The Effects of Thai Consumers' Attitudes of Korean-Wave on the Visit Intentions of Korean Restaurants-Focusing on the Mediation Effects of Perceived Consumption Value of Restaurant*

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Received 30 November 2021, Revised 20 December 2021, Accepted 23 December 2021

Abstract

Purpose - This study is an empirical study on the relationship of Thai consumers' attitude toward Korean Wave with the visit intention of Korean restaurants and a mediation effect of consumption value of Korean restaurants.

Design/Methodology/Approach - Data were collected using a structured questionnaire of 245 Thai consumers and the hypotheses presented were verified by regression analysis and structural equation models.

Findings - As a result of the empirical analysis, it was found that the higher the attractiveness and favorableness of Thai consumers for K-Wave, the higher the intention to visit Korean restaurants, and the Korean Wave attitude have a positive effect on the functional and symbolic values of Korean restaurants. In particular, the important result that can be presented in this study is that the better the attitude toward K-Wave, the higher the consumption value (functional/symbolic value) of Korean restaurants and the symbolic value plays a significant mediating effect on the relationship of the attitude of K-Wave and visiting intention, while the effect of functional value is not verified. **Research Implication or Originality** - These results means that in order to lead Thai consumers to a Korean restaurant using K-Wave, a strategy to make Thai ones perceive symbolic value of a Korean restaurant higher would be more effective. The main strategic implication of this study is that a high-end positioning strategy with a high symbolism, which make Korean restaurant as a suitable place as a means to show off one's value (or self) or as a means to show off one's social status (or role) to Thai consumers, will be relatively effective.

Keywords: Consumption Value, Functional Value, Korean-Wave Attitude, Symbolic Value, Visit Intention *JEL Classifications:* L8, L83, M3

I. The purpose of research

Korean pop culture such as K-pop, K-dramas, and K-entertainment programs has spread around the world under the name of "Korean Wave (or Hallyu)", and one of these influences has contributed to the popularity of Korean food in various countries and the growth of Korean food-related industries in the country (Suh et al, 2018; Shin et al, 2018). Following the airing

^{*} This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea(NRF-2021S1A5B8096365)

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of dramas such as "Daejanggeum" and "My Love from the Star," the number of related Korean food, cooking, and Korean restaurants has increased significantly in the world.

In addition, as Korean pop culture spread throughout Southeast Asia, focusing on Korean TV dramas since the mid-1990s, Thailand has also become a representative country affected by the Korean Wave since the "Americanization" phenomenon in the past. The Thai market, which is popular with Korean Wave content, is drawing attention in various aspects, as the digital transformation of broadcasting is very fast and the OTT market is rapidly revitalizing due to high penetration of 4G mobile tele-communications (Trend Report, 2020). Currently, Korean food is widely known to Thai consumers due to the Korean Wave spreading through Korean dramas, and as the Thai economy develops, consumers' desire for Korean food is increasing and interest in Korean dietary lifestyles is increasing (KOTRA National Report, 2018).

Under these circumstances, Korean food-related companies interested in the Thai market will need to systematically understand the characteristics of Thai consumers' lifestyles and customers' behavior to visit Korean restaurants to establish marketing strategies for customizing services to meet Thai customers' needs (Jeong, 2020). Historical studies on the Korean Wave have mainly been conducted on TV dramas, movies, music, and the attitude of consumption of Korean cultural content, but direct research on Korean food or Korean restaurant is very rare and insufficient (Kim Bum-sang, 2015; Kim Do-hee et al, 2016).

Accordingly, this study aims to conduct an empirical study on the impact of Thai consumers' Korean Wave attitude on the value of Korean restaurant and visiting intention of Korean restaurants. By analyzing a causal relationship between attitude toward Korean Wave and the perceived value of Korean restaurants and visiting intention toward Thai, we would like to provide some practical and strategically suggestions for Korean restaurants to enter the Thai market. First, we reviewed the existing research that are highly relevant to this study thoroughly, and we set research models and hypotheses based on existing studies. After that, the survey was conducted Bangkok residents aged 18 or older who had experience using Korean restaurants. Furthermore, we tested hypotheses through the regression analysis and covariate structural model after verifying the validity and reliability of the constructs.

