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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Uses and Gratifications of Korean Entertainment Consumption among Moroccan Fans

Mariame Naguim<sup>1</sup> ✉ Abdelhamid Nfissi<sup>2</sup> and Sanae Mammoun<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Doctorate Holder from the Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences, Sais-Fes, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah, Morocco

<sup>2</sup>Senior Professor, Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences, Sais-Fes, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah, Morocco

**Corresponding Author:** Mariame Naguim, **E-mail:** [mariamenuim3@gmail.com](mailto:mariamenuim3@gmail.com)

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| ABSTRACT

In the past decade, Korean popular entertainment has gained global popularity, including in Morocco. This paper aims to explore the uses and gratifications of Korean popular entertainment consumption among Moroccan fans. To achieve this objective, a quantitative research design was adopted. The results indicate that fans of Korean popular entertainment in Morocco satisfy cognitive needs by gaining knowledge about Korean culture, fulfill social needs by seeking connections with other fans, and find escapism in this form of entertainment. The findings of this research provide valuable insights into transnational fandoms and help to understand the patterns of consumption of transnational media entertainment content in Morocco. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on the globalization of Korean popular culture and its impact on audiences in different parts of the world.

| KEYWORDS

Fandom, Korean entertainment, popular culture, uses and gratification theory

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### 1. Introduction

Although the practices of fandom had been pathologised for a long time in media and academia before the eighties (Jenkins, 1992), the proliferation of digital technologies has gradually shifted this negative perspective, and the practices of fandom have become wildly celebrated. One of the reasons for this new positive attitude towards fans is that in its early stages, fan communities were the ones who quickly adapted to cyberspace since it provided an opportunity for such like-minded individuals to cluster and interconnect (Reijnders et al., 2017). In recent years, fan culture has become popularized and integrated with the mainstream culture, especially in the virtual sphere, where several sectors and companies use this digital environment to reach fans and target them to sell their products.

The complex and diverse nature of fandoms led many academics to establish the field of fan studies, in which this subculture is thoroughly studied and analysed. In contrast to the traditional "effects" model, which claimed that media audiences are passive, studies in this new field argued that not only these particular audiences are active, but their performances, identities and production are worth exploring since they intersect with social and economic aspects. The fandom experience is no longer marginal but a considerable factor in studying audiences and users, especially now that different media and cultural flows are prominent in the cyber sphere. The spaces where fandom activities take place can be virtual and physical. In the digital space, fans create groups on social media and forums; in the physical one, they meet in small-scale and large-scale clubs and organize and attend events and conventions. In these social gatherings, they celebrate their favourite media content and share their knowledge, emotions and creativity (Reijnders et al., 2017).

One of these new global cultural flows that have become popularized through Satellite television and new media is the Korean popular culture. The internet helped fans of this phenomenon reach each other and organize their community. The new Korean Wave's own "social mediascape" nature had altered not only the level of its exposure but also how this media content is

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disseminated, used and consumed among fans and the general audiences. This paper aims to explore how fans use Korean entertainment and the needs they gratify when they consume it. To reach this objective, a quantitative design was employed.

## **2. The Literature Review**

### **2.1 Uses and Gratification Theory**

In order to understand the uses and the needs Moroccan fans satisfy while consuming Korean entertainment content, the theory of Uses and gratification was used. This theory aims to understand the audience's relationship with media content and their behaviour besides the classical consumption model, which looked at the audiences as passive consumers.

According to Sullivan (2013), the genesis of this theory came as a response to Bernard Berelson, a communication scholar who claims in an editorial article in 1959 that the communication studies field was in crisis. Katz' (1959) response was that while the traditional paradigm of communication and media research that views media's influence as erosive and absolute has come to a halt, he calls for a paradigm shift, and instead, this new paradigm "should reframe issues of media power to more fully document the conditions under which individuals choose to consume particular types of media and media content" (Sullivan, 2013, p.109). Katz argues that research should move to "functional audience enquiry" (Sullivan, 2013, p.109). He also believes that the audience's approach to media text comes with previous agendas and interests in advance, and those interests differ from one member of the audience to another. "Audiences bring their own sets of beliefs, values and needs, some of which may be shaped by their social environment, to their media exposures" (Sullivan, 2013, p.109). In other words, there are many factors that affect people's choice of media content, for instance, their cultural background, previous experiences and personality.

