Validating the Antecedent Effects of Hallyu WOM on Chinese Consumers’ Intention to Buy Korean Products

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Currently as the growing global influences of Korean Pop-Culture (commonly named Hallyu) invites scholarly and practitioner’s attention, it seems quite appropriate to investigate the key factors driving Hallyu’s success from a wide spectrum of perspectives including cultural, communicational and behavioral manifestations. Based on this rationale, this study seeks to accomplish the three research objectives; First, this study aims to confirm whether Chinese consumers’ prior Hallyu experiences impact on their WOM (word-of-mouth) specific to Hallyu. Second, the study aims to confirm whether individual consumer’s social network properties (tie strength and centrality) influence Hallyu WOM. Third, the study purports to verify whether cultural orientation (collectivism and uncertainty avoidance) moderates the relationship between the Hallyu experiences and Hallyu WOM. To achieve these objectives, we administered a large scale survey of Chinese consumers residing in China’s big and medium sized cities which have high level of cultural exposure to Hallyu. The findings suggest that Hallyu owes much of its success to not only Chinese consumer’s cultural experiences which result in WOM, but also to consumer’s social network configurations and cultural orientation. Finally, the study discusses managerial and theoretical implications on country-of-cultural-origin.

Key words  Hallyu, WOM, social network, purchase intention, cultural orientation
1. Introduction

According to a recent column in Wall Street Journal (2014. 2. 26), Chinese consumers currently indulge in Korean food named “Chi-Mac” (meaning chicken and beer) because the food was featured in a popular Korean drama broadcast in China. The number of posts on Weibo (Chinese version of Twitter) hit 370 million with 30% sales increase reported by BBQ, a Korean franchisor with 155 chicken shops in China.

This particular phenomenon illustrates the link between dominant popular culture and consumer’s purchase behavior, as manifested in a transnational cultural influence named “Hallyu” (meaning Korean Wave in Korean language). Over the past decade, Korean popular culture has made a big cultural impact in Asian countries and globally as well. The mass media and concerned scholars have elevated the significance of Hallyu to reexamine the global popular culture propelled by Korean television dramas, popular music, and movies, and currently expanding into food and fashion. Since the mid-1990s, Korean popular culture has spread over the pan ethnic-Chinese countries including China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. Thus, some scholars regard Hallyu as “a counter-case to media imperialism: a fissure in West-centered globalization” (Kim, 2009, pp. 732-37) or as a case proving that globalization is not a one-way traffic but a two-way flow (Cho-Han, 2003, p. 40).

What is intriguing about Hallyu phenomenon is the role of social media in disseminating relevant information about the newly emerging cultural influences. The role of social network as a marketing communication tool has received considerable scholarly attention lately, because of the pervasive power of word-of-mouth (here-in-after WOM) in not just fulfilling personal communicational needs but caus-
ing people connected in their own social networks to buy products or services. However, the previous *Hallyu* literature has scarcely examined the role of either WOM or social network in gauging *Hallyu* performances.

Previous research on WOM has widely reported that an individual’s cultural orientation affects WOM through its impact on network-based communication (Rivera & Rogers, 2006), product specific online WOM (Lee & Park, 2006), and its ability to fulfill communicational needs shared by society members (Buchan et al., 2005). For instance, in countries like Korea or Japan where people show high propensity to avoid uncertainty and espouse collectivistic values, people would find WOM as a way to express or share their cultural experiences (Money, Gilly, & Graham, 1998). It is, however, difficult to find previous literature which investigated the role of cultural orientation in the link between particular cultural experiences and WOM. It is from this observation of previous literature that motivates this study to investigate the role of cultural orientation on *Hallyu* WOM.

In sum, the research objectives of this study are three-fold; First, this study aims to confirm whether Chinese consumers’ prior *Hallyu* experiences impact on their WOM specific to *Hallyu*. Second, the paper aims to confirm whether individual consumer’s social network properties (tie strength and centrality) influence his/her *Hallyu* WOM. Third, the study purports to verify whether cultural orientation (collectivism and uncertainty avoidance) moderates the relationship between the *Hallyu* experiences and *Hallyu* WOM. To achieve these objectives, we administered a large scale survey of Chinese consumers residing in China’s big and medium sized cities which were presumed to have high level of cultural exposure to *Hallyu*.
2. Literature Review

1) Conceptualization of Hallyu

The term “Hallyu” was originally coined by a Chinese newspaper in 1997, and riding the waves of popularity of Korean contemporary popular culture, scholarly research on the phenomenon has seen a sharp increase. The past literature on Hallyu may be categorized into three broad areas. First, a majority of them tried to explain the factors that are responsible for making Hallyu become so popular in Asian countries (Hanaki, Singhal, Han, Kim, & Chitnis, 2007; Lee, 2006; Leung, 2008). For instance, some researchers focused on what makes Asian audiences fascinated with Korean popular culture. The studies addressed the ways in which the Asian audiences interpret and evaluate Korean cultural contents (Kim, 2009; Sin, 2005; Yun, 2009). Second, some studies tried to assess the effects of Hallyu, mostly concentrated on economic effects, i.e., tourism, sales of Hallyu-related products, and marketing implications. Others focused on Hallyu’s effects on changing the images of Korean people as well as culture in those countries where Hallyu has made an impact (Chae, 2006; Choe, 2007; Hong, Gang, & Ohya, 2007; Hwang, 2008; Iwabuchi 2008; Kim, Argusa, Lee, & Chan, 2007). Third, some scholars approached Hallyu from the perspective of globalization (Iwabuchi, 2008; Kim, 2009; Shim, 2006; Yang, 2007). Some of them regard Hallyu as a part of globalization driven by the logic of capital (Cho-Han, 2003) with a few others viewing Hallyu as a sign of regionalization for or against globalization occurring in Asia. This latter view considers Hallyu as a symptom of a new regional cultural formation (Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008).

