



# *Seoul Hallyu* Trip by Traveloka: Special Interest Tourism Packages for MZ Generation

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**Abstract.** Special interest tourism (SIT) is a reflection of tourism diversity consumption patterns that fit the MZ (millennial-Z) generation. As it is known, the Indonesian MZ generation lives in a fandom culture era as a result of the massive development of the Korean cultural wave (*Hallyu*) that spread through Korean Pop music. The development of this fandom culture opens opportunities for several tour service application providers to offer special interest tour packages for KPop fans, such as Traveloka which carries the title *Seoul Hallyu Trip* (SHT) in their tour packages. The results of the study explain that SHT is a special interest tourism package for the KPop community, which is also a space for MZ generations to fulfill the world of desired self-pictures and actualize their imaginations. SHT also offers other interesting experiences to their participants starting from visiting the K-pop idols dormitory, television stations that broadcast K-pop music shows, till enjoy their K-pop idols' favorite culinary delights. So it can be concluded that the growth of special interest tourism such as SHT was influenced by the desire and ambition of the Indonesian MZ generation to adapt the "new self-image" offered by the South Korean pop culture industry.

**Keywords:** Special Interest Tourism (SIT) · Popular Culture · Media · MZ Generation

## 1 Introduction

The late post-modern society's tourism consumption patterns show dynamic changes, as well as leading to a diversity of recreational interests. The late post-modern society's consumption pattern, demands that tour operators provide tour packages with a certain identity, with a limited duration, but capable of producing an optimal recreational experience. No longer referred to as the Tourism Industry, Opaschowski [1] calls it the "Experience Industry". This change in consumption patterns resulted in the concept of special interest tourism (SIT). Morgan and Pritchard [1] explain that there are several forms of tourism such as ecotourism, adventure tourism, cultural tourism, and SIT [1]. Of the four forms, SIT is considered appropriate to be applied to society in the late post-modern era, especially the MZ (Millennial-Z) generation.

The MZ generation, especially in Indonesia, is closely related to fan culture (fandom). The massive development of Korean culture (*Hallyu*) which spread through the Korean

Pop music genre in Indonesia, gradually gave rise to symptoms of fanaticism towards these music groups. As Storey said [2] that the development of access to information technology consumed by the MZ generation increasingly supports fan culture bigotry, thus creating excess imagination [2]. This imagination is the main factor driving the MZ generation to take a special interest in tourism trips with the theme of K-pop idols. Traveloka, as one of the tour package service providers in Indonesia, is trying to seize this opportunity by providing special interest tour packages called the *Seoul Hallyu Trip*.

The *Seoul Hallyu Trip* is aimed at the Indonesian MZ generation to realize the fanatical imagination of K-Pop fans, as well as “escape” from the pluralization and rationalization of contemporary world life. To help the process of “escape” requires a high quality of physical contact and emotional sensations during a tour, and experts call it as “experience hunger”. Furthermore, the fanatical imagination of the fans is commodified adventure tourism. Following Cater’s opinion [1] says that the fanatical imagination that is realized, managed, and marketed through special interest tourism packages such as that done by Traveloka through the *Seoul Hallyu Trip*, is an attempt to meet the spectrum of consumers against mythical frameworks and dramatic storylines.

## 2 Objectives

There are two objective points in this article, *first* is how the South Korean popular entertainment industry uses K-Pop as a medium to spread Korean cultural waves (*Hallyu*), especially in Indonesia. South Korea’s popular media and entertainment industry created a new ideology, namely market ideology where the main target is the Indonesian MZ generation. *Second*, how the imaginations, dreams, and fantasies of the Indonesian MZ generation develop into a driving motivation for traveling as well as business opportunities for tourism industry players.

## 3 Theoretical Review

This article uses four theoretical reviews classified into two main subjects, popular culture and tourism research. For popular culture, *there is* a book by John Storey [2] entitled *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture: Theories and Methods*. This book contains a series of theories and methods used to analyze contemporary pop culture in *cultural studies*. Through this book, Storey enriches the understanding of pop culture as a result of consensus and resistance, where there are practices of cultural production, distribution, and consumption that lead to ideological control.

For the tourism research there are three sources, *first*, a book by Gayle Jennings [3] entitled *Tourism Research 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. This book contains the role of research in tourism and theoretical paradigms underpinning tourism research, that help to identify the research topic and also specific roles of tourism research. *Second*, a book by Dennis L. Foster entitled *First Class: An Introduction to Travel & Tourism*. This book provides a thorough understanding of the principles, practices and impacts of the tourism industry on the economy, society, culture and environment. Foster also describes the factors that influence travel agencies in making travel plans and choices. *Third*, an article by Birgit Tourer [1] “Conceptualizing Special Interest Tourism - Frameworks for Analysis”.

