



LATIN AMERICAN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR TOWARDS K-DRAMAS: A NETNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF KOREAN CULTURAL BRANDING

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ABSTRACT

K-Dramas have emerged as a global cultural phenomenon in the last decade. This research examines its influence on consumer behavior and perception of the South Korean cultural brand in Latin America through a netnographic analysis of interactions on TikTok. Using data mining, Atlas.ti and EmojiCloudAPP, a strong emotional connection of viewers, preference for subtitled content in original language and a significant impact on the consumption of South Korean products (food, fashion and beauty), acting as a cultural bridge between South Korea and Latin America were evidenced.

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1. Introduction

In the last decade, K-Dramas have experienced a remarkable rise in popularity, becoming a global cultural phenomenon that has transcended borders. They are part of the Korean Wave, which has more than 20 years of international following. The arrival of Korean dramas has marked a milestone in the penetration of Korean culture in countries such as Colombia, facilitating a first approach of Colombian television to Korea (Zarco, 2018). The Korean wave has also influenced the youth culture in Eastern Europe, creating a significant market for Korean products (Glodev et al., 2023). In Pakistan, Korean dramas have fostered an increase in young people's understanding of and interest in Korean culture, encompassing aspects such as language, cuisine and customs (Saleem et al., 2023). In Peru, the Korean wave has created a space where social inequalities are momentarily forgotten, offering hope and a sense of community among the followers (Nusta et al., 2014). This interest not only reflects a change in audiovisual consumption habits, but also indicates a growing fascination with Korean culture in various regions of the world (Han, 2019).

On the one hand, K-Dramas not only entertain, but also act as vehicles for transmitting cultural values, influencing purchasing decisions and the perception of Korean culture, and can also include elements of reflection, teaching, emotional development, and social connections. Consumer behavior, understood as the process of deciding to purchase and use products and services, has been the subject of study in various disciplines (Cayaban et al., 2023; Nguyen, 2019). Hirschman y Holbrook (1982) suggest that consumption is influenced by emotional and cultural factors, which highlights the importance of analyzing how K-Dramas affect consumers' emotions.

On the other hand, the Korean cultural brand has gained recognition in emerging markets thanks to South Korea's "soft power" strategy, where culture is used as a tool to enhance its global image (Nye, 2005; Ohnesorge, 2019). In Peru, the growth of the K-Dramas fan community has created an environment in which consumers not only consume content, but also actively participate in online communities, sharing and discussing their experiences (Min et al., 2019; Solis & Castilla, 2023). This online interaction not only amplifies the reach of K-Dramas, but also allows consumers to express their emotions and opinions about the content, which contributes to the construction of a shared cultural identity.

Therefore, this research aims to answer the following general question: How do social networks and in particular Tik Tok help us to understand the influence of K-Dramas and the Korean cultural brand on the Latin American consumer? To address this question, the following specific questions are posed: (1) What perceptions do Latin American consumers have about the quality and authenticity of K-Dramas? (2) How do K-Dramas affect purchase decisions of Korean cultural products in Latin America? (3) What emotions and feelings arise in consumers when interacting with K-Dramas related content?

While the general objective of the study is: to analyze how K-Dramas influence consumer behavior and perception of Korean cultural brand in Latin America, through a qualitative approach that explores the experiences, emotions and opinions of viewers in social networks and online communities. As for the specific objectives are: (1) To analyze the perceptions of Latin American consumers on the quality and authenticity of K-Dramas; (2) To evaluate the influence of K-Dramas on the purchase decisions of Korean products in the Latin American market; (3) To investigate the emotions and feelings that K-Dramas generate in Latin American consumers; and (4) To investigate the emotions and feelings that K-Dramas generate in Latin American consumers.

On the other hand, the rationale for this study lies in the need to understand how K-Dramas, as a cultural phenomenon, impact consumer behavior and cultural brand building in the Latin American context. This analysis will not only contribute to the existing literature on consumer behavior and cultural marketing but will also provide valuable insights for companies seeking to position Korean products in emerging markets. By exploring the relationship between cultural content and consumer behavior, this study can serve as a basis for future research in the field of cultural marketing and the influence of media on cultural perception.

2. Theoretical and conceptual framework

Consumer behavior refers to the decision-making process that people carry out when selecting, acquiring, using and disposing of products, services or experiences. This behavior is influenced by psychological, social and cultural factors (Cueva et al., 2013; De Mooij, 2004). In this context, consumer

perception plays a crucial role. Opinions on the quality of K-Dramas are fundamental, as perceived quality directly impacts consumer satisfaction (Abigail et al., 2024; Xie & Sun, 2021). In addition, the perception of cultural authenticity in K-Dramas is essential, since authenticity is defined as the ability of a product to genuinely reflect cultural traditions (Kang & Ro, 2024; Williams, 2016). The evaluation of the representation of Korean culture is also relevant, as the media contributes to the construction of cultural identities and the way foreign cultures are perceived (Radwan, 2022).

Consumer engagement is reflected in the frequency of interactions on social networks, where active participation can strengthen brand loyalty (Aaker, 2012). On the other hand, participating in discussions and forums about K-Dramas facilitates the exchange of opinions, which, according to the theory of interpersonal communication (Alsina, 2018; Yamaguchi, 1994), influences the formation of consumer attitudes. In addition, sharing and commenting on content related to K-Dramas increases their visibility; in fact, the theory of diffusion of innovations (Abdalla et al., 2024; Rogers, 2003) emphasizes that communication between consumers is fundamental to the adoption of new products.

Consumer preferences are equally critical. In this sense, the most popular K-Drama genres reflect cultural and social trends. Uses and gratification theory suggests that consumers choose media that satisfy their emotional needs (Stark & Schneiders, 2022). In addition, preference for specific actors and actresses may influence content selection, as identification with appealing characters is a significant factor in the selection of content (Cohen, 2001). This theory also postulates that individuals actively use the media to satisfy specific needs, which makes it a suitable tool for analyzing user behavior in social networks (Falgoust et al., 2022).

Consequently, consumer attitudes towards K-Dramas are an area of growing interest in the field of cultural marketing, this is based on the theory of reasoned action, formulated by Ajzen and Fishbein, which states that positive attitudes towards an object, in this case K-Dramas, influence behavioral intentions in the cognitive, affective and conative components. This is particularly relevant in this context, where viewers who develop an emotional connection to the content are more likely to consume related products and participate in fan communities (Schiffman et al., 2010).

On the other hand, the emotional experience that K-Dramas offer in their followers is explained from Plutchik's in 1980 theory of emotions, emotional responses can influence consumer satisfaction (Wang et al., 2023). Various studies highlight that the emotions evoked by K-Dramas, such as joy and sadness, can increase viewer satisfaction and foster loyalty to the cultural brand they represent (Messerli & Locher, 2021; Sukendi et al., 2023). This emotional bond translates into greater consumer engagement, which aligns with the theory of perceived value of Zeithaml (1988), which suggests that satisfaction is derived from the comparison between expectations and actual experiences.

From a cultural perspective, K-Dramas act as vehicles for the dissemination of Korean culture. The media emphasizes and constructs cultural meanings, and K-Dramas feature narratives that highlight distinctive elements of their culture (Torelli et al., 2012). The depiction of Korean culture in K-Dramas not only educates the international audience but also enhances the global perception of South Korea (Ariffin et al., 2018; Jin, 2024).

Nye's Soft Power Theory postulated in 2005 substantiates the contribution of K-dramas to the promotion of Korean culture abroad, attracting admiration and generating a sense of cultural affinity. K-dramas have increased interest in Korean culture, fashion, and cuisine, which in turn affects consumers' purchasing decisions (Gauttam et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2007).

Consequently, cultural identity also plays a preponderant role. Bhabha (2004), he argues that identity is fluid and can be reinterpreted in different contexts. This phenomenon is seen in how K-Dramas shape and redefine contemporary Korean identity, resonating with global audiences seeking authenticity and emotional connection. Hence, the study of consumer attitudes towards K-Dramas is framed in a theoretical context that encompasses reasoned action, emotions, cultural representation and soft power. Recent research underscores the importance of these factors in Korean cultural brand building and their impact on consumer behavior.