By 1996, China has witnessed the heated reception of Korean TV dramas expanding its realm to music, and currently Hallyu’s impact is fanning out to areas as diverse as fashion, food, mobile phone,
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language, and Korean traditional culture. Park (2004) noted that Hallyu phenomenon is fast becoming a very effective tool for global marketing and that Korea needs to coordinate tourism, entertainment and export industries to attract Chinese tourists. Kim (2007) also contended that tangible Hallyu such as food or fashion, compared to intangible Hallyu like celebrity star, drama, music and movie, has much stronger impact on attitude toward Korea and intention to buy Korean products.

Despite this increased significance, there has been relatively little research done to explain how Hallyu has transformed itself from simply perceiving good attitude toward foreign pop culture into actually causing people to buy products made in the country of cultural origin. One previous study examined how Chinese consumers’ consumption of Korean culture affects perception of national image, corporate image and product image of Korea (Yang, 2011). The result confirmed positive relationships among cultural consumption of Chinese consumers, Korean national image, and Korean firms and products. The study also confirmed a positive link between national image and evaluation of products made in Korea (Yang, 2011). He further reported that purchase intention of generic Korean products is most influenced by national image of Korea, whereas the purchase intention of culture-specific products is most influenced by perception of Korean culture and awareness of Korean pop culture. On a similar but slightly different note, Jung (2006) found that Chinese consumer’s perception of Korean culture influences sales of not only culturally specific contents but general products of Korea as well.

In sum, the previous literature on Hallyu has concentrated on the antecedents (i.e., national image, cultural attitude) and consequences (i.e., sales of culture-specific products and generic products). However, it appears relatively little studied how such cultural or na-
tional perceptions of cultural exporter actually translates into intentions to buy products through *Hallyu* WOM on social media (i.e., social network sites).

2) *Hallyu* Word-of-Mouth

One of the pivotal drivers of *Hallyu* as an effective marketing tool is its mass appeal through media exposure. *Hallyu* marketing seems to derive much of its thrust from social communications among people who have previously experienced *Hallyu*. The most prevalent and effective vehicle to diffuse information created from social communication is WOM.

In previous research, WOM has been recognized as playing a critical role in consumer’s purchase decision for its role on consumer’s choices (Katz & Lazarfeld 1955; Engel, Kollat, & Blackwell, 1969; Richins, 1983). WOM refers to all the positive and negative statements made by potential or incumbent customers about the products, services, or firms (Henning-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). There have been a number of previous studies which tried to investigate the determinants of WOM. Here we categorize them into three determinants which have immediate bearings on this study; 1) prior experience, 2) network effects, and 3) cultural orientation.

(1) Prior Experiences

Previous studies have found a close relationship between consumers’ product experiences and knowledge and the WOM communication. Some have focused on the relationship between consumers’ past experiences and their WOM intentions and the quantity of arguments. For instance, employing negativity bias theory, Yoon (2006) and Shin (2006) reported that consumers are more likely to seek WOM commu-
nication when they are satisfied with their purchase. In addition, Yoon (2005) found that WOM intentions are influenced not only by the directionality (positive or negative) of a particular experience but also its intensity.

Other studies have examined the relationship between consumers’ past experiences and WOM communication and produced somewhat mixed results. For instance, Kim (2006) reported that an individual’s experience-based recommendation is the most important information source for the choice of indigenous food products. Punji and Staelin (1983) defined consumers’ shopping experiences as useful prior information and reported that these experiences have negative effects on external searches. By contrast, Goldman and Johansson (1978) verified a positive relationship between consumers’ prior knowledge and/or experiences and information searches. As of now, there is no previous study which examined the relationship between a consumer’s Hallyu experiences and WOM, but it is highly assumable that the more experienced a person is with Hallyu, the more he would be inclined to express his experiences through WOM.

(2) Network Effects
As noted earlier, social network is a notion very useful to explain WOM behavior because its theoretical premise is drawn on the belief that accumulation of the reciprocal exchanges builds social network, which underlies resource exchange between social actors (Wellman & Berkowitz, 1998). This concept is particularly conducive to identifying the ways in which WOM spreads because network characteristics typically determine the levels and intensity of communication among the networked actors. One study found that network externalities exist in diffusion of mobile communication services (Lee & Lee, 2003). It has also been reported in the literature that network is
formed by a group of individuals who have inter-personally interactive connections and that network properties (i.e., tie strength and centrality) influence how individual actor exhibits communicational behavior within a network (Frenzen & Nakamoto 1993; Feick & Price 1987; Rogers 2003).

Since most of e-WOM communications occur in social relationships whose intensity or strength is determined by the closeness between e-WOM producer and adopter, it is presumable that network characteristic may positively influence the extent and intensity of WOM on social media.

This study views WOM as a network-based behavior that results from a consumer’s prior experiences, and attempts to verify the role of social network properties in regard to Hallyu WOM. This study’s major theoretical premise is based on the belief that social network is a useful concept to explain the exchange and dissemination of Hallyu information. For this reason, it seems quite important to investigate Hallyu experience as WOM source because it touches upon the consumer’s desire to share multi-cultural experiences through network-based WOM.

(3) Cultural Orientation

In order for socio-organizational network to mobilize innovative concept, there must be in place a consistent goal and shared values among the networked members (Mahajan & Peterson, 1985). That is, cultural similarity or familiarity and general trust of the society facilitate network-based communication because of the cohesiveness of networked members (Rivera & Rogers, 2006). One previous study confirmed the role of cultural orientation by applying the concept of cultural proximity to demonstrate its effect on the adoption of Korean dramas by foreigners (Jung & Lee, 2011).
Hofstede’s (1980) five dimensions of cultural orientation (individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity/femininity. long-term work orientation) have been innumerable cited as a measure of cultural difference among countries. Korea and China have similarly low ratings on individualism (Korea = 18, China = 20), but China is lower in uncertainty avoidance (Korea = 85, China = 30), and higher in power distance (Korea = 60, China = 80) and masculinity (Korea = 39, China = 66) (Hofstede, 2001).

