

STRONG WOMEN IN THE EYES OF FILIPINAS: A RECEPTION STUDY OF KOREAN TV DRAMAS

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Introduction

Korean television dramas (K-dramas) have enjoyed immense popularity all over the world. It is part of the phenomenon known as Hallyu or Korean Wave, in which all things Korean from TV dramas to popular music to fashion are consumed by audiences the world over. K-dramas ushered the Wave, beginning in China in the late 1990s through hit TV shows such as *What is Love?* which aired in China Central Television (CCTV) in 1997.

The Wave swept Japan in 2003 when the TV drama *Winter Sonata* was aired on Japanese television channel NHK (Korean Culture and Information Service , 2011). Its airing was a phenomenal success in Japan, garnering viewer ratings of 20 percent. Audiences were mostly women aged 40 and older who have fallen head over heels for lead character Chunsang's (played by Korean actor Bae Yongjoon) "good looks, passion, sincerity and good manners" (Maliangkay, 2006 , p. 15).

From the late 2000s onwards, the second stage of Korean Wave, also known as Neo-Korean Wave, branched out to other Southeast Asian countries such as Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, to name a few, as well as in Europe and the United States. During this stage, it was K-pop which served as its primary driving force.

As of the writing of this research, the Korean Wave is aggressively expanding even to far-flung areas in the Middle East, Europe and the United States.

The Appeal of K-dramas

In the second stage of the Korean Wave, the internet helped spread the consumption of K-dramas. Through download sites, video streaming sites, and social networking sites, viewers beyond the borders of Korea are able to watch and share shows aired on Korean channels such as KBS, MBC and SBS (Korean Culture and Information Service , 2011).

Viewers from various countries and backgrounds are drawn to K-dramas for various reasons. For Americans, these dramas are "relaxing and cheerful" while for Europeans, the appeal rests on "uncomplicated and romantic" plots. Middle East and Muslim audiences, meanwhile, are drawn to the "subtle repression of emotions and intense romantic passion without overt sexuality" (Korean Culture and Information Service , 2011, p. 73).

For Asians, the appeal of Korean TV dramas rests on its so-called "emotional power "which comes from the "interwoven themes of family, romance, friendship, martial arts, war, and business" as well as the way the characters face issues on love in a "tender, meaningful and emotional than sensual" manner. The Asian sensibilities of prioritizing family and of expressing emotions in a subtle manner also appeal to Asian viewers across generations (Korean Culture and Information Service , 2011, p. 73).

Koreanovelas: K-drama in the Philippines

In the Philippines, K-dramas are fondly called "Koreanovelas", a term coined by Philippine television channel GMA 7 as a marketing buzzword for the growing popularity of K-dramas, following the past successes of the Mexican "telenovela", Taiwanese "chi-novela" and Japanese J-dorama trends.

Since *Bright Girl*, the first K-drama shown in the Philippines through GMA 7 in 2003, K-dramas have been steadily gaining popularity among Filipinos. But K-drama's popularity picked up its pace when *Endless Love: Autumn in My Heart* was shown in the same year in the same channel.

Rival network ABS-CBN was quick to latch on to the trend and aired its own set of Korean TV dramas. In fact, in 2005, the Philippines was counted among major importing countries of K-dramas in Asia, with Japan leading at 60.1 percent, China at 9.9 percent, Philippines at 3.7 percent, and Taiwan at 1.4 percent. The aforementioned figures represent 95.3 percent of total export of Korean TV dramas (Kim, Long, & Robinson, 2009).

Often, these dramas are dubbed in the Filipino language. Characters are also given names that are familiar-sounding to Filipinos, such as Vivian for the lead female character and Carlo for the male lead character in *Lovers in Paris*. Soundtracks and background music are given a Filipino touch through the inclusion of local music artists, an example being Kitchie Nadal's *Wag na Wag Mong Sasabihin*, also in *Lovers in Paris*.

