizenship behavior, and tourist behavioral intention.

Previous studies have limitations in that they did not identify the diverse success factors of K-pop and examine the causal relationship of them with national image and SNS citizenship behavior from multiple perspectives. In addition, they failed to empirically examine whether national image and SNS citizenship behavior can induce or improve tourist behavioral intention. Therefore, this study aims to identify the success factors of K-pop and empirically examine whether these factors can exert a positive effect on national image and SNS citizenship behavior, and ultimately on tourist behavioral intention. To this end, the following research questions are proposed.

Research Questions:

RQ1: How does the success factor of K-pop affect SNS citizenship behavior?

RQ2: How does national image affect SNS citizenship behavior and tourist behavioral intention?

RQ3: How does SNS citizenship behavior affect tourist behavioral intention?

RQ4: Is there a mediating effect of national image and SNS citizenship behavior in the relationship between the success factors of K-pop and tourist behavioral intention?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Base Theories

K-pop refers to the trendy music gaining popularity in South Korea [23,32]. As Korean pop music became popular in other countries, the term K-pop was widely used outside the country [23,32]. The success of K-pop can be summed up as a producer's or entertainment company's organized production process entailing "casting/training/producing/promoting." These factors laid the foundation for meticulous preparation for entering the international market [33]. In this process, the use of social media such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter played a role in saving time and money for launching overseas [33]. In other words, social media had a key role in the success of K-pop. Therefore, based on the above facts, this study aims to analyze the success factors of K-pop from the perspective of production, consumption, and distribution. In addition, we examine the base theories in depth in the following sections.

### 2.2. Service Quality Model

The service quality (SERVQUAL) model is most widely accepted as a tool for measuring service quality. Service is characterized by intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability, and perishability. To measure service quality, the SERVQUAL model was suggested as a way of analyzing the congruence between consumers' expectations and perceptions [34–36]. The SERVQUAL model presents the following five critical dimensions to consider when evaluating a service for general customers or users of various types of services: (1) Tangibility refers to physical facilities (e.g., building, store, interior), equipment, and the appearance of service personnel; (2) Reliability refers to the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately; (3) Responsiveness refers to the service personnel's ability and willingness to help customers and provide prompt service; (4) Assurance refers to the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence; and (5) Empathy refers to caring and individualized attention to each customer [37–39]. Studies that applied the SERVQUAL model are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Examples of applying the SERVQUAL model.

| Service Field | Tangibility | Reliability | Responsiveness | Assurance | Empathy | Researcher (Source) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Airlines | Airplanes, ticketing counters, uniforms | Departing and arriving on time | Swiftness in baggage handling and ticketing, and promptness upon request for inflight service | Trustable names, safety records, competent employees | Understanding and caring for individuals' particular needs | Rezaei et al. [40] Shah et al. [41] |
| Medical service | Buildings, waiting rooms, examination rooms, medical equipment | Seeing patients at the scheduled time, giving accurate diagnosis | Attitude of carefully listening to customers (patients), short wait time | Expertise and skills, validated qualifications, fame and reputation | Treating patients with respect and care, remembering previous health problems | Ali et al. [42] Lee & Kim [43] |
| Auto repair | Repair facilities, waiting rooms, uniforms, repair equipment | Fixing the problem and getting it done within a promised time frame | Accessibility, short wait time, prompt response to requests | Mechanics with expert knowledge | Remembering the customer's names, previous issues, and understanding preferences | Famiyeh et al. [44] Jain et al. [45] James & James [46] |
| Construction | Office, business proposal, invoice, employee attire | Proposing and executing the plans within budget | Responding quickly and accommodating the changes in needs in the construction process | Validated qualifications, reputation, expertise, and skills | Understanding the customer and the specific needs of the customer | Durdyev et al. [47] Prakash & Phadtare [48] |
| Travel agency | Office, travel agency website | Making proposals and reservations tailored to customer's needs and budgets | Travel-related product reservation, visa processing | Finding and recommending local tourist destinations | Understanding and considering various situations (e.g., family trip, business trip, friendship) | Gholipour Soleimani & Einolahzadeh [49] Mohtasham et al. [50] |
| K-pop | Discovering talent through street auditions, events, and festivals (casting) | Producing albums and music videos with perfection/reliability for the global market (producing/promotion) | Real-time delivery or prompt communication with fans regarding assorted information about K-pop through SNS (social media) | Well-organized process and system related to K-pop production(producer), and professional trainings for talented trainees with the ability to convey confidence (training) | Optimizing a variety of contents and obtaining popularity and empathy (contents) | Chang [51] Choi & Park [52] Kim [53] Oh & Lee [33] |

In this study, we examined the success factors of K-pop within the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL model. The success factors of K-pop were re-labeled in accordance with the purpose of this study: (1) Tangibility factor of K-pop encompasses scouting efforts to discover the talents through street auditions, events, and festivals. This was re-labeled as "casting" for this study; (2) Reliability factor encompasses the effort to produce albums and music videos with perfection/reliability for the global market. This was re-labeled as "producing/promotion"; (3) Responsiveness factor encompasses the real-time delivery or prompt communication with the fans through SNS regarding assorted information about K-pop. This was re-labeled as "social media"; (4) Assurance factor encompasses the well-organized process and system related to K-pop production and training for talented trainees with the ability to convey confidence. This was re-labeled as "producers" and "training"; and (5) Empathy factor encompasses the attributes of K-pop that optimize a variety of contents and generate popularity and empathy. This was re-labeled as "contents" [33]. When examining the above-mentioned factors, the 'SERVQUAL model' can be applied as the base theory for analyzing the success factors of K-pop.

*2.3. Image Theory*

Image theory by [54] was developed as an alternative to decision making theory, which was based on the expected utility theory. Image theory focuses more on the decision-making process, which was not expounded by the expected utility theory [54]. Even though behavioral decision approaches centered on heuristics and biases undoubtedly show that actual decision-making deviates from the normative decision-making model, they do not encompass the entire cognitive process of decision-making [55].

To overcome these limitations, the image theory provides an ideal model for analyzing the decision-making process for individuals or organizations in situations that require social, ethical, or moral considerations from a behavioral point of view [56,57]. The image theory disregards the normative decision model and holds that decision making is guided by the values and beliefs of individuals or groups who make decisions. Therefore, decision-makers choose their behavioral path for achieving goals within the boundary of their values and beliefs [56,57].

The image theory is divided into two components: a component describing personal decision making and a component describing organizational decision making. Regardless of the unit of analysis, both components use framing, a process to recognize a problem prior to making decisions [58]. For framing, decision makers use three types of image: value image, trajectory image, and strategic image [59,60]. As such, the image theory hypothesizes that decision makers utilize three different schematic knowledge structures, namely images, to organize their thinking in performing decision-making tasks [59,60].

(1) The value image is the decision-maker's principle, and it contains the concepts that define what is right, such as beliefs, values, moral standards, ethics, and norms. For example, "Let's fulfill the social responsibility" is a value image (value/standard/principle). Such a principle works as a criterion for judging the appropriateness of the decision making with regard to designing and choosing the alternative goals and plans that are likely to be selected [59,60].

(2) The trajectory image refers to the goal agenda describing the future state that a decision-maker wishes to achieve. For example, "Let's double the productivity" is a trajectory image. Based on the trajectory image, decisions are made on which behavior is appropriate and which is not [59,60].

(3) The strategic image comprises different plans selected for achieving a goal, a strategy for achieving the plan, and a prediction of the outcome of the strategy. Planning is an abstract process that entails a series of behaviors ranging from goal setting to goal achievement. Strategy refers to the specific and practical behaviors required by the plan. Prediction means forecasting future outcomes that will take place upon selecting a certain plan and strategy [59,60]. This entails planning/implementation/enforcement of actions.