In an individualistic society, people are interested in themselves not others and individual rights are highly respected. In contrast, collectivistic society puts group interests and values ahead of individual ones. This cultural divide invites a reasoning that the collectivistic society has highly dense, highly embedded network would be conducive to facilitating WOM diffusion. Drawing from this observation, we may suggest that Chinese consumers with high collectivism would find themselves is a social environment favorable to distributing information about Hallyu experiences.

3. Research Hypotheses

1) Consumers’ Experiences and Hallyu WOM

In the past literature, only a few studies have investigated the effects of product knowledge on the quantity of WOM arguments with somewhat mixed results (Kim, 1995; Kim, 1992). For instance, Park and Jung (2006) conducted a content analysis of consumers’ online reviews and reported that experienced goods tend to facilitate subjective WOM communication, whereas searched goods promote objective WOM communication. This result indicates that consumers’ prior knowledge and experiences of Hallyu may play an important role in produc-
ing *Hallyu*-specific WOM communication.

Despite the increased importance of understanding the role of predominant culture on social media and relevant purchase behavior, previous literature to date didn’t fully incorporate culture-specific experiences as a source of WOM, mostly utilizing product reviews (Lee & Park 2006; Park & Jung 2006) or the role of message features i.e., persuasiveness, correctness, form, and timeliness (Bhattacherjee & Sanford 2006). Therefore, it seems appropriate to study whether the the cross-cultural experiences like *Hallyu* may have a close impact on *Hallyu* WOM.

Although a host of studies have previously examined the relationships between consumers’ prior knowledge and experience and WOM behavior, no research has investigated the relationship between consumer’s culture specific experience and WOM. The literature has generally overlooked the causes of WOM specific to cultural experiences, mostly focusing instead on consumption product experiences (Yoon, 2005, 2006; Shin, 2006; Kim, 2006) or shopping experiences (Punji & Staelin, 1983; DeLone & McLean, 2003) and evaluative criteria of WOM message (Bhattacherjee & Sanford, 2006). At this juncture, we may raise a theoretical issue whether we can consider a consumer’s cultural experiences as something analogous to product or shopping experiences which ensue WOM. If we consider cultural experiences as a result of consumer’s buying process involving problem recognition, information search, and alternative evaluation, we can expect *Hallyu* consumers to go through a similar process to reach a decision to experience Korean cultural products. From this viewpoint, we may speculate that Chinese consumers’ *Hallyu* experiences may result in the same kind of WOM that people would do after product experiences on SNS like Weibo or WeChat. That is, the more experienced a Chinese consumer is with *Hallyu*, the more likely it is that he or she
will take part in in WOM on SNS. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis. To choose the subject contents of *Hallyu*, we relied on previous government publication “2014 Report on the Current Status of *Hallyu*” which reported the four most representative *Hallyu* contents. According to the report, respondents answered K-Pop as no.1 content (61.9%: 3,466), followed by drama (46.8%; 2,620), movie (43.4%;2,430) and food (40.0%; 2,240) (KOFICE). Based on this finding, we adopted the four contents as subjects of *Hallyu* experiences in this study.

**H1:** Chinese consumer’s *Hallyu* experiences will have a positive effect on their WOM on SNS.

**H1a:** Chinese consumer’s experience with Korean food will have a positive effect on WOM on SNS.

**H1b:** Chinese consumer’s experience with Korean drama will have a positive effect on WOM on SNS.

**H1c:** Chinese consumer’s experience with Korean movie will have a positive effect on WOM on SNS.

**H1d:** Chinese consumer’s experience with Korean music will have a positive effect on WOM on SNS.

2) Network and *Hallyu* WOM

As noted earlier, network can serve as an important communicational platform facilitating diffusion of *Hallyu*-specific WOM among Chinese consumers. In what follows, two widely researched network properties (tie strength and centrality) are discussed focusing on their relationships to *Hallyu* WOM, from which relevant research hypotheses are proposed.
(1) Tie Strength and *Hallyu* WOM

Previous literature on social network and WOM includes one study which reported that, regardless of message itself, the ways in which communication counterparts are connected determine the WOM process and effects (Bansal & Voyer, 2000). Tie strength was defined previously as “a multi-dimensional construct representing dyadic personal relations in social network context” and comprises such factors as intimacy, familiarity, assistance, and association (Frenzen & Davis, 1990). Since most of WOM communications occur in social relationships whose intensity or strength is determined by the closeness between WOM diffusor and adopter, it is important to grasp the nature of relationships among the communicators on a network (Bristor, 1990).

Furthermore, a few previous studies employed a network analysis to link tie strength with the amount of WOM, using subjects at an early phase of e-WOM diffusion, to find that tie strength, opinion leader, and connector contributed to WOM quantity (Lee et al., 2010). Also, tie strength was found to affect information stream, with people of high tie strength making information exchanges in greater quantity and frequency than those of low tie strength (Brown & Reingen, 1987). And, drawing from social exchange theory, Frenzen and Nakamoto (1993) found that, the greater tie strength is, the more likely it is to produce information of higher economic value.

The above findings are particularly important because they provide rationale which explains the impact of network characteristics on *Hallyu* WOM. Based on the above literature review, we can draw a conclusion that *Hallyu* WOM on SNS may depend, to a large extent, on the intensity of social relations (i.e., high or low tie strength). That is, the more strongly connected a person is with others in a network, the more he will engage in WOM activities involving *Hallyu*. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.
**H2a:** The tie strength in social network will positively influence 
*Hallyu*-specific WOM in China.