This article helps to understand the flow of supply and demand in the SIT circle and provides coverage of analysis on SIT, its concepts, motivations to the differences in focus that distinguish it from conventional forms of travel. Tourer helped to advance the understanding of this phenomenon of SIT in the 21st century, but also analyzed the SIT phenomenon at the macro-level within a triangular relationship of supply, demand, and media.

## 4 Methods

This research used a qualitative research method. The qualitative approach is carried out by following the phenomenological philosophy of thought in which phenomena and consciousness are dialectically interrelated. It also has some synergies with critical theory, also postmodern approach. The tourism phenomenon as an empirical reality are gathered, interpreted, and then (re)generated with theoretical construction. As Jennings [3] says, qualitative research enables researchers to highlight the participants under study, but also provides the other side of their life [3].

This article is also at the same time a research output that contains a description of the conditions and phenomena of the social reality of Indonesian MZs. Primary data sources were obtained from interviews and observations, while secondary data sources were obtained from literature reviews of books, scientific articles, and online mass media.

## 5 Findings and Discussion

### 5.1 Korean Pop (KPop): Popular Culture, Media, and Market Ideology

South Korea's popular entertainment industry produces pop music that is cultural as well as economic. Storey (2010: 118) [2] further explains that the nature of pop music is motivated by the structure of pop music which can be changed from one to another, without a significant effect on the overall composition. The same goes for Korean pop music. These structural changes of Korean pop music have always followed the standardization of hit songs. The changes were made as part of the South Korean entertainment industry's efforts to maintain consumer tastes for Korean pop music. Korean pop music is then massively produced and marketed through the media.

Apart from being a cathartic channel for entertainment, in its journey television, radio, newspapers, and magazines both online and offline also offer their ideological concepts. This is known as a *market ideology*. The media is capable of creating a new pseudo-reality. Through this new *pseudo-reality*, a set of aesthetic manipulations is also created. Thus, a new need emerges for media consumers who are dominated by the MZ generation, namely the need to consume *pseudo-reality* (*propensity to consume*) [4]. For Critical Theory thinkers, these manipulative advertising processes are concluded as part of the seepage of modernity. The manipulative ad then develops into a lifestyle.

Korean Pop shifted the level of awareness and imagination capacity of the Indonesian MZ generation, thus creating two worlds, namely the world of media fiction and the real world. Following Berger's opinion [4], manipulative advertisements created by the South Korean entertainment industry have led the Indonesian MZ generation towards

a modern symbolic universe. These imaginations produce a new lifestyle namely fan culture (fandom), a potential bigotry. However, in the end, fandom culture becomes part of the daily life of the MZ generation in Indonesia, as well as balancing the process of adapting to post-modern life. Fandom culture was also a choice as well as a way out for the Indonesian MZ generation, from the stagnation of life under the auspices of tedious and tiring capitalism [2].

Fandom culture is the result of the celebrity image of idols generated by agents of South Korea's popular entertainment industry. Both male and female, the celebrity image of Korean Pop idols is shaped in such a way (*hyperproduction*), thus creating a history of fame [5]. The lives of Korean Pop music idols are shown through the media as a text which contains various meanings. One of them is so that the generation of MZ Indonesia as consumers can digest and even negotiate the contents of the show. Chomsky in Ibrahim [4] says the media has built our perception of the world. Consumers are fed various necessary illusions. Popular celebrity imagery articulates meaning and desire through fantasy and imagination [6], the same is true for Korean Pop idols. In the end, the text conveyed becomes a necessity and produces an "ideal life" representation.

As said by Hall in Burton [7] that the relationship between the media and popular culture develops into a process of constructing the identities of social groups through the media [7]. Hall's opinion is proven by the existence of Korean Pop and fandom culture which has now turned into a new identity for the Indonesian MZ generation. A new identity that emphasizes their distinctiveness as a generation that lives in two worlds, namely the fictitious world created by the media and the real world. In line with Storey and Hall, Baudrillard (in Burton [7]) says that in postmodernism media reality and social reality could be exchanged.

