

THE IMPACT OF KOREAN WAVE (HALLYU) ON CONSUMER  
BEHAVIOR OF GENERATION Z

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THE IMPACT OF KOREAN WAVE (HALLYU) ON CONSUMER  
BEHAVIOR OF GENERATION Z

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Program in Business Administration (English)

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## JÜRİ VE ENSTİTÜ ONAYI

**Serenay ERARSLAN’ın “The Impact of Korean Wave (Hallyu) on Consumer Behavior of Generation Z”** başlıklı tezi **07 Şubat 2022** tarihinde, aşağıdaki jüri tarafından Lisansüstü Eğitim-Öğretim ve Sınav Yönetmeliğinin ilgili maddeleri uyarınca toplanan **İşletme Anabilim Dalı İşletme Yönetimi Bilim Dalı (İngilizce)**nda, yüksek **lisans tezi** olarak değerlendirilerek kabul edilmiştir.

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## ÖZET

### KORE DALGASININ (HALLYU) Z KUŞAĞI TÜKETİCİ DAVRANIŞLARINA ETKİSİ

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Günümüzde küresel boyutta başarı kazanmış Kore Dalgası (Hallyu), Güney Kore popüler kültürü ve ürünlerine yönelik ilgiyi ifade eden bir fenomendir. Bu başarının arkasında Kore hükümeti politikaları, Koreli şirketler, internet ve sosyal medyanın gelişiminin yanında en büyük sebep uluslararası hayran kitlesi yani tüketicilerdir. Temel hedef grubu genç kitle olan Kore Dalgası, çeşitli tüketim kalıpları ile duygusal bağ yaratarak tüm dünyada olduğu gibi Türk pazarındaki hayranlar üzerinde de etkili olmuştur. Bu araştırma ise Kore Dalgası ve Türkiye’deki genel yansımaları ile ilgili güncel bilgilere yer verirken, Kore popüler kültür ürünleri tüketim alışkanlığının bir sonucu olarak küresel Hallyu hayran kitlesine katılan Z kuşağı üzerine yapılan bir nitel bir durum çalışmasıdır. Bu doğrultuda “Kore dalgasının Z kuşağı tüketici davranışlarına etkileri nelerdir/ nasıldır?” sorusuna cevap aramaktadır. Amaçlı örnekleme yöntemi ile seçilen çalışma grubunu üniversitelerin Kore kültür topluluğu, Türkiye’nin çeşitli illerindeki Kore kültür merkezi üyeleri olan ve Kore popüler kültürünü hayranlık boyutunda takip eden 26 kadın katılımcı oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılmış, görüşmelerden elde edilen veriler betimsel analiz yöntemiyle analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda elde edilen bilgiler doğrultusunda Kore Dalgasının Türkiye’deki Z kuşağı hayranlarının tüketici davranışları üzerinde çeşitli etkileri olduğu anlaşılmıştır. K-pop ve K-dizilerinin bağımlılık yapıcı ve uyarıcı içeriklerinin hayranların zihninde Kore’ye dair olumlu bir imaj oluşturduğu ve diğer kültürel unsurların tüketimini teşvik ederek hayranların çok fazla zaman, para ve enerji harcadığı keşfedilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kore Dalgası, Hallyu, Tüketici Davranışları, Z Kuşağı, Hayranlar.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE IMPACT OF KOREAN WAVE (HALLYU) ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR OF GENERATION Z**

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MBA - Program in Business Administration (English)

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Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Feyza AĞLARGÖZ

The globally successful Korean Wave (Hallyu) is a phenomenon that expresses interest in South Korean popular culture and products. Besides the Korean government policies, Korean companies, the development of the internet and social media; the biggest reason behind this success is the international fan base, namely consumers. The Korean Wave, whose main target group is the young generation, created an emotional bond with various consumption patterns and had an impact on the fans in the Turkish market as well as all over the world. While this research includes up-to-date information about the Korean Wave and its general reflections in Turkey, it is a qualitative case study on Generation Z, who joined the global Hallyu fan base as a result of the consumption habits of Korean popular culture products. In this direction, “What/ How are the impacts of the Korean Wave on consumer behavior of generation Z?” seeks an answer to the question. For the selection of the study group, purposeful sampling method was used, and the study group consisted of 26 female participants who are members of the Korean cultural communities of universities, the Korean cultural centers in Turkey, and who followed Korean popular culture with admiration. A semi-structured interview form was used, and the data obtained from the interviews were analyzed by descriptive analysis method. In line with the information obtained at the end of the research, the Korean Wave has several impacts on consumer behavior of generation Z fans in Turkey. It has been revealed that the addictive and stimulating contents of K-pop and K-dramas created a positive image of Korea in the minds of fans and encouraged the consumption of other cultural elements, where Turkish fans spend superabundant time, money, and energy.

**Keywords:** Korean Wave, Hallyu, Consumer Behavior, Generation Z, Fans.

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## **ETİK İLKE VE KURALLARA UYGUNLUK BEYANNAMESİ**

Bu tezin bana ait, özgün bir çalışma olduğunu; çalışmamın hazırlık, veri toplama, analiz ve bilgilerin sunumu olmak üzere tüm aşamalarında bilimsel etik ilke ve kurallara uygun davrandığımı; bu çalışma kapsamında elde edilen tüm veri ve bilgiler için kaynak gösterdiğimi ve bu kaynaklara kaynakçada yer verdiğimi; bu çalışmanın Anadolu Üniversitesi tarafından kullanılan “bilimsel intihal tespit programı”yla tarandığını ve hiçbir şekilde “intihal içermediğini” beyan ederim. Herhangi bir zamanda, çalışmamla ilgili yaptığım bu beyana aykırı bir durumun saptanması durumunda, ortaya çıkacak tüm ahlaki ve hukuki sonuçları kabul ettiğimi bildiririm.

İmza

Serenay ERARSLAN



07/02/2022

## **STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND RULES**

I hereby truthfully declare that this thesis is an original work prepared by me; that I have behaved in accordance with scientific ethical principles and rules throughout the stages of preparation, data collection, analysis and presentation of my work; that I have cited the sources of all the data and information that could be obtained within the scope of this study, and included these sources in the references section; and that this study has been scanned for plagiarism with “scientific plagiarism detection program” used by Anadolu University, and that “it does not have any plagiarism” whatsoever. I also declare that, if a case contrary to my declaration is detected in my work at any time, I hereby express my consent to all the ethical and legal consequences that are involved.

Sign

Serenay ERARSLAN

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|            |                                                         |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| AMA        | : American Music Awards                                 |
| BTS        | : Bangtan Seonyeondan                                   |
| HRI        | : Hyundai Research Institute                            |
| K-beauty   | : Korean beauty and cosmetics                           |
| K-drama    | : Korean tv series/ soap operas                         |
| K-fashion  | : Korean fashion                                        |
| K-food     | : Korean food/cuisine                                   |
| K-language | : Korean language                                       |
| K-movie    | : Korean movies                                         |
| K-pop      | : Korean pop music                                      |
| KOCCA      | : Korea Creative Content Agency                         |
| KOCIS      | : Korean Culture and Information Service                |
| KOFICE     | : Korean Foundation For International Cultural Exchange |
| MV         | : Music Video                                           |
| TV         | : Television                                            |
| UNGA       | : United Nations General Assembly                       |



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter of the study, the research organization, problem, purpose and objectives, significance, background will be presented in detail. Then limitations, assumptions, and definitions of terms of the thesis are explained.

One of the most fundamental subjects of marketing science is consumer behavior, which is a fundamental part of human behavior. All actions of consumers are examined and tried to be interpreted in the most accurate way in consumer behavior studies. Consumer behavior is investigating and evaluating the consumption process before, during, and after purchase while examining human behavior in order to understand consumers' experiences, beliefs, feelings, motivations, abilities, attitudes, knowledge, and preferences (Mucuk, 2004, p. 71).

Examination of consumer behavior is of great importance for marketers (Khan, 2006, p. 5). In order to achieve success in the market, companies need to keep up with the changing conditions and competitive environment. At this point, it is important to identify consumer needs in advance and satisfy their wants. In this direction, determining the tendencies of consumers and creating an impact on their purchasing behavior is one of the main functions of marketing organizations (Sungur, 2012, p. 60).

In this study, the effects of the Korean Wave which started in South Korea and spread all over the world, on consumer behavior studied by focusing on Hallyu fans' perspectives. To get information, Hallyu fans' experiences and thoughts on the Korean Wave and Korean popular culture products and effects of the factors as made-in-Korea labels and idols are questioned. In this respect, it is questioned how and why this wave has an impact on Turkish youth behavior, attitudes, and perceptions. Lastly, in light of the data obtained, recommendations are given to the sector and future studies.

Qualitative research was designed as a case study. Semi-structured interview techniques were conducted for generating the empirical material. The interview form was made up of 15 main questions with sub-questions to get detailed information during the interviews. Participants were selected between Turkish Hallyu fans who are members of Generation Z. The purpose is to generate empirical data and detect impacts of the Korean Wave in the context of consumption from Hallyu fans' perspectives.

### **1.1. Organization of Study**

This research provides for understanding the phenomenon of globalized popular culture Hallyu and highlights how it effects on the consumer behavior of generation Z. In this research, comprehensive analysis showed a consistent framework of how Hallyu consumers make remarks about their world by focusing on the products such as K-pop, K-dramas, K-movies, K-food, K-beauty, K-fashion, Korean language and tourism. Additionally, a complementary analysis on K-Wave is done from the perspectives and experiences of Gen Z consumers in Turkey.

This thesis study includes five main chapters. In chapter 1; introduction, problem, purpose, objectives and significance are examined by adding terminology about Hallyu used throughout this study. Chapter 2 contains based on the strategies and strengthening factors of Hallyu. In addition to that, the key characteristics of Hallyu phenomenon that started in South Korea and how Korean popular culture products affect today's global market are examined. Chapter 3 provides demographic information of participants like age, education, marital status, occupation and detailed information about interviews under the title of the methodology. In chapter 4, the effect of the Korean wave on consumer behavior, attitudes and perceptions are conveyed from the eyes of the Z generation Hallyu fans within the findings of the interviews are explained. In chapter 5, conclusion of the findings, and discussions are utilized with adding suggestions for the industry and for the further studies.

## **1.2. Problem Definition**

This research provides an understanding of the globalizing popular culture phenomenon Korean Wave also named as Hallyu, and the impacts of the Korean Wave on generation Z consumer behavior. The Hallyu phenomenon, which has rapidly increased the number of fans in Turkey as well as all over the world, has attracted the attention of the researcher by observing Hallyu news from social media and Turkish press, especially the change in the consumption behavior of the younger generation. In this direction, a basic research question such as ‘What/How are the effects of the Korean wave on consumer behavior of Generation Z in Turkey?’ has emerged. With a view to finding an answer to this subject, it is aimed to explore the behavior, attitudes, perceptions of Gen Z consumers towards Korean Wave and Korean popular culture products.

In the research, up-to-date literature information was given by focusing on Korean popular culture and its products such as K-drama, K-movie, K-pop, K-food, K-cosmetics and fashion, Korean language, and K-tourism. The research is a comprehensive study of how Generation Z consumers talk about their world and how their behavior, attitudes, and perceptions are affected by the Korean Wave.

From the researcher's standpoint, it is inadequate to search solely for Korean culture or their marketing strategies. Therefore, to provide an insider's perspective, I decided to focus on consumers who are members of Korean Culture Communities in Turkey, and their experiences as Hallyu fans.

The semi-structured interviews were held with the participants who are members of Korean Cultural Centers and Korean societies of universities in Turkey to detect the effect of Hallyu on their behavior, attitudes, and perceptions as fans.

### **1.3. Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of the study is to analyze the impacts of Korean Wave phenomenon on consumer behavior by considering the impacts of the Korean popular culture and its products on the Turkish market from the perspectives of Z generation fans. In this direction, Korean popular culture and the products of this culture such as music, drama, movies, games, food, cosmetics, language, fashion were explained and the opinions and experiences of Z generation consumers about Korean culture were taken. Thus, it has been tried to determine why and how Korean popular culture affects consumer behavior.

It is aimed to conduct a detailed research on the Korean Wave and its effects on consumer behavior with the help of data obtained from the participation of Turkish youth who are fans of Korean popular culture, and with up-to-date information obtained from all sources that the researcher can follow about South Korea.

The reason why the Z generation was chosen as the working group is that they are the generation most affected by the Korean Wave, born into digital technologies, social media and electronic devices (Sönmez, 2016, p. 108) and whose consumption habits are different from other generations (Altuntuğ, 2012, p. 206).

In addition, in his book *"Korean Wave Global Popular Culture Phenomenon Hallyu/ Korean Dramas"*, Macit (2018) states the characteristics of the Korean Wave

with titles such as; youth-orientedness, creating an impact and communication on consumers, using the power of technology and internet, transnationality, different influence, and the culture industry (Macit, 2018, pp. 30-35). In fact, the internet and the younger generation have a great influence on the expand of the Korean Wave (The Korean Wave, 2011, pp. 38-51). Accordingly, the interaction between social media and the sociability of fans has been cited as one of the most important elements of the Korean Wave in today's world (Jin & Yoon, 2016).

Hallyu was named with different names each time its influence increased. The first phase is called Hallyu 1.0, the second phase is Hallyu 2.0, the third is Hallyu 3.0, and today's phase is called Hallyu 4.0. In the Hallyu 4.0 era, people affected by the Korean Wave become consumers of not only the products of popular culture, but all products that are Korean (Kim, 2011, p. 167).

For this reason, in this study, focusing on the new Hallyu 4.0 period, while reflecting the consumer behavior of the young generation consumers towards both Korean popular culture products and Korean made products, the perception and attitudes of Korean culture will be tried to be understood. Thus, coherent with the main question, this research also answers the key questions stated below;

- What are the main causes and consequences of the South Korean government's implementation of the Korean wave as a political, economic and cultural strategy?
- What are the effects of the internet, social media, and fans on Hallyu's rapid spread in the world and in Turkey?
- What are the impacts of the Korean popular culture and its products on the lives of fans in the context of consumption?
- What are Hallyu reflections and activities in Turkey?
- What are the reflections of Anti-Hallyu, which is opposed to Hallyu, in Turkey?
- How do the news about Hallyu in the Turkish press affect consumers?
- What are the reasons and dimensions of fans for preferring Korean popular culture products?

- What are the features that make Korean popular culture products different from other products?
- What are the pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase behavior of consumers towards Korean popular culture products?
- What are the consumer's perceptions of Hallyu products and Made-in-Korea label?
- What are the effects of Hallyu stars on the consumer decision-making process?

In addition, it is aimed that this study will be explanatory for those who are trying to understand why the Korean wave affects the youth so much and contribute to Hallyu awareness studies in Turkey.

#### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

The Korean Wave is a popular culture phenomenon that continues to expand, first affecting Korea, then the Asian continent, and finally the whole world. In Turkey, it has become a trend that has existed for about 15 years and its fanbase is sprawling each passing day. The wave which spread silently in the first phase, remained far from academic awareness. Today, the number of sources related to the Korean Wave is increasing in the international literature and its effects on the culture of different countries from Asia, the United States, Latin America and Europe are being addressed. In Far Eastern countries, there are studies that deal with the admiration of Asian audiences in terms of cultural proximity. Especially when the articles and thesis studies were examined, it was seen that numerical data were reached with quantitative research methods. In addition, the achievement of the Korean Wave, whose influence has gradually increased with the support of the South Korean government, has also been evaluated with the soft power theory (Nye & Kim, 2013, p. 32; Flew, 2016, p. 33).

It is remarkable that a country dominates the global market with its cultural industry. However, the number of studies evaluating the Korean Wave from a scientific point of view is few in Turkey. Mutlu Binark's study named *Kültürel Diplomasi ve Kore Dalgası 'Hallyu' Güney Kore'de Sinema Endüstrisi, K-Dramalar ve K-Pop* (2019), considering the Korean Wave as a cultural policy and cultural diplomacy tool, and the field study in South Korea examined the K-drama and K-pop industry on site (Binark,

2019, p. 38). In Mustafa Macit's studies *Elin Korelisine El Salladım* (2015) and *Kore Dalgası: Küresel Popüler Kültür Fenomeni Hallyu/ Kore dizileri* (2018), research were conducted in-depth interviews to understand the fan culture through Korean dramas. Macit stated that virtual environments have roles such as “blessing, inciting and provoking” (Macit, 2018, p. 86). In Demet Fırat's article titled *Küresel Yönde Ters Akış: Asya'dan Doğan Alternatif Bir Popüler Kültür* (2017), the sites created by fans were researched (Fırat, 2017, pp. 67-74). On the other hand, the thesis studies about the Korean Wave are mostly concentrated on how Korean dramas affect people religiously, Korean history, comparison of Korean adapted Turkish Tv series with the originals.

When the subject is considered in terms of marketing; it is of great importance to determine which factors affect the behavior of individuals, who are consumers. This research is important because limited number of studies evaluating the effects of the Korean Wave in Turkey from a scientific viewpoint. Also, this research deals with the Korean Wave in terms of cultural marketing and deals with Hallyu products with aspects that have not been examined before by focusing on not just K-drama or K-pop; it varies from other studies in the sense that it focuses on new and current Korean popular culture products (Hallyu 4.0) such as fashion, cosmetics, food, games, tourism, language, in brief “K-style”, and it is thought to contribute to the field. Another significance is that the interview form was prepared completely specific to this study by reflecting the perspectives, attitudes, and behavior of the Z generation consumers, who follow the Korean Wave at the fan level, with a detailed qualitative study.

### **1.5. Background of the Thesis**

Although K-pop is the first thing coming to mind when the Korean Wave is mentioned, it should be considered that not only K-pop, but also overall Korean popular culture industry products like dramas, movies, music, digital games, fashion, food, language, tourism feed each other and be consumed by fans in the international market. Although many countries in the world try to implement similar strategies, South Korea has shown its difference in terms of its impact and success globally. Behind the global success, there are many factors such as new media environments, social media practices, loyalty of fan groups, interaction of K-pop groups with their fans, government support, companies' content production and marketing strategies (Binark, 2019, p. 16).

In recent years, the popularity of cultural products originating from South Korea has increased in Turkey as in the whole world. Especially among young people, the interest in Korean history, culture, and the use of Korean products has become widespread. The researcher observed the same situation both from the social media accounts of the people around and from the news about Hallyu in the Turkish press.

In terms of marketing, it is necessary to comprehend the impact of the Korean Wave and to examine its reflections in Turkey from the perspective of consumers in detail. In this study, the effects and results of the Korean Wave on Turkish youth participating in the global Korean fan base will be evaluated in the context of consumption.

### **1.6. Assumptions**

It is assumed that the participants sincerely answered the questions asked to them during the online interviews. In this direction, Yıldırım and Şimşek (2021) stated that, individuals who will participate in the interview could provide more sincere data with the privacy provided by the internet (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021, p. 224).

### **1.7. Limitations**

This study has several limitations. The scope of this research consists of generation Z citizens of the Republic of Turkey who are fans of Korean culture. In this direction, the study group was reached through the social media accounts of Korea cultural centers and Korean communities of universities such as Eskişehir Korea Cultural Center, Mersin Korea Cultural Center, Ankara Korea Cultural Center, and Boğaziçi University Korean Society. It is known that there are many Hallyu fans in Turkey. Since data saturation is reached, this qualitative research is held with 26 Turkish volunteer participants who are Hallyu fans and between 15 and 24.

The other limitation is the gender of the interviewees. It was difficult to reach male participants. During the participant selection process, only one male participant could be reached, however, before the interviews, he stated that he gave up due to lack of time. Thus, all of the interviewees are female in this study.

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, all of the interviews conducted online via Zoom and WhatsApp. Majority of the participants agreed to make both audio and video calls so their gestures, facial expressions and sincerity were clearly observed. Voice recordings of the

participants were taken. One of the participants contributed to the research by sending their answers to the interview questions via e-mail due to being in exam week. Also, online interviews held with three participants who are living and studying in South Korea to get more information about Korean culture. Furthermore, it was difficult to arrange interviews with participants who live in South Korea because of the six hours of time difference between Korea and Turkey. As a result, it was observed that all participants were interested in the subject Korean popular culture and they concentrated on answering the questions sincerely during the interviews.

One of the limitations of the research is that there is a gap in the literature in field of the effects of Korean Wave in Turkey. Although rich data are obtained from interviews, few articles in Turkish literature are accessible and up-to-date since the Korean Wave is a new phenomenon in Turkey.

The other limitation is that this qualitative research was carried out with Turkish youth who are Hallyu fans in November of 2021.

Lastly, I wrote this thesis as a 26-year-old person who has been educated in Turkey, has visited many European countries, is interested in learning about different cultures, has been following Korean culture closely and is aware of its effects in the world through social media and Turkish press. However, being that the purpose of the research is to comprehend the Korean wave through the eyes of the Z generation in Turkey, I tried to maintain my neutrality and not reflect my point of view throughout the interviews to be as objective as possible. For this reason, I have conducted and discussed the interpretation process with my thesis advisor.

### **1.8. Definitions of Terms**

This study focuses on subjects like Hallyu, Hallyu related terms, Gen Z and consumer behavior. Thus, it is important to enlighten the readers about those terms and their meanings.

- **Korean Wave (Hallyu)**

It is a South Korean popular culture phenomenon that was born in the late 1990s with the broadcast of a Korean tv series which is called K-drama on Chinese television,



and whose number of fans increased first in Asian countries and then all over the World (Macit, 2018, p. 23).

- **Popular Culture**

This term can be figured as a tool of entertainment culture that is built to escape real-life challenges and to give people artificial happiness (Gans, 2012, pp. 81-87; Oktay, 2002, pp. 15-19). It is an element of consumption culture that spread to the world with the development of technology (Tellan, 2009, p. 80). According to Adorno (2011), popular culture can be described as an artificial commercial consumption culture in which marketing and advertising strategies are effective and the ‘ideal and different’ are presented to people as popular culture products (Adorno, 2011, pp. 68-78).

