
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring the Multidimensional Motivations of Moroccan Fans Consuming Korean Popular Entertainment: Identification, Cultural Hybridity, and Cultural Proximity

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| ABSTRACT

Korean popular entertainment has gained global popularity primarily due to the participatory nature of Web 2.0 platforms. The rapid dissemination of this content has significantly increased the number of fans worldwide. This paper aims to investigate Moroccan fans' motivations for consuming Korean popular entertainment. A qualitative research design was adopted, wherein standardized open-ended interviews were conducted to collect data. Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) was utilized to analyze the data. The study revealed that Moroccan fans are motivated to consume Korean popular entertainment because of their identification with the emotions and values represented, as well as the aesthetic elements portrayed. The findings indicate that fans' motivations are both hedonic and eudemonic, as they seek both psychological pleasure and meaning in their consumption. The study also highlights the similarities between the attitudes of Moroccan fans and those of fans in other Middle Eastern countries towards Korean popular entertainment. In conclusion, this research sheds light on transnational fandoms in Morocco and the reasons for the consumption of global media entertainment content in diverse cultural contexts. It also contributes to a better understanding of the complex and multifaceted motivations behind popular entertainment consumption.

| KEYWORDS

The Korean Wave, *Hallyu*, fandom, popular culture, media entertainment.

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1. Introduction

Digital platforms, particularly social media, have played a crucial role in disseminating locally produced popular culture in global marketplaces. The Korean Wave, also known as "*Hallyu*", is one example of a regional cultural flow that has gained worldwide popularity. In recent years, the Korean Wave has entered a new phase, known as "*Hallyu 2.0*", and digital platforms and social media have facilitated its expansion into global markets. *Hallyu 2.0* refers to not only Korean popular music and other entertainment programs but also online games and Manhwa (만화) (Korean comics and webtoons). As Korean cultural producers have quickly altered their popular culture to match the social media era, the new Korean Wave has fittingly responded to the preferences of global followers in both production and consumption, in what Jin (2018) refers to as *the social mediascape of Hallyu*. Prior to the widespread use of social media, most Korean Wave followers were exposed to local popular culture through CDs, DVDs, and even videotapes given to them by friends and relatives (Jin, 2018). In the current era, however, the essence of Web 2.0 as a space of collaboration and interactivity has helped fans reach Korean entertainment companies, get in touch with other fans, and circulate *Hallyu* content on the platform.

In the Moroccan context, national television channels aired dubbed Korean dramas in the past few years, but no Korean music videos or other entertainment shows were broadcast. Therefore, Moroccan fans took advantage of the nature of *Hallyu 2.0* to enjoy different Korean entertainment genres. The number of fans continued to grow despite the cultural barriers and differences.

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Although there has been a fundamental body of research on this new transnational phenomenon in Asian, American and European contexts, research is still limited in Africa. For this reason, this research aims to investigate the reasons Moroccan fans are motivated to consume Korean popular entertainment. Furthermore, it is crucial to point out that several researchers of the Korean Wave who investigate this phenomenon among transnational fans consider "cultural proximity" by Straubhaar (1991) as an essential factor for its international success, particularly among Asian audiences. Yet, "cultural proximity" alone does not explain transnational media reception and fails to comprehend the complicated nature of international audiences and users' motivations for their global cultural text consumption. For these reasons, this study aims to look beyond cultural proximity to investigate this phenomenon in greater depth. By using the qualitative approach, specifically the standardized open-ended interviews, the present study contributes to a deeper understanding of the motivations of Moroccan fans by eliciting their insights, opinions, and personal experiences.

2. The Literature Review

2.1 The Korean Wave

The Korean Wave (*Hallyu*) is a phenomenon that caught the attention of cultural studies and media studies researchers as a new non-western cultural flow. It refers to the worldwide growth, interest and popularity of Korean popular culture, first in East Asian countries in the 1990s and later in other different parts of the world, especially in the United States, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East (Ravina, 2009). This phenomenon includes Korean popular music (K-pop), television drama (K-drama), video games, cosmetics and fashion, dance groups (B-boys), tourism and language. In the Arab world, particularly, the Korean Wave started in the early 2000s when Korean television dramas were aired on many national and satellite television channels (Malik, 2019).

