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# The Impact of Korean Wave on Malaysian Metrosexual Grooming Attitude and Behaviour: The Moderating Role of Visual Media Consumption

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The study investigated the effects of Korean cultural products – namely drama, popular music, and celebrity – on Malaysian metrosexuals' attitudes to Korean grooming products and also their consumption behaviour. In this study, we developed a conceptual model depicting the relationships of critical variables deduced from the Cultural Diamond Model and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). Acknowledging the influential role of media exposure in these relationships, we treated visual media consumption as a moderating variable. The effects were expected to vary according to the level of exposure to the Korean Wave from multiple visual media platforms. We conducted a multi-group structural equation modelled on data from an online survey of 205 Malaysian metrosexuals with low (N=57) and high (N=148) consumption rates of Korean Wave material. The results show that Korean cultural products, except popular music, significantly predict metrosexual grooming attitudes and behaviour. The study also found that high visual media consumption of Korean celebrity news contributes to favourable attitudes to and use of Korean grooming products. The research suggests that globally, metrosexuals might serve as the pioneers of an expanded market for the Korean grooming culture.

**Keywords:** Cultural product, grooming behaviour, Korean wave, metrosexual, visual media, Malaysia

The Korean Wave is the fast-spreading trend of contemporary Korean culture throughout the world. It first arrived in East Asia in the 1990s and has since spread to global audiences in the United States, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Europe (Ravina, 2009; Jang & Paik, 2012). It is much promoted on *television* (Featherstone, 2007), and *its impact has been intensified* by the internet and social media platforms (Ainslie & Lim, 2015). Several types of Korean cultural products are exported around the world. Korean drama is much appreciated by Asian audiences, who enjoy its “subtle repression of emotions and intense romantic passion without overt sexuality” and the cultural familiarity (Jang & Paik, 2012, p. 198). Korean popular music (K-pop), a musical genre that integrates a variety of styles, is readily identified as being of South Korean origin (Leung, 2012) and is loved by teenagers and young adults in many parts of the world. K-pop has gone international, present not only in Asian countries but also further afield, with new fan groups in distant lands, including Palestine, Brazil, and Peru (Ainslie & Lim, 2015). In Malaysia, the

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government had even organised the *One Million Youth Gathering 2012*, which used K-pop as an attraction tool to attract young voters (Hariati, 2012). The fame of Korean celebrities of K-pop and Korean dramas has indirectly promoted other forms of Korean popular culture, creating influential heroes and stars on the international stage (Jang & Paik, 2012). Korean celebrities have become the faces of brands and products worldwide. They influence consumer culture in areas of food, fashion, make-up trends, and plastic surgery (Shim, 2006). Consequently, Korean culture has become famous worldwide, and the country has become a cultural world leader (Jang & Paik, 2012). This development is supported by the national government's "ten-year master plan for cultural development" to establish cultural identity and promote regional culture (Yim, 2002). Foreign fans obsessed with Korean culture are becoming interested in learning Korean and in travelling to South Korea; all are motivated by the booming Korean Wave (Shim, 2006).

The Korean Wave has brought Korean fashion and grooming cultures to all corners of East Asia (Huang, 2009; Ainslie & Lim, 2015). Male consumers have played the most active role in modern consumerism (Bakewell et al., 2006), and this contemporary culture is beginning to set standards for men like those historically expected of women (Roedel, 2006). A specific male consumer category that has contributed to this emerging culture is the so-called metrosexuals – young adult men living in metropolitan cities who are meticulous about their grooming and appearance. They typically spend most of their leisure time and money on high-end fashion and grooming products (Conseur, 2004; Janowska, 2008; Simpson, 2006). *Metrosexuals symbolise trendy men with significant grooming behaviour, including shopping for and consuming fashion and beauty products* (Simpson, 2006). A study claims that a metrosexual attempt to disassociate themselves with the notion of femininity and queerness (Khai & Wahab, 2017). Their identity has been constructed by the media through *celebrities* like Hugh Jackman, Brad Pitt, Orlando Bloom, and Jeff Gordon (Roedel, 2006). The Korean Wave boom has promoted metrosexuality as well. Korean celebrities, including *Big Bang's* G-Dragon, *U-kiss's* Kevin, *Super Junior's* Leeteuk and Sungmin, *2AM's* Jinwoon, and *FT Island's* Hong Ki, are leaders in men's grooming. Korean celebrities are different from their Western counterparts; they promote a "good man" image, of a man who is masculine, yet gentle and tender. Korean dramas tend to highlight specific aspects of good-looking actors, with certain specific physical features, extreme fashions, and romantic characteristics (Ainslie & Lim, 2015).