- **Soft Power**

It originates from respect for a country's politics and admiration for its cultural values. While the term ‘hard power’ points to economic and military power, ‘soft power’ signifies a country's political and cultural power. This term is closely related to the nation branding, cultural and public diplomacy.

- **Nation Branding**

This concept is emerged in marketing studies, which means the spread of a country's culture to other countries through activities that economic interest at the forefront (Yağmurlu, 2019, pp. 134-135). The objective of nation branding is to positively alter the attitudes and behavior of other countries by using branding techniques of marketing (Szondi, 2008, p. 5).

- **Public Diplomacy**

This term, which is closely related to nation branding, takes place in international relations and international communication systems. Public diplomacy is often shaped around political purposes thus, it is managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, nation branding is related to marketing and shaped around economical purposes (Szondi, 2009, p. 302).

- **Idols/ Idol Group**

Idols are generally young male and female singers, models, or media personalities who use their abilities to attract people. They are prepared through systematic training by entertainment companies through the planned star creating system (Binark, 2019, pp. 133-134). Also, idols' images and products are produced for Hallyu fans and they are offered to the market as cultural consumption items (Zhang & Funk, 2017, p. 135).

- **Fandom**

A group of people who passionately admire something or someone. For example, the fan community of Korean pop culture contents is called K-fandom or Hallyu fans. According to Reysen and Branscombe (2010), the term “fandom” predicates a characteristical identification with other fans who share a connection (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010, pp. 176-193).

- **Fansumer**

Fansumer, which is announced by Consumer Trend Research Institute of Seoul National University, is a new term in consumption culture and combines of words “fan” and “consumer” ([http-9](http://9)).

- **Consumer Behavior**

All of the decision processes and physical activities include activities such as searching, receiving, using, evaluating, and disposing of goods or services by the consumer (Khan, 2006, p. 4). Consumer behavior can be described as a procedure that is directly connected to selecting, purchasing and positioning products or services to provide the wants and needs of groups or individuals (Ogbeide, 2015, p. 337).

- **Generation Z (Gen Z)**

Generation Z consists of individuals born between the mid-1990s and the late 2000s. This generation was born into digital technologies, social media, and electronic devices (Sönmez, 2016, p. 108), and their consumption habits are different from other generations (Altuntuğ, 2012, p. 206).

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In this chapter, a detailed literature review will be given about the concept of Hallyu, its spread, its global impact, the factors behind the success of this popular culture phenomenon, its contributions to South Korea, Generation Z and consumer behavior.

### **2.1. Definition of Korean Wave (Hallyu)**

The Korean Wave, also known as Hallyu, is a South Korean popular culture phenomenon that was born with the broadcast of Korean series on Chinese television in the late 1990s. The number of fans increased first in Asian countries and then all over the world (Macit, 2018, p. 23). The consumption of popular culture products originating from South Korea has been named Hallyu, which is a combination of Chinese words, namely ‘Korean Wave’ or ‘Flow of Korea’ (Kim & Kim, 2011, p. 22).

Hallyu, which has developed and progressed throughout its nearly 25-year history, is today an internationally known popular culture phenomenon. By the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), Hallyu is defined as a growing international interest in South Korean popular culture ([http-1](#)). In addition, 26 Korean-origin words such as K-drama, aegyo, unni, oppa, hanbok, daebak, kimbap have been added to the dictionary ([http-5](#)).

### **2.2. Emergence of Korean Wave**

Korea, which came out of the war in the 1950s and adhered to its history and traditions, began to modernize with the effects of democratization and globalization in the 1980s. In this direction, imports of foreign products were increased, American and European TV series and music began to enter the Korean market (KOCIS, 2011, pp. 17-19). In order to improve the country's economy, the Korean government created and supported the Hallyu movement in the mid-1990s. The initial phase is between 1993 and 1997 (Macit, 2018, p. 48). The South Korean government started to support the products of cultural industry as a development tool and a state policy in the late 1990s. These products are creative content industry elements such as cinema/tv, music, digital games, fashion, food, language. Thus, K-dramas and movies started to enter the Asian market first in China, then in countries such as Japan, India, Iran, Thailand, Philippines. South Korea, which was adversely affected by the Asian economic crisis in 1997, aimed to increase exports to foreign countries and provide economic development by generating a national culture industry with the start of Kim Dae-Jung government in 1998 which is

called the growth phase until 1999 (Kim, 2007, pp. 59-161). However, America and Japan, which dominate the region at those times, posed a threat to the South Korean culture industry. As an example for this situation, the revenue of the movie Jurassic Park is equivalent to 1.5 million Hyundai cars, could be given. In this direction, the government has ensured the establishment of new companies with the contribution of wealthy and powerful family companies such as Samsung, LG, Hyundai, which are called chaebol, in order to strengthen the media industry. These initiatives have increased exports and improved the image of Korea abroad. Hallyu's peak period which began in 2000 lasted until 2005 (Macit, 2018, p. 48). In 2001, The Korean Culture and Content Agency (KOCCA) was established and the trainings given in the fields of TV series, movies, games, technology and animation were increased (Asa, 2019, pp. 27-28). Also, South Korea attracted attention in 2002 with the World Cup and Busan Asian Games. Over time, it has managed to become the popular culture leader among Asian countries. After some blockbuster movies, the drama named 'Dae Jang-Geum' best known as 'Jewel In The Palace', was sold to countries such as Turkey, Russia, USA and Hungary. Then, Korean-specific globalization methods called Sagyewha began to be applied. An example of this is the success of Korean dramas adapted from American TV series in the Asian market due to cultural proximity. According to Kim (2007), Hallyu is a hybrid cultural phenomenon that contains local Asian traditions and the modern, global characteristics of the West, so its success in global market can be examined due to "cultural hybridity" (Kim Y., 2007, pp. 121-125). Hallyu, which has been in the expansion period since 2005 (Macit, 2018, p. 48), continues to spread around the world without slowing down.

### **2.3. Spread of Hallyu: from Hallyu 1.0 to Hallyu 4.0**

Hallyu productions are consumed on a global scale. K-dramas and K-pop play a big role in this, however, Hallyu was evaluated in 4 different periods, as there were various fluctuations with the new cultural contents added over time.

The first period is called Hallyu 1.0. During this period, K-dramas and movies are in the foreground. These elements, especially shown on TV channels, have gained great popularity in East Asian countries.

The second period is called Hallyu 2.0, which is also known as New Korean Wave (KOCIS, 2011, p. 11). The spread of digital technologies and the internet has been

effective in increasing the spread of the Hallyu phenomenon at this time (Howard, 2013, p. 9). It spread in continents such as America and Europe with the widespread use of the internet, that is, the number of consumers increased. Music, movies, TV series, digital games and animation have been an important part of it (Jin, 2019, p. 5). Consumer demand for Korean popular culture products has increased.

The third era Hallyu 3.0 is also called Post Hallyu. In this period, it was desired to increase the export of cultural products such as food, make-up products, radio, TV and music, and the target became the world market. When the targets were reached, consumers started to prefer not only popular culture products, but also products of Korean origin (Binark, 2019, pp. 65-67). In addition, mukbang “eating show” videos shared on Youtube, and the popularity of K-pop groups like BTS, Blackpink and Korean artist PSY have increased tremendously.

In the current period of Hallyu 4.0, the consumer admires Korean culture and life. They become consumers of Korean products (Kim M., 2011, p. 167). They watch K-dramas, listen to Korean music, try to learn Korean, dress in Korean fashion, buy K-beauty skin care and makeup products to meet Korean beauty standards, try Korean food, travel to Korea, choose K-brands. Thus, Korean culture and style has become a part of life. In short, it is aimed to increase the consumption of Hallyu concept products from beauty to fashion to food and others all over the world (Jun, 2017, pp. 156-157).

Thus, KOCCA and KOFICE continue to conduct country research to find new markets. In this direction, the cultures of the countries are researched and data is collected. Also, for Hallyu to continue in the countries where it spread; concerts, competitions, promotions of Korean culture and products are done regularly by organizing K-Con events (Binark, 2019, pp. 159-161).

#### **2.4. Emergence of Anti-Hallyu**

As Hallyu's popularity has grown through K-dramas, Korean influence has increased in Asian countries. Hallyu fans, who started to become like Korean actors and actresses with their hair and clothing styles, were named as Korean Tribe. As negative criticism increased in Asian countries like Japan, Thailand, Vietnam and China; the Anti-Hallyu Wave began to spread, and governments imposed various limitations on Korean products, which they saw as an invasion or cultural imperialism. Especially for Japan and

China, these practices have its source also in nationalism. In this regard, the South Korean government defended Hallyu as a two-way cultural exchange (Asa, 2019, pp. 69-71).

K-pop has also been instrumental in spreading the Anti-Hallyu Wave. With the worldwide success of Korean artist PSY with his song Gangnam Style, many criticisms have been made that the K-pop industry has begun to become Americanized. In addition, the South Korean government has been criticized for acting for economic rather than cultural purposes (Tuk, 2012, pp. 42-45).

## **2.5. Key Factors Behind the Success of Hallyu**

The lasting impression of Korean popular culture and its ability to transfer its uniqueness to other countries have been the reason that many academic studies have been conducted on this global wave. Although many countries in the world try to implement similar strategies, South Korea has shown its difference in terms of its impact and success. The Korean wave has started in East Asia and swept over the world and behind this success, there are Korean government policies, Korean companies, fans, and social media. Also, Binark (2019) addressed that behind the global success there are many factors such as new media environments, social media practices, loyalty of fan groups, interaction of K-pop groups with their fans, government support, companies' content production and marketing strategies (Binark, 2019, p. 16).

### **2.5.1. Korean Government Policies: Soft Power and Nation Branding**

The support of South Korean government has increased in every phase of Hallyu from 1.0. to 4.0. “Korea Creative Content Agency” (KOCCA) was established to coordinate the promotion of the Korean content industry, “Korean Foundation For International Cultural Exchange” (KOFICE) was established to connect people and to exchange cultures all over the world, also the “Korean Culture and Information Service” (KOCIS) was established to spread the world Korea’s national image by the government of South Korea.

The South Korean government intervenes in the creative content industry as soft power, and K-content, which is one of the Korean brands is used as a cultural diplomacy tool (Binark, 2019, p. 15). The Korean government supports the proliferation of K-content and uses Hallyu in the field of cultural diplomacy with its soft power policy. Soft power stems from the respect for a country's politics and admiration for its cultural values, and

this term is closely related to the nation branding, cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy (Nye & Kim, 2013, p. 32; Flew, 2016, p. 33).

The most important one among the soft power resources of a country; is the country's culture and its ability to export this culture (Schneider, 2005, pp. 148-178). Nye (2017) explained that a country's soft power comes out of three main sources which are political values, foreign policy, and culture (Nye, 2017, p. 32). In addition to that, in many studies, international students, tourists, book sales, sports, average human lifespan, aid sent to foreign countries, internet service providers, advertising, architecture, fashion, art, design, leisure activities, music, video, performing arts, movies, publishing, digital games, radio, television are mentioned as sources of soft power (Özüdoğru & Yüksel, 2019, p. 338). In short, one of the main goals of soft power is to create a positive image of the country by creating cultural attractiveness and to increase the country's reputation worldwide. In this direction, South Korea achieved first national and then international success by adding its popular culture to its soft power policy (Nye & Kim, 2013, p. 32; Flew, 2016, p. 33).

Nation branding can be explained as the spread of a country's culture to other countries through various activities, that is, the branding of culture. Topics like instauration of national identities, improvement of national competition, conservation of economic and cultural interests, developing national image and reputation are important in nation branding (Fan, 2010, p. 4). In this respect, the Korean government tries to solidify the nation branding strategy by putting the prefix "K-" on all sorts of cultural products ranging from music to dramas to movies to cosmetics to tourism. On the other hand, as a cultural diplomacy reflection, South Korean government has included culture in foreign relations to achieve political goals and to improve the national image of Korea and K-brand (Jang & Paik, 2012, p. 196).

The Korean government achieve success by using the Korean Wave as a cultural diplomacy tool and implementing a nation branding strategy due to Korea's less costly content and being a substitute for Japanese popular culture products whose influence in the Asian market was declining. In the 2010s, the government's investments in Hallyu products were further increased, financial support was provided, and Korean Cultural centers and King Sejong Institutes were opened all over the world. These practices were

effective in increasing the positive perception towards Korea and increasing the interest in Korean products (Song, 2018, p. 676).

### **2.5.2. Korean Companies**

As mentioned before, the Korean government has ensured the establishment of new companies with the contribution of wealthy and powerful family companies, which are called chaebol, such as Samsung, LG, Hyundai, SK Group at the end of 1990s, in order to strengthen the media industry. Thus, the image of Korea improved and Korean products' exports increased abroad.

In addition to that, in the entertainment industry, there are 3 biggest companies; SM established in 1995, YG established in 1996 and JYP Entertainment established in 1997 (Tuk, 2012, p. 47). However, today, HYBE Corporation (formerly Big Hit Entertainment) which is established in 2005, is included and changed the situation as the biggest four entertainment companies of South Korea.

In short, Hallyu is systematically supported by public and private institutions by investing in creative content industries, and various sectors provide advantages to South Korea in economic, political, cultural terms and constitute its soft power (Keskin, 2021, p. 212).

### **2.5.3. Internet and Social Media**

Jin and Yoon (2016) argued that the relationship between fans' sociality and social media remains one of the most significant factors in expansion of Hallyu phenomenon (Jin & Yoon, 2016). With the highly usage of the internet and social media, geographical distance between countries is losing importance. Hereby, Hallyu fans around the world become closer and interact easily. They tend to share the information which is important for them especially from social media since they are social humanbeings. In this direction, Chen and Lien (2017) underscored that, social media could shape the purchasing tendencies and influences fans' decision making process (Chen & Lien, 2017).

It is possible to reach subtitled versions of Korean dramas in the mother tongue of many countries via the internet (Jung, 2009, p. 72), and this has allowed K-dramas and other products to spread more rapidly among the global fan base (Taylan & Arklan, 2008, p. 93). In addition, social media, online and mobile platforms such as Twitter, Youtube,



Instagram, Weibo, KakaoTalk, Line, VLive, Naver, iTunes, Melon, Spotify, TikTok are the global and local networks where the Korean Wave contents are produced, spread and consumed. These channels are used effectively by companies and Hallyu stars to interact with fans by communicating, vlogging or messaging frequently (Binark, 2019, p. 158). These channels make it easier to create a strong, direct, interactive and positive “parasocial interaction” between fans and stars. In this parasocial interaction process, fans can feel like Hallyu stars are actual friends, role models or social beings who exist in daily life of them (Kim & Song, 2016, p. 571). In brief, fans’ consumption of popular culture contents and products have changed with the increasing usage of internet, social media and due to all these practices.

#### **2.5.4. Hallyu Fans**

One of the biggest causes for the global spread of Hallyu and its profound effect is consumers, that is, the fanbase or fandom (KOCIS, 2011, pp. 38-39). Today, with the influence of social media and internet, the content number created by fans about Korean culture and everything related to Korea has increased rapidly. Thus, Hallyu products have become products that are consumed quickly and continuously. This trend, which is followed closely by the young generation regardless of language, religion or race, has now become an element that is marketed and advertised by fans.

Just to give an example on K-pop, songs are listened to on social platforms and fan groups are formed for K-pop stars. The speed of its spread increases as fans share. Millions of fans support them in various ways by streaming the music videos of their favorite idols, buying their albums, collaborating with brands from products, making dance covers of their songs, streaming their songs to support their band's for breaking records, voting for them to win awards (KOCIS, 2015, pp. 52-53). They even buy from the clothes idols wear to the drinks they drink. Many products that became sold out instantly make brands smile. In summary, Korea-lover fans are proof of how successful the Korean government and Hallyu strategies have been.

#### **2.6. Korean Popular Culture Products**

Hallyu's main characteristics are; its hybrid structure which is a mixture of modern and traditional cultures, efficient use of the power of technology and the internet, supported by the government, producing up-to-date content for young people, affecting

consumers in admiration, and products such as fashion, tourism, cosmetics, TV series, music, and movies feed each other in connection (Asa, 2019, pp. 42-43). Hallyu promoted the dissemination of the Korean image and Korean brands called K-brands (Binark, 2019, p. 155). These features are the main factors behind the success, and to better understand the situation, Korean popular culture products should be examined in detail.

According to Kwon and Kim (2014), Hallyu is a marketing strategy implemented by the government of South Korea to develop its cultural industry (Kwon & Kim, 2014), in addition, Huang (2011) accentuated that, the wave is shaped by global consumers who buy Hallyu products (Huang, 2011, p. 3).

Even though K-pop is one of the first things that spring to mind when it comes to Korean Wave today, it should be considered not only K-pop but also many elements related to Korea which feed each other and be consumed by fans in the transnational market. In fact, with the increasing product variety of Korean Wave, the number of countries it affects is increasing day by day.

#### **2.6.1. K-Drama**

Among the Korean popular culture products which are spread across the world by crossing borders, the Korean soap opera which is called K-drama should be examined first. Korea's first TV series exports are *Jealous* in 1993 and *What on Earth Is Love?* in 1997 which were aired in China. Also, *Winter Sonata* which aired in Japan in 2003 was broken the rating records and have helped the recovery of South Korean image in Japan (Tutucu, 2015, pp. 29-30).

K-drama scenarios are written suitable for every era, generally focussing on various topics such as family relations, educational problems, romantic relationships of young characters, fashion and city life, innocent love, rich-poor separation, and the difficulties of business life (KOCIS, 2015, pp. 59-65).

Today, the number of K-dramas are increasing and many websites and platforms are created to watch them. Fans translate the K-dramas on the websites so that they can cross the language barrier and reach many audiences. K-dramas, which are trendy and visually rich, are fast-moving consumption products that take approximately about 1 hour between 16-24 episodes. One of the features of K-dramas is specially made music which is called Original Sound Track (OST). In this popular culture product, the Korean lifestyle

is presented as attractive and approachable, roles played by actors who draw attention with their acting skills and appearance, topics are away from sexuality and violence which appeals to moral values. Thus, K-dramas created a positive image and perception in the minds of consumers all over the world (Lee G., 2009, p. 130).

Over time, consumers who are influenced by K-dramas began to imitate and copy the Korean lifestyle. They started to visit drama filming locations, buy Korean products used by actors or actresses and eat Korean food which is seen in the K-dramas (Desideri, 2013, pp. 43-62).

#### **2.6.1.1. Squid Game Effect**

With the trends created by the K-drama called Squid Game published on Netflix in 2021, the clothes worn by the characters have been sold out, consumption of the Korean confectionery dalgona shown in the drama suddenly increased, the emergence of the drama in social networks has become number one trend, a line from the drama like mugunghwa kkoci pieot seumnida (red light, green light) is repeated by everyone who does not speak Korean, the traditional games played in the series began to be played from America to Europe, to the Middle East, in short, all over the world. These cases are an example of how K-dramas affect consumers' lives. In addition, the curiosity and interest in other Korean dramas broadcast on Netflix such as Vincenzo, Crash Landing on You, It's okay not to be okay, Extracurricular has also increased.

#### **2.6.2. K-Movie: Oscar Winner Parasite**

With the success of Korean movies such as Sopyanje and Shiri in the 1990s, the Cinema Incentive Law was enacted. Thus, K-movies contributed to the advancement of Hallyu at the same rate as K-pop and K-dramas. This progress was replaced by a decline in 2006 due to the rise in film production costs. For a long time, K-movies left their place in the Hallyu system to K-pop and K-dramas (Tuk, 2012, p. 14).

When the year comes 2020, the South Korean movie Parasite made Oscar history and received many awards. It was the first time in Oscar history that a non-English movie has been awarded as the best movie. In addition, for her role in the movie Minari, South Korean actress Youn Yuh-Jung won the best supporting actress award at the 2021 Oscar ceremonies. These are up-to-date news that shows K-movies have been resurrected within Hallyu again.

### **2.6.3. K-Pop**

A blend of Eastern and Western musical culture, K-pop is a branded South Korean cultural industry product. This term is a tool of music diplomacy which is used effectively in cultural diplomacy. Besides, it is important to note that K-pop provides positive precedences to South Korea in diplomatic relations with other nations (Keskin, 2021, pp. 196-197). Moreover, K-pop albums are given as a diplomatic gift to other countries' heads of state (Keskin, 2021, p. 202).

Influenced by J-pop of Japan in 1980, SM Entertainment founder Lee So Man, who tried to create K-pop in his country, formed a K-pop group which is called H.O.T. Among the four biggest entertainment companies in Korea; YG, SM, JYP Entertainment and HYBE (Big Hit Music) Corporation have a big role in the development of K-pop. These companies provide years of training by discovering talented young people in vocal, dance, and rap. These young trainees stay in the dormitory and are educated in foreign languages, voice, sports, and manners (KOCIS, 2015, p. 114). There are many K-pop groups and singers formed by these companies. First generation groups such as H.O.T., Baby Vox, S.E.S., Shinhwa, god, Fin.K.L., Sech Kies appered from 1996 to early 2000s, second generation groups like Kara, T-ara, TVXQ, Wonder Girls, BigBang, Apink, Super Junior, 2NE1, SS501 were active from 2003 to 2011, third generation groups such as EXO, Winner, BTS, MonstaX, BlackPink, Got7, IKON, Red Velvet, Twice, Mamamoo have appeared after 2012 and fourth generation groups such as Itzy, ATEEZ, Stray Kids, TXT, NCT, Seventeen received attention around 2020 (Lee & Son, 2021, pp. 2920-2930). However, some of them became inactive on the grounds of disbandment, contract expiration, desistement or military duty (Lee & Son, 2021, p. 2919). It is worthy of note that, a large number of new K-pop groups are released every year.