The concept of "the Korean Wave" (*hanliu* 韩流) was first introduced by Chinese journalists to explain the growth of this new sensation in China and Taiwan in the 1990s. It was first used locally by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Korea when the government exported a music CD to "improve public relations by bringing Korean pop music to China" (Jin and Yoon, 2017, p. 2244), and it gained more popularity in 1997. Korean television serial drama was the first popular culture genre that started this phenomenon in many countries. The first aired drama on Chinese television CCTV was *'What Is Love All About'*. The second drama was *'Jealous'* in 1993 on MBC-TV. These drama series, soundtracks and music videos made South Korea an exciting destination for television audiences. More people got interested in the lifestyle and culture they saw on the screen. This impact was visible both culturally and economically; between 1998 and 2015, the export of Korean cultural products increased by 21.4 times, from U.S.\$189 million in 1998 to U.S.\$4 billion in 2014 (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2015). For that purpose, the Korean government has changed its policy extensively, notably "to capitalize on the Korean Wave as a means of soft power to enhance the national image" (Jin and Yoon, 2017, p.2242). This means that entertainment promoters and marketing agents use Korean popular culture for consumption both at the national and transnational levels.

2.1.1 The Korean Wave in the Middle East and North Africa

When it comes to the consumption of Far Eastern entertainment programs and music in the Arab world, Korean media was absent from the scene for a long time. In the 1980s-90s, mainly Indian and Chinese movies, such as Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan films, were broadcast on local television channels (Elaskary, 2018). Notwithstanding, in the 1990s and early 2000s, Turkish and Korean dramas started to gain popularity in the Middle East and North Africa. It began to compete with American popular entertainment in terms of popularity and appeal (Elaskary, 2018).

The first Korean entertainment program that was broadcast in the Middle East was the cartoon *Cute Jjoggomi*. Particularly in Jordan in 1998, and the first K-drama was *Youth* in 2002 in the same region (Kim, 2017). One of the big hits, not only in the Middle East but also in Africa, Central and South Africa, and Eastern Europe, was the Korean historical drama *Dae Jang Geum* (2008). According to Kim (2017), "this led to *Hallyu* television series being actively distributed, which helped spread Korean culture as well" (p. 259). In 2007, Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) sold nearly 500 hours from 16 different series at a media marketing show in Dubai. *Winter Sonata*, a television drama produced by the Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS) and Korean Broadcasting System (KBS), was launched in the Middle East by *Ghassan*, a Saudi Arabian distributor (Kim, 2017). Subsequently, because of the internet, Arab audiences did not need or depend on national television or satellite channels to consume Korean popular media content. Research on Middle Eastern fans of *Hallyu* reported that 52% of respondents listen to K-pop daily on the internet (Kim, 2017), mainly on the YouTube platform. Surprisingly, 87% of these respondents plan to visit South Korea in the future (Kim, 2017). Consequently, the positive perception of the Korean wave helped create fan communities in many countries in the Arab world.

Su Wan Kim (2014) points out that the positive perception of the Korean wave in the Middle East is due to some similarities between Arabic/Muslim culture and Korean culture. She conducted a cross-cultural analysis to identify the factors that made *Hallyu* successful in the Middle East and its effect on the increase of Middle Eastern tourists in Korea. Kim argues that what made the Islamic world enthusiastic about the Korean Wave goes beyond its economic aspects to include emotional and cultural ones. First, the Middle East lacks sufficient broadcasting programming compared to Europe or the Americas, and therefore, channels typically

rely largely on foreign programming. Nevertheless, Western content does not pass the screening procedures since it often contradicts the ideals of Islam and Middle Eastern traditions, particularly when it contains excessive sexual imagery or homosexuality. Despite a dearth of original programming content, the influence of Western, particularly American, public culture is comparatively low in Islamic countries, which frequently take an anti-American position compared to their perspective on Korea (Kim, 2017). Regarding Korean entertainment, historical series usually pass the screening process because it is less controversial.