## **5.2 Seoul Hallyu Trip by Traveloka: The Indonesian MZ Imagination that Coming to Be True**

Various authors, therefore, point towards people's desire for quality of life and escape from the 'pluralization of lifeworlds', and 'rationalization of contemporary urban life' as major push factors and motivators for travel [1]. Motivation in traveling is an authentic characteristic of special interest tourism. Special interest tourism is intended for tourists who have a fanatical inclination or penchant for something [8]. Travel trends are demanding to no longer only facilitate the escape of 'traditional' tourists from everyday life. Trauer [1] explains that advances in technology, media, and ecology, in the world's economic-political-social-cultural sectors have affected the decline of postmodern society's interest in conventional tour packages. They prefer new forms of travel that offer experiences full of intimacy, intensity and complexity, and can be carried out in a short time. Furthermore, Trauer [1] explains that this new form of travel is a personal project that requires time, thought and financial commitment by individuals living in industrialized post-modern societies that are time-poor (Fig. 1).

Brotherton and Himmetoglu (in Trauer, 2006: 187) [1] say that three major concepts in the SIT cycle are often indistinguishable, namely General Interest Tourism (GIT), Mixed Interest Tourism (MIT), and Special Interest Tourism (SIT). The differentiating factor of the three concepts is the focus of tourists in travelling, which can be seen in Table 1.

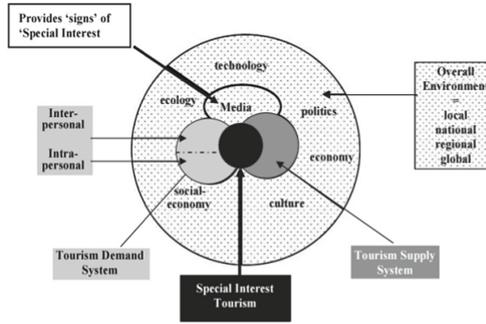


Fig. 1. Special Interest Tourism Interactive System [1]

Table 1. SIT cycle [1]

Concept	Focus
GIT	Where can I go on holidays?
MIT	Where, how and/or with whom can I go on holidays and what activities can I pursue there?
SIT	What interest/activity do I want to pursue, and where can I do it?

Based on the elaboration of the three concepts above, *Seoul Hallyu Trip* by Trav-eloka is classified as Special Interest Tourism (SIT). This is because the type of target consumers is clear, namely the MZ Indonesian generation of K-Pop fans. Consumers understand where to go on a tour, what to do, and what they will get from this tour. As explained by Agarwal, et.al (2018: 3), there are several important characteristics of SIT, namely: (1) SIT is motivated by a desire to engage in new or existing interests in familiar locations; (2) SIT is the opposite of mass tourism/conventional tourism; (3) SIT is undertaken for specific purposes; (4) SIT emanates from the desire to deliver a more sustainable form of tourism; and (5) SIT involves market segmentation and advance in technology [9].

*Seoul Hallyu Trip*, a special interest tour package offered by travel agent Trav-eloka is an open tour with a duration of 11 h, and targets the Indonesian youth market which is classified as millennial and Z generations, often abbreviated as the MZ generation. This special interest tour package is motivated by the fantasy and imagination of the Indonesian MZ generation about Korean popular culture trends (Hallyu wave), especially Korean pop music idols. *Seoul Hallyu Trip* offers an intimate experience with South Korea’s popular entertainment industry. There are several activities during the trip, starting from watching KPop idols arrive at the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) broadcasting station, and then listen about the history of broadcasting and the entertainment industry in South Korea while make a short tour around the KBS building. After carrying out a short tour inside the KBS building, participants had the opportunity



**Fig. 2.** *Seoul Hallyu Trip* Banner by Traveloka

to witness their favourite K-pop idols perform live on the music program Music Bank (Fig. 2).

Tour activities continued by visiting two entertainment agencies which are among the largest agencies in South Korea, namely JYP Entertainment and SM Entertainment (in SM TOWN Coex Atrium). While visit this entertainment agency, tour participants get the experience of visiting various souvenir shops that sell various K-Pop-themed knick-knacks. Especially when visiting the SM TOWN Coex Atrium building, tour participants have the opportunity to visit a dance practice studio, a museum that displays the iconic K-Pop idol costumes while filming music videos, and then having a special moment to touch a SM idol's hand print gold metal plate (Fig. 3).

The Indonesian MZ generation currently lives in the late post-modern era and tends to be a *consumer society*. *Consumer society* is a type of society whose existence is judged by its ability to realize imagination, dreams and desires, identity, and communication. *Seoul Hallyu Trip* is here as one of the travel agent's efforts to turn the media reality which is full of fantasy and imagination into reality. Strinati [10] further explains that popular culture exists by offering various conveniences of fantasy and non-demanding escape [10]. Korean Pop as part of South Korean popular culture, is marketed to benefit the mass consumer society. Korean Pop and fandom culture make social reality and media reality go together and even interchange. Murphy's opinion in Pitana, et.al. [11]



**Fig. 3.** Hand Printing Gallery at SM TOWN Coex Atrium (Photo by: Traveloka)

says that tourism motivation that develops among consumer societies is a positive impact on the development of visual mass media [11].

