

Drama-induced tourism: From the Gelboys series to travel inspiration

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INTRODUCTION

The promotion of T-POP in global markets has been significantly supported by contributions from the BL series. Recent strategies have leveraged popular domestic T-POP bands, such as BUS, whose members have produced distinctive soundtracks for these series (Spotify Newsroom, 2023). The music accompanying Thai BL series fosters cultural convergence among audiences across Southeast Asia (Gia Allana, 2020). Within the creative economy, television series, music, and fan culture collectively shape cross-border media consumption. Operating within this dynamic media environment, GELBOYS not only entertains but also promotes interest in contemporary Thai lifestyles (Taweekittiviroj & Banterng, 2025). Accordingly, this study examines how GELBOYS influences tourist consumption patterns and inspires visitation to filming locations.

Prior research on the South Korean drama *Winter Sonata* demonstrates that viewing experiences can create personalized memories and emotional attachment to filming locations, ultimately generating new touristic spaces (S. Kim, 2010). These experiences often motivate audiences to visit these sites and engage in reflexive practices during their travels (S. Kim, 2012). However, such studies are limited in scope, focusing primarily on East Asian tourists, particularly Japanese and Korean audiences. Similarly, research on drama-induced tourism in Egypt examined the role of television dramas in promoting domestic tourism, finding that portrayals increase intention to visit; yet, the analysis was restricted to Al Fayoum Province, limiting generalizability (Aya, Shereen, & Dalia, 2023). Other studies, such as Zhong (2020), explored Chinese tourists' motivations, identifying natural scenery as the most influential factor, followed by comfort, cultural distance, adventure, resort atmosphere, affordability, and language accessibility. Nevertheless, these investigations often concentrate on single dramas within specific timeframes and lack diversity in sample populations. Consequently, broader insights into narrative elements, character relationships, and filming locations remain underexplored.

Several studies (e.g., Aya, Shereen, & Dalia, 2023; Zhong, 2020; S. Kim, 2010) have highlighted limitations in sample diversity, particularly in terms of location and ethnicity, with most research focusing on Japanese, Korean, or Chinese populations. These constraints restrict understanding of how narrative elements, character relationships, and filming locations influence actual travel behaviors. To address these gaps, the present study aims to identify factors that drive tourist inspiration, intention, and consumption within the context of BL series-induced tourism. Specifically, it examines diverse influences such as music engagement (e.g., T-POP) and incorporates perspectives from both domestic and international tourists to provide a more comprehensive analysis.

This study examines six key factors influencing drama-induced tourism: the GELBOYS series, tourist inspiration, intention to visit, symbolic consumption, actual visitation, and push–pull motivation as a moderating variable. The primary objective is to investigate how the BL series stimulates tourist travel intentions through media-induced tourism mechanisms.

METHOD

Primary data for this study were collected through both online and on-site surveys. The online survey was administered via Google Forms and distributed through relevant social media platforms, including the Facebook fan page “สมาคมซีรีส์วายหนังวาย/ Samakhomseeree NhungY” and “KKU Group.” For on-site data collection, surveys were conducted in person at Siam Square and Siam Centre in Patumwan District, Bangkok, Thailand. Research team members facilitated participation by providing respondents with QR codes to scan and complete the questionnaire. Approximately 400 individuals who had watched the series and reported being influenced by it were collected. Data were analyzed using SPSS and SmartPLS software to ensure robust statistical validation. While the findings provide valuable insights into drama-induced tourism and its role in promoting Thailand's soft power, certain limitations should be acknowledged.