In the same way, it can be said that the theoretical basis is based on the essence of netnography, given that the behavior of the Latin American consumer towards K-Dramas is framed in a context of cultural co-creation, where consumers are not only receivers, but active agents who adapt these products to their own needs and contexts. This interaction is facilitated by digital platforms, which allow for the exchange of experiences and the formation of communities around K-Dramas. Technogenesis,

understood as the integration of technology and human intention, plays a crucial role. As consumers engage with K-Dramas, their interpersonal relationships and power structures are transformed, reflecting a continuous adaptation to these new cultural narratives. Studies of the online social experience indicate that the algorithmic characteristics of platforms influence the visibility of content, thus affecting consumption preferences. In this sense, the netnographic analysis will explore how these dynamics impact the perception and consumption of the Korean cultural brand in Latin America, evidencing a process of cultural adaptation and reconfiguration (Kozinets, 2020),

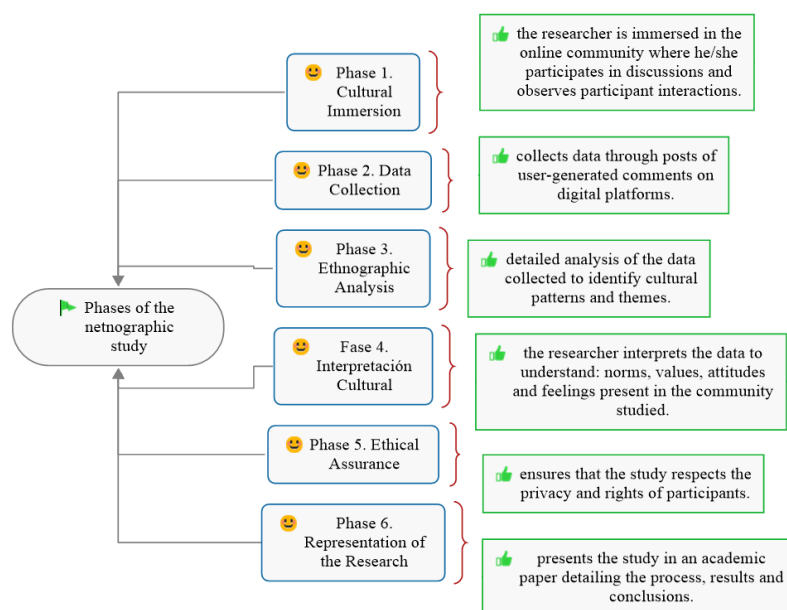
3. Material and Methods

This study is based on a netnographic approach to analyze Latin American consumer behavior towards K-Dramas and the perception of the South Korean cultural brand. Netnography is an adaptation of traditional ethnography to study the cultures and online behaviors of its users, combining ethnographic research methods with digital data analysis, this approach allows understanding online social interactions, providing information on how digital technologies affect human relationships (Calvo et al., 2024; Kozinets, 2020).

Según Kozinets (2020), Netnography focuses on qualitative research of social media data, differentiating itself from approaches such as ethnography or market research. It includes methods such as interviews, data scraping, online observation, and thematic analysis. Its objective is to understand the cultural experiences that are manifested in social practices and networks. In addition, it is linked to current trends in qualitative research and reflects a dynamic approach that combines principles of anthropology and sociology. Hence, the approach is qualitative and interpretive, allowing for a deep understanding of the cultural and social dynamics that influence consumer interactions (Quinton & Reynolds, 2024).

The phases that make up a netnographic study according to Kozinets (2020) are presented in Figure 1 and are as follows:

Figure 1. Phases of the netnographic study



Note. Based on Kozinets (2020) and made with the Mind Manager© version 22 program

As for the population of this study, it consisted of users of the social network TikTok® as the target audience and audience of Korean series in Latin America. This choice is due to the growing popularity of K-Dramas on this network, where users share their opinions and experiences. On the other hand, the sample was formed by collecting publications and comments extracted from the social network. This approach allowed for relevant and up-to-date data on user interactions in relation to K-Dramas. The study period was defined from January 2022 to May 2024. This time interval allowed for the capture of trends and discussions around K-Dramas during a specific period, thus facilitating a deeper analysis of consumers' perceptions and emotions.

The inclusion criteria established for the collection of data on K-Dramas in the context of the Latin American population are represented in Table 1, which includes not only the keywords and demographic characteristics, but also the relevant hashtags and the arroba that facilitated the search and analysis of information on social networks.

Table 1. Inclusion criteria

Criterion	Description
Keywords	K-Drama, Korean Drama, Korean Series, Korean Culture, K-Drama Actors, K-Drama Reviews, K-Drama Recommendations, K-Drama Episodes, K-Drama Plots.
Demographics	Age: Users 18 years of age and older. Location: Users in Latin America. Gender: Gender diversity in opinions.
Content Format	Posts and comments expressing opinions, analysis, or discussions about K-Dramas. Content that includes K-Drama reviews, reviews, or recommendations.
Interaction	Posts with a minimum of 300 interactions (comments or likes).
Hashtags	#KDrama, #KDramaLatinoamérica, #CulturaCoreana, #DramaCoreano, #SeriesCoreanas, #OpinionesKDrama, #RecomendacionesKDrama, #KDramaFans, #KDramaLovers, #KDramaCommunity.
The arroba	@Netflix, @Viki, @KDramaLatino, @KDramaUpdates
Social Network	TikTok

Note. Own elaboration, 2025.

Similarly, for data collection, data mining, scraping and text analysis techniques were used, facilitating the extraction of relevant comments and publications. Tools such as NVivo© and Atlas.ti© were used to analyze comments and thus generate study categories. Similarly, EmojiCloudAPP© and Nocode functions© were used to categorize the emotions of the participants (Pang & Lee, 2008). These tools are especially useful for processing large volumes of textual data and extracting meaningful patterns.

Likewise, a data triangulation was implemented, combining the findings of the netnographic analysis with the results of the sentiment analysis and the theories that support the study. This strategy strengthens the validity and richness of the results, providing a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon studied. Through this triangulation, we sought to identify not only consumer behavior, but also how it relates to the reception of Korean culture in the digital sphere (Ardèvol et al., 2003; Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2014; Saenz Lopez & Tamez González, 2014). Therefore, this study not only analyzes consumption patterns, but also explores the construction of cultural identity through K-Dramas in the Latin American context.

4. Results

The results of the netnographic research are presented below, which focused on understanding the cultural characteristics of the community studied through a process of immersion, data collection and analysis (Kozinets, 2020).

4.1. Phase 1. Cultural Immersion

Much of the immersion approach stems from the need for elusive, high-quality data, which can be applied to various interaction strategies. Information gathering for immersion focuses primarily on detailed and in-depth data, which is extensively descriptive and informative.

4.1.1. Community Description

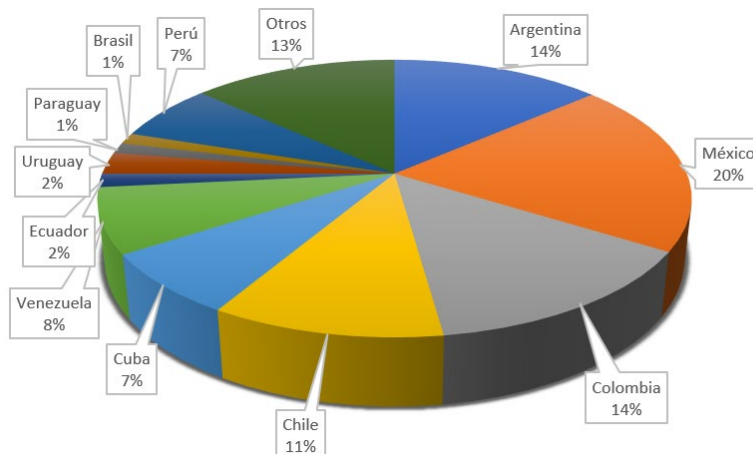
The online community studied focuses on K-drama followers, particularly on the TikTok platform who participate in publications dedicated to this cultural phenomenon. The members of this community are predominantly young, with a strong inclination towards the female gender, and the majority are in the age range of 18 to 30 years. This demographic reflects an active interest in Korean pop culture, especially among adolescents and young adults. In addition, the community is diverse, encompassing people of different nationalities and socioeconomic backgrounds, which enriches interactions and the exchange of experiences.