During the Neo-Korean Wave era, both the number and success of idol groups increased. K-pop has spread to many countries and consumers. This situation can be measured by the increase in internet usage, the increasing rate in Youtube views, and surge in the number of followers on social media (KOCIS, 2011, pp. 38-51). South Korean singer Park Jae-Sang, best known as PSY, gave wing to the music industry when his K-pop song "Gangnam Style" broke the record for the first time on Youtube in 2012.

K-pop, which is consumed fast and always updated, continues its influence with the success of various K-pop groups like BTS, Blackpink, Twice, and many more. As a matter of fact, today, idols make collaborations with world-famous stars, go on world tours and create admiration with their looks and stage performances. Also, they take part in Korean promotional videos as Korea's brand faces, tourism ambassadors of Korea, presidential special envoys, global campaigns as global ambassadors of world-famous brands.

#### **2.6.3.1. BTS**

Bangtan Sonyeondan thy name is Bulletproof Boy Scouts, best known as BTS; is world-famous South Korean boy band which consist of 7 members; Kim Nam-Joon, Kim Seok-Jin, Min Yoon-Gi, Jung Ho-Seok, Park Ji-Min, Kim Tae-Hyung, Jeon Jung-Kook, better known by their stage names respectively; RM, Jin, SUGA, J-Hope, Jimin, V, Jungkook. In 2013, Bang Si-Hyuk brought together the group under the HYBE Corporation (formerly Big Hit Entertainment). Today, the fans of the group, which has become known all over the world, are called “Adorable Representative M.C. for Youth” abbreviatedly “ARMY”. As of 2021, BTS has 58.3 million followers on Instagram, 43.1 million followers on Twitter, and 45.3 million followers on Tiktok. According to Guinness World Record, they are the most interactive music group on Twitter. The elements that make BTS special are; they participate directly in album production by writing their own lyrics, they touch on universal topics that encourage younger generations, they are anti-racist and helpful that they made donations with ARMY for UNICEF campaigns, Black Lives Matter movement, for musicians who lost their jobs due to pandemic, and many more, they have outstanding stage performances, they have a special bond with their fans, and they use social media actively. BTS has become a cultural symbol of South Korea abroad by winning many awards, breaking records and receiving support of political actors (Keskin, 2021, p. 196). Accordingly, they appeared on the cover of Times magazine as “New Generation Leaders” in 2018. Members were awarded the “Order of Cultural Merit” by the President of South Korea in 2018. They were also chosen as the “Entertainer of the Year” for 2020 by the Times. They are honorary tourism ambassadors of Seoul since 2017 and promotions like “See You In Seoul”, “Visit Seoul”, “Your Seoul Goes On” have published (Rahman, 2020, p. 1-5).

The group was selected by Time as the 100 most influential people of 2019. BTS are global or brand ambassadors of Louis Vuitton, Samsung, Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Fila, Hyundai, Coway, Puma, Starbucks, Baskin Robbins, VT Cosmetics, Mediheal, Formula E, Lemona, Bodyfriend, and many others. These collaborations play an important role in reaching new fans and promoting Korean brands to the world.

BTS were nominated for the 2021 Grammy Awards and performed at the awards ceremony. In 2021, President Moon Jae-In designated group members as special envoys and diplomatic passports were issued to them. At the 76th United Nations General Assembly, BTS gave a speech in front of world leaders about climate change, Covid-19 vaccine, and coping with the pandemic issues as Next Generations and Cultures Presidential Envoys (http-3). In addition, the group members were able to use this process effectively by releasing 4 new songs, making “Bang Bang Con”, “Map of the Soul On:e”, “Permission to Dance on Stage” virtual concerts and communicating their fans through online platforms especially VLive, Weverse, Twitter and Instagram during the pandemic.



**Figure 1.** *BTS at 2021 UNGA. Respectively V, SUGA, Jin, RM, Jungkook, Jimin, J-Hope.* (Credits: Twitter account of ‘The Office of President Moon Jae-In’ @TheBlueHouseENG, 2021, <https://twitter.com/TheBlueHouseENG/status/1440140022078836744/photo/3>)

Also, idol groups especially BTS, have a huge impact on fans' purchase decisions from drinks and beverages to fabric softener to clothes (http-4). Fans who see products used by celebrities instantly share the details of the brand on their Twitter and Instagram accounts. The demand for the brand is increasing rapidly and later, the product is sold out instantly. As an example, BTS member V's just 3 seconds of lip balm application video was noticed by the fans and the company stock was sold out in seconds (http-5).

In 2022, BTS members have designed K-fashion products under the name of "Artist-Made Collection By BTS". From hoodies to bags to earrings to pajamas, all products sold out in less than 1 minute. In addition, the group was released video series of "Learn Korean with BTS" in 2020 and aimed to teach international fans Korean language. All these practices show that, as a K-pop group, BTS is one of the leading mediators and cultural agents in the development of "K-brand" in all aspects, from fashion to Korean language to tourism.

BTS's contribution to the South Korean economy is significantly great that, according to the Hyundai Research Institute (HRI), BTS contributed to the South Korean economy by estimating 5 billion dollars each year. Also, the HRI expects that BTS will generate an economic value of 37.06 billion US dollars and an added value of 12.66 billion US dollars between 2014 and 2023 (http-6).

#### **2.6.4. K-Beauty**

In today's world, one of the pioneers in aesthetic and cosmetic industry is South Korea. Besides, export of K-beauty products from make-up to skincare to bath-and-body has been increased. Also, the variety of K-beauty brands in our country Turkey is increasing. In K-beauty sector, "rituals" which are multiple and repeated behavior of consumers (Rook, 1985) by using various K-beauty brands, and "myths" that associate the origins of beauty products with nature by using natural and special ingredients such as fruits, collagen, snail slime, honey, aloe vera gel are in the foreground (Kniazeva & Belk, 2007). For example, the 10-step Korean skincare routine consists of different products such as cleaner, peeling, toner, serum, essence, moisturizer, eye cream, sheet mask, sunscreen, to sleep pack for the sake of reaching a "smooth-like-glass skin".

In K-dramas which makes emotion marketing, another notable element is the use of actors and actresses who meet Korean beauty standards. Being physically graceful,

thin, white-skinned, having a V-line, double eyelids are some of the basic elements of Korean Beauty that make the actors and actresses attractive. Consumers, who are aware of Korean beauty standards with what they have learned from K-dramas, turn to Korean cosmetics and skincare products with the dream of becoming like Hallyu stars. In addition, consumers who go to South Korea, which remains one of the leading countries in aesthetic and plastic surgery, for the sake of beautification, are substantial. Thus, important strategies for aesthetic tourism have been taken (Asa, 2019, pp. 52-53).

#### **2.6.5. K -Fashion**

K-fashion, which is one of Hallyu's nourishing branches, appeals especially to female consumers. Today's Korean fashion attracts the attention of consumers mostly thanks to the simple and elegant clothing of K-drama artists, and the bold-colorful images of K-pop groups. In addition, Han-bok, the traditional Korean outfit that consumers often see in historical K-dramas, has created an interest in Korean fashion.

#### **2.6.6. K-Tourism**

The Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) was established in 1980 to attract more tourists to Korea. This organization, which has developed various strategies in line with the positive image Hallyu has provided to the country, has opened agencies in different countries. This organization actively uses social media and promotes Korean culture in different languages. In Turkey, it is located in İstanbul. Under the name of K-culture and tourism, the marketing areas of popular culture products have been increased. Filming venues in K-dramas and K-movies were opened to visitors, and it was aimed for fans to visit the country with concert tourism and fan meetings, where products of K-pop groups were sold (Asa, 2019, p. 64).

#### **2.6.7. K-Food: Han-Sik**

The Korean government, for the purpose of make Korean cuisine more popular around the world, attracted attention of the audience especially by promoting it in K-dramas and aimed to create interest in Korean cuisine. Traditional Korean cuisine products, including daily street food, are commonly promoted in K-dramas. In addition to traditional Korean delicacies such as Kimchi, ramyeon, tteokbokki, which appear in almost all K-dramas, interest in Korean snacks and street food has also increased. For example, dalgona candy, which was popular 30 years ago in Korea, has recently gained



popularity again with the effect of a K-drama called Squid Game. Dalgona has become a trend worldwide and consumers have begun to prepare or buy this flavor consisting of a mixture of sugar and baking soda. In the period when the Covid-19 pandemic started in Turkey, dalgona coffee became a trend in social media and its consumption increased. In addition, the Korean government promotes Korean dishes at the events of Korean cultural centers opened all over the world and gives consumers an experience. Also, the number of Korean restaurants opened abroad is quite high. This number is increasing in Turkey too (Choi, 2015, pp. 46-47).

#### **2.6.8. Korean Language: Han-Geul**

Korean writing system also known as “Hangul” which is invented by the King Sejong and scholars as a result of years of research in 1443, is one of the most scientific alphabets in today’s world (Gökmen, 2007, pp. 65-66).

Korean Cultural Centers and King Sejong Institutes have been introduced by Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism all around the world to teach Korean language and promoting of Han Style globally. Language courses and many activities related with Korean culture are held in these centers with the participation of Hallyu fans (Oh & Chae, 2013, pp. 87-95).

#### **2.6.9. Korean Digital Games**

Another cultural industry product is digital games, which has grown rapidly in the 21st century (Digital Game Industry Report, 2020). With the digitalization, traditional games have been replaced by digital games (Gül, 2019, pp. 452-453). From online games to simulations, this industry takes the player's time and money while giving them excitement. Indeed, in the culture industry, the aim of companies is not to raise awareness of consumers but to make maximum profit and entertain them (Binark & Bayraktutan Sütçü, 2008, pp. 41-46).

Another important development in the digital game industry is that individuals prefer mobile devices instead of consoles and computers. The widespread use of mobile phones, the development of their technical features, and their easy accessibility have been effective in this. The market shares of console games and computer games are declining, while the market share of mobile games is increasing every year (Gül, 2019, p. 454).

According to the 2020 Digital Game Industry Report of the “Information Technologies and Communications Authority” (BTK), the digital game industry has achieved 159 billion dollars in 2020 with a rising of 9.3% by virtue of COVID-19 pandemic and it is estimated to reach 295 billion dollars by 2026. In addition, mobile games have had the largest place in the digital game market, with a revenue of 77.2 billion dollars in 2020 (Dijital Oyun Sektörü Raporu, 2020).

The digital gaming industry has been evolving ever since the first electronic game in 1947. Tablets, smartphones, social media, the increase in computer ownership, increase in data storage and internet connection speed have made the game industry a constantly developing sector. One of the most prospering countries in digital game market in the world is South Korea where appreciates this prosperity to encouragement of the government (Karahisar, 2013, p. 113). As an example, in 2017, South Korean company Bluehole which is developed the PUBG game has achieved great success. The game reached two million sales within five weeks of its release (Gül, 2019, p. 457). Today, South Korean game manufacturers have identified countries such as Turkey, Brazil, Egypt, India, and Poland as major markets and are working for the localization of the product (Binark & Bayraktutan Sütçü, 2008, p. 92).

## **2.7. Hallyu Influence in Turkey**

The Korean Wave started with K-dramas and progressed quietly in Turkey, however, in recent years, it has occupied the agenda and Turkish fan base has expanded considerably.

### **2.7.1. Hallyu Reflections in Turkey**

Hallyu entered the Turkish market with the historical K-drama “Emperor of the Sea (Hae-Sin)”, better known in Turkish as “Denizler İmparatoru”, which started broadcasting on TRT 1 in 2005 (Oh & Chae, 2013, p. 86).

Korean dramas, the number of which has increased over the years, have been broadcast on many Turkish channels. Some of these are; in TRT 1; The Flower in Prison (Hapishanedeki Çiçek), Empress Ki (İmparatoriçe Ki), Princess Hours (Düşlerimin Prensi), Dae Jang-Geum (Saraydaki Mücevher), The Great Queen Seon Deok (Muhteşem Kraliçe), Sangdo (Tacir), Jumong (Efsane Prensi), Goong S (Zoraki Prensi), in TRT Okul; Boys Over Flowers (Yaban Çiçeği), Dream High (Büyük Hayaller), in Kanal 7; Moon

Lovers Scarlet Heart (Aşka Yolculuk), Love in the Moonlight (Bir Tutam Aşk), Kill Me Heal Me (Sil Baştan), Secret Love (Feda), “Kim Book Joo (Sev Beni), in Meltem Tv; Hong Gil Dong (Kahraman Hong), “King Geunchogo (Efsane Kral), Chuno (Köle Avcıları), in Mesaj Tv; Dae Jo Young (Büyük Kral Jo Young), in Ege Tv; The Princess’ Man (Prensesin Tutkusu), in Bahartürk Tv; Empress Chunchu (Demir İmparatoriçe), in Olay Tv; Big King (Büyük Kral Gwanggaeto) (Taşdemir, 2018, p. 56).

With the widespread use of the Internet, some of the most-watched Korean dramas from online platforms can be listed as; “Sky Castle”, “Crash Landing On You”, “Guardian: The Lonely and Great God”, “Boys Over Flowers”, “Descendants of the Sun”. In addition, in recent years, many Korean adaptations of Turkish series have been shot and shown on the tv channels or continue to be broadcast. To give some examples; “Cunning Single Lady” adapted as “Aşk Mantık İntikam”, “A Gentleman’s Dignity” adapted as “Kiraz Mevsimi”, “The Heirs” became “Çilek Kokusu”, “She Was Pretty” became “Seviyor Sevmiyor”, “Boys Over Flowers” adapted as “Güneşi Beklerken”, “Can Love Become Money” adapted as “Kiralık Aşk”, “Doctors” became “Kalp Atışı”, “What Happens To My Family” became “Baba Candır”, “Roof Top Prince” adapted as “Osmanlı Tokadı”, “Temptation of An Angel” adapted as “Beni Affet”.

The popularity of Korean cultural products is increasing in Turkey. The interest in Korean history and culture and the use of Korean products have become widespread, especially among young people. Young people in Turkey open countless fan pages and create various content related to Korea on social media. In addition, Korean cosmetic brands entered to Turkish market with K-beauty stores (Binark, 2019, pp. 21-23). The number of Turkish youth who go to Korea for tourism or university education has also increased. As mentioned before, Korean TV series are shown as dubbed on Turkish television, and many Korean adaptations of Turkish series have been made. The South Korea-Turkey co-production movie “Ayla”, which was released in 2017, also, “7. Koğuştaki Mucize” (2019) which is a remake movie adapted from K-movie called “Miracle in Cell No.7” (2013) by buying screenplay rights (Gündel, 2021, p. 1697), and other remake movies such as “A Millionaire’s First Love” (2006) adapted as “Senden Bana Kalan” (2015), “Always” (2011) adapted as “Sadece Sen” (2013), “A Moment To Remember” (2004) adapted as “Evim Sensin” (2012) have received great acclaim (Erguvan, 2021, p. 65).

These consumption practices, which support each other all the time, provide economic, political, and cultural advantages to the Republic of South Korea. In addition, the Korean Wave has positively affected the image of the country on an international scale and the attractiveness of the country has increased in the eyes of consumers (Macit, 2018, p. 75).

### **2.7.2. Korean Cultural Centers and King Sejong Institutes in Turkey**

King Sejong Institutes and Korean Cultural Centers have been established in Turkey as well as other countries in the world to teach Korean language and creating social interactions between Turkish and Korean people. Also, private associations like “Korea-Turkey Friendship Association” and “Korea-Turkey Cultural Exchange Association” are contributing to educate Korean language in Turkey (Oh & Chae, 2013, p. 94). The majority of the Korean Cultural Centers are located in cities such as Ankara, İstanbul, İzmir, Mersin, Eskişehir, and Kayseri; while King Sejong Institutes are located in Ankara, Bursa, İstanbul, Trabzon and İzmir. Activities such as Korean culture promotion, Korean lessons, Korean food making, Korean movie screening, Korean clothes sewing, K-pop and taekwondo trainings are held in these centers.

### **2.7.3. Hallyu News in Turkish Media**

Although Korean dramas have been broadcast on Turkish channels for many years, criticisms of Hallyu have been based on K-pop, as the headcount of K-pop fans and their addition have increased in recent years. Due to the agenda created in some newspapers, news channels and mass media; Korean groups and their fans have been harshly criticized in Turkey (<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr>). In particular, journalists and writers who have religious sensitivities stated in the written and visual media that young people are brainwashed by K-pop groups on issues such as de-sexing, normalizing LGBT, and creating a new religion. These anti-Hallyu discourses which describe K-pop as an "outbreak" and a threat, aim to create “moral panic” and fear in Turkish community by making K-pop groups “scapegoat” with negative “labelling” (Keskin & Binark, 2021, pp. 147-154). On the other hand, fans published reaction videos, create hashtags by accusing these journalists and writers of human discrimination and racism.

However, all Hallyu news in the Turkish press are not negative. There were also positive and informative news about BTS being introduced, the group's achievements, the

Korean movie Parasite receiving an Oscar, the K-pop concerts held in Turkey, and many more (http-8).

In short, Hallyu, which has been on the agenda of Turkey in recent years, is evaluated positively and negatively by the parties in different dimensions. In this direction, the opinions of the Z generation Hallyu fans were taken and given in the findings part of the research.

#### **2.7.4. Hallyu Fans in Turkey**

Korean popular culture products are interrelated and feed each other. The Korean Wave, which achieved great success on a global scale after its regional success, has become the main focus of the young people in many countries (Macit, 2018, p. 33). Studies have revealed that Hallyu consumers in Turkey mostly consist of young people (Erguvan, 2021, p. 68).

Consumers show different tendencies in different generations, therefore, understanding the consumer behavior of young generation is significant in terms of marketing.

##### **2.7.4.1. Consumption**

Consumption is the purchase and use of goods or services by individuals to benefit from them. This definition is made because goods or services can be purchased separately (Engin Öztürk, 2015, p. 8). Although the term 'use' occurs in mind first when we speak of consumption, it should be considered as benefiting from goods or services for the satisfaction of needs (Özdemir, 2000, p. 28).

Economically, consumption is defined as the fulfillment of wants and needs, however, this concept has also gained psychological, sociological, and cultural dimensions today. In other words, the term consumption should not just be defined as its traditional function of meeting the basic needs of individuals. It has turned into a new structure that allows individuals to form an identity, gain prestige, social acceptance, and status (Kahvecioğlu, 2004, p. 42). In this direction, it should be noted that the desired objects in the consumption process are constantly renewed with advertisements and images (Kadioğlu, 2014, p. 16).

##### **2.7.4.2. Generation Z as Consumers**

Consumers form the basis of consumer behavior. The concept of consumer, which has many definitions in the literature, is generally the person who performs the act of consumption, in short, who buys and uses goods or services. Consumers get benefits from the product or service they buy, at the same time they satisfy their needs and use these products or services. Humans are different from other living things because they affect other people and also affected by others socially, economically and psychologically while performing their consumption activities. Consumers might be individuals, institutions or organizations that have needs and desires that they want to be satisfied, willing to spend and financial means (Mucuk, 2004, pp. 66-71). According to another definition, consumers are the people who are making decisions on foods and everyday living products, in order to drive the physical, sociological, psychological needs under a financial satisfaction (Erasmus, Boshoff & Rousseau, 2001, p. 82). According to Solomon (2006), the person who realizes wants or needs and buys goods or services to meet these needs is called as a consumer (Solomon, 2006, p. 271). Consumer could be divided into two different terms as individual consumers and organizational consumers. Individual consumers are the people who use products or services for their individual or family needs (Öz, 2012, p. 11). On the other hand, organizational consumers are public institutions, social organizations, profit-oriented or non-profit organizations that try to achieve their organizational goals (Wells & Prensky, 1996, pp. 44-56).

Another distinction to be considered in marketing; are the differences between the concepts of consumer, customer and buyer. The consumer is a natural person who purchases goods or services for his/ her private wants and needs, or who has opportunity to purchase them. However, the customer can be defined as the consumer who constantly uses service of a business or buys the same brand over and over. Thus, it might be said every customer is a consumer, but every consumer is not a customer (Karabulut, 1981, p. 11). On the other hand, the buyer is the person or organization that makes the purchase on behalf of someone else (İslamoğlu, 2003, p. 32).

Studies in the literature have revealed that Hallyu consumers are generally young people (Hae-Joang, 2005, p. 156), and Hallyu also produces content for young people. In short, one of Hallyu's main target groups is Gen Z consumers.

There are various opinions about the years in which members of this generation were born. In general, it consists of individuals born between the mid-1990s and the late

2000s. This generation was born into digital technologies, social media, and electronic devices (Sönmez, 2016, p. 108). They have fallen upon extreme in their lifelong such as technologic, economic, politic, and social changes (Ernst & Young, 2015). Gen Z consumers are mostly well-educated people and they have the ability to build up a remark in a snap by accessing information through the internet and social networks. This generation determines consumption trends and is influenced by today's consumption (Altuntuğ, 2012, p. 204). Thus, their consumption habits are different from other generations (Altuntuğ, 2012, p. 206). This generation can easily find everything they are looking for on the internet, they use social networking sites to communicate, they are under the influence of celebrities thanks to media tools, they attach great importance to the opinions of their peers and they make quick decisions (Csobánka, 2016, p. 66). Wood (2013) asserted that Gen Z consumers are interested in new technologies, insistent on ease of handling, and they wish to feel secure and momentarily run away the actuality they encounter (Wood, 2013, pp. 1-3). According to Schlossberg, Gen Z is a complication being that their behaviors are different from previous ones, and this status leads some modifications in consumer behavior. Also, Schlossberg marked that, Gen Z members have higher expectations and care more about the experiences, however, they have no brand loyalty (Schlossberg, 2016).