In Malaysian society, the traditional norm of masculinity has been contested and faced significant changes (Rani & Surinderpal, 2018). There is a growing number of Malaysian men who have paid more attention to their grooming and appearance, including skincare, haircare, and general hygiene. A study shows that Malaysian men spent an average of 20 minutes daily on their grooming, and 56% of them also stated that grooming had boosted their level of self-confidence (Cheong, 2012). Reports suggest that the metrosexual community is on the rise in Malaysia (Aida, 2014; Toyad & Gopinath, 2012). What contributes to the increase is no other but constant media exposure of metrosexual identity. As metrosexuals heavily pay attention to their appearance, the market for men's daily grooming products has increased in recent years. The Mintel Group (2015) of market analysts reports rapid growth in the Korean cosmetics market among male consumers; sales rose from \$463 million (or ₩ 500 billion) in 2007 to \$1.2 (or ₩ 1,300) billion in 2013. A more recent report shows that sales in cosmetic products in South Korea has reached \$7 billion per year and men's spending on cosmetic contributed to the booming of Korean cosmetic industry (Park, 2018). Many claim that well-groomed Korean celebrities influence men. The success of the Korean cosmetic industry is often associated with the Korean Wave. Empirical evidence to support this claim, however, is still lacking.

We posit that the spread of Korean cultural products and the grooming culture on visual media has influenced metrosexuals to be more open to Korean grooming products and subsequently to adopting Korean grooming habits. This study examines the impact of Korean cultural products on metrosexuals grooming behaviour. We also treat visual media consumption of Korean cultural products as a moderating factor to gauge its influence on changes to metrosexual attitudes and behaviour.

## Literature Review

This study addressed the research problem in which a lack of empirical research, and we intended to bridge the gap of the relationship between Korean cultural products and metrosexuals' grooming behaviour. Therefore, we use two theoretical approaches: the Cultural Diamond Model to direct the study, and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) to frame the relationships between cultural products and grooming behaviour.

### The Cultural Diamond

The relationship between cultural phenomena and social life is central to Griswold's analysis of culture, which she depicts through the *cultural diamond*. Griswold (2013) identifies four elements: *creator*, *cultural object*, *receiver*, and *social world*, arranged in the shape of a two-dimensional diamond. This cultural diamond arranges the four elements into four points and six links. Griswold (2013) defines an aesthetic object as "shared significance embodied in a form." All cultural objects should have creators. The creator provides the production perspective on culture, showing how cultural meaning is created by the producers of the cultural content (Brinson, 2014). Any cultural object must have people receiving it, through processes of hearing, reading, understanding, thinking, participating, or remembering. The elements mentioned above of cultural artifact, creator and receiver, do not stand independently; they are anchored in a particular context called the social world, which includes the economic, political, social, and cultural patterns and difficulties that exist at any given moment. The cultural diamond does not state what the relationship between the points is but says that a relationship exists (Griswold, 2013).

Until now, the Cultural Diamond Model has rarely been applied in empirical research. There is one study (Seo, 2012), which shows how K-pop became a global success, using the cultural diamond to determine the four factors that have driven K-pop to the world stage; namely, it is content (cultural object), delivery (social world), systematic preparation (creator), and consumers (receiver). Since we seek to explore the relationships between the Korean Wave trend and metrosexuals, with a focus on their grooming behaviour, the cultural diamond is an ideal guide for the present study. Focusing on receivers rather than the creators/producers, our study examined the relationships among Korean cultural products (cultural objects), visual media (social world), and metrosexual (receiver).

We eliminated the creator/producer from the study because the samples used are metrosexuals, and the focus is on their attitudes to and use of Korean grooming products. We also argue that the social world is created through media use. In this case, media technology is involved. According to Strauss (1978, p. 122), "most world evolves quite complex technologies." The secure link between media and social world has been established by Croteau and Hoynes (1997), who proposed a simplified model of media and the social world, in which media is considered one aspect of a larger social world. Like Seo (2012), we argue that visual media as the delivery of Korean cultural products

(i.e., Korean drama, K-pop, and Korean celebrities) creates a kind of social world to the global audience. It is diffused with the help of high visual media usage. K-pop has spread rapidly through YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook content-sharing (Cha & Kim, 2011). Users tend to share content simultaneously with the social media they use most frequently and through which they feel strongly connected to others (Michiko, 2010). Metrosexuals, as receivers, tend to use digital media to receive and to share Korean cultural products (cultural object) in the consumption of visual media (social world). However, the theoretical concepts of the cultural diamond have some limitations when it comes to demonstrating the effects of Korean cultural products on attitudes and behaviour empirically. Hence, this study requires supporting concepts, which we have taken from the Theory of Reasoned Action.