*Seoul Hallyu Trip* as a product is considered capable of fulfilling the “world of desirable images”, namely the cultural tastes of the Indonesian MZ generation. It is through this “taste” that the MZ generation’s desire for purchasing power is created for special interest tourism products, the *Seoul Hallyu Trip*. Foster [12] explains “taste” is a hidden need that is not expressed by consumers, however, influences their decision to provide a product [12]. Through website and application, Traveloka advertises product details in such a way as to attract consumers’ interest by adding magical sentences such as: “Fulfill your dreams since you first discovered the Hallyu trend”; “Meet your favourite Kpop idols...”; “Complete your dream list...”, and so on. Strinati [10] explains further that in the development of popular culture, the exploitation of emotions, needs, hopes and aspirations, is carried out at the request and approval of the consumers themselves (Fig. 4).

For the Indonesian MZ generation who live in advanced fandom culture, *Seoul Hallyu Trip* by Traveloka is considered as a ritual of visiting sacred locations that are full of meaning for K-Pop fans. The sacredness of this meaning is the result of advertisements that are continuously exposed by the South Korean entertainment industry through the media so that it is embedded in the cognition of the Indonesian MZ generation. This is explained further by Jenkins in Storey [1], that fan groups are a community structure that is highly organized and equipped with a set of knowledge. This set of knowledge consists of certain codes, signs, and even traditions that can only be understood and communicated by fellow members of the community.

*Seoul Hallyu Trip* by Traveloka offers travel packages that are unusual and have never even been offered by conventional travel agents. *Seoul Hallyu Trip* by Traveloka turned the fantasy and imagination of the Indonesian MZ generation about the image of a South Korean pop music idol celebrity, into a business opportunity for the tourism industry. For Traveloka as a travel operator and MZ Indonesia’s generation as its consumers, the *Seoul Hallyu Trip* is not just a tour package but also a deal. The *Seoul Hallyu Trip* allows the fanatical passion for K-Pop and the celebrity image of its idols, packaged into a business opportunity, as well as a chance to turn fantasy and imagination into reality.

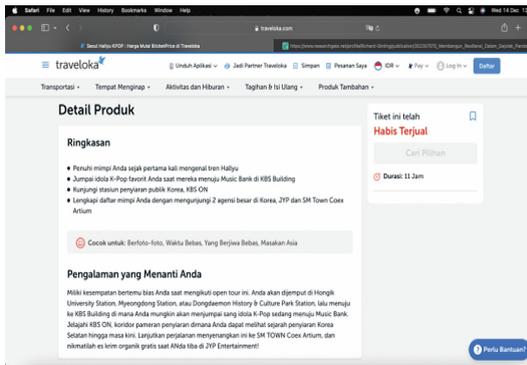


Fig. 4. *Seoul Hallyu Trip* product details. (Photo by: Traveloka)

Furthermore, Opaschowski suggests that tourists are looking for emotional stimuli, they want to buy feelings and not products [1]. So, it can be said that fandom culture is a reciprocal action between production and consumption.

*Seoul Hallyu Trip* by Traveloka facilitates the need to affirm the identity of the Indonesian MZ generation regarding K-Pop consumption patterns, both personally and socially. Stebins, Weller and Hall [8] said that serious leisure tourists seek to satisfy their diverse and personalized needs—such as self-actualization, self-enrichment, self-renewal, self-expression, and social interaction by participating in special interest tourism. Therefore, successfully providing the creative space for the consumer's personal aesthetic projects to unfold is surely the challenge facing the late-modern entrepreneur [1].

## 6 Conclusion

Tourism as an area of study and research, is a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary field of study. Tourism research offers studies on the tourist's motivations, needs, expectations and levels of satisfaction. Market identification, as well as the development of the sociodemographic profile of Indonesian youngsters, has made Traveloka (an application-based travel agency) to seize opportunities by turning fantasy and imagination into business opportunities for the tourism industry. *Seoul Hallyu Trip* by Traveloka offers an emotional stimulus experience through a K-pop-themed tour that is full of romance and experience and is carried out in a short time. *Seoul Hallyu Trip* by Traveloka has succeeded to respond to the late postmodern tourism challenges, by providing special interest travel packages that satisfy the MZs' expression, self-actualization, and personal aesthetics to fulfill their creative space as part of the fandom community.

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**Competing Interest Statement.** This article is free from any conflict of interest regarding the data collection, analysis, and the publication process itself. Either replicate or modify the previous sentence for this part.

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