What's to like about Korean novels

Romantic comedies such as *Princess Hours* and *Lovers in Paris* rate well among K-dramas liked by Filipino audiences, followed by melodramas like *Endless Love* and historical dramas like *Jumong* and *Jewel in the Palace*. In Filipino viewers' minds, these mainstream TV dramas from major Korean TV networks such as KBS, SBS and MBC are synonymous to what K-dramas are.

According to the survey done by TNS Global titled *Korea in Our Daily life: A Look at Filipinos' Awareness and Behavior Towards Korean Culture*, Filipinos watch Korean TV shows and movies because these have a tempered blend of character and plot and the actors and actresses are appealing and pleasing to the eye (Lee, 2011).

Moreover, Filipinos like K-dramas because plots are not typical, are unpredictable and fast-paced, actors are good-looking and act well, storylines are not just about love but about careers, and because storylines make them laugh, particularly with comedy shows (Torre, 2006). Filipino viewers thus found in Korean novels quality TV shows with high production values and solid storytelling that's fresh and relatable.

The Audience: Predominantly female

Female Filipino youth in their teens to early 20s comprise a big segment of K-drama viewers. In particular, females 15-25 years old who belong to the AB^C classes scored highest in awareness of Korean pop culture exports such as K-dramas, K-pop and movies (Lee, 2011, p. 10).

While the phenomenon of Filipino youth hooked on Korean dramas has been studied by communication scholars, there is a small segment that quietly consumes these dramas during their free time. This small segment is composed neither of young adults nor of retirement-aged women. Rather, they are somewhere in-between—university-educated, career-oriented Filipinas but who are as avid and as dedicated K-drama viewers as their younger high school and college counterparts.

As this small segment consume Korean TV dramas, media representations and concepts about their identities are formed. Moreover, the phenomenon of Filipino audiences avidly watching Kdramas from a foreign culture affects their conceptions not only of themselves but of Philippine culture as well.

Statement of the Problem

This research aims to answer the following:

- 1) How do Filipina working women consume Korean TV dramas? That is, what are their favorite K-dramas, how do they access these dramas, what media do they prefer and use, and how often?
- 2) In their regular consumption of Korean dramas, what images and representations of women do they see?
- 3) In this small segment of Korean TV drama viewers, why is there a following?

These Filipina working women, their Korean TV drama consumption patterns, and the meanings they construct from TV drama viewing are the focus of this study.

Objectives

This study aims to:

- a. Describe and understand Filipino working women's consumption of Korean TV dramas
- b. Determine the images and representations that they see and identify with
- c. Describe the ways in which they construct meanings from Korean TV drama viewing

Significance of the Study

In the Philippines, academic exploration of the phenomenon is scarce, focusing on teenagers' consumption and reception of Korean cultural products. Little attention is paid on Filipino working women's consumption and reception of Korean dramas.

As cultural consumers possessing a certain degree of maturity and greater sense of self compared to their teenage Filipina counterparts, it is interesting to investigate how Filipina working women negotiate Korean culture as depicted in Korean dramas with their own way of life. This is because identity-making is also said to be an ongoing process in people's lives (Kellner, 2009). Thus, older Filipino working women are also influenced by the genre in ways that we ought to know. It is about time that this particular audience segment be examined as they are part of the second largest demographic of Korean cultural products fans according to age.

Korean, American and Japanese cultures are cultures which Filipinos generally are said to be open and attracted to (Lee, 2011). Studying Filipino working women will help shed light on how women who are past the tumultuous young adult stage of finding their identities negotiate Korean culture as depicted in K-dramas, along with their native Filipino culture and the influential American and Japanese cultures. Moreover, this study will help shed light on how Filipino working women view what it means to be a woman in this day and age. As Kellner puts it:

We are immersed from cradle to grave in a media and consumer society and thus it is important to learn how to understand, interpret, and criticize its meanings and messages. The media are a profound and often misperceived source of cultural pedagogy: They contribute to educating us how to behave and what to think, feel, believe, fear, and desire -- and what not to. The media are forms of pedagogy which teach us how to be men and women. They show us how to dress, look and consume; how to react to members of different social groups; how to be popular and successful and how to avoid failure; and how to conform to the dominant system of norms, values, practices, and institutions (Kellner, 2009, para. 2)

Scope and Limitations

This study covers Filipino working women in their 20s to 40s who watch Korean TV dramas either on free or cable TV, DVDs or the internet. They are middle-class professionals (AB⁺C) who are college graduates, with some having masters degrees or are currently pursuing their degrees. They have been watching Korean TV dramas for more than a year and can thus comment extensively on their Korean TV drama viewing habits, preferences and impressions of Korean culture alongside Philippine culture and the influences of other prevalent cultures in Philippine media culture today (American and Japanese, for example).