To summarize the above descriptions, the image theory can be applied as a base theory for analyzing the path for the success factors of K-pop as follows: the success factors of K-pop → national image/SNS citizenship behavior → tourist behavioral intention. The application or implementation of the decision-making frame in the 'image theory' can be specified as in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Decision-making frame in image theory (application/implementation).

| Image | Variables | Description | | Researcher (Source) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Value image | Producers | • Degree of systematic processes and systematization related to K-pop production | value/standard/principle | Chang [51] Choi & Park [52] Kim [53] |
| | Casting | • Degree of various efforts to discover K-pop talent | value/standard/principle | Chang [51] Choi & Park [52] Kim [53] Kim [61] |
| | Training | • Degree of comprehensive training to develop K-pop talent | value/standard/principle | Chang [51] |
| | Producing/ promotion | • Degree of production of high-quality albums and wide promotions suited for the global market in relation to K-pop | value/standard/principle | Chang [51] |
| | Social media | • Degree to which real-time information on various K-pop contents is provided or communicated through SNS | value/standard/principle | An & Jeong [62] Chang [51] Cho & Sim [63] |
| | Contents | • Degree of additional originality and efforts to secure popular appeal after optimizing a variety of K-pop contents | value/standard/principle | Chang [51] Lee, Kim, & Oh [64] Wen & Cha [65] |
| | | ↓ | | |
| Trajectory image | National image | • Level of economic and cultural influence in the international society and competitiveness of Korea, the source of K-pop | goal agenda | Choi et al. [66] |
| | SNS citizenship behavior | • Degree to which good information or material related to K-pop is produced and rapidly shared on SNS | goal agenda | Kim et al. [67] |
| | | ↓ | | |
| Strategic image | Tourist behavioral intention | • Degree of desire or plans to actually travel to Korea | planning/implementation/enforcement | Choi et al. [66] Kwak et al. [28] Meng et al. [68] |

### 2.4. Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior explains human behavior and intention as a combination of three core components: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control [69–71]. These three core components shape a person's intention, and behavior is determined by the interaction between the intention and the three components. In this theory, intention is the willingness to act on a certain behavior. It is the key factor that motivates behavior [69–71].

The theory of planned behavior was an expanded version of the theory of reasoned action. The traditional theory of reasoned action described human behavior with only

two variables: attitude and subjective norms. This theory was widely applied in accounting for human behaviors including consumer attitude [72–74]. Nonetheless, in order for an actor to carry out a certain action, it is crucial to first understand whether he or she has the ability or the resources to do it. This is an important determinant for a behavior. The traditional theory did not fully take this into consideration, and thus received criticism that it lacked predictive power. To overcome this limitation, Ajzen developed the theory of planned behavior by adding to the previous theory the perception of controlling factors that limit human behavior [72–74].

The core components in the theory of planned behavior are attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The specifics are as follows: (1) "Attitude" refers to the actor's approval or disapproval toward a certain behavior. In other words, attitude is formed based on the psychological interaction between two variables: whether or not a certain action brings about a positive (or negative) outcome and how much the actor values the outcome [69,75–77]; (2) "Subjective norms" refer to the psychological pressure that an actor feels with regard to observing the social norms. In other words, they are normative beliefs about how much the reference individuals or groups who are significant to the actor support or approve of the particular behavior. In addition, how important the actor thinks the reference group's expectation is plays a role in shaping the behavior [69,75–77]; and (3) "Perceived behavioral control" pertains to the difficulty or ease of performing a particular action. In other words, behavior is explained as a result of interaction between how much access the actor believes he or she has to the necessary resources and opportunities to perform the behavior and how much the actor values them. Because of this component, the theory of planned behavior is deemed to be one of the most valid theories ever developed to account for human behaviors and intentions [69,75–77]. In addition, these three components have direct correlations with behavioral intention. Further, behavioral intention mediates for certain behaviors [69,75].

The following modifications were made to the theory of planned behavior in this study: (1) We re-labeled "attitude" as national image. That is, the attitude regarding K-pop can be seen as the national image of Korea perceived by global viewers (competitiveness of Korea—the origin of K-pop—and the level of economic and cultural influence in the international community). In addition, it includes how consistently the viewers behave toward Korea, either favorably or unfavorably; (2) "Subjective norm" was re-labeled as SNS citizenship behavior. That is, the subjective norm of K-pop refers to a person's perception that most of their significant others support a certain behavior (SNS citizenship behavior). It also includes the tendency to produce positive information or data about K-pop, and for the majority to agree/support/understand what they instantly share on SNS; and (3) We re-labeled "behavioral intention" as tourist behavioral intention. That is, behavioral intention of K-pop refers to people's evaluation (thinking or planning to travel to South Korea in person). This includes the behavioral intention to travel to Korea even if it means putting up with inconveniences such as expenses/cultural differences/language barriers/traffic/distance. Therefore, to sum up the above descriptions, the 'theory of planned behavior' can be applied as a base theory for analyzing the path for the success factors of K-pop (image + citizenship behavior + behavioral intention) as follows: the success factors of K-pop → national image/SNS citizenship behavior → tourist behavioral intention.

### 2.5. Success Factors of K-Pop

This study reviews previous studies about success factors of K-pop and summarizes them in Table 3. First, producers, casting, training, and producing/promotion were grouped together and categorized as the "production system." Second, social media and contents were categorized as "social media/contents".

**Table 3.** Success factors of K-pop.

| Categorization and Classification | Variables | Description | Researcher (Source) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Production system | Producers | • Entertainment companies meticulously preparing to enter the global market by systematizing the entire production process of "casting-training-producing-promotion"<br>• Entertainment companies meticulously preparing to enter the global market by systematizing their production processes from a long-term perspective<br>• The scouting method of selecting a small number of trainees among the multitudes of intensively trained candidates, which is deemed a differentiating competitive edge, unique to Korea | Fuhr [78]<br>Lee et al. [79]<br>Oh [80]<br>Shin & Kim [81] |
| | Casting | • Concentrating on discovering raw talent<br>• Devoting all energy in discovering talent believing that scouting a good raw gemstone is "half-success"<br>• Actively searching for global talents through overseas auditions | Shin & Kim [81] |
| | Training | • Training the best entertainers through long-term investment<br>• Entertainment companies performing the role of strong gatekeepers, training only the best of the numerous gemstones into idols and stars<br>• Entertainment companies risking long-term and large-scale investments for such training | Oh [80] |
| | Producing/ Promotion | Producing factors:<br>• Global sourcing of creative work<br>• Maximizing the level of perfection by engaging global experts in each creative field<br>• Dividing labor in the production stage by engaging experts of various nationalities and from varying fields | Fuhr [78]<br>Lee et al. [79] |
| | | Promotion factors:<br>• Utilizing the network of local partners<br>• Minimizing the uncertainty and risk of global expansion through partnerships with local companies, keeping in mind global launching from an early planning stage<br>• Overcoming cultural barriers in a short period of time by releasing a localized album tailored to local markets | Fuhr [78]<br>Lee et al. [79] |
| Social media/contents | Social media | • Saving cost and time in the process of global expansion by social media channels such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter<br>• Saving cost and time necessary for global expansion, owing to the contagious nature of the platforms, where word-of-mouth travels fast<br>• Entertainment companies recognizing social media as a key platform for K-pop consumption; they actively use social media platforms as a distribution channel and produce suitable content | Jung [82]<br>Jung [83]<br>Jung [84]<br>Marinescu & Balica [85]<br>Min et al. [86]<br>Sung [87] |
| | Contents | • K-pop idols constantly captivating global consumers by transforming themselves, based on their competitiveness in vocals, choreography, and visuals<br>• Obtaining universal popularity that transcends nationalities by fusing Western pop style with easy melodies suited for Eastern sentiment<br>• Providing a splashy spectacle by including a regimented group dance and a point dance<br>• Constantly transforming through sensational fashion and styles for new releases | Doré & Pugsley [88]<br>Kim [14]<br>Oh & Lee [89]<br>Parc, Messerlin, & Moon [90] |

## 2.6. National Image

National image has been researched in diverse fields of study. It is a cognitive representation that a person holds of a given country, and it can be viewed as a level of trust in the country [91]. It is also defined as collective expressions of perceptions and judgments of a country by overseas citizens [92]. As the market competition became intensified due to globalization, the concept of national image has become more important, and it is often used as a significant factor in consumer behavior studies [93–95].

Meanwhile, national image cannot be seen as an absolute and objective factor because it varies depending on a person's subjective perception. That is, the evaluator's emotional and subjective attitude has a great influence [92,96]. However, consumers who have little or no background knowledge about a certain product have a strong tendency to evaluate products based on the national image of the country of origin. In addition, if the image of a country is positive, people also view companies from the country positively [94,97,98]. In this study, we define "national image" as competitiveness and level of economic and cultural influence that Korea (the origin country of K-pop) has in the global community.

## 2.7. SNS Citizenship Behavior

SNS citizenship behavior is a concept that applies organizational citizenship behavior to SNS [67,99]. Organizational citizenship behavior is a voluntary behavior that promotes the organization's efficiency regardless of official incentives from the organization, such as reacting in a timely fashion, assisting colleagues, and avoiding confrontations [100].

Today, there is online community citizenship behavior similar to SNS citizenship behavior. Online community refers to the group of people who interact online around their shared interest. However, SNS differs from online community in that individual users form a separate network [101]. Previous studies have defined SNS citizenship behavior as pro-social and responsible behavior that members of SNS voluntarily perform outside their own roles [67,99]. In this study, we define "SNS citizenship behavior" as the level of generating good information or data about K-pop and sharing it on SNS in a timely manner.