II. The background and research hypothesis

1. The definition of Korean Wave and attitude toward Korean Wave

Korean Wave, recently named "K-Culture", reflects the popularity of Korean pop culture and a phenomenon of admiration for Korean culture, like K-pop, K-dramas, and K-entertainment programs. The meaning of Korean Wave expands into a phenomenon that either likes Korean products or likes Korea itself and as a result, it is a soft resource that can enhances one's preference for Korea (Yoo Se-kyung et al, 2012; Shin Bong-kyu et al, 2014; Ha A-jung, 2014).

A variety of measurements were used to measure the attitude of Korean wave in the past, like measured as positive-negative, pleasant-unpleasant, like-unlike, value-valueless, and favorable-un favorable in terms of awareness and emotion(Bae Il-hyun, 2012; Lee Kwang-ok et al, 2013). Based on existing research, this study defined the attitude toward the Korean Wave as a favorable or unfavorable emotional state for Korean culture and measured it using two dimensions of attractiveness and favorable toward Korean culture.

Researcher	Construct	Measurements
Yang Seung-pil, Kwak Young-dae (2010)	Emotional Attitude	Fantastic feeling, Significant Meaning, Fun, Attractive Sightseeing
Lee Myung-sik (2010)	Emotional Attitude	Favorableness, Value, Pleasure
Kim Jin Wan (2011)	Emotional Attitude	Pleasure, Joy, Good
Kim Jung-hoon (2012)	Emotional Attitude	Like, Enjoy, Fun, Beneficial
Lee Kwang-ok, Jang Hyun-jong (2013)	Emotional Attitude	Beneficial, Likeability, Attractiveness
Moon Hyo-jin and Park Sung-hyun (2013)	Cognitive-Emotional	Expertise, Novelty, Quality, Charm, Sophistication, Familiarity, Talented
Lee Hee-jin (2014)	Korean Wave	Favorableness, Interest

Table 1. Measurement of Korean Wave Attitude

Attractiveness refers to the "power to attract people's hearts," and visual and psychological attractiveness factors are involved in the attitude-building process and the information provided by attractive sources (person/object) is highly persuasive (Lee Jung-hoon, 2019). In studies related to attractiveness, the attractiveness of information sources is related to persuasion, especially for emotional products (Pallak et al, 1983). For example, many studies in online purchase show that the visual attractiveness of the homepage significantly affects the purchase intention (e.g, Cho Eun-seok et al, 2008). In particular, when information is over-informed, attractiveness is a more important criterion for decision-making and confidence and has a greater impact on the judgement (Koh Hyun-bong, 2019; Ji Ji-rim, 2019).

Therefore, the attractiveness of Korean Wave that Thai consumers perceive is an important component of the attitude toward Korean restaurant. The favorableness is related to the attitude of an object, and we want to define the positive response that we feel through cultural contents such as Korean dramas, movies, and music as the favorable attitude toward the Korean Wave (Kim Young-mi, 2018). It is a positive assessment of culture including Korean products and pop culture as a favorable emotion toward Korea by forming a certain image of Korea (Kim Joo-yeon et al, 2012; Yoo Kyung-jin et al, 2014). Customers who are favorable to the Korean Wave show favorable reviews of Korean culture-related products (Lee Hee-jin, 2014; Yoon Sung-jun et al, 2013; Moon Hyo-jin et al, 2012).

2. Perceived consumption value for Korean restaurants

Consumption value has been treated as an important concept understood as an abstract belief or overall assessment of the cost and benefits that customers perceive and has a significant impact on consumers' choices (Kang Byung-chan, 2012; Kim Ga-ryeong, 2014). Based on the existing concept of consumption value, this study also defined it as the perceived value of consumers to Korean restaurants by visiting Korean restaurants and measured it in two dimensions: functional and symbolic values.

Functional value recognized as a very basic value when it comes to the choice and evaluation of products/services, is a practical and physical value associated with the quality and function of products/services (Sheth, 1991; Noh Won Hee et al, 2012). In the various existing researches about restaurant selection from the consumption value perspective, the importance of functional value in the case of restaurant selection (ex: Choi Dong-hee, 2014; Choi Byung-chang et al, 2015; Seo Dong-hwan et al, 2017). Therefore, based on the past research, this study

also presents functional value as an important factor in Thai consumers' visiting intention of Korean restaurants.