The above is based on various studies such as the survey conducted in 2023 in 26 countries around the world, about 41 percent of respondents stated that Korean dramas (K-Dramas) were very popular in their countries that year. In total, about 68 percent of respondents felt that K-Dramas were popular in general even outside of dedicated fan circles (Kozinets, 2020).

Similarly, Barraza et al. (2021), states that, a notable characteristic of K-drama followers is that most of them are women, which reflects a strong female inclination towards this type of content. In addition, this audience is mainly concentrated in the 20-29 age group, indicating that K-Dramas especially appeal to a young and dynamic audience. Sukendi et al. (2023), who found that, the majority of Korean drama followers are women (99%), with an average age of 24 to 30 years old, and most have watched K-Dramas for more than 3 years, mainly using mobile phones and platforms like Netflix®.

As for the geographical location of the followers in an analysis carried out on TikTok, the question was raised about which country in Latin America they were watching K-Dramas from, generating a total of 316 comments from community members indicating the country of origin. This interaction not only reflects the global interest in K-Dramas, but also provides valuable insight into the geographic diversity of viewers. Figure 1 presents the responses collected, highlighting the different regions of Latin America that participated and the percentage they represent:

Figure 2. Geographical distribution of Latin American followers



Note. Own elaboration made with SPSS version 27.

Figure 2 shows the percentage distribution of countries from which members of the online community are watching K-Dramas according to the data collected in the TikTok post about the question of which Latin American country they were watching K-Dramas from. The data reveals that Mexico leads with 20% of the responses, followed by Colombia and Argentina, each with 14%. Other prominent countries include Venezuela with 8%, Cuba with 7%, and Peru with 7%.

In addition, it is observed that 11% of the participants come from Chile, while Ecuador and Uruguay contribute 2% each, and Paraguay represents only 1%. 13% of the responses are grouped under the category "Other", which indicates the presence of viewers of various nationalities. This analysis suggests a strong presence of audiences in Latin America, highlighting the global appeal of K-Dramas and their ability to connect with diverse cultures and contexts.

4.1.2. Interaction Observations

In the context of netnography, the researcher actively participated in discussions within publications dedicated to K-Dramas. During these interactions, a variety of behaviors were evident, from heated debates about plots and characters to mutually supportive practices, such as the creation of focus groups. These dynamics highlight the enthusiasm for K-Dramas and the importance of social interaction in building shared identities.

Below are a series of questions that were sought to be answered through immersion in different groups of followers of Korean dramas and that are part of Phase 2 and 3 of the study.

4.2. Phase 2. Data Collection and Phase 3. Netnographic analysis

In the context of the study, "Latin American Consumer Behavior Toward K-Dramas: A Netnographic Study of Korean Cultural Branding," Phases 2 and 3 were unified into a comprehensive analysis that encompassed both data collection and netnographic analysis. During Phase 2, data was collected through user-generated comment posts on TikTok, allowing for a broad view of community interactions and opinions. Simultaneously, in Phase 3, a detailed analysis of this data was carried out, where patterns and cultural themes that emerged from consumer interactions were identified. This combined approach provided a deep understanding of how K-Dramas were perceived and consumed in the Latin American context, revealing the cultural dynamics that influenced their popularity.

The data collection to answer each question was carried out by extracting a certain number of comments at various times and in different publications, which are identified in each analysis showing the number of comments analyzed.

4.2.1. About Content Preferences:

What is the most popular K-Dramas among community members, and what elements appeal most to Latin American consumers?

After reviewing a total of 817 comments on a TikTok post asking about the participants' favorite k-drama, the following titles were identified as the most mentioned: True Beauty, Such a Beautiful Love, My Adorable Demon, Job Proposal, King the Land, Love alarm, It's Okay Not to Be Well, Emergency Landing to Your Heart, 25/21 and Love is like the cha cha cha. These results reflect audience preferences and highlight the popularity of these dramas in the community. In this way, the preference for K-Dramas is described, which is due to various reasons mentioned by followers.

First, the quality of the narrative is a crucial factor, as evidenced by comments that highlight satisfaction with the plot, for example, "I finished watching, true Beauty and I give it a 10/10 🌟❤️." In addition, the emotional connection generated by the stories is significant, with users expressing their personal impact, as in the case of "True Beauty Cries with That Series 🥹❤️".

The dynamics between characters also play an important role, evidenced by the interaction between fans who identify with different actors, such as "Are they Team Suho or Team Seojun? 🤔". On the other hand, recommendations from friends have a significant influence on the choice of series, as can be seen in comments that suggest specific titles.

The diversity of genres within K-Dramas allows for options for all tastes, which is reflected in statements such as "The best is king the land." The expressions of enthusiasm and excitement, accompanied by emojis, highlight the impact that these series have on the audience. Phrases such as "I loved True Beauty, I 😊 loved it" and "my adorable demon is the best ❤️❤️❤️🥰" demonstrate the passion they arouse, evidencing how these dramas not only entertain, but also establish meaningful connections with viewers. In Figure 3, the K-Dramas named as favourites by users.

Figure 3. Favorite K-drama



Note. Own elaboration, 2025.

Who are the favorite actresses and actors according to K-drama fans?

After the immersion in the social network TikTok, table 2 shows the result of the online netnographic analysis, which revealed that Suzy and Kim Yoo Jung are the most mentioned actresses, with 17 and 15 references respectively. This suggests that both actresses have a strong emotional connection with viewers, which may be related to their roles in popular series and their physical attractiveness. Moon Ga-young and Park Bo Young also appear frequently, indicating that the audience values the diversity of characters these actresses have played. The comments analyzed reveal a marked admiration for the actresses, expressed through emojis and enthusiastic phrases. This pattern manifests the role of these figures in K-drama culture, demonstrating how their public image significantly influences audience perceptions and preferences. The frequency of mentions of specific actresses not only reflects their popularity, but also illustrates their impact on the public's consumption decisions, highlighting their role as influential cultural ambassadors.

Table 2. Favorite K-drama actresses

Actress	Frequency	Preference Expressions and Emojis
Suzy	17	"Suzy i love your love", "Suzy is beautiful", 🥰💖
Kim Yoo Jung	15	"Kim Yoo Jung es mi top", "kim yoo jung es hermosa", 🥰💫
Moon Ga-young	10	"Moon Ga-young es la 1", "I love you moon ga-young", 💖🐱
Park Bo Young	8	"Where is Park Bo Young?", "Tremendous goddess", 🙏💖
Seo Ye Ji	7	"Seo Ye Ji is missing", "Seo Ye-ji is beautiful", 🌸😭
Kim Se-jeong	9	"Kim Sejeong deserves to be higher", "Kim Se-jeong is very pretty", 😭💖
Han So-hee	6	"my girlfriend Han So-hee", "Han So-hee prettier", 🐱💖
Jisoo	5	"Jisoo is beautiful", "Jisoo should be in the top 3", 💖💫
Park Shin Hye	6	"Park Shin Hye is missing", "I think she is beautiful", 🥰😭

Actress	Frequency	Preference Expressions and Emojis
Go Young Jung	5	"Go Young Jung is definitely missing", "Go Young Jung is the most beautiful", 🥺💡
Lee Sung-kyung	4	"Where is Lee Sung Kyung?", "Lee Sung-kyung is beautiful", 🥺💖
Kim Go Eun	4	"Kim Go Eun is the prettiest one", "the real beauty of Korea", 🥰💖

Note. Own elaboration, 2025.

As for actors, according to table 3, it indicates that Cha Eun-woo and Hwang In-yeop are the most outstanding actors, receiving 20 and 15 mentions respectively. This finding suggests that their popularity stems from their ability to connect with the audience through their performances. The controversy surrounding the ranking of Song Kang, who was singled out as deserving of a higher position, reflects viewers' expectations of actors' attractiveness and talent. The comments, accompanied by emotional emojis, underscore a strong emotional bond towards these artists, emphasizing their relevance in K-drama culture. This analysis highlights how stakeholder perception not only affects individual popularity, but also influences viewing decisions among consumers.