## 2.8. Tourist Behavioral Intention

In the tourism industry, behavioral intention is used in reference to the intention to visit a tourist site or revisit a certain place [102,103]. Here, behavioral intention is a plan to achieve a particular goal, and it is a main predictor of consumer behavior. In other words, it can be said to be consumers' willingness or belief to carry out their future plan after they form an opinion about a certain product or service [104,105].

Tourist behavioral intention is a person's intention to visit a certain place, and it is the probability of carrying out the plan or belief. In other words, a person's decision to visit a tourist site based on a personal belief leads to an actual visit [17,28,66]. As such, tourist behavioral intention in the tourism industry is the decision made based on the willingness to visit a particular place. Therefore, the main goal of tourist site marketing is to encourage consumers to set a tourist behavioral intention [17,28,66]. In this study, we define "tourist behavioral intention" as a thought or plan to travel to Korea in person.

## 2.9. Relationship between Key Variables

We specify the relationship between the key variables, as shown in Table 4. Accordingly, we examined previous studies.

**Table 4.** Relationship between the key variables (previous studies).

| Variables | Path | Variables | Description | Researcher (Source) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Success factors of K-pop | → | National image | • Attributes of K-pop (e.g., topic and content, visual and acoustic effects, and cultural interest) have a positive (+) effect on national image | Suh & Yang [106] |
| | | | • K-pop, movies, and dramas have a positive (+) effect on national image | Lee [107] |
| | | | • K-pop image has a positive (+) effect on national image | Wen & Cha [65] |
| | | | • In terms of K-pop production, the degree of structured processing and systematization has a positive (+) effect on national image (producers) | Kim [108] |
| | | | • In terms of casting, discovering talents who are competent, charming, and highly attractive has a positive (+) effect on national image (casting) | Han, Chen, & Rhee [109] |
| | | | • In training the talents into K-pop stars, the trainer's image has a positive (+) effect on the self-image of the trainees (training) | Kim [110] |
| | | | • Diverse marketing and promotion for K-pop has a positive (+) effect on national image (producing/promotion) | Jang & Jung [111] |
| | | | • Social media has a positive (+) effect on national image (social media) | Li & Park [112] |
| | | | • Optimized K-pop contents have a positive (+) effect on national image (contents) | Moon & Park [113] |
| Success factors of K-pop | → | SNS citizenship behavior | • Research on "success factors of K-pop and effective strategy for global launch" was conducted<br>• Two contributing factors of K-pop's successful global launch were found: ① Competitiveness of K-pop contents (contents) and ② Social media strategy<br>• Three competitive edges of K-pop contents were found: ① Strategy to localize globally (producing/promotion), ② Idol training system (casting), and ③ Competitiveness of K-pop stars (training)<br>• The greatest charm of K-pop is the performance of idol groups (contents)<br>• The most effective strategy of K-pop promotion is social media (social media)<br>• Voluntary citizenship behavior of SNS users was reported to be a success factor of K-pop, as the information was shared in real time with global fans | Kim [31] |
| | | | • Research on "contributing factors of K-pop's global spread" was conducted<br>• Four contributing factors of K-pop's global spread were identified: ① Globalization strategy (targeting the global market), ② Evolution of management system (advent of corporate type entertainment companies, structured organization/specialization), ③ Training system (of producing stars through training, open audition programs of entertainment companies/broadcasting companies), and ④ Globalization of production (collaboration on production with overseas experts)<br>• Three contributing factors of K-pop contents' global spread were found: ① Idol singers' authentic lyrics and story-telling albums (empathy formation), ② Visual elements, such as singing and dancing (performance), and ③ Personas of idol singers (e.g., appearance and talent)<br>• SNS citizenship behavior was reported as a success factor of K-pop's global spread, as K-pop global fans naturally shared the information on SNS | Jun [30] |

**Table 4.** *Cont.*

| Variables | Path | Variables | Description | Researcher (Source) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| National image | → | SNS citizenship behavior | • Brand image perceived by consumers has a statistically significant correlation with brand citizenship behavior | Nyadzayo, Matanda, & Ewing [114] Hoang [115] |
| | | | • Company's image perceived by customers has a statistically significant correlation with customers' citizenship behavior | Ahn & Park [116] |
| National image | → | Tourist behavioral intention | • National image has a positive (+) effect on behavioral and purchase intentions | Alvarez & Campo [117] Kim, Kim, & Lee [118] Kim, Kwon, & Bae [119] Suh & Yang (2012) [106] |
| | | | • Positive attitude toward Hallyu (Korean Wave) has a positive (+) effect on national image • Consequently, national image has a positive (+) effect on tourist behavioral intention | Kim, Kim, & Choi [120] Lee & Kim [121] Lee & Lockshin [122] |
| SNS citizenship behavior | → | Tourist behavioral intention | • Consumers' citizenship behavior has a positive (+) effect on consumer satisfaction and commitment • In their turn, consumer satisfaction and customer commitment have a positive (+) effect on revisit intention | Kim, Kim, & Cha [123] |
| | | | • Civic consciousness, such as volunteering activity, meeting attendance, and tolerance of inconvenience, has a positive (+) effect on behavioral intention | Kwon & Song [124] |

*2.10. Hypotheses*

We established the following hypotheses based on the relationships between the key variables in Table 4 (previous studies).
Hypotheses:
Production system

**Hypothesis 1a (H1a).** *Producers exert a positive (+) effect on national image.*

**Hypothesis 1b (H1b).** *Casting exerts a positive (+) effect on national image.*

**Hypothesis 1c (H1c).** *Training exerts a positive (+) effect on national image.*

**Hypothesis 1d (H1d).** *Producing/promotion exerts a positive (+) effect on national image.*

Social media/contents

**Hypothesis 2a (H2a).** *Social media exerts a positive (+) effect on national image.*

**Hypothesis 2b (H2b).** *Contents exert a positive (+) effect on national image.*

Production system

**Hypothesis 3a (H3a).** *Producers exert a positive (+) effect on SNS citizenship behavior.*

**Hypothesis 3b (H3b).** *Casting exerts a positive (+) effect on SNS citizenship behavior.*

**Hypothesis 3c (H3c).** *Training exerts a positive (+) effect on SNS citizenship behavior.*

**Hypothesis 3d (H3d).** *Producing/promotion exerts a positive (+) effect on SNS citizenship behavior.*

Social media/contents

**Hypothesis 4a (H4a).** *Social media exerts a positive (+) effect on SNS citizenship behavior.*

**Hypothesis 4b (H4b).** *Contents exert a positive (+) effect on SNS citizenship behavior.*

**Hypothesis 5 (H5).** *National image exerts a positive (+) effect on SNS citizenship behavior.*

**Hypothesis 6 (H6).** *National image exerts a positive (+) effect on tourist behavioral intention.*

**Hypothesis 7 (H7).** *SNS citizenship behavior exerts a positive (+) effect on tourist behavioral intention.*

### 3. Methods

*3.1. Research Model*

We designed our research model based on theoretical concepts and the extant literature on our main variables, as discussed above (see Figure 1). As Figure 1 shows, our study analyzes empirically the effects of the K-pop success factors as listed on South Korea's national image and on global SNS citizenship behavior in the context of the three theories mentioned (SERVQUAL, image theory, and theory of planned behavior). Ultimately, our model assesses how SNS citizenship behavior influences national image and how they both influence tourist behavioral intention.
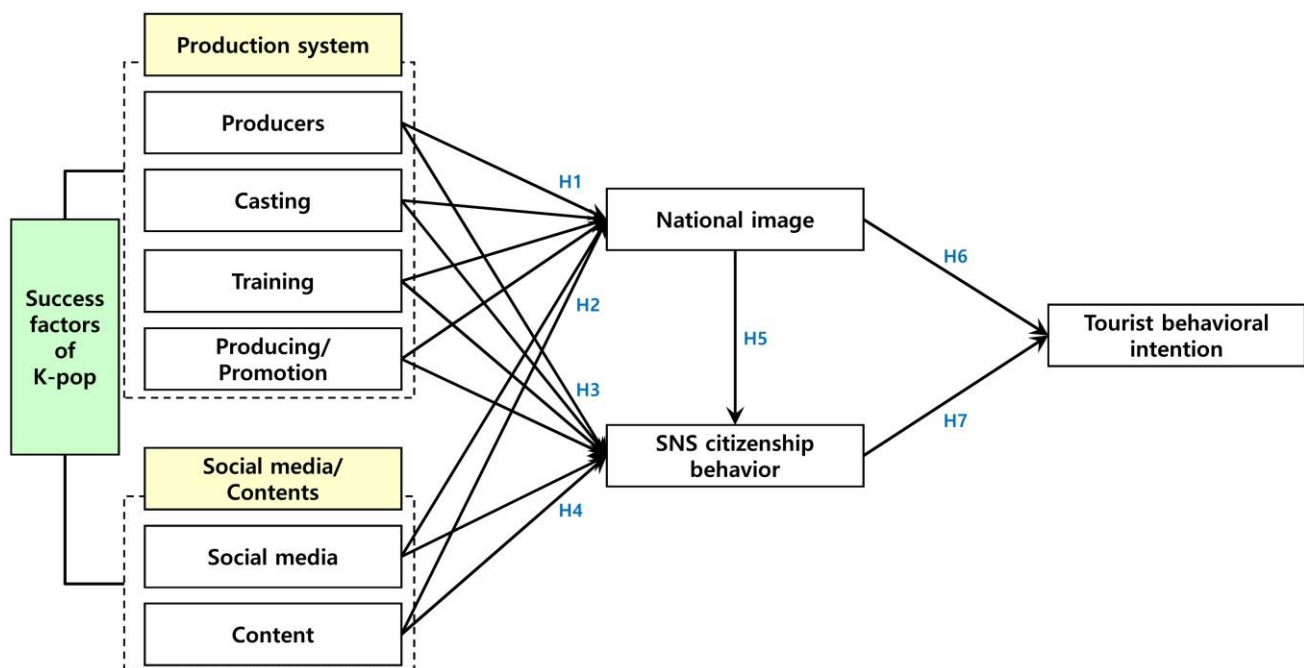
**Figure 1.** Research model.