Research on media audiences as "users" can be tracked down to the 1920s. The Payne Fund studies research on the effects of motion pictures in the 1920s is one of the early ones. In a study conducted by the sociologist Herbert (1933), he took a different approach to the study of audiences; instead of conducting surveys as it has been done by communication researchers at that time, Blumer's method was collecting "autobiographical statements" in which he asked his subjects to "write life histories, describing the movies' impact on their developing emotional, social and intellectual lives during childhood and adolescence" (Sullivan, 2013, p. 109). These autobiographical statements provided insights into how these adolescents and young adults choose to consume movies and the reasons and motivations behind their choices. Some of these needs were "romantic fantasies, role modeling and information about faraway people and places" (p. 110).

One of the most well-known and cited cases related to the study of the uses and gratification of media content is a 1944 study conducted by Herzog from the office of Radio Research at Columbia University. The aim of this research was to see "what radio means in the life of listeners" (Lazarsfeld & Stanton, 1944, p. vii). Herzog looked for what satisfaction female listeners derive from daytime serials (Sullivan, 2013). At the beginning stage of her research, Herzog came up with a set of hypotheses; she thought radio listeners would have less social life and lack interest in social issues. Moreover, they would consume much of their time on radio listening, and they would have a lot of anxieties that they would recompense for by excessive radio listening and daytime serial drama (Sullivan, 2013). However, the results of the study showed that radio listeners were engaged in their community and were as social as non-listeners. However, the difference was in terms of interests; while non-listeners were interested in historical novels, radio listeners were interested in mystery and topics that were more related to their preferred topics of listening (radio topics). And they used radio as a source of information and news rather than newspapers and other traditional mediums of information. Additionally, these female radio listeners use radio programs for "emotional release" and "fantasising", as well as a means of education about social decorum.

As the previous cases show, this theory focuses on the relationship between the audience and the media they consume. Unlike previous approaches that focus on a "functional perspective on audience activity." (Sullivan, 2013, p. 113), this perspective seeks to comprehend the reasons and motives for media texts' use. The audience, in this case, is considered active users who are rational about their media use. In 1974, Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumer and Michael Gurevitch suggested five assumptions of the Uses and Gratification theory, summarized as the following;

**First assumption:** the use of media is not separated from the audience's definite needs. Individuals bring their behaviour to the use of media. According to McQuail and colleagues (1972), these needs can be organised as follows: diversion needs, such as using television shows and movies as an escape from everyday life pressure. Personal relationships, audiences use social media for companionship. Personal identity, that is to say, the ways people use media to reinforce their values and surveillance, "a category of gratification coming from media use, involves collecting needed information" (West & Turner, 2010, p. 398). Likewise, Katz, Gurevitch and Haas (1973) suggested this typology of needs when researching the use of media among Israeli audiences.

**Table 1**  
*"Needs Gratified by the Media"*

Need type	Description	Media Examples
Cognitive	Acquiring information, knowledge, comprehension	Television (news), video ("How to Install Ceramic Tile"), movies (documentaries or films based on history, e.g., <i>The Other Boleyn Girl</i> )
Effective	Emotional, pleasant, or aesthetic experience	Movies, television (sitcoms, soap operas)
Personal integrative	Enhancing credibility, confidence, and status	Video ("Speaking with Conviction")
Social integrative	Enhancing connections with family, friends, and so forth	Internet (e-mail, chat rooms, Listserves, IM)
Tension Release	Escape and diversion	Television, movies, video, radio, Internet

Source: Adapted from Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973, In Sullivan, 2013

**Second assumption:** the choice of media content is not the same for everyone; even if two audience members choose the same media content, for example, a movie or a television show, a user may choose it for the plot or the desired genre, while others may be more interested in its cinematography, or they might be fans of the actors.

