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South Korea's marketing campaigns to promote tourism

Marketingové kampane Južnej Kórey na podporu turizmu

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Podpis:

Abstrakt

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Cieľom tejto bakalárskej práce je pochopiť ako juhokórejská vláda a iné vládne organizácie propagujú Južnú Kóreu ako turistickú destináciu s cieľom zvýšiť počet turistov prichádzajúcich do krajiny. Pojednáva o jedinečných kultúrnych atribútoch Južnej Kórey a sile jej značky ako kľúčovej pre zvýšenie jej atraktivity ako turistickej destinácie. Pomocou analýzy kvantitatívnych a kvalitatívnych dát, táto práca zisťuje efektívnosť propagácie krajiny na sociálnych sieťach počas prebiehajúcej kampane “Visit Korea Year 2023–2024”.

Abstract

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The focus of this bachelor’s thesis is to understand how the South Korean government and other governmental organizations promote South Korea as a tourist destination to increase tourist arrival numbers. It discusses South Korea’s unique cultural attributes and its brand power as a key force to increase its attractivity as a tourist destination. By analysing both quantitative and qualitative data, this thesis assesses the effectiveness of the ongoing “Visit Korea Year 2023–2024” marketing campaign.

Moje poďakovanie patrí predovšetkým mojej rodine a blízkym kamarátom, ktorí ma počas písania tejto práce neustále podporovali.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	6
List of Figures	6
Transcription	7
1. Introduction	8
1.1. Methodology	8
2. Marketing a Tourist Destination	10
2.1. Defining Destination Marketing.....	10
2.2. Essentials of a Destination Marketing Strategy	11
2.3. The Need for Market Segmentation	13
2.4. Promoting a Destination	13
3. Branding a Destination	15
3.1. What is Nation Branding?	16
3.2. Brand Identity and Brand Image	16
3.3. Brand Positioning	17
4. Marketing South Korea as a Tourist Destination	17
4.1. South Korea’s Marketing Strategy	17
4.2. Brand Identity	19
4.3. Brand Image and Brand Positioning	20
5. South Korea’s Marketing Campaigns: In Relation to Tourism Types	23
5.1. Hallyu Tourism	23
5.2. Medical Tourism	26
5.3. MICE Tourism	27
6. Visit Korea Year 2023–2024: Marketing Campaign Analysis	28
6.1. Methodological Approach & Data Collection Methods.....	29
6.2. Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis	30
6.3. Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis	34
7. Conclusion.....	37
Bibliography	40
a) Books and Journal Articles.....	40
b) Newspaper Articles and Other Sources.....	41

List of Tables

Table 1: Vision Statement Tourism Australia 12

Table 2: Marketing Objectives of Prague City Tourism..... 12

Table 3: DMO’s Mission of Turismo de Portugal 12

Table 4: The Marketing Plan of the Korea Tourism Organization 18

Table 5: Destination Marketing Objectives of the Korea Tourism Organization..... 18

Table 6: List of all Visit Korea Year 2023 – 2024 Promotional Videos 32

Table 7: Top Ten Visit Korea Year 2023 – 2024 Promotional Videos..... 33

Table 8: Element Occurrence in the Videos with Less Views 35

Table 9: Findings of the Qualitative Analysis 39

List of Figures

Figure 1: Logo of the Korea Tourism Organization 20

Figure 2: Brand message of the Korea Tourism Organization 20

Transcription

For the transcription of all Korean terms and names this thesis will follow the rules of the “Revised Romanization” system, except for cases when a different transcription is established or lexicalized.

1. Introduction

The tourism industry is slowly recovering from the severe consequences COVID-19 had on world economies. Following the findings UNWTO released on their website, international tourism has seen an increase in tourist arrivals equating to 93% of pre-pandemic levels. Data shows that in 2024, tourism could not only reclaim its pre-pandemic status but also see an estimated 2% increase in tourist arrival numbers (UNWTO 2024).

Tourism is recognized as one of the elements credited for boosting the globalisation process worldwide. Its significance for today's society is undeniable. People all around the world put great value on tourism. Reasons for engaging in tourism vary, however, countries have identified that tourism brings opportunities for their economies to grow. For a destination to be considered desirable, the destination first must find a way to outshine its competitors. This is where marketing can be of help (Page and Connell 2020, 3).

The main objective of this thesis is to take a closer look at how destinations, in this case, South Korea, work with their unique historical and cultural attributes to differentiate themselves from other destinations, and how these attributes are used to create eye-catching marketing campaigns that leave a lasting impression on a potential tourist which eventually results in a visit of the country. Apart from defining the concept and ways of destination marketing, this thesis will explore Korean tourism and the most popular types of tourism practiced in the country to better understand how marketing campaigns are modified to please the needs of specific consumers. The practical part of this thesis will then closely analyse the representation of Korea Tourism Organization's current marketing campaign named "Visit Korea Year 2023–2024" on YouTube (KTO 2023).

1.1. Methodology

This thesis will focus on analysing the "Visit Korea Year 2023–2024" marketing campaign on the official YouTube channel of Korea Tourism Organization "Imagine Your Korea". Mixed methods design approach will be used to determine the effectiveness of the campaign. A total of forty-nine promotional videos were released since the beginning of the campaign on the second of May 2023. The quantitative data collection and analysis will consist of the following steps:

- table with all collected data about the videos will be generated
- videos will be sorted in a table from the oldest to the latest
- *Social Blade* measuring tool will be used to track the most popular videos

- based on the number of views top ten videos will be selected

The qualitative analysis will then commence with close reading of the top ten videos with the aim to list a set of frequently reoccurring elements that are the possible factors of the videos' popularity. The elements will be inspired by the HubSpot's guide to better promotion on YouTube. After listing the reoccurring elements, a comparison between the top ten and the remaining videos will be made to determine whether the presence or absence of these elements could be the cause of low number of views in the remaining videos.

2. Marketing a Tourist Destination

This chapter explains the basic definitions of terms related to destination marketing and destination marketing itself, the steps needed to take to create a successful tourism destination marketing strategy and it also takes a closer look at ways a destination can be promoted to potential tourists.

2.1. Defining Destination Marketing

Destinations compete to be deemed as attractive for tourists. To achieve this, the use of marketing is of great importance to destinations. Destination marketing varies in definition. According to Alastair Morrison (2018) “marketing is a continuous, sequential process through which a destination management organization (DMO) plans, researches, implements, controls and evaluates programmes aimed at satisfying traveller’s needs and wants as well as the destination’s and DMO’s visions, goals and objectives. To be most effective, the DMO’s marketing programmes depend upon the efforts of many other organizations and individuals within and outside the destination” (Morrison 2018, 9). A more concise definition of destination marketing has been provided by Pike (2020) which states that destination marketing is “the process by which a destination marketing organization (DMO) matches the destination’s strengths with macro-environment opportunities and minimises destination weaknesses in relation to macro-environment threats, to achieve a competitive market position” (Pike 2020, 9). Compared to the first definition, the second one considers the existence of threats that destination marketing organizations face. Destinations build their brand presence upon their strengths, however, without considering possible threats, such as bad nation brand image, destination marketing efforts can prove to be ineffective.

Despite being around for a while, marketing itself evolved as a concept much later in the 1950s. Since then, it underwent four eras: the production era, the sales era, the marketing era, and Web 2.0. The advent of Web 2.0 changed the whole marketing landscape. Web 2.0 provided marketing with a closer connection to the consumer. Marketing and digital platforms became interconnected, and the digital era of marketing boosted not only the field of marketing itself but also tourism. It has become easier to reach out to potential tourists and bring them closer to destinations with added value for a reasonable price (Gursoy and Chi 2018, 6).

Promotional efforts, regardless of the kind of product being promoted, can be costly. Although the digital era of marketing lowered the costs of such activities significantly, there is

still a need to implement strategies that will help destinations scale the resources they have to their full potential (Gursoy and Chi 2018, 6).

Apart from monitoring destination resources and ensuring they will be used efficiently, the destination marketing process requires proper guidance for it to be successful. Destination marketing organizations (DMOs) carry a responsibility for the marketing activities that take place within destinations. According to the level at which they operate, DMOs can be divided into national tourism office/organization (NTO), state tourism office/organization (STO), regional tourism organization (RTO), and local tourism administration/ local tourism association (LTA), each managing tourism-related activities in different parts of the country, from cities to the smallest of geographical areas. The main tourism body is the national tourism office/organization (NTO) that operates on a national level. Its duty is primarily to manage tourism-related marketing activities of a nation-state (Pike 2020, 18). Some NTOs operate under the name Convention and Visitor Bureau. NTOs function as complex bodies with their board of directors, a constitution, and a level of freedom from the political system (Page and Connell 2020, 315).

