

THE PHENOMENON OF THE «KOREAN WAVE» AS A DRIVER OF INTERNATIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The global tourism industry has become an integral part of modern life and a powerful economic driver for most countries. Since its demand is formed by heterogeneous groups of people inclined by different motives, an important factor in the formation, implementation and promotion of tourist products is market segmentation. The statistics states that the most dynamic group of tourists are people aged 15–35 years old, who are interested in active, cultural and cognitive tourism. They are eager to organise their holidays independently and are in search of new impressions, information and acquaintances. In this context, this article demonstrates how youth subcultures affect the development of tourism, in particular, through the popularity of Korean culture and the promotion of inbound tourism to South Korea.

One of the brightest examples of youth trends in recent years is the «Korean wave» known as «Hallyu» [1]. The most popular representatives of this phenomenon are Korean pop music (K-pop) and TV series. K-pop is taking over the world's top charts while its performers called idols are gaining millions of followers on social media sites and billions of views on YouTube. As a result, Korean language courses, modelling and, of course, tourism have become more in demand. Fans from all over the world are eager to come to South Korea to attend a concert of their favourite artist, to purchase K-pop star-related merchandise, to visit artist-owned cafes and shops, which generates revenue for the national economy and, consequently, expands exports. In this case, K-pop is an effective tool for the expansion of Korean culture and a powerful engine for the national economy.

Along with that, Korean TV series, known as *dramas*, are becoming very popular due to the creation of a strong emotional connection with the viewer. Thus, watching the everyday life of the characters, viewers can learn about different social norms, mentality of the country, lifestyle, peculiarities of national cuisine, etc. In addition, Korean series touch upon such social problems as corruption, gender stereotypes, bullying, social inequality — the most popular issues of discussion among young people. The selection of actors, which may include favourite K-pop artists, increases the rating of the series, which attracts many people to Korean culture and encourages them to visit South Korea.

For example, famous Korean TV series «The Great Jang Geum» (released in 2003) created a tourism boom on the Korean island of Jeju,

where the main filming of the series took place. The number of visitors to the village where the film locations were situated increased from 221,000 to 330,000, and the number of foreign tourists increased by 49 %. The economic impact was estimated by experts at more than 10 million won [2].

As one can see, the popularity of the «Korean wave», which also includes the beauty industry, video games, and webtoon — Korean comics in digital format — is steadily growing worldwide. Korean content is proved to be not only a cultural field but also an effective tool for its expansion, transforming South Korea into a leading exporter of media and entertainment goods and services. In the pre-pandemic period, particularly in 2019, the impact of the «Korean wave» on the South Korean economy was estimated at 12.3 billion USD [2].

In light of the above, it can be concluded that today youth subcultures, being an effective means of cultural expansion, are the main influencers of tourism stimulation and development. It is obvious that tourism happens to be not only a driving force of mass demand but also its outcome. It allows travellers to access new cultural values and becomes a source of preservation of cultural heritage. So, each country is able to form and promote its own tourism brand, increase its value and competitiveness, following the experience of South Korea.

References

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