**Third assumption:** media is not separated from society and its aspects, and the relationship between media and society is more complicated. Many social factors affect the audience and their relationship with the media. One example is using media as a socialising device. While some people may socialise by meeting friends and having live conversations, others may prefer doing activities using media, such as playing video games with other players online or streaming movies.

**Fourth assumption,** relates to scholars rather than audiences. Researchers believe that audiences are able to give clear information about the reasons for their consumption choices. According to West and Turner (2010), early research on uses and gratification started by collecting qualitative data on the population. However, they opted later for a quantitative approach. The questions asked, nonetheless, were derived from previous interviews and observations.

**Fifth assumption:** researchers of media audiences should not judge the merit or the value of a media text and criticise the audience's needs or the reasons for choosing it. Additionally, sometimes audiences choose to consume content because they do not have other available choices. As stated by Rayburn and Palmgreen (1984),

[A] person may read a particular newspaper because it is the only one available, but this does not imply that she is perfectly satisfied with that newspaper. Indeed, she may be dissatisfied enough to drop her subscription if an alternative paper becomes available" (p. 542, as cited in West and Turner, 2010, p. 399).

Today, the Uses and Gratifications theory is applied in research on new media, such as smartphones, video games, and user-generated websites like blogs and social media. Papacharissi and Rubin's (2000) research is an excellent example since their study reveals the reason for browsing the internet. It was used as a replacement for individuals who are not satisfied with face-to-face interaction and those who find their living environment restricted economically (Papacharissi, 2009). Despite its widespread use and influence, the Uses and Gratification theory has faced some criticism; for instance, it was criticized by McQuail (1984) for being less critical of the credibility and reliability of media messages (West and Turner, 2010). In addition, not all media users are active while consuming media content. According to Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi (1990), many individuals watch television passively and with little or no focus. Uses and Gratification scholars also do not consider all the available choices and options for users and don't consider subconscious effects on people's choices (West and Turner, 2010).

Despite all these criticisms, the theory is still prominently in use today, especially in exploring internet communities' needs (see Alanzalon, 2011). For that reason, this study uses this theory to investigate the needs of Moroccan fans of Korean popular entertainment.

### **3. Methodology**

Academic research on transnational fandoms of popular culture in the digital age is relatively new and still lacks deep discussions on methodology (Evans & Stasi, 2014). However, due to its interdisciplinary nature, it borrows methodological perspectives and approaches from different fields in social sciences and humanities, such as cultural studies, media studies, film studies, psychology, anthropology, etc. (Evans & Stasi, 2014). In their article, *Desperately Seeking Methodology: New Directions in Fan Studies Research (2014)*, Evans and Stasi discuss and analyse why methodological discourse has been absent in twenty years of research on fans; one of the reasons is that fandom is a community that has no material existence; it is an “imagined community” that exists in virtual space, which makes it hard for researchers to track and contain. For these reasons, this study adopted research methods used in communication and media studies.

In order to explore the needs Moroccan fans satisfy when consuming Korean entertainment, the quantitative design was used. In this case, quantitative data is useful to map and draw a profile of Moroccan fans and tendencies and provide statistical results. The population chosen for this study is Moroccan fans of Korean popular entertainment content. Since it is challenging to distinguish members of non-mainstream subcultures, especially of media content, one of the best ways to reach out to them is through social gatherings and fan clubs since they are more visible and active there. This has become easier because of social media groups. It is important to state that not all fans are part of online communities or active in cyberspace.

