

Article



Multicultural Commercial Districts: International Students' Perceived Value and Place Advocacy

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Abstract: This study examines the potential development of a multicultural commercial district from the perspective of international students and investigates their potential role as advocates for local commercial areas. Data were collected from 163 international students in Busan, Republic of Korea. Exploratory factor analysis identified four value dimensions: social and cultural experience, food experience, service facilities, and supportive environment. Regression analysis showed that social and cultural experience had the strongest positive relationship with advocacy intention, followed by supportive environment and food experience, while service facilities had no significant direct relationship. The moderating effects of K-content consumption were further examined by categorizing the four dimensions into broader experiential and functional values. K-content consumption significantly moderated the relationship between functional value and advocacy intention but did not moderate the relationship between experiential value and advocacy intention. These findings demonstrate that international students' advocacy for multicultural commercial districts is associated with distinct forms of perceived value and that the role of these values varies according to their K-content consumption. The study provides implications for developing culturally inclusive commercial districts and engaging international students as potential advocates for local commercial areas.

Keywords: multicultural commercial district; international students; perceived value; advocacy intention; K-content consumption; commercial revitalization

1. Introduction

International mobility has expanded substantially over recent decades. The global number of international migrants nearly doubled from approximately 154 million in 1990 to 304 million in 2024 [1]. International student mobility has also grown considerably. Despite the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, international student mobility continued to increase between 2018 and 2022 [2]. Along with the growth of international tourism [3], these trends have increased the presence of culturally diverse visitors and temporary residents in cities and destinations worldwide. As cities increasingly accommodate people with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, local commercial areas are no longer shaped solely by the needs of traditional local consumers. They increasingly function as spaces in which culturally diverse residents, international students, and visitors engage in consumption, social interaction, and cultural experiences.

This growing cultural diversity has implications for the development and revitalization of urban commercial districts. Previous research shows that culturally distinctive urban areas can develop into important spaces for consumption, leisure, entertainment, cultural experience, and tourism. Ethnic enclaves, for example, have evolved in some cities from residential and employment concentrations into commercial spaces attracting co-ethnic



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consumers, local residents, and international visitors [4]. Research in hospitality and tourism similarly characterizes ethnic enclaves as gastronomic and cultural destinations where food, cultural experiences, retail outlets, festivals, and services collectively contribute to visitor experiences [5]. In parallel, cultural district research has emphasized the role of geographically concentrated cultural and commercial activities in improving place attractiveness and supporting local revitalization [6,7]. These developments suggest growing relevance for multicultural commercial districts, where culturally diverse experiences, consumption opportunities, and supporting services coexist within a geographically concentrated commercial area.

International students are particularly relevant in this context because they reside in the host country for an extended period and participate repeatedly in everyday consumption, social interaction, leisure, and travel. At the same time, their social relationships often extend beyond the host community, allowing their local experiences to be communicated through interpersonal and online networks [8]. Therefore, international students can occupy a dual position as local consumers and potential advocates of the places they experience in the host country.

This study examines the potential development of a multicultural commercial district from the perspective of international students. Specifically, the study has three objectives. First, it explores the key value dimensions that international students consider important for the development of a multicultural commercial district. Second, it identifies key value dimensions that influence international students' advocacy intentions. Third, it examines whether the relationships between the identified values and advocacy intentions differ according to international students' K-content consumption. Consequently, this study extends the understanding of multicultural commercial districts by incorporating international students' evaluations and their potential role as advocates for local commercial areas.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Multicultural Commercial Districts

Culture has been incorporated into urban development strategies to revitalize declining commercial areas and enhance place attractiveness [6,7]. This trend has generated various spatial concepts, including cultural districts (e.g., [7,9]), cultural quarters (e.g., [10,11]), and cultural clusters (e.g., [12,13]). Although these terms differ in their origins and applications, they generally refer to the geographical concentration of cultural activities, facilities, and related economic activities within a particular area [6]. For example, Park [7] describes cultural districts as geographically concentrated areas of cultural and entertainment facilities and notes that their functions can range from cultural production to commercialized entertainment and consumption. Similarly, Nuccio and Ponzini [6] show that cultural districts, clusters, and quarters have been widely adopted in urban and regional policy although their meanings and geographical scales vary considerably across contexts.