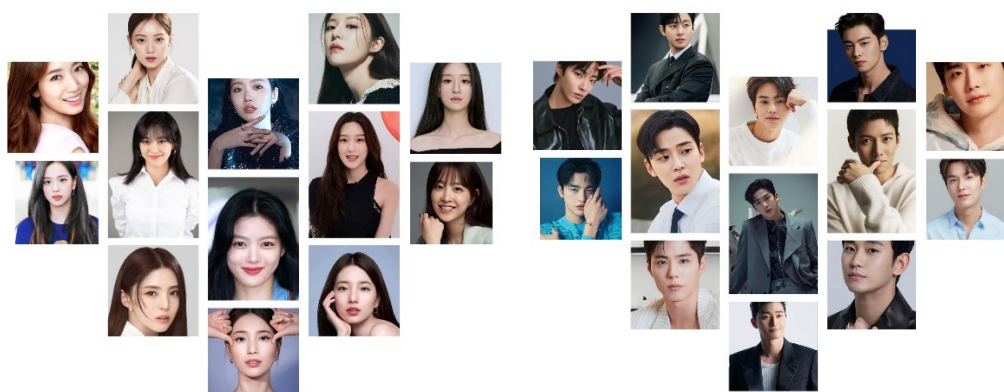
Table 3. Favorite K-drama actors

Actor	Frecuencia	Expresiones y Emojis de la preferencia
Cha Eun-woo	20	"Cha Eun-woo is the best", "my love Cha Eun-woo", 🥰💖
Hwang In-yeop	15	"Hwang In-yeop the most handsome," 🥰💖
Song Kang	12	"Song Kang should be in the 2," 🥺🥺
Lee Jong-suk	10	"Lee Jong-suk is my favorite," 🥰💖
Nam Joo Hyuk	8	"Nam Joo Hyuk is my eternal love," 🥰💖
Ahn Hyo-seop	8	"Ahn Hyo-seop I adore you so much", "my husband Ahn Hyo-seop", 🥰💖
Park Seo Joon	6	"Where is Park Seo Joon", "Park Seo Joon was missing", 🥺🥺
Ji Chang Wook	7	"My beautiful Ji Chang Wook", 🥰💖
Kim Soo-hyun	5	"Kim Soo-hyun is handsome," 🥰💖
Lee Min-ho	6	"Lee Min-ho is the most beautiful," 🥰💖
Park Bo-gum	4	"Park Bo-gum is beautiful," 🥰💖
Rowoon	5	"Rowoon is the most handsome", "my beautiful boyfriend Rowoon", 🥰💖
Kim Yohan	4	"Kim Yohan is very handsome," 🥰💖
Lee Do-hyun	3	"Mi amor Lee Do-hyun", 🥰💖
Seo In-guk	3	"Seo In-guk the cutest", "Seo In-guk was missing", 💖🥺

Note. Own elaboration, 2025.

Figure 4 is presented below, in a collage of the actresses and actors most mentioned by the followers of K-Dramas on the social network TikTok and which positions them as the most prominent.

Figure 4. Favorite actresses and actors



Note. Own elaboration with Fotor online, 2025.

4.2.2. About Display Behavior:

How often do they watch K-Dramas and on what platforms?

K-drama users on TikTok, in a review of 585 comments, reveal a clear trend towards frequent viewing of these dramas. Many viewers enjoy marathons and watch multiple episodes in a single day. In addition, users mention that they watch one to four K-Dramas per week, highlighting that their daily routine adapts to include these dramas, even at times such as transportation or during meals. Phrases like "college won't let me" and "I finish one and want to keep watching" reflect how the behavior of K-drama followers has become an integral part of their everyday lives, affecting even their sleep time.

As for the platforms for viewing Korean soap operas, Netflix is the most mentioned, with users specifically recommending dramas available there. Comments such as "recommend a few on Netflix" and "Penthouse on Netflix... it's barbaric" indicate that this platform is a key place to access this content. The addiction to these dramas is evident, as many users express their desire to see more and their inability to stop, which is reflected in the phrase "it's an addiction, I need to rehabilitate." Thus, the combination of viewing frequency and preference for platforms like Netflix highlights the significant impact that K-Dramas have on the lives of their followers.

Similarly, TikTok users state that they watch K-Dramas on various platforms in addition to Netflix, such as Viki®, where they find a wide selection of Asian content, and YouTube®, which allows them to access episodes and clips for free. They also mention Amazon Prime Video® and HBO Max®, although their use is less frequent. This variety of platforms reflects the flexibility of users to watch K-Dramas at different times of the day, whether on days off, during transportation, or even at work, demonstrating the great popularity and accessibility of this content today.

Do you prefer to watch K-Dramas in their original language or dubbed/subtitled and why?

Based on 286 comments from TikTok users, a clear trend was observed towards the preference for watching K-Dramas in their original language. Many people expressed that they enjoy Korean dramas more, as they consider that "nothing like in their original language" 🥰 and that "dubbed ones lose all their essence." 😊 This idea is reinforced with comments such as "I love seeing them in their same language, so I learn the language" 📺 and "I prefer the original language, it is more enjoyable". 😊

In addition, the need for subtitles is mentioned, as some users indicate that "although I see them in their original language, I prefer subtitles" 👁️ to be able to follow the plot without losing details. On the other hand, there are those who look for free and accessible options, such as "the best, I only see from there" 👍 or "there is an application that I use that is DoramasFlix® and some dramas give you an option in Spanish". 🇪🇸

However, there are also challenges, such as the difficulty in finding certain apps in the Play Store, with comments saying, "it is not found in the Play Store" 📱 or "I look for it and it does not appear". 😞 This reflects users' frustration when trying to access specific content. Consequently, the trend among TikTok users is clear: they prefer to watch K-Dramas in their original language with subtitles, valuing

the authenticity of the content, while looking for accessible platforms to enjoy their favorite 📺💡 series.

4.2.3. About Online Interactions:

How do community members interact when discussing episodes and plots in their daily lives?

The interaction between members of the K-Dramas community in 585 TikTok comments clearly reflect consumer behavior, characterized by an intense emotional connection and a sense of belonging. Comments such as "I just watched True Beauty 😊, but now which one do you recommend" and "Once you enter the world of K-Dramas, there is no going back 😂❤️" show how these dramas have captured the attention and affection of viewers, positioning them as the favorites of users of different ages. This phenomenon manifests itself in the active search for recommendations, evidenced in phrases such as "Recommend a few on Netflix by fis ❤️❤️❤️❤️", which highlights the importance of the community in making consumption decisions. In addition, users openly share their daily experiences, from watching episodes at unexpected times to acknowledging the addiction they feel, as seen in comments that mention the need for "therapy and a support group." This behavior reflects not only the attraction to the content, but also a desire for social connection, where the K-Drama becomes a vehicle for entertainment and community interaction, thus highlighting the cultural and emotional impact of these series in the Latin American context. The emotional connection is expressed with emojis and words of admiration for K-Dramas. Table 4 and Figure 4 show in percentage the number of expressions according to the emoji expressed by the participants of the comments and the most used emojis.

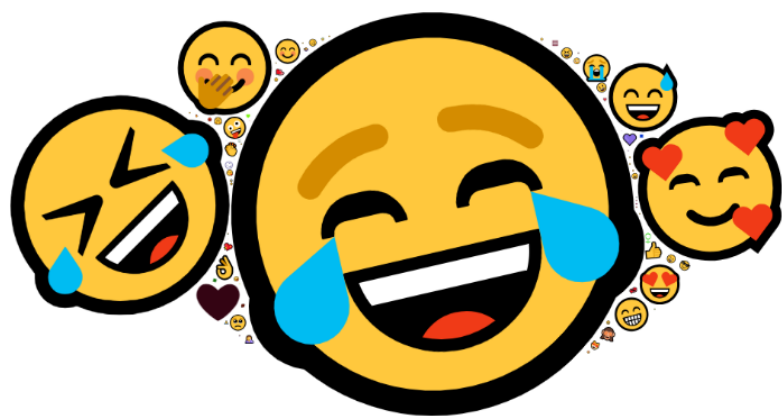
Table 4. Frequency of emoji use

Emoji	Name	Freq	Percentage (%)
😂	Face with tears of laughter	322	41.51
🤔	Laughter with tears	175	22.58
😊	Smiling face with hearts	115	14.84
😏	Face with hand in mouth	75	9.68
😓	Face smiling with sweat	55	7.1
❤️	Heart	43	5.55
😍	Face with heart eyes	32	4.1
😄	Smiling face with big eyes	27	3.48
😭	Crying Face	22	2.84
👌	Hand OK	20	2.58
Otros	-	61	7.86

Note. Own elaboration in Microsoft Excel©, 2025.