This study does not cover the Korean TV drama viewing habits, preferences and impressions of Filipino working women under the lower CDE classes because their viewpoints will be starkly different from the small segment under study.

Review of Related Literature

Kim (2009) frames the production of Korean TV dramas through the concept of popular feminism and the accompanying role of mass media's hegemonic practice of "incorporating feminist discourse in dominant patriarchal ideology" (p. 3). That is, although women's concerns are steadily being elevated in mainstream media and popular culture since the early 1990s, Kim asserts that "images of liberated women are mainly connected with commercial interests, and feminist discourse is incorporated in dominant patriarchal ideology in popular culture" (p.2)

Kim gives the example of the "Missy" phenomenon in Korea in 1993. Here, young married women were known as "Missy", meaning, "a young and sophisticated married woman who voices her thoughts." This, according to Kim, allowed women to don "a new identity of activity and self-assertiveness" (p. 9).

However, Kim was also quick to point out that the driving force behind “Missy” was economic and commercial, having been the concept behind a South Korean department store’s promotion campaign. Because of Korea’s rapid growth, there was a need to expand markets, which included targeting young married women as a new market segment.

In Korea and elsewhere in Asia, consumption and successful reception of Korean TV dramas are often attributed to the uniquely Korean penchant for presenting stories that blend “traditional values of Confucianism with Western materialism and individualism.” Viewers are said to be attracted to the lifestyles depicted in Korean dramas which consequently influence their buying behaviors and preferences, such as fashion choices. This unique blend of entertainment is said to resonate with today’s audiences (Korean Culture and Information Service , 2011, p. 23).

The popularity of Korean dramas in the Asian region is a testament to the cultural consumption that pervades modern times—“routinely crossing national borders” to “share popular culture products, as well as consumption habits, leisure activities, and lifestyle trends”, with consumers “concurrently or supplementarily consuming American, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and other culture-related products” (Otmazgin, 2005 , p. 511).

This phenomenon is often noticeable among Asia’s middle class with enough buying power to keep cultural and economic consumption going. Money is not the only thing going around in this case, though, as the phenomenon also spawns “commonalities of identities and conceptions” which “allows individuals and communities in different places to reciprocate each other’s cultural ideas, innovations, and products in a direct and informal manner in a transnational encompassment” (Otmazgin, 2005 , p. 518).

Cultural consumption tied to economic consumption, in terms of Korean dramas as a woman’s genre, breeds what Yang (2008) calls “consumeristic femininity” (p.11). Yang thus echoes arguments made by previously mentioned bodies of work when she asserts that “as a result of the movements of global capital, a consumeristic discourse of gender equality has replaced the state-centered discourse of domesticity and become the cultural dominant of the present” (p. 3).

Yang analyzed two classes of women in contemporary Taiwan: the least educated and the well-educated to demonstrate how class politics plays a role in Taiwanese women’s reception of Korean TV dramas. She found out that working class women identified with “domestic ideology,” that is, women as housewives. Well-educated women, meanwhile, identified with the notion of television as something that serves the consumer, that is, as an “information machine in the new economy” and as technology just meant for entertainment. She says:

Rejecting domesticity (‘bear with it’) and embracing the spirit of ‘fighting back’, these women’s interpretations are governed by the new discourse of femininity promulgated by consumer capitalism which privileges women’s individuality, autonomy, career development, and (fashion) consumption. Many women express their preferences for those career-oriented female characters as well as shows that ‘realistically describe the workplace’. (p. 8)

In Hong Kong, Lin, Kwan and Cheung (2004) examined career women’s viewing practices of Korean dramas in an ethnographic study of themselves and their friends. They sought to understand how Korean TV dramas “might provide working women with resources to negotiate real life tensions between deep-rooted, Confucianist socio-cultural values and new, modern working conditions in a rapidly Westernizing, globalizing Hong Kong” (p.1.).