Second, at the affective level, Middle Eastern viewers easily empathize with the emotions conveyed in Korean television series and are drawn to classic Korean love storylines; since they have a calm, humanistic ambience in comparison to much popular American television series and soap operas that are full of sexual and violent messages (Kim, 2017). Korean Confucian ideals are akin to traditional Islamic ideals, which appeal to Middle Eastern viewers who favour shows that teach youngsters moral lessons, such as respect for adults and connection with family members. Fans are particularly interested in happy endings since they convey a feeling of optimism after overcoming life difficulties (Kim, 2017).

However, it is essential to emphasize *Hallyu's* strategic and industrial nature as an important factor for its success among fans in these regions; it is a well-crafted piece of consumption that tries to "play it safe" as much as possible in a global industry and to have a universal appeal (Lie, 2012). That is to say, the international success of *Hallyu*, especially in the Arab world, is not only due to similarities in cultural values and technological development but also because of the polished nature of Korean popular music, from songs to performances, K-pop¹ does not discuss controversial issues and themes so that it can be consumed by a wide range of audiences.

One of the most referred to case studies on the Korean wave in the Middle East region is Otmazgin and Lyan's (2013) research on Israeli and Palestinian K-pop fandoms. The study focuses on how these fan communities have a significant role in the spread and circulation of Korean popular music in the region and how these fandom practices and the institutionalization of K-pop have a substantial impact on these fans' identities. In Israel and Palestine, a place that has been overlooked by scholars when it comes to the consumption of transnational content because of political instability, the researchers examine how the cultural flow of non-western products is popular within a space populated by two different ethnic communities, Arabs and Jews. Geographically speaking, these two ethnic groups are located close to each other, but there are significant differences between the two cultures. According to Otmazgin and Lyan, Jewish society is more liberal and cosmopolitan compared to Palestinian culture, and there is a huge emphasis on family values and religion in the latter.

In terms of Korean popular culture circulation, unlike Korean drama, Korean popular music in the Middle East is disseminated and driven by fans and not actively via a system of marketers and agents and mainstream mass media (Choi 2011; Shin 2012, 2013) K-pop in Israel and Palestine (as well as many other countries in the Middle East and North Africa) has been popularized through the internet, via social media in particular. One of the noticed differences among the researcher is that, to a certain extent, Korean drama is more popular among Palestinians, whereas Korean pop music is more popular among Israelis. This distinction in preference reveals how both of these narratives are portrayed. On the one hand, Korean drama is safe and more relatable to Palestinian audiences since it deals with conservative values and struggles among families in a patriarchal environment (especially old Korean drama that was broadcast on middle eastern nations and satellite channels). According to Otmazgin & Lyan, "Palestinians like Korean TV dramas because they resonate with codes and narratives rooted in their society, such as the patriarchal family, a controlling father, and conservative ideas about life..." (2013, p.75), on the other hand, Korean popular music is more daring and provocative.

Another important study that discusses the Korean wave phenomenon among Arab audiences is Malik's research on the Korean wave in Qatar. She examines fans' development of multiple affinities and their cultural translation of Korean popular entertainment texts to suit their lifestyles (2019). Her study uses Chin and Morimoto's concept of "affective affinity" to overcome the shortcoming of the "cultural proximity" theory. "Affective affinity" can be summed up as how fans are attracted to and identify with transcultural media content despite dissimilarities in language and culture, history, religion, etc., since they can relate to other elements presented in their objects of desire, such as narratives and characters emotions and personalities. Malik argues,

¹ K-pop in this case refers to mainstream music produced by Entertainment companies such as SM, JYP and YG Entertainment for export. This does not include music produced independently. In many cases, independent music discusses controversial issues and themes.