According to product symbolism theory, consumers reveal (or falsify) their classes through the owning or consuming of certain products/services. An addition to this, consumer also uses products and services as a means of communication tools to indicate that they belongs to a particular group, including a reference group (Leigh & Gabel, 1992). The value of representing status and social network symbolically and purchasing a product or service that can help express one's identity is defined as the symbolic value in consumption (Macinnis & Jaworski, 1989).

In the Korean Wave phenomenon, Korean food is one of the cultural content and visiting a Korean restaurants is also one of the cultural exchange phenomenon (Lee Jisun et al, 2017; Jung Sung-rok, 2020). In this respect, the experience of Korean restaurants might be an expression of personal (or social) aspects and could be seen as a communication action. Therefore, symbolic value will also be a very important factor in the choice of Korean restaurants.

3. Intent to visit a Korean restaurant

Visiting intention is similar to product purchase intention (Kim Jin-ok et al, 2013), a concept that can predict future behavior after attitude is formed. Existing studies on the influence of the Korean wave in Asia, including China and Vietnam, show that the more you know and like Korean culture, the higher your intention to purchase Korean products (Jin Yeol-hui, 2014; Shin Ga-hwa, 2017; Yang Hee, 2017). The attractiveness and favorableness of Korean dramas and movies also increase the intention of visiting Korea (Yang Rina et al, 2014). As a result, it can be expected that the better the attitude toward the Korean Wave, the higher the intention to visit Korean restaurants.

Accordingly, hypothesis 1 could be established as follows:

H1: The more positive the Thai's Korean wave attitude (attractiveness and favorableness) is, the higher the Thai's visiting intention of Korean restaurants.

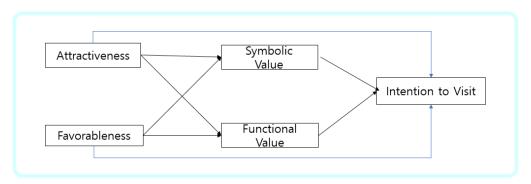
In particular, this study will try to seek that the perception of the perceived consumption value of Korean restaurants plays a mediating role in the influence of the Korean Wave's attitude on the visiting intention of Korean restaurants. In other words, the attractiveness and favorableness of the Korean Wave affect the perception of functional and symbolic values of Korean restaurants and then the perception of values affects the visiting intention, thereby presenting research hypotheses 2 in this respect.

H2: The higher the attitude (attractiveness and favorableness) towards the Thai's Korean Wave, the higher the Thai's perception of the Korean restaurants' (functional/symbolic) value.

In studies on restaurant choices, functional values such as taste, health and convenience of restaurants increase the visiting intention of restaurants and also the symbolic value of restaurant brands has a significant impact on restaurant choices (Hwang Soo-yeon et al, 2015; Kim Hee-young, 2015)

H3: Perceived (functional/symbolic) value of Korean restaurants will play a mediating role in the relations of Thai's Korean Wave attitude and the visiting intention of Korean restaurants.

Fig. 1. Research Model



III. Empirical analysis and hypothesis test

1. Collecting data and sample characteristics

To collect data from this study, a preliminary survey of 50 people was conducted in Bangkok, Thailand for 25~27 July 2019, and 245 effective samples were collected for 3~15 August after the questionnaire was revised. Samples visited Korean restaurants more than once, with an average of 4.68 visits. According to the sample characteristics, women (58.8%) are a few more than man and the average age is 27.4 years old, accounting for 67.4% in their 20s. It consists of 15,000 to 20,000 baht (43.3%) of monthly income and proportion of the unmarried are higher (59.6%). Academic level of above college graduation is about 69.4%.

2. Analysis of reliability and validity.

The reliability of the constricts was measured with Cronbach α and it was determined to be satisfied. Furthermore, validity of the constructs was tested through explorative factor analysis and be confirmed ($\langle \text{Table 1} \rangle$ and $\langle \text{Table 2} \rangle$).