Table 4 presents the use of emojis in comments, highlighting that the emoji 😂 (Face with tears of laughter) is the most popular, with 322 mentions (41.51%), which indicates a strong humorous response among users. It is followed by the emoji 🤔 (Laughter with tears) with 175 uses (22.58%), which reinforces the fun atmosphere. In addition, the emoji 😊 (Smiling face with hearts) appears 115 times (14.84%), showing emotional appreciation towards the content, while the emoji 😏 (Face with hand in mouth) is used 75 times (9.68%), suggesting surprise or embarrassment. Emojis such as 😓 (Face smiling with sweat) and 😭 (Face crying) have lower frequencies (55 and 22, respectively), indicating that negative reactions are less common. The "Other" category includes 61 mentions (7.86%), reflecting a diversity of emotional expressions. In short, users tend to react in a positive and humorous way, with fun and affection predominating in their interactions. Figure 5 shows the emojis that are most representative of the feelings and emotions of K-drama fans.

Figure 5. Emoji Expressions From K-Drama Followers



Note. Own elaboration with the EmojiCloudAPP© software, 2025,

What type of content do you generate and how is it shared?

Analysis of emojis in 585 comments on TikTok reveals that Korean dramas generate a deep emotional connection with viewers, suggesting that these contents not only entertain, but also resonate on a personal and cultural level, transcending borders. Emojis such as 🥰, 😍, ❤️ and 💕 indicate a strong affection and admiration towards the plots and characters, while 😭, 😞 and 🥺 reflect the sadness brought about by narrative events that deeply impact the audience (Ko et al., 2022; Shalahuddin & Fajrianti, 2024). This phenomenon demonstrates that Korean dramas, by addressing universal themes such as love, loss, and vulnerability, manage to connect emotionally with people from diverse cultures, facilitating their acceptance in international markets. In addition, the use of emojis such as 😂 highlights moments of humor, suggesting that these dramas also offer emotional relief amidst the complexity of modern life. The combination of emotions, from joy to sadness to confusion, is evidence that these genres can cut across Korean culture, becoming a global phenomenon that appeals to diverse audiences and fosters cross-cultural understanding, making Korean dramas a bridge that connects different realities and experiences. Table 5 shows a summary of the content generated by users, its meaning and some examples of expressions in the analyzed comments.

Table 5. User-generated content

Emoji	Meaning	Comment
🥰	Love, affection	"my adorable demon 🥰"
😍	Intense admiration	"King the land is a beautiful series I recommend 😍 it"
😭	Sadness, pain	"Your time calls 😭😭😭😭😭"
😞	Soft sadness	"Predestined love I cried at the end beautiful, beautiful 😞"
🥺	Vulnerability	"Nam Soon A Super Strong 🐱 Girl I Need Season 2 🥺"
💕	Strong affection	"My demon and my 19 lives 💕💕💕"
💖	Romantic love	"A predestined love and My adorable demon my favorites 💖"
❤️	Deep Love	"My Adorable Demon Is the Best Kdrama ❤️ Yet"
😂	Intense laughter	"that's pure Netflix if they go to pandrama they're going to go crazy 😂"
🐱	Love or admiration	"I loved nangoo a super strong 🐱 girl"

Emoji	Meaning	Comment
😬	Confusion	"I was bored King the Land 😬"
💔	Emotional pain	"Predestined love I love her 💔"
💕	Romantic attraction	"I highly recommend them The King The Land 💕"
😩	Exhaustion or frustration	"I've seen them all, I'm not sure what to see 😩"

Note. Own elaboration in Microsoft Excel©, 2025.

In the same way, users generate content as hashtags in posts such as #kdrama, #kdramas, and #kdramas Korean dramas, evidence the popularity and growing interest in this genre globally. Other hashtags such as #MustWatch, #recommendations, and #foryoukdrama suggest that viewers seek recommendations to discover new series, highlighting the importance of the community in promoting content.

Likewise, they use hashtags such as #netflix and mentions of platforms such as @viki and @Netflix indicate how these dramas have found a home on streaming services, facilitating their international access. Repeated hashtags such as #kdramalover and #kdrama_lover52 highlight fan devotion, while #starup and #boradeborah show specific examples that have captured the public's attention. These hashtags not only reflect the passion for Korean dramas, but also their ability to connect with diverse audiences and cross-cultural boundaries. In addition to all the above, K-drama fans also share images and videos in their comments that reflect their enthusiasm and following of the series.

4.3. Phase 4. Cultural Interpretation:

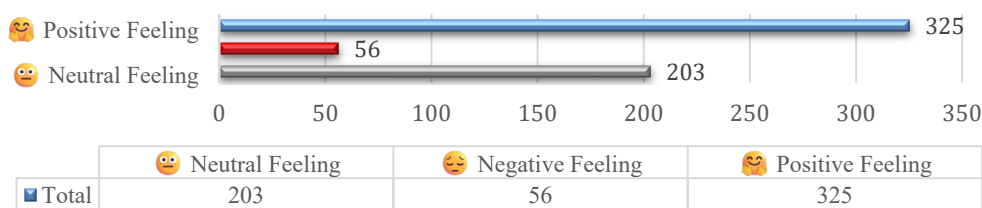
In Phase 4 of the study, the researcher focused on the cultural interpretation of the data collected. This analysis sought to understand the norms, values, attitudes and feelings that emerge within the community of followers of K-Dramas in Latin America. Through this interpretation, it is possible to identify the beliefs and emotions that influence the reception and consumption of this cultural brand, thus revealing how K-Dramas are intertwined with the identity and cultural experience of consumers in the region. This analysis was carried out through different questions in diverse contexts, as described below:

4.3.1. On Identity and Community:

What are the prevailing patterns and sentiments in user comments about K-Dramas, and how do they reflect the perception and impact of Korean cultural branding?

Through the review and analysis of 587 comments on TikTok from a publication entitled "My daily life with K-Dramas", it was possible to analyze the feelings expressed in the comments using the Nocodefunctions© tool, where the frequency and percentage of emotions and perceptions were identified according to the figure and Table 6. This approach allowed for a better understanding of the social and affective dynamics surrounding the phenomenon of K-Dramas, revealing how these contents influence the identity and interpersonal relationships of fans.

Figure 6. Feelings for K-Dramas



Note. Own elaboration in Microsoft Excel©, 2025.

Table 6. Percentage in the level of feelings

Feeling	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
😊 Positive Feeling	325	59.4
😞 Negative Feeling	56	10.2
😐 Neutral Feeling	203	37.4

Note. Own elaboration based on Nocode functions and Microsoft Excel, 2025.

The analysis of the comments revealed, according to Figure and Table 6, patterns that highlight the predominance of positive feelings. Most users express strong emotional attachment, using phrases like "I love it" and emojis like 😊 and ❤️. For example, one comment mentions, "It's an addiction that I need to rehabilitate myself 😊 from," suggesting a deep connection to this content and reinforcing the Korean cultural brand in the region. In terms of sentiment distribution, 59.4% of the comments are classified as positive, with a frequency of 325 responses, indicating a strong recognition and appreciation for K-Dramas. On the other hand, neutral feelings represent 37.4% of the comments, with 203 responses, reflecting emotionally neutral questions or experiences. Comments such as "which one do you recommend?" contribute to the dynamic of recommendations among consumers, creating a space for the exchange of suggestions. Finally, 10.2% of the comments are negative, with a frequency of 56 responses, revealing concerns related to K-drama addiction and its effects on daily life. Emojis like 😞 and 🤔 indicate these concerns. A representative comment mentions: "the truth is already common in a woman hahahahahahh", suggesting self-criticism in the context of cultural consumption. In addition, humor and self-criticism are key tools to express consumers' relationship with K-Dramas. Humorous comments, such as "hahaha, I thought I was the only one," foster a sense of community among fans, easing the emotional burden of addiction. Finally, the reviews reflect a desire for social connection, where many consumers seek recommendations and share experiences. A comment that encapsulates this need is, "You have to make the group to comment," suggesting that fans value the social interaction that K-Dramas generate, thus cementing the Korean cultural brand.