The cultural proximity thesis conceptualizes culture and cultural identity as stable and bounded. It assumes that audiences identify cultural commonalities, which directs their interest toward media texts from culturally similar regions. Therefore, it cannot account for audiences' agency in making culture while interpreting what they watch (2019, p. 5737).

Generally, like the study on Palestinian fans, Qatari and Syrian fans emphasize some cultural similarities between Korean and Arab culture as their reason for consuming Korean drama, especially in gender relations and power dynamics in a patriarchal society, as one interviewee in Malik's study stated: "the strictness of fathers, such as not allowing their daughters to stay late at night outside the house, is similar to the father–daughter relationship in our societies, and that made Korean drama familiar, not foreign, to us" (2019, p. 5741).

Overall, the studies discussed examine how the Korean Wave is translated into different Middle Eastern contexts. As scholars of *Hallyu* argue, the motivations to consume this transnational cultural flow are not only related to the cultural proximity aspect, such as similar cultural values but also the audiences' affinities and the core, hybrid nature of the Korean Wave that made translatable among different contexts.

2.2 Cultural proximity

One of the most used theories in transnational fandom studies is cultural proximity, especially when looking for reasons for transnational popular culture appeal and popularity (Malik, 2019). This theory has emerged to explore and analyze audience performances and preferences of increased digital technologies in a global world (Ksiazek and Webster, 2008). Straubhaar defines cultural proximity as "... the tendency to prefer media products from one's own culture or the most similar culture possible" (2003, p.85). The concept of cultural proximity was originally introduced by DeSola Pool (1977) and elaborated by Straubhaar (1991, 2003). According to Straubhaar (2003), as much as understanding the language of the target media product is essential, it is not the only factor. Cultural proximity is a complex concept with various dimensions, and it is performed on multiple levels in accordance with individuals' multiple layers of identity.

For Straubhaar, one of the reasons audience members opt to consume media content and genre from other countries is that their desired content or genre is not available in their home country or when the production of such programs is too expensive to produce locally. Therefore, as he argues, audiences choose to consume regional programs that are culturally similar. Straubhaar (2003) also argues that such commonalities can be related to other trends; he gives the example of Telenovela consumption in Latin American countries. Although the Spanish language can be a factor in the vast spread and consumption of this television genre, it is not the only one; culture and similar values are also crucial factors. In many cases, language barriers can be transcended when consuming transnational content. For example, the popularity of Indian movies and dramas in the Arab world and Japanese popular culture in Taiwan, one of the factors of the popularity of this content is the shared cultural values. Subtitles and dubbing can help transcend the language barrier.

Additionally, as previously stated, people's identity is complex and multi-layered; therefore, a person may relate and identify with different aspects of different genres and media texts. For instance, some Moroccan audiences opt to watch Egyptian Islamic channels because of similarities, such as Islamic and Arab identities. Another example is gender identity; many women across cultures enjoy watching family sitcoms or dramas that point out commonalities of "family struggles", and they feel like they can identify with the presented narrative.

2.2.1 Genre Proximity

Genre, and storytelling in general, has the ability to transcend geographical and cultural borders. Straubhaar (2005) argues that "melodrama builds on underlying oral structures, formulas and archetypes that can be shared by cultures" (p. 275). For that reason, it is easy for a foreign melodrama to be understood and enjoyed by different cultures. For example, the prosperous success of Korean drama, particularly in Asia, is due to its plot, storytelling structure and techniques. According to Huang (2009), "the popularity of Korean TV dramas is a reflection of how cultural proximity functions as the identification of Asian people. Cultural proximity provides an easy way to understand the background of the programs [and] audiences ... easily by the plot" (p. 129). The Korean melodrama discusses the values of life and deals with power relations and patriarchy within the family. In addition, it presents the conflicts that happen mainly between couples and parents-in-law (Lee and Hahm, 2013), a theme that exists in many transnational series, such as Telenovelas and Bollywood television shows. Unlike Japanese dramas, whose plot is usually predictable and ideal, Korean drama includes the Confucian and family values shared by all its neighbour countries (Hwang, 2009).