(2) **Network Centrality and WOM**

Network centrality concerns the positional significance of any networked actor in a given network structure. In general, an actor is said to possess centrality if he or she is connected to a host of other actors (degree) or takes up a strategic position in overall network structure (betweenness) (Scott, 1991). Also, centrality implicates that an actor assumes a central position as a reliable partner in concentric relationship. According to resource dependency theory, centrality refers to the extent of potential resources that an actor has in his control which results from having many connectors (Pfeiffer & Salancik, 1978). Previous literature on innovation diffusion also supports the view that central actors are likely to be innovators (Rogers, 2003).

From a marketing standpoint, an actor’s centrality takes on substantial importance as a source of WOM references. Feick and Price (1987) used a term “market maven” to explain those opinion leaders who influence other people’s decisions in the market. The market mavens “characteristically possess quite a lot of information about diverse products, engage in intimate conversations with ease, and quickly respond to requests for market information” (Feick & Price, 1987, p.85). In a related study, Rogers (1995) posited that early adopters play a role of central market figure similar to that of opinion leader, and once they judge their given information to be reliable, they become an active agent in diffusing WOM.

Based on the above literature review, it is hypothesizable that opinion leaders or market mavens are influentials and take up a central position in a network. These influentials in China would actively carry *Hallyu* WOM as *Hallyu* represents a new cultural phenomenon.
in China with some impact on Chinese living. In light of this, Chinese consumers who assume the network centrality may positively promote *Hallyu* WOM, thus we propose the following hypothesis.

**H2b:** The level of centrality in social network will positively influence *Hallyu*-specific WOM in China.

(3) Cultural Orientation as a Moderator between Cultural Experience and WOM

In order for any socio-organizational network to disseminate innovative concept, there must be in place a consistent goal and shared values among the networked members (Mahajan & Peterson, 1985). That is, cultural similarity or familiarity and general trust of the society will facilitate network-based communication because of the cohesiveness of networked members (Rivera & Rogers, 2006).

Individualistic people primarily seek personal interests and individual rights, whereas collectivistic people place group interests and values ahead of individual ones. Also, the collectivistic people have highly dense, highly embedded network, which is conducive to WOM diffusion. Conversely, individualistic people with low network density and embeddedness would be less amenable to WOM.

Some other studies tried to link cultural orientation and job-related WOM and need for information. For instance, Hofested (1991) stated that people with high uncertainty avoidance tend to stress work security, precise execution of work, and depend on superior’s advice. Thus, this type of people search for behavioral norms, which requires stronger network that allows for ready access to information. Other studies tried to link cultural orientation with personal relationship and information dependency by proving that uncertainty avoidance has an impact on individual’s dependence on personal in-
formation (Dawar et al., 1996) and dependence on information source (Pornpitakpan, 2000). One previous study reported that in comparison with Americans having high individualism and low uncertainty avoidance, Koreans with high collectivism and uncertainty avoidance show much greater influence of online product reviews on product purchase and further asserted that negative product information rather than positive one has greater impact on purchase decision (Lee & Park, 2006). Also, Money et al. (1998) found that Japanese companies in Japan with stronger ties among employees make purchase decisions based on individual ties and WOM than American companies. In a similar context, Pornpitakpan (2000) reported that Japanese consumers with high uncertainty avoidance orientation resort much more to personal WOM than Thai consumers to make purchase decisions.

The above literature review gives support to the role of cultural orientation in moderating the relationship between Chinese consumer’s Hallyu experiences and Hallyu WOM. That is, given the same level of cultural exposure to Hallyu, highly collectivistic people will more actively engage in Hallyu WOM than those who are individualistic. Likewise, given the same Hallyu exposure, people who are highly averse to uncertainty will more actively engage in Hallyu WOM than those less averse to uncertainty. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed.

**H3**: Cultural orientation of Chinese consumers will moderate the relationship between Hallyu experiences and Hallyu-specific WOM.

**H3b**: Highly collectivistic people will engage in greater amount of Hallyu-specific WOM than less collectivistic people

**H3b**: Highly uncertainty avoiding people will engage in greater
amount of *Hallyu*-specific WOM than less uncertainty avoiding people.

4) *Hallyu* WOM and Intention to Buy Korean Products

Previous research on WOM has primarily focused on measuring adoption of WOM information, changes in customer’s attitude, purchase intention, and actual purchase to find that adoption of WOM information closely relates to positive attitude and purchase intention (Henning-Thurau, 2004).

A review of literature on WOM’s effects reveals that researchers primarily viewed WOM as an activity related to information adoption and dissemination which cause changes in the attitude and behavior of a person receiving information and they reported high correlation among the information adoption and information diffusion (Henning-Thurau et al., 2004; Chatterjee, 2001). Chatterjee (2001) argues that online WOM gets translated into purchase intention of potential buyers, and online WOM exerts greater influence than offline WOM because a person can get a wider range of WOM information online with no time and place constraints. Also, Oh (2011) found from a study of structural relations that people who perceive usefulness of online WOM information tend to adopt WOM and have higher level of purchase intention. Other researchers reported that WOM about tourism destinations is significantly affected by information’s accuracy, timeliness and delightfulness, which in turn, influences WOM effectiveness (Chae, 2006). Based on these previous research findings, we may hypothesize that adoption of WOM will affect WOM recipient’s intention to act on the WOM message. For instance, Chinese consumers who have been receiving and sending information on *Hallyu* on SNS may be highly predisposed toward Korean culture and thus build up positive image about Korea, which may translates into the intention
to buy Korean products. This conclusion is drawn from a premise that the information carried through *Hallyu* WOM reflects the media exposure and diffusion of information through social media regarding *Hallyu* contents, i.e., TV drama, movie, K-pop, and others, which may be intimately related with the national image of Korea and products made by Korea. We can explain this phenomenon using the concept of “cultural halo” which was previously confirmed by a study on the relationship between cultural attitude toward a country’s culture and intention to buy the country’s products (Yoon, Yang, & Han, 2013). In the study they found that Chinese consumers’ attitude toward Korean culture has positive impact on their intention to buy Korean products. The study is particularly noteworthy because it used the term “cultural halo” to explain the way cultural attitude affects product purchase intention not only through national image but directly.