Table 2. Reliability Analysis

Variables		items	Cronbach's Alpha
Attitude toward K-Wave	Attractiveness	4	.865
Attitude toward N-wave	Favorableness	4	.891
Consumation Value of Manage Destaurant	Symbolic Value	4	.791
Consumption Value of Korean Restaurant	Functional Value	4	.795
Intention to Visit Korean Restaurant		4	.797

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	Attractiveness	Favorableness	Symbolic	Functional	Intention
Attractive 2	.727	.154	.297	.073	.167
Attractive3	.746	.090	.328	.080	.259
Attractive4	.799	.221	.044	.194	.154
Attractive1	.765	.216	.150	.225	.122
Favorable1	.227	.712	.291	.274	.122
Favorable1	.258	.807	.251	.127	.000
Favorable1	.102	.807	.180	.109	.147
Favorable1	.119	.865	.062	.150	.139
Symbolic 1	.055	.282	.699	.003	.111
Symbolic 2	.222	.134	.761	.143	.146
Symbolic 3	.189	.122	.674	.363	018
Symbolic 4	.298	.195	.665	.202	.142
Functional2	.273	.122	.169	.684	.154
Functional1	023	.173	.101	.766	.130
Functional3	.110	.052	.083	.819	095
Functional4	.217	.242	.202	.671	.194
Intention 2	.359	012	.361	.056	.620
Intention 3	064	.237	089	.109	.810
Intention 4	.266	028	.239	.128	.798
Intention 1	.328	.198	.092	.036	.698
cumulative var (%)	16.38	30,57	43.85	56.99	69.46

Table 3. Result of Validity Analysis

3. Hypothesis test and analysis

To verify the hypotheses presented in this study, we used multiple regression model and structure equation model and the results are presented in the \langle Table 5 \rangle and \langle Figure 1 \rangle .

Table 4. F	Results	of	Correlation	Analysis
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	Attractive	Favorable	Symbolic	Functional	Intention
	(M=3.49, s.d=.752)	(M=4.07, s.d=.663)	(M=4.08, s.d=.566)	(M=3.88, s.d=.637)	(M=3.66, s.d=.587)
Attractive	1	.469**	.557**	.426**	.535**
Favorable	.469**	1	.509**	.439**	.344**
Symbolic	.557**	.509**	1	.472**	.413**
Functional	.426**	.439**	.472**	1	.310**
Intention	.535**	.344**	.413**	.310**	1

The model for verifying hypothesis 1 (H1) that establishes a direct relationship between attitudes toward Korean wave and consumers' visiting intention is M1. For verifying H1, we analyzed M1 including gender, age, income, and visiting experience of Korea as control variables.

Intention= $\alpha+\beta_1$ *Attractive+ β_2 *Favorable+ β_3 *Gender+ β_4 *Age+ β_5 *Income+ β_6 *Experience+ ϵ_i + ϵ_i i[M1] ~ (1)

As shown in Model 1, attractiveness (β_1 =0.368, t=7.655) and favorableness(β_2 =0.111 t=2.035) are all significant on visiting Korean restaurants($\langle \text{Table 5} \rangle$).

The regression model for H2 that establishes the relationship between attitude toward Korean wave and perceived consumption value of Korean restaurant in M2 and M3.

Symbolic Value= $\alpha+\beta_1$ *Attractive+ β_2 *Favorable+ β_3 *Gender+ β_4 *Age+ β_5 *Income+ β_6 *Experience+ ϵ_i [M2] ~ (2)

Functional Value= $\alpha+\beta_1$ *Attractive+ β_2 *Favorable+ β_3 *Gender+ β_4 *Age+ β_5 *Income+ β_6 *Experience+ ϵ_i [M3] ~ (3)

As shown in \langle Table 5 \rangle , The results are that the more favorable to Korean Wave, the higher perceived consumption value of Korean restaurants both functional and symbolic. As the results of each dimension of attitude, attractiveness has a significant impact on both symbolic value (β_1 =0.237, t=4.432) and functional value (β_1 =0.304, t=7.107) perception and favorableness factors also show results in symbolic value (β_2 =0.299, t=4.935) and functional value (β_2 =0.275, t=5.675). Eventually, hypothesis 2 was supported as suggested.