Fansumer, which is presented by the Consumer Trend Research Institute of Seoul National University, is a new term in consumption culture and combines of words “fan” and “consumer” (http-9). As well as consumption of ordinary consumers, fansumers have a huge influence on supply too which is a two-sided pattern. Especially, generation Y and Z fansumers have a strong desire to be involved in producing, developing goods, marketing products, idols, and brands through social media. In addition, “self-promotion” and “consumption for self-belief” are in the foreground. Fansumers feel proud of their meaningful spending and their effort “by-me”. They voluntarily place idol advertisements on public transportations, present gifts like lunch boxes and coffee or snack cars to the idol's filming site, participate in crowd-funding, make donations on their favorite idols' behalf, collabrate with cafes to hold special events for supporting idols, set up a music streaming labor team, campaign for ethical consumption of legal products, engage in corporate product development and marketing activities by giving constructive feedback (http-10). In addition to that, they can criticize or boycott products, celebrities, idols, or companies. For example, they tend to express their dissatisfaction on social media by

creating hashtags on Twitter to get companies' attention. Thus, companies have to be aware of fansumers' opinions and values when producing products, brands or idols (http-11).

#### **2.7.4.3. Consumer Behavior**

One of the most fundamental subjects of marketing science is “consumer behavior, which takes an essential part in human behavior” (Mucuk, 2004, p. 71). This scientific field that examines how consumers' decision-making process works and how this process affects their purchasing behavior by revealing from whom, how, where, and when goods or services are purchased (Akturan, 2007, pp. 237-252).

According to Durmaz (2008), consumer behavior is the instruction of how procedures of consumption affect the world (Durmaz, 2008, p. 11). In addition, the process that occurs when consumers choose between products after determining their needs, then buy or not buy the product, and continue to make decisions about the product after purchasing, constitutes the scope of consumer behavior (Engin Öztürk, 2015, p. 7). Also, Odabaşı and Barış (2017) state that; the scope of consumer behavior consists of explanations of how consumers use their time, energy and money (Odabaşı & Barış, 2017, p. 29).

Consumer behavior is formed by the characteristics of consumers and their decision-making processes and is affected by several factors such as cultural, social, psychological (Okumuş, 2013, p. 6). In addition to that, Kiracı (2014) stated that; consumers may make unplanned purchases, and may be affected by various factors according to their situational and emotional states, as well as family, friends and environmental factors (Kiracı, 2014, p. 152).

According to Odabaşı and Barış (2013), consumer behavior has seven basic features which are listed below;

- It is a motivated behavior in order to achieve the satisfaction of the consumer's wants and needs.
- It is a dynamic process that is interconnected, interrelated and consecutive.
- It consists of various activities such as information gathering, purchasing decision.



- It is “complex due to the multitude of variables that affect the purchase consideration, and abluudes in timing when the decision is made and how long the process takes”.
- It has five roles which are listed as “initiator, influencer, decision-maker, buyer and user”.
- It is “affected by environmental external factors”.
- It may “differ from person to person due to personal differences” (Odabaşı & Barış, 2013, p. 30).

To achieve success in the market, companies need to keep up with the changing conditions and competitive environment thus, companies should analyze the behavior of today's conscious consumers by considering what, when and how they want, what factors affect their purchasing behavior. So that they can predict how to behave in the future (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010, p. 160). Majority of businesses that carry out marketing activities allocate a budget to research on consumer behavior in order to analyze what, where, how much, how and why consumers buy (Barmola & Srivastava, 2010, p. 269). In short, marketers, firms or organizations should understand consumer behavior well in order to gain competitive advantage (Porter, 1980, p. 12).

In this direction, in the findings section of the study, Hallyu was examined from the perspective of Gen Z fans and its impact on consumer behavior is tried to be determined. The results obtained from these findings are interpreted in the results section.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

In this chapter of the study, the research method and techniques used during data collection process will be explained in detail.

#### **3.1. Research Paradigm**

In this study, as a methodological paradigm, the qualitative research was implemented during data collection and analyzing process to explore perceptions, perspectives and experiences of the Hallyu consumers with the aim of better understanding the Korean Wave and its effects on consumers. Because the qualitative research helps data collection in participant's settings while the researcher makes interpretations of the meaning of the data and analyzes data from particulars to general namely inductively (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, pp. 257-258).

Moreover, quantitative research emphasizes the statistical relationship between different variables. In contrast, qualitative research is process-oriented and emphasizes descriptions and explanations of how specific situations, events or people influence others rather than numbers or calculations (Maxwell, 2013, p. 40). Therefore, this research has the information on the participant, their point of view on Hallyu, and Hallyu products by asking them their consumption and life experiences about these subjects in light of the qualitative method.

Observation, interview, meeting notes or historical records can be used as review types in qualitative method. However, the relationships between words and concepts should be defined carefully because the data obtained is based on people's interpretation and evaluation. In this direction, there are factors that the researcher should pay attention to using the qualitative research method (Walliman, 2017, p. 73).

To sum up, qualitative research focuses on both process and content while creating an in-depth understanding of behavior, attitudes, actions, or events and how these characteristics are influenced by social contexts (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2020, p. 3).

##### **3.1.1. Research Method**

The research method is conducted as a case study focused on Hallyu consumption of Gen Z fans because case study can be defined as a “qualitative research method” in which a subject or situation is described in detail and examined in depth (Büyüköztürk,

Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2021, pp. 268-270). Also, according to Brown (2008), case study defined as; “an in-depth study of a situation or event” which provides the development of important perspectives about the situation or event (Brown, 2008, pp. 1-13).

According to Creswell (2007), during case studies, the researcher tries to examine briefly one or more situations whose boundaries are determined over time through interviews, observations, visuals, documents, or reports and then themes coupled with the condition are determined (Creswell, 2007, p. 36). For this reason, semi-structured interviews were executed with the interviewees to collect data about gen Z consumers’ thoughts and attitudes towards Hallyu and Korean popular culture products. In addition to that, the case study was supplemented by documents such as media articles, websites, government reports, popular culture documents, and visual documents.

It is important in a case study to understand the process of how various factors affect the situation such as groups or events, and how they are affected by a situation with a holistic approach (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021, p. 70). This study was conducted as an exploratory case study in order to specify the impact of the Korean Wave on consumer behavior scrutinizingly.

In the literature, there are several classifications of case study designs. According to Yin (1984), the case study designs are classified in four categories (Yin, 1984, p. 41). In this study, the “holistic single case design” was utilised being that one of the qualitative research as a case study designs. “Holistic single case design” is utilized in studies in which a concept, individual, group or situation is examined alone (McMillan, 2004, p. 275) which means there is one analysis unit in this study design (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021, p. 314). Thus, the analysis unit of this study is Hallyu consumers namely Turkish Hallyu fan base.

Consumer behavior can be described as whole of the decision and physical activity operation of the consumers that includes activities such as searching, finding, evaluating, purchasing, and using the goods or services which can meet their needs (Khan, 2006, p. 4). Majority of marketing research has focused on consumers and tries to understand of how consumers make purchasing decisions (Gabbott & Hogg, 1998, p. 6). Studies have shown that the concept of popular culture and today's information and communication

technology tools affect people's culture and consumption habits (Çınar & Çubukçu, 2010, p. 296). In this study, it will be stated how Hallyu, which means Korean popular culture, affects Gen Z fans in the context of consumption. In addition to that, case study is a useful and flexible way of clarifying a problem, phenomenon or issue which allows data collection from the internet, phone or online tools (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021, pp. 303-304). For this reason, during the data collection of this research, exploratory and open-ended questions which are likely to begin with 'What' and 'How' asked during online interviews to discover the insights of the Hallyu consumption of fans (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019, pp. 186-187).

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative data analysis approaches were classified as descriptive and content analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021, p. 243). In this case study, the data were analysed with descriptive analysis. All concepts derived from data were presented with direct quotations, coding was made according to these concepts, themes and sub-themes were created.

### **3.2. Credibility and Trustworthiness of the Study**

Credibility and trustworthiness are two significant factors so as to enhance the integrity. According to Yin (2003); content, internal and external credibility are the major factors that a case study should provide (Yin, 2003, p. 34). Content credibility means the measures taken by the researcher while reaching the correct information such as in-depth data collecting, triangulation, prolonged engagement, member checking, and peer debriefing. Also, transferability may be increased the credibility of the research with the help of direct quotations and purposive sampling methods. In order to reach internal credibility, the researcher should explained clearly and precisely how the conclusion was reached (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021, pp. 311-312). In social sciences, since events are determined by the participants, it is not possible to repeat or generalize the results statistically as it is done in quantitative research. However, in a case study only analytical generalization could be done in order to provide external credibility (Yin, 2003, p. 37).

On the other hand, a detailed convey of the research process to the reader increases the trustworthiness of the qualitative research. In addition, researchers should make a point of consistency and confirmability of their studies to increase trustworthiness. Consistency is defined as the harmony between the findings and results. Also, to reach

confirmability, personal opinions should not be reflected and accordingly, raw data may need to be stored (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021, pp. 289-296).

In an effort to provide credibility and trustworthiness of the research, therefore the researcher tried to conduct data collecting and analyzing processes objectively and these processes were expressed briefly. This qualitative research was designed as a case study and for the main data-gathering technique, semi-structured interviews were used to seek views on a focused topic. One-to-one internet-mediated interviews were conducted to understand an experience or condition from Hallyu consumers' perspective. In addition to that, the empirical material of the study was supplemented by documents such as media articles, websites, government reports, popular culture documents, and visual documents. To provide member checking, the summary of what understood shared with the participants after the interviews. The interview form and conceptual framework of the research were checked by an expert. In the findings chapter, the data acquired through all interviews were presented without personal comment, and the Korean Wave was reflected from the perspective of the Z generation by transferring it with direct quotations. In the conclusion part, a descriptive analysis was made and the attitudes and consumer behavior of the Z generation in the context of the Korean Wave were stated.

### **3.3. Semi-Structured Interview Technique**

In this research, the primary source of data was collected from Hallyu fans by way of semi-structured interviews. Thus, enriching the content of the study by understanding the subjects like popular culture products, Hallyu consumption, and the effect of Hallyu on youth in Turkey. The reason why this technique was used to gather information is that semi-structured interviews are more flexible in nature, thus, the researcher was able to ask flexible, variable, and open-ended questions in harmony with the flow of entire interviews. This allowed all interviewees to respond in accordance with the subject and without restrictions (Tracy, 2019, p. 158). In this way, the researcher was able to learn the real and emotional feelings of Hallyu fans and the points they found important. It is also significant that the mimics and gestures of the interviewees could be seen during online video calls which provide another rich data.

Semi-structured interviews provide an opportunity for the interviewer to get more detailed individual information with the help of good communication between the

interviewer and interviewees. It is worthy of note that the semi-structured interview process is a difficult one due to factors such as the interviewer's behavior, appearance, and skills that may affect it. As Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019) explained; the interviewer's appearance should be appropriate, the interviewer should have the ability to deal with participants, listen carefully to the participants, use different types of questions when questioning, test understanding, and record data fully (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019, p. 489).

While preparing the form of semi-structured interview, relevant studies and literature were examined. Care was taken to make sure that all questions were open-ended, clear, and easy to understand that did not lead the participants. After receiving expert opinion on validity, arrangements were made and the semi-structured interview form was created. Depending upon principles of semi-structured interview, fifteen questions with the sub-questions and probes are prepared which are related to the Korean Wave and its effects to reach detailed data about the subject. The interview form is constituted questions including demographic characteristics of all interviewees, which Korean cultural events they attend, which Korean cultural products they consume, their attitudes towards purchasing Hallyu products, their experiences before and after the purchase, and their predictions and expectations about the Korean Wave and the rest. Also, the probes and sub-questions are prepared in order to reduce the uncertainty that may occur in the minds of the participants and to better understand the questions. The semi-structured interview guide could be seen in Appendix 3.

### **3.4. Participants Selection and Preparation Process**

In the selection of the study group, it was aimed to select participants who have an idea about Korean popular culture and follow Hallyu products in the dimension of admiration. Briefly, due to the research subject, participants who were not interested in Korean culture were not included in this study. In this direction, “snowball sampling which is one of the purposive sampling methods”, was used for study group selection (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021, p. 120). The population of this research is the Hallyu fan base. The study group was formed from Turkish Hallyu fans, who will receive answers for the purpose of the research. While determining the study group, it was aimed to reach the Z generation consumers who follow Korean popular culture with admiration and who are the members of the Korean cultural community of universities or the members of the

Korean cultural centers in various provinces of Turkey. In this direction, first of all, the researcher contacted Mersin, Ankara, Eskişehir Korea Cultural Center, and Boğaziçi University Korean Society through social media accounts and conveyed the research details. Thus, all of the participants may be classified as Hallyu fans. After reaching a few voluntary participants, it was easy to reach others because the circle of friends of Hallyu fans is also made up of Hallyu fans. As Patton (1987) explains about the participant selection process, also the process of this study was continued with a simple question. The researcher asked to the participants: “Who else would you suggest me to talk as a Hallyu fan?” (Patton, 1987, p. 56). In this way, the study group grew like a snowball and in-depth interviews could be done. A limited number of male participants were reached while selecting the study group. Later, male participant stated that he gave up. Thus, all of the participants in this study are women. Since Hallyu produces content especially for women, and females are dominant in Turkey as Hallyu consumers (Oh & Chae, 2013, p. 85), a large number of female participants could be reached for this study. Since the information obtained by the researcher reached the level of data satisfaction, the study group was limited to 26 female participants in this study (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 149).

Each one of the interviews were conducted in participants’ mother language in Turkish. The use of mother language was helped the participants explain themselves clearly. In addition, most of the participants used some Korean words during interviews. Since the researcher had prior knowledge of Hallyu literature, some Korean terms which were mentioned by the participants could be understood clearly. In brief, the interviews were completed with the participants using a common and sincere language. Before the interviews, the researcher prepared an interview form in Turkish. Also, the participants’ answers were translated to English after the interviews by the researcher.

Due to Covid-19 and the distance, most of the interviews are conducted online with the participants. Before asking the questions to all 26 participants, a pilot interview was conducted with a small group to make a control of consistency between the questions and answers. Also, the pilot interview was efficient for the researcher to control voice recording, connection glitches, and the interview process. During online interviews, gestures and facial expressions of some interviewees who shared their images were observed. The answers of the participants caused the length of the interviews to vary.

Verbal and written permissions were gathered before the interviews. Each and every interviewee kept informed in detail related to the study and ‘Voluntary Participation Form’ (Appendix 1). This form contains the rights of the participants signed by all of them. In addition, minors under the age of 18 participated in the study. The parents of these participants were informed with the ‘Parent Permission Form’ (Appendix 2) and their consent was obtained. In all permission forms, it has been stated that participation is voluntary and the data of the interviews are solely used for scientific purposes and if the participant leaves the study, the data collected will be destroyed.

### **3.5. The Participants and Interviews**

In addition to the questions in the semi-structured interview form, various additional questions were asked in accordance with the interview process. Since the interviews focused on various topics of Hallyu, their length varied. One-to-one interviews were conducted with the help of information communication technology through online platforms such as Zoom, WhatsApp, and e-mail. Most of the interviews were verbal interviews with a video component and they were conducted over Zoom. One of the voice-to-voice real-time interviews was conducted over WhatsApp. Finally, an asynchronous interview was conducted over e-mail since the participant was in the exam week. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated there are strengths and weaknesses of synchronous and asynchronous venues. The most important strength is that the researcher interviewed participants across the world. Also, nonverbal cues were explored through video chats. On the other hand, one of the participants did not respond to all questions over email. However, this text-based interview over e-mail was provided the researcher with a ready transcript which means time-saving (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, pp. 115-117). During the month of November, at the appropriate date and time for the participants, online interviews were held and took from 23 to 48 minutes. The average of the interviews was about 36 minutes. The first question of the semi-structured interview form is aimed to understand the background and demographic information of the participants. In accordance with the participants’ answers, Table 1 was prepared.



**Table 1.** *Informations of Participants and Interviews*

| <b>PARTICIPANTS</b> | <b>AGE</b> | <b>GENDER *</b> | <b>MARITAL STATUS **</b> | <b>EDUCATION</b>     | <b>OCCUPATION</b>                                    | <b>JOB STATUS</b>                   | <b>PLACE OF RESIDENCE</b>         | <b>DATE OF INTERVIEW</b> | <b>PLACE OF INTERVIEW</b> | <b>LENGTH ***</b> |
|---------------------|------------|-----------------|--------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>P1</b>           | 21         | F               | S                        | University           | Student                                              | English Teacher                     | Currently in Korea/ from Mersin   | 08.11.2021               | Online -Zoom              | 47                |
| <b>P2</b>           | 19         | F               | S                        | University           | Student                                              | –                                   | Kapadokya<br>Ankara               | 05.11.2021               | Online -Zoom              | 35                |
| <b>P3</b>           | 20         | F               | S                        | University           | Student                                              | –                                   | Ankara                            | 07.11.2021               | Online -Zoom              | 44                |
| <b>P4</b>           | 22         | F               | S                        | University Graduated | Maritime Transportation and Foreign Trade Specialist | Shipmaster and South Korea Importer | Mersin                            | 09.11.2021               | Online - WhatsApp         | 40                |
| <b>P5</b>           | 22         | F               | S                        | University           | Student                                              | –                                   | İstanbul                          | 12.11.2021               | Online -Zoom              | 27                |
| <b>P6</b>           | 24         | F               | M                        | University Graduated | Preschool Teacher and Child Development Specialist   | Preschool Teacher                   | Muğla/ Fethiye                    | 04.11.2021               | Online -Zoom              | 40                |
| <b>P7</b>           | 17         | F               | S                        | High School          | Student                                              | –                                   | Muğla                             | 06.11.2021               | Online -Zoom              | 31                |
| <b>P8</b>           | 20         | F               | S                        | University           | Student                                              | Working in Family Business          | Tekirdağ                          | 07.11.2021               | Online -Zoom              | 38                |
| <b>P9</b>           | 18         | F               | S                        | High School          | Student                                              | Waitress                            | Eskişehir                         | 11.11.2021               | Online -Zoom              | 45                |
| <b>P10</b>          | 21         | F               | S                        | University           | Student                                              | –                                   | Niğde                             | 08.11.2021               | Online -Zoom              | 25                |
| <b>P11</b>          | 20         | F               | S                        | University           | Student                                              | English Teacher                     | İzmir                             | 05.11.2021               | Online -Zoom              | 43                |
| <b>P12</b>          | 17         | F               | S                        | High School          | Student                                              | –                                   | Muğla                             | 06.11.2021               | Online -Zoom              | 23                |
| <b>P13</b>          | 21         | F               | S                        | University           | Exchange Student                                     | –                                   | Currently in Korea/ from İstanbul | 12.11.2021               | Online -Zoom              | 35                |
| <b>P14</b>          | 20         | F               | S                        | University           | Intern at Hospital                                   | Surgical Technician                 | İzmir                             | 10.11.2021               | Online -Zoom              | 47                |
| <b>P15</b>          | 24         | F               | S                        | University Graduated | English Teacher                                      | English Teacher                     | İstanbul                          | 06.11.2021               | Online -Zoom              | 32                |
| <b>P16</b>          | 21         | F               | S                        | University           | Student                                              | –                                   | Eskişehir                         | 08.11.2021               | Online -Zoom              | 40                |
| <b>P17</b>          | 23         | F               | S                        | University Graduated | Editor in Cinema TV Sector                           | Social Media and Video Editor       | İstanbul                          | 10.11.2021               | Online -Zoom              | 42                |
| <b>P18</b>          | 20         | F               | S                        | University           | Student                                              | -                                   | Adana                             | 11.11.2021               | E-mail                    | -                 |
| <b>P19</b>          | 21         | F               | S                        | University           | Student                                              | Computer Engineering Coordinator    | Adana                             | 08.11.2021               | Online -Zoom              | 45                |

**Table 1.(continue) Informations of Participants and Interviews**

|            |    |   |   |                      |                              |                                                        |           |            |              |    |
|------------|----|---|---|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|--------------|----|
| <b>P20</b> | 21 | F | S | University Graduated | Korean Language Teacher      | –                                                      | Ankara    | 05.11.2021 | Online -Zoom | 33 |
| <b>P21</b> | 20 | F | S | University           | Student                      | –                                                      | İstanbul  | 09.11.2021 | Online -Zoom | 26 |
| <b>P22</b> | 21 | F | S | University           | Student                      | Data Entry Staff                                       | İstanbul  | 08.11.2021 | Online -Zoom | 32 |
| <b>P23</b> | 15 | F | S | High School          | Student                      | –                                                      | Muğla     | 10.11.2021 | Online -Zoom | 28 |
| <b>P24</b> | 21 | F | S | University           | Student                      | Tourist Guide in museum and in Korean Agency           | Ankara    | 09.11.2021 | Online -Zoom | 33 |
| <b>P25</b> | 22 | F | S | University Graduated | Emergency Medical Technician | Emergency Medical Technician in Family Practice Center | Eskişehir | 07.11.2021 | Online -Zoom | 34 |
| <b>P26</b> | 24 | F | S | University Graduated | Civil Engineer               | –                                                      | İstanbul  | 09.11.2021 | Online -Zoom | 48 |

\* **F: Female**

\*\* **S: Single, M: Married**

\*\*\* **Min: Minutes**

The participants of this research are 26 Turkish female Hallyu fans who are between 15 and 24. The participants were coded by giving numbers from P1 to P26. All of the participants are single except for one. All of the participants are generation Z members who are high school students, university students, and university graduated individuals from different backgrounds. All of the participants are living in various cities in Turkey and in South Korea. The interviews conducted with participants who are studying and living in South Korea provided invaluable insights to understand Korean culture and lifestyle.

An academic study on Hallyu surprised and pleased all the participants. They expressed their satisfaction to participate in this study and stated that they had the opportunity to express themselves correctly as Hallyu fans at the end of the interviews.

### **3.6. Data Analysis**

At the first phase of the study, books, articles, master and doctoral thesis studies written in Turkish and English, as well as official websites and social media accounts of

Korean cultural centers were used as sources to reach the international Hallyu literature. In addition, Korean fan pages were followed on Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and Youtube to understand the extent of admiration. The developments regarding Korean popular culture products, which were updated throughout the research, were added to the study by following the news about the Korean wave from the national and local press. Images obtained from these studies were also included in the study.