## Theory of Reasoned Action as a Framework

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) is well-established in the social-psychology discipline. It was formulated by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and aimed to explain the relationship between attitudes and behaviours in human action. The TRA helps us to understand individual voluntary behaviour, using four general concepts: *attitude*, *subjective norm*, *behavioural intention*, and *behaviour*. In the context of the Korean Wave, Lita and Cho (2012) adopt the ideas of TRA to investigate the impact of the Korean cultural wave on consumer attitudes and how it influences and changes their actual behaviour. The current study adopts the TRA to evaluate metrosexual approaches to Korean grooming products. Subsequently, evaluation of attitudes is used to predict metrosexual grooming behaviours. Lita and Cho (2012) applied the concept of the subjective norm by addressing the influence of perceptions of pop musicians and actors (belief in what experts think) on the relationship between the impact of the Korean cultural wave and consumers' overall attitudes. Similarly, Korean celebrities represent a subjective norm in the present study.

Earlier studies indicate a limitation regarding the stability of intentions between the time of measurement and actual behaviour (Werner, 2004). According to Sheeran and Orbell (1998), the relationship between behavioural intention and behaviour tends to diminish when the time gap between the two exceeds a few months. In that time, an individual's plan might change, and his behaviour will not be consistent with the prior purpose. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) attempted to conceptualise the effect of attitude on actual future behaviour that is entirely mediated by intention. Hsu and Huang (2010) extended the research by hypothesising that attitude can influence actual behaviour directly, without being mediated by behavioural intention. Embracing suggestions from earlier work, this study excludes the measurement of behavioural intention. We develop a framework to depict relationships among key variables (i.e., Korean cultural products, metrosexuals' attitude to Korean grooming products, and their grooming behaviour) and the moderating effects of visual media consumption on the relationship between Korean cultural products and attitude (see Figure 1).

## Korean Drama

The charms of Korean drama lie not only in their well-crafted plots and well-written scripts but also in their strong visuals. Grooming is an essential visual element in Korean dramas (Chua, 2010). In particular, it is the grooming of the male characters that make Korean drama distinct. In Korean dramas, good-looking men, wearing extreme fashions, play romantic roles, whose physical features typically include fair, smooth skin, curly eyelashes, soft, stylish hair, and manicured (and pedicured) nails (Ainslie & Lim, 2015).

Previous studies have examined the impacts of drama for different purposes. Lee et al. (2015), for example, found that audience fondness for Korean drama has a significant and positive effect on their perceptions of Korea as a country. Hence, we hypothesise that:

**H1:** Korean drama positively affects metrosexuals' attitudes toward Korean grooming products.

## Korean Popular Music

Powerful visual influence has been aggressively created in K-pop through music videos and live stage performances. The fashion element in the K-pop music scene is extremely important (Tuk, 2012). Global audiences access K-pop not merely to see their idols performing in concert and dancing in music videos, but also to see them having their hair and makeup is done (Leung, 2012). K-pop has created widespread interest among teenagers and young adults, especially in Korean idol groups and singers' fashion and styles (Ainslie & Lim, 2015).

It is no surprise then that the influence of K-pop has long been widely observed in studies of the Korean Wave. Byun (2014) conducted a survey of the impact of K-pop celebrity endorsement on Thai brand images. Her findings reveal that K-pop does indeed have a significant favorable influence on brand images. Similarly, we hypothesise that:

**H2:** Korean popular music positively affects metrosexual attitudes toward Korean grooming products.

## Korean Celebrity

According to Park (2011), the imitable looks of celebrities are said to be one of the essential factors encouraging audiences to follow their trends. Leung (2012) points out that the stars who are visually entertaining are more appreciated than those singers who demonstrate "mere" singing talent. Another exciting discovery is that Korean television commercials feature more male celebrities than females (Francis & Rashad, 2013).

Celebrities are also known to have a strong influence on the public, especially on their fans. Previous studies have examined the effect of Korean celebrities in different research areas. Kim et al. (2007) explored the influence of Korean celebrities on the flow of Japanese tourists. The results indicate that there has been an increase in Japanese tourists travelling to South Korea due to their high preferences for Korean celebrities. We hypothesise that:

**H3:** Korean celebrity positively affects metrosexual attitudes to Korean grooming products.

## Attitudes to Korean Grooming Products

The fashion industry in South Korea has also influenced grooming products and helped to create a typical male image. The so-called feminisation of men's fashion has progressed by a repudiation of the stiff, heavy fabrics, dark colours, and typically "hard" masculine features used to symbolise male power and status in post-industrial society (Kim & Lee, 2002). Many cosmetic companies have also introduced a series of skincare products aimed specifically at men, by brands including Clinique, L'Oréal, Nivea, and Kiehl's (Miller, 2006).

