

What a BTS Concert Did for Busan's Small Businesses: Sales Up 3.6%, Foreign Spending Up 71.7%

The Ministry of SMEs and Startups (MSS) has analyzed what a global concert means for neighborhood shops and small businesses, examining sales across Busan's main commercial districts before and after BTS's world tour "Arirang" performances held in the city on June 12 and 13.

Because concertgoers do not simply arrive and leave on the day of a show – many stay in the city and spend across a range of businesses – MSS compared sales over a four-week window spanning two weeks before and after the concerts (May 30 to Jun 27) against the same period last year (May 31 to June 28, 2025).

Drawing on data from Korea Credit Data (KCD) merchants in Busan – shops and services people use day to day – the analysis found that small business sales in the city rose 3.6 percent year-on-year on the back of the concerts. That figure far outstrips both the national average of 0.4 percent and Seoul's 0.3 percent over the same period.

Sales on the concert days themselves jumped 11.1 percent from a year earlier. Notably, the run-up to the concerts drove more spending than the aftermath: sales were up 4.4 percent two weeks before and 3.3 percent one week before, against 3.4 percent one week after and 1.0 percent two weeks after.

By sector, convenience stores (up 6.5 percent) and hair and beauty salons (up 6.2 percent) – both popular with visitors from outside the city – outpaced the overall average. Restaurants posted a solid 3.6 percent gain.

Yeongdo led with a 13.7 percent increase, buoyed by its growing popularity for mural villages and distinctive cafes. Gukje Market (up 11.0 percent), Seomyeon (up 8.7 percent), Haeundae (up 5.0 percent), and the area around Busan Station (up 4.2 percent) all came in above the citywide average.

The influx of international fans lifted spending by foreign visitors in Busan by 71.7 percent year-on-year.

Accommodation saw the sharpest rise at 148.1 percent, followed by restaurants (up 72.3 percent), convenience stores (up 71.0 percent), and hair and beauty salons (up 63.8 percent).

By district, Yeongdo (up 259.1 percent) and Gwangalli (up 101.3 percent) more than doubled their foreign spending from a year earlier – the clearest winners from concert tourism.

"This analysis shows, with data, the economic ripple effect that cultural content like a large-scale K-pop concert has on small businesses and neighborhood commercial districts," said MSS Vice Minister Lee Byeong-Gweon. "Public and private data on small businesses is currently scattered across sources. We will keep bringing it together and use it to build more precise, evidence-based support policies."

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