Cultural districts have also been associated with local revitalization by attracting visitors, supporting retail activity, and improving the image and vitality of declining urban areas [7]. In Republic of Korea, for example, culture-led strategies have been introduced to revitalize distressed commercial areas by attracting cultural activities and visitors. However, previous research also cautions that the designation or planned development of a cultural district does not necessarily produce successful revitalization, particularly when local needs and participation are insufficiently considered [6,7].

A related stream of research shows that ethnic enclaves have also evolved into culturally distinctive commercial and consumption spaces. For example, Kim [4] describes Manhattan's Koreatown as a transclave, a commercialized ethnic space centered on consumption, leisure, and entertainment rather than primarily on residence and employment. Similarly, hospitality and tourism research views ethnic enclaves as gastronomic and cultural destinations where food, cultural experiences, retail outlets, festivals, and services collectively contribute to visitor experiences [5].

Based on these two streams of research, this study uses the term multicultural commercial district to describe a geographically concentrated commercial area that provides culturally diverse experiences, food offerings, service facilities, and a supportive environment for consumption, social interaction, and cultural exchange. This concept differs from conventional cultural districts and ethnic enclaves in several respects. Cultural districts generally emphasize the geographical concentration of cultural activities, facilities, and cultural production as a means of fostering cultural development and urban revitalization [6,7,9]. In contrast, ethnic enclaves have traditionally been associated with the residential, economic, and cultural concentration of particular ethnic communities, although some have evolved into commercial spaces for consumption, leisure, and tourism [4,5]. Thus, the multicultural character of such a district derives not only from culturally diverse offerings but also from the diversity of its consumers and the interactions that occur within the commercial space. Accordingly, understanding which attributes consumers consider valuable becomes important when developing such districts.

2.2. Perceived Value

Perceived value has been regarded as an important concept for understanding consumer evaluations and behavioral decisions. Early research primarily conceptualized perceived value as an overall assessment based on what consumers receive relative to what they give up [14]. However, subsequent research has viewed perceived value as a multidimensional construct. For example, Sheth et al. [15] proposed five consumption values, namely functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional value, suggesting that consumers evaluate products, services, and consumption settings based on both practical benefits and broader experiential and socio-psychological benefits.

A useful broader distinction can be made between functional and experiential value. Functional value reflects the practical and utilitarian benefits derived from an offering, whereas experiential value reflects benefits derived from consumers' experiences and interactions during consumption [16–19]. These studies indicate that functional and experiential value provide complementary perspectives for understanding how consumers evaluate consumption environments.

The multidimensional nature of perceived value is evident across diverse tourism and hospitality settings. Functional, emotional, and social values have been identified in tourists' evaluations of tourism products and services [20], while experiential value has been examined in food tourism [21] and food and wine festivals [22,23]. Cultural value has also been identified as an important dimension of tourists' food consumption experiences, reflecting the role of local food in experiencing and understanding destination culture [24]. Furthermore, local food can possess symbolic value by representing local identity and providing visitors with a means of engaging with the culture of a destination [25].

The functional-experiential distinction can provide a broader framework for organizing more specific forms of perceived value. Experiential value encompasses benefits arising from cultural engagement, social interaction, and consumption experiences, while functional value concerns practical attributes and environmental conditions that facilitate consumption [16–18]. Therefore, specific value dimensions identified in a consumption setting may be conceptually organized according to their predominantly experiential or functional characteristics. This broader distinction provides a theoretical basis for examining how different forms of value influence subsequent consumer responses.

