

Perceived Appeals and Influences of K-Drama among Malaysian Youths

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Abstract

The widespread popularity of Korean dramas (K-dramas) among Malaysian youths raises pertinent questions about their cultural and social implications. This research investigates the perceived appeals and impacts of K-dramas on the values, attitudes, and behaviours of Malaysian youths aged 18 to 24. As K-dramas transcend linguistic and cultural barriers, their influence on lifestyle choices and media consumption patterns becomes a subject of growing significance. Employing a qualitative approach and grounded by Cultivation Theory, this study utilized the diary method and semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth insights from five participants. The diary method allowed participants to document their daily interactions and reflections on K-dramas, while interviews provided nuanced perspectives on their emotional and cognitive responses. This dual-method strategy facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted ways in which K-dramas resonate with and influence their audience. The findings revealed that K-dramas appeal to Malaysian youths due to their relatable storytelling, strong character development, and cultural aesthetics, which evoke a sense of escapism and emotional connection. Moreover, participants reported adopting certain values portrayed in K-dramas, such as resilience, family bonds, and romantic ideals, while also reflecting critically on the unrealistic expectations they may propagate. This research underscores the potential of K-dramas to shape societal attitudes and foster cross-cultural appreciation, presenting an opportunity for media creators and educators to leverage this medium for promoting constructive values. Additionally, it highlights the need for media literacy initiatives to encourage a balanced and health-conscious approach to consuming such content. By addressing both the positive and critical aspects of K-dramas' impact, this study contributes to the growing discourse on their role in shaping the lifestyles and perceptions of Malaysian youths. It serves as a valuable resource for fostering media awareness and empowering young audiences in their engagement with globalized media.

Keywords: Korean Dramas (K-dramas), Malaysian Youths, Media Consumption, Cultivation Theory, Media Awareness

1.0 Introduction

In recent years, Korean dramas have become a part of the mainstream genres consumed by television audiences worldwide. More commonly known as K-dramas, [1] defines them as drama television series produced and aired in South Korea, starring Korean actors. K-dramas cover many genres, from science fiction and romance to period and horror pieces, deviating from their usual association and description as Korean soap operas [2]. Thang further explains that K-dramas tend to be more PG-friendly compared to Western TV shows due to the nearly non-existent nudity and sex scenes, thus making them more appealing to a broader range of age groups and countries, particularly those that are more socially conservative. Most K-dramas have a finite number of episodes, usually between 16 and 24, except some family-oriented

and historical pieces running up to over 50 episodes. Typically, K-dramas are completed in a single season. However, since Koreans suddenly began watching American dramas on Netflix and learned about the season system in recent years, more K-dramas are being renewed for multiple seasons [2]. Season renewals are also encouraged by fan demand across the world, especially for high-rated and highly acclaimed dramas. For example, ‘Squid Game’, is set for a second season in 2024 after it has become a global sensation and received awards at several prestigious award ceremonies like the Primetime Emmy Awards and Blue Dragon Series Awards[3]. ‘The Penthouse: War in Life’ is another K-drama that has been renewed for a total of three seasons following its booming success, with the final episode of its first season earning a peak viewership rating of 31.3 per cent [2], making it the first mini-series in five years to achieve more than 30 percent of viewership on a Korean terrestrial channel.

Besides K-dramas, many aspects of Korean popular culture have spread widely and become increasingly influential worldwide. This phenomenon is known as the Korean Wave, K-Wave, for short. It is a neologism that refers to the surge of global popularity and international interest in South Korean culture that occurred in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The Korean Wave is exemplified by the international popularity of Korean film, television, fashion, food, and music (Hallyu, N.: Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). The Korean term for the Korean Wave is Hanryu (Hangul: 한류; Hanja: 韓流), more commonly romanised as Hallyu. The term, referring to the diffusion of Korean culture, is made of two root words: han (한/韓), meaning “Korean”, and ryu (류/流), meaning “flow” or “wave” [4].