Based on previous literature review, we can postulate that Chinese consumer’s *Hallyu* experiences resulting in positive attitude toward Korean culture when amplified through WOM on SNS will translate into favorable intention to purchase Korean products. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis.
**H4:** WOM about *Hallyu* experiences by Chinese consumers will significantly influence their intention to buy Korean products.

Based on the above hypotheses and literature reviewed, the following research model is constructed.

### 4. RESEARCH METHODS

1) **Operational Definition**

(1) **Prior *Hallyu* experiences**

For cultural experience items, we used questions that measure respondent’s level of experience with four of *Hallyu*’s specific cultural contents, i.e., food, drama, movie, and music. The questions read like ‘I have previous experience with Korean food (or drama, movie, & music).’

(2) **Network Properties—Tie Strength and Centrality**

We defined tie strength as “the extent to which an individual actor is connected to WOM counterparts” and used three items drawn from Money et al.’s (1998, p.82) study. The three items are ‘My network counterparts and I have been acquaintances for long’, ‘I frequently see my counterparts’, ‘My counterparts are important to me’. The items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale with 1 representing “most disagree” and 7 “most agree”.

Network centrality was defined as “something (or someone) that is most central in the context of social network” and we drew seven items from Childers’ (1986) study, which are ‘When speaking about things, others usually agree with me’, ‘I often persuade others to buy
the products that I like’, ‘People to whom I recommend products tend to buy them’, ‘When talking with others, I usually start out conversation first’, ‘While talking about some topics, I usually dominate the conversation’, ‘I frequently talk about things with others’, ‘When talking about things, I usually give out a variety of information’. The items were measured using 7-point Likert scale.

(3) WOM Behavior
We defined WOM as “an activity of speaking with more than one friend or acquaintance, whose effects can be measured by the quantity and quality of the information spoken.” In order to provide respondents with specific Hallyu referents, we asked respondents to recall their most recent Hallyu related WOM they engaged on SNS.

This study adopted four WOM quality measures (i.e., precision, timeliness, reliability, and comprehensiveness) used by Cheung et al. (2008, p.239). Items used for the survey are ‘Hallyu information I share with others on SNS is precise,’ ‘Hallyu information I share with others on SNS is comprehensive’, ‘Hallyu information I share with others on SNS is reliable,’ ‘Hallyu information I share with others on SNS is timely,’ To include some quantitative measures of WOM, we modified two from Anderson (1998,p.8) ‘I usually provide much information about Hallyu on SNS,’ ‘I usually receive much information about Hallyu on SNS.’

(4) Cultural Orientation
We selected two cultural dimensions developed by Hofstede (1991) —individualism/collectivism and uncertainty avoidance—as representative measures of cultural orientation. We adapted three individualism items from Yoon & Kim’s (2000, p.9) study which are ‘I tend to do things on my own,’ ‘I try to live my life independently,’ ‘I
usually do things that I like doing.’

For uncertainty avoidance, we adapted three items used from Yoon & Kim’s (2000, p.10) study which are ‘I tend to worry a lot when I can’t predict the outcome,’ ‘I prefer systematic circumstance to unsystematic one,’ I dislike ambiguous situations.’ For both measures of individualism and uncertainty avoidance, 7-point Likert scale was adopted.

(5) Purchase Intention
The three items for purchase intention were adapted from Engel et al.’s (1995) scale of purchase intention containing three items ‘I intend to buy Korean products,’ ‘I will buy Korean products if needed,’ ‘I will keep buying Korean products.’

2) Sample Subjects
The questionnaire used for the survey was pretested by testing it on 100 Korean undergraduate students to eliminate items which lacked semantic clarity, or judged difficult to comprehend, or seemed redundant. For the Chinese version of the questionnaire, a back-translation was performed with the help of two bi-lingual (Korean and Chinese languages) graduate students. The sampled respondents were selected by targeting general public who currently live in five Chinese cities (Shanghai, Yentai, Wuhai, Chengdu, and Zhangqun) varying in population size. The rationale for selecting sample respondents in different cities is based on the belief that the access to Hallyu experiences requires two essential conditions-geographic proximity and population. First, the geographical proximity may be a critical factor affecting cultural accessibility. For instance, the four cities located near the eastern seaboard (i.e., Yentai, Wuhai, Chengdu, and Zhangqun) are well known.
for their high level of cultural exchanges between China and Korea
due to their geographic proximity, among others. Second, the city’s
population size is another selection criterion because big cities like
Shanghai have well developed communication system and their city
residents are better educated and globalized with easy access to global
news, which gives them easier access to Hallyu information. Altogether,
after discarding unusable questionnaires, we used a total of 678 ques-
tionnaires composed of 302 respondents from the four eastern sea-
shore cities and 376 respondents from Shanghai.

5. Findings

1) Data Refinement

We performed exploratory factor analysis on independent variables
composed of Hallyu contents experience, network characteristics,
WOM behavior, and purchase intention. The result of EFA produced
a good measure of construct validity with all communality scores and
factor loadings exceeding .50. The result of reliability test yields highly
acceptable level of internal consistency with all factors producing
Cronbach alphas greater than .70. The details of the result reveal that
two items from network centrality ‘I frequently talk about things
with others’, ‘When talking about things, I usually give out a variety
of information’ were deleted. Out of six items on WOM measure, one
question ‘Hallyu information encountered is timely’ was deleted.