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Variables	M1;Intention β(t value)	M2; Symbolic	M3; Functional	M5;Intention
(Constant)	1.842(6.121)	1.808(5.392)	1.893(7.059)	1.633(4.597)
Attractiveness	.368(7.655)**	.237(4.432)**	.304(7.107)	
Favorableness	.111(2.035)**	.299(4.935)**	.275(5.675)	
Symbolic Value				.343(4.978)
Functional Value				.131(2.144)
Gender	011(176)	071(994)	061(-1.059)	0.046(.670)
Age	.006(1.061)	.008(1.216)	.007(1.368)	.001(.140)
Income	.000.)000.	001(031)	006(183)	.022(.605)
Visit Experience	-0.54(-2.300)	-0.58(-2.194)	-0.60(-2.837)	-0.35(-1.331)
Fitness	R ² =.560	R ² =.525	R ² =.643	R ² =.444
1 1111055	Adj R=.297	Adj R=.257	Adj R=.399	Adj R=1.77

Table 5. Results of Regression Analysis

In order to more clearly analyze the causal relationship between attitude toward Korean wave and visiting intention to restaurant, we establish the Model 4(M4), including the consumption value of restaurants.

Intention= $\alpha+\beta_1*$ Attractive+ β_2* Favorable+ β_3* Symbolic+ β_4* Functional+ β_5* Gender+ β_6* Age+ β_7* Income+ β_8* Experience+ ϵi [M4]~(4)

The effect of attractiveness on visiting intentions is significant (β_1 =0.328, t=6.112), as shown in M1, but the favorableness is not significant (β_2 =0.072 t=1.216) (see \langle Table 6 \rangle).

Table 6. Results of Regression Analysis(Mediation Effect)

variables	M ₄ ; Intention	Mediation-Symbolic Effect(LLCI~ULCI)	Mediation-Functional Effect(LLCI~ULCI)
(Constant)	1.585(4.667)		
Attractiveness	.328(6.112)	.033(0071~.0805)	.0066(0202~.0390)
Favorableness Symbolic Value	.072(1.216) .110(1.478)	.030(0053~.0767)	.0083(0259~0.469)

Functional Value	.0276(.465)		
Gender	003(042)	0067(.0361~.0037)	0020(0277~.0048)
Age	.005(.886)	.0008(0002~.0034)	0020(0005~.0022)
Income	.001(.024)	0006(0121~.0061)	.0000(0064~.0050)
Visit Experience	-0.46(-1.916)	0065(0206~.0006)	0016(0125~.0042)
Fitness		R ² =.568/Adj R=.299	

According to the results of regression M1 through M4, we could conclude tentatively that attractiveness and favorableness of Korean Wave have an impact on the visiting intention of Korean restaurants differently. Namely, in the case of attractiveness, it has a direct effect on the visiting intention of Korean restaurants but favorableness has an impact on the intention of visiting by mediating the consumption value of Korean restaurant unlike the attractiveness.

To confirm a tentative conclusion, we did an analysis of mediation effect using regression models M5 and M6. The results of the analysis are shown in $\langle \text{Table 7} \rangle$.

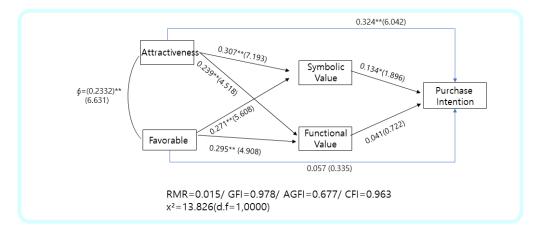
Intention= $\alpha+\beta$ 1*Symbolic+ β 2*Functional+ β 3*Gender+ β 4*Age+ β 5*Income+ β 6*Experience+ ϵ i [M5]~(5) Intention= $\alpha+\beta$ 1*Attractive+ β 2*Favorable+ β 3*Symbolic+ β 4*Functional+ ϵ i [M6]~(6)

As shown in $\langle \text{Table 7} \rangle$], both symbolic value ($\beta 1=0.343$, t=4.978) and functional value ($\beta 2=0.131$, t=2.144) of restaurants have a significant impact on their intention to visit in M5. However, the results of the M6 show somewhat different results of M5.

According to M6, attractiveness (β 1=0.324, t=6.109) has a significant impact on the visiting intention of Korean restaurants but in the case of favorableness, it does not directly affect the visiting intention of Korean restaurants (β 2=0.057, t=0.974). symbolic value (β 3=0.134, t=1.828) is significant impact on the visiting intention but not functional value.