The globalization of Korean culture in Malaysia is evident through its widespread availability and accessibility to Malaysians through both traditional and new media, as Korean movies are screened in local cinemas, K-dramas and variety shows are aired on local broadcasting stations, and K-pop music is played on various local radio stations and can be streamed via different music streaming applications. Following the increase in interest in South Korean culture, the demand for Korean-made products has seen an increase as well. Consequently, South Korean brands and products are entering the Malaysian market and are no longer foreign to Malaysian consumers. From these situations, the influence of K-dramas on Malaysian youths can be observed through the influence of Korean culture into their lifestyles [1]. Since Hallyu entered the Malaysian scene in the early 2000s, K-dramas have become part of the mainstream of popular and favourite genres among Malaysian audiences. Despite the language barrier, Malaysians accept K-dramas because of the cultural similarities between those depicted in K-dramas and Malaysian cultures. The approaches used in K-dramas, which touch on human sensitivity, such as lifestyle, value, and family, are familiar to Asian audiences and, thus, can attract Asian audiences. Due to cultural familiarity and similarity, Malaysian audiences can feel emotionally satisfied in comparison to Western productions [5].

With the advancement of media and technology, Malaysian audiences can easily access and consume Korean media, especially K-dramas, using their digital devices. This allows Malaysians to watch K-dramas for a more extended period without having to rely on television airing times. As viewers become increasingly engaged with K-dramas, so will their interest in Korean culture [6]. Apart from a growing interest in Korean culture, attitudes toward South Korea have improved. Another research by Loke proves that K-drama audiences develop favourable views towards South Korea through their K-drama consumption which in turn influences their behavioural intentions toward South Korea. Amidst the craze over Korean culture, K-dramas are significant components of the K-Wave that is consistently amplifying in Malaysia because of its major influence in developing Malaysian youths’ admiration for Korean culture, fashion, and language through product placements of South Korean products and display of K-fashion in K-dramas. It was found that the K-Wave significantly influences Malaysian youths’ admiration for Korean culture, fashion, and products [7]. The popularity of K-dramas in Malaysia has clearly demonstrated the need to investigate this phenomenon by identifying the elements in K-dramas that attract Malaysian youths’ attention and how K-dramas influence their lifestyles which makes the gap for this research. Therefore, this study seeks to: (1) explore the perceived

appeals of K-dramas among Malaysian youths, and (2) explore how K-dramas influence their values, attitudes, and behaviours.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Korean Wave

American political scientist Joseph Nye defines the Korean wave as “the growing popularity of all things Korean, from fashion and film to music and cuisine.” In other words, the phenomenon encompasses the global awareness of various aspects of South Korean culture, including film and television, particularly K-dramas (K-dramas), Korean pop music (K-pop), manhwa, the Korean language, and Korean cuisine [8].

Notably, K-dramas have long been one of the key pioneers of Hallyu. Professor Jin Dal Yong, a communications professor at Simon Fraser University and one of the world’s foremost experts on Korean pop culture, pointed out that the Korean Wave had begun reaching China in 1993 after the broadcast of the Korean drama *Jealousy (Jiltu)* [9]. Nevertheless, the term Hallyu was first coined by Beijing journalists, referring to the global craze for Korean culture due to the success of the K-drama, *What Is Love* which ranked second in China’s all-time imported video content [10].

The beginning of the K-drama-led Hallyu occurred due to the dramatic popularity increase of Korean television series, namely *What is Love* which aired in 1991 and 1992 [11]. More significantly, were the dramas released in the 2000s as they pioneered the Korean Wave internationally, to their neighbouring countries, China and Japan, as well as all across Asia through K-drama hallmarks like ‘*Princess Hours*’, ‘*Coffee Prince*’, ‘*Stairway to Heaven*’, ‘*My Girl*’, and ‘*Full House*’. These dramas have significantly increased and cemented the popularity of K-dramas in Asia, including Malaysia. In 2002, the KBS2 drama ‘*Winter Sonata*’—starring Bae Yong Jun and Choi Ji Woo—was the television series that catapulted the K-drama genre beyond South Korea. When the drama was aired in Japan, it became an instant blockbuster hit, attracting more than 20 percent of viewership across Japan [12]. Notably, ‘*Winter Sonata*’ marked the initial entrance of Hallyu in Japan, although it was initially intended by director Yoon Suk Ho to be targeted at Southeast Asian countries. Regardless, the drama did successfully meet Yoon’s goals in Southeast Asian countries, as it is credited with galvanising the second wave of Hallyu in Asia, following the success of its predecessor—*Autumn in My Heart*—in the *Endless Love* series, from director Yoon Suk Ho.