*3.2. Variable Measurements*

Table 5 encapsulates the specific measurement items of each variable we surveyed. We based the survey categories and items on previous studies, which we then modified and adapted according to our purpose. There are a total of 42 survey items for the variables, measured on a five-point Likert type scale (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much).

**Table 5.** Survey items.

| Variables | | Operational Definition | Measurement Item | Researcher (Source) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Production system | Producers | Degree of systematic processes and systematization related to K-pop production | 1. Systematization of production process | Chang [51] Choi & Park [52] Kim [53] |
| | | | 2. Preparation to enter the overseas market from a long-term perspective | |
| | | | 3. Honing of skills from the planning stage to target the global market | |
| | | | 4. Systematization of the entire production process forming promotion | |
| | Casting | Degree of various efforts to discover K-pop talent | 1. Focus of efforts on talent discovery | Chang [51] Choi & Park [52] Kim [53] Kim [61] |
| | | | 2. Selection of trainees through various channels, including official auditions and the recommendations of acquainted celebrities | |
| | | | 3. Prioritization of talent and hidden potential in evaluations | |
| | | | 4. Active discovery of overseas talent through global auditions | |
| | Training | Degree of comprehensive training to develop K-pop talent | 1. Korean agencies performing the role of powerful gatekeepers | Chang [51] |
| | | | 2. Dedicated teams of experts in Korea providing training focused on singing, dancing, English, etc. | |
| | | | 3. Harsh training of trainees in a continuous survival style | |
| | | | 4. Assigning roles such as singing, acting, and choreography based on the members' strongest talents and combining them to create the best synergy | |
| | Producing/promotion | Degree of production of high-quality albums and wide promotions suited for the global market in relation to K-pop | 1. Maximizing the quality of K-pop albums by involving the world's premier experts in each creative field | Chang [51] |
| | | | 2. Overcoming cultural barriers in a short time period by releasing albums specialized for local markets | |
| | | | 3. Optimizing lyrics, music videos, fashion, etc., for local cultures in album production | |
| | | | 4. Wide utilization of K-pop recorded in the local language for local dramas, movies, commercials, etc. | |
| Social media/contents | Social media | Degree to which real-time information on various K-pop contents is provided or communicated through SNS | 1. Use of social media such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter | An & Jeong [62] Chang [51] Cho & Sim [63] |
| | | | 2. Effectively leveraging the infectious nature of social media that enables quick word-of-mouth for overseas expansion | |
| | | | 3. Effectively sharing news about performances and recent updates through social media | |
| | | | 4. Expanding emotional interactions by directly communicating with overseas fans via social media | |
| | Contents | Degree of additional originality and efforts to secure popular appeal after optimizing a variety of K-pop contents | 1. Fusion of Western pop styles with easy melodies that suit Eastern sentiments | Chang [51] Lee, Kim, & Oh [64] Wen & Cha [65] |
| | | | 2. Securing universal mass appeal to gain popularity across nationalities | |
| | | | 3. Providing showy spectacles through highly synchronized choreography and point dances | |
| | | | 4. Constantly varying sensuous fashions and styles whenever a new song is released | |
| National image | | Level of economic and cultural influence in the international society and competitiveness of Korea, the source of K-pop | 1. Korea's national income and education level are high | Choi et al. [66] |
| | | | 2. Korea's national conditions are stable | |
| | | | 3. Korea's level of technology is excellent | |
| | | | 4. Korea's economic influence is large | |
| | | | 5. Korean culture is open | |
| | | | 6. Korean culture is appealing | |
| | | | 7. Korean culture is of a high standard | |
| | | | 8. Korean culture is unique and preserves tradition | |
| | | | 9. Korean culture has a long history and is likeable | |

**Table 5.** *Cont.*

| Variables | Operational Definition | Measurement Item | Researcher (Source) |
|---|---|---|---|
| SNS citizenship behavior | Degree to which good information or material related to K-pop is produced and rapidly shared on SNS | 1. Sharing and providing K-pop-related information to people around me through SNS | Kim et al. [67] |
| | | 2. Sharing positive opinions about K-pop-related information to people around me through SNS | |
| | | 3. Always contemplating how to share K-pop-related information to people around me through SNS | |
| | | 4. Extracting, processing, and sharing the core contents of K-pop-related information with people around me through SNS | |
| | | 5. Always contemplating whether K-pop-related information can be helpful to people around me through SNS | |
| Tourist behavioral intention | Degree of desire or plans to actually travel to Korea | 1. Will travel to Korea even if it is expensive | Choi et al. [66] Kwak et al. [28] Meng et al. [68] |
| | | 2. Will travel to Korea even if there are cultural differences and a language barrier | |
| | | 3. Will travel to Korea even if transportation is inconvenient | |
| | | 4. Will travel to Korea even if it is far | |

### 3.3. Respondents

The respondents are global viewers who have listened to K-pop on TV, radio, or the Internet at least once, watched K-pop videos on YouTube at least once, and searched for information related to K-pop on SNS at least once. We conducted two rounds of surveys from October 2019 to October 2020 through the global research agencies Entrust Survey (http://entrustsurvey.com, accessed on 22 January 2022) and Netpoint Enterprise Inc. (http://www.netpoint.co.kr/, accessed on 22 January 2022). The surveys were provided in English and French. The respondents are from eight countries: the Philippines, Singapore, Australia, the UK, France, the US, Canada, and South Africa. Our final sample includes valid responses from 1247 participants. Table 6 presents the demographic statistics of the respondents.

**Table 6.** Demographic characteristics (N = 1247).

| Item | | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 618 | 49.6 |
| | Female | 629 | 50.4 |
| Age | 20s | 308 | 24.7 |
| | 30s | 326 | 26.1 |
| | 40s | 311 | 24.9 |
| | 50s | 302 | 24.2 |
| Education | High school graduate | 313 | 25.1 |
| | Technical college graduate | 276 | 22.1 |
| | College graduate | 515 | 41.3 |
| | Graduate school graduate | 143 | 11.5 |
| Monthly income (Mean) | Under $1000 | 270 | 21.7 |
| | $1000–$2000 | 268 | 21.5 |
| | $2001–$3000 | 205 | 16.4 |
| | $3001–$4000 | 155 | 12.4 |
| | $4001–$5000 | 151 | 12.1 |
| | over $5000 | 198 | 15.9 |
| Nationality | Philippines | 150 | 12.0 |
| | Singapore | 156 | 12.5 |
| | Australia | 161 | 12.9 |
| | UK | 150 | 12.0 |
| | France | 170 | 13.6 |
| | US | 150 | 12.0 |
| | Canada | 160 | 12.8 |
| | South Africa | 150 | 12.0 |

*3.4. Data Analysis*

We used four statistical programs, SPSS, SmartPLS GSCA Pro, and JASP, for the analysis. The procedure was as follows: first, a frequency analysis to examine demographic characteristics; second, a reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha to test the reliability of the metrics; third, a factor analysis to test the validity of the metrics; fourth, a correlation analysis to examine the closeness (i.e., correlation) of the variables; and fifth, a regression analysis and structural equation model (SEM) analysis to test the association (relationship) between key variables in this study.