In order to understand what drives Moroccan fans to consume Korean popular entertainment, it is essential to know what they find appealing and pleasant in it. In this case, the cultural proximity theory would explain why foreign media content is consumed. The key concepts extracted from this theory are: First, genre refers to the plot, themes, and storyline of Korean entertainment, especially dramas, songs, and shows. The second element is language, in this case, the Korean language. The third aspect is culture,

which refers to Korean cultural features shown in entertainment. Finally, the visual elements, including artists' looks, fashion and aesthetics.

3. Methodology

This study uses the qualitative approach to collect and analyze the data. Choosing this particular design has many benefits; specifically, it facilitates the collection of diverse perspectives from Moroccan fans and enables a greater understanding of their meanings, unique experiences, and insights regarding the motivations of their consumption. Interviews are chosen as an instrument, and they are coupled with instant messaging interviews for a full-rounded data collection. This second method was added to enhance the participants' self-report (Kaufmann and Peil, 2019). The type of interview used is the standardized open-ended interview, where participants are asked the same questions. They give as much information as possible and provide their experiences and viewpoints about the topic. It is also semi-structured; the researcher can change the order of questions according to the raised situations while interviewing. Additional follow-up questions can be added for more insights, information, or clarification (Brennen, 2013). Unlike the informal conversational interview and the general interview approach, the questions are already prepared and worded (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). The strength of this method is that the researcher allows the interviewees to express their opinions with no bias (Gall, Gall, and Borg, 2003). However, the weakness of this method is that interviewers find it hard to code the collected data and organize it into clear and categorized themes (Creswell, 2007).

The sampling technique used to choose interview participants is a combination of snowball and purposive techniques (Marshall, 1996). The conditions to select participants are the following: participants should be diverse in terms of age and be a part of the Korean popular culture fandom for more than three years. The purpose of imposing such conditions is for participants to make a more substantial contribution to the topic by eliciting different and rich experiences and attitudes. Participants were initially approached through Instagram and Facebook, and later WhatsApp. Originally, it was decided to conduct 15 interviews. However, because of time constraints, only 11 interviews were conducted. Six participants are high school students, and five are employed. All the interviewees fulfil the criteria of being fans for more than three years.

The participants were asked about the reasons they chose to consume Korean popular entertainment and what makes it different from entertainment from other countries. This question's purpose is to elicit information about fans' motivations and explore what elements make *Hallyu* different in fans' viewpoints. The second question investigates whether fans enjoy entertainment programs and songs from other countries. This question examined whether fans have a cosmopolitan attitude towards a global consumer culture. In the third question, interviewees were asked whether they like Korean culture and what they like about it. Through this question, the researcher can inspect whether fans recognize Korean and other cultural elements represented in these media texts and to what degree fans hold affection for these cultural elements.

In order to analyze the results of qualitative data, reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was used (Braun and Clarke, 2006); this type of thematic analysis aims to interpret qualitative data in a flexible manner. Byrne defines it as "an easily accessible and theoretically flexible interpretative approach to qualitative data analysis that facilitates the identification and analysis of patterns or themes in a given data set" (2021, p.2). Reflexive thematic analysis is different from other thematic analysis approaches in the following principles; First, in terms of coding reliability, many approaches rely on a structured codebook, and themes are usually predetermined based on the theoretical approaches used in the study (Byrne, 2021). By contrast, the reflexive thematic analysis themes are considered "domain summaries" (Byrne, 2021), in which the researcher decides the themes based on the collected data. Second, in regard to the codebook, such as template analysis (King and Brooks, 2017), they usually rely both on coding reliability and a reflexive approach; as explained by Byrne (2021), they "adopt the use of a structured codebook and share the conceptualisation of themes as domain summaries. However, codebook approaches are more akin to the reflexive approach in terms of the prioritisation of a qualitative philosophy with regard to coding" (p. 3). Third, concerning the reflexive approach, it allows the researcher the freedom to interpret the significance of the codes and themes and lets the researcher make their analysis based on their skills and their theoretical assumptions. As Byrne (2021) states, "Braun and Clarke (2019) encourage the researcher to embrace reflexivity, subjectivity and creativity as assets in knowledge production" (pp 4 – 5).