2.3. Advocacy Intention

Consumer advocacy is defined as a form of voluntary cooperation with a firm [26]. Unlike general positive word-of-mouth (PWOM), which involves favorable comments without a deliberate attempt to influence others, advocacy is characterized by proactive, strongly expressed, and persistent recommendations intended to affect other consumers' evaluations and choices [27]. Advocates recommend an offering, communicate favorable experiences, defend it against criticism, or actively encourage others to consider or use it. Advocacy has become an important construct in consumer-brand relationship, enabling consumers to amplify their opinions and recommendations across wider networks [28,29].

The significance of advocacy extends naturally to hospitality, tourism, and place-related settings. In service contexts, personal recommendations are especially influential because consumers often rely on other consumers' experiences when evaluating intangible and heterogeneous offerings [27]. Hospitality research likewise treats advocacy as consumers' strong support for a business through positive WOM, recommendations, information sharing based on personal experience, and defense against criticism [30]. In tourism contexts, visitors who develop favorable evaluations of a place can recommend it to others, communicate positive experiences, and encourage others to visit. Further, digital and social media extend these behaviors by allowing such evaluations to circulate beyond immediate interpersonal networks.

Perceived value provides an important basis for such advocacy. Advocacy research indicates that consumers' favorable evaluations of an offering can motivate them to move beyond personal consumption and actively communicate support to others. In hospitality settings, positive relational evaluations have been shown to foster advocacy behaviors [30], while research on consumer advocacy more broadly identifies service quality, brand identification, and positive consumption experiences as important antecedents of advocacy [27]. Therefore, the following hypotheses were established:

Hypothesis 1: *Experiential value influences international students' advocacy intention.*

Hypothesis 2: *Functional value influences international students' advocacy intention.*

K-content consumption may differentiate how international students respond to the perceived value of local places. Previous research has shown that engagement with Korean popular culture can influence consumers' perceptions of Korea and their tourism-related responses. K-pop consumption can foster familiarity with Korea and subsequently encourage travel-related responses [31], while engagement with K-pop celebrities can contribute to the formation of affective destination image through the transfer of cultural meanings to the destination [32]. More recent research also demonstrates that engagement with Hallyu content through social media is associated with Hallyu-related tourism consumption [33] and that exposure to Korean dramas can contribute to intentions to visit Korea and its cultural sites [34]. These findings suggest that K-content consumption provides international consumers with prior cultural exposure and familiarity that can affect how they respond to Korean places and consumption environments. Accordingly, the relationship between the perceived value of a multicultural commercial district and advocacy intention may differ according to international students' level of K-content consumption. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3: *K-content consumption moderates the relationships between perceived value and advocacy intention.*

3. Methods

3.1. Study Context

The study was conducted in the commercial district surrounding Pusan National University (PNU) in Busan, Republic of Korea. PNU is a major national university in Busan, with approximately 30,000 students and staff, and its surrounding area has historically served as one of the city's major university-oriented commercial districts. During its peak in the 1990s, the district was regarded as one of Busan's three major commercial centers, along with Seomyeon and Nampo-dong. The area developed around a concentration of retail, dining, service, and leisure establishments catering particularly to university students and younger consumers. However, in recent years, the district has experienced substantial commercial decline, showing a high commercial vacancy rate and a continued decline in annual sales. Changes in consumer behavior, the expansion of online shopping, competition from other commercial centers, and a decline in younger customers have weakened its traditional position. These changes have created a need to reconsider how the district can attract consumers and establish a distinctive identity rather than relying on its former role as a conventional university shopping area. At the same time, the area retains considerable potential associated with its university population. PNU provides a large concentration of young consumers, including international students, while several other universities are located within the broader district. The increasing presence of international students provides an additional source of cultural diversity and creates opportunities for consumption, social interaction, and cultural exchange within the local commercial environment. Therefore, the PNU commercial district provides an appropriate setting for examining how international students evaluate the values of a multicultural commercial district and how such evaluations are associated with their advocacy intentions.