4.3.2. On Cultural and Social Influences:

Which cities in Korea do they want to visit and why do they want to visit them?

The messages in 350 messages posted on TikTok reflect a deep yearning to visit South Korea, with cities such as Busan and Jeju being the most prominent. Busan, described as "beautiful" and "full of charms," is mentioned repeatedly, with many users expressing a desire to explore its scenery, beaches, and local culture. The emotional connection to the city is accentuated by references to celebrities such as Jimin of BTS, suggesting that pop culture popularity influences its appeal. On the other hand, Jeju is craved for its natural beauty and connection to Korean dramas, which fuels users' dreams of experiences similar to those seen on screen. In general, the desire to visit these cities is driven by the search for cultural experiences, admiration for the beauty of the country and the influence of music and movies, which create a strong emotional bond with South Korea.

How do K-Dramas influence their perceptions of Korean culture?

K-Dramas significantly influence users' perceptions of Korean culture, as evidenced by the analyzed posts. Many comments refer to iconic scenes and locations from dramas, generating a desire to experience those same environments in real life. The beauty of the landscapes, traditional architecture and cultural elements depicted in these productions create an idealized image of South Korea, enticing viewers to want to visit cities such as Busan and Jeju, where various series have been filmed.

In addition, the emotional connection that users feel towards the characters and plots reinforces their interest in Korean culture, cuisine and traditions. The influence of K-Dramas not only fosters a desire to travel, but also promotes a sense of belonging and connection to a country that many consider a "dream" or an "ideal destination." In short, K-Dramas act as a bridge that brings fans closer to Korean culture, shaping their aspirations and perceptions in a positive way.

- Norms, Values and Relationship with the Cultural Context

The relationship between K-Dramas and the Latin American cultural context is manifested through the adoption of norms and values that transcend borders, creating a phenomenon of cultural hybridization. K-Dramas not only entertain, but also act as vehicles for the dissemination of Korean values, such as the importance of family, respect and aesthetics, which resonate with Latin American audiences. This phenomenon is reflected in the way fans identify with the plots and characters, allowing them to explore and reconfigure their own cultural norms. In addition, interest in Korean food, fashion and beauty products indicates a search for authenticity and an openness to new cultural experiences. This cultural exchange fosters a dialogue in which traditional Latin American values are intertwined with elements of Korean culture, enriching the cultural identity of the followers and promoting a sense of community around shared interests. Thus, K-Dramas become a space for reflection on identity, belonging and globalization, where followers not only consume content, but also actively participate in the construction of a new cultural paradigm that integrates the best of both cultures.

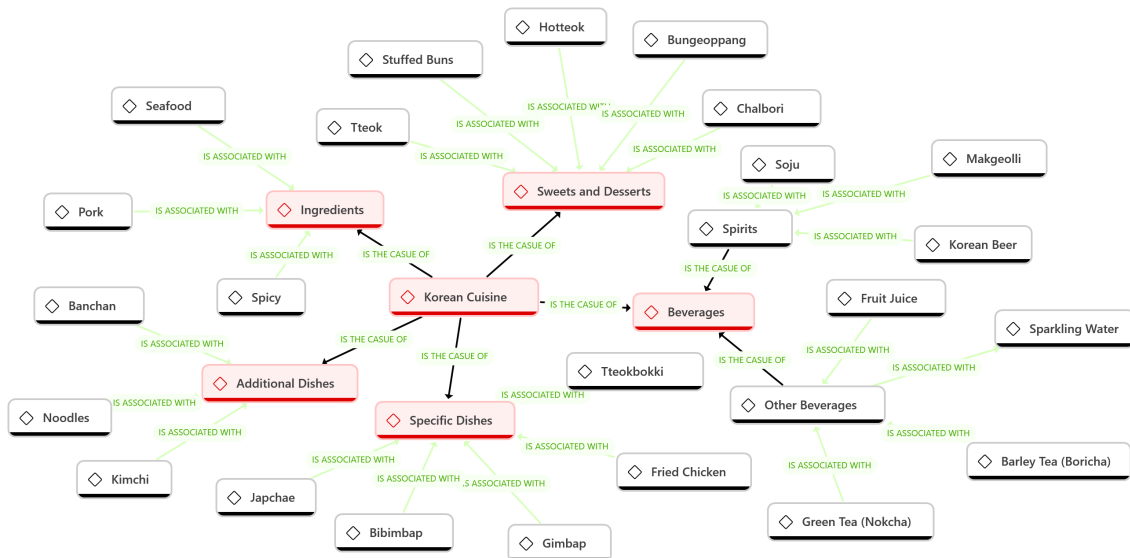
4.3.3. About Related Purchases:

What impact do they have on their consumption habits?

Analysis of comments on posts on the social network TikTok reveals that Latin American followers of K-Dramas show a notable interest in various aspects of Korean culture, especially gastronomy. This interest is reflected in the popularity of dishes such as Tokkboki and Bibimbap, with enthusiastic comments such as "I want to try Bibimbap now! 🍲" and "Tokkboki is the best! 🍝", evidencing an active search for authentic culinary experiences.

Figure 7 highlights how these consumption habits extend to a variety of Korean foods, from beverages such as Soju and Makgeolli, to sweets and desserts such as Hotteok and Bungeoppang. In addition, there is an interest in specific ingredients and additional foods such as kimchi and seafood, reflecting a deeper integration of Korean cuisine into viewers' food preferences. This connection not only highlights the visual appeal of K-Dramas, but also their ability to influence consumption decisions and foster a broader appreciation of Korean culture.

Figure 7. Gastronomy

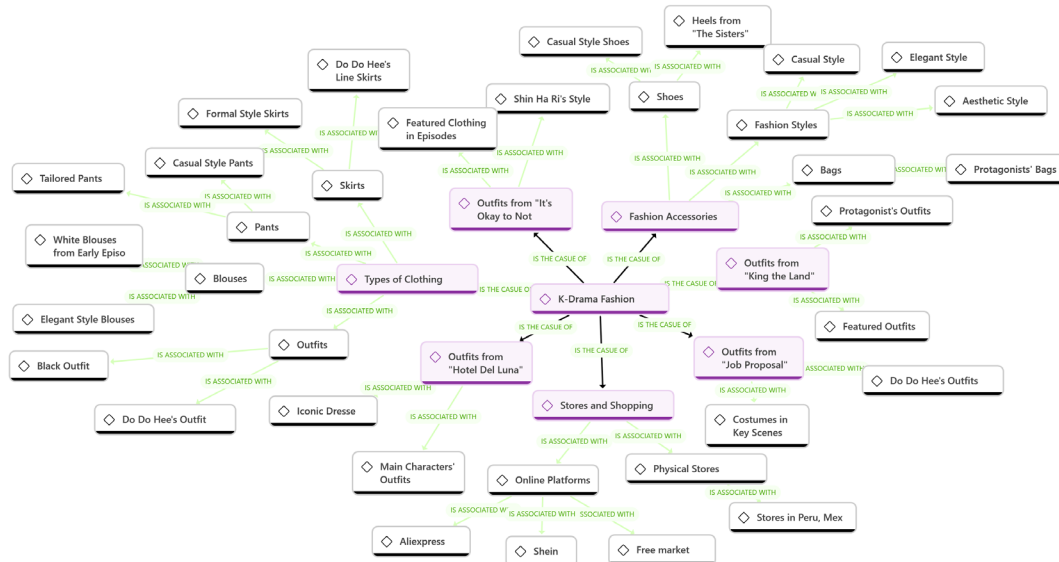


Note. Own elaboration with Atlas ti software version 24, 2025.