In the other part of the research, data were collected from interviews with Hallyu fans. The purpose of the interviews is to accurately identify the experiences and comments of the participants. Thus, audio recordings of all interviews were taken and after the interviews, all recordings were listened and transcribed by taking into account the emphases. In this research, descriptive analysis was utilised to analyse the data. It is significant to note that, the descriptive analysis was conducted without adding any personal opinion. The interview transcripts were directly transferred from Turkish to English by the researcher and analyzed carefully. In order to keep the participant information confidential, the participants were coded by giving numbers from P1 to P26.

In this research, the most frequently used topics by the participants were determined by the coding method. The themes and sub-themes were created depending on the answers given by Hallyu fans during overall interviews, finally conclusions were reached in this direction. The participants' opinions are included with direct quotations in findings of the study. In order to ensure credibility and trustworthiness, the findings reflecting the views of the participants were presented without personal opinion or comment. The main theme of this research is the effect of the Korean Wave on the consumer behavior of Gen Z in Turkey. According to this; consumer behavior of before, during, and after purchasing are investigated. Also, the data analysis has been conducted harmoniously with the related themes; consumers' perceptions about Korea label products, Hallyu reflections in Turkey, the effects of Hallyu on their general life, and on their consumption life. Moreover, in the following section, the findings according to interviews and the categorization of the themes are discussed clearly.

## 4. FINDINGS

In this chapter of the research, the findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews with 26 Turkish Hallyu fans will be shared by direct quotations, themes and sub-themes.

### 4.1. Initial Awareness of the Korean Wave

Participants were asked a question about how did their interest in Korean popular culture begin, how did they first hear the term Korean Wave. The answers received is given in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.** *Initial Awareness of the Korean Wave*

|                |                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Periods        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Secondary School</li><li>•High School</li></ul>                              | P1, P5, P6, P7, P12, P14, P19, P23<br>P8, P11, P13, P15, P17, P20, P21, P25, P26                                                                            |
| Intermediaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Friends</li><li>•Family &amp; Relatives</li><li>•TV &amp; Internet</li></ul> | P1, P5, P6, P7, P8, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P19, P20, P21, P22, P23, P25<br>P3, P4, P11, P22, P24, P26<br>P2, P6, P7, P18, P19                        |
| Products       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•K-drama</li><li>•K-pop</li></ul>                                             | P1, P5, P6, P11, P10 P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P19, P20, P22, P24, P25, P26<br>P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P9, P11, P12, P14, P15, P16, P18, P19, P20, P21, P22, P23 |

All participants stated that they have been following the Korean popular culture for years, the first sensation was mostly shown in high school and secondary school times. It has been determined that the first awareness has arisen thanks to the sense of curiosity created by the recommendations for popular culture products; K-pop and K-drama, which developed during chattings with their surroundings such as friends, cousins, neighbors, and thanks to local tv channels and the internet which they come accross randomly. Accordingly, consumers suddenly start consuming popular culture products through social environments and digital networks.

**P2:** *“First of all, we listened to the song released by BTS members on Youtube with my friends, it came across randomly. I realized it was fun. Once you click on it, suggestions appear, and more are coming Blackpink, Twice...”*

**P6:** *“When I was in secondary school, there was Jewel in the Palace, Boys Over Flowers on TRT1. The first K-dramas I watched. Even all the girls in my class watched Boys Over Flowers. Lee Min Ho was everyone's first love back then (laughs).”*

**P19:** *“I was 13-14 years old and my cousins were watching TV series on TRT. I also wanted to know because they often talk among themselves. Then we turned to K-pop while watching dramas. Let's check their music, how is the music?”*

**P20:** *“I didn't know there was a country called South Korea in primary school, but I got to know its popular culture in high school, their music was popular in our class. As I got older, I started to dig deeper as I used social media effectively. More series, movies, groups, idols, songs... it continued to increase in that way.”*

According to this, participants can be divided into 2 groups; the ones who joined the Hallyu fandom by watching K-dramas and the ones who joined by listening to K-pop music. Majority of the interviewees stated that they first watch K-drama Boys Over Flowers, and listened K-pop songs from BTS and EXO. As can be seen from this situation, it has been understood that the spread of Hallyu in Turkey is also due to other consumers and that local television channels and today's digital platforms are instrumental in increasing the rate of spread. Also, according to the starting status of the participants, the first time K-dramas aired on Turkish channels is similar to Hallyu's spread in Asian countries in influencing audiences.

#### **4.2. Participants Became Fans**

In line with the answers given by the participants, it is understood that the admiration processes went through 3 different stages. Some stated that they had a period of pause in the first phase of admiration process;

**P15:** *“After watching the first K-drama, it was too emotional for me, I took a break for a few years. Then I learned that better tv series and music were coming out, with the advice of my friends. I watched it again and this time I kept watching because I liked it. In this way, I watched series continuously until university.”*

Some fans mentioned that they were prejudiced at first due to overreactions of other fans, and too emotional K-dramas. However, they admitted that they become addicted after giving Hallyu contents a chance.

**P8:** *“You know, I said something like, they wouldn't attract me... but it didn't work like that (laughs). I was very prejudiced at first. I said I would listen but never be a fan. I talked big.”*

**P11:** *“At first I hated it, I was prejudiced. Everyone was overjoyed, it seemed antipathetic to me. Actually, I didn't like people's reactions. Some fans were saying that Jungkook is my boyfriend, my husband, it sounded ridiculous. My brother was very interested in K-dramas, I was kidding with him while watching those serials, they sounded too romantic. Then I thought I'd watch it too, and I got addicted too.”*

Majority of the participants stated that their admiration level has increased without slowing down since the first day. P6, summarized this situation as follows;

**P6:** *“My interest, which started with K-drama and then K-pop at first, turned to everything related to Korea over time. Once I got into the business, I started to research everything about Korean culture. Food, language, history... Over time, it turned into a hobby that I enjoy and has been going on for years.”*

All participants are active fans who have been consuming Hallyu products for a minimum of 3 years and a maximum of 12 years were agreed that K-drama and K-pop create addiction which led them to consume more Hallyu products over time.

**P15:** *“They put sooo many food scenes in dramas! My interest in Korean food is increasing. There is OST in every drama, the series ends, this time I start listening to OST music. When the music I listen to ends, other bands and other artists appear. I'm unconsciously drawn into K-pop and starting to learn about popular culture. The costumes of K-pop idols are very different and assertive. They look very beautiful, very handsome. When I say what she used, what she wore, I am chasing Korean fashion and beauty products. Thanks to K-dramas I watch, I discover places that must be visited in Korea, street games, street food... It also arouses my curiosity, I want to go and experience it. I dream of going to Korea because they make it look so good.”*

**P9:** *“I always listen to K-pop and watch K-dramas, but over the years it became such that I became addicted. It can't do without them. I like learning about Korea, it's like a hobby.”*

P20 stated that, social media using increased her addiction to K-beauty.

**P20:** *"I have been a student in Korea for 4 months. They have an obsession with beauty, so they take great care of their appearance. I had a few negative experiences in this direction. I was trying to conform to the beauty standards of the place. I went shopping to dress the way they dress. The more I use social media, the more intense addiction occurs."*

Explaining that they did not know much about Korea before, the fans learned the first information about Korea through K-dramas. The excellence shown in K-dramas has created a positive image of Korea in the minds of fans and desire for more consumption even for other factors especially food, beauty and fashion.

**P13:** *"The way actors dress in dramas draws my attention. They have different, simple and elegant clothes. Since I like Korean fashion, I started to look for K-fashion products and brands."*

**P14:** *"While watching TV series, I noticed that they always eat hungrily. In their culture, it means that the louder you eat, the tastier. I was craving, while I was watching, then I started to research Korean restaurants and Korean food in Turkey."*

Fans are not one-dimensional according to their interests, but research and consume everything that is unique to Korea. This shows that Korea has reached the targeted consumer profile in the Turkish market. Turkish fans also described themselves as "Korecanlar, Korea Lovers, Crazy Fans" during interviews. They are more focused on "we" than "I", and they always talked about the empowering effect of belonging to the community.

**P9:** *"Being in a fandom is amazing. It feels good to know that I'm not alone and it always motivates me. We give strength to each other."*

#### **4.3. Reasons of Interest in Korean Popular Culture Products**

The reasons for the participants' interest in Korean popular culture are given in Table 3 in line with the answers they gave;

**Table 3. Reasons of Interest in Korean Popular Culture Products**

| <b><u>K-Pop</u></b>                     | <b><u>K-Drama</u></b>                  | <b><u>K-Food</u></b> | <b><u>K-Beauty &amp; Fashion</u></b>   | <b><u>Korean Language</u></b>         | <b><u>K-Culture &amp; Tourism</u></b>          | <b><u>Digital Games</u></b> |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Given message in lyrics                 | Short and fluent chapters              | See from K-dramas    | Harmony between modern and traditional | Similar to Turkish language structure | Cultural similarities between Turkey and Korea | Parasocial interaction      |
| Exertion in MVs and performances        | OST                                    | Mukbang shows        | Korean beauty standards                | Understand Korean culture better      | Ability to make empathy with Koreans           |                             |
| Characteristics and lifestyles of idols | Given message                          | ASMR videos          | To look like Hallyu stars              | Ear familiarity from K-dramas         | To gain different perspectives                 |                             |
| Appearance of idols                     | Appearance and acting skills of actors |                      |                                        | Meet Korean Friends                   |                                                |                             |
| Mentally relaxing                       | Variety of series                      |                      |                                        |                                       |                                                |                             |
| Escape from the world and problems      | Far from violence and sexuality        |                      |                                        |                                       |                                                |                             |
|                                         | Original script                        |                      |                                        |                                       |                                                |                             |
|                                         | Learn and improve Korean               |                      |                                        |                                       |                                                |                             |

As it can be understood from the answers of the participants, it is seen that they are integrated into the Hallyu system, and because they are a part of it for many years, they are influenced not only by a single product but also by all Hallyu products in general terms. This situation has evolved and has become “everything about Korea” for the majority of fans.

**P20:** *“I can say that I am interested in all kinds of Korean popular culture elements.”*

Fans’ reasons of interest in Hallyu are classified under 7 sub-themes. K-pop fans stated as follows;



**P16:** *“K-pop lyrics, I think what sets them apart from others is what he does and what he says in his music videos. Both individually, their personalities, their respect, and their messages in the songs are very beautiful. I got to know them well, as they shared their life stories with us from Youtube, the videos they shot, and the programs they participated in, they became like my family. The work they do, the effort, the quality appeals both visually and to the ear, which is the reason why I haven't lost my love. The meanings of the lyrics are good, it makes me feel good.”*

**P22:** *“K-pop stars have good looks. It's been 7 years since I got to know BTS. Jimin burned me, he looks so good! (laughs)”*

**P7:** *“Their songs get the depressed person out of that place very easily. Love yourself, their stance against racism, their stance against evil in the world impresses me a lot. I think an example should be taken.”*

**P21:** *“K-pop groups welcome their fans very warmly and they are very talented. I can feel very good when I open a song if I'm sad. If I am happy, my joy is doubled.”*

**P17:** *“K-pop moves me and keeps me focused on what I'm going to do. It raises my energy and tells me to love myself. Especially Namjoon from BTS talking like this.”*

The participants talked about the extent of their admiration for various K-pop groups throughout the interviews. Some stated that they see group members as family, some as friends, and some as boyfriends or ideal male profile. Fans, who got away from life's problems and stress thanks to K-pop, stated that they found the messages given in the lyrics are relaxing. Also, the exertion in music videos and dance performances is one of the main reasons why K-pop is interesting.

Fans stated the reasons behind their love for K-dramas like this:

**P16:** *“Tv-series in Turkey remain simple for them. The script and acting allow you to watch from every angle. Turkish serials last 2 or 2.5 hours. K-dramas last 15 minutes, 45 minutes. This causes me to watch more.”*

**P21:** *“K-dramas are life lessons. They are romantic, sometimes harsh, have different themes.”*

**P17:** *“I liked K-dramas because they don't contain much violence and sexuality, they suited me. I think they feed me emotionally, they push me to power, they told me to get up when I fall. In Itaewon Class's Stand Up song, I can fly high, I can do things like... we all stumble while learning something, we fall, sometimes there are times when we fail. When I was psychologically worn out, I listened to this song as if it is written for me. For example, in the K-dramas, when I saw a woman who comes from the bottom to reach rise, she pushed me to work harder.”*

**P2:** *“They have original scripts. They are very original from production to acting and they relax me a lot. I love K-drama actors Lee Min Ho and Park Seo Joon and especially their fantasy fiction series. It's more creative than we can imagine. It has about 16 episodes and is much shorter than Turkish TV series, it ends in one sitting. For example, when I have free time, I finish a series in 2 days, so it's gripping. I even try to create free time, I try to get things done quickly so that I can watch K-dramas.”*

Fans stated that they watched a lot of K-dramas, and this number increased even more during the pandemic period. While making comparisons with Turkish TV series, majority of them focused on the short-term episodes of K-dramas that can be consumed quickly.

P22 stated the reasons behind her interest in K-food as follows;

**P22:** *“I was seeing a lot of ASMR videos on Instagram, 95 out of 100 videos are made with Korean food. I like to watch it, so I wondered if I want to try it. Now, when I want to reward myself, I prefer to eat Korean food. I see Korean food in dramas, if it is something I can't cook at home, I immediately say I should go to a restaurant and try it. Also, since I associate ramyeon with K-dramas, I prepare it before the drama starts, and I eat it while watching the drama. Then it feels like we eat at the same time as the actor there (laughs).”*

P13 and P17 stated the reasons behind their interest in K-fashion and K-beauty as follows;

**P13:** *“I started to follow K-fashion products and brands because I like different, simple and stylish clothes, they reflect both Western and traditional elements in their clothes.”*

**P17:** *"I am into cosmetics. I like their face masks, foundations and lipsticks, and I think that this thought occurred to me because I saw that the women are more beautiful. Both in K-dramas and my Korean friends are beautiful, and they caught my attention. It occurs in my mind that if it is Korea, it is good."*

Fans, who are aware of different Korean beauty standards, have often expressed their opinion that Korea is the best in the world in the cosmetics industry. Also, fans who take an example by the looks of Korean idols expressed that they try to dress like them and put on makeup like them.

Fans stated the reasons behind their interest in Korean language as follows;

**P13:** *"I'm learning Korean because it sounds so good in K-dramas. I've heard that Korean is one of the easiest languages to learn for a person who speaks Turkish. I knew that it is very close to Turkish in terms of language structure."*

**P20:** *"I was already a foreign language student, I thought I needed to learn a different language other than English, then Korean stepped in. Now, the Korean language and culture outweigh for me. I try to improve my language skills to understand their culture better and to meet Korean friends."*

**P26:** *"When I speak Turkish, I speak it as noo. My mom makes fun of me about it. When I heard Korean, their speech by saying "Anniyoo" gave me the feeling that I belong to Korea as if I belonged to this language. It was good for me that their way of speaking was similar to me. My sister says they talk just like you. That's why I feel comfortable speaking Korean. That's why I didn't quit, I'm still learning."*

Almost all of the participants can speak Korean. Some are students in the Korean language department at universities, some have attended Korean language courses, some have learned Korean by self-study from online resources. Even the participants who don't speak Korean expressed that they only knew a few basic words and want to learn.

The reasons behind fans' interest in Korean culture are as follows;

**P25:** *"They are so cute when we watch them, we may be of different religions, we may have grown up in different societies, but our cultures are very similar. These affect me."*

**P8:** *“They have had a lot of wars, they are extremely respectful... Maybe I can empathize with the Koreans. I really like Korean actors, artists, history, culture... and language extremely.”*

**P1:** *“It gave me different perspectives to get to know Korean culture. I wanted to have Korean friends and it allowed me to meet different people on the internet. I met not only Koreans, but also people from different nationalities who were interested in Korea. But for a while, I felt very far away from Turkey and Turkish culture. It got better after that.”*

Participants noticed the differences and similarities between Korea and Turkey through the TV series they watched. These differences and similarities have also been attractive factors in turning to other Hallyu products. According to them, the similarities arise from having similar historical events and customs, such as the wars of both countries, their respect for their elders, and the fact that they take off their shoes inside the house. Some participants stated that they got used to differences and started to adapt over time, and they even started to be more interested in Korean culture thanks to their ability to empathize with Koreans. Others have associated cultural differences with learning from different perspectives and stated that it contributes to their personal development. However, one of the participants admitted that the extreme sympathy for K-culture drove her away from her own culture.

It has been noticed that the participants are less interested in digital games among Hallyu products. Only P6 of the participants stated that she plays the mobile video game called BTS World published by Netmarble in 2019. Fan's desire to interact with idols in real life is tried to be fulfilled through this game.

**P6:** *“Although I don't play a lot of games, I'm obsessed with BTS' game these days. You become BTS' manager in the game, there are various tasks, as you level up you reach new pictures of BTS. There are songs specific to the game, even I feel like I'm talking to BTS on the phone.”*

#### **4.4. Korean Culture and Art Festivals in Turkey**

Another question about Korean cultural and artistic events that they attend in Turkey was asked and Table 4 was formed with the answers given.

**Table 4.** *Korean Cultural Events in Turkey*

| EVENTS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | LOCATION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | PARTICIPANTS' FEELINGS                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chuseok (mid-autumn harvest festival)</li> <li>• K-Food Festival</li> <li>• K-cover and Dance Festival</li> <li>• Home Stay</li> <li>• K-pop Concerts</li> <li>• K-pop products selling and Donation Events</li> <li>• K-movie screening</li> <li>• Fan Meeting with K-pop bands</li> <li>• Korean Traditional Games</li> <li>• Exhibition of Paekche History</li> <li>• Anniversary of Hangul (Korean alphabet)</li> <li>• Korean speaking competitions</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Korean Cultural Centers (in Mersin, Ankara, Adana, Eskişehir)</li> <li>• İstanbul Korean Consulate</li> <li>• Boğaziçi University Korean Culture Community</li> <li>• Korean Culture Week at Universities (İstanbul University, Beykent University)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoyable</li> <li>• New experience</li> <li>• Self-confident</li> <li>• Sense of belonging-similarity</li> </ul> |



**Figure 2.** *Korean Cultural events held in Turkey.* (Credits: Pelinsu Alptekin, Belemir Karameşe)

With the diversity provided by the participants living in various provinces of Turkey, rich data were obtained about the Hallyu events held in Turkey. In this direction, the majority of the participants stated that there are many events held in Turkey from İstanbul, to Eskişehir to Ankara to Mersin to Adana that they enjoy participating. They stated that they learned about these events from the social media accounts of the Korean cultural centers, and from the advice of their Korean language lecturers.

**P1:** *"I have been learning Korean since 10th grade at Mersin Korean Cultural Center. My teachers are Koreans. They make announcements when there would be events."*

**P3:** *"Since I studied at the department of Korean language literature at Ankara University, our teachers often recommended it. There is a Korean cultural center in Ankara, even its main place. They would direct us to the events of the place. I also follow their announcements on social media."*

**P15:** *"I attended the events held by a Korean cultural center in Istanbul. There were presentations introducing Korean culture every week. In addition, my own university has a lot of Korean events and there is also a club called Boğaziçi Korean Society. Korea Day is organized on campus and a large number of people attend it."*

Korean cultural centers and universities play an active role in the organization of the events, and the events are held constantly and frequently. Participants stated that various types of activities and organizations are held such as concerts, contests, movie screening, dance cover festivals, exhibitions which are free to attend for members, however, during some of the activities sometimes a small amount of payment may be required.

**P1:** *"We celebrated Korea's chuseok, we sold K-pop products at the kermess and we donated the money collected to forest fires in Turkey. There are activities that are very entertaining and add different things to me. Participation is usually free, Small amounts such as 5 TL are given to food events, that's all."*

**P15:** *"Dance, music, books, poetry readings... There was a variety of food, most of what you can see on the street in Korea. So we could find tteokbokki, hotteok, fish cake, rice cake, all of them."*

**P8:** *"There was a K-cover dance festival in Istanbul, and I was promoted to the Turkey finalist there. Also, Korean K-pop groups come to Turkey and perform. There was a fan meeting of the ACE group, and I also attended it online."*

The answers given to the question about how they felt in the activities they participated in show similarity;

**P16:** *“Finding people like myself made me feel happy and excited. Because it was very nice to be with people who shared the same feelings as me. It was good for making friends and learning something new.”*

**P20:** *“I was excited to be together with people who had the same feelings and thoughts as me. It was a new experience, a new learning for me.”*

Active participation in the events has been helpful in increasing the self-confidence of the fans, they gain new experiences, and realize the similarities between Korean and Turkish culture which can be explained as cultural proximity.

**P4:** *“I performed at a K-pop event in 2018. I rapped in Korean. In 2019, I participated in the Calligraphy competition held in Ankara Korean cultural center on the anniversary of the Korean alphabet on Hangul. I won the incentive award. I attended many cooking events, Korean speaking events, K-pop and K-drama events. There was a screening of Korean films in Mersin Forum, where I played an active role. In 2019, we represented Korea as Mersin Korean cultural center at Mersin Citrus Festival, and I wore a traditional shinbu which is a traditional bridal dress, and we were in the procession on the march in front of the governor's office. I participated in many events where I received a certificate. As a result of these activities, my self-confidence increased a lot. When I am with Koreans, I feel as if I am with people from my own nationality. Because our cultures are very similar and our lifestyles are almost the same, we are not alienated. When we are in the same environment, we look like them and they look like us.”*

One of the participants, P24 stated that she organizes these events as a guide who works in a Korean agency in Ankara. Also, she explained that the aim is to introduce Korea to the world and to teach culture in these events by adding the pandemic does not pose an obstacle to the activities at this moment.