2.2. Essentials of a Destination Marketing Strategy

Marketing strategies help marketers organise their priorities and efficiently use available resources. One of the key parts of a destination marketing strategy is the destination marketing plan. DMOs should be equipped with a destination marketing plan that will define the goals a DMO plans to reach in a specified time and destination's prospects for the future. Each destination marketing plan should include destination vision, DMO vision, destination marketing goals, destination marketing objectives, and DMO mission (Gursoy and Chi 2018, 9).

Destination vision exemplifies an image a destination wants to develop by achieving its set goals and objectives in the future. The official body responsible for tourism marketing and the development of a destination clearly states the destination's vision in a vision statement. Based on the three stages of the destination visioning process, a destination vision includes a desired future destination image which empowers those it may concern to execute the vision. In DMO vision statement, like in destination vision statement, DMO has a responsibility to set its vision which envisions how a destination vision will be fulfilled (ibid.).

Tourism Australia	Our vision is to make Australia the most desirable (first-time visitors) and memorable (attracting repeat visitors) destination on earth – because this underpins everything we do at Tourism Australia.
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Table 1: Vision Statement Tourism Australia

Destination marketing goals work towards implementing marketing strategies to accomplish DMO’s and destination’s vision. These goals are intended to be completed over a duration of a pre-specified time but maximum of 5 years. (Gursoy and Chi 2018, 9).

The Japan Times (2023) published an article on the 10th of February about Japan’s announced marketing goals with which Japan “aims to receive a record number of foreign visitors in 2025, a draft of the government’s revised tourism plan has shown, with inbound tourism seeing a steady recovery since the country significantly eased border measures last October. The ambitious goals come as the government expects a recovery in demand for international air travel and for upcoming international events to be held in Japan, such as the Expo 2025 in Osaka, to boost visitor numbers.”

Destination marketing objectives usually have a shorter duration than marketing goals. Their renewal usually takes place every year with which new objectives for the following year are added. Both destination marketing goals and objectives should specify which markets the specific goals and objectives are intended for (Gursoy and Chi 2018, 9).

Prague City Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase average spend per visitor - Increase overnights - Increase arrivals or, in some markets, recover declining arrivals - Motivate repeat visits
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Table 2: Marketing Objectives of Prague City Tourism

DMO mission is often confused with vision and goals. DMO mission, however, stems from the destination and DMO vision statements and should follow the destination marketing goals (Gursoy and Chi 2018, 9). According to Gursoy and Chi (2018), DMO’s mission is “a broad statement about the organization’s business and scope, services and products, markets served and overall philosophy” (9).

Turismo de Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promote Portugal as a tourist destination; - support the development of infrastructures for tourism and investment in the sector; - foster the training of human resources; - regulate and conduct inspections of games of chance.
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Table 3: DMO’s Mission of Turismo de Portugal

2.3. The Need for Market Segmentation

Various markets have unique needs, therefore, using the same marketing strategy on every market is inefficient. Morrison (2022) defines market segmentation “as a process followed in tourism marketing where potential customers are separated into groups (market segments) sharing certain common characteristics. In a market segmentation analysis, a destination or tourism business forms these groups and then, based on criteria established by the organization, selects its target markets from among the available market segments” (Morrison 2022, 277).

As previously stated, when marketing a product, marketers need to choose the right audience before proceeding straight to promotional activities. Market segmentation allows marketers to group potential customers into groups with shared needs and interests. When it comes to tourism marketing, marketers need to also consider several other factors, such as various religious beliefs, languages, cultural traits, and traditions. On top of that, various tourists look for various experiences. While some prefer sightseeing as the must-do activity while visiting a specific destination, some tourists have specific needs which marketers need to identify in advance (Morrison 2022, 278).

2.4. Promoting a Destination

Destination marketing would not yield results without the use of marketing channels. In the age of digital media, traditional marketing is not the go-to tool of marketers anymore. Traditional marketing is facing a shift to digital which allows marketers measure the successfulness of marketing campaigns in matter of seconds while being able to adjust marketing campaigns based on target group characteristics. One of the advantages of digital marketing is that it can also appeal to a larger global audience without marketers needing to sacrifice large budgets on the behalf of one marketing campaign. Marketers are not the only ones that profit from digital media interconnecting the world. Customers can browse, choose, and follow brands based on their own preferences. Consumers also can review whether the brand, the product or an experienced is recommended by other consumers. Marketers and consumers are closer than ever before powered by online space which consists of a range of digital communication channels (Hudson and Hudson 2023, 71–74).

Hudson and Hudson (2023) have created a summarization of digital means of communications that marketers can scale in today’s digital world and thus: websites, social media, display ads, internet-specific ads and videos, email, blogs, microsites, search ads, the Metaverse, online brand communities (Hudson and Hudson 2023, 72). While this

summarization also includes types of advertisements marketers can run in the digital space, Tuten (2020) puts emphasis on social media, which includes all elements named in the previous list, and groups social media into four social zones, combining digital communication means each to their own zone based on their purpose and functionality. These four zones are social community zone, social publishing zone, social commerce zone, and social entertainment zone (Tuten 2020, 195–301).

Social community zone represents what brands aim to achieve when interacting with their current and potential customers. Brands want their customers to remain loyal to their brand and continue to engage with it. By using social media, brands build a sense of community through exchange of information crucial to both brands and their customers. This exchange takes on a form of content which is made by either brands themselves or users (Tuten 2020, 196–197). In January 2023, the data gathering and visualization platform Statista, presented that the most preferred social communities by marketers were Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter (now X), and LinkedIn (Statista 2024).

Social community zone allowed brands and users to connect over content, social publishing zone allowed them to get inventive. This zone concentrates social media that encourage spread of content that is either user-generated or was created to aid brands' marketing efforts. Depending on the type of content shared, social publishing sites range from written content (blogs), video-based content (YouTube) or a combination of both (Snapchat). It is important to note that most social media sites combine attributes of both social community zone and social publishing zone to some extent (Tuten 2020, 234).

Social publishing zone stretches to social entertainment zone with the exception that it transforms the goal the content published is based upon. As the name suggests, it enables the spread of content that was produced to entertain masses in some way. Marketers use this zone to position and run advertisements in or around published social entertainment content. Entertainment content is not limited by the form it is in, one example of entertainment content are social games (Tuten 2020, 270–271). The Drum (2023) explained that 'videos games also outperform other media in engagement'. Consumers are no longer mindlessly scrolling and not engaging with brands, they are entertained while often not realizing there are hidden marketing techniques behind the games they play (*The Drum*, 17 November 2023). What is more, the marketing potential social games have is best seen on the example of League of Legends World championship that took place in 2023. Due to popularity of the game, it transcended from online into the offline world in the form of events creating a marketing goldmine. Over 6 billion people

streamed the championship worldwide and generated profit to its sponsors reaching almost 150 million dollars (*Sports Business Journal*, 12 July 2023).

The fourth zone, the social commerce zone, provides both businesses and consumers with the digital selling and shopping experience using social media platforms and their communities. The preference of social commerce among consumers is becoming prevalent due to it being accompanied by ratings and reviews, giving consumers upper hand over what they purchase (Tuten 2020, 302–303). Rialti, Kvítková, and Makovník (2023) support this claim considering “more and more customers consider electronic word-of mouth (eWOM) as a reliable source of information, specifically for products that can be searched for, booked, and purchased online” (165).

Social media serve as a powerful tool especially for tourism in this regard. Destinations lacking a social media presence are in a disadvantaged position compared to those that possess one. With the number of social media sites available today, one critical review can extend across all social media communities. On the contrary, destinations optimizing social media engagements to their benefit can significantly increase tourist arrival numbers (Rialti, Kvítková, and Makovník, 164–166). Apart from consumer-based reviews, consumers rely on their favourite influencers when making final buying decisions. This is particularly applicable to destinations. With the aim to take a photo like their favourite influencers in that specific country on that exact spot just to post it on Instagram, tourists are more than ever relying on social media when deciding on visiting a destination (DW, 17 May 2023).