Cheng et al. (2010) examined factors influencing metrosexuals' consumption of grooming products and found that self-image, social expectations, and celebrity endorsements have significant effects on their consumption behaviour. Their study highlights the importance of understanding metrosexual behaviour in light of this growing male-grooming market. Most often, past research (Glasman & Albarracin, 2006; Hsu & Huang, 2010) examined the direct relationship between attitude and behaviour. Abdul Jamil and Nik Mat (2012), for example, studied consumers' attitude towards the usage of online catalogues and found that attitude has a positive and significant effect on consumers' internet purchasing behaviour. Hence, we hypothesise that:

**H4:** Metrosexual attitudes toward Korean grooming products positively affect grooming behaviour.

## The Moderating Role of Visual Media Consumption

Visual media influence people's perceptions of what is fashionable, interesting, and attention-grabbing (Kim et al., 2007). Leung (2012) strengthens this point by saying that the Korean Wave offers visual consumption, especially the K-pop industry, which realises strong visual marketing with rich visual, not just audio, content. It is known that television drama is one of the visual media that has a substantial impact on tourist numbers (Hahm & Wang, 2011). Cinema remains a popular visual media in the domain of entertainment. Professionals and academics are keen to study Cinema audiences' behaviour from time to time (Changsong, 2019). The first generation of the Korean Wave or *Hallyu 1.0* washed over East Asia principally through television programs and films between the late 1990s and 2007 (Jin, 2012). The development of digital technologies, social media, and smartphones encouraged a significant transformation of the Korean Wave in the 21st century. It now utilises social networking services and video-sharing websites such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter to expand "digital Hallyu" (Kim, 2013) or *Hallyu 2.0* (Jin, 2012). This is because media consumption culture among youths has been reinforced through the aesthetic of Instagram photos and videos shared by social media influencers (Khalid, Jayasainan, & Hassim, 2018). Nowadays, K-pop fans, in particular, are "active" rather than "passive." In the K-pop world, a participatory media culture allows producers to know what those active fans want (Leung, 2012). It is also through these enthusiastic fans that K-pop has circulated, reproduced, and been actively consumed among global audiences (Ainslie & Lim, 2015).

Grooming is all about visual appearance. Audiences tend to "see" the Korean Wave through visual content in the digital environment (Leung, 2012). The accessibility of celebrities' looks is also an essential factor influencing the audience to follow them and their trends (Park, 2011). We know that, increasingly, young people learn of Korean popular culture, including music, drama, and soap operas, through the internet (Ainslie & Lim, 2015). Internet influence is often gauged by the amount of time spent with the medium. A study on Malaysian young generation by Samsudin A. Rahim (2018) revealed that those who consumed a long time on the Internet had a higher level of citizen participation than those who spent a shorter time on it. However, little more than that is known about the consumption of visual media that focuses on Korean cultural products and grooming trends. The different levels of visual media consumption are expected to influence the relationship between cultural products and metrosexual grooming behaviour.

Noro (2010) explored the influence of visual media on teenagers' behaviour, belief systems, and preferences daily. Another study by Jung et al. (2014) investigated the moderating effect of media exposure – measured by respondents' exposure to television,

radio, and the internet – on the relationship between socioeconomic position and fear of cancer. The findings reveal significant moderator effects of media exposure on this relationship. The outcomes of these studies encourage the measurement of visual media consumption as a moderating variable for our current study. We posit, therefore, that:

**H5a:** Visual media consumption moderates the relationship between Korean cultural products and metrosexual attitudes to Korean grooming products.

**H5b:** Visual media consumption moderates the relationship between Korean cultural products and metrosexual grooming behaviour.

## Methodology

We used an online survey to reach a highly dispersed but homogenous sample of metrosexuals. The sampling process was conducted in two stages – using purposive and snowballing techniques. First, purposive sampling was used to select respondents based on specific characteristics or qualities. Those who failed to meet the specified criteria were eliminated (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Respondents were asked to respond to Janowska's metrosexual evaluation (2008), and those who met the criteria were selected. Second, a snowball sampling technique was employed, especially when members of a particular group with specific criteria were hard to locate (Mack et al., 2005). We selected 45 qualified respondents using the first method, and they were asked to recommend other volunteers with similar characteristics and with whom they were familiar, including friends, siblings, relatives, or acquaintances. The online questionnaires were distributed to a sample size of 317 respondents, of which 251 were returned. After data screening, a total of 205 valid questionnaires were subject to data analysis. Most respondents were young adults, aged between 22 and 35 years (89.8%), followed by those aged between 18 and 21 (7.3%) and then those aged from 36 to 49 (2.9%). More than half of the respondents (86.3%) were living and working in urban regions, while the rest (13.7%) lived in suburban areas. Also, most (87.8%) fell into the above-middle-income group, while the rest fell into the below-middle-income category. It is worth noting that the majority of the respondents (72.2%) were high consumers of visual media (more than two hours per day) of Korean Wave content; the rest (27.8%) were low visual-media consumers (less than two hours per day).