Similarly, the fashion of K-drama characters significantly influences their purchase decisions, as observed in phrases such as "I need that outfit from Hotel del Luna 🛍️💎" and "The outfits from King the Land are amazing", indicating that followers seek to replicate styles seen on screen, reflecting an emotional connection with the characters. Figure 8 shows how consumption habits derived from K-Dramas are closely related to fashion. Followers are inspired by the main outfits of series such as "Labor Proposal" and "It's Okay to Not Be Okay", adopting both complete outfits and specific accessories such

as shoes and bags. This phenomenon not only highlights the influence of K-Dramas on purchasing decisions, but also on the adoption of lifestyles that include types of clothing such as blouses, pants and skirts. K-drama fashion becomes a cultural bridge that connects viewers to Korean culture, promoting a deeper and more emotional interaction with the content they consume.

Figure 8. Fashion according to K-Dramas



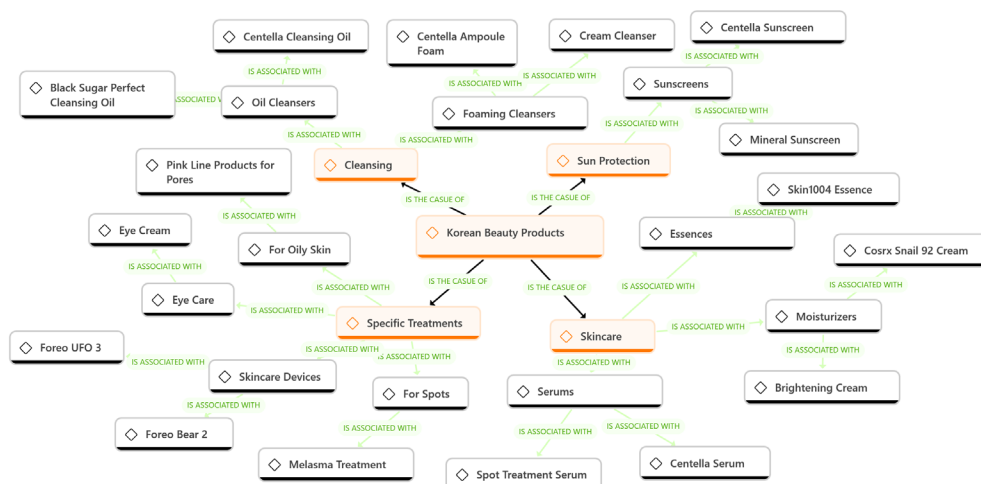
Note. Own elaboration with Atlas ti software version 24, 2025.

Likewise, in Figure 9, the growing popularity of Korean beauty products is shown in comments such as "Centella serum has changed my skin 🌞" and "I can't live without my Korean cleansers", suggesting an interest in self-care that is inspired by the aesthetics of dramas. This phenomenon is reflected in the adoption of detailed cleansing routines, such as the use of foaming and oily cleansers, and in the care of the skin with specific moisturizers and serums.

K-Dramas have changed the perception of beauty, popularizing products such as "Centella Cleansing Oil" and "Cosrx Snail 92 Cream". These products have been integrated into the daily routines of many consumers, who seek to replicate the flawless skin of drama characters. In addition, the use of skincare devices, such as the "Foreo Bear 2", has become common, highlighting the importance of technology in personal care.

The impact of K-Dramas is not only limited to specific products, but also promotes specialized treatments for different skin needs, such as treatment for melasma or products for oily skin. The representation of these products in dramas has generated a loyalty to Korean brands, becoming a pillar of the "Hallyu" phenomenon that continues to conquer global audiences.

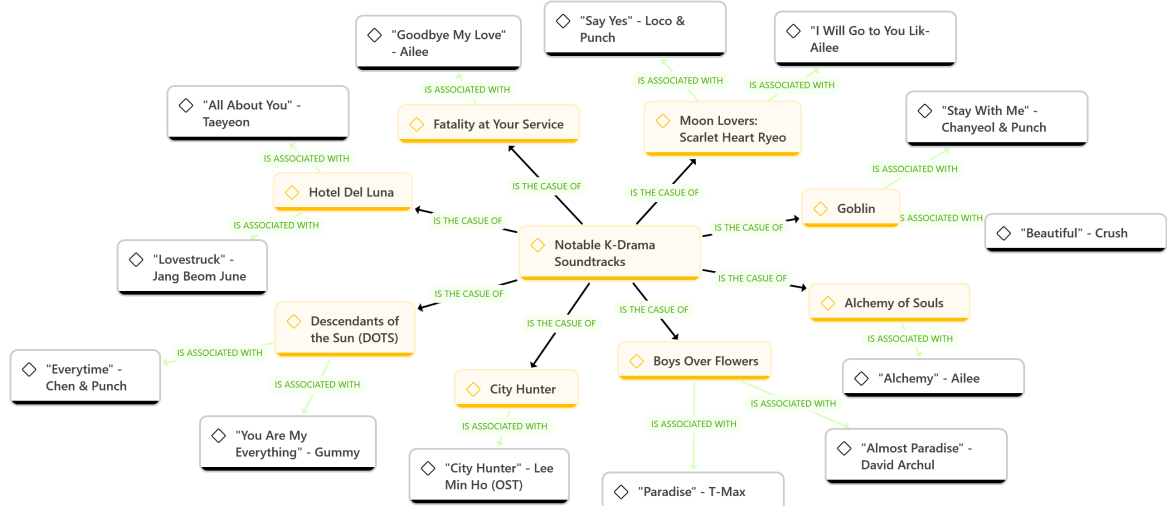
Figure 9. Beauty Products



Note. Own elaboration with Atlas ti software version 24

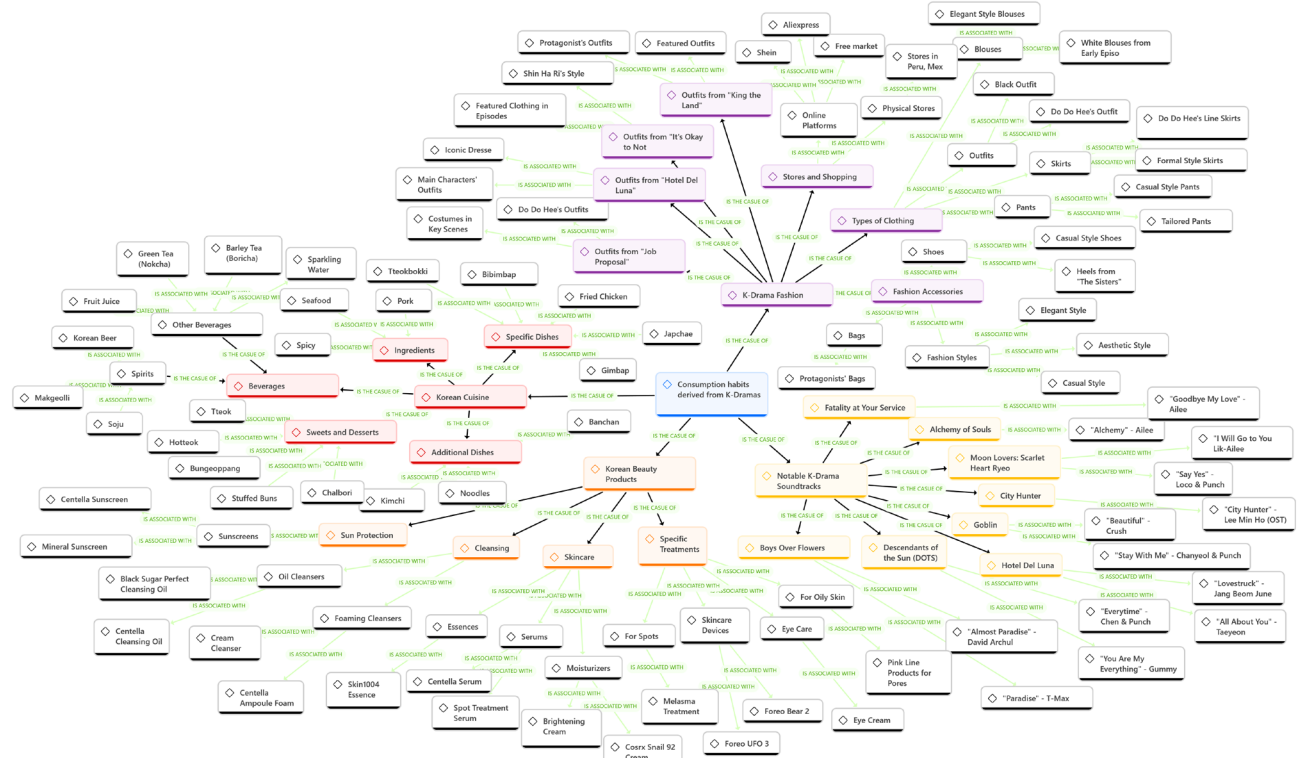
Finally, is the follow-up and emotional connection of the soundtracks of the most popular K-Dramas. Comments like "I can't stop listening to 'Stay with me' 🎵❤️" and "The music of 'Descendants of the Sun' makes me feel things" underscore the emotional connection these dramas generate. They transform the viewing experience into a cultural phenomenon that transcends borders and promotes a lifestyle influenced by Korean culture. In Figure 10, you can visualize how the soundtracks of K-Dramas such as "Goblin," "Hotel del Luna," and "Moon Lovers: Scarlet Heart Ryeo" are associated with a strong emotional and cultural impact. These soundtracks not only enrich the narrative of the dramas, but also generate a sense of belonging and community among fans, who adopt elements of Korean culture in their daily lives, from music to fashion and entertainment.