3.2. Measurement Items

The measurement items were developed based on the purposes of the study and the characteristics of the study context. Because no established scale was available to assess the attributes considered important for the development of a multicultural commercial district, an initial pool of items was developed through a qualitative process involving multiple stakeholder groups. Interviews were conducted with 12 participants, including two local merchants operating businesses in the study area, four local government officials, three international graduate students with experience living and studying in Korea, and three academic researchers specializing in consumer behavior and intercultural studies. Based on these interviews, an initial pool of 30 potential value attributes was generated. The research team subsequently reviewed the items for relevance, conceptual overlap, and clarity. Redundant or overlapping items were removed, and the wording of the remaining items was refined for use in the questionnaire. This process resulted in 22 items assessing the attributes considered important for the development of a multicultural commercial district. Respondents evaluated the importance of each attribute on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not important at all) to 7 (extremely important). Advocacy intention was measured using nine items adapted from Badenes-Rocha et al. [28], Hyun and Kim [30], and Sweeney et al. [27]. The items assessed respondents' intentions to recommend the district and communicate favorable evaluations through interpersonal and social media channels. In addition, drawing on the concept of visiting friends and relatives (VFR), selected items were modified to assess respondents' intentions to invite friends and relatives from their home countries to visit the district. In this study, K-content consumption was operationalized as respondents'

consumption of Korean screen-based narrative content, specifically K-dramas and K-movies. Screen-based Korean cultural content was selected because it provides international audiences with repeated exposure to Korean places, lifestyles, and cultural settings, contributing to familiarity with Korea and its culture [35]. K-content consumption was measured using a single item assessing the average amount of time respondents spent watching K-dramas or K-movies per day. Response options ranged from 1 (rarely watch) to 6 (more than 5 h per day). Thus, the measure reflects the intensity of respondents' exposure to K-dramas and K-movies rather than the full range of Korean cultural content.

3.3. Data Collection and Data Analysis

Data were collected from international students who had previously visited the commercial district surrounding Pusan National University in Busan, Republic of Korea. The survey was conducted between August and September 2025. Potential respondents were recruited from international students enrolled at Pusan National University and Busan University of Foreign Studies, including undergraduate and graduate students, exchange students, and Korean language trainees. Because the study focused on international students with actual familiarity with the study area, respondents were screened to confirm that they had previously visited the PNU commercial district. Given the difficulty of accessing this specific population, snowball sampling was employed, whereby initial participants and contacts were asked to refer other eligible international students. Qualified respondents received a link to the online questionnaire and completed the survey voluntarily. A coffee coupon was provided to respondents who completed the questionnaire as a small token of appreciation. A total of 163 completed questionnaires were obtained and used for the study.

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 30.0. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to identify the dimensions of perceived value. Additionally, to empirically test the proposed hypotheses, multiple and hierarchical regression analyses were performed.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of the respondents was examined based on 163 valid responses. The sample comprised 85.3% female and 14.7% male respondents. The mean age was 24.68 years ($SD = 4.33$). Regarding academic status, 51.5% were undergraduate students, 38.7% were graduate students, and 9.8% were language trainees, exchange students, or others. The respondents represented diverse national backgrounds, with the largest groups from Vietnam (34.4%), China (23.9%), Myanmar (11.0%), and Japan (9.2%), followed by Mongolia (4.9%), Kazakhstan (3.1%), and other countries (13.5%).