3. Branding a Destination

When we think of brands, destinations, in this case countries, are not the first thing to come to mind. Even though the concept of nation branding is relatively new, it sheds light on how branding can be a great way to enhance the overall reputation of a country globally. No matter the size of a country, creating a strong branding strategy can result not only in gaining a high reputation among other nation brands but also in achieving profitable outcomes, such as increased tourist arrival numbers or foreign investments. Aside from that, countries can identify the attributes that make them stand out and utilize these findings to distinguish themselves from other countries (Dinnie 2022, 6). This chapter is an addition to the previous chapter as branding should be essential to every successful marketing strategy. The chapter will explain the basics of nation branding, alongside the most important parts of a nation branding strategy and how a reputation of a nation brand is measured.

3.1. What is Nation Branding?

Before diving into possible ways, a country can profit from building a branding strategy, it is important to define the exact meaning hidden behind nation branding. For Brand Finance (2019), a recognized brand valuation and strategy consultancy, nation branding is “how a country or place positions and promoted itself as a place for people to visit, invest in, and build a good reputation for their quality of goods and services as well as talent”.

Nation branding is a complex process that goes beyond making a branding strategy. Although fundamental, branding managers need to understand how to promote a nation as a brand to attract probable future profit but also how the nation was and is perceived by the consumers. There is more to a nation brand than an aesthetically pleasing logo or a design. The consumers seek a connection to the brand. Creating a successful brand means creating such a connection with the consumer. One aspect that can be particularly hindering in creating a positive brand image is the mental vision of the brand consumers have. The existence of deep-rooted stereotypes poses a threat to brand managers. This especially applies to nation brands; it is not easy to create a nation branding strategy that can overcome these stereotypes. Changing the mind of consumers takes time. Nations with a more difficult background to work with need to invest a significant amount of time to change the consumer’s perspective. Thus, nation branding strategy must be long-lasting with set long-term plans to build a positive outlook on the nation brand (Dinnie 2022, 4).

The more interconnected the world is, the harder it gets to develop something that has not been used yet. Defining the trend-setting aspects of a country’s culture helps in differentiating itself from the competition. Other than that, pinpointing the nation’s unique cultural heritage and scaling it to create marketing campaigns that define the nation brand should be a part of every nation branding strategy. These campaigns are meant to encompass elements that separate the specific nation from other nation brands. Particularly in tourism, this can be a crucial aspect that will be memorable to the prospective visitors of the country.

3.2. Brand Identity and Brand Image

Brand image and brand identity are two terms that are often interchangeably confused with one another. Both are, however, of paramount importance to creating a successful branding strategy. Brand identity is the first thing a consumer is met with when encountering a brand. It consists of an eye-catching design, an inviting brand message, a modern logo, and many more. Nations use brand identity to express themselves via using attributes associated with their nation’s

culture and history, such as varying symbols or colours. Brand image on the other hand is revealed to the consumer later in the brand perception stage. It is the heart of a brand (Dinnie 2022, 32).

It is important to note that using every bit of a nation's culture and history would be notably counterproductive. This especially applies above all to tourism. Tourists usually do not need to know every detail about the country they are planning to set foot in. Nation branding strategy should therefore include aspects that will be deemed as memorable, attractive and fulfil the objectives of the strategy (Dinnie 2022, 35).

As previously stated, a nation or any brand image can sometimes be out of reach of branding activities. Personal experiences with the nation brand undeniably impact how consumers view the brand. Whether it is by consuming popular media, associating the nation with public figures, or even simply by word of mouth, consumer's perception of the brand can either scar or boost the country's attractiveness. All these pre-existing, positive or negative, perceptions should be considered when talking about creating a nation branding strategy (Dinnie 2022, 36).

3.3. Brand Positioning

Choosing the right target audiences to alter the perception of the brand can be beneficial. However, without a clear understanding of how to approach these potential target markets, a branding strategy can struggle to meet its desired outcomes. Brand positioning relates to brand identity as its purpose is to shape how target markets view the brand by utilizing unique, nation characteristics.

4. Marketing South Korea as a Tourist Destination

The following chapter makes use of nation branding principles stated in the chapter two and applying them to branding South Korea as a nation to reach the country's full marketing potential. An overview of tourism bodies responsible for marketing in South Korea will be given, along with the South Korea's nation brand image and identity.

4.1. South Korea's Marketing Strategy

The primary tourism authority in South Korea is the Korean Tourism Organization (hereafter KTO) which alongside the aid of the Ministry for Tourism, Culture and Spirit (MTCS) make continuous efforts to position South Korea as an attractive destination to visit for tourists and to promote its unique attributes (Trolan 2017, 82). KTO operates in nine offices within the country and thirty-three offices internationally (KTO, n.d.). Following the principles explained

in chapter two, to successfully promote a country as a tourist destination, a destination marketing plan is a necessity. The following table includes the current KTO’s marketing plan.

KTO Vision	The Korean Tourism Organization strives to make Korea a tourism powerhouse visited by people around the globe through future inbound growth.
DMO Mission	A global public enterprise that promotes Korea as a world class travel destination. To improve quality of life in Korea and spread Korean culture worldwide through the strengthening and development of the tourism industry.
Destination Vision	Korea to become most visited international tourist destination through inbound tourism growth.
Destination Marketing Goals	Increase tourist arrival numbers to 20 million inbound tourists by 2024 and 30 million inbound tourists by 2027.

Table 4: The Marketing Plan of the Korea Tourism Organization

To achieve the desired outcome, KTO has published detailed steps on how it plans to make South Korea desirable as a tourist destination. The implementation of international destination marketing objectives has three parts: extended themes and contents, segmented positioning, and differentiated branding.

Extended Themes and Contents	Segmented Positioning	Differentiated Branding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension and convergence of K-culture and tourism • Expansion of high-value tourism content • Increase attraction of global MICE to Korea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of specialized marketing in target markets • Promotion of Korea tourism via public-private partnership • Activation of data-driven marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global expansion of Korea’s regional tourism brand • Development of sustainable tourism ecosystem • Improvement of Korea’s tourism conditions and convenience

Table 5: Destination Marketing Objectives of the Korea Tourism Organization

The KTO has given out examples of how it plans to enact these objectives to reach the goal of 30 million tourist arrivals by 2027. Regarding expansion of K-culture elements, mega roadshows are to be hosted during the “Visit Korea Year 2023–2024” (KTO, n.d.). During the year 2023 a total of 15 cities welcomed Korean mega roadshows showcasing the ambiguity of K-culture. The mega roadshows are to be continued during 2024, this time in 25 cities, expanding the reach of Korean tourism campaigns to new untouched markets (*Korea Times*, 19

January 2024). One of such mega roadshows was held in Tokyo, Japan. Korea JoongAng Daily (2024) has on 22 March 2024 written in its article that the mega roadshows included “Korean food trucks, beauty salon booth, K-pop dance performances, and a talk show hosted by actor Bae In-hyuk”. With this initiative, KTO is also successfully fulfilling its other set objectives, involving “increasing global marketing hubs” and “strengthening marketing by strategic market and individual”. In addition, KTO’s marketing objectives are focusing on expanding partnerships with the rising esports industry, as well as understanding the marketing needs of the Middle East and medical and wellness clients (KTO, n.d.).

4.2. Brand Identity

For a brand to be recognizable and distinguishable from other brands, a unique brand identity needs to be designed. The abundance of Korean cultural heritage equips the country with a range of unique cultural assets that can be used in the country’s branding strategies. With 100 cultural items associated with South Korea’s culture and history, the top ten symbols include (Lee and Lee, 63):

the traditional outfit, *hanbok*
the alphabet system, *hangul*
traditional food, *kimchi* and *bulgogi*
the Buddhist temples *Bulguksa* and *Seokgulam*
the martial art form, *taekwondo*
the medicinal herb, *ginseng* or *insam*
the traditional mask dance, *talchum*
the royal ancestral shrine, *Jongmo*
the national park of *Mount Seoraksan*
Korean artists of international calibre

Proudly representing KTO is its logo, which embodies the character “h” from the Korean alphabet and the initial character of the organization’s official Korean name. The symbol is divided into three sections, each carrying its own unique symbolism. The first section is the circle on top, representing the organization overlooking the promotional activities of Korean cultural heritage. The second part portrays the smiling face of Koreans welcoming anyone coming to Korea. The third section is the harmonious and eternal nature of the Korean land. Together, they form a person who invites people into its embrace, greeting them and welcoming them. Incorporated in the organization’s symbol are the colours representing KTO, orange, red, yellow, and pink. The message/slogan “Imagine Your Korea” uses Korean traditional calligraphic style as its font and a mix of traditional Korean colours, *saekdong*, to “express Korea’s vibrant and dynamic image and convey a welcoming message to everyone visiting Korea” (KTO, n.d.).