Figure 10. the soundtracks of the most popular K-Dramas



Note. Own elaboration with Atlas ti software version 24, 2025.

Figure 11. Consumption habits derived from K-Dramas



Note. Own elaboration with Atlas ti software version., 2025.

5. Discussion of the results

This netnographic study, through the TikTok platform, has allowed us to immerse ourselves in the dynamic world of K-Drama followers in Latin America, revealing not only a voracious consumption of this type of content, but also the construction of a collective identity around Korean culture. The findings show that consumer perception of K-Dramas is characterized by a deep appreciation of their narrative quality and their ability to generate meaningful emotional connections.

Viewers are drawn to captivating plots and characters they identify with, confirming the theory of uses and gratification that consumers choose media that satisfies their emotional needs (Falgoust et al., 2022; Stark & Schneiders, 2022). This search for emotional satisfaction is reflected in the high frequency of viewing, participation in online discussions and the incorporation of elements of Korean culture into their daily lives, which shows a high engagement with this cultural phenomenon. In fact, this behavior aligns with the theory noted above, which suggests that individuals actively seek out media content that meets their needs and desires (Luo, 2021; Whiting & Williams, 2013).

This dynamic of active and participatory consumption also corroborates the theory of the diffusion of innovations, where communication between consumers becomes a fundamental driver for the adoption of new products, as in the case of Korean beauty products, highlighting their cultural brand (Abdalla et al., 2024; Rogers, 2003). Consumer preferences reveal an inclination towards K-Dramas, their actors and actresses, with Netflix being the preferred platform to access this content (Vega, 2024; Widianingrum & Harsono, 2023). Similarly, the majority choice of the original language with subtitles stands out among the results, far from being a barrier, it becomes an indicator of the search for authenticity and openness to an immersive cultural experience. This finding correlates with previous studies showing that exposure to subtitled content can improve linguistic and cultural competence (Safran, 2015; H. Williams & Thorne, 2000). Attitudes towards K-Dramas are overwhelmingly positive, impacting consumers' daily lives in a variety of ways.

As for the constant search for information and recommendations to the integration of gastronomy, fashion and Korean language into their routines, K-Dramas have become a significant element in the construction of the identity of their followers. This phenomenon aligns with social identity theory, which suggests that individuals seek to belong to social groups that reflect their values and interests (Huang et al., 2023; Tajfel, 1982). Meanwhile, the emotional experience stands as a fundamental pillar in the consumption of this type of content. Users express a wide range of emotions, from euphoria and sadness to anxiety and satisfaction, confirming the power of K-Dramas to generate immersive and meaningful experiences (Messerli & Locher, 2021). This deep emotional connection aligns with the theory of perceived value of Zeithaml (1988), which holds that consumer satisfaction derives from comparing their expectations to actual experiences (Lee et al., 2007).

With respect to the Korean cultural brand, K-Dramas have managed to build an attractive and aspirational image in Latin America. Korean culture is perceived as modern, dynamic and with values like those of Latin America, such as the importance of family and respect. This finding correlates with soft power theory, which posits that popular culture can be a powerful tool for influencing a country's public perception (Nye, 2005). In the case of fashion, gastronomy and the Korean language have become objects of interest and desire, promoting experimentation with Korean food, imitation of costume styles and language learning. This phenomenon is based on the theory of symbolic consumption, which suggests that individuals consume products and services not only for their functional value, but also for their symbolic meaning (Baudrillard, 1998; Witt, 2010).

K-Dramas have transcended the screen to become a vehicle for cultural dissemination, positively impacting the perception of South Korea and its cultural expressions. The increase in the consumption of Korean products, the interest in traveling to the Asian country and the creation of online communities around this passion are clear examples of the scope of this phenomenon. The representation of Korean identity in K-Dramas is characterized by its authenticity, modernity, and universality. Values such as perseverance, honesty and the importance of family resonate with the Latin American audience, creating a positive and close image.

Although this study did not delve into the comparison with other cultures, there is a clear openness and positive appreciation towards Korean culture and its distinctive elements, which indicates that K-Dramas have managed to weave a cultural bridge between South Korea and Latin America, creating a global community united by the passion for stories, the characters and the culture that is breathed in

each scene. This study not only confirms the importance of emotional and cultural factors in consumer behavior, but also accentuates the power of media to shape perceptions, transform attitudes, and build bridges across cultures.

6. Conclusions

The study revealed that K-Dramas exert a significant influence on Latin American consumer behavior and Korean cultural brand perception. This influence manifests itself through a strong emotional connection, changes in consumption habits, and a growing fascination with various aspects of Korean culture. In effect, K-Dramas act as a cultural bridge, promoting not only entertainment, but also the adoption of Korean cultural elements in the daily lives of Latin American viewers.

Regarding perceptions about the quality and authenticity of K-Dramas, it was observed that consumers consider them to be products of high quality and cultural authenticity. This is mainly evidenced in the preference for watching dramas in their original language with subtitles, reflecting a desire to experience Korean culture more authentically. Likewise, the quality of the narrative, production, and acting are highly valued, as evidenced by the positive feedback and enthusiastic recommendations among fans. Notably, the perception of authenticity is reinforced through the depiction of Korean cultural elements, which viewers find genuine and engaging.

Moreover, the study showed that K-Dramas have a significant impact on purchasing decisions for Korean products in the Latin American market. There has been an increase in interest in and consumption of products related to Korean culture, including food, fashion, beauty products, and music. In this sense, viewers are actively looking to replicate lifestyles and experiences seen in K-Dramas, which translates into an increase in demand for Korean products. It is important to note that this influence extends beyond material consumption, also encompassing the desire to travel to South Korea and experience the culture first hand.

Regarding the emotions and feelings that K-Dramas generate in Latin American consumers, the analysis reveals a wide range of emotional responses, with positive ones predominating. Through the analysis of the comments and the use of emojis, feelings of joy, admiration, love and enthusiasm towards the dramas and their characters have been identified. Additionally, the study reveals complex emotions such as melancholy and restlessness, arising from the intense narratives of K-Dramas and the perception of dependence of some viewers. This range of emotional responses, both positive and intense, strengthens the bond between the audience and K-Dramas, encouraging active participation and a lasting connection to Korean culture at large.

Finally, K-Dramas have proven to be a cultural phenomenon of great impact in Latin America, establishing a close relationship with viewers in the region. Its influence goes beyond mere entertainment, encompassing the assimilation of Korean cultural aspects into the daily lives of the Latin public. This cultural exchange has enhanced the presence and attractiveness of the Korea brand on the continent, overcoming language barriers and geographical distances. K-Dramas thus stand as effective cultural ambassadors, with the ability to transform opinions, guide consumer trends and create lasting emotional bonds with their audience in Latin America.

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