## Measures

The indicators used for measuring the variables were selected based on the internal consistency and reliability of relevant earlier studies. Some indicators were modified to accommodate the demands of the present study. An assessment of measurement models was performed to establish the reliability and validity of the indicators. As a result, a total of 43 indicators were retained, as follows:

- (i) Korean drama: 8 indicators (adapted from Lee et al., 2015; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007).
- (ii) Korean popular music: 8 indicators (adapted from Lee et al., 2015; Mulder, 2008).
- (iii) Korean celebrity: 10 indicators (adapted from Cheng et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2015; Zailin Zainal Ariffin, 2010).
- (iv) Attitude: 7 indicators (adapted from Jarvelainen, 2012; Jun, 2007).
- (v) Grooming behaviour: 10 indicators (adapted from Cheng et al., 2010; Lee & Lee, 2013; Zailin Zainal Ariffin, 2010).



A 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree) was implemented for all indicators. We used a 6-point Likert-type scale to avoid confusion of midpoints when evaluating responses (Kulas et al., 2008). The technique of 6-point semantic differential scale indicators (1 = unfavourable, 6 = favourable; 1 = unfashionable, 6 = fashionable; Table 1) was used for variable attitudes to Korean grooming products.

## Data Analysis

A structural equation modelling, partial least squares regression (Hair et al., 2014), was used to test the model developed for this study. We are interested in exploring the moderating effects of visual media consumption, measured by low and high consumption, on the structural relationship between Korean cultural products and metrosexual grooming attitudes, and Korean cultural products and their grooming behaviour. We coded the consumption of visual media as a dummy variable equivalent to 1.0 if the respondents choose less than two hours and 2.0 if the respondents want more than two hours of exposure to the Korean Wave. Then, the moderating effect of visual media consumption was estimated by using multi-group analysis (PLS-MGA).

## Results

The research model for this study was tested using Partial Least Squares (PLS). This study used a two-stage model building process for analysing data of the research model, as suggested by Hair et al. (2014). SmartPLS was used to assess the measurement and structural models for this study. The adequacy of the measurement model was evaluated in the first stage. The structural relationships were tested in the second stage.

## Measurement Model Assessment

We first tested the reliability and validity of our questionnaire; Table 1 shows the summary results. Reliability was evaluated by internal consistency and composite reliability. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values were used to assess the internal consistency of the constructs. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value above 0.7 indicates an acceptable level of reliability. Table 1 showed Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values were between 0.950 and 0.993, indicating that the constructs are reliable. Moreover, all the composite reliability (CR) values in this study ranged from 0.958 to 0.994, surpassing the recommended threshold value of 0.7 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

The construct validity was evaluated by convergent validity. The verifications of the convergent validity are: (1) average variance extracted (AVE) value is above 0.5 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988); and (2) the indicator loading is greater than 0.6 (Hair et al., 2009). Table 1 shows that the AVE values fall within the range of 0.739-0.939, which indicates acceptable convergent validity. Loadings of all indicators were statistically significant and ranged from 0.822 to 0.976, suggesting that convergent validity was acceptable.

Table 1. Summary results for the measurement model

Construct	Indicator	Loading	CR	AVE	$\alpha$
Korean drama	Kdrm1	0.824	0.958	0.739	0.950
	Kdrm2	0.872			
	Kdrm3	0.882			
	Kdrm4	0.877			
	Kdrm5	0.846			
	Kdrm6	0.865			
	Kdrm7	0.875			
	Kdrm8	0.829			
Korean popular music	Kpop1	0.889	0.963	0.763	0.956
	Kpop2	0.890			
	Kpop3	0.822			
	Kpop4	0.893			
	Kpop5	0.840			
	Kpop6	0.883			
	Kpop7	0.896			
	Kpop8	0.846			
Korean celebrity	Kcel1	0.969	0.994	0.939	0.993
	Kcel2	0.962			
	Kcel3	0.963			
	Kcel4	0.960			
	Kcel5	0.971			
	Kcel6	0.970			
	Kcel7	0.964			
	Kcel8	0.972			
	Kcel9	0.972			
	Kcel10	0.976			
Attitude	Att1	0.937	0.979	0.869	0.975
	Att2	0.932			
	Att3	0.922			
	Att4	0.897			
	Att5	0.950			
	Att6	0.947			
	Att7	0.936			
Grooming behaviour	Gb1	0.900	0.975	0.797	0.972
	Gb2	0.898			
	Gb3	0.860			
	Gb4	0.897			
	Gb5	0.891			
	Gb6	0.884			
	Gb7	0.908			
	Gb8	0.889			
	Gb9	0.890			
	Gb10	0.904			