4.2. Reliability and Validity Test

EFA with Varimax rotation was conducted to identify sub-dimensions of perceived value in the proposed multicultural commercial district. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure indicated a high level of sampling adequacy ($KMO = 0.885$), and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 2250.448$, $df = 231$, $p < 0.01$), supporting the suitability of the data for factor analysis. As shown in Table 1, all retained items exhibited factor loadings above 0.50. Four components with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted, accounting for 64.96% of the total variance. After Varimax rotation, the first component accounted for 23.16% of the variance and consisted of nine items representing social and cultural experiences, with factor loadings ranging from 0.573 to 0.772. The second component accounted for 15.23% of the variance and included five items representing a supportive environment, with loadings ranging from 0.668 to 0.772. The third component, representing food experience, accounted for 13.46% of the variance and comprised four items with loadings ranging from 0.512 to 0.821. The fourth component represented service facilities and accounted for 13.10% of the variance, with four items loading between 0.714 and 0.833. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.918 for social and cultural experience, 0.813 for food experience, 0.865 for service facilities, 0.826 for supportive environment, and 0.886 for advocacy intention. Thus, all alpha values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency [36].

Table 1. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results.

	Social and Cultural Experience	Food Experience	Service Facilities	Supportive Environment	Eigen Value	% Variance	Cronbach's α
SCE 1	0.772				9.275	23.164	0.918
SCE 2	0.764						
SCE 3	0.747						
SCE 4	0.736						
SCE 5	0.717						
SCE 6	0.702						
SCE 7	0.671						
SCE 8	0.640						
SCE 9	0.573						
FE 1		0.821			1.793	13.460	0.813
FE 2		0.789					
FE 3		0.716					
FE 4		0.512					
SF 1			0.833		1.240	13.100	0.865
SF 2			0.749				
SF 3			0.726				
SF 4			0.714				
SE 1				0.772	1.982	15.232	0.826
SE 2				0.723			
SE 3				0.720			
SE 4				0.677			
SE 5				0.668			

Discriminant validity was further assessed using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). As presented in Table 2, the HTMT values among the five constructs ranged from 0.526 to 0.687, all below the recommended threshold of 0.85 [37], providing evidence of discriminant validity among the constructs. Based on the conceptual characteristics of the four dimensions, social and cultural experience and food experience were categorized as experiential value, whereas service facilities and supportive environment were categorized as functional value.

Table 2. Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT).

Construct	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) Social and cultural experience	1				
(2) Food experience	0.675	1			
(3) Service facilities	0.614	0.669	1		
(4) Supportive environment	0.593	0.526	0.580	1	
(5) Advocacy	0.687	0.604	0.527	0.613	1

4.3. Hypothesis Test

To examine the effects of the four dimensions of perceived value on advocacy intention, multiple regression analysis was conducted. The results were presented in Table 3. The overall regression model was statistically significant ($F(4, 158) = 37.671, p < 0.001$) and explained 48.8% of the variance in advocacy intention. Social and cultural experience had the strongest positive effect on advocacy intention ($\beta = 0.392, p < 0.001$). Food experience ($\beta = 0.195, p = 0.018$) and supportive environment ($\beta = 0.198, p = 0.005$) were also positively associated with advocacy intention. In contrast, service facilities did not significantly influence advocacy intention ($\beta = 0.042, p = 0.572$). VIF values ranged from 1.518 to 2.072, indicating that multicollinearity did not appear to be a concern. The Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.952, indicating no substantial concern regarding the independence of residuals.

Table 3. Path Coefficients.

Path	β	t	p	VIF
Social and cultural experience $\rightarrow$ Advocacy intention	0.392	4.800	<0.001	2.061
Food experience $\rightarrow$ Advocacy intention	0.195	2.381	0.018	2.072
Service facilities $\rightarrow$ Advocacy intention	0.042	0.565	0.572	1.717
Supportive environment $\rightarrow$ Advocacy intention	0.198	2.817	0.005	1.518