**P24:** *“Since I work in a Korean agency, we are organizing these events. We are working with Korea in connection with the embassy. A few days ago, there was a food event at the Ankara Korean cultural center, and we organized it. We have an exhibition in the Korean cultural center today about the history of paekce. You can join for free with the Hes code, I am accompanying you as a guide. Gifts are given at events, it's so fun! Sometimes you need to buy kimchi coupons for extra meals, other than that, there is no*

*charge. It's for incentive and instructional purposes. The aim is to open Korea to the world."*

As it is seen, Hallyu is trying to be promoted and spread in all its dimensions, from traditional to modern, as much as possible in Turkey. The remarkable thing here is that the activities are carried out by making a two-way exchange of cultures, not a one-way, that is, the culture of the country that is trying to spread in the Hallyu system is also recognized. This means enabling fans to adapt to a combination of Turkish and Korean culture. P3 and P4 expressed it as follows:

**P3:** *"In the food festival where people who were depressed due to Coronavirus or even stayed in Turkey and could not go to Korea, likewise Turks who could not go to Korea, gathered together. Event made so that they could feel Korea in Turkey. To strengthen the ties between the two countries. In fact, the words 'Smile Again' were written on the dinner plates in both Korean and Turkish."*

**P4:** *"I had a home stay from the taekwondo group at the Mersin Korean cultural center. I hosted Koreans in my house for 5 days. They introduced us Korean culture, we showed them Turkish culture. It was my first experience, as a family, we liked how respectful they are, and then we became friends."*

In addition, some participants mentioned that there are no events held in their place of residence, however, they have demand to participate. In this direction, it is necessary to expand the activity areas of Korean cultural centers or events in Turkey.

**P12:** *"If it were in Muğla, I would definitely attend. I will write my university preference in Ankara or Istanbul just to be able to attend these events (laughs). I wish I could be a part of it."*

Apart from the events organized by official institutions and organizations, there are also events organized by Turkish fans voluntarily. During the interviews, the participants mentioned that they make a voluntary effort to prepare birthday events for their favorite idols at cafes, create social media fan accounts on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook for Korean celebrities to disseminate information to others, make donations and billboard advertisements, support idols by voting and streaming music videos, actively produce social media content related to Hallyu which makes them "prosumers" who both consume and produce.



**P6:** “When Chen from EXO welcomed the birth of his child, we made a donation to LÖSEV. We organized the event on Twitter as Turkish EXO-L's.”

**P22:** “I opened a BTS fan account on Facebook. I got together with people, we formed a community, when a new song came out, we would stream. It gave me a lot of excitement. Finding even one person didn't make me feel lonely.”



**Figure 3.** Turkish fans-sponsored billboards to celebrate BTS members' birthdays in Ankara (Credits: Twitter account of 'BTS ARMY Turkey (REST)' @bangtantr, <https://twitter.com/bangtantr/status/1205904198531010560/photo/1>, Access date: 03.12.2021).

#### 4.5. Hallyu's Effects on Fans' Life

When the question what does the Korean popular culture mean to you, what are the feelings and thoughts that appear in your mind asked, some participants stated that K-drama and K-pop are the first things that come to mind when they think of Korean Wave. In addition, most of the participants mentioned BTS who are the representatives of K-pop by adding BTS had a much deeper meaning for them, and that the messages given in the songs are promising, hopeful and create happiness in difficult times. This explains why BTS is an important part of the Hallyu system and has a significant impact on fans.

**P25:** *“BTS. I find them very successful. I mean, the relationship between ARMY and BTS is so special. We support each other no matter what and they always make me happy.”*

**P2:** *“Especially BTS comes to my mind. Whenever I feel bad, I have a band. I feel comfortable when I listen to their songs. When I am unhappy, when I have exam stress, I listen to BTS's songs out loud. The lyrics are very promising and they have a special place in my heart.”*

**P26:** *“Especially when bad things happen to me, I want to follow someone, I am a person who looks at them and gets motivated, looks at them and finds love by looking at them.”*

Also, the fans stated that the feeling of belonging to a community makes them feel like family which creates a deep bond and love. P20 explained this situation as follows;

**P20:** *“The idols I follow, my friends who love K-pop like me, all give a feeling of family love.”*

**P21:** *“When it comes to music, 100 percent K-pop for me. I internalize it, so I love it. Twice is a 9-member girl group, they really impress me. A member, Johnyoon, has anxiety. Her determination is to be successful even when she is sick... Itzy is another girl group of 5, since we are close in age, even their conversations impress me. Their characters and music are all very beautiful in their own way, I can't say anything bad about their beauty.”*

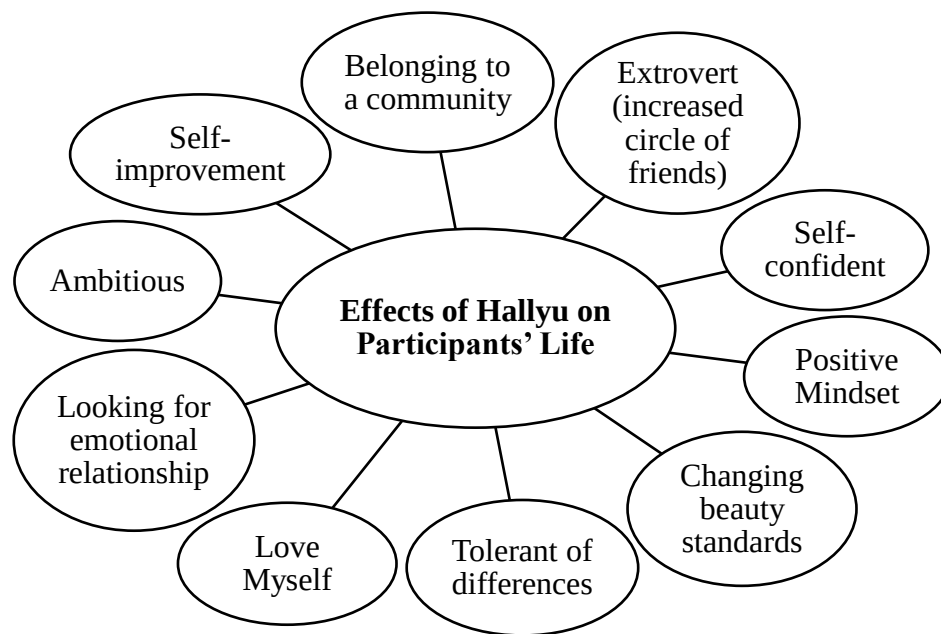
The participants' love and devotion to K-pop groups who they see as family or friends, turned them into advocates against fans whom they called "toxic". P21 stated this situation as follows;

**P21:** *“I even fight with toxic fans. There are those who are very harsh and insulting towards idols. It hurts me when idols see this and get upset. They say ugly, talentless, can never dance well. No, I answer that they are a very good dancer, and they are very beautiful. Those idols change my life with their good conversations, their music... When something is said to those idols, I feel the need to defend them as if they were my friend. I internalized my idols. I get hurt when someone say something bad to them.”*

Also, some of the participants stated that they were verbally attacked and ostracized by their close circles just because they are fans of K-pop boy bands. These participants made extremely defensive statements towards idols. For example;

**P12:** *“I encountered exclusion and verbal attack for being a BTS fan. The boys around me, especially in my class, make fun of me a lot. I think they are jealous because my idols are handsome and successful. I really like my idols’ way of thinking, they usually spread the message of love yourself.”*

**Table 5.** *Effects of Hallyu on Participants’ Life*



When the question of what are the effects of Hallyu on their life asked, as understand from participants’ answers, Hallyu has various effects on their characters and decisions.

**P3:** *“I became more determined. I got into the philosophy that if you want to do something like the Koreans, you have to try harder.”*

**P16:** *“It changed in every way. I met new people through events. Getting to know Korean culture has affected many aspects of me. I became more social. I can express myself better.”*

**P23:** *“I was looking for the Turkish translations of the lyrics of K-pop groups like BTS, Red Velvet since I don't know Korean. Their words made sense, I found myself close.”*

*I wasn't very popular at school, I had few friends. In fact, they were saying that I shouldn't see myself as a loser in songs. I also gained self-confidence after a while, it was pretty low. I couldn't do what I wanted to do before, now the situation has changed. Thanks to K-pop, I made many friends. It gives an opportunity to meet, we start the conversation by saying 'oh so you are listening to K-pop too' and things like that."*

**P12:** *"My mindset has changed in a positive way. So I started to think close to their way of thinking, I don't know. Because they are people I envy, people I love... BTS, other idols..."*

**P4:** *"I gained self-confidence in bilateral relations and got to know myself."*

**P8:** *"I learned a new culture and became more conscious. As I learned about Korean culture, I realized that they are just like us. At first they sounded very strange and different, but they are not."*

**P13:** *"My understanding of aesthetics and beauty has changed. Mine became just like them because I was constantly exposed to it. If it didn't suit me somewhere, I'd leave it out. I like it so it's still going, it suits me."*

#### **4.6. The Impact of Korean Popular Culture on Consumer Behavior**

As it mentioned in the literature review of the study, the Korean wave created its own consumption patterns. Generation Z fans, as active consumers of Korean popular culture products, also stated that their consumption practices has changed after becoming a fan.

##### **4.6.1. Pre-Purchase Behavior**

Table 6 was prepared in line with the answers given about where fans accessed the information before purchasing Hallyu products.

**Table 6.** *Product Information Sources Before Purchasing*

| <b>Recommendations</b>                                    | <b>Internet Research</b>                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Social Media</b>                                                                                                                                          | <b>Consultation</b>                                                                                         | <b>Advertisements</b>                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Friends</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Korea-Turkey price comparison</li><li>• Reading others' comments from e-shopping applications</li><li>• Reading product detailed descriptions on brands' websites</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Korean Influencers</li><li>• Turkish Influencers who live in South Korea</li><li>• Youtube unboxing videos</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Family</li><li>• Turkish Friends</li><li>• Korean Friends</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• K-dramas</li><li>• K-pop idols</li></ul> |

With the increasing influence of the Korean wave, South Korea has increased its exports to Turkey as well as all over the world. In short, the variety of Korean products in the Turkish market has also increased in recent years. Before purchasing these products, fans access information from various channels. Majority of them stated that they reach information from internet and social media which is the most practical way for them. Consumers primarily stated that they saw the products from their friends, influencers on social media, Youtube videos or advertisements frequently made in K-dramas and they tend to make search from the official websites, Instagram accounts, Youtube videos before purchasing.

**P24:** *“There are too many commercials in K-dramas. They advertise every type of product, involuntarily encourage me. I say look at her skin, her make-up is very beautiful, I wonder what she uses, then she takes a lipstick out of her bag, so what lipstick is this? That's when I start researching.”*

**P26:** *“There was a drama in which Lee Min Ho played Eternal Monarch. One of the characters applied a single pink-lidded product on the eye, under the neck, and on the lips... something like brightening cream. It doesn't shine as much as the highlighters we use, but it gives comfort. After watching it, I thought yes, this product is really good, as though they highly recommended it. Even in a very unrelated moment, the product can be shown in K-dramas, so it caught my attention and I wanted to buy it.”*

**P19:** *“I choose to research myself because you know internet era, and I consult my friends too. I've been watching Youtubers and influencers lately. I follow pages that give*

cultural information about Korea on Instagram. Turkish citizens who are living in Korea, I follow them a lot to understand Korean life closely and they share Korean brands they use. When choosing a product in Turkey, I think directly about the ones they share.”

**P4:** “From brands' own websites or social media accounts. Especially on Instagram, I follow Korean influencers like Pony, Irene Kim. There are also many unboxing videos of Korean products on Youtube.”

**P17:** “My friends who study Korean language literature talk about which product is good, which is bad. I consult them often.”

**P1:** “Since I know Korean, I compare the price difference of the product between Korea and Turkey. I search on the internet. If I am torn between two products, I consult my family and friends.”

#### **4.6.1.1. Factors Affecting Consumers' Purchasing Decision**

Participants stated the factors affecting their decision-making process while purchasing products or services as follows;

**P6:** “A big part of my life I would say is Korea. It settled into my life as much as possible. Idols I love are good for me mentally, they make my day better. Eating like them, using chopsticks like them, talking like them, dressing like them, putting on make-up... so I use Korean products very often. I find Korean brands better quality and different. First of all, their designs are stylish and sweet. Even if the prices are expensive, it's worth it because it feels different. Especially if my idol uses it or advertises it, I want to buy it even if I don't need it. He has it, I'm glad I have it too.”

P8 and P11 stated the factors affecting their decision-making process while purchasing K-beauty products as follows;

**P8:** “Koreans are actually obsessed with beauty. Even K-dramas are about it. Being beautiful and handsome means being one step ahead for them. My friends who go to Korea always tell me this. The concepts of beauty are different. They wear extremely beautiful make-up, not heavy Western-style make-up, much lighter. I really like the makeup of idols Somi and Chungha. I research the products they use. The packaging style is definitely already very sweet, they make products that are appealing. Likewise, those people know how to advertise. In Turkey, the product is weirder, the box is simpler, there

*is no product that interests me, I do not look back over and over, but Korean products are not like that. Extremely cute things. For example, I use lenses, even the lens cups are shaped like chicks, bears, and so on. I buy them from a Korean store or online. When buying a product, even the Korean writing on it affects me. I also make sure that it is cruelty free. If it is testing on animals and isn't vegan, I would never buy it even if my favorite celebrity promotes it.”*

**P11:** *“I do not use other than K-beauty products. Product features are more important for me. Since my skin has acne, I tried different products for a long time, but Korean products are really good, I'm very satisfied with Missha products, they have useful ingredients, better quality. The contents... that is, whatever is written, is in it. So it deserves my money. Instead of giving 250 TL to a La Roche Posay, I go and pay 250 TL to a Korean brand. For example, I used to like matte skin, oil-free look more. Right now, an oily, shiny, moist look doesn't bother me at all. I am even happier because my perception of beauty has completely changed. I started to dislike American-style makeup. I prefer Korean-style makeup that makes you look younger. It's like... I look at the ages of the actresses, they are 30-40 years old, but they look 20-25. I saw that make-up and the products they used have a great effect. There's also genetics, but I've also looked at non-Korean people, they also look younger when they put on makeup with these products. It means that people's perceptions of beauty can change. That's why my perception of beauty has changed a lot, so the products I use have also changed.”*

#### **4.6.1.1.1. Country Image Perceptions**

In the absence of any product group, the answers of the participants to the questions about understanding the image of the country are given below;

**P21:** *“They are doing quality things in Korea. The country makes itself loved and gives me trust. Compared to our country, Korean people are more productive and talented... have a high level of education, schools, rules... it makes me think this way, as far as I can see from the K-dramas.”*

It was understood that the image of Korea, which formed the beliefs of the participants, is positive. This has had an impact on consumers' preference for Korean brands and their purchasing intentions. They reported that Korea is strong in terms of economic conditions, education level, cultural structure and human characteristics. The

positive image of Korea in general has led to the belief that Korean-made products are of good quality and has a positive effect on consumers' desire to buy.

#### **4.6.1.1.2. Product Image Perceptions (Made-in-Korea Label)**

The answers given to find out what the Made-in-Korea label products means when purchasing a product to understand the perceptions, can be grouped in 2 themes as quality and trustworthy. The majority of the participants stated that they feel over trust when it comes to Made-in-Korea label. In this respect;

*P4: “If I compare it with the products of other countries in terms of quality, the fact that it is from Korea impresses me. I think that they are progressing and developing much faster than other countries. When you see their rise in the technological field and take an interest in their culture, the fact that they are Korean inevitably puts them ahead of other countries.”*

*P21: “If there is Korea written in a product, I tend to buy it. So, let's consider two products, one made in Korea and the other in another country, I prefer the one made in Korea because I trust a lot.”*

*P22: “Trust. They do the best in everything they do. That's what I think as I get to know idols, actors, producers. I guess that's because I know they're good at technology or most things. Their products are also absolutely reassuring. When I see it I say; ok this is good, I can buy it! Products that say made in Korea can't be bad.”*

It is understood that K-dramas which showed Korea as hardworking, successful and productive, created an positive image in the minds of consumers. Thus, K-dramas have a role in the formation of quality and trustworthiness perceptions of products labeled as Korean made.

#### **4.6.1.1.3. Hallyu Stars (Idols, Celebrities, Influencers)**

Another question of how do the products/brands promoted by their favorite Korean idols, celebrities or influencers affect their consumption and purchasing decision, and what do they think about the use of these stars in marketing communications is asked to the participants.



Fans who follow their favorite idols on digital media reported that they saw the brand promotions instantly, and stated that even if they had not heard of the promoted brand before, they immediately started researching and that the brand attracted attention thanks to the idol.

**P11:** *“I quickly find out about the products that my favorite celebrity is the face of. I easily notice products that I would never know if someone else promoted them. When celebrities promote them, they reach people.”*

**P9:** *“I directly aware of the product because my idol promotes it. Every time I use that product, I think of my favorite idol. No matter what the product is, its value increases for me.”*

The vast majority of fans stated that their tendency to purchase products promoted by idols has increased. The reasons for this situation, as understood from the responses of the participants, are that the use of idols in marketing communication creates a perception of “quality, cool, sympathetic, reliable” about the product in the minds of the consumers.

**P6:** *“Since I follow them frequently, I am instantly informed about their products and collaborations with brands. Wow, if it's promoting by BlackPink, I think that it's a cool brand.”*

**P8:** *“There are cosmetic brands that Red Velvet is the face of. Whether it's hair dye or lipstick. I can't find every product in Turkey, but if I find some, I say, for example, Joe was using it, and I feel sympathy for the product. Sometimes I even buy it just because Joe uses it.”*

**P3:** *“It is something he uses... at least he claims it. Well... I'll use it too. There's a skincare brand called Nature Republic, which is the face of Jeeyun in the NCT group that I'm a fan of, and I'm going to pick it up as well. Of course, an inevitable interest is forming.”*

**P7:** *“Since you know how your idol behaves and his interest, I think that if he is the face of that brand, he must know something or it is a reliable brand, and it makes me want to purchase. I always look at products that are the faces of groups such as BTS and EXO for example, to see how I can buy them.”*

According to P20, buying products which are promoted by idols, create a bond between idols and fans:

**P20:** *“Korean idols appear in phone commercials, lens commercials, makeup promotions. I want to buy too, I mean, as if it will create a bond between us... They have it so I can have it too.”*

The brand loyalty of the fans is quite low. They can easily trust and shop for brands promoted by idols. In addition, they tend to equate idols with the brands/products, namely their thoughts about idols were transferred directly to the brands/ products.

**P26:** *“I went to Deichmann to buy shoes, there were many different brands and different options. Thinking that the product introduced by such a group is of definite quality, I chose Fila directly. It just connoted from there, I had never used a Fila product before, it had never caught my attention... After seeing BTS' commercial, I went and bought Fila.”*

According to the participants, owning these products is seen as a way to support the celebrity, show their love to the celebrity and show off.

**P12:** *“I bought the Samsung BTS Edition phone because BTS is promoting phones, you know, the purple one. It's like the symbol of BTS. I showed off in class (laughs).”*

**P16:** *“Is it right to say it's a show of affection... after all, I use the product used by someone I love. I prefer that product.”*

**P19:** *“It is important for me that the celebrity I love use it. For example, the Samsung advertisement is very good promotional films, I write in my head that I will buy it later, even if not immediately. For example, the Korean brand is just coming to Turkey, BTS plays in their advertisements, I say I should buy Fila, not Adidas. When those people wear it I also want to wear it. When I wear it I become happy and BTS will gain, it's a plus for everybody.”*

While some participants act with the motive of being like idols, some see these brands as a bond of love and support between fans and idols. Korean idols are the faces of many local and global brands from all segments. The process by which the purchasing intentions of the fans, which change depending on their income, can not turn into actions, when the topic is luxury goods, P23 and P21 referred this situation follows;

**P23:** *“Their prices are expensive, and I can't buy luxury products with a student budget anyway. But of course I want to buy it.”*

**P21:** *“The face of Chanel is Jennie from Blackpink, I also like Chanel, I used to buy original perfumes but my purchasing power has decreased due to the prices today, therefore, I can't afford it. Also, no lie though, I bought an imitation bag just because Jennie had it too. The real one is very expensive.”*

P14 stated that, she will choose the product that the idol promotes, regardless of price:

**P14:** *“For example, Got7 is a band that I like. If my cream is finished, I prefer the cream brand that Got7 promotes. Rather than buying a regular cream, I prefer Got7, even if the price is more expensive.”*

#### **4.6.2. Purchase Behavior**

The personalities and income levels of the participants make a difference in the way they shop. However, it was observed that all participants shopped for Korean popular culture products in Turkey and their Korean brand awareness is high. However, most of the participants stated that their shopping is affected by the fluctuations in the exchange rate.

**P3:** *“There is Missha in Ankara, I go directly to the Korean store and buy it there. Stores and e-shopping sites... There are Korean cosmetic brands such as COSRX, Dr. Jart, Dear Klairs, and Laneige that I use. Also, Tony Moly's masks are very good. I buy some from stores such as Gratis, Watsons, but I usually order from Trendyol. My cousin is a BTS fan, he also went to their concerts. I bought him an album, I bought a lightstick from the internet. Koreaworld.com. I'm also a fan of NCT group. I really like NCT's Jeehyun. The name of the company Jeehyun works for is SM. Every year, SM releases certain products for their artists, for example, it can be a key chain one year, a bracelet one year, and a necklace the next year. It has a name on it, it's a birthstone or something. I also bought this year's bracelet. When you buy it from the company's website, it is shipping to Turkey.”*

**P4:** *“There are many brands that I cannot find in Turkey, I have them brought to Turkey using my contacts in Korea. Sometimes Korea has its own international shipping*

websites like gmarket. Although it is difficult to bring products due to the pandemic, I used to prefer it before. Due to the pandemic, it has become difficult to reach Korean products in Turkey. In Istanbul, there are places such as smart markets where Korean people sell them, where you can find food products. In addition, there are stores that sell K-pop products on social media, these stores produce and sell many products in Turkey, they do not supply directly from Korea, but you cannot find every product in Turkey. Since I can't find it, I have it brought directly from Korea. There are small roughnesses in food products from time to time, some foods are forbidden to enter Turkey, there is a problem at the customs.”