Both the attractiveness and favorableness have a significant impact on the visiting intention of Korean restaurants through the symbolic value (effect=.0411*, LLCI=.0002~ULCI=.0891 and effect=.0411*, LLCI=.0002~ULCI=.0891). However, while attractiveness and favorableness positively affect the functional value perception, functional value does not directly affect the Korean restaurant's visiting intention, which means there's no significant mediation effect on the relationship between attitude and visit intention in case of functional value.

Fig. 2. Results of SEM



The results of the regression analysis (M1 to M6) can be explained more clearly through structural equation model analysis. The results of the structural equation model for the hypothesis presented in this study are similar as regression analysis as shown in (Figure 2).

In other words, attractiveness has a significant impact on the restaurant's symbolic value (ρ_{11} =0.307, c.r=7.193) and functional value (ρ_{21} =0.239, c.r=4.518). Plus favorableness also has a significant impact on functional value (ρ_{22} =0.295 c.r=4.908) and symbolic value (ρ_{12} =0.271, c=5.608). However, while symbolic value (β_{11} =0.134, c.r=1.896) has significant effects on the intention to visit a restaurant, functional value has no significant effects (β_{12} =0.041, c.r=0.722). Consequently, the symbolic value of a restaurant is interpreted as a mediation variable in the relationship between attitude and visit intention, but functional value does not act as a mediation variable.

Direct Effect	Favorableness	Attractiveness	Symbolic	Function
Symbolic	0.295	0.239	0	0
Functional	0.271	0.307		
Intention	0.057	0.324	0.041	0.134
Indirect Effect	Favorableness	Attractiveness	Symbolic	Function
Symbolic	0	0	0	0
Functional	0	0	0	0
Intention	0.048	0.051	0	0

Table 7. Direct and indirect Effects of K-wave Attitude

IV. Research findings and limitations

This study conducted an empirical study on whether Thai consumers' attitudes toward the Korean Wave could affect significantly on the intention of visiting Korean restaurants mediated the consumption value of Korean restaurants.

The empirical results of this study are summarized as follows. First, the attitude toward the Korean Wave has a positive impact on the intention of visiting Korean restaurants, which support of the H1. Second, the attitude toward the Korean Wave also has a positive impact on the consumption value of Korean restaurants, both functional and symbolic. What the second result means is that the better the attitude toward Korean Wave, the higher Thai consumer perceive the symbolic and functional value of Korean restaurants. Third, both attractiveness and favorableness of Korean Wave have indirect effects on the visiting intention of Korean restaurants. What's noteworthy about the 3rd result is that the attractiveness factors have direct and indirect effects on the visiting intention in case of Thai, while the functional factor does not play a direct role in the relationship between the attitude of Korean Wave and the visiting intention but has indirect effect in the relationship through the perception of restaurants' symbolic value.

Based on the empirical results of this study, it can provide important strategic implications for Thai consumers to visit Korean restaurants. Firstly, it is very important for Thai consumers to form a positive attitude toward Korean culture especially in terms of symbolism. In other words, it is important to increase the symbolic value of Korean restaurants by strongly recogniz-

ing the attractiveness of Korean culture. Both the favorableness and attractiveness of the Korean culture are useful for increasing the Thai consumers' consumption value of Korean restaurants, attractiveness is a more important factor in increasing the visiting intention of Korean restaurants. Above all, the core of the marketing strategy of Korean restaurants for Thai consumers will be to establish a service environment that can highlight the attractiveness of Korean culture. Especially service-scape that maximize the atmosphere and image of restaurants emphasizing attractiveness of Korean culture using Korean movies and dramas, including Korean pop stars, should be created. It will also be useful to highlight the symbolic value of restaurants through a high-end strategy. A high-end positioning strategy will be needed to recognize that Thai consumers' visit to Korean restaurants is a suitable place as a means of expressing their self and values and showing off their social status or role to others.

Nevertheless, there are several limitations of this study. First, the lack of reviewing the prior researches about the relationship of Korean Wave and restaurant visit behavior for Thai consumers has limitations as this exploratory study. Various studies on Thai consumers through more theoretically and empirically faithful research should be conducted in the future. Second, although this study is an empirical study, it has limited the generalization of the study because sample has been collected in Bangkok, Thailand. Third, in this study, although there are many elements of Korean wave and consumption value, but it is defined and measured by only two dimensions such as attractiveness/favorableness and symbolic/functional value.

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