A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to assess the moderating role of K-content consumption. Although the EFA identified four distinct dimensions, for the subsequent moderation analysis, these four empirically derived dimensions were conceptually organized into two broader value categories based on the functional-experiential distinction established in the perceived value literature [16–18]. Social and cultural experience and food experience were categorized as experiential value because they primarily represent benefits

derived from cultural engagement, social interaction, and consumption experiences. Service facilities and supportive environment were categorized as functional value because they primarily represent practical services and environmental conditions that facilitate consumption and use of the district. Table 4 presents the results of the interaction effects between the two broader value categories and K-content consumption on international students' advocacy intention. Specifically, age and duration of stay in Korea were used as control variables in Model 1. In Model 2, experiential value, functional value, and K-content consumption were added to the regression. The inclusion of these variables substantially increased the explained variance by 49.3% ($\Delta R^2 = 0.493$, $\Delta F = 45.285$, $p < 0.001$), resulting in an R^2 of 0.518. Experiential value ($\beta = 0.534$, $p < 0.001$) and functional value showed significant positive effects on advocacy intention ($\beta = 0.206$, $p = 0.011$). Additionally, K-content consumption positively influenced advocacy intention ($\beta = 0.145$, $p = 0.018$). In Model 3, the interaction terms between the two value dimensions and K-content consumption were entered. The interaction terms produced a statistically significant increase in explanatory power ($\Delta R^2 = 0.042$, $\Delta F = 6.235$, $p = 0.003$), with the final model explaining 55.9% of the variance in advocacy intention ($R^2 = 0.559$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.536$). The interaction between functional value and K-content consumption was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.356$, $p = 0.005$), whereas the interaction between experiential value and K-content consumption was not significant ($\beta = -0.022$, $p = 0.854$). These findings indicate that K-content consumption moderated the relationship between functional value and advocacy intention, but not the relationship between experiential value and advocacy intention. That is, experiential value had a strong and positive impact on advocacy intention regardless of the level of K-content consumption, while the effect of functional value on advocacy intention varied according to the level of K-content consumption.

Table 4. Hierarchical Regression Results.

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Control variables			
Age	-0.172	-0.069	-0.061
Duration of stay in Korea	0.027	-0.009	-0.022
Main effects			
Experiential value		0.534 **	0.553 **
Functional value		0.206 *	-0.079
K-content consumption		0.145 *	0.156 **
Interaction effects			
Experiential value $\times$ K-content consumption			-0.022
Functional value $\times$ K-content consumption			0.356 **
Model statistics			
R^2	0.025	0.518	0.559
Adjusted R^2	0.010	0.499	0.536
ΔR^2		0.493	0.042
ΔF		45.285 **	6.235 **

Notes: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

To further examine the moderation roles at the attribute level, separate hierarchical regression analyses were conducted for the four specific dimensions of perceived value. As shown in Table 5, K-content consumption significantly moderated the relationship between service facilities and advocacy intention ($\beta = 0.423$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.083$, $p < 0.001$), with this interaction producing the largest increase in explained variance. Significant interaction effects were also found for supportive environment ($\beta = 0.255$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.025$, $p = 0.027$) and food experience ($\beta = 0.254$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.029$, $p = 0.013$). In contrast, the interaction between social and cultural experience and K-content consumption was not significant ($\beta = 0.120$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.006$, $p = 0.233$).

Table 5. Follow-up Moderation Analyses Results.

Interaction	β	ΔR^2	ΔF	p	Result
Social and cultural experience $\times$ K-content	0.120	0.006	1.438	0.233	Not significant
Food experience $\times$ K-content	0.254	0.029	6.296	0.013	Significant
Service facilities $\times$ K-content	0.423	0.083	16.350	<0.001	Significant
Supportive environment $\times$ K-content	0.255	0.025	4.932	0.027	Significant

Figure 1 summarizes the results of the hypothesis testing.