The sampling method chosen for this study is ‘non-random sampling’, which is also called non-probability or purposive sampling; this sampling method is usually used within a positivist and post-positivist framework (Bertrand and Hughes, 2004). The rationale behind choosing this sampling method is that it is more appropriate when researching specific traits or characteristics of particular populations or when subjects require in-depth analysis (Bertrand and Hughes, 2004). In this case, it is helpful for exploring features of the Moroccan fandom. Two specific techniques were used, convenience sampling with its variant, snowball sampling (Goodman, 1961); these techniques’ main advantage is that it is easy for the researcher to reach the subjects under study. However, some researchers consider such sampling techniques as ‘weak’ and not representative of the whole population and deem them biased. However, it is notably beneficial for studying attitudes and characteristics of particular groups or a particular phenomenon (Deacon, 2007).

The questionnaire is chosen as a research instrument; it is both descriptive and analytical (Gray, 2014) since its main objectives are to collect data that describe the population and have an overall idea about the characteristics of this fan community, which is the uses and the needs they satisfy through their participation in this fandom. Web-based surveys (Google Forms) were created and shared online among Moroccan fans of Korean entertainment programs. To overcome the sampling error, the optimum size chosen for this study is 500+ subjects. The questionnaires are delivered through Social media websites and applications: Facebook and Instagram. The reason behind using the Internet survey instead of the traditional survey is for its fast delivery and to reach fans from different cities of Morocco since Moroccan fans use social media to find other fans and share their news and opinions. The reason for choosing only these two social media websites and applications is that many fans in Morocco use Facebook to create groups and Instagram to follow popular accounts of celebrities and fanbases. Targeted participants are active members of the official group “Moroccan fans of Korea 한국의 모로코 팬”, other official fanbases and groups and different Instagram accounts. The form of data collection is self-administered, cross-sectional questionnaires. This online instrumentation has advantages, which are its vast outreaching and speed of delivery. However, this instrument has some limitations. For instance, there is no guarantee that all participants will get the questionnaire or answer it. Besides, collecting the needed data takes a long time (Schonlau et al., 2002). The questionnaire contains 13 questions and statements that intend to elicit information about the subjects of the study. It is divided into two parts: The first category consists of demographic questions and questions about the frequency of consumption: the demographic items are gender, age, and occupation. The reason behind choosing these demographic variables is to have a general profile of the participants. Additionally, asking about the frequency and patterns of Korean popular entertainment consumption can measure the level of engagement. Whereas the second part of the questionnaire is composed of questions that investigate the uses and gratifications of Korean popular content by Moroccan fans. Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas's (1973) typology of needs gratified by mass media is used to explore some of the fans’ needs that were gratified by the Korean entertainment programs; these needs are,

1. **Cognitive needs:** to examine whether fans use Korean popular entertainment to learn about Korean culture and way of life.
2. **Affective needs:** to find out which elements of Korean music, dramas, and shows are pleasing to Moroccan fans.
3. **Personal integrative:** to explore whether Korean entertainment enhances the fans’ self-confidence and feeling of uniqueness

4. **Social integrative:** to find out whether Moroccan fans satisfy their social needs when consuming Korean entertainment content and help them in their social status.
5. **Tension release:** to find out whether fans consume Korean music and programs as an alternative to other local and foreign media content and see why they choose the former specifically.

The table below shows the items used in the questionnaire:

**Table 2**  
*Items Adopted for the Uses and Gratifications Scale*

Variables	Statements
<b>Cognitive needs: (Information seeking)</b>	- I watch Korean popular entertainment and/or listen to K-pop to learn about South Korea.
	- I watch Korean popular entertainment and/or listen to K-pop because I like South Korean culture.
<b>Affective needs: (Entertainment)</b>	- I watch Korean popular entertainment and/or listen to K-pop because I enjoy it better than other entertainment.
<b>Personal integrative: (Attention seeking)</b>	- I watch Korean popular entertainment and/or listen to K-pop because it makes me feel unique.
<b>Social integrative (social utility)</b>	- I watch Korean popular entertainment and/or listen to K-pop to connect with other fans.
	- I watch Korean popular entertainment and/or listen to K-pop to have topics to talk about with others.
<b>Tension release (passing time and escape)</b>	- I watch Korean popular entertainment and/or listen to K-pop to alleviate boredom.
	- I watch Korean popular entertainment and/or listen to K-pop to get away from daily pressure and responsibilities.