FINDINGS

The bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrap (BCa) method was applied to analyze data from 372 participants. The structural model results indicate strong explanatory power, with R^2 values of 0.767 for Actual Film Visiting, 0.548 for Intention to Visit, 0.370 for Inspiration, and 0.253 for Symbolic Consumption. All four hypotheses were supported. Specifically, the GELBOYS Series (GBS) exerted a positive and significant effect on Inspiration (INS) ($\beta = 0.608$, $p < 0.000$), confirming that it effectively enhanced audience inspiration (supported H1). Inspiration significantly influenced both Intention to Visit (ITV) to Visit ($\beta = 0.399$, $p < 0.022$, supported H2) and Symbolic Consumption (SC) ($\beta = 0.503$, $p < 0.001$, supported H3), while Symbolic Consumption also positively affected Intention to Visit ($\beta = 0.454$, $p < 0.001$, supported H4), indicating that symbolic consumption contributes to visit intention. In contrast, Intention to Visit did not significantly predict Actual Film Visiting (AFV) ($\beta = 0.094$, $p = 0.636$, not supported H5). The moderating effect of Push–Pull Motivation (PPM) was also not significant (PPM $\times$ ITV: $\beta = 0.002$, $p = 0.982$; H6 not supported), strengthening the relationship between intention to visit and actual visitation was not valid (see Figure 1).

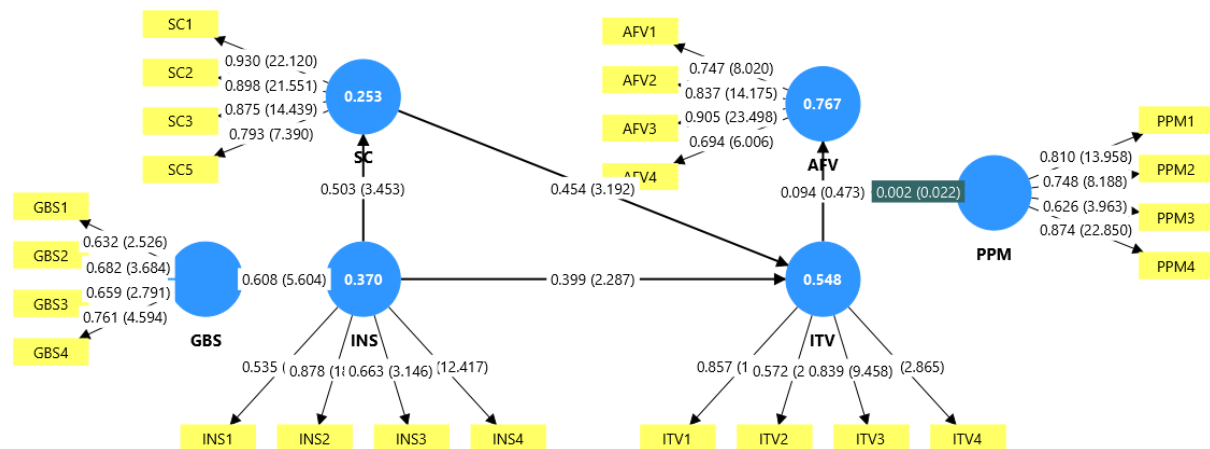


Figure 1. The Study's Model

Note: GBS = GELBOYS Series; INS = Inspiration; SC = Symbolic consumption; ITV = Intention to visit; PPM=Push and pull motivation; AFV = Actual film visiting.

CONCLUSION

This study builds upon prior research (S. Kim, 2010) by addressing gaps in the literature and validating a theoretical model through hypothesis testing. The findings provide a conceptual framework for analyzing how media content influences audience consumption and travel inspiration. Specifically, relationships among GBS, INS, SC, ITV, PPM, and AFV were examined in the context of visiting filming locations. Using a quantitative approach, the proposed hypotheses were tested and found consistent with related studies (S. Kim, 2010). Results indicate that the GELBOYS series exerts the strongest positive effect on Inspiration (INS), which subsequently influences both Symbolic Consumption (SC) and Intention to Visit (ITV). SC also significantly enhances ITV, but ITV does not predict Actual Film Visiting (AFV). In contrast, Push–Pull Motivation (PPM) demonstrates only a minor moderating effect on the relationship between ITV and AFV. These findings suggest that inspiration derived from the series plays a central role in shaping travel intentions and symbolic consumption behaviors, whereas motivational factors exert comparatively limited influence. This aligns with prior evidence that films and television series can significantly influence destination choice (Bi et al., 2021). Film-induced tourism, defined as “visitation to sites where movies and TV programs have been filmed, including film-related attractions” (Beeton, 2005), continues to emerge as a powerful driver of cultural and experiential travel.

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