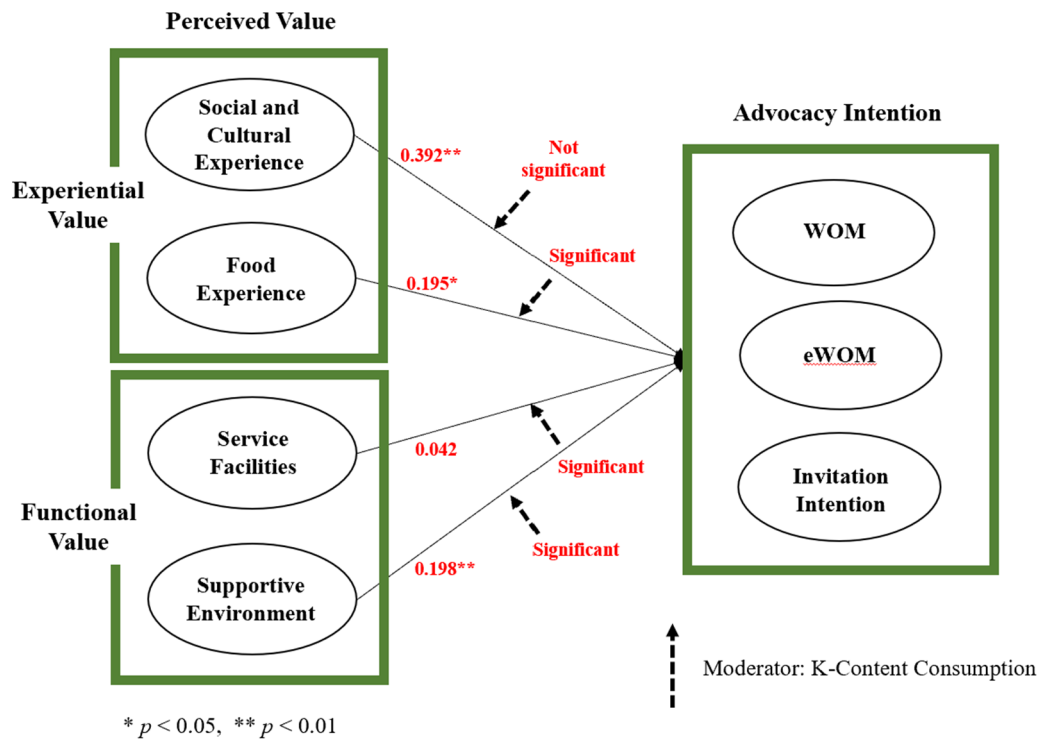


Figure 1. Results of the Hypothesis Tests.

5. Discussion and Implications

5.1. Theoretical Implications

This study offers several theoretical implications for research on multicultural commercial districts, perceived value, and consumer advocacy. First, the findings extend the literature on culturally oriented commercial districts by identifying the values that culturally diverse consumers consider important in such spaces. Previous research has primarily examined cultural districts as spatial concentrations of cultural activities and facilities [6,7] or ethnic enclaves as culturally distinctive spaces for consumption and tourism [4,5]. The present study approaches the issue from the perspective of international students as potential users of a multicultural commercial district. In the study, four distinct value dimensions emerged from their evaluations (e.g., social and cultural experience, food experience, service facilities, and supportive environment). These findings indicate that the value of a multicultural commercial district extends beyond cultural attractions themselves and incorporates both experiential opportunities and practical conditions that facilitate everyday consumption and interaction.

Second, the findings demonstrated that among the four dimensions, social and cultural experience had the strongest positive relationship with advocacy intention, followed by supportive environment and food experience, whereas service facilities had no significant direct relationship. This finding is consistent with the multidimensional view of perceived value, which recognizes that consumers derive value from both functional and experiential aspects of consumption [17,19]. More importantly, the results suggest that, unlike attributes that primarily facilitate the use of a commercial district, cultural activities and interpersonal interactions can generate experiences that students are more willing to communicate and recommend to others. This interpretation is consistent with the conceptualization of advocacy as an active form of consumer support that involves communicating favorable experiences and influencing others' evaluations and choices [27]. Additionally, the nonsignificant effect of service facilities can be explained by their primarily supportive role. Multilingual menus, QR-based ordering systems, interactive signage, and AI-based guidance may improve convenience and accessibility but may not independently provide compelling reasons for students to advocate for the district. Therefore, their value may become more apparent when they support other experiences within the district.