The psychometric scale used is a five-point Likert scale (1932) (anchored by 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) to measure the degree of agreement to the mentioned statements. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and level of significance are utilised to measure validity and reliability. Frequencies and standard deviations are used to measure the amount of variance.

Before distributing the official questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted to test the reliability and validity of the uses and gratifications scale; this scale's reliability was assessed via internal consistency. The relationship between all the items is measured simultaneously (Singleton & Straits, 2010). Generally, the scale is valid if Cronbach's Alpha is .70 or more. For Israel (1992), a Cronbach's alpha of .60 is also valid for exploratory research, and .80 shows that "the items have a good internal consistency" (Mirjana, 2017, p.67). The results of the test indicate that the Uses and gratifications scale is valid since Cronbach's Alpha is greater than .7. No items were deleted.

A codebook was created to analyse and organise the data; it includes all the studied variables, with their names and labels. The quantitative data were imported into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The statistical analyses that were conducted are; frequencies and percentages analysis, which aims to describe the sample, especially for the categorical data. Items of the uses and gratifications scale are calculated and analysed using the mean and standard deviation scores. Exploratory

Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted for the uses and gratifications scale. The main reasons factor analysis is used are to check whether factor loadings are consistent with all the items the study is seeking to measure and to extract the main factors of the scale.

**4. Results and Analysis**

As aforementioned, the main objective of this study is to investigate gratifications associated with Korean popular entertainment consumption and usage among Moroccan fans. In addition to demographic information, respondents were asked to provide the degree of agreement to 8 statements of gratifications derived from different studies on online media uses and gratification.

According to the analysis of the demographic data, the results show that the majority of fans of Korean popular entertainment in Morocco are young females (96.4%) who were first exposed to Korean entertainment, mainly through television and social media. As for the results of the mean and standard deviation of the gratifications scale, the items that have the highest score are “I watch Korean popular entertainment and/or listen to K-pop to have topics to talk with others” ( $M=3.44, SD=1.48$ ), and “I watch Korean popular entertainment and/or listen to K-pop to connect with other fans” ( $M= 3.25, SD=1.48$ ), and the lowest average score was detected for the statement “I watch Korean popular entertainment and/or listen to K-pop because I enjoy it better than other entertainments” ( $M=1.94, SD=1.22$ ).

These statements are used to conduct an exploratory factor analysis (Principal Component Analysis) with Promax with Kaiser normalization rotation to extract a group of dimensions bound together. The main criteria for choosing the retained factors are an Eigenvalue greater than 1.0 and a scree plot. Moreover, the threshold limit for the factor loading is .60. No cross-loaded items are included. Out of the eight items, three factors are identified for needs gratified when consuming Korean popular entertainment programs and music by Moroccan fans, with 70.61% of the total variance explained. Factor scores are computed by calculating the mean of each item that belongs to each factor. Table 3 shows the rotated factor loadings of the three factors identified.

**Table 3**  
*Rotated Factor Matrix for Uses and Gratifications*

Factor	I watch Korean popular entertainment and/or listen to K-pop because...	Factor		
		1	2	3
Cognitive needs	I like South Korean culture	.90		
	to learn about South Korea	.88		
	I enjoy it better than other entertainments	.62		
Social needs	to connect with other fans		.91	
	to have topics to talk about with others		.79	
	it makes me feel unique		.66	
Tension release (escape)	to alleviate boredom			.87

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Factor	I watch Korean popular entertainment and/or listen to K-pop because...	Factor		
		1	2	3
	to get away from daily pressure and responsibilities			.82
<b>Eigenvalue</b>		2.92	1.38	1.33
% of variance explained		36.59	17.30	16.71

The first factor includes three items related to South Korean culture and media, which the participants enjoy and want to learn about; this factor is named "Cognitive needs". It explains 36.59 % of the total variance. The second factor constitutes items related to the participants' connection to other fans and their identity in relation to others. Therefore, it is labelled "Social Needs"; this factor explains 17.30% of the total variance. The third and last factor consists of two items that are related to consuming this type of media as a way of getting away from daily pressures and elevating boredom. Therefore, it is labelled "Tension release, " resulting in 16.71% of the total variance.