Figure 1: Logo of the Korea Tourism



Figure 2: Brand message of the Korea Tourism

Diverse, vibrant, creative, intriguing is what defines the Korean land and its people. Therefore, KTO has set these four keywords as their core brand values, placing emphasis on forming a brand identity that promotes creative motivation. This creative motivation will be promoted through five segments: K-Food, K-Wave, K-Spirit, K-Place, and K-Style. Each of these segments offers tourists visiting Korea with unique experiences, each tailored to their own preferences, so that each tourist can create their own image of Korea. Tourists will be accompanied on their journey by three Kingdom Friends king tiger Hojong, warrior bear Mugo, and magpie Kawoo. Their task is to introduce what Korea has to offer as a tourist destination and what to look out for when visiting Korea. Kingdom Friends are active on their own personal Instagram channel (KTO, n.d.).

4.3. Brand Image and Brand Positioning

The need to alter the unfavourable brand reputation has led to South Korea's rapid rebranding to a globally known player it is today. With assistance from renowned branding leaders, such as Keith Dinnie and Simon Anholt, South Korea has recognized that its bad nation brand image might have trouble transforming itself, because of the West perceiving it as an underdeveloped country, and that is despite its rapid development and modernization. On top of that, based on Anholt's survey findings, the bad brand reputation stems from South Korea being linked to North Korea, therefore being perceived as one country. Taking this into account, South Korea has oriented its efforts into nation-wide branding strategies that no prior country has done before on such a large scale. On 22 January 2009, the previous South Korean president Lee Myung-bak has established a Presidential Council on Nation Branding which later in March of the same year has put in action a 10-part nation branding plan listing how South Korea's brand reputation should be managed and built (Schwak 2016, 428–439).

Dinnie (2009) has particularly highlighted differing perceptions of South Korea when comparing the West, putting emphasis on European countries, and the neighbouring Asian countries. He supported his claim by presenting answers of university students in Tokyo of

varying cultural background to being asked what first comes to their mind upon hearing the word Korea. Some of the answers are grouped into one category as they relate to each other. The answers provided are as follows (Dinnie 2009, 3):

Food (spicy food, Korean BBQ, kimchi, delicious food)
Korean actors, movie industry on the rise
Geographical aspects (small area, not so far from Japan, separated in North and South)
Kind people, friendly people, people get mad easily, Korea is friendly and positive, pretty women
Military
Technologically strong (electronics, Samsung, Hyundai, LG)
Plastic surgery
Politicians fight with their fists
Challenge the world
2002 World Cup
Interesting culture
North Korea is bad: South Korea is good
Very Asian but different from Japan and China

In comparison to Anhalt's survey findings, Tokyo-based university students had a more optimistic viewpoint outlook South Korea's nation brand. They recognized a clear distinction between North and South Korea and at the same time recognized South Korea's technological and cultural growth via emergence of influential companies and the effect of the Korean Wave. Albeit its continuous development, companies of Korean origin displayed hesitancy to claim their belonging to the Korean brand mainly due to the Korea discount. The Korea discount amounted to products labelled with "Made in Korea" being evaluated as having lesser renown in contrast with stronger labels (Dinnie 2009, 2). In 2008, South Korea claimed 33rd place in the Anhalt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index (Schwak 2016, 436) resulting in "Korea's plan to upgrade its national brand lauded but also evaluated as too ambitious" (*Korea Times*, 19 March 2009). The 10-point action plan aimed to reach 15th place in the nation branding indexes by 2013 (ibid.). The 10-point plan encompassed key initiatives to promote Korea, such as introducing the Global Korea scholarship, promoting taekwondo, or adopting a program using Korean Wave elements (Dinnie 2009, 4).

However, "it is very difficult to create a strong national brand and a tourist destination by continually changing your message" (Trolan 2017, 83). With the perspective of a more promising nation brand image, South Korea has taken on a challenge to define its identity as a brand. The very first slogan's purpose was to portray the country as the land of the morning calm. The culture that functions on needing to execute things as fast as possible was far from being calm (ibid.). The year 1998 was accompanied by a brand-new slogan "Dynamic Korea"

pointing out the country's rapid development (*Korea Times*, 31 July 2016). The message was not met with a praise as both tourists and non-tourists deemed the message as unclear. Following "Dynamic Korea" were the nation brand slogans "Korea Sparkling", "Korea Be Inspired", "Creative Korea" and lastly, "Imagine Your Korea 2014" which intended to attract 20 million foreigners by 2020 (KOCIS 2014). The flow of tourists to the country was not accounted to the impressiveness of nation branding initiatives done by the Korean Tourism Organization but to the global impact of the Korean Wave. In addition to sending unclear brand messages, the choice of the content being branded was not less than ideal. Instead of leveraging the Korean Wave in its entirety in the past, there was a dominating initiative to focus only on one aspect and promote it abroad. Korean food being an example of such trials which would have had more impact if it was incorporated as a part of the Korean Wave impact. With the advent of "Visit Korea Year 2023–2024", the Korean Tourism Organization set a clear message, inviting tourists to South Korea with a "Ride the Korean Wave". The "Visit Korea Year 2023–2024" deals with promotion of the popular "K"-segments with "K"-related events, promotional videos, and marketing campaigns (Trolan 2017, 83–84).

The South Korea's nation brand image has undergone several changes since 2009. Dinnie maintains that there was a considerable shift in South Korea's nation brand image from the past one. The boost of South Korea's brand image was a result of the Korean Wave, more specifically K-pop as the largest consumed K-content by foreign markets. The Korean K-pop group BTS put South Korea in the spotlight of the foreign media, winning awards at the renowned Billboard music popularity charts and representing Korea as Korea brand ambassadors. The film industry served as an agent of boosting the Korea Brand image, too. Considerable popularity spiked when the film *Parasite* qualified for the 2020 Oscars, receiving an award for the Best Picture. South Korea has seen an overall increase of sales in K-related products, spiking interest in products labelled as Korea-made. Thereby, the "Korea Discount" stereotype became erased, and brands gained a sense of pride in representing South Korea on the global market.

Besides the effects of the Korean Wave, South Korea tackled Covid-19 with grace, being set as an example in foreign media and acquiring dominancy in the medical sphere. Other than that, a clear definition of the South Korea's brand identity helped to further improve the overall image as opposed to the past where tourism branding and promotional activities were hindered by unclearness of messages to the global audience (Dinnie 2022, 51). However, according to Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index, South Korea ranked 24th in the year 2023. Although

receiving a better brand score compared to the year 2008, the country still has a long way to reach the desired 15th place (Ipsos 2023).

5. South Korea's Marketing Campaigns: In Relation to Tourism Types

Once a country far from being deemed as a popular tourist destination, South Korea is now being watched by the world as it continuously leverages its quality products and content to attract global audience. This chapter delves into factors that aided the growth of the South Korean popularity in the world and how these factors correlate with the prominent tourism types that attract millions of tourists yearly to the country. KTO (2024) puts the most significant efforts to promote Hallyu tourism, MICE tourism, and medical tourism, devoting entire departments for these tourism segments. In their business statement, the organization also highlights the importance of collaborating with the esports industry to promote tourism. In addition to explaining factors drawing masses of tourist to South Korea every year, set of marketing campaigns will be paired to each tourism type further proving South Korea's government and organizations' involvement in altering marketing campaigns to meet the needs and interests of tourists visiting the country.

5.1. Hallyu Tourism

When discussing tourism in South Korea, leaving out Hallyu phenomenon would mean leaving behind a significant part of the Korean tourism industry we know of today. The Hallyu phenomenon kickstarted the rise of the Korean tourism movement and its popularity. Aside from the influence of Hallyu, events worth of mentioning when it comes to Korean tourism industry are the 1988 Seoul Olympics and the 2002 FIFA World Cup which attracted the attention of many tourists. However, the impact of Hallyu lasted and evolved over the years until today and still draws visitors to the country from all around the world. First-ever recorded data on tourist arrivals shows that in 1962 the number of tourists visiting Korea reached only the total number of 15,184 visitors (Kim and Nam 2016, 524). Compared to around 11 million tourists that visited South Korea only in 2023, even with the huge influence of the COVID-19 on international tourism, the numbers are truly unmatched to the year 1962 (Statista 2024).