Third, the study identifies K-content consumption as an important moderator of the relationship between perceived value and advocacy intention. Notably, its moderating role differed between experiential and functional values. K-content consumption did not significantly moderate the relationship between experiential value and advocacy intention. In contrast, it significantly moderated the relationship between functional value and advocacy intention. This finding suggests that greater K-content consumption may increase familiarity with Korean places, lifestyles, and consumption settings [35], increasing the relevance of functional attributes when international

students evaluate local environments. However, experiential value may provide more immediate benefits through cultural and social engagement, making its relationship with advocacy less dependent on prior K-content exposure. Thus, media-based engagement with Korean culture may affect how international consumers evaluate and respond to different forms of value in local consumption environments.

5.2. Managerial Implications

The findings provide practical implications for the revitalization of university commercial districts serving culturally diverse populations. Most importantly, revitalization strategies should not focus exclusively on physical improvements or additional service facilities. Social and cultural experience was the strongest predictor of advocacy intention, suggesting that international students are particularly responsive to opportunities for cultural participation and social interaction. Therefore, commercial district planners could prioritize activities that encourage interaction among international and local students, such as cultural exchange programs, cooking classes, international festivals, buddy programs, and cultural or entertainment events. Such activities may provide international students with experiences worth communicating and recommending to others.

Food experience also had a significant positive relationship with advocacy intention. A multicultural commercial district can therefore benefit from diverse dining opportunities, international food markets, and food-related cultural experiences. Food is particularly suitable for commercial revitalization because it combines everyday consumption with opportunities for cultural experience and social interaction. District planners can further enhance the role of international food offerings by integrating them with festivals, cultural programs, and opportunities for interaction among culturally diverse consumers.

The findings regarding functional value provide a different implication. Although service facilities did not directly predict advocacy intention, their relationship with advocacy differed according to K-content consumption. Supportive environment also demonstrated both a positive direct relationship and a significant interaction effect. Thus, practical features such as multilingual services, accessible information, convenient digital services, public Wi-Fi, and a safe and supportive environment should not be regarded as secondary considerations. These features can reduce practical barriers faced by international consumers and may be particularly important for specific segments of international students. Commercial district revitalization should therefore combine experience-oriented programs that provide reasons to visit and advocate for the district with functional support that makes participation convenient and accessible.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations that provide directions for future research. First, the study was conducted among international students in a university commercial district in Busan, Republic of Korea. Although this setting was appropriate for examining culturally diverse consumers, the findings may differ across cities, universities, and commercial environments. Future research could examine multicultural commercial districts in other geographical and institutional settings and include other internationally mobile populations, such as migrants and international tourists. The sample also contained a relatively high proportion of female respondents, with some national groups more heavily represented than others, and participants were recruited through snowball sampling. These characteristics may have limited the representativeness of the sample. Future research could employ more balanced samples and probability-based or broader recruitment strategies where feasible.

Second, although advocacy intentions provide useful information about consumers' willingness to recommend, communicate, and invite others, various constraints may prevent these intentions from translating into actual advocacy behavior. Future studies could examine observable advocacy outcomes, such as social media posts, online recommendations, referrals, or actual visits by friends and relatives.

Third, K-content consumption was measured using a single item based on respondents' daily viewing time of K-dramas and K-movies. Although this measure reflects the intensity of exposure to Korean screen-based content, K-content encompasses a much broader range of cultural products, including K-pop, entertainment programs, online videos, food-related content, games, and other digital media. Therefore, future research could employ multidimensional measures that reflect both the frequency and diversity of K-content consumption across different content categories.

Author Contributions

N.R.: conceptualization, methodology, validation, data curation, writing—original draft preparation; J.K.: conceptualization, methodology, software, data curation; I.K.: conceptualization, investigation, supervision, validation, writing—reviewing and editing. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The data are not publicly available due to privacy and confidentiality concerns.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Use of AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT to assist with language editing and improving readability. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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