## 5. Discussion

What differentiates fans from regular audiences and users is their attachment and constant consumption of their desired media content (Jenkins, 2006). Through this repeated consumption, fans satisfy a variety of needs. This study aims to explore what those needs are. Key concepts from the Uses and Gratifications theory by Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973) and their specific typology of needs were employed. The quantitative data analysis shows three main factors with the highest loading, "cognitive needs", "social needs", and "tension release". This part discusses these results and compares them with previous research on fans of Korean popular entertainment.

### 5.1 Cognitive Needs

According to McQuail, Blumler, and Brown (1972), one of the basic needs audiences gratify while using mass media is information seeking. Even when consuming entertainment programs and music, fans can use them to learn about a plethora of things, such as language, culture, art, etc. In this case, when fans build a pattern of consumption of Korean popular entertainment, they are exposed to certain elements of Korean culture, or at least a representation of such elements, and they are also exposed to the Korean language. As mentioned in the results section, the main reasons people use Korean popular entertainment are the following: because they like Korean culture, they want to learn about South Korea, and they enjoy it better than other entertainment. This learning process is not only proven and expressed in the Moroccan context; these conclusions are consistent with a study conducted by Alanzalon (2011) on Filipino fans of *Hallyu* (the Korean Wave), who not only did not find the language barrier hindering their repeated consumption but highly appreciated the Korean language and started learning it.

### 5.2 Social Needs

Among several studies on fans in popular culture and sports, a sense of community is considered one of the driving factors in belonging to a fandom. To connect with others, fans look for people who can identify with the narratives they consume the same way they do. This enhances their identity within their fan community and makes them feel unique and distinguished. Another important reason fans choose to belong to fandoms is that it enhances their well-being and alleviates their positive psychological responses, such as feelings of happiness and life satisfaction. Research on the relationship between fandom and well-being by Reysen, Olante, and Daniel (2017) provides corroborating evidence for these findings. They stated that identifying and engaging with other fans results in positive psychological satisfaction and well-being (Reysen et al., 2017). These findings apply to different fandoms, such as Japanese animation fandoms and furies (fans of anthropomorphic anime characters) fandoms as well (Reysen et al., 2017). Fans construct a new, layered, and complex identity through their consumption and identification with users who consume the same media content. According to Tajfel and Turner's (1979) theory of social identification, individuals' self-identity is constructed through identification with the social groups they belong to. However, it is essential to consider whether fans' subjective positions and biases make them exaggerate the positive features of their group in contrast to the mainstream culture or other communities they belong to. As Tajfel and Turner (1979) argue, individuals tend to overemphasize the positive qualities of the groups they belong to, whereas they overstate the negative aspects of other groups (in Islam, 2014).

The results of this study are consistent with those of Alanzalon (2011), who also found that Filipino fans satisfy their social needs by interacting with other fans and driving them to join groups online and offline in social forums and organizations. According to Alanzalon (2011), these social interactions with other fans "allowed them to obtain news, updates, and new information about their favourite artists and Kpop-related events. As a result, these new forms of social interaction and the new people they met through Kpop somehow motivated most of the interviewees to continually consume more Kpop content, and they even practised certain ways of consuming Kpop such as attending fan conventions, gatherings or other events" (p. 93). The same has been said among Palestinian and Israeli fans, as Otmazgin and Lyan (2013) explain, "in online discussions and meetings, members of Kpop fan communities talk not only about K-pop but also about non-fandom issues such as family, society, and even politics" (p. 80).