## 4. Results

*4.1. Reliability and Validity*

We examined the reliability and validity of all the variables in relation to the survey items. Table 7 presents our results. Cronbach's alpha for all variables showed a minimum of 0.847, indicating very high reliability. Moreover, the loading of each factor was a minimum of 0.732, indicating high validity. The average variance extracted (AVE) was at least 0.611. A multicollinearity analysis was performed to confirm the properties closely related to the independent variables; the variance inflation factor (VIF) was 4.019 or less, indicating no problems. Accordingly, the reliability and validity of the variables of the study were confirmed.

**Table 7.** Variable reliability and validity.

| Variable | Item | Convergent Validity | | | Cronbach's Alpha | Multicollinearity |
| | | Outer Loadings | Composite Reliability | AVE | | VIF |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Producers | Producers1 | 0.856 | | | | 2.271 |
| | Producers2 | 0.863 | 0.921 | 0.745 | 0.886 | 2.252 |
| | Producers3 | 0.878 | | | | 2.447 |
| | Producers4 | 0.856 | | | | 2.242 |
| Casting | Casting1 | 0.843 | | | | 2.059 |
| | Casting2 | 0.860 | 0.907 | 0.710 | 0.864 | 2.239 |
| | Casting3 | 0.849 | | | | 2.083 |
| | Casting4 | 0.818 | | | | 1.832 |
| Training | Training1 | 0.836 | | | | 1.880 |
| | Training2 | 0.836 | 0.897 | 0.686 | 0.847 | 1.934 |
| | Training3 | 0.794 | | | | 1.765 |
| | Training4 | 0.845 | | | | 1.994 |
| Producing/promotion | Producing/promotion1 | 0.835 | | | | 1.964 |
| | Producing/promotion2 | 0.848 | 0.907 | 0.710 | 0.864 | 2.109 |
| | Producing/promotion3 | 0.850 | | | | 2.139 |
| | Producing/promotion4 | 0.837 | | | | 1.996 |
| Social media | Social media1 | 0.859 | | | | 2.370 |
| | Social media2 | 0.852 | 0.919 | 0.741 | 0.884 | 2.292 |
| | Social media3 | 0.872 | | | | 2.402 |
| | Social media4 | 0.860 | | | | 2.180 |
| Contents | Contents1 | 0.810 | | | | 1.885 |
| | Contents2 | 0.862 | 0.909 | 0.714 | 0.867 | 2.227 |
| | Contents3 | 0.850 | | | | 2.099 |
| | Contents4 | 0.858 | | | | 2.151 |

**Table 7.** *Cont.*

| Variable | Item | Convergent Validity | | | Cronbach's Alpha | Multicollinearity |
| | | Outer Loadings | Composite Reliability | AVE | | VIF |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| National image | National image1 | 0.740 | | | | 2.116 |
| | National image2 | 0.748 | | | | 2.119 |
| | National image3 | 0.787 | | | | 2.283 |
| | National image4 | 0.805 | | | | 2.367 |
| | National image5 | 0.732 | 0.934 | 0.611 | 0.920 | 1.926 |
| | National image6 | 0.810 | | | | 2.550 |
| | National image7 | 0.819 | | | | 2.693 |
| | National image8 | 0.784 | | | | 2.447 |
| | National image9 | 0.805 | | | | 2.347 |
| SNS citizenship behavior | SNS citizenship behavior1 | 0.903 | | | | 3.576 |
| | SNS citizenship behavior2 | 0.902 | | | | 3.559 |
| | SNS citizenship behavior3 | 0.916 | 0.957 | 0.816 | 0.944 | 3.985 |
| | SNS citizenship behavior4 | 0.913 | | | | 4.019 |
| | SNS citizenship behavior5 | 0.883 | | | | 3.172 |
| Tourist behavioral intention | Tourist behavioral intention1 | 0.910 | | | | 3.341 |
| | Tourist behavioral intention2 | 0.921 | 0.947 | 0.817 | 0.925 | 3.776 |
| | Tourist behavioral intention3 | 0.869 | | | | 2.557 |
| | Tourist behavioral intention4 | 0.914 | | | | 3.493 |

Note: Survey items: Likert five-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very much); Outer loadings > 0.70; Composite reliability > 0.70; Average variance extracted (AVE) > 0.5; Cronbach's alpha > 0.70; Variance inflation factor (VIF) < 10.0.

*4.2. Common Method Bias*

The respondents are 1247 global viewers (eight countries) who have listened to K-pop on TV, radio, or the Internet at least once, watched K-pop videos on YouTube at least once, and searched for information related to K-pop on SNS at least once. In other words, when the independent variable and the dependent variable are measured in the same way, and when the independent variable and the dependent variable are measured from the same respondent, the case where the correlation value between the two variables is inflated more than the actual result, is the same. This is called common method bias [125,126]. This means that there may be cases in which a total of 9 variables (factors) used in this study are inflated more positively or negatively than the actual answer to the questionnaire. In particular, when responding to a questionnaire intentionally, in order to maintain consistency, there is a possibility that the correlation between variables may be distorted because the respondent thinks too much before responding.

Therefore, in this study, principal component analysis was performed to solve common method bias. The single-factor test suggested by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff [127] was performed. As a result of factor analysis, 5 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted. Among them, the accumulation (%) of the first factor accounted for 24.591% (total accumulation: 66.437%). Since this is less than half of the total cumulative (%) of 66.437%, it can be seen that the distortion caused by the common method bias is not large.

*4.3. Correlation Analysis*

Table 8 shows the results of the discriminant validity analysis (correlation analysis). We examined whether the AVE square root exceeded the correlation coefficient for each variable. The results indicate that the AVE square root exceeded all correlation coefficient

values except one. Thus, we partially confirmed the discriminant validity of the variables in our study.

**Table 8.** Correlation analysis.

| Variable | Producers | Casting | Training | Producing | Social Media | Contents | National Image | SNS Citizenship Behavior | Tourist Behavioral Intention |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Producers | **0.863** | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Casting | 0.770 | **0.843** | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Training | 0.781 | 0.799 | **0.828** | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Producing | 0.766 | 0.807 | 0.800 | **0.842** | - | - | - | - | - |
| Social media | 0.724 | 0.705 | 0.740 | 0.745 | **0.861** | - | - | - | - |
| Contents | 0.725 | 0.713 | 0.743 | 0.766 | 0.784 | **0.845** | - | - | - |
| National image | 0.550 | 0.544 | 0.525 | 0.563 | 0.517 | 0.533 | **0.782** | - | - |
| SNS citizenship behavior | 0.400 | 0.498 | 0.432 | 0.482 | 0.380 | 0.424 | 0.423 | **0.903** | - |
| Tourist behavioral intention | 0.434 | 0.471 | 0.447 | 0.481 | 0.436 | 0.445 | 0.659 | 0.497 | **0.904** |

Note: The bold diagonal lines indicate the square root of the AVE.

### 4.4. Hypothesis Testing

We use SPSS, SmartPLS, GSCA Pro, and JASP for our regression and SEM analysis. The structural equation model (SEM) has the following three approaches: (1) There are CB (covariance based) SEMs such as AMOS, LISREL, MPlus, JASP, and jamovi. In particular, JASP and jamovi are open-source statistical packages with an easy-to-use graphical user interface (GUI). Since it is implemented based on R statistical programming language, it allows the user to use all the powerful and flexible functions in R; (2) There are PLS (partial least squares) based SEMs such as SmartPLS, VisualPLS, and PLS-Graph. Among them, SmartPLS can ① generate structural equation and pathway models in a short period of time, ② easily reflect formative measurement models and reflective measurement models, ③ and easily analyze mediating effects and moderating effects [128–131]; and (3) There is generalized structured component analysis (GSCA) based SEM such as VisualGSCA and GSCA Pro. In particular, while GSCA SEM is similar to PLS SEM, it has the following differences: ① PLS is limited-information, whereas GSCA is full-information, ② The concept of overall model fit is not well applicable to PLS, ③ GSCA is more flexible than PLS [132–134]. Despite their theoretical differences, PLS and GSCA will likely produce similar estimates of parameters in unidimensional, unidirectional and unconstrained component models [135,136], although GSCA still tends to provide smaller standard errors and confidence intervals [137]. Despite their theoretical differences, PLS and GSCA will likely produce similar estimates of parameters in unidimensional, unidirectional and unconstrained component models [135,136], although GSCA still tends to provide smaller standard errors and confidence intervals [137]. Hence, this study intends to conduct SEM analysis with three approaches: CB SEM with JASP, PLS SEM with SmartPLS, and GSCA SEM with GSCA Pro.