#### 4.6.2.1. Shopping Place and Experiences

**Table 7.** Shopping Places of Korean Popular Cultures

| Channels Where Korean Popular Culture Products are Purchased |                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Social Media</b>                                          | Instagram, Netflix                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Stores</b>                                                | Missha, Watsons, Gratis, Rossmann, Yoyoso, Miniso                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Online shopping</b>                                       | Trendyol, Asya Gurme, Kore Dünyası, Official Web Pages of Korean Entertainment Companies, Gmarket, Smartmarket, Hepsiburada, Korendy, Kokoma, JustinBeauty, Amazon |
| <b>Korean Cultural Centers</b>                               | Face-to-face events and festivals                                                                                                                                  |

**P11:** “Korean restaurants in Istanbul sell packaged tteokbokki and rice cakes. I order online, I buy it like that and I make it at home by adding water or something. I started eating a lot of ramen after watching Korean dramas. By making various sauces. It can be a bit expensive in terms of price, especially Korean paste Gochucang, soy sauce and so on are expensive due to exchange rate. I sometimes go to the restaurant or make it at home.”

**P24:** “I can't be sure of the authenticity of the products when it comes to shopping on social media, so I don't prefer it. I prefer to buy Korean products from Trendyol and Missha in Turkey. For example Skinfood, The Face Shop, Mishha these are good brands with stores in Korea. In the same way, you can find Missha Store on Trendyol and in

*Ankara Tunalı Hilmi Street. Korean products came to Gratis and Watsons here, but the prices are 1 unit in Korea, 30 units here. They don't deserve this price."*

**P15:** *"I buy online and in-store. For example, I order from Trendyol, I buy from Gratis or Watsons stores. Last time, I tried to make Korean food like a Korean omelet, Miyeok-guk seaweed soup at home(laughs) and I ordered chopsticks and seaweed from Amazon."*

**P16:** *"Since there are no sales in Turkey, I shop from social media accounts, especially from Instagram, thanks to intermediaries. For example, I recently bought an ARMY BOMB lightstick. I prefer to go to restaurants for food, but I shop for cosmetics from e-shopping sites and social media. I buy skin care products at Watsons, but I can't find the brands I want. We can't find the originals in Turkey, there are always fake ones, I prefer to order the originals from Korea."*

**P19:** *"I find websites in more detail, they write more about their contents and how to use them. In fact, on some websites, they send the tester of the product, then if you are satisfied, you buy it."*

**P20:** *"I buy popular culture products on Instagram and social media such as Korendy, Justinbeauty. They ship home. By the way, there is a Korean restaurant that I found on Instagram and went to. I go as I miss Korean food. But if it's near my house, I can go and get it right away like Missha."*

**P21:** *"I prefer online shopping sites, especially for Korean cosmetics shopping. There is a cosmetic brand I love, Missha. I can find it in Turkey. In addition to this, I use beauty products from brands like Laneige and Nature Republic. I order these from Trendyol."*

Fans can be divided into three those who prefer online shopping and those who prefer in-store experience and those who prefer both. P17 explained the reason for not preferring online shopping as follows:

**P17:** *"The reason why I don't trust online shopping is because I see and hear that many people are defrauded or fake products are sold, so I prefer to go to the store and buy it myself. I also want to see the environment, I am happier in the environment,*

*different things, brands... I do not trust online shopping, so I prefer to buy from the stores like Gratis and Watsons."*

Some consumers, on the other hand, want to order products from Korea that they cannot find in Turkey, however, they hesitate as they are unsure of reliability and delivery. P22 stated this situation as follows;

**P22:** *"It is a little difficult to find Korean-made products in Turkey. I cannot find every product I want, there is no supplier. If I could find it in Turkey, I would buy a lightstick as a souvenir. I am afraid that the product will be damaged at the customs. Buying from abroad scares me, I can't trust it, I might be scammed."*

#### **4.6.2.2. Consumers' Spending**

When the participants were asked how much of their income or pocket money they spent on Korean popular culture products, their calculations made them aware of the fact that they spent too much on these products. Participants do not stick to a single product, but generally spend on all Korean popular products such as technological, cosmetics, food, fashion, K-pop items. Consumers, who find these products expensive due to the depreciation of the Turkish lira over the dollar rate and the high customs tax, stated that they still cannot give up buying Korean products.

**P1:** *"Almost all of them (laughs). 40% of my pocket money in Turkey goes to Korean products. I spend a lot on cosmetics. As TL depreciates, my spending increases, of course. Even cosmetic products alone exceed 400 TL per month."*

**P4:** *"My monthly income is around 6,000 TL. I spend 2,000 TL of this on Korean popular culture products, including K-pop, cosmetics and more Korean food. I watch K-dramas on Netflix. I spend a lot of money because I shop in dollars."*

It has been understood that the expenditures made for K-beauty products, which they reach through online channels, especially in Turkey, are quite high. Although original K-pop products are sold in Turkey, the participants preferred to order from Korea due to insecurity and high prices.

**P16:** *"I bought a few clothing items, but the prices change according to the exchange rate. No matter what I buy, nothing comes below 300 TL. Customs tax, international-domestic cargo... Even if the product is 50, it costs 200-300 TL until I*

*receive it. Other than this... I went to the basic language course of the Korean cultural center, I gave him 110 TL on a monthly basis, each course lasted 4 months. The books were around \$80. It was a reasonable price compared to foreign language books. There is a lightstick that fans of K-Pop bands wave in their hands at concerts. I'm a BTS fan too, I bought their ARMY Bomb lightstick. I paid by debit card. It came in 2 weeks. It cost me 700 TL all inclusive. I wish it was cheaper, but the rate is constantly increasing, I still find it appropriate, despite the customs tax, cargo, exchange rate, I find it appropriate."*

Similar to P16, consumers who find other Hallyu products expensive stated that they find Korean courses and activities of Korean cultural centers appropriate.

**P3:** *"The activities of the Korean cultural center are mostly free, but they can also be paid, for example, yesterday I paid 50 TL."*

**P10:** *"I went to Adana Korean cultural association to learn a language. It has a very affordable fee of 170 TL per month."*

Some of the generation Z consumers who do not have their own income stated that they bought Hallyu products by saving the pocket money they received from their families.

**P23:** *"I save the remaining part of the allowance I get from my family, I go and buy K-pop magazines, actually I should buy test books, but..."*

**P7:** *"When I save money or my family supports me, I buy clothes online. The prices are expensive, of course, a piece at least 200 TL. Most of my allowance goes towards Korean products."*

#### **4.6.3. Post-Purchase Behavior**

When the question of what are fans' behavior after purchasing Korean popular culture products was asked, almost all of the participants stated that they were generally satisfied with the products they bought or used.

**P10:** *"I have never bought a Korean product that I disliked."*

**P19:** *"I've always been satisfied with the Korean products I bought."*

While the participants stated that the biggest reason for satisfaction in their shopping was the price-performance balance, some said that these factors were gifts, the interest of the sellers, packaging, fast shipping.

**P17:** *"The packaging of my last purchase was really nice, it was wrapped securely. A small gift was placed inside. Sellers were very interested, they responded to my every message, the product arrived in a short time, I was satisfied with these aspects."*

Only P7 and P17 expressed dissatisfaction as follows;

**P7:** *"Rarely have I been dissatisfied with and I gave them a bad rating in the scoring system. Other than that, I was okay with most of it."*

**P17:** *"If I'm not satisfied, I think it's my fault, after all, I made that choice. Product information is written on everything."*

While both consumers stated that there were products that they were not satisfied with, although rare, P17 saw the reason for her dissatisfaction as her own fault. P7, on the other hand, shared dissatisfaction with other consumers by declaring that she gave low scores on online platforms. In general, participants tend to share their evaluations of products online. Their purpose in making these reviews is to enlighten other consumers. In addition, they stated that product scoring and interpretation is a fun and practical method.

**P7:** *"I share my review about the product to inform other people as well. Also, I usually give five stars if I'm satisfied. I find it fun to rate the products."*

**P1:** *"I always leave a review. I write in detail why I am satisfied or not. To raise awareness for others."*

#### **4.6.3.1. Consumers' Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction**

Consumers who stated that they were generally satisfied with Korean popular culture products, took actions after being satisfied such as recommending to others, commenting on the product, rating the product, and re-purchasing.

It has been understood that the Z generation fans share their likes and opinions especially with their friends and other Korean fans, and they insist that their friends should buy the products they are satisfied with.



**P8:** *“When I am satisfied, I buy more and to my friends ‘hey look this is really good’... even my friends get tired of me.”*

**P5:** *“If we are satisfied, we share it with friends. we have a Korean group on Whatsapp. For example, last time I bought Korean coffee instant ones called Maxxim, from Trendyol. I liked it very much and I recommended it to my friends there.”*

**P10:** *“I bought the same product over and over again because I was satisfied. When I am satisfied, I recommend them to my friends and even force them buy. At first, I was using a little bit, be it food or make-up products. Since I was satisfied, I started to buy more later.”*

**P11:** *“I buy again only if I am satisfied. My friends also ask what I use, I recommend it to them. I always tell them to buy and make Korean skincare. It is a two-stage cleaning, toning, moisturizing, essence... It has such a stage. Especially about using sunscreen, I tell everyone to use Korean brands.”*

Consumers who are satisfied with a product after purchasing stated that, their trust in the brand has increased and they tend to buy different products of the same brand with peace of mind.

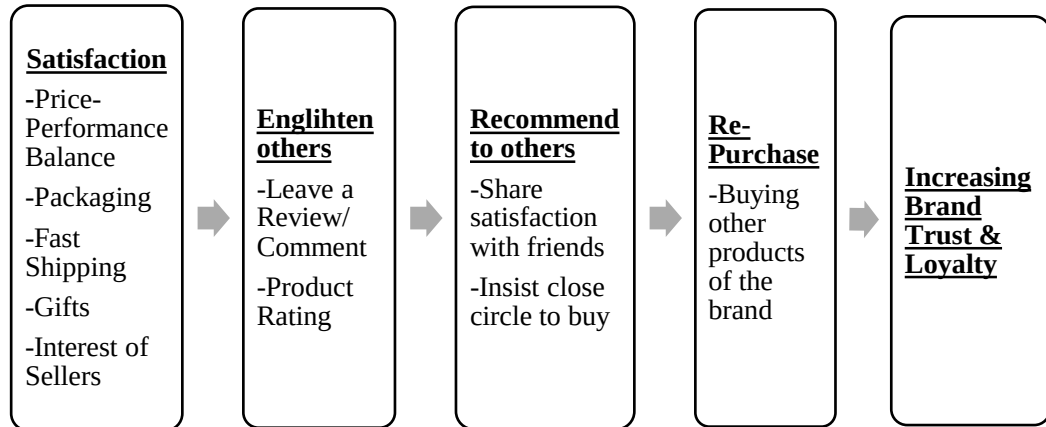
**P13:** *“When I am satisfied with a product, I approach other products of the brand as well. Shall I try this too?..”*

**P9:** *“When there are products that I like, I give other products of the same brand a chance. I used this, this time I want to use this, I already know that this brand is good.”*

**P16:** *“As you are satisfied with each purchase, the level of trust in Korean brands increases. I was hesitant when I first bought it, but once I was satisfied, more came.”*

According to answers of the participants table 8 was formed below.

**Table 8.** Post-Purchase Behavior of Hallyu Fans in Turkey



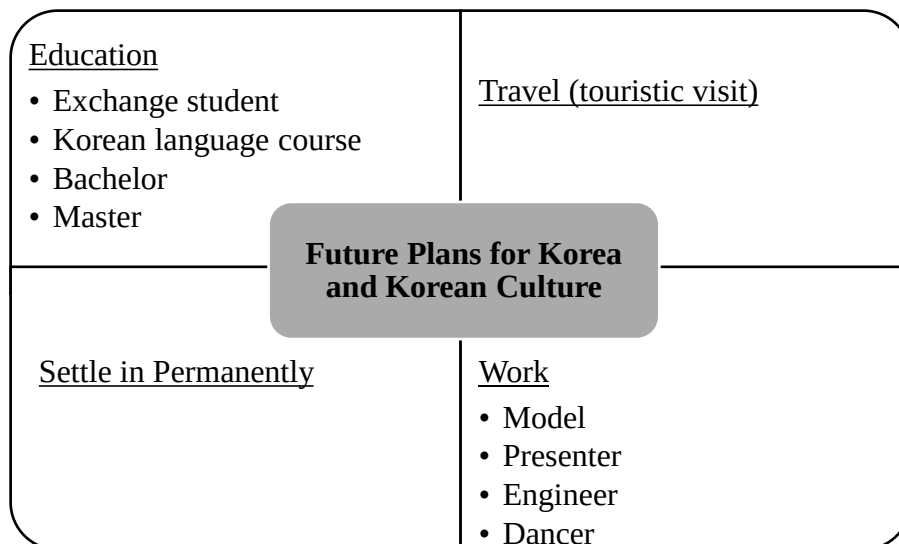
#### 4.7. Future Plans about Korea and Korean Culture

Participants excitedly talked about their Korea and Korean culture oriented future plans and dreams. Also, they were highly eager to make their dreams come true when the topic is Korea. For example P4 stated as follows;

**P4:** “Let's not call it a dream, let it not be just a dream!”

All participants stated that they definitely want to visit Korea in the future. According to their purpose of visit they can divided into 4 as can be seen in Table 9.

**Table 9.** Korea and Korean Culture Oriented Future Plans



The majority of the participants have never been to Korea before. They expressed their wishes and plans as follows:

**P7:** *"I want to live in Korea. Going to concerts there, visiting their stores... I think I can do something with the concept of dance there. I don't plan on staying here too long."*

**P10:** *"After graduation, I want to go to a language course for 3 to 6 months. After finding a job, working there, living there. My boyfriend is also Korean so I look at it as a future plan. It is a country that I would like to live in in the future, its welfare level is high, it is safe, you receive a recompense for your work, and the entertainment industry is developed."*

It was interesting that, some of them also expressed their wishes about settling in Korea permanently even add not turning back to their country. Also, participants tend to compare their own country with Korea mainly focusing on living standards. Majority of the participants stated that they found South Korea as a highly prosperous, technologically advanced and safe country which makes it a perfect country to study, work, and live.

**P11:** *"I'm going to Korea, so I don't plan to come back. Living there is not a bad idea. Living standards are economically more comfortable compared to Turkey."*

**P9:** *"It is more technologically advanced there and its economy is better than ours. It may be difficult to find a job, but at least I can be remunerated for my work."*

As it is understood from the participant responses, the reason behind Korea related plans and dreams coming from the effects of K-dramas and K-pop. Just like in K-dramas, an image of "a perfect country" created in the minds and fans who follow the lives of K-pop idols dream of "being like idols" overtime.

**P8:** *"I really want to go to Korea. I am currently studying French language, I want to study Korean language literature as a second university there. It feels like I'm going to experience the things we see in those K-drama scenes, natural beauties, historical buildings, food..."*

**P7:** *"I envy idols so much, I wish I could be as talented as them and rise in this field. I dream a lot in this sense."*

Also, in order to reach their goals, some participants stated that they research Korean education system, universities, dormitories and scholarships of Korea. In this direction, P3 who will go to Korea soon due to bachelor degree expressed her attempt as follows:

**P3:** *“I want to be a translator in the future. I want to be a presenter in SM Entertainment or a model in Korea. My future plans are purely for Korea. In January, I will go to Sungkyunwan University to study English language literature. I will attend an interview to win a Samsung scholarship these times. There are two types of scholarships, one covering your 4 years of education and the other providing both your 4 years of education and accommodation expenses and pocket money up to 500,000 Won. Education in South Korea is unfortunately paid, I mean private universities.”*

Two of the participants, P1 and P13, are currently staying and getting education in South Korea. Similar with the ones who have never been in Korea, they focused on positive aspects such as high quality of life, living standards and winnings in Korea which causes them to continue their education and work life in Korea:

**P13:** *“I’ve been in Korea for 5 months now. I am currently studying for a bachelor’s degree in Korea. I want to stay here for my master’s degree. I like the quality of life. I think it is better than Turkey. Korea is very safe at night, on the street at midnight, a woman can walk as she wants, dress as she wants, nothing will happen to her. In this sense, it is a very good situation. I want to live here cuz engineer salaries are also sufficient.”*

In addition to all this, P20 who had been in Korea before as an exchange student stated that she finds Koreans just like the Turkish people in terms of hospitality and thanks to her keeping up with the life in Korea abilities, she wants to continue her education life in Korea.

**P20:** *“I was in Korea as an exchange student for 4 months, in the capital city, Seoul. They were very hospitable towards me. I like their service culture, they are respectful and they follow the rules. Of course, there are people who are closed to strangers, who don’t like, and who behave prejudicedly. Both my country and Korea have positive and negative aspects. I think I’ve adapted to Korea. I’m thinking of coming back to Korea for master’s degree in the department of teaching Korean as a foreign language.”*

#### 4.8. Thoughts about Anti-Hallyu Reflections

When the participants were asked about their thoughts on Hallyu news they face in the Turkish press, they evaluated this news in two frameworks as negative and positive. Topics like success of Korea-Turkey co-productions, success of BTS in terms of music and marketing, success of Hallyu products, Hallyu is a good example for teenagers are considered as positive news by participants.

**P6:** *“I came across some positive news like it affects young people in a good way, the awards BTS won, their achievements, the records they broke... There were news on TGRT that BTS members applied lip balm and its sales exploded (laughs).”*

Fans closely follow the news published in the press and social media. However, all of them agree that mostly negative news was made in the written and visual media, especially in Turkish television channels and newspapers.

**P16:** *“There is some positive news as well, a speaker on tv channel summed it up very well. She said young people like them very much, they are talented and so on. However, there is more negative news, and the criticisms are exaggerated.”*

On the other hand, topics like girlish boys, sexlessness, bad example for children and youth, against the Turkish family structure, virus were described as negative news by the fans.

**P2:** *“I see false news being made. Especially in some channels, people come out and say K-pop groups spread genderlessness, they set a bad example for children, children are running away from home.”*

**P1:** *“I came across negative news. K-pop drives men to be like girls, they distort the perception of girls, it's like a virus or something.”*

The voice tones and facial expressions of the participants while answering the question showed that they were extremely uncomfortable with the criticisms. Fans who describe themselves as Korea-lovers, Korecanlar, Crazy-fans have almost turned into K-defenders and they expressed their anger and thoughts about negative news harshly under the categories like; unfounded, racist, exaggerated, absurd, disparaging, and prejudicial.

**P22:** *“These type of news are super exaggerated! Basically, our cultures are different, they don't understand this difference, they are racist.”*

**P9:** *“Of course, not everyone has to like it, but they use disparaging words. Third gender or something without an idea, without research! There should be no prejudice.”*

The focus of anti-Hallyu news which tries to keep children and youth away from the Korean wave, while creating fear and panic in families, is happening through criticism of K-pop, moreover, male K-pop groups' appearances and sexual identities. In addition, fans agree that the main reason behind making this negative news is to get ratings by attracting the attention of the large fanbase.

**P23:** *“I think channels are making such unfounded news to increase the number of views for attention.”*

**P17:** *“They don't try to understand young people. They're doing it for the spotlight.”*

When asked about the impact of this negative news on fans' lives, P7 openly stated that she was mocked and ostracized by her close circle.

**P7:** *“As Korea lovers, we are ostracized and made fun of because of this news in Turkey. What kind of music do you listen to, do you listen to people like women? I am very disturbed by this news. This has no reality. K-pop boy groups are called gender-neutral. This news wrongly affects families and the environment. In the song, they say love yourself, you are special, your skin race, gender does not matter. However, some people say that it is not clear whether they are men or women!”*

Also, P15 stated that her mother questioned her by reason of this negative news:

**P15:** *“I and my friends are followers who love Korean culture. Because of this news, my mother said to me one day, why are you watching genderless people, boys look like girls. However, I had been watching for years, and she wouldn't have said anything like this before, she would just say ok, that's it. I told my mom don't mind the news, they're exaggerating.”*

#### **4.9. Thoughts about Hallyu's Future**

When their thoughts on the future of the Korean wave asked, all the participants stated that this wave will gradually increase in Turkey and in the world.

**P26:** *“The Korean wave is not going to end, it will even get stronger.”*

**P24:** *“I think it will continue for many years because the love and interest of people is excessive.”*

Expressing that the wave will continue, fans also expressed their opinions about various reasons behind this situation. The first reason is that the age range of those affected by the Korean wave has decreased considerably. One of the participants, P26, stated that she personally observed this situation in her close environment.

**P26:** *“I am 24 years old, I have 8 year old cousins and we live in the same building. I get on very well with them. Despite the generation gap, we have a common feature BlackPink. We talk every time we meet, they showed me the edits they make. At that age, they use social media, and edit reels videos that I couldn't make. They open BlackPink MVs and dance. For this reason, I think Hallyu will continue for many years, as I have observed that the next generations are also interested.”*

As can be understood from here, it can be predicted that the Korean wave will have an impact on the Alpha generation as well as the Z generation. Some participants, on the other hand, stated that this wave affected not only the youth but also previous generations:

**P7:** *“I see that they appeal to all kinds of people from my environment and social media. It's not just for young people.”*

**P25:** *“I saw a 40-50 year old uncle, he was even learning Korean. He said that it is an advantage being close to Korea because they appear everywhere now. This situation comprise not just young girls and adolescents. Both in Turkey and in the world, everyone has started to follow it now.”*

According to fans, the continuity of the wave will be ensured because of the constant production of Korean companies by releasing new K-pop groups and new productions.