To test construct validity of cultural orientation adopted for
moderator for the research model, separate EFA was performed, re-
sulting in one item from uncertainty avoidance being deleted- ‘I tend
to worry a lot when I can’t predict the outcome’. Overall, the com-
munality scores and factor loadings exceeded .5 with cumulative var-
### Table 1: Result of EFA

<table>
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<th>Components</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<td>.873</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>-.025</td>
<td>.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2_6 Centrality</td>
<td>.137</td>
<td>.825</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>-.063</td>
<td>.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2_4 Centrality</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.805</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>.164</td>
<td>.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2_7 Centrality</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>.627</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>.193</td>
<td>-.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8_2 Purchase Intention</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.889</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8_3 Purchase Intention</td>
<td>.217</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.856</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>.195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8_1 Purchase Intention</td>
<td>.260</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.800</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2_1 Tie Strength</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.882</td>
<td>.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2_2 Tie Strength</td>
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<td>.052</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>.870</td>
<td>.090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2_3 Tie Strength</td>
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<td>.140</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.771</td>
<td>.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1_3 Korean Movie</td>
<td>.142</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1_2 Korean Drama</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>-.056</td>
<td>.138</td>
<td>.146</td>
<td>.733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1_4 Korean Music</td>
<td>.328</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>-.010</td>
<td>.585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1_1 Korean Food</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>.175</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>.182</td>
<td>.549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eigenvalue</td>
<td>5.006</td>
<td>2.525</td>
<td>2.132</td>
<td>1.633</td>
<td>1.216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cum Variance Exp</td>
<td>26.34</td>
<td>39.63</td>
<td>50.85</td>
<td>59.45</td>
<td>65.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach Alpha</td>
<td>.759</td>
<td>.712</td>
<td>.745</td>
<td>.723</td>
<td>.765</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Factor extraction Method: Principal component analysis, Rotation method: Varimax.*
### Table 2: Result of Correlations Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hallyu exp</th>
<th>Tie strength</th>
<th>Centrality</th>
<th>WOM</th>
<th>Collectivism</th>
<th>Uncertainty avoidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tie strength</strong></td>
<td>Pearson Coeff</td>
<td>.220**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>P</em>(two-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>N</em></td>
<td>678</td>
<td>678</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Centrality</strong></td>
<td>Pearson Coeff</td>
<td>.137**</td>
<td>.175**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>P</em>(two-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>N</em></td>
<td>678</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>678</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WOM</strong></td>
<td>Pearson Coeff</td>
<td>.375**</td>
<td>.083*</td>
<td>.202**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>P</em>(two-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>N</em></td>
<td>678</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>678</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collectivism</strong></td>
<td>Pearson Coeff</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.127**</td>
<td>.165**</td>
<td>.108**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>P</em>(two-tailed)</td>
<td>.292</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>N</em></td>
<td>678</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uncertainty avoidance</strong></td>
<td>Pearson Coeff</td>
<td>.114**</td>
<td>.217**</td>
<td>.201**</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.115**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>P</em>(two-tailed)</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.314</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>N</em></td>
<td>678</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purchase intention</strong></td>
<td>Pearson Coeff</td>
<td>.436**</td>
<td>.098*</td>
<td>.155**</td>
<td>.422**</td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>P</em>(two-tailed)</td>
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<td>.011</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>N</em></td>
<td>678</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>678</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Crobach alphas were .68 and .73 respectively for two separate measures.

Next, to calculate inter-factor correlations, we performed correlations analysis to find that all factors positively correlate with each other at .01 significance level except for cultural orientation factors. Specifically, individualism factor was not significantly correlated with cultural experience (r = .40; p = .292) and uncertainty avoidance fac-

Validating the Antecedent Effects of Hallyu WOM on Chinese Consumers' Intention to Buy Korean Products 179
2) Hypotheses Verification

(1) H1 Verification
To verify whether Hallyu experiences impact WOM behavior, we conducted multiple regression analysis treating four Hallyu contents experiences as independent variables. The result of analysis showed that the regression model is structurally fit with $F = 35.58$ ($p = .000$). The result shows that Chinese consumers’ experiences with Korean movie ($\beta = .135; t = 3.221; p = .001$) and music ($\beta = .316; t = .8241; p = .000$) have significantly positive effects on WOM about Hallyu at significance level of .01, but experiences with food and drama do not.

What this finding illustrates is that Chinese people respond to dif-

<Table 3> Regression on the Effect of Hallyu Experience on WOM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum squared</th>
<th>$DF$</th>
<th>Mean squared</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression model</td>
<td>76.459</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19.115</td>
<td>.235</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Residual</td>
<td>361.523</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>.537</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>437.983</td>
<td>677</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coeff</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.1604</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>13.779**</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean food</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>.799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean drama</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>1.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean movie</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.135</td>
<td>3.221**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean music</td>
<td>.189</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.316</td>
<td>8.241**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent variable: Hallyu WOM ** $p < .01$
Validating the Antecedent Effects of Hallyu WOM on Chinese Consumers’ Intention to Buy Korean Products

(2) H2 Verification

To test H2 which predicted the effect of WOM on purchase intention of Korean products by Chinese consumers, we performed regression analysis. The result showed that network centrality has a significant impact on WOM at .01 significance level ($\beta = .194; t = 5.068; p = .000$), while tie strength doesn’t ($\beta = .049; t = 1.270; p = .205$). What this result suggests is that people who play a central role in sharing Hallyu information with people around them actually produce high level of WOM, whereas people who have strong sties with people do not. This result illustrates that an individual maintaining central position in social networks plays a role in producing Hallyu WOM because he possesses a rich variety of information to share with others.
(3) H3 Verification

To verify the hypothesis H3 which predicted the moderating effect of cultural orientation on the relationship between Hallyu experiences and WOM, we performed a series of regression analysis with cultural orientations (individualistic/collectivistic orientation and uncertainty avoidance orientation) entered as a moderating variable. The result of the hypothesis verification for H3a is shown in Table 5. To operationalize collectivistic value, we used reverse coded the original variable that was designed for individualism measure.