It is noteworthy to point out beforehand that the analytical procedure of coding and theme generating is not a linear process. That is to say, the researcher has to go through the phases repeatedly, either when re-defining themes or making new interpretations. Moreover, it was also essential to go back to the literature to make sense of the data in an academic way. In the first phase, in order to be familiarized with the data and to identify relevant information, the taken notes and instant messages were read repeatedly. After the essential information was highlighted, additional notes about the frequent trends were taken. During the second phase, initial codes were generated, with a brief explanation for each code. Through the process of deciding which codes were relevant, many of them were later omitted since they were deemed unnecessary for answering the research question. Furthermore, the codes chosen were either explicitly stated or required some interpretation. Therefore, many items were coded

semantically and latently. In the third phase, codes were analyzed and reviewed to generate themes. Surprisingly, many intersected narratives emerged. However, only three basic themes were chosen, and ones with scarce data to support them were omitted. Those themes are; "cultural hybridity", "cultural proximity", and "hedonic and eudemonic motivations".

4. Findings

The motivation to consume popular entertainment is not unidimensional nor simplistic. Generally, there are many reasons fans choose to consume popular entertainment. One crucial component is identification (McMillan & Chavis, 1986), either with the narrative, i.e. the movies', the series' plot, music videos messages, and characters in the narrative, or identification with other fans who enjoy the same popular culture content. Regarding the current study, interview results show different reasons. Moroccan fans consume Korean popular entertainment. Some of these motivations are: identification, cultural hybridity and cultural proximity.

Consumed media content becomes more relatable on a global scale due to cultural hybridity, a phenomenon that arises from transcultural contact and has been previously linked to the popularity of *Hallyu* (Lee, 2017). Most interviewees in this study find Korean popular culture, k-pop in particular, colourful, energizing and catchy. These elements are applied to different cultural products across the world. As Iwabuchi (2002) describes these types of entertainment programs and cultural commodities that are successful transnationally as culturally "odorless". In other words, K-pop, and *Hallyu* in general, is highly manufactured and designed, and the dancing and the aesthetic elements of k-pop can be readily consumed even when audiences cannot understand the Korean language. One interviewee stated: *"The reason why I like Korean music is because of the fact that it's very diverse, there are many different genres, and it is mainly based on singing and dancing, which is unique and new"*. Participants also enjoy consuming Korean entertainment because it effectively conveys universal emotions and values through its content. These traits are not exclusive to Korean entertainment and can be observed across various transnational cultural flows. Moreover, the majority of participants mentioned aesthetic elements presented in Korean popular music videos, such as choreography, the singers' beauty, styles and fashion, as essential motivators for their consumption. Two participants, in particular, mentioned that they were already familiar with these elements since they were already fans of other Asian entertainment, such as Japanese popular music, and they stated how similar it was to Korean popular music.

As established in prior research, Korean culture has been actively used in popular entertainment and has become a global brand. When asked about Korean culture, the participants mentioned the main features that are represented in shows and songs; nearly every participant agreed that they find the Korean culture fascinating, and through constant exposure and consumption, they learned particular elements of it, which motivated them to learn more about other Asian cultures. Some interviewees explicitly stated that they actively learn about cultures through entertainment programs, and they can make comparisons between different Asian cultures and learn more about the differences between them. Fans learn about Korean gastronomy, art, architecture, history, folk tales, and cultural customs. They also learn Korean values: such as hard work, respect, and power relations. As one participant said: *"I have since then learned the names of a few dishes like: kimchi, jajangmyeon, japchae, bulgogi, etc.."*

What can be easily observed in the interviewees' responses is how the first exposure to Korean entertainment and appreciation of its different components led participants to acquire more knowledge about South Korea, as one of the participants stated in the following quote:

I adore Korean culture for a number of reasons, firstly, because it bears a long history, a museum of achievements; secondly, the old dress known for its professional manufacturing and coordination; and thirdly, the palaces that occupy large areas of Korea, which teach us that the Korean state appreciates and preserves its monuments, ..., the holidays, which is held in Korea, where the people are at the top of their joy and perform a set of customs that increase foreigners' admiration for this ancient culture.