In SmartPLS, resampling is performed 500 times using bootstrapping [28,29,138–141]. Bootstrapping, as a non-parametric procedure, can assess the statistical significance of diverse partial least squares-SEM results [28,29,138–141]. In addition, the author would like to conduct regression analysis using the SPSS statistical program. Regression analysis is a statistical technique that estimates the effect of one or more independent variables on the dependent variable. In other words, it is used for statistical analysis to identify the relationship between the variables [17,142,143]. Accordingly, this study will conduct statistical analysis with four approaches, as the objective is to confirm the completeness (accuracy/completion) of the study model design and maximize the generalization possibility of hypothesis test, that is, statistical analysis. Tables 9 and 10, and Figure 2 present our results.

According to our SPSS regression results, we observe the following. (1) Four K-pop factors have a statistically significant positive influence on national image: K-pop producers, casting, producing/promotion, and contents. However, two factors, K-pop training and social media, do not have a statistically significant influence on national image. (2) Three

factors have a statistically significant positive influence on SNS citizenship behavior: K-pop casting, producing/promotion, and contents. However, the remaining three factors, K-pop producers, training, and social media, do not have any statistically significant effect on SNS citizenship behavior. (3) National image has a statistically significant positive influence on SNS citizenship behavior. Moreover, national image and SNS citizenship behavior both have a statistically significant positive influence on tourist behavioral intention.

From the SEM results in SmartPLS, we observe the following. (1) The same four K-pop factors have a statistically significant positive influence on national image: K-pop producers, casting, producing/promotion, and contents; and the same two factors, training and social media, have no statistically significant influence on national image. (2) In the SEM, only two factors, K-pop casting and K-pop producing/promotion, have a statistically significant positive influence on SNS citizenship behavior, while the remaining three factors have no statistically significant effect on it (K-pop training, social media, and contents). And producers had a statistically negative impact on SNS citizenship behavior. (3) Here again, national image has a statistically significant positive influence on SNS citizenship behavior and both national image and SNS citizenship behavior have a statistically significant positive influence on tourist behavioral intention.

**Table 9.** Hypothesis testing.

| | Path | | | SPSS | | | SmartPLS | | | GSCA Pro | | | JASP | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | β | t | H | β | t | H | β | t | H | β | t | H |
| H1a | Producers | → | NI | 0.175 | 4.187 *** | O | 0.170 | 3.327 ** | O | 0.171 | 3.054 ** | O | 0.175 | 4.217 *** | O |
| H1b | Casting | → | NI | 0.124 | 2.814 ** | O | 0.125 | 2.440 * | O | 0.128 | 2.723 ** | O | 0.128 | 2.902 ** | O |
| H1c | Training | → | NI | 0.000 | −0.001 | X | 0.004 | 0.090 | X | 0.001 | 0.022 | X | −0.004 | −0.099 | X |
| H1d | Producing/ Promotion | → | NI | 0.177 | 3.834 *** | O | 0.178 | 3.161 ** | O | 0.180 | 3.462 ** | O | 0.181 | 3.920 *** | O |
| H2a | Social media | → | NI | 0.072 | 1.773 | X | 0.074 | 1.785 | X | 0.073 | 1.698 | X | 0.072 | 1.770 | X |
| H2b | Contents | → | NI | 0.125 | 2.983 ** | O | 0.123 | 2.497 * | O | 0.123 | 2.412 * | O | 0.122 | 2.927 ** | O |
| - | | | | R = 0.605, R² = 0.367, F = 119.589 (*p* = 0.000) | | | - | | | - | | | - | | |
| H3a | Producers | → | SNS CB | −0.060 | −1.341 | X | −0.093 | 2.001 * | X | −0.094 | −1.918 | X | −0.096 | −2.160 | X |
| H3b | Casting | → | SNS CB | 0.326 | 6.876 *** | O | 0.301 | 5.521 *** | O | 0.301 | 5.017 *** | O | 0.303 | 6.520 *** | O |
| H3c | Training | → | SNS CB | 0.001 | 0.027 | X | −0.002 | 0.035 | X | 0.001 | 0.021 | X | 0.003 | 0.066 | X |
| H3d | Producing/ Promotion | → | SNS CB | 0.226 | 4.552 *** | O | 0.190 | 3.029 ** | O | 0.191 | 2.653 ** | O | 0.189 | 3.857 *** | O |
| H4a | Social media | → | SNS CB | −0.059 | −1.346 | X | −0.069 | 1.286 | X | −0.074 | −1.276 | X | −0.073 | −1.701 | X |
| H4b | Contents | → | SNS CB | 0.106 | 2.357 * | O | 0.082 | 1.507 | X | 0.083 | 1.627 | X | 0.081 | 1.841 | X |
| - | | | | R = 0.519, R² = 0.270, F = 76.312 (*p* = 0.000) | | | - | | | - | | | - | | |
| H5 | NI | → | SNS CB | 0.419 | 16.264 *** | O | 0.197 | 5.280 *** | O | 0.196 | 5.158 *** | O | 0.197 | 6.589 *** | O |
| | | | | R = 0.419, R² = 0.175, F = 264.527 (*p* = 0.000) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| H6 | NI | → | TBI | 0.542 | 24.270 *** | O | 0.545 | 21.922 *** | O | 0.546 | 21.000 *** | O | 0.541 | 24.214 *** | O |
| H7 | SNS CB | → | TBI | 0.270 | 12.087 *** | O | 0.266 | 9.918 *** | O | 0.266 | 9.172 *** | O | 0.269 | 12.029 *** | O |
| - | | | | R = 0.699, R² = 0.489, F = 594.543 (*p* = 0.000) | | | SRMR = 0.037, NFI = 0.898 | | | SRMR = 0.027, GFI = 0.997 | | | CFI = 0.959, GFI = 0.908, NFI = 0.941, TLI = 0.955, SRMR = 0.028, RMSEA = 0.041 | | |

Note: * *p* < 0.05, ** *p* < 0.01, *** *p* < 0.001.

**Table 10.** Summary of hypotheses.

| | Path | | | Hypothesis |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| H1a | Producers | → | National image | **Supported** |
| H1b | Casting | → | National image | **Supported** |
| H1c | Training | → | National image | Not supported |
| H1d | Producing/promotion | → | National image | **Supported** |
| H2a | Social media | → | National image | Not supported |
| H2b | Contents | → | National image | **Supported** |
| H3a | Producers | → | SNS citizenship behavior | Not supported |
| H3b | Casting | → | SNS citizenship behavior | **Supported** |
| H3c | Training | → | SNS citizenship behavior | Not supported |
| H3d | Producing/promotion | → | SNS citizenship behavior | **Supported** |
| H4a | Social media | → | SNS citizenship behavior | Not supported |
| H4b | Contents | → | SNS citizenship behavior | **Partially supported** |
| H5 | National image | → | SNS citizenship behavior | **Supported** |
| H6 | National image | → | Tourist behavioral intention | **Supported** |
| H7 | SNS citizenship behavior | → | Tourist behavioral intention | **Supported** |
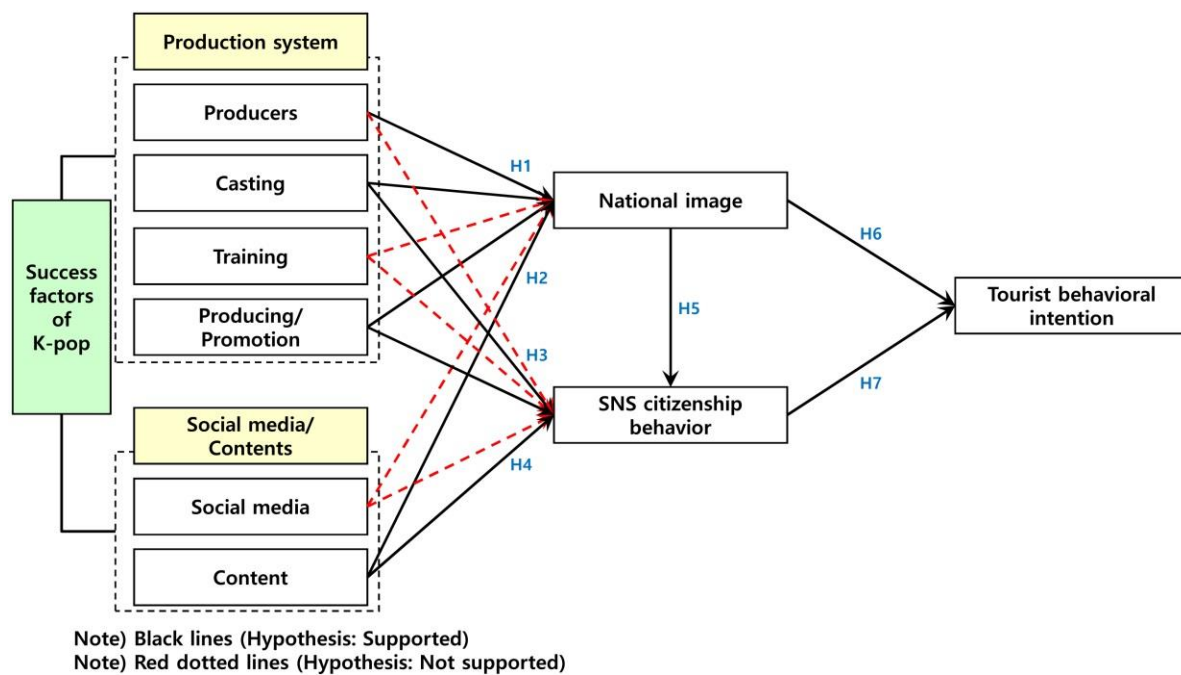
**Figure 2.** Results of hypothesis testing.