The Korean Wave, also referred to as Hallyu or Hallyu phenomenon, opened many doors to Korean tourism. It is up to debate when exactly did Hallyu begin, different sources claim the year 1997 was the official start as the economic crisis compelled Korean entertainment industry to create domestic content which was cheaper to produce. The very beginnings of emergence of Hallyu are defined as the Hallyu 1.0. Hallyu is so far divided into 3 eras – Hallyu 1.0, Hallyu

2.0, and the present Hallyu 3.0. With each era, Hallyu managed to advance and flourish, gaining global recognition. Hallyu 1.0 underwent a set of changes as governments and policies changed continuously. Constraints such as censorship were hindering any cultural activities and the overall lack of the rights to express and produce cultural content left no space for advancement. When the censorship limitations were finally almost gone in the early 1990s and the Kim Young-sam government regarded culture as an industry, new opportunities for growth opened for Korean cultural industry. As mentioned above, the outreach was at that time limited to the East Asia market with television dramas, films and Korean popular music being as the main exported content (Jin 2023, 17–21).

Hallyu 2.0 targeted markets outside the Asian one. For the first time, the Hallyu phenomenon reached beyond its usual scope to the far North America and Western Europe. Korean popular music, in short K-pop, was leading the way, for the first time, replacing Korean television dramas and films which were considerably more favoured in the Hallyu 1.0 era. The expansion abroad was prompted by Asian target markets labelling Korean cultural content as invasive and putting a ban in effect to prevent it from being distributed. Other than expanding overseas, Hallyu went digital and digital content distribution enabled Korean culture being closer to the global markets. The main contributor to its spread was the power of social media which did not only help Hallyu's global outreach but aided the growth of popular culture in general. The shifting global audiences, especially generational changes in audiences, further increased Hallyu's influence. South Korea broadened its repertoire of its exported content by adding digital gaming, broadcasting, animation and webtoons. Younger audiences were mostly the main consumers of the Korean digital gaming and K-pop (Jin 2023, 21–24).

Hallyu 3.0, spanning from 2017 to the present day, marks the period when the Hallyu phenomenon is perceived as a global sensation not only because of its outreach to global markets but also due to the presence of Korean culture content ambassadors at global awards, namely the Oscars, the Emmys, the Billboard Awards and many more. In this era, the esports industry joined exported cultural content. However, the dominant cultural content exported persisted. K-pop, Korean films and dramas are still topping the charts with webtoons and mobile games on the rise in the Hallyu 3.0. What brought the global audience closer to Korean cultural content were over-the-top service platforms (OTT) such as Netflix. Netflix with its large production budgets sponsored many award-winning movies and series, including the *Squid Game* series. Korean entertainment industry grew rapidly over the years, undergoing several changes, steadily transitioning from purely Asian market to the global stage and simultaneously

conquering digital space with the help of social media and OTT platforms attracting not only the global recognition but also tourists to South Korea (Jin 2023, 24–28). It is important to note that even though the Korean Wave attracted tourists to South Korea, it would not have been achievable without the contributions of Korean government and other governmental organizations. They recognized the need to build strategies on how to engage with Hallyu-driven tourists even more and utilize the potential of the Korean Wave to create a continuous growth of the Korean tourism market. Building tourism sites which revolve around Korean TV dramas and movies are an example of such contributions. This created an extra activity for tourists that allows them to experience their favourite Korean TV dramas and movies first-hand. Tourists visiting South Korea are driven by different motivations. South Korean government and organizations created such marketing campaigns that cater to these individual tourist motivations (Kim and Nam 2016, 534).

The award-winning promotional video series “Feel the Rhythm of Korea” featuring worth-a-visit places all around Korea accompanied by Korean folk music has been praised for its attention-grabbing atmosphere (*Korea Times*, 18 March 2021). The series displays various cities, including Seoul, Daegu, Busan, Andong, Mokpo, Gangneung, Busan, Incheon, Jeonju, Gyeongju, and Suncheon (*Imagine Your Korea*, YouTube). As mentioned above, with each promotional video the viewer is introduced to a new Korean folk song with its interpretation. Each of these songs was remade into a hip-hop version to be more relevant to younger generation (ibid.). First released on 30 July 2020 on YouTube, the “Feel the Rhythm of Korea” has been running for over 3 years. In 2022, KTO incorporated into this promotional video series the superstars BTS (*Korea Times*, 20 October 2022). The four promotional videos introduced four Korean places with varying music genres playing in the background. For the Jeju Island a jazz song was chosen, for Pohang, hip-hop, for Daejeon rock’n’roll, and for Busan, blues (*Imagine Your Korea*, YouTube). “Challenge Korea” consists of four videos, each introducing a different theme. K-Dance introduces “the moves of Korea”. K-Photo Spot shows the viewers “charming photo spots of Korea”. K-Future highlights the futuristic appeal of Korean cities. K-Food takes the viewer through must-visit places when looking to experience Korean food (KTO 2023). The promotional agent in all these videos is actor Lee Jung-jae from the famous *Squid Game* series.

5.2. Medical Tourism

A bustling industry attracting tourists to South Korea is the healthcare industry with around 248,110 patients visiting the country in 2022 driven by improving their health. The country has accommodated patients from 218 countries, the leading markets that are interested in getting medical treatment in South Korea are China, the U.S., Japan, Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Vietnam, Thailand, and Canada. The most sought-after medical treatments include general surgery procedures, dental clinic visits, undergoing plastic surgery, and visiting a dermatologist, for example (KTO 2023). Healing procedures can be done all over the country, however, the epicentre of South Korea's medical tourism is Gangnam in Seoul. Hallyu-driven tourists seeking to undergo plastic surgery and cosmetic procedures have been the main clientele visiting Gangnam's medical facilities (KOCIS, n.d.). The desire to be beautified like their favourite celebrity being the main reason for their visit. K-culture content has made the global audience aware of the high-quality medical procedures and cosmetic products the country has to offer (De Micco 2017, 421–422). South Korea's medical industry is a large part of the country's brand power. Undergoing medical procedures in South Korea is associated with guaranteed success, because of its image being linked to advanced care. The country's brand is especially linked to high plastic surgery skills (Kim, Arcodia and Kim 2019, 4–5).

Marketing campaigns targeted at medical tourists share similar features. Often featuring foreigners talking about their experiences, influencers recording their tour around medical facilities in South Korea or introductory videos of South Korean doctors. KTO does promote medical tourism on its official YouTube channel, however, it is more heavily promoted on social media channels of the Korea Health Industry Development Institute (KHIDI). These promotional activities mostly take place on YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. Instagram's and Facebook contents are the same content wise – they hold weekly giveaways, announce tours, and promote the institute's conferences to the medical tourists. The YouTube content is more detailed. It divides promotional videos into categories four categories. “Medical Korea, where your days begin again” which includes generic promotional videos. “Soul Note” involves doctors debunking medical problems. “Soul Story” features foreigners talking about their hospital experiences in South Korea, and “Soul Life” has a mixture of content, including healthy recipes and doctors introducing themselves and their work (*Medical Korea Official*, YouTube).

KTO uses the art of storytelling to attract medical tourists to South Korea on their official YouTube channel with the catchphrase “Heal We Go Korea”. The KTO produced two promotional videos with the titles ‘Wellness Korea’ and “Experience Korea's Healing Power”.

“Wellness Korea” tells a story of recovery and healing power South Korean nature has to offer. “Experience Korea’s Healing Power” shows a medical journey of an overworked employee discovering KTO’s website and going on a medical tour. The video ends with the employee leaving South Korea as a brand-new person, healed, and refreshed (*Imagine Your Korea*, YouTube).

5.3. MICE Tourism

MICE (acronym for meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions) is a type of tourism that considers major cities as the main destination for travel. For a city to be considered a MICE destination, countries need to invest in development of facilities able to accommodate masses of MICE tourists. Spendings of MICE tourists are markedly higher than those of regular tourists, underscoring the economic significance of the industry to both countries and cities and therefore highlighting the importance of well-designed marketing campaigns. Well-designed marketing campaigns can bring more MICE-driven tourists to the cities and give them global exposure. The best MICE city in the world for the 8th year in the row, Seoul, is renowned to be a thriving place for MICE-related activities, due to its outstanding capacities to hold international business events (*Forbes*, 2 February 2023). Visitors can now even experience Seoul’s MICE facilities on a virtual platform “Virtual Seoul”, allowing visitors participate in virtual conferences, exhibitions, schedule meetings with in-person exhibitors and participants, network and join various events (Seoul Convention Bureau, n.d.).