Concerning cultural proximity, as shown in many case studies where *Hallyu* is examined in the Middle Eastern region, such as in Egypt (see, Noh 2011), Israel and Palestine (see, Lyan & Levkowitz, 2015; Otmazgin & Lyan 2013) and Iran (see, Koo 2014), cultural proximity (Straubhaar, 2003) plays a pivotal role in the dissemination and the increasing appeal of the Korean wave in the Middle East region, particularly, the proximity of values. Correspondingly, there is an overlap between Korean values that were originally derived from Confucian values and Islamic values and culture (Lee, 2017); specifically, what has been emphasized throughout these cases and the current study is family values, relatable family struggles stories and respect to elders. Research on Tunisian fans by Lee (2017) in particular is an interesting case, given the similarities between Tunisia and Morocco; as these two countries are known for their intercultural environment, and their French colonial history, fans' attitudes were remarkably similar toward Korean popular entertainment, although both were exposed to Western entertainment, they found the prior more fascinating because it was comparatively more comfortable and appealing to their tastes and less sexual (Lee, 2017). A sentiment that has been shared many times among participants in this study.

The results also show how Moroccan fans' motivations are both hedonic and eudemonic. Oliver and Raney (2011) demonstrate that entertainment consumption goes beyond hedonic reasons to include eudemonic motivations as well; fans desire for the entertainment they consume to have meaning and not only satisfy their psychological needs, such as joy and catharsis. Tsay-Vogel and Sander's (2017) research on fandoms examines how fans' motivation to consume their favourite popular entertainment and to join fan communities goes beyond psychological and physiological pleasure to include meaning-seeking as well. Fans are not passive consumers; they nonetheless reflect on the media texts they consume and engage in self-reflective thinking and retrospectives (Trapnell & Campbell, 1999, in Tsay-Vogel & Sanders, 2017). They relate their use of media to their identities, relationships and values. Moreover, they aspire to make relationships with people who share their perceptions and standards (Sandvoss, 2013). A comparison of the findings confirms what has been mentioned. For instance, one interviewee said, "*I believe BTS²'s songs are full of meaningful messages, especially towards today's youth*". This demonstrates that fans seek entertainment that represents their inspirations and values. Another interviewee said

"Frankly, I listen to Korean songs, especially K-pop, because they have beautiful meanings; for example, they encourage u to study and continue life despite its difficulty, they talk about teenagers and how to improve their lives..."

These results reflect those of Jenol and Pazil (2020), whose research on Malaysian fans of Korean popular music finds that fans' admiration of K-pop goes beyond the feelings of hedonic satisfaction. Fans strive for personal growth and use their fandom activities for personal development. They find their favourite Korean celebrities' hard work and creativity inspiring.

5. Conclusion

Overall, the study has shown that Moroccan fans are motivated to consume Korean entertainment for several reasons. First, fans identify with the narratives presented in Korean drama and music. Second, this research has shown that cultural hybridity and proximity are important factors in fans' motivation and in making global media content relatable transnationally and transculturally. In this case, the similarities between Confucian and Islamic values helped the Korean wave be popular among fans not only in Morocco but also among other Middle Eastern fans as well. Finally, fans' motivations to consume *Hallyu* are both hedonic and eudemonic in the sense that it gratifies their emotions and desires and it provides meaning for their lives.

6. Limitations

It is noteworthy to address some 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 terms of generalizability. Second, the number of interviewees was limited and unstructured. Therefore, it would be beneficial to reach more diverse interviewees and focus group participants for further insights.

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² A popular South Korean boy band.

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