In the preliminary findings in the conference paper they presented in 2004, they found that watching Korean TV dramas triggered in career women a heightened self-awareness on the conflicts they battle with within themselves: between navigating a predominantly tough, male dominated workplace culture and the desire for a “safe fantasy place” where they can don “a more traditional/Confucianist feminine identity and be protected by a strong, loving man.” Moreover, Korean drama viewing also served as a way to “re-affirm their Chinese and Asian cultural identities” (p.12).

Singaporean women, on the other hand, tend to receive and interpret Korean dramas according to three repertoires: fairytale, tradition and moral values and gender equality, according to researchers Chan and

Wang. The “fairytale-like romance” depicted in Korean dramas particularly stood out for Singaporean women as a reprieve from the fast-paced and stressful city life. This is aside from other elements that they like about Korean dramas, such as “touching storylines”, ‘beautiful scenery’, ‘excellent cinematography’, ‘good-looking actors and actresses’, ‘trendy fashion’ and ‘nice music’ on the background (Chan & Xueli, 2011).”

In the Philippines, studies of K-dramas focus on teenagers' consumption and reception of Korean cultural products. In *Is it too early to talk about “Hallyu” in the Philippines? Korean drama and its reception among Filipino audience*, the first study done on Korean dramas in the Philippines, Kwon (2006) examined Filipino audiences' reception of Korean dramas in local free TV including consumption patterns, factors that attract them to watch Korean dramas, and their own cultural reading and meaning-making of a foreign cultural product in general terms. Among the factors that make Korean dramas attractive to Filipino audiences are production quality (music, story setting, cinematography), fast-paced plot and stylishly dressed characters. Moreover, although the Philippines is not a Confucian society unlike Korea, Kwon found the concept of cultural proximity applicable to how Filipino audiences receive Korean TV dramas when his informants expressed attraction to “community based culture such as hierarchical family relationship between elders and younger ones, and the extended family relationships” (p.1).

This study was followed five years later when Espiritu (2011), in *Transnational audience reception as a theater of struggle: Young Filipino women's reception of Korean television dramas* examined young Filipino women's (teens to early 20s) reception of Korean dramas as a “theater of struggle,” owing to Filipinos' long and heavy history of consuming American cultural products, which she deemed as an “American cultural imperialism that is deeply entrenched in Philippine society” (p.1) The results of her study validated Kwon's assertion that Filipino audiences possess cultural affinity with Korean dramas, including culture, storylines, values and environment in the Korean TV dramas that they liked. Espiritu thus asserts that through Korean drama viewing, “American cultural imperialism in the Philippines was undermined, challenged, and to some extent subverted” (p1). However, strains of “capitalist patriarchal values and ideologies” were still present in Korean dramas as Korea is also heavily influenced by America culturally. According to Espiritu, “While there were young female participants who subscribed to global capitalist values showing their cooptation within Western cultural hegemonic domains, the young women largely articulated negotiated readings of capitalist values and oppositional readings with regard to the dominant ideology of capitalist patriarchy” (p.1). In particular, the young women studied identified with the “fighting spirit” of the female lead characters during conflict situations. As for the capitalist values embedded in the Korean dramas, Espiritu found out that “most of the young Filipino women opposed the individualism and liberalism shown by the characters in the dramas, which reveals their adherence to traditional values such as the sanctity of marriage and the value of close family ties” (p. 16).

Theoretical Framework

This study is essentially a reception analysis of Filipino working women's Korean TV drama viewing. Thus, it studies how Filipino working women encounter, engage with, and understand K-dramas as media text.