The second most populous city in South Korea, Busan, is following Seoul’s lead in proving its world-class ability to hold extensive MICE events. Busan is a great example of how MICE cities should be promoted. Although Busan’s efforts to become a host country for World Expo 2023 were unsuccessful, marketing campaigns showed the city’s brand power. In collaboration with domestic conglomerates, worldwide marketing campaigns were designed (*The Korea Herald*, 29 November 2023). Hyundai Motor Group took a strategic approach in promoting the city. The company parked its customized art cars in front of the headquarters of the Bureau International des Expositions, the organizer of the World Expo event, in Paris to enhance the visibility of the city as a prominent MICE destination (*Hyundai*, 6 October 2023). Promotional videos supporting Busan’s participation in the World Expo 2023 were broadcasted by Samsung in Paris and other strategic European cities. In the same manner as Hyundai Motor Group, the electronics company LG operated customized buses showcasing the images of Busan in Paris. The promotional activities also took place in-land, Lotte counted down the days

tills the voting day for World Expo 2023 by illuminating the Lotte World Tower in Seoul, displaying the slogan “Busan is No. 1” and the colours of the South Korean flag (*Korea Times*, 24 November 2023).

5.4. Esports Tourism

A newly emerging area of interest in tourism is the esports industry. Amid misconceptions about esports industry being reserved to younger generations, esports are proving their economic significance for countries. Although younger generations remain the main consumers as non-digital sports are decreasing in attractiveness, this rising phenomenon is attracting attention of diverse spectrum of people. Particularly during the pandemic, when digital entertainment became prevalent, all-time high viewership of esports-related events was recorded. Esports of today are comparable to regular sports. The industry holds both online and offline events, inducing fans to visit countries where these esports events are held and see their favourite esports players in-person. Some of the well-known events include Dreamhack, The World Electronic Sports Games (WESG), Intel Extreme Masters (IEM) and the League of Legends World Championship (Masłowski and Karasiewicz 2021, 95–97).

South Korea is acknowledged as a pioneer in esports competitions, being a home to professional esports gamers and respectable esports gaming coaches. The country recognized the need to focus on growing the industry and upskilling its players. Professional gaming has become a recognized occupation and internet cafés with high-performance gaming equipment invite anyone wanting to hone their gaming skills to play for an hourly fee. Despite being preeminent figure in the industry for a long time, South Korea is competing for the dominant position in the esports industry with China, the United States and Europe (Kim and Kim 2022, 1–2). As a part of the ongoing “Visit Korea Year 2023–2024” campaign, esports fan tours will be promoted during KTO’s roadshows that will span across 25 cities globally. (*Korea Times*, 30 January 2024).

6. Visit Korea Year 2023–2024: Marketing Campaign Analysis

The aim of this thesis is to analyse South Korea’s ongoing tourism marketing campaign “Visit Korea Year 2023–2024” and the campaign’s effectiveness in promoting South Korea as a tourist destination on social media. For the purpose of this research, the focus will be on conducting a content analysis of the campaign’s representation on the official Korea Tourism Organization (hereafter KTO) YouTube channel “Imagine Your Korea”. The reason behind selecting YouTube as the primary analysed social media platform is due to a lack of representation of the

campaign on other social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook. The “Visit Korea Year 2023–2024” campaign has close to no mention on the KTO’s official Instagram and Facebook, making it hard to define whether posted content following the campaign’s appearance on both platforms is part of the campaign’s promotion or a continuation of the commonly posted content, such as pictures of Korean landscape. A part of the YouTube content analysis will be to conclude which repeatedly used elements of the most popular promotional videos posted on YouTube could be the reason for their success. The following subchapters closely explain the employed methods used in this research, and finally, the research itself and its findings.

6.1. Methodological Approach & Data Collection Methods

The methodological approach for this thesis will be mixed methods design. By considering both qualitative and quantitative data to conclude this research, a more detailed information on the campaign’s success on YouTube can be recorded, and therefore provide reasons behind the campaign’s effectiveness, or ineffectiveness.

The quantitative data collection will be used to measure the engagement on all the promotional videos posted since the first official mention of the campaign on YouTube. In this case, a collection of all videos labelled with the logo of the “Visit Korea Year 2023–2024” tourism marketing campaign will be organized in a table from the oldest to the latest videos released on the official KTO’s YouTube channel “Imagine Your Korea”. The table with all the collected data will showcase all collected data about each individual video. The table includes data about the date of release, the video name, number of views, number of likes, and number of comments. Other than that, social media measuring tool “Social Blade” will be used as an instrument to track spikes in popularity and overall growth of the total followers on the KTO’s YouTube channel, assigning value to promotional videos that created the most significant impact. The promotional videos will be ranked according to their popularity, reducing the number of videos to the top ten videos. The main variable, the number of views, will be considered when ranking the most popular videos.

The qualitative data collection will be based upon a close reading of the top ten videos, defining the common popular elements they share. The elements considered will be both in-video and under the videos, observing both video graphic elements and reoccurring elements in the comment section and the video’s description. Lastly, a comparison of the top ten

promotional videos with the remaining videos will be made, pointing out lacking elements and giving advice on how to improve them for better outreach.

6.2. Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

Although the first promotional video fully mentioning the campaign itself in the title of the video has, as seen in the table below, been released on 20 July 2023, the usage of the logo of the campaign has been used for the first time on the 2 May 2023. The new brand message “Ride the Korean Wave” being introduced later in the year 2023 was my initial personal reasoning for the promotional video not being released sooner. However, the new slogan was already mentioned on 2 March 2023 in an article written by ITB Berlin (2023), the world’s largest travel trade show on international tourism. Hence the usage of the logo earlier than the actual date of the release of the “Visit Korea Year 2023–2024: Ride the Korean Wave” promotional video, this research marks the start of the campaign’s promotion on YouTube with the “Unlock Korea: K-Beauty”. The following table includes a list of all promotional videos that could be retrieved on the 26 April 2024 from the official KTO’s YouTube channel “Imagine Your Korea”. The promotional videos are sorted from the oldest to the latest video released.

Date of Release	Video Name	Number of Views	Number of Likes	Number of Comments
2. May 2023	Unlock Korea: K-Beauty	4,368	111	7
2. May 2023	Unlock Korea: K-Food	5,462	124	3
2. May 2023	Unlock Korea: K-Contents	6,108	148	7
4. May 2023	Korea and Land of the Morning Light: Journey to Utopia	38,465	1K+	77
5. June 2023	Korea with a beautiful atmosphere and Land of the Morning Light	9,315	271	14
22. June 2023	K-Streaming Fighter New Korea Suncheon	5,439	70	3
22. June 2023	K-Streaming Fighter New Korea Buan	5,591	74	6
27. June 2023	Challenge Korea: Shooting Star 30s	61,673,174	46K+	40
27. June 2023	Challenge Korea: Battle of K-Food 30s	42,253,316	199K+	94
27. June 2023	Challenge Korea: Hello Future 30s	47,149,007	44K+	27
27. June 2023	Challenge Korea: Dance Dance Dance 30s	60,763,463	132K+	82
27. June 2023	Challenge Korea: Shooting Star	129,083,194	5,2K+	2,911
27. June 2023	Challenge Korea: Battle of K-Food	138,963,842	17K+	20,825