2.2 Korean Wave in Malaysia

Since then, Malaysians began taking an interest in South Korea and engaged in Hallyu when the free-to-air television channel, TV3, aired ‘*Winter Sonata*’ in 2002 with Mandarin dubbing and Bahasa Malaysia subtitles [12]. When Hallyu first became popular in Malaysia, only a few channels broadcasted South Korean dramas: TV3, 8TV, and TV9. However, at present, Malaysia’s free-to-air channels, such as TV2 and 8TV, are currently airing K-dramas, whereas Malaysia’s local satellite television provider, ASTRO, Malaysian satellite television and IPTV provider, introduced several Korean language television channels over the years: KBS World (CH 391), KBS World HD (CH 392), One HD (CH 393), Oh!K HD (CH 394), tvN (CH395), K-Plus HD (CH 396), and tVN Movies [13]. Therefore, K-drama hallmarks, such as ‘*Boys Over Flowers*’, ‘*The Inheritors*’, and ‘*Moon Embracing The Sun*’, were aired in Malaysia at the same time or only one hour after the first broadcast in Korea, allowing Malaysians to enjoy the South Korean content daily at the highest convenience.

Malaysians can now enjoy K-dramas through online streaming from services such as *dimsum* and *Netflix* too, which provide K-dramas with subtitles in multiple languages and can be watched on-demand for free or with paid membership [14]. Furthermore, the K-dramas available on the websites are up to date, and new

episodes are added relatively quickly. These ongoing scenarios illustrate the market demand for South Korean programmes on Malaysian television channels. Concurrently, the number of K-drama fans in Malaysia has been steadily growing, possibly due to the ease with which South Korean media content can be accessed [15].

2.3 Appeals of K-Dramas

The continuous growth of the popularity of K-dramas proves that they have several key appeals that serve as a factor of attraction amongst their audiences. K-dramas are made up of three main influential aspects, labelled as the 3P's— Place, Personality, and Performance. The study states that the 3P's are constituted of the ubiquity of K-dramas' storylines, production values, beautiful locations, casts, sensational scenes and plots. Besides that, family values, respect for elders, fighting for true love, and filial duty also contribute to K-dramas' appeal. According to Professor Jin Dal Yong, Korean drama series resonated within Asian countries in the early 2000s due to affiliated cultures and similarities in cultural, lingual, historical, and geographical foundations, allowing them to assimilate into their neighbouring countries. Professor Jin also explained that cultural proximity allowed Asian audiences to easily relate to the cultural context of the narratives [11].

In fact, other researchers have revealed similar findings as they discovered that relatable storylines and familiar Asian values due to the similarities of cultures in the Asian region are contributing factors to the popularity of K-dramas amongst Malaysian audiences. Additionally, high reception of K-dramas in Malaysia is due to the presence of familiarity in terms of the cultural backgrounds addressed and dealt with in K-dramas and the absence of Western movies' typical racial or ethnic stigmatizing against Asian cultures [13].

2.4 Impact of K-Dramas on Audience

Due to the increasing popularity of K-dramas, audiences worldwide have shown a strong appreciation and interest in Korean culture. Moreover, K-dramas can potentially affect Malaysians' way of thinking and living. Due to the emotional storytelling and well-developed characters of K-dramas that Malaysian youths find to be relatable, K-dramas naturally cultivate a stronger influence on their emotions and behaviours [16]. This shows that the degree of likeness of South Korean drama can influence viewers' attitudes toward South Korea. As a result, it drives viewers' purchasing behaviours, leading them to purchase Korean products and visit locations shown in the dramas [15]. Eventually, these purchases lead up to an increase of following K-fashion and Korean beauty standards in viewers' daily lives [17].