This study takes off from the concept of popular feminism as defined by Hollows, who asserts that feminist ideas of “liberation”, “freedom” and “independence” has penetrated mainstream media forms and popular culture texts (Hollows, *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture*, 2000).

Hollows and Moseley offer a feminist discourse that emphasizes “feminism *in* popular culture” instead of “feminism *and* popular culture”, that is, a type of feminism that springs from popular culture and which is neither separate nor superior from it. This is because of differences arising in what she calls the “generational politics of feminism.” In the past, feminism was a movement in the United States where women sought equal opportunities as men and fought against discrimination. Discourse was outside of, and absent within, popular culture (Hollows & Rachel, *Feminism in Popular Culture*, 2006).

In today's world, feminist ideas and ideals are embedded in popular culture texts and not outside of these. Thus, women grow up with images of independent women manifested in popular culture, such as the way women's magazines and daytime TV shows “encourage women to be assertive, independent and to fight for their rights” and to “campaign around feminist issues such as sexual discrimination, sexual harassment, rape and child care.” (p. 195)

According to Hollows and Moseley, “Most people’s initial knowledge and understanding of feminism has been formed through the popular and through representation. Rather than coming to consciousness through involvement in feminist movements, most people become conscious of feminism through the way it is represented in popular culture.” Because of this, there is a “‘commonsense’ understanding of women’s rights and potential” among women. That is, because of exposure to popular culture products, feminist ideas are believed to be a natural part of the world. This, according to the two authors, “forms the basis for later feminist identifications and politics (p.2).”

Thus, the concept of popular feminism appropriately frames the present generation of women’s femininity and world view. Living in a heavily mediated world more than ever, today’s generation of women are bombarded with various media messages, including strains and ideas of feminism and women’s issues. Thus, their conceptions of themselves, their identities, have been undoubtedly formed by pro-women messages and images of strength and independence. Since Korean TV dramas come from a culture that is foreign to Filipino working women, ideas of popular feminism that are embedded in Korean TV dramas such as women unafraid to voice out their opinions and women who equate power with the ability to buy and consume (Kim, 2009) may be received differently by this Filipino audience segment.

This leads to the “consumption position” that Filipina working women take when watching Korean TV dramas. According to Huat, these “consumption positions” may be 1) an audience watching a locally produced program, where “identification with themes and characters may be said to come naturally”; 2) a diasporic subject where, although the themes depicted in a certain show have a certain degree of familiarity, interpretations may be approached with hesitancy because of spatial distance and time concerns; 3) an audience watching an imported program, where the audience does not possess the degree of knowledge and familiarity with the themes presented in a show compared to the first two types of audiences, which thus leaves this type of audience to interpret the meaning of a show according to his or her own cultural context (Huat, 2006). This third type of audience is where Filipina working women who watch Korean TV dramas belong.

Under study are Filipino women’s Korean TV drama consumption patterns, images and representations they see and identify with, as well as the meanings they construct from their Korean TV drama viewing as fans of K-dramas.

By Filipino working women, the researcher means college-educated women (or higher) in their 20s to 40s who are professionals in their fields, and who are avid viewers and fans of Korean TV dramas.

Based from their consumption position, the following were determined:

- 1) Consumption patterns, meaning, how they began watching K-dramas, the K-drama genre/s they watch, frequency of watching K-dramas, medium/media they use to access K-dramas and why, factors that determine their attraction and subsequent decision to watch a certain K-drama and why.
- 2) Representations of women that they saw in the K-dramas they watch. By representation, the researcher refers to constructed identities received by an audience in a certain text, in this case, the constructed identities received by Filipino working women in the K-dramas they watch (medium, 2010).
- 3) Meanings they glean from their K-drama viewing. These meanings take on either one of the following readings, according to reception analysis (PBWorks, Undated):
 - a) Preferred reading, or the meaning embedded and “preferred” by the dominant ideology.
 - b) Negotiated reading, or the type where the “reader partly shares the text’s code and broadly accepts the preferred reading, but sometimes resists and modifies it in a way which reflects their own position, experiences and interests - this position involves contradictions.”
 - c) Oppositional reading, where “the reader, whose social situation places them in a directly oppositional relation to the dominant code, understands the preferred reading but does not share the text’s code and rejects this reading, bringing to bear an alternative frame of reference”
 - d) Aberrant reading, where “readers can miss or ignore the ideology of the text and import their own, thus producing ‘aberrant’ readings - where ‘aberrant’ means only different from the ones envisaged by the sender.”