In our SEM results using GSCA Pro, we observe the following. (1) Again, the same four K-pop factors have a statistically significant positive influence on national image: K-pop producers, casting, producing/promotion, and contents, while the same two factors, K-pop training and social media, do not have a significant effect. (2) As in our SEM analysis using SmartPLS, two factors, K-pop casting and producing/promotion, have a statistically significant positive influence on SNS citizenship behavior, while the four other factors have no statistically significant effect on it (K-pop producers, training, social media, and contents). (3) As in the other analyses, national image has a statistically significant positive influence on SNS citizenship behavior and both national image and SNS citizenship behavior have a statistically significant positive influence on tourist behavioral intention.

In our SEM results using JASP, we observe the following. (1) Again, the same four K-pop factors have a statistically significant positive influence on national image: K-pop producers, casting, producing/promotion, and contents, while the same two factors, K-pop training and social media, do not have a significant effect. (2) As in our SEM analysis using GSCA Pro, two factors, K-pop casting and producing/promotion, have a statistically

significant positive influence on SNS citizenship behavior, while the four other factors have no statistically significant effect on it (K-pop producers, training, social media, and contents). (3) As in the other analyses, national image has a statistically significant positive influence on SNS citizenship behavior and both national image and SNS citizenship behavior have a statistically significant positive influence on tourist behavioral intention.

Our hypothesis results can be summarized as follows. (1) Since four K-pop factors show a statistically significant positive influence on national image (i.e., K-pop producers, casting, producing/promotion, and contents), [Hypothesis 1a], [Hypothesis 1b], [Hypothesis 1d], and [Hypothesis 2a] are all supported. However, [Hypothesis 1c] and [Hypothesis 2a] are not supported, as the two remaining factors (training and social media) do not significantly influence national image. (2) In terms of [Hypothesis 3b] and [Hypothesis 3d], as two factors have a statistically significant positive influence on SNS citizenship behavior in all the programs (casting and producing/promotion), these are supported; furthermore, since K-pop contents has a statistically significant positive influence on SNS citizenship behavior in the SPSS analysis, [Hypothesis 4b] is partially supported. However, as the other three factors do not have a statistically significant effect on SNS citizenship behavior (K-pop producers, training, and social media), [Hypothesis 3a], [Hypothesis 3c], and [Hypothesis 4a] are not supported. (3) As national image has a statistically significant positive influence on SNS citizenship behavior and national image and SNS citizenship behavior both have a statistically significant positive influence on tourist behavioral intention, [Hypotheses 5 ~ Hypotheses 7] are supported.

### 4.5. The Mediated Effect

We also looked at whether national image and SNS citizenship behavior have a mediating effect in the relationship between the K-pop success factors and tourist behavioral intention. Table 11 presents our results. We did observe a mediating effect in the path of K-pop producers, casting, producing/promotion, contents → national image → SNS citizenship behavior → tourist behavioral intention. The implication is that these four K-pop factors are improving South Korea's national image and thereby impacting SNS citizenship behavior, which, ultimately, influences tourist behavioral intention. However, we do not observe any mediating effect in the path of K-pop training, social media → national image → SNS citizenship behavior → tourist behavioral intention.

**Table 11.** Mediated effect results.

| | Path | β | t | p | Mediated Effect |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Producers → national image → SNS citizenship behavior → tourist behavioral intention | 0.009 | 2.445 | 0.015 | Yes |
| 2 | Casting → national image → SNS citizenship behavior → tourist behavioral intention | 0.007 | 2.263 | 0.024 | Yes |
| 3 | Training → national image → SNS citizenship behavior → tourist behavioral intention | 0.000 | 0.094 | 0.925 | No |
| 4 | Producing → national image → SNS citizenship behavior → tourist behavioral intention | 0.009 | 2.630 | 0.009 | Yes |
| 5 | Social media → national image → SNS citizenship behavior → tourist behavioral intention | 0.004 | 1.545 | 0.123 | No |
| 6 | Contents → national image → SNS citizenship behavior → tourist behavioral intention | 0.006 | 2.079 | 0.038 | Yes |

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

*5.1. Summary of the Study*

(1) Four success factors of K-pop (producers, casting, producing/promotion, and contents) were found to exert a statistically significant positive (+) effect on national image. This finding is consistent with the findings from previous studies by Han, Chen, and Rhee [109], Jang and Jung [111], Kim [108], Li and Park [112], and Moon and Park [113]. In K-pop production, Korean entertainment companies meticulously prepare the global launch by systemizing the entire production process of "casting–training–producing–global promotion." In terms of the distribution method, in particular, they utilized social media such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter and minimized the cost and the time for global launching. In terms of contents, K-pop idols brought about constant transformation based on the combination of excellent singing skills, choreography, and charming visuals, thereby captivating consumers globally.

To synthesize the above finding, the success factors of K-pop led global viewers to feel closer to Korea and helped improve the national image of Korea and its attraction level. That is, among global viewers, K-pop's popular culture greatly affected the national image of Korea. This verified that K-pop culture in Korea is contributing to the formation of a positive national image among global viewers.

Meanwhile, training and social media did not exert a statistically significant effect on national image. The standard of training that puts the multitude of candidates into rigorous training regiments to produce a handful of stars is deemed to be the competitiveness that differentiates Korea from other countries. Nevertheless, training did not exert a statistically significant effect on national image. In particular, the hypothesis test using SPSS indicated that the effect of training on national image was not only statistically nonsignificant, but also showed a negative (-) effect. This suggests that grueling K-pop boot-camps resembling harsh Spartan training can exert a negative effect on the national image of Korea among global viewers.

In addition, global K-pop viewers who are familiar with social media enjoy the culture and freely express their views on social media. Nonetheless, social media did not exert a statistically significant effect on national image. In reality, global K-pop viewers can use social media to obtain various K-pop-related information and knowledge released by entertainment companies. In other words, global K-pop viewers who widely utilize social media can effectively use their knowledge and collect information about K-pop. Furthermore, much knowledge of K-pop did not necessarily mean a positive national image of Korea. Considering the potential of K-pop, however, it can be speculated that it may form a positive national image in the future.

To sum up, K-pop has succeeded in taking root in every corner of the world. This is evident from the headlines of numerous media outlets regarding successful international debuts and global pop hits by Korean musicians, who have taken the center stage in the massive popularity of Korean pop culture on the global stage. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the world music industry (e.g., offline music concerts) is suffering a frustrating downturn. However, everyone in the industry is trying hard to boost and revive the market by developing a new competitive edge. Under this situation, specifically, what made the global success of K-pop possible were the series of efforts and innovations (e.g., producers, casting, producing/promotion, contents) made by entertainment companies (production companies) under the given circumstances. This is also supported by the results of this study.

Therefore, the entry of K-pop and other pop cultures of Korea into the global market, as well as the series of efforts and innovations made by entertainment companies (production companies) could contribute to enhancing the national brand of Korea. Additionally, they could play an important role in helping other industries of Korea including Korean products, healthcare, and tourism. Also, those efforts and innovations would have other positive effects in improving Korea's national image/competitiveness in various fields such as Hangul (Korean alphabet), food, and fashion. In this regard, the success factors (produc-

ers, casting, producing/promotion, contents) of K-pop are extraordinarily important for improving the national image of Korea.