Not only that, K-dramas influence culture, habits, dress code, behaviours, and language of young people, impacting knowledge, creativity, and societal beauty standards, with both positive and negative effects. Such behaviour also includes an increased tendency to travel to South Korea especially among the younger generation [18], fostering repeat visits and promoting heritage tourism development as discussed in several studies in the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia [19][20]. Findings from previous researcher show that K-dramas have encouraged many Malaysian K-drama viewers to respect and value their families more, besides broadening their knowledge of other cultures. Notably, the narratives and experiences of the characters in K-dramas provide Malaysian youths with insightful lessons and a new outlook on life. For example, K-dramas like 'It's Okay to Not Be Okay' and 'My Mister' examine the depths of the most fundamental interpersonal bonds and reflect relatable everyday circumstances in a raw and intimate way which captivates viewers [21].

Furthermore, K-dramas provide a form of entertainment and escapism for Malaysian youths, allowing them to immerse themselves in a different culture and world. This sense of escapism is one of the cultural appeals of K-dramas and contributes to their influence on Malaysian youths including inducing an increased interest in learning the Korean language [22]. Other research findings show the presence of the negative influence of K-dramas on its viewers' lifestyles. The emphasis on physical appearance and wealth then

creates a toxic culture where people feel pressure to conform to these superficial standards [12]. In another study, K-dramas incur changes in their audience's daily behaviour and language, thus causing the loss of the nation's characteristics as it has been displaced by another culture [24]. It was also found that K-dramas perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes and promote unrealistic expectations in relationships.

Furthermore, K-dramas, renowned for their portrayal of idealised romantic relationships, often captivate viewers with their depiction of love that seems almost too perfect, thus shaping the expectations of audiences regarding real-life relationships. The research also discussed that such portrayals could lead individuals to anticipate similar levels of intensity and passion in their own relationships, potentially setting them up for disappointment. Furthermore, K-dramas also frequently underscore the importance of communication in relationships [16]. Through the compelling narratives of K-dramas, viewers witness how misunderstandings can be resolved through open dialogue and honest communication. This emphasis on effective communication can positively influence viewers' perceptions of how to navigate relationships in their own lives.

2.5 Cultivation Theory

Cultivation is a theory about how television influences viewers' perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and values [25]. This theory contends that individuals who have had extensive exposure to television are more likely than light viewers to reflect what they have seen on television [26]. As a result of extensive television consumption, viewers will tend to believe the media content portrayed is a reality [27]. Television has the power to shape both individual and societal values due to the consistency of the TV message and the frequency with which these messages are viewed, making it the dominant socialising force in American society.

Gerbner and Gross explained the effects of watching television on violence using the cultivation theory, stating that viewing violent television content for an extended period of time will influence viewers to become violent [26]. This occurs when viewers will learn and follow what they see in the media they consume because they perceive it as reality. Dramas, for example, were broadcast on television for entertainment purposes. As a result of dramas accompanied by violence for entertainment, viewers perceive the violence depicted on television as a reality and then be replicated in their daily lives with a means that television viewing time is interlinked with the violent behaviour depicted.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Data Collection Method

This study used the qualitative method with the diary method and interview as the research instruments. The diary method is a research data collection method used to gather qualitative data about user behaviours, activities, and experiences over time [28]. In a diary study, participants record entries about their everyday lives in a log, diary, or journal about the activity or experience. This method is adaptable for recording time-sensitive details, thus offering flexibility to explore behavioural aspects in studies [29].

For the diary method, participants were required to record their interactions with K-dramas and K-dramas' impact on their feelings, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours. The diary method offers a longitudinal lens, capturing the evolution of participants' perceptions and behaviours over time [30]. Data was collected through a set of diary entries for ten days in Microsoft Word documents and distributed to informants. As the diary entails the participants' personal experiences, an informed consent form was attached to obtain confirmation from the informants about their willingness to share their information and provide them with information about the study. Notably, the data collected will solely be used for this research.

To ensure that the entries are related to the research topic, ten sets of open-ended questions have been constructed for each day's entry blog. Open-ended questions have been selected for this data collection process because they allow informants to provide an infinite range of detailed and meaningful answers based on their own knowledge and feelings, which can lead to more diverse and richer qualitative data [31]. To integrate these inquiries effectively, the questions are segmented and categorised for streamlined data collection. The first segment pertains to demographic data to learn about the informants' backgrounds and their viewing habits of K-dramas, which are crucial because they may influence the responses. Next, the second segment aims to find out the perceived K-drama appeal. Lastly, the final segment assesses the influences of K-dramas on Malaysian youths based on the orders of effect in the cultivation theory: perception and assumption changes, values and attitudes transformation, and behavioural changes. For example, questions pertaining to the participants' social interaction and lifestyle changes fall under the third segment, within the category of "behavioural changes".