Note: CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted;  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's alpha

## Structural Model Assessment

The full structural model is illustrated in Figure 1 and summarised in Table 2. Figure 1 and Table 2 portray the relationship between the three predictors of Korean cultural products (KDRM, KPOP, and KCEL) and the impacts they exert on the endogenous constructs of attitude (ATT) and grooming behaviour (GB). The exogenous constructs of KDRM, KPOP, and KCEL explain 93.9% of the variance to ATT. Meanwhile, ATT explains 93.7% of the variance to GB.

The  $R^2$  values of both endogenous constructs are close to the suggested substantial value of 0.75 (Hair et al., 2011), which are substantially explained by their respective exogenous constructs. The effect sizes ( $f^2$ ) and predictive relevance ( $q^2$ ) of the exogenous constructs were also evaluated to obtain a more detailed understanding of the model.

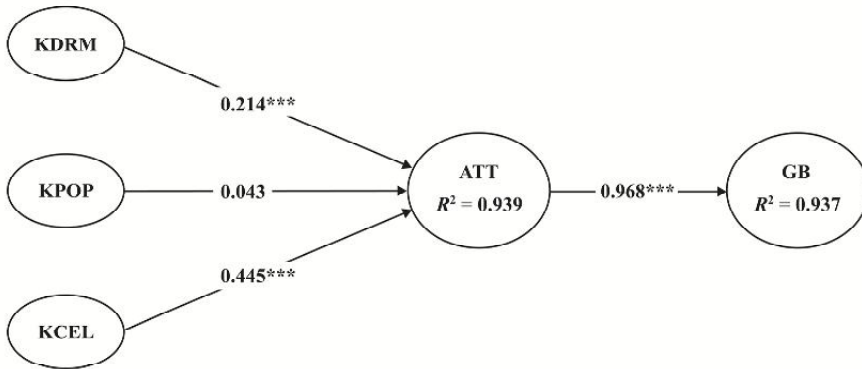


Figure 1. Verification of research conceptual model

Note: KDRM, Korean drama; KPOP, K-pop; KCEL, Korean celebrity; ATT, attitude; GB, grooming behaviour.

\* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Altogether, the values in Figure 1 and Table 2 suggest that the impact exerted by KPOP on ATT is irrelevant in terms of its effect size and predictive relevance; its path coefficient also failed to attain statistical significance. KCEL has medium effects on ATT, respectively. Meanwhile, KDRM has little effect on ATT. Table 2 indicates that KDRM and KCEL have little predictive relevance on ATT, whereas ATT has significant predictive relevance on GB. Figure 1 and Table 2 also demonstrate that the path coefficients of KDRM and KCEL on ATT and ATT on GB reached statistical significance. As for the hypotheses, the results indicate support for **H1**, **H3**, and **H4**, while **H2** was rejected.

Table 2. Summary results for the structural model

Path	$\beta$	Construct	$R^2$	$f^2$	$q^2$
KDRM $\rightarrow$ ATT	0.214***	KDRM	-	0.114	0.033
KPOP $\rightarrow$ ATT	0.043	KPOP	-	0.007	0.005
KCEL $\rightarrow$ ATT	0.445***	KCEL	-	0.338	0.098
ATT $\rightarrow$ GB	0.968***	ATT	0.939	14.756	2.925
		GB	0.937	-	-

Note:  $\beta$  = path coefficient;  $R^2$  = coefficient of determination;  $f^2$  = effect size;  $q^2$  = predictive relevance.

\* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

## Analysis of Multi-Group Structural Equation Modelling

Visual media consumption (VMC) was used as a variable to test its moderating effect on the relationship between Korean cultural products and metrosexual attitudes to Korean grooming products, and grooming behaviour. The VMC generated two data groups according

to the respondent number: low VMC (57 cases) and high VMC (148 cases). Next, the PLS-MGA was analysed according to the generated data groups. Table 3 tabulated PLS-MGA results of  $p$ -values and standard deviation for low VMC and high VMC, as well as  $p$ -values for the low VMC versus high VMC. The differences in  $p$ -values between two groups ( $p^{(1)} - p^{(2)}$ ) were calculated manually. We found that VMC is significant in moderating the paths of KCEL  $\rightarrow$  ATT and KCEL  $\rightarrow$  GB, which attained significant statistical difference at the 5% probability of error level ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Henseler et al., 2009). Hence, the results lend little support to **H5a** and **H5b**, as the test of significant differences between low and high consumptions for all hypothesised paths were not supported except for KCEL  $\rightarrow$  ATT and KCEL  $\rightarrow$  GB.

Table 3. Summary results for multi-group analysis

	Group 1:	Group 2:	Group 1 vs. Group 2				
	Low VMC	High VMC					
	$p^{(1)}$	se $p^{(1)}$	$p^{(2)}$	se $p^{(2)}$	$p^{(1)} - p^{(2)}$	$p$ -value	Sig. level
KDRM $\rightarrow$ ATT	0.245	0.150	0.186	0.282	0.059	0.705	-
KPOP $\rightarrow$ ATT	0.476	0.097	0.080	0.158	0.396	0.137	-
KCEL $\rightarrow$ ATT	0.000	0.101	0.180	0.165	0.180	0.002	**
KDRM $\rightarrow$ GB	0.252	0.128	0.248	0.114	0.004	0.536	-
KPOP $\rightarrow$ GB	0.477	0.084	0.192	0.079	0.285	0.245	-
KCEL $\rightarrow$ GB	0.000	0.093	0.272	0.077	0.272	0.003	**

Note: VMC, visual media consumption.

\* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

## Discussion

Our objective was twofold; to examine the impact of Korean cultural products on metrosexuals' grooming attitudes and behaviour and to determine whether the impact varies depending on the degree of visual media consumption. We performed structural equation modelling analysis to achieve the objective.

Korean celebrity was found to be the strongest predictor of grooming attitude and behaviour among a range of cultural products. This implies that metrosexuals are influenced by male beauty standards, as portrayed by Korean celebrities. Tee (2016) claims that traditional norms of masculine grooming have been increasingly challenged and redefined by the Korean Wave, especially by its perfectly-groomed celebrities. The flawless complexions of members of K-pop bands such as *2PM* and *Big Bang*, as well as male actors in Korean dramas, advertise the high standards of grooming considered globally acceptable and encourage men to invest in Korean grooming products. This corresponds to the findings of other studies (Cheng et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2015; Zailin Zainal Ariffin, 2010), which have found a powerful influence of celebrities on their followers. Korean celebrity has significant effects on positive metrosexual attitudes to Korean grooming products and on their product-use behaviour.

Our study supports the notion that Korean drama has a significant influence on its viewers (Lee et al., 2015). We found that Korean drama significantly predicts metrosexuals' positive attitudes toward Korean grooming products. Metrosexuals are likely highly sensitive to the fashion products depicted in Korean drama. They enjoy watching the dramas not only for the plot but also for the outfits worn in them. New technological

development supports this assumption. There are digital applications available, for example, to enable the audience to search for items worn by the actors in just a single click on the smart TV screen while they are watching Korean dramas (Abid Rahman, 2015). The results of our study suggest that metrosexuals explore the men's grooming trends depicted in Korean drama.

While the influence of K-pop is significant in previous studies (e.g., Lee et al., 2015), it did not appear to have as much impact in this study. K-pop is heading for global success through dance and song (Messerlin & Shin, 2013), and one possible explanation for the insignificant result is that the metrosexual participants in this study may enjoy K-pop primarily for its music and choreography rather than its grooming aspects. This might be because the dance choreography is increasingly dynamic and engaging, perhaps more appealing than the grooming.

Several cross-cultural consumer behaviour studies reveal that a positive attitude to brands and products has a significant impact on consumer behaviour all around the world (Jun, 2007; Jarvelainen, 2012). Similarly, we found that metrosexuals' attitudes toward Korean grooming products have a substantial impact on their grooming behaviour. A favourable impression of Korean grooming products makes it more likely that the tag "Made in Korea" will encourage metrosexuals to use Korean products rather than imported ones. This study indicates the strong impact of positive metrosexual attitudes; they are willing to try new Korean grooming products that they have not tried before.