Through this lens, the extent to which popular feminism has penetrated Filipino working women's conceptions of their identities and their notions of an empowered woman, in the context of Korean TV dramas, were determined.

Methods and Procedures

Online interviews were conducted from January 26 to February 7, 2012 through a Wiki site especially made for this research project. Ten interviewees were selected according to convenience sampling, through the researchers own network of contacts and referrals made by friends. Interviewees were Filipina working women in their 20's to 40's, college graduates (with some holding Master's degrees and some currently in graduate school) with a middle-class background, and have been watching Korean dramas for more than a year. However, of the 10 interviewees, only 8 are included in this study as the 2 were not able to complete their responses in time.

Research questions on Filipino working women's Korean TV drama consumption patterns and preferences were posted on the Wiki page. Questions about themselves, their favorite Korean dramas and why they like them, their thoughts on female and male protagonists and other characters as well as the plot in the dramas were asked.

A Wiki site was chosen because it is a suitable form of data-gathering among busy working women with erratic schedules. Two of the interviewees also reside abroad. The site, therefore, provided a space where interviewees can answer and participate in the study at their own pace while still answering in an in-depth manner. Moreover, the Wiki site provided a space where responses were stored in one place—a page where interviewees can view other interviewees' answers and converse with them online if they choose to do so.

Also embedded on the page was the first episode of *I Need Romance*, a Korean TV drama of the romantic comedy genre that portrays the lives of contemporary Korean working women in their early 30's as they navigate their loves, careers and families. Often described as *Sex and the City*esque by netizens, this drama aired in 2011 on tvN, a pay-TV channel operated jointly by Fox International Channels and CJ Media.

The TV drama was selected for its portrayal of contemporary Korean women's lives and its exploration of women's issues such as career, love and romance, aging, and family life, among others. It was also selected for purposes of parallelism with *Sex and the City*, an American TV show which contains ideas of popular feminism, and which is familiar with the interviewees under study.

I Need Romance has not yet been shown on Philippine TV but has been made available on online fansubbing and streaming sites. However, none of the informants has seen this particular TV drama.

Since *I Need Romance* deviates from the usual romantic comedy and historical dramas that Filipino viewers are used to, it is a good example of a non-mainstream drama that fits the purposes of this study. Through this, the informants will have a common reference point to draw impressions from. That most of the interviewees were only able to watch the first episode of the drama is a limitation of the study.

Results and Discussion

Note: The informants are identified in this study through the screen names they used during the online interview as it is the easiest way to identify them while protecting their privacy. Some informants have explicitly requested that their screen names be used instead of their real names. The researcher thus decided to use screen names for all.

How Filipino working consume Korean TV dramas: From dubbed to subbed

Among the interviewees, romantic comedies rated the highest when they were asked what their favorite Korean dramas are. Often cited were *Lovers in Paris*, *Princess Hours*, *Boys Over Flowers*, *You're Beautiful*, *Secret Garden*, and *Coffee Prince*. A few interviewees were also into melodramas such as *Winter Sonata* and fewer still were interviewees who liked historical dramas such as *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* and *Jewel in the Palace*.

The interviewees became hooked on Korean TV dramas mainly through two means: Some began by watching Korean dramas dubbed in Filipino in local free TV networks ABS-CBN and GMA before moving on to access these dramas through DVDs, cable TV and internet streaming and downloading.

An equal number of interviewees, meanwhile, began watching Korean dramas through recommendations made by friends and relatives who are K-drama fans. Avlacs, for example, started watching Korean dramas as an “offshoot” of her liking for *Meteor Garden*, a Taiwanese drama of the Chinovela craze that preceded the current popularity of K-dramas. “A couple of years ago, my sister in