To further supplement the written diary entries, interviews have been conducted as well. Interviews serve as a source to gain a deeper insight into the informants' viewpoints of the research topic besides allowing them to elaborate more about their diary entries that would be explained more easily verbally than in written form [32].

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population refers to the group of individuals from which the sample might be drawn, whereas a sample is a subgroup of the target population that takes part in the investigation in order to generalize about the target population [33]. Adhering to the subject of this study, a few criteria was set for this study; the targeted informants must be Malaysian youths within the age range of 18 to 24 years old who are K-drama viewers. The sample size for this study is 5 informants.

Moving on, sampling is a process of selecting a representative group from the population under study used in statistical analysis [34]. Non-probability sampling will be applied for this study. Non-probability sampling means that researchers choose the sample instead of selecting it at random, thus creating an unequal chance of participating in the study among members of the population [34]. Two non-probability sampling methods will be used; purposive sampling and convenience sampling. Purposive sampling refers to selecting participants with specified characteristics, which in this case are only people who watch K-dramas and only people from ages 18 to 24 years old. Convenience sampling, on the other hand, means that participants will be selected by researchers based solely on convenience, which includes their availability and willingness to participate in the study. Previously, convenience sampling had been used by researchers in their studies to collect data from their target population. Therefore, a pre-survey was distributed to a pool of potential informants to determine their suitability and availability to participate in the subsequent diary method and interview processes.

4.0 Analysis and Discussion

The data obtained from informants via diary method and in-depth interview are analysed. This is to identify common patterns, themes, and emerging insights that form the basis for new theories of the appeals and influences of K-Dramas on Malaysian youths. Grounded theory will synthesise the findings and reveal relationships that might not have been apparent otherwise. Subsequently, a holistic understanding of participants' experiences is fostered which contributes to the interpretation of data when concluding the research [36].

Notably, K-dramas are essential components of the K-Wave, which is still gaining traction in Malaysia. This study's focus on youth is further supported by research from Pakistan and Indonesia, which found that the Korean Wave has a significant impact on young people [37], especially through K-dramas and K-pop, changing their cultural preferences and behaviors. With a focus on Malaysia, K-Dramas has greatly impact young Malaysians. Table 1 below are the themes identified from the data collected on appeals of K-dramas on Malaysian youths.

TABLE 1
Appeals of K-Dramas on Malaysian Youths

Theme Identified	Method Used
Storytelling, plots and script	Diary
	In-Depth Interviews
Actor Characters	Diary
	In-Depth Interviews
Genre Most preferred genres: Romance and Slice of Life	Diary
	In-Depth Interviews
Cultural Aspects	Diary
Visual and Aesthetics	Diary
	In-Depth Interviews

Following the themes identified in Table 1, the study is supported with findings stating that theme and storylines are one of the most influential appeals of K-dramas towards audiences. As such, all participants had stated in their diary entries and interview that the storytelling, plots and scripts of K-dramas are what appealed most to them. Another appeal of K-dramas that have been brought up by most of the informants is K-drama characters. In fact, the actors and their characters in K-dramas play a significant role in attracting viewers [38].

Furthermore, it was also found that the diverse genres offered by K-dramas are a major appeal that attracts their interest. Besides, a study conducted in the Philippines also concluded that K-drama genres appeal due to true-to-life stories encompassing love, modern romance, comedy, historical fiction, and action-drama [17]. Drawing from the responses of the five informants, it was found that romance dramas were the most preferred genre, followed by the slice of life genre. Additionally, aside from the storytelling aspect of K-dramas, cultural elements also contribute to K-dramas' appeal. In an interview with Korea JoongAng Daily, Professor Jin Dal Yong from the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University said that K-dramas resonate with Asian audiences because of similarities in cultures [11]. Lastly, the high-quality visuals and aesthetics in K-dramas were also pointed out as appeals of K-dramas. Studies have found that K-Dramas utilise intricate aesthetics to create visual appeals to attract global audiences [39].