In a multi-group structural equation modelling analysis, visual media consumption significantly moderates the relationship between Korean celebrity and metrosexual attitudes to both Korean grooming products and grooming behaviour. Reliable visual media consumption results in the metrosexual desire for proximity to Korean celebrities. Metrosexuals with such desires tend to have a favourable attitude to the Korean grooming products used or endorsed by the celebrity. We found that high visual media consumption of the Korean Wave helps them to identify with the celebrities. Through high consumption of Korean Wave visual media, metrosexuals learn about Korean celebrities, and then present more positive attitudes to using Korean grooming products than those whose visual media consumption is low. In contrast, even high visual media consumption has no significant effect on the relationships between other cultural products examined in this study (Korean drama and K-pop) and metrosexual grooming attitudes and behaviour. This suggests that metrosexuals tend to have positive attitudes to Korean grooming products as long as they are receptive to the Korean grooming culture, regardless of the degree of visual media consumption.

## Theoretical Implications

The use of two theoretical lenses (i.e., the Cultural Diamond Model and the TRA) taken from cultural studies and consumer behaviour research adds to the academic contribution of the present study. The Cultural Diamond Model depicts transparent relationships among Korean cultural products (cultural objects), visual media (social world), and metrosexual (receiver). Human behaviour has been the subject of much attention in the study of culture in the last few decades (Griswold, 2013). Still, another theoretical approach is needed to focus on receivers' practices and experience. Theoretically, TRA consolidates the prominence of Korean celebrity (subjective norm) and the prediction of metrosexual grooming attitudes and behaviour. The mutually-supporting selected concepts of the cultural diamond and TRA strengthened the conceptual framework. While the Cultural Diamond Model

demonstrates the relationships among the three angles (that is, Korean cultural products, visual media consumption, and metrosexuals), the TRA reflects the tendency of metrosexuals to respond to the Korean Wave, by focusing on their grooming behaviour. From a theoretical point of view, it can be argued, therefore, that a single theoretical lens is insufficient to comprehend a study that covers elements of culture and consumer behaviour.

## Managerial Implications

The study provides some evidence of the significant influence of Korean drama and celebrity on Malaysian men's grooming behaviour. Hence, marketers can optimise these channels to market grooming products to audiences in Malaysia. Increasingly important is the role of Korean celebrity, which was found to be the strongest predictor of grooming behaviour. This finding suggests the importance of brand endorsement or spokespersons for the marketing of Korean grooming products. The emerging beauty products market segment, the metrosexuals, is another area for exploration. Studying this market segment is essential for manufacturers, retailers, and marketing practitioners. The findings on Malaysian metrosexual visual media consumption of the Korean Wave and its relationship to grooming behaviour have some other practical implications as well. Retailers and marketers can target consumers using multiple visual media platforms, combining both traditional (i.e., television) and new media (i.e., YouTube). Also, the interaction effect of visual media and Korean celebrities suggest that globally, metrosexuals might pave the way to an expanded market for Korean grooming culture, since these are sophisticated young adult men who earn sufficient incomes to perform frequent grooming activities and to be high consumers of grooming products (Conseur, 2004; Janowska, 2008; Lim, 2008; Simpson, 2006). Hence, the growth of the cosmetic market for this segment can be expected to continue shortly.

## Conclusion

Our results show extremely high values in coefficients of determination ( $R^2$ ) that may lead to concern about multicollinearity. Multicollinearity occurs when the predictor variables in a multiple regression model are closely correlated to one another. A previous study (Lowe et al., 2013) conducted in the area of consumer behaviour obtained very high R-squared values, and some scholars (e.g., Frost, 2013) argue that it could be only due to a biased estimate and the overfitting of the model. We say that in this study, the sample is highly homogeneous; the metrosexuals with common traits and characteristics might share a biased and very close response; their data may lead to overfitting of the model that caused the extremely high values in R-squared. Future research may consider recruiting diverse samples to be tested by a similar model. The different types of visual media used in this study were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives. Nevertheless, social media usage has changed and evolved over time. Online users tend to be active rather than passive consumers in the present day (Leung, 2012). Future research may explore integrated media usage which includes consuming, participating and producing behaviours (Omar & Wang, 2020) to examine media consumption.

Improving the measurement of metrosexuality could also be an object of future research. According to the metrosexual evaluation developed by Janowska (2008), used in this present study, the indexes on the assessment focus chiefly on brand, image, and clothing. However, a metrosexual is often conceptualised as a young adult man who is

meticulous about his grooming and overall appearance, and who enjoys a sophisticated, leisure-class lifestyle (Conseur, 2004; Janowska, 2008; Lilia, 2014; Lim, 2008, Simpson, 2006). In future quantitative research, the metrosexual evaluation could be enhanced by deploying comprehensive indexes, including the hairstyle, skincare routine, and other elements of their shared lifestyle. Despite these limitations, the outcomes of our study are statistically valid, and we expect that it can expand the opportunities for similar research in the future.

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