27. June 2023	Challenge Korea: Hello Future	142,082,444	3,6K+	1,136
27. June 2023	Challenge Korea: Dance Dance Dance	132,638,623	18K+	12,697
4. July 2023	Cha Eun-woo on what it's like to be the Honorary Ambassador of Visit Korea Year 2023–2024	2,167,532	1,4K+	177
20. July 2023	Visit Korea Year 2023–2024: Ride the Korean Wave	423,615	1,2K+	19
28. August 2023	The Landmark of Korea: Best 10 Cheongwadae Travel Course	149,234	442	29
12. September 2023	Visit Korea! Experience local markets!	5,299,376	43K+	13
15. September 2023	Korea Bucket, Make It Happen!	787,891	139	4
22. September 2023	Visit Korea! Enjoy Local Markets!	3,739,750	10K+	40
10. October 2023	One Fine Day in October with Cha Eunwoo	6,213	631	48
24. October 2023	Korea Never Forgets #Campagnas #TrueStory #VisitKoreaYear	17,304,895	429	360
24. October 2023	Live Squid Game #Ulleungdo #SquidFishing #VisitKoreaYear	61,946,175	756	368
24. October 2023	Queendom: Korean Archery #Suwon #KoreanArchery #VisitKoreaYear	65,643,108	993	382
24. October 2023	Guardian's Fireworks #Haman #Fireworks #VisitKoreaYear	63,204,730	596	371
24. October 2023	What If [Vincent Van Gogh] Visited Korea #AIpainting #BeautifulKorea #VisitKoreaYear	89,722,561	1,3K	444
15. November 2023	Kooking Korea!	2,054,802	1,1K+	189
17. November 2023	My Little Travel-Dreamer #MyLittleTraveler #FamilyKlog #FamilyBonding	6,385,186	2,2K+	12
17. November 2023	My Little Travel-Creator #MyLittleTraveler #FamilyKlog #FamilyBonding	6,303,362	1,2K+	12
17. November 2023	My Little Travel-Explorer #MyLittleTraveler #FamilyKlog #FamilyBonding	6,245,122	1,7K+	15
24. November 2023	K-Streaming Fighter New Korea_Danyang #Travel #Battle #Danyang	1,798	29	1
24. November 2023	K-Streaming Fighter New Korea_Asan #Travel #Battle #Asan	2,512	45	9

27. November 2023	Visit Korea Year 2023 ~ 2024 Korea Hangukbangmunui hae	10,597,420	12K+	1,144
29. November 2023	Enjoy All Corners of Korea through Regional Int'l Airport (JPN)	7,648,865	36	1
29. November 2023	Enjoy All Corners of Korea through Regional Int'l Airport (CHN)	2,959,812	36	2
29. November 2023	Enjoy All Corners of Korea through Regional Int'l Airport (ENG)	15,942,569	104	6
4. December 2023	Korea Playlist – Fashion #SoundofKorea #KoreaPlaylist	7,196,938	247	21
4. December 2023	Korea Playlist – Joy #SoundofKorea #KoreaPlaylist	7,182,617	232	14
4. December 2023	Korea Playlist – Relax #SoundofKorea #KoreaPlaylist	7,140,929	289	20
6. December 2023	The Making of Visit Korea Year 2023~2024 Campaign Korea Cha Eun-Woo	1,579,739	2,1K+	182
22. December 2023	Add to Kart	1,776,108	1,5K+	87
5. February 2024	Gangwon Rhapsody - Chuncheon #Chuncheom #Mime #VisitKoreaYear	3,131,883	10K+	19
5. February 2024	Gangwon Rhapsody - Wonju #Wonju #KDance #VisitKoreaYear	2,895,080	6,9K+	18
5. February 2024	Gangwon Rhapsody – Yangyang & Samcheok #Yangyang&Samcheok #K_Music #VisitKoreaYear	3,251,308	3,6K+	40
4. March 2024	Wellness Korea: Official Promotion Video	2,195	90	4
4. March 2024	Experience Korea's Healing Power	3,180	105	4
18. March 2024	[Korea Invites U] Korea Travel Invitation – Application Opens	4,102,282	39K+	12
1. April 2024	[Korea Invites U] Invitation to Visit Korea Year 2023 – 2024	2,098,832	14K+	28

Table 6: List of all *Visit Korea Year 2023 – 2024* Promotional Videos

Based on all the data found, the least engagement can be seen in the comment section in most of the videos, even those with more views. The reason for low engagements in the comment section is unclear, considering even some videos, for example “Challenge Korea: Shooting Star_30s” with over 60 million views had only 40 comments in total. Deducting from the available data on all the promotional videos uploaded since the beginning of the campaign,

the most reliable data on the videos’ popularity is the number of views (Social Blade 2024). The following table shows the top ten videos based on the number of views ranked from the most views to the least.

The Top 10 Promotional Videos		
Date of Release	The Video Name	Number of Views
27. June 2023	Challenge Korea: Hello Future	142,082,444
27. June 2023	Challenge Korea: Battle of K-Food	138,963,842
27. June 2023	Challenge Korea: Dance Dance Dance	132,638,623
27. June 2023	Challenge Korea: Shooting Star	129,083,194
24. October 2023	What If [Vincent Van Gogh] Visited Korea #AIPainting #BeautifulKorea #VisitKoreaYear	89,722,561
24. October 2023	Queendom: Korean Archery #Suwon #KoreanArchery #VisitKoreaYear	65,643,108
24. October 2023	Guardian’s Fireworks #Haman #Fireworks #VisitKoreaYear	63,204,730
24. October 2023	Live Squid Game #Ulleungdo #SquidFishing #VisitKoreaYear	61,946,175
27. June 2023	Challenge Korea: Shooting Star 30s	61,673,174
27. June 2023	Challenge Korea: Dance Dance Dance 30s	60.763,463

Table 7: Top Ten *Visit Korea Year 2023 – 2024* Promotional Videos

Topping the chart is the “Challenge Korea” video series telling a story of tourists visiting South Korea and being guided by actor Lee Jung-jae from the famous *Squid Game* series through various experiences tourists can try in the country. The weekly video views analytics provided by “Social Blade” illustrate that the most spikes in popularity since the beginning of the year 2023 were recorded in the week following 26 June 2023, the week when the “Challenge Korea” video series was released. After that, the views remained high until the end of August, then steeply plummeting to low numbers comparable to those in the first half of the year. The next significant soar in views was seen again at the end of October, following the release of “What If [Vincent Van Gogh] Visited Korea”, “Queendom: Korean Archery”, “Guardian’s Fireworks”, and “Live Squid Game”.

6.3. Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

The qualitative data was collected by close reading of the top ten promotional videos of the “Visit Korea Year 2023–2024” marketing campaign and then listing the reoccurring popular elements appearing in or under them. The same was done for the remaining videos with less views. The observed variables were the video title, the video description, and the video itself.

For better promotion on YouTube, HubSpot (2024) has created guide with recommendations to increase the engagement rate on YouTube. According to the guide, YouTube videos should include target keywords along with their variations in the video title and within the video description. These keywords need to be chosen based on their searchability within YouTube. For “Imagine Your Korea”, the main keyword is “Korea”. Additionally, relevant hashtags can further increase the video’s reach and engagement potential. Other than that, it should include a custom thumbnail to attract the viewer’s attention and include subtitles and closed captions, if possible, for more accessibility for people of varying language backgrounds (HubSpot, 2024).

Following the aforementioned recommendations, this analysis will continue with a close reading of both the top ten videos and the remaining videos with less views. Not all recommendations were included in this analysis, only the relevant ones were chosen due to some data being open only the author of the channel itself, such as the data from YouTube analytics. Through close reading of the top ten videos, a series of reoccurring elements was derived from the videos. The reoccurring elements that could have contributed to the popularity of the top ten promotional videos are presented below:

- the usage of related hashtags in the title of the video and/or in the video’s description
- inclusion of the word “Korea” in the title of the video and in the video’s description
- subtitles in over twelve languages
- consistent usage of the campaign’s logo at the end of the video and on the thumbnail
- description included links to the KTO’s official website in English, Japanese and Chinese to provide more details on travelling to South Korea
- detailed description, including tourist attractions featured in the video
- a well-known celebrity or a mention of a popular aspect of Korean culture (e.g.: *Squid Game*)
- the use of storytelling

Upon comparing the top ten selected promotional videos to the ones with less engagement, a lack of these repeatedly occurring elements was found. In some cases, these elements were included but used incorrectly or inconsistently. The findings are as follows:

- Inconsistent video titles (missing or irrelevant hashtags in the title/description, no mention of Korea in the title/description)
- Incorrect hashtag usage in the description
- Inconsistent usage of the “Visit Korea Year 2023–2024” logo (at the beginning, at the end, both)
- Logo missing
- Thumbnail not including the logo of the campaign
- No subtitles
- Short Description lacking a list of tourist attractions shown in the video
- Lack of links leading to KTO’s official website

Element	Number of videos
The Usage of Relevant Hashtags (Title)	4
The Usage of Relevant Hashtags (Description)	30
Inclusion of the Word “Korea” (Title)	29
Inclusion of the Word “Korea” (Description)	33
Subtitles Provided	4
Subtitles Provided In-Video	26
Campaign’s Logo (at the End of the Video)	25
Campaign’s logo (in the Thumbnail)	15
Description Including Links to the KTO’s Official Website	13
Detailed Description, Including Tourist Attractions Featured in the Video	23
Mention of a Popular Aspect of Korean Culture (or a Celebrity)	16
The Use of Storytelling	26

Table 8: Element Occurrence in the Videos with Less Views

The table above illustrates an exact number of videos where the elements were used correctly. The total number of analysed videos, not including the top ten videos, was thirty-nine. The most consistent elements from the list were the usage of the word “Korea” in both the title and the description. The usage of hashtags in the descriptions appeared to be the most consistent, too. However, after taking a closer look at the listed hashtags, only a few of them were relevant, the remaining ones led to content not related to anything Korean or were considered low-frequency hashtags with only a few videos tagged with this hashtag. Although more than four videos had hashtags in the video title, they were relevant to the video’s content not to the

promotion of Korea, therefore they were not included in the table as relevant. In the case of “My Little Travel-Dreamer” and other videos from the same series, the hashtags in the video title “MyLittleTraveler”, “FamilyKlog”, and “FamilyBonding” are not as popular as the hashtag “Korea”, for example, as they are used less frequently. The series did include relevant hashtags in the description, however, there was no mention of Korea in the title and in the description.