The result confirms H3a in that the effect of all four Hallyu experiences on WOM were greater for people with higher collectivistic value than those with lower value. The biggest impact of Hallyu experience was observed on experience with Korean movies ($\beta = .215; t = 3.980; p = .000$ for low collectivistic orientation vs. $\beta = .400; t = 8.112; p = .000$ for high collectivistic orientation).

To verify the hypothesis H3b which predicted that the effects of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Collectivism low</th>
<th>Collectivism high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korean Food</td>
<td>2.071</td>
<td>.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.123</td>
<td>.210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>.247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.238*</td>
<td>3.892**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean Drama</td>
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<td>.165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.215</td>
<td>.247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.210</td>
<td>.247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.980**</td>
<td>4.742**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean Movie</td>
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<td>.278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.326</td>
<td>.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.427</td>
<td>.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.249**</td>
<td>8.112**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean Music</td>
<td>.260</td>
<td>.278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.427</td>
<td>.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.790**</td>
<td>8.112**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Validating the Antecedent Effects of Hallyu WOM on Chinese Consumers’ Intention to Buy Korean Products

Hallyu experiences on WOM will be greater for respondents with high uncertainty avoidance orientation than those with low orientation, we performed a series of regression analysis with uncertainty avoidance orientation used as a moderating variable. The result shows that uncertainty avoidance orientation acts as a moderating variable for Chinese consumers’ experiences of Korean dramas, movies, and music as these experiences have greater effect on WOM for people with high uncertainty avoidance score than ones with low score. However, experience of Korean food produced greater effect on WOM for people with low uncertainty avoidance score than those with high score (β = .168; t = 2.772; p = .006 for low uncertainty avoidance vs. β = .141; t = 2.883; p = .004). The biggest impact of moderated difference occurred in Korean drama experience (β = .177; t = 2.938; p = .000 for low uncertainty avoidance orientation vs. β = .262; t = 5.488; p = .000 for high uncertainty avoidance orientation).

(Table 6) Effects of *Hallyu* Experience on WOM by Uncertainty Avoidance Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Uncert. Avid low</th>
<th>Uncert. Avid high</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coeff</th>
<th>Standardized Coeff</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korean Food</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>2.772</td>
<td>**.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>2.938</td>
<td>**.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean Drama</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>.180</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.271</td>
<td>4.600</td>
<td>**.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.262</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.278</td>
<td>5.840</td>
<td>**.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean Movie</td>
<td>.165</td>
<td>.183</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.330</td>
<td>5.707</td>
<td>**.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.419</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.300</td>
<td>9.333</td>
<td>**.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean Music</td>
<td>.184</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.300</td>
<td>5.707</td>
<td>**.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.419</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.300</td>
<td>9.333</td>
<td>**.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent variable: *Hallyu* WOMt purchan lyu WOM **p < .01
### Table 7: Regression Analysis on the Effect of WOM on Purchase Intention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum squared</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Mean squared</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>125.233</td>
<td>.297</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
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<td>676</td>
<td>.855</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>702.930</td>
<td>677</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coeff</th>
<th>Standard Coeff</th>
<th>$T$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1.847</td>
<td>.121</td>
<td>15.255**</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOM</td>
<td>.535</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.422</td>
<td>12.106**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent variable: Product purchase intention ** $p < .01$

(4) **H4 Verification**

As hypothesized in H4, we verified whether WOM about *Hallyu* experiences actually result in buying products made in Korea. The result confirms the hypothesis, with WOM having a significant impact on purchasing Korean products at 0.01 significance level ($\beta = .422; t = 12.106; p = .000$). This result also proves that when dispersed through WOM, cultural experience of a country can actually translate into a desire to buy products made by the country of cultural origin, which somehow explains the underlying mechanism of country of origin where the culture-specific aspect of country of origin transcends into product-specific aspect, causing people to buy the products made by the country.

### 6. Conclusions and Implications

This study aims to confirm whether Chinese consumers’ prior experi-
ence with *Hallyu* and individual consumer’s social networks influence their WOM specific to *Hallyu* experience. Also, the study sought to verify whether cultural orientation (collectivism and uncertainty avoidance) moderates the relationship between *Hallyu* experience as well as social network properties and *Hallyu* WOM.

1) Theoretical Implications

The findings and pertinent theoretical implications derived from the current study results are as follows. First, Chinese consumers’ experiences with Korean movies and music have significantly positive effects on *Hallyu* WOM, but their experiences with food and drama do not. What this finding demonstrates is that Chinese people respond to different *Hallyu* experiences with different WOM intensity. This result is supported by previous research finding that WOM behavior is triggered by previous product experiences (Yoon, 2005, 2006; Shin, 2006; Kim, 2006) or shopping experiences (Punji and Staelin, 1983; DeLone & McLean, 2003). Here we may need to contemplate on why experiencing Korean food and drama do not significantly influence *Hallyu* WOM. One explanation may be that cultural contents, depending on their characteristics, may be more or less amenable to concerted fandomship. Korean movies and music with wide media access may be able to create concerted public appeal that is reflected in fandoms of movie stars and idol musicians, making such experiences particularly susceptible to WOM on SNS. In contrast, food and drama, since they tend to appeal a wide variety of personal tastes, it may be more difficult to create concerted opinions or fandom groups, thus making them relatively less susceptible to WOM. Another potential explanation is that movies and music have greater media accessibility through the use of mobile devices like smart phones so that people can easily down-
load Korean movies or K-Pop, which makes such cultural experiences suitable for SNS-based WOM.