Fans use Korean popular culture to enhance their identity and distinguish themselves from the mainstream culture. This is in accordance with Otmazgin and Lyan's findings and conclusions. In their words, "K-pop fans are not considered mainstream and might therefore be subject to ridicule. In this respect, their fandom may position them as "outsiders"—a position few teenagers want to be in" (2013, p.80). Such fan communities are considered support groups, especially for fans who do not find other social groups interesting. Fandom, in this case, has a "therapeutic effect" (Otmazgin and Lyan, 2013). In other words, they use digital communities to express themselves freely and "accumulate social capital" (Otmazgin and Lyan, 2013). Fans use resources (Korean music, television shows, transnational cultural elements, movies) to enhance their social experiences. As Bourdieu and Wacquant explain concerning social capital, it is "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 119). This can be applied to Moroccan fans of Korean popular entertainment and also to other non-Korean fans. It was confirmed by Otmazgin and Lyan's research on Palestinian fans, who found that by belonging to the Korean music fandom, they distinguish themselves from their surrounding culture and have a way to relate to fans from other social and national backgrounds based on a neutral basis and not a political one (Otmazgin and Lyan, 2013). Although there are some similarities between the Israeli and Palestinian fan communities, the distinguishing characteristics of the two are particularly evident. The Israeli K-pop fandom is small, and they take great pleasure in distinguishing themselves from mainstream pop fandoms even if they are perceived as "strange". However, Palestinian fans see Korean pop music fandom practices as a way to connect to the outside world and be a part of it, particularly with other Arab fans (Otmazgin and Lyan, 2013).

In a nutshell, Moroccan fans use Korean popular culture to gratify their social needs. Particularly, fan engagement within their community increases their well-being and feelings of satisfaction and happiness. Moreover, Moroccan fans enhance their social identity through *Hallyu* use and consumption since it makes them unique and distinguishable from their non-fans peers and serves as an additional social capital.

### **5.3 Escapism and Tension Release**

The analyses of quantitative results expectedly show how fans use Korean popular entertainment to escape from daily pressures and responsibilities and alleviate boredom. These results are consistent with the literature on audiences' uses of media. Users not only utilise entertainment as a way to escape daily life stresses (Sullivan, 2013) but also to escape the mainstream culture's social situations and expectations. Since media can help create new realities out of fiction (Baudrillard, 1985), particularly the internet, fans use these new virtual realities as mental and emotional coping mechanisms. Research on Malaysian fans of the Korean wave by Jenol and Pazil (2020) is an example of these conclusions. One of the several ways fans use *Hallyu* for escapism is through building para-social relationships with their favourite idols; since they are constantly exposed to them through Korean brands' advertisements, drama, music videos, social media and online live events, fans become emotionally attached to these celebrities (Jenol and Pazil, 2020). The new media helped facilitate access to Korean celebrities worldwide and build such para-social relationships through the use of apps (for example, V LIVE, LYSN and Weverse), which made fans become highly immersed in their escapism and fantasy world for a long duration of time. As stated by Jenol and Pazil (2020), "These experiences serve and allow fans to break away from unwanted social realities even if it is temporary. Although fans may not know idols personally and are fully aware of that, it creates a strong personal bond and attachment" (p. 342).

## **6. Conclusion**

Overall, like the case of many international fans, Moroccan fans satisfy cognitive, social, and escapism needs through the use and consumption of Korean popular entertainment. In terms of cognitive needs, fans use this type of popular culture to learn about Korean culture and language. For social needs, fans enhance their social identity and distinguish themselves and their fan community from the mainstream culture. They seek out other fans who share the same taste as them and build friendships. Moroccan fans also use the Korean Wave to alleviate boredom and as a way of escapism. This study has contributed to the growing knowledge of fan studies; the findings of this research have provided insights into the nature of the Korean entertainment fandom in Morocco. It can be concluded that when fans find the media they consume arousing and very satisfying, they keep consuming and using it to gratify their needs and enhance their identities.



It is noteworthy to address several limitations of this research. First, although the Korean Wave fanbase in Morocco is large and diverse, this research has investigated only online communities through Facebook and Instagram. Therefore, it could be limited in generalizability. Moreover, considering the cross-sectional nature of the collected data, the chosen variable should be more examined through thorough experiments and replications.

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