What appears to be the most unclear is the inconsistent usage of the campaign’s logo. The numbers show that nineteen videos did not include the logo at the end of the video. The logo was used in different parts of the video or not used at all. Comparing it to the videos that had the logo used correctly, the number is not as significant as the occurrence of this element. The logo was misplaced even after it was used correctly, and then, was used correctly again in the following video. A great example of inconsistent logo usage are two videos from the same series “Visit Korea! Enjoy Local Markets!” and “Visit Korea! Experience Local Markets!”. Both videos were released in the same month ten days apart. The first one, however, features the logo at the beginning of the video and the latter at the end of the video. Seven videos were missing a logo completely. The video “Add to Kart” promoting popular K-fashion spots lacked a logo in-video, but it was included in the thumbnail. Four videos featured the logo both in the beginning and at the end, as it was in the case of “Korea and Land of the Morning Light”. Some videos appeared to be part of the campaign but were hardly identifiable as they had no logo in the video and in the thumbnail.

Subtitles in one or more languages were included only in four of the analysed videos. Most subtitles were included in-video or there were auto-generated closed captions available. Celebrities were not a common appearance in the videos, still popular elements of Korean culture were either appearing in the videos or were recorded in the title, in the description or in one of the hashtags. More than half of the videos had a detailed description with clearly listed tourist attractions that were highlighted in the video. The rest had shorter description or even one-sentence one. Despite for the videos being released under the KTO’s official account, only thirteen videos had links leading to the KTO’s website in the description.

7. Conclusion

South Korea has undergone a notable economic shift. The country has created a distinctive brand for itself, separating itself from the unfavourable nation brand perceptions due to being associated with North Korea. Marketing a nation is not an easy task and requires nationwide efforts to be promoted successfully to attract potential tourists. This thesis consists of four theoretical sections delving into the fundamentals of destination marketing and their application to South Korea's destination marketing strategies for tourism, and one practical section focused on analysing the South Korea's ongoing marketing campaign "Visit Korea Year 2023–2024".

The first section closely explains how a strong destination marketing strategy can be beneficial to countries to position themselves as an attractive tourist destination. It emphasizes the need for destinations and destination marketing organizations to have a clear vision, mission, marketing goals and objectives. These help destination marketing organizations upkeep the image they strive to have in the eyes of potential tourists. As a boosting element for this process, the first section of this thesis concluded with discussing the importance of social media for destinations.

In the second section, this thesis explored key nation branding elements and thus, brand identity, brand image, and brand positioning, with an emphasis on explaining the difference between brand image and identity as these two terms are often confused. With the third section a transition was made from purely broad definitions into applying them to South Korea. The main tourism body in South Korea, the Korea Tourism Organization, envisions to become a tourism powerhouse with people visiting the country from all parts of the world. South Korea struggled to attract tourists in the past and took great measures to improve its bad nation brand reputation. Its scarred brand image stemmed mainly from the West, where South and North Korea were still perceived as one country. South Korea was, however, not an unknown player in the Asian market. Hallyu 1.0, the early beginnings of the infamous Korean Wave, were slowly gaining recognition and popularity in the neighbouring countries.

The fourth section delved deeper into the prominent tourism types in South Korea and provided an example of marketing campaigns tailored to each of the tourism types. The Korea Tourism Organization recognizes that the main driving force drawing tourists to South Korea is the Korean Wave. With K-pop gaining in popularity and Korean films being featured on global award shows, more tourists are adding South Korea to their must-visit bucket list. Recently released video marketing campaign "Challenge Korea" targeting Hallyu-driven tourists, took tourists on a journey guided by Lee Jung-jae from the popular *Squid Game* series.

The campaign introduces potential tourists to what they can experience in South Korea, from K-Food to learning some professional dance moves. The Korean Wave had its influence in the medical sphere, too. Hallyu shaped how the South Korean medical industry is viewed, especially because of its high-quality plastic surgery procedures. Hallyu-driven tourists wanting to look like their favourite celebrities form a significant portion of the customers of the Korean medical facilities. The last tourism types mentioned in this section were MICE tourism and esports tourism. Both are continuously gaining in popularity. Seoul being chosen the best MICE city in the world for the eighth year in the row is maintaining its status by further developing its facilities. On top of that, the city has launched a virtual version of Seoul allowing MICE tourists to participate and engage in events from home. Meanwhile the esports industry is being threatened by other countries wanting to becoming number one in the field. South Korea is, however, standing strong as it still has a status of being home country of leading professional esports gamers and coaches.

The last section, section five, was dedicated to quantitative and qualitative analysis of the ongoing tourism marketing campaign “Visit Korea Year 2023–2024”. More precisely, its representation on the Korea Tourism Organization’s official YouTube channel “Imagine Your Korea”. Part of the quantitative analysis was to list all videos released under the logo of “Visit Korea Year 2023–2024” and write down the number of views, likes and comments. Subsequently, the top ten videos were selected based on the number of views. In the qualitative analysis, a close reading of the selected top ten videos was done to determine the commonly reoccurring elements that could have boosted the popularity of these videos. These reoccurring elements were then listed and a close reading of the remaining videos with less views was done, comparing the elements found in the top ten videos with the ones in the remaining videos.

According to the findings of the quantitative analysis, the most viewed videos were those featuring either a popular Korean celebrity or mentioning a popular K-culture content, such as the video “Live Squid Game” with 61,763,463 views mentioning the famous *Squid Game* series and featuring popular aspects from the series in the video. The *Squid Game* series continued to yield results as the actor Lee Jung-jae became the face of the “Challenge Korea” series, earning the most views recorded since the beginning of the campaign with over 100 million views. The series consisted of eight videos in total with varying length, all six of them being in the top ten videos’ list.

The quantitative analysis began with defining the start of the campaign “Visit Korea Year 2023–2024” itself. However, without clicking on each video released since the start of the year

2023, it would have been hard to define when the campaign started. Although the first promotional video fully mentioning the campaign was released in July 2023, the logo itself was used from May 2023. After close reading and comparing repeatedly occurring elements of the top ten videos with the videos with less views released on the official YouTube channel of the Korea Tourism Organization “Imagine Your Korea”, the findings from the qualitative analysis showed that there is an absence of unison in what was being uploaded. The main observed variables of the qualitative analysis were the video titles, the video descriptions, and the content of the video. The findings of the qualitative analysis showed lack and inconsistency of the elements listed in table 9.

Video Title
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • campaign’s logo missing • campaign’s logo at the beginning of the videos • campaign’s logo at the beginning and at the end of the video • no subtitles
Video Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • missing hashtags • irrelevant hashtags • no links to the KTO’s website • no mention of Korea
Video Content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • missing hashtags • irrelevant hashtags • no mention of Korea

Table 9: Findings of the Qualitative Analysis

Despite having the popular promotional videos as an example, these elements were incorrectly and inconsistently used even after the release of the popular promotional videos. This inconsistency might have aided the low number of views on some of the videos. There were instances where it appeared that with each video a different person, or a team was in the charge of uploading the videos. The writing-style descriptions were in was different on almost every other video. While some descriptions were perfectly written, some lacked essential information or contained spelling errors. The promotion of South Korea as a tourist destination on YouTube during the “Visit Korea Year 2023–2024” campaign has several deficiencies but also considerable potential. To enhance the effectiveness of future marketing campaigns, consistent formulas need to be employed and a clear definition of what is popular among the viewers needs to be researched.

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