**P19:** *“I started at the age of 13, now I am 21 years old. It doesn't end as long as they give new things to people.”*

**P2:** *I'm sure this rate will increase and spread even more in the future. Because Korean entertainment companies try to release more than 60 new groups every year, they come up with new projects. If their projects are not liked in a country, they immediately bring a new one.*”

**P8:** *“I think it will continue exponentially in the future because number of K-pop groups are increasing day by day.”*

**P25:** *“The series that are coming out are on the agenda. I don't think it will end.”*

These practices will no doubt bring success to Hallyu in reaching new consumers. Because this wave, which has frequently occupied the agenda and trends with its successful works in recent years, has turned people, who were not aware of the wave before or who were not interested in Hallyu products, into Hallyu consumers. In this direction, the success of the recently popular K-drama Squid Game, especially in reaching male consumers, was evaluated by P26 and P17:

**P26:** *“My brother had no interest in this matter before, he used to make fun of me back then. But, now he is sharing the scenes he watch from Squid Game online. I was shocked when I saw it, I mean how is this possible...”*

**P17:** *“Especially men have started to follow by the explosion of Squid Game. This appreciation will increase in the future.”*

Another reason reflected by the participants is that Korean celebrities have started to be more active in the American market, they make collaborations with international artists, they use a lot more English in lyrics, they appear in American productions. All these practices help them to become global and reach new fan bases.

**P8:** *“As far as I know, a K-drama actor has signed contract with Marvel. Jackson Wang has involved in the production of the Marvel soundtrack. These are not small things. They are opening up to the world. I think Hallyu has great potential.”*

Especially ARMY emphasized that BTS has led to K-pop and other industries with their worldwide success, and that even K-pop rise to the occasion by surpassing American pop and it become unstoppable and unrivaled.



**P21:** *“It will be very high. It's just out of Korean now. They also do English singles. They are going on a world tour. They perform duets with world famous singers. I don't want this success to diminish. Because now it has even surpassed the American pop.”*

**P22:** *“It will grow. BTS paved the way. Other groups and other sectors are also well affected by this. I think they've become unstoppable. It's like they don't have any competitors at the point where they are now.”*

Majority of the participants who shared their thoughts on Hallyu's future focused on K-pop and K-drama. A few respondents reported her predictions that there will be an increase in Korean brands in Turkey and that more Korean restaurants will open.

**P8:** *“I think in the future there will be more Korean brands, more diverse products. Especially young people's spending on K-pop may increase much more. A Korean restaurant can be opened in every city, for example, there is no one in Adana at the moment, but there is a great demand for it to be opened.”*

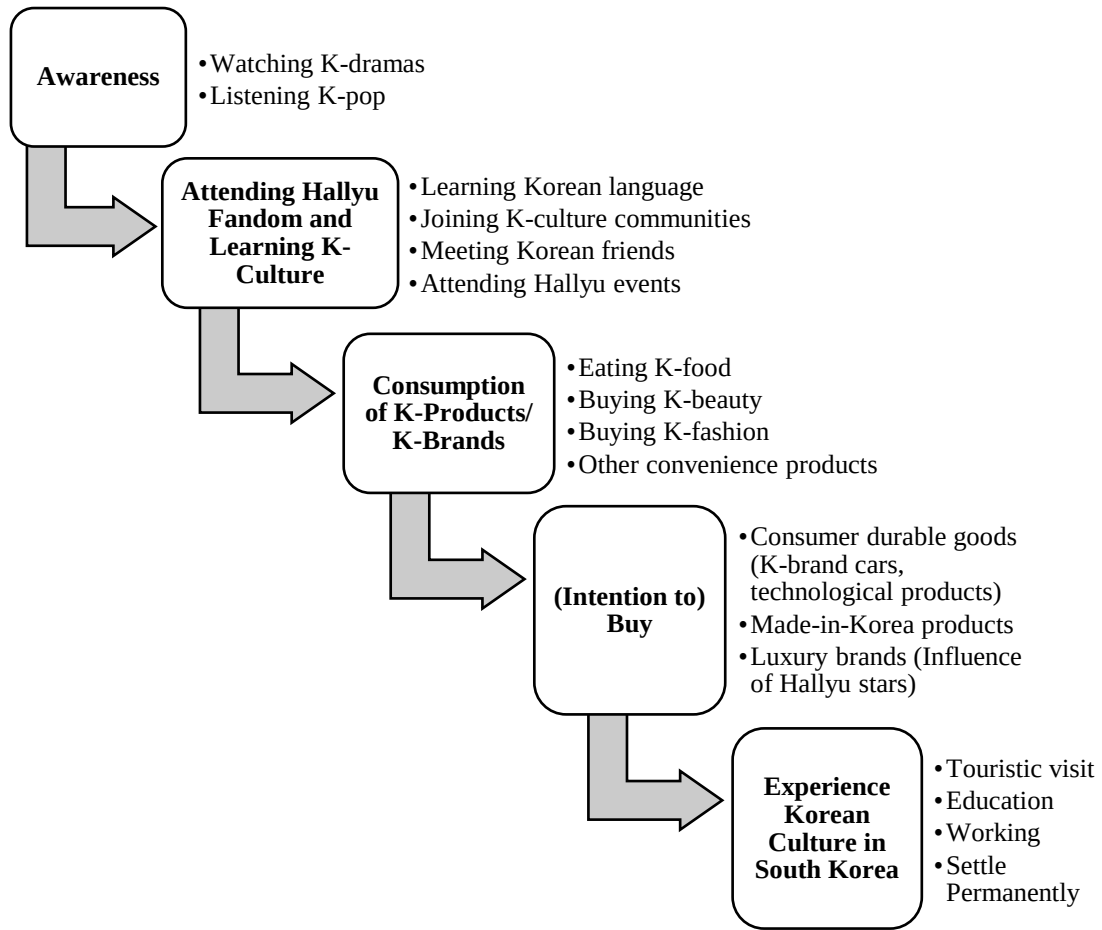
## **5. CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **5.1. Conclusion**

This study has shown that the Korean Wave has several impacts on consumer behavior of generation Z fans in Turkey. It has been revealed that the reflections of the Korean Wave in Turkey and the change it created in the consumer behavior of the young generation are significant that, Turkish fans spend superabundant time, money, and energy on Hallyu products.

Generation Z consumers in Turkey first recognized the Korean Wave with K-drama and K-pop, and these popular culture products created a positive image of Korea in the minds of consumers. Under the influence of factors such as curiosity and cultural affinity, consumers who turned to other popular culture products have turned into active K-brand consumers over time. As evident from the findings, the main reason for the increasing interest in other Hallyu products is the “addictive and stimulating” contents of K-pop and K-dramas. Hallyu products have changed their perspectives on life and lifestyles, and accordingly, what is bought and consumed has also changed. Turkish fans who follow and support every aspect of Korea have finally gotten into the idea of settling permanently in Korea. This cycle is shown in Table 10.

**Table 10.** *The Spreading Process of the Korean Wave Among Turkish Fans*



In general, the Korean Wave ensures that the perceptions and attitudes of the participants towards Korean products are positive. It has been understood that the Korean Wave has various impacts on pre-purchase, purchasing and post-purchase behavior of fans. Their consumption practices are shaped respectively as; "imitate Koreans", "be like Koreans". Rather than utilitarian expectations, hedonic expectations are in the foreground for fans in popular culture products. The hedonic expectations in the consumption of K-pop and K-drama products are similar. Fans have turned to these products to relax, escape from problems and get rid of stress. These products affect consumers emotionally with the given messages, cause them to dream, and by creating a positive image towards Korea. In consumption of K-brands, fans display both utilitarian and hedonic behavior. Fans who are satisfied with Hallyu products shopping convey their experiences and opinions to other consumers and their close circles by making positive word-of-mouth communication.

The Korean brand awareness of the participants is quite high. Participants who research everything about Korea, demand to reach many Korean brands that they cannot find in Turkish market. In addition, they prefer online shopping as a more practical method. However, they are wary of the fact that the products they order from Korea are caught in customs and the tax rate is high. For some, the store experience is different. They describe stores where Korean products are sold as a lively, colorful and fun world. These consumers want to see the products with their own eyes and describe the situation created by the store atmosphere as coming to the place where they belong.

For consumers, K-brand products are not only limited to their overall value, but also provide psychological value. Consumers enter the cycle of re-purchasing or re-consumption due to the sensations of the products. Consumption is repeated at regular intervals in order to bond with and support their favorite idols and celebrities, and to feel like Korean.

Buying her favorite idol's album has great and deep meanings for Hallyu fans, once the consumer tastes that pleasure, she wants to experience the same feelings again. In this respect, it can be said that all Korean popular culture products create a positive emotional feeling in consumers.

Consumers can be divided into 2 groups when it comes to purchasing K-beauty products. Those who prefer Korean brands in Turkey and those who prefer Korean brands that are not in Turkey. In the first group, their motivation to be a customer is high. Consumers always buy Korean cosmetics from the same place; they prefer Korean brands sold in stores such as Missha or online shopping from Trendyol. This situation originates from factors such as high variety of products, reasonable prices and easy accessibility. However, for the second group K-beauty brands that are sold in Turkey are not as qualified as the ones sold in Korea. Therefore, they tend to buy or order from South Korea.

The findings of this study suggested that fans possess a higher motivation to purchase Korean products if the products provide consistent quality and reasonable price. Furthermore, the fans can easily access knowledge about any type of product from the internet, from their Korean friends, and from their Turkish friends who are living in South Korea. They are highly motivated to look for information related to Korean products; thence the fans' intention to buy Korean products is possibly increased.

Among the factors that determine the purchasing decisions of the fans, the representation of Hallyu stars, accessibility, price-performance balance, quality, made-in Korea label are at the forefront, while some stated that even the Korean writings (Hangul style) on the products encourage them to buy. Fans' perceptions of Korea and Korean products are consist of quality and trustworthy. Buying Hallyu products is a way of expressing their love, showing support to idols, showing off, showing a symbol of belonging to the community.

As evident from the findings, fans are one of the key factors behind the success of Hallyu. They actively attend and take charge in Hallyu events voluntary. Against the anti-Hallyu discourses in Turkey, Hallyu fans have become “K-defenders”, claiming that they are seriously disturbed by this situation and that the criticisms are unnecessary and unconscious. According to them, Korean popular culture and its products are an element that does not harm anyone, moreover, it is an element that they have fun in their own way, that supports their personal development and makes them happy. It doesn't matter to them whether the anti-Hallyu increases or decreases in the future. On the contrary, the fans think that anti-Hallyu will not harm sales and image of Hallyu, as their number is increasing.

It is clearly seen that the fans are not just active consumers but also prosumers who actively produce Hallyu content from their social media accounts, prepare birthday events for their favorite idols, organize fundraisers, support idols by streaming music videos, voting for them to win awards. Moreover, based on the findings, it is estimated that the status of being a fansumer will become more evident among Hallyu fans in the future. In addition to all this, fans' overly defensive attitude towards the anti-Hallyu discourse shows that perhaps the biggest success behind Hallyu is the fans.

Finally, in line with the importance of nation branding, with the success of Hallyu, South Korea can set an example for Turkey and other countries that want to become a brand and gain economic, political, cultural opportunities.

## **5.2. Discussion**

The results of this study showed that, the spread process of the Korean wave among Turkish fans is similar to the “predicted flow of the Korean Wave” in Jung-bong Choi's article “Hallyu versus Hallyu-hwa: Cultural Phenomenon versus Institutional Campaign”

(2015). However, today, Turkish Korean fans have stated that they have plans to go beyond working in Korea and even settling permanently in Korea. This is an indication that Hallyu's influence is gradually increasing and that it has a huge impact on young people's entire lives as well as consumption lives.

As another result of this study; South Korea's cultural industry products and nation branding strategy have created a positive image in the eyes of Turkish youth and increased the consumption of K-products. While the demands of female consumers for K-drama and K-pop continue unabated, the intense demand for K-beauty and K-food products in recent years has attracted attention. This situation is in line with the conclusion stated in Jung Suk Yoo's article titled “Kore Savaşı (Kan Kardeşi), Kore Dizisi ve K-beauty (Kore Kozmetiği) Merkezinde Türkiye’de Kore Akımının Günümüzdeki Durumu ve Geleceği” (2019), that K-beauty will increase its popularity and consumption power and it will gain a high momentum in Turkey.

In this study, it was concluded that female consumers do not prefer playing games much. Only one of them stated that she plays BTS World which is a mobile video game released by Netmarble to learn more about BTS members. This situation supports to Lucas and Sherry’s research results in “Sex Differences in Video Game Play: A Communication-Based Explanation” (2004). According to them, males tend to play more games than females. Also, gender affects the game preferences, male players generally prefer intense competition, while females prefer intriguing games.

This study results vary with Yalçın and Mutlu’s research article “Evaluation of Hallyu Fanship Among Youngsters in Turkey” (2020), the results show that if fans’ family income rises, their wish to be connected excitedly to K-Pop, to identify themselves with K-pop and become friends with other fans rise. However, in this research it turns out that; regardless of income status, fans identify themselves with all types of Hallyu products and even Hallyu stars, and their emotional commitment is quite high. They are also very active in making fan-friends and communicating with other fans, especially in school settings or online. Income levels only make a difference when purchasing some of the Hallyu products and participating in events.

### **5.3. Suggestions**

Within the framework of the results obtained, this research has revealed the impacts of the Korean Wave on Generation Z and explored attitudes, perceptions, and behavior of Turkish consumers related to the Korean popular culture phenomenon and K-Wave-related products. Also, to have a wide view of the expenditure of consumers on Korean cultural products, an inclusive study was performed. It could be a roadmap for brands and throw light on future researches in the literature.

### **5.3.1. Suggestions for the Industry**

Understanding the personality traits, wants and needs, issues they care about, their understanding of products and services, their consumption habits and behavior of this generation, who are one of the most important parts of the consumer society, companies will provide a competitive advantage in terms of gaining new customers and creating brand loyalty. Thus, companies should reach generation Z correctly.

- Especially for Korean companies/brands in the cosmetics and food sector, it can be recommended to enter the Turkish market which has great potential and to increase their activities there. Also, Turkish brands can cooperate with Korean brands to offer products that will meet the interests of Generation Z for the Korean Wave. The idea that the two countries are brother countries is quite common. In this respect, it is thought that Turkish-Korean cooperation products will attract great attention.

- The findings have indicated that the effects of Hallyu celebrities and Turkish influencers who live in South Korea on consumers' behavior are stronger. Thus, brands should use Hallyu celebrities or influencers to attract the attention of Turkish Hallyu fans, however, celebrity/ influencer and the brand itself should be harmonious.

- Gen Z consumers share their satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the product or service after purchasing on social media and with their close circles. In case of dissatisfaction, it is important for companies to contact them to win back these individuals.

- By using colorful packaging and cute symbols, brands can capture the vibrant and different status of Korean products in the eyes of the Z generation.

- In addition, providing scholarships to students, participating in sponsoring events, producing eco-friendly and cruelty-free products will positively affect the thoughts of Gen Z consumers.

- The variety of Korean brands and products in Turkey should be increased. In order to increase sales, visuals should be used in the windows of stores where Korean products are presented, and a store atmosphere that reflects the Korean culture in accordance with the consumer trend should be created.

- Generation Z actively benefits from social media and online shopping sites at every stage of consumer behavior. In this direction, it is essential for companies to increase their activities on social media and carry out communication and marketing activities through these channels.

### **5.3.2. Suggestions for Future Studies**

Based on the results of this study, suggestions for future research were listed below;

- In this research, a qualitative approach was taken as the aim is to examine the attitudes and consumer behavior of the participants towards the Korean Wave. Therefore, it is recommended for further research to examine the same area based on quantitative measures by conducting a survey with a larger sample to support the findings in terms of statistically.

- It is known that Korean Wave affects people of different cultures and ages from 7 to 70. For this reason, sociological research can be done on other generations, and the causes and results of the effect can be compared with Gen Z.

- Additionally, the fact that the Hallyu fan base in Turkey is mostly women and why Turkish men adopt this culture less can be explored.

- As this study found evidence, further study could be done on the influence of Korean language use in the daily life of Turkish youth.

- By participating in Korean cultural events in Turkey, fans can be observed with observation techniques, and thus attitudes and behavior can be learned first hand. Also, interviews with experts who are working in Korean cultural communities could procure more well-rounded comprehension of driving factors behind Hallyu.



- The dimensions of the anti-Hallyu concept, which is identified as adverse thoughts and attitudes towards Korean culture and products can be explored in depth by focusing on the reasons and results behind it.

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## **APPENDIX 1.**

### **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION PERMISSION FORM**

This study is a research study titled The Impact of Korean Wave (Hallyu) on Consumer Behavior of Generation Z and aims to examine the Korean Wave from the perspective of generation Z in Turkey and determine its effects on consumer behavior. The thesis study, which is a part of Anadolu University master's degree, has been conducted by Serenay ERARSLAN (Researcher) and Assist. Prof. Dr. Feyza AĞLARGÖZ (Consultant). With the results of the research, the Korean Wave will be reflected from the perspective of the Z generation, and its effects on consumer behavior will be revealed. The information obtained from you is confidential and will only be used for academic research purposes. Your participation is entirely voluntary and your name will not be disclosed in the final report of this research project.

- Your participation in this study is voluntary.
- In accordance with the purpose of this study, data will be collected from you through interviews.
- You do not have to write your name or provide any information to reveal your identity. The names of the participants will be kept confidential in the research. During online meetings, no action will be taken and no information will be requested about IP addresses.
- The data collected within the scope of the research will be used only for scientific purposes, it will not be shared with others without your (written) permission.
- You have the right to review the data collected from you if you wish.
- Within the scope of the research, the sound recording will be made and these recordings will be explicated and analyzed by the researcher and her advisor.
- If you have any questions or requests during the data collection process, you can share them with the researcher. If you feel uncomfortable for any reason during your participation, you can leave the research process at any time.

- If you leave the study, the data collected from you will be removed from the study and destroyed.

Thank you for your time to read and evaluate the volunteer participation form.

Researcher Name: Serenay ERARSLAN

**I accept the use of the information I have provided for this study with my own consent and knowing that I can quit the study if I wish for scientific purposes.**

*(Please fill in this form and give it to the person who collects the data after signing it.)*

Participant Name Surname:

Signature:

Date:

## **APPENDIX 2.**

### **PARENT PERMISSION FORM**

Dear Parent,

This study is a research study titled The Impact of Korean Wave (Hallyu) on Consumer Behavior of Generation Z and aims to examine the Korean Wave from the perspective of generation Z in Turkey and determine its effects on consumer behavior. The thesis study, which is a part of Anadolu University master's degree, has been conducted by Serenay ERARSLAN (Researcher) and Assist. Prof. Dr. Feyza AĞLARGÖZ (Consultant). With the results of the research, the Korean Wave will be reflected from the perspective of the Z generation, and its effects on consumer behavior will be revealed. The following items apply to your child (participant) whom you voluntarily consent to participate in the study:

- Your participation in this study is voluntary.
- In accordance with the purpose of this study, data will be collected from you through interviews.
- You do not have to write your name or provide any information to reveal your identity. The names of the participants will be kept confidential in the research. During online meetings, no action will be taken and no information will be requested about IP addresses.
- The data collected within the scope of the research will be used only for scientific purposes, it will not be shared with others without your (written) permission.
- You have the right to review the data collected from you if you wish.
- Within the scope of the research, the sound recording will be made and these recordings will be explicated and analyzed by the researcher and her advisor.
- If you have any questions or requests during the data collection process, you can share them with the researcher. If you feel uncomfortable for any reason during your participation, you can leave the research process at any time.

- If you leave the study, the data collected from you will be removed from the study and destroyed.

Researcher Name: Serenay ERARSLAN

I consent to the voluntary participation of my child  
..... I know that my child can leave this study if he/she  
wishes, and I accept that the information given by him/her is used for scientific purposes.

Parent Name Surname:

The degree of proximity:

Date:

Signature:



### **APPENDIX 3.**

#### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

- 1)** Could you please introduce yourself? (Age, marital status, educational status, occupation, employment status, etc.)
- 2)** How did your interest in Korean popular culture begin?
  - How did you first hear the term Korean Wave? (internet, social network, ads, TV, friends, etc.)
  - What does Korean popular culture mean to you? (feelings and thoughts that appear in your mind)
- 3)** Which Korean cultural and artistic events did you attend in Turkey?
- 4)** What are the reasons for your interest in Korean popular culture? Why? (K-pop, K-drama, fashion, movies, food, technology, language, etc.)
- 5)** What are the effects of the Korean Wave in your life?
- 6)** How does being a fan of Korean popular culture affect your lifestyle in terms of consumption?
  - What is the place and influence of Korean popular culture elements in your consumption life in general?
- 7)** (If it affects) Where do you get the information before purchasing these products/services? (internet research, advertising, friend advice, family consultation, etc.)
- 8)** (If it affects) Which channels do you use to buy these products? (Social media, TV, e-shopping sites, stores, etc.)
- 9)** (If it affects) How do the products/brands promoted by your favorite Korean idols or celebrities influence your consumption and purchasing decision?
  - As a consumer, what do you think about the use of Korean idols/celebrities/influencers in marketing communications? Do you have a tendency to buy? Why?

**10)** (If it affects) What are your reasons for choosing Korean popular culture products/services?

- What are the factors affecting your decision-making process when purchasing products/services? (Price, celebrity representation, quality, Made in Korea label, salesperson, warranty, brand, content, accessibility, packaging, advertisements, ease of payment, etc.)

**11)** (If it affects) What are your behaviors after purchasing Korean popular culture products? (Re-buy, share with friend, recommend to others, satisfaction, etc.)

- What do you do if you are satisfied or dissatisfied after purchasing the product?

**12)** What does the “Made-in-Korea” label mean to you when purchasing a product?

- What is your perception of Korean Made products?

**13)** How much of your income/pocket money do you spend on Korean popular culture products?

**14)** What do you think about Hallyu news in the Turkish press?

- What do you think about the effect of the term “Anti-Hallyu” on Hallyu?

**15)** What do you think about the future of the Korean wave?

- What are your future plans/dreams about Korea and Korean culture?

My questions end here. Do you have anything to add on the subject? Thank you for your participation.