Second, the result that network centrality has a significant impact on WOM, while tie strength doesn’t suggests that people who play a central role in sharing information with people around them actually produce high level of WOM, whereas people who have strong ties with people do not. This result suggests that maintaining a central position in social networks positively influences the level of WOM activity pertaining to Hallyu experiences. This finding gives support to resource dependency theory where central actor who controls potential resources must have many connectors (Pfeiffer & Salancik, 1978). This view is in line with arguments made by Rogers (1995) who posited that early adopters in market play a role of central market figure so called market mavens who are very active in diffusing WOM in the market. The finding that centrality and not tie strength had significant impact on Hallyu WOM may pose some interesting theoretical interpretation. This difference in the effects of network properties on Hallyu WOM may reflect the different nature of two properties-tie strength and centrality. For instance, tie strength characterized by familiarity intimacy, and association among the acquaintances (Bristor, 1990), may be conducive to diffusing Hallyu WOM, but it may be limited in the scope and width of communication network as it is confined to people with highly strong relationships. On the contrary, centrality embraces network actors similar in their communicator role to market mavens who possess a quantity of Hallyu information, engage widely in intimate conversations about Hallyu, and respond quickly to information requests (Feick & Price, 1987). This type of network actor is likely to have wider spectrum of friends on SNS to exert their influences upon, thus making network centrality more conducive than tie strength to increasing Hallyu WOM on SNS.
Third, as a result of testing the moderation effect of cultural orientations, H3a was supported because the effects of all four Hallyu experiences on WOM were greater for consumers with higher collectivistic value than those with lower value. Also, uncertainty avoidance orientation was found to moderate for Korean drama, movie, and music as hypothesized, producing greater effect on WOM for people with higher uncertainty avoidance. The finding that uncertainty avoidance did not yield the hypothesized effect for Korean food may be explained by an postulation that Chinese consumers may view Korean food as not demanding the high level of involvement or personal interest.

Finally, the finding that Hallyu WOM did have a positive influence on the purchase of Korean products clearly demonstrates the power of social media, i.e., SNS in influencing people buy goods talked about on SNS. This result is in support of a previous study which found that adoption of WOM information closely relates with positive attitude and purchase intention (Henning-Thurau et al., 2004). Further research needs to be done to explore the question as to how WOM adoption of Hallyu experiences converts to country of origin effect. Hence, it is recommended that future research examine the role of national image mediating between Hallyu WOM and purchase of Korean goods.

2) Practical Implications

To suggest practical implications of this study result, Korean firms involved in business with China may benefit from building stronger connections between experiencing Hallyu and country of origin effects to create so called country-of-cultural-origin. To do so would require Korean firms as well as Korean government to orchestrate together to diversify relevant communication channels, one of which may be uti-
lizing public media forum or hostig promotional activities on a national or corporate level. For example, they can set up a government run Web sites in Chinese language to give out pertinent information on up-to-dated Hallyu trends or current events. Further, Korean firms whose products are sold in China will benefit from employing popular Korean movie stars or idol musicians to endorse their products with a view to creating positive corporate sponsorship image in connection with with Hallyu.

Another strategic implication stemming from this study is the critical role of social network properties in fostering Hallyu WOM. To maximize the positive effect of network centrality as found in this study, firms may find it beneficial to identify maket mavens from their customers who possess a lot of up-to-dated Hallyu infromation playing a opinion leader’s role. Based on this information, firms need to not only feed the market mavens or opinion leadrs on current information on Hallyu trends but actively seek to build an effective corporate communication system that turns market influentials ‘opinions into actionable problem solutions.

3) Limitations and Recommendations

The present study has started on the assumption that Chinese consumers who are highly exposed to Korean pop culture harnessed with current Hallyu information would talk favorably about Hallyu, which will positively influence purchase intention of Korean products. For this reason, this study has selected its study subjects from four cities in China which have geographic proximity and a big city like Shanghai with high degree of global media exposure. But this approach leaves behind other consumer segments that are distantly located geographically, but who have relatively high interest in Hallyu. Therefore, it will be
necessary for future research to look into the differences in Hallyu experiences and WOM by selecting subjects from other Chinese consumers located in distant Chinese regions.

Another issue which was not explored in this study is the demographic effects on Hallyu experiences and Hallyu WOM. It is speculatable that Hallyu is more favorably received by young people because of their high interests in pop cultures due to the peer norms. Therefore, it would be worth finding whether demographic variables i.e., age, education, income level, have any notable impact on Hallyu experiences.
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중국 소비자의 한국산 제품 구매에 영향을 미치는 한류 구전 행동의 선행 요인에 대한 검증

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최근의 한국 대중문화(한류로 통칭)의 국제적인 영향력이 증가함에 따라 연구자와 실무자들의 관심도 커지고 있다. 이에 따라 문화적ㆍ커뮤니케이션적ㆍ행동적인 다양한 관점에서 한류의 성공을 이룬 원동력에 대해 접근하는 연구의 필요성이 존재한다. 이런 타당성에 근거하여 본 연구는 다음과 같은 세 개의 연구목적을 추구한다. 첫째, 본 연구는 중국 소비자들의 한류에 대한 사전 경험이 한류 관련 구전에 영향을 주는지를 조사한다. 둘째, 본 연구는 개인 소비자의 사회적 네트워크 특성(유대 강도, 불확실성 회피)이 구전에 영향을 주는지를 조사한다. 셋째, 문화적 지향성(집단주의와 불확실성 회피)이 한류 경험과 구전 간의 관계를 조절하는지를 검증한다. 이런 목적을 달성하기 위해 한류 문화의 노출이 많은 중국의 대도시와 중간 도시에 거주하는 소비자들을 대상으로 설문 조사를 실행하였다. 분석 결과에 의하면 한류의 성공 요인으로는 문화 경험에 대한 구전뿐만 아니라 사회적 네트워크와 문화적 지향성 또한 유의한 영향력이 있음을 발견하였다. 끝으로, 본 연구는 문화 원산지 효과에 대한 실무적·이론적 시사점을 토론한다.

주제어  한류, 구전, 사회적 네트워크, 구매 의향, 문화 지향성