(2) Casting and producing/promotion were found to exert a statistically significant positive (+) effect on SNS citizenship behavior. Furthermore, contents showed a statistically significant positive (+) effect on SNS citizenship behavior, but only in the SPSS analysis. This finding partially supports previous studies done by Kim [31] and Jun [30]. The findings can be summed up in three points: (1) In terms of casting, Korean entertainment companies heavily invest in discovering raw talent. That is, they put all their effort in finding talented youth, believing that discovery of a good gemstone is half-success. In addition, they actively scout talented youths globally by holding auditions overseas [81]. (2) In terms of producing creative works, Korean entertainment companies tap global sources. In other words, they engage global experts in each field of creative work and maximize the level of perfection. Meanwhile, they divide labor in the production process by collaborating with experts from a diverse background (nationality or field). In terms of promotion, they utilize the network of local partners. From the planning stage, they keep a global launch in mind and minimize the uncertainty and risks pertaining to a global launch by building a partnership with local companies. In addition, they release albums tailored to the local market and overcome cultural barriers in a short period of time [78,79]. (3) Korean entertainment companies constantly transform contents, while K-pop idols transform the combination of competitive vocals, choreography, and visuals in an attempt to captivate consumers worldwide. In addition, they strive to obtain universal popularity that transcends nationalities by fusing Western-style pop with easy melodies suited for the Asian sentiment. They also strive to offer splendid spectacles by including perfectly regimented group dance and point dance. Furthermore, they constantly attempt to transform through sensational fashion and styles for releasing new songs [14,88–90]. To synthesize the above findings, the influence of new media such as YouTube and SNS changed the paradigm of K-pop distribution and led to active participation of fans [30,31]. Therefore, among the six success factors of K-pop, casting, producing/promotion, and contents maximized information sharing among global K-pop viewers through SNS, while naturally promoting SNS citizenship behavior.

In summary, the results of this study indicate that it is necessary to have a clear vision of the global entertainment industry (K-pop) and consistently create innovative K-pop products (contents). In other words, it means that we need to build a sustainable growth model for K-pop by ① securing the growth momentum for K-pop, ② strengthening the capability of K-pop for industrialization, ③ developing creative and talented human resources for K-pop, and ④ establishing rules for fair competition in the K-pop market. And the weapons for improving the quality and diversity of K-pop products (contents) will definitely go with expanding their market share in the global market. That is, this study indicates that the industry should generate more creative and innovative music products (contents) on a consistent basis, further expanding its consumer base in the world market by developing new genres.

Moreover, global K-pop viewers (fans) are actively utilizing social media for communication. Considering this trend, for entertainment companies (production companies), it is of utmost importance to make more aggressive use of social media to distribute K-pop contents, which is substantiated in this study. It can be also said that there is a need to systemically analyze the data of global viewers (fans) on social media and more specifically categorize the types and channels for distributing K-pop contents. To this end, K-pop contents for those viewers should be provided in the format that is most friendly to social media, which can be achieved thoroughly based on the interactive relationships among global viewers (fans). Therefore, the success factors (casting, producing/promotion, contents) of K-pop are playing a very important role in enhancing SNS citizenship behavior.

(3) National image was found to exert a statistically significant positive (+) effect on SNS citizenship behavior. This finding supports the findings from previous studies by Ahn and Park [116], Nyadzayo, Matanda, and Ewing [114], and Hoang [115]. This indicates that a positive national image of Korea perceived by global viewers can enhance SNS citizenship

behavior. That is, accurate K-pop information provided to global K-pop viewers can help create a positive national image and lead them to view Korea more favorably. Therefore, formation of a positive national image can be said to play a crucial role in improving SNS citizenship behavior among global K-pop viewers.

(4) National image and SNS citizenship behavior were found to exert a statistically significant positive (+) effect on tourist behavioral intention. This finding supports the finding of previous studies by Alvarez and Campo [117], Kim, Kim, and Cha [123], Kim, Kim, and Choi [120], Kim, Kim, and Lee [118], Kim, Kwon, and Bae [119], Kwon and Song [124], Lee and Kim [121], Lee and Lockshin [122], and Suh and Yang [106]. In the culture and tourism industry, national image is considered a key variable that has a profound effect on global K-pop viewers' (tourists') decisions on their tourist destination. In other words, under the circumstance where international travel is becoming common, it was shown that building a positive national image can act as an effective factor for attracting more global K-pop viewers (tourists) to Korea.

Global K-pop viewers (tourists) become more engrossed by their favorite K-pop idols and continuously search for information about K-pop, which leads to voluntary SNS citizenship behavior. That is, global K-pop viewers (tourists) who voluntarily participate in SNS citizenship behavior perform selfless and altruistic acts on SNS. This showed that global K-pop viewers' (tourists') voluntary SNS citizenship behavior can lead to tourist behavioral intention in the future.

(5) In the path analysis, there was a mediating effect as follows: producers, casting, producing/promotion, contents → national image → SNS citizenship behavior → tourist behavioral intention. In other words, the four success factors of K-pop were shown to improve national image/SNS citizenship behavior and further improve tourist behavioral intention. Based on this research finding, we can view the key to the success of K-pop in "competition" from the perspective of business management and psychology. That is, Korean pop culture is competing with Western pop music with a much faster pace than other industries, while differentiating to survive. In doing so, K-pop is offering a unique enjoyment to global viewers unlike Western pop music. Furthermore, because K-pop has built up its strength through competition, the global attention is not temporary. Therefore, the success factors of K-pop demonstrated in this study have crucial roles for K-pop to succeed as a cultural industry in the global market. In other words, this study verified that the success factors of K-pop can improve global viewers' national image and SNS citizenship behavior, and ultimately tourist behavioral intention.

*5.2. Implications of this Study*

This study has academic and practical implications as follows.

(1) This study is very significant in that it used three base theories (SERVQUAL model + image theory + theory of planned behavior) to empirically verify the effect of the success factors of K-pop on national image and SNS citizenship behavior, as well as on tourist behavioral intention.

(2) The hypotheses in this study were tested using four statistics programs (SPSS, SmartPLS, GSCA Pro, and JASP) in performing regression analysis and SEM analysis. This greatly contributed to improving the level of accuracy and generalization and overcame the limitations of the statistical analyses.

(3) As an exemplary cultural product, K-pop is creating large-scale economic added value. Therefore, it is necessary for companies in other fields to use the K-pop's strategic value (songs, vocals, fans) as a stepping stone for developing new products, establishing new strategies for promotion, and pioneering a new market. This can be discussed in detail as follows: (1) Added values should be generated using derivative products. That is, the gaming and animation industries can develop products using K-pop contents or stars as characters, while conventional cultural products such as musicals and dramas can cast K-pop singers; (2) Buyers' goods that attract K-pop fans should be developed. In other words, it is necessary to design customized products that integrate K-pop contents,

tourism, and shopping, and attract tourists by landmarking the place that produces K-pop; (3) It is necessary to maximize the effect of promotion through collaboration with K-pop singers who have an exceptional sense of fashion and design; (4) It is essential to adopt a new PR strategy to hire K-pop stars as commercial film models for marketing relevant products; and (5) It is imperative to use the K-pop fan base as a bridgehead to enter the newly emerging market. In particular, it is necessary to establish a more meticulous global launching strategy for each region by utilizing social media such as YouTube, which is a main route of K-pop distribution.

To synthesize, K-pop succeeds by keeping the global launch in mind from a long-term perspective, and by building on the strength of Korean culture through systematic production of stars who have the crucial talent. Taking this as a lesson, it is imperative to promote the third and the fourth Hallyu to improve the national image and brand as well as the diversification of export.

(4) It is necessary to establish the measures to integrate K-pop in product planning and PR for sustainable marketing for Hallyu tourism. In other words, it is crucial to encourage visits/travel to Korea through sustainable support and management for ardent K-pop fans and foreign guests attending K-pop concerts. In addition, it is essential to reinforce the development of a sustainable website that provides information about K-pop and relevant tourism information. In the meantime, it is necessary to encourage K-pop performance in relation to sustainable local festivals and to develop K-pop related Hallyu tourism products tailored to different target groups. Furthermore, it is imperative to establish measures to vitalize K-pop-related Hallyu tourism from a sustainable and institutional level.

*5.3. Limitations of the Study and Future Directions*

(1) It is speculated that attributes of K-pop consumers may differ between the group of global viewers who actually attended a concert in person more than once and the group of global viewers who only watched the online concerts. Therefore, the groups should be analyzed and compared in a follow-up study.

(2) With regard to the likelihood of displaying the tourist behavioral intention by the global viewers who actually attended a K-pop concert, temporal distance and spatial distance from construal level theory should be used as moderator variables. In doing so, the study could show in detail potential visitors' tourist behavioral intention.

(3) In the structure that shows the influence of realistic success factors of K-pop on tourist behavioral intention, it is necessary to include other parameters (moderator variables) apart from national image and SNS citizenship behavior to examine the effect on tourist behavioral intention from multiple perspectives.

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