TABLE 2
Influences of K-Dramas on Malaysian Youths (Perception and Assumption Changes)

Theme Identified	Method Used
Increased Awareness of Social Issues	Diary
	In-Depth Interviews
Perception towards Relationships in Society, Romantic and Friendship	Diary
	In-Depth Interviews
Increased Cultural Knowledge and Acceptance	Diary

Adhering to the first order of effect in the cultivation theory, perception and assumption changes, it was derived from this study's informants that they have experienced an increase in awareness of social issues as shown in Table 2. Another viewpoint that has arisen from the data collection process is that K-dramas create an overidealized perception of relationships amongst Malaysian youths. This impact of K-dramas was also discussed in the findings of research conducted by [16] found that K-dramas cause increased expectations and standards in terms of perceiving one's personal relationships. In terms of romantic relationships, most of the informants admitted to having increased expectations and standards that they look for in a potential romantic partner. Interestingly, it was found that K-dramas can potentially increase Malaysian youths' cultural knowledge and acceptance. Supporting this, [16] discovered that K-dramas have broadened Malaysian K-drama viewers' knowledge of other cultures. Through the storytelling of K-dramas that weave the intricacies of Korean culture, traditions, customs, and societal norms with the drama's characters and themes, viewers are able to get a glimpse into Korea's rich cultural tapestry.

TABLE 3

Influences of K-Dramas on Malaysian Youths (Values and Attitudes Transformation)

Theme Identified	Method Used
Increased Emotional Awareness and Mental Health Well-being	Diary
	In-Depth Interviews
Resilience and Determination Empathy and Compassion	Diary
Increased Emotional Awareness and Mental Health Well-being	Diary

Referring to Table 3, in terms of the influences of K-dramas within the second order of effect of the cultivation theory; values and attitudes transformations, it was found that informants experienced an increase in emotional awareness and mental health well-being. This finding is consistent with the findings on precision mental health understanding using K-dramas. It was found that K-dramas can enhance emotional awareness and mental health well-being among the informants of the study. Moving on, another viewpoint that was raised by informants is the ability of K-dramas in nurturing positive values among Malaysian youths. As indicated in a study [16] in Malaysia, K-dramas nurture higher positive influence in terms of personal values including, promoting respect and family values. A similar point that was found in the diaries of most informants was the fact that watching K-drama characters overcome challenges and achieve personal growth had inspired them to face their own challenges with resilience and determination.

TABLE 4

Influences of K-Dramas on Malaysian Youths (Behavioural Changes)

Theme Identified	Method Used
Improved Social Interactions	Diary
	In-Depth Interviews
Impact on Daily Productivity	Diary
	In-Depth Interviews
Purchasing Behaviours	Diary
Cultural Impact on Gestures, Food, Korean Language	Diary

Assessing the influences of K-dramas on Malaysian youths based on the third order of effect of the cultivation theory; behavioural changes, all informants shared that K-dramas had improved their social interactions with others. This is supported by another study conducted in Korea which found that K-dramas facilitate social interactions by sparking discussions on societal issues, transitioning from pure escapism to

realism, fostering dialogue among viewers in contemporary society [40]. Moving on, through the diary method and interviews conducted, K-dramas were discovered to impact Malaysian youths' daily productivity levels in various aspects. All the informants except Informant 2, shared that K-dramas did not significantly affect their responsibilities or daily tasks. This is similar to findings in a previous study conducted in Indonesia which found that K-dramas motivate students in their daily lives without affecting academic performance. Informant 2 wrote in his diary entry that he feels that K-dramas interfere with his responsibilities because he usually procrastinates whenever he is deep into a certain K-drama. This is supported by findings from a study conducted in the Philippines concluded that K-dramas serve as a form of escapism and stress relief for Filipino Millennials, offering relaxation, entertainment, and a break from daily challenges through engaging and relatable storylines [17].

Next, another behavioural impact of K-dramas on Malaysian youths is on their purchasing behaviours. Purchasing behaviours include an increased influence to purchase and follow the latest K-fashion and K-beauty products or trends, as well as an increased tendency to travel to South Korea. Informants 2 and 5, admitted to having been inspired by the K-fashion and K-beauty shown in K-dramas. As such, Informant 5, Said that K-dramas had influenced her to buy Korean makeup and skincare products. In terms of having an increased tendency to travel to South Korea, Informants 1 and 3, have shared their intentions of travelling to South Korea, hoping to experience life as shown in K-dramas. This finding is supported by multiple studies conducted among K-drama viewers in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia [19][37]. Evidently, for this research, Informant 3, wrote in her diary that "K-dramas have made me want to travel to Korea for the longest time to experience the life in K-dramas as it looks interesting." Finally, the last behavioural change induced by K-dramas upon Malaysian youths based on this study's methodologies is the cultural impact of K-dramas, particularly in terms of gestures, food, and the Korean language. For instance, handing things with both hands and bowing are common gestures integrated in Korean culture. As such, Informant 2, found himself to practise those gestures as a result of adapting what he saw in K-dramas into his own daily mannerisms. Overall, K-dramas serve not only as entertainment but also as a medium that shapes consumption patterns and cultural adaptation among Malaysian youths.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

This study was conducted to identify the appealing elements of K-dramas to Malaysian youths and the influences of K-dramas on their lifestyles. Consistent with Gerbner's Cultivation Theory, prolonged exposure to K-dramas cultivated participants' perceptions of social norms, romantic ideals, and family values. Notably, the findings have provided insights on Malaysian youths' views on the appeals and influence of K-drama, both positive and negative, through various data points provided by the informants. The findings of this study can contribute to media producers or filmmakers to create content that appeals and resonates deeply with Malaysian youths. First, more educational themes or moral lessons could be incorporated by subtly weaving them into the entertainment value. This would also aid parents and educators in using these dramas as conversational references to teach values and social responsibilities.

Besides that, characters should be developed with evolving narratives that reflect the challenges and aspirations of Malaysian youths because characters that demonstrate growth can inspire and connect more deeply with viewers. Lastly, given the impact of K-dramas on Malaysian youths' perceptions of relationships, scripting more complex and realistic relationships that go beyond idealistic romantic narratives could help set healthier expectations. This includes scripting and depicting healthy friendships, family dynamics, and professional relationships to provide Malaysian youths with a more comprehensive view of interpersonal interactions. Essentially, by integrating narratives with relationship dynamics that practise effective communication and conflict resolution, Malaysian youths will obtain positive models of communication and relationship management in their own lives.

Additionally, practical implications emerge for educators, parents, and media practitioners. Educators can use K-drama narratives to initiate classroom discussions about intercultural understanding, media influence, and critical viewing. Parents can engage youths in conversations that differentiate fiction from reality, fostering balanced consumption habits. Media practitioners can incorporate culturally diverse, realistic storylines to encourage social empathy and responsible representation.

This study's findings underscored the allure and impact of K-dramas on Malaysian adolescents; nonetheless, some limitations were present. The participants in the survey predominantly reside in major urban centres, with a significant number located in Kuala Lumpur. Consequently, this hinders the generalization of the findings, as it may not correctly reflect the charms and influences of K-dramas on all Malaysian teenagers, especially those from smaller cities or suburban regions. This study is constrained by geographic limitations. Therefore, it is recommended that future research be undertaken in different regions to establish a basis for comparison with informants from major urban centres in this study. This study primarily examined the influence of K-dramas as a media form affecting the lifestyles of Malaysian youths. Nonetheless, the influences encountered by each informant may vary due to factors such as differing educational backgrounds or perceptions of realism. Consequently, subsequent research should examine such issues with greater scrutiny.

Moreover, subsequent research could utilize longitudinal studies to gain a more profound understanding of the enduring effects of K-dramas on Malaysian adolescents, especially on the evolving impact of the cultural phenomenon as its popularity increases. Longitudinal research will elucidate how the influence of K-dramas on Malaysian youth may change with age, evolving societal standards, or differing living environments. It examines the degree to which K-dramas impact cultural identity and if this influence endures over time. Longitudinal studies can assess the efficacy of K-dramas as educational instruments for Korean language acquisition, cultural awareness, and social concepts and issues. Consequently, over time, monitoring academic performance and language competency across multiple years will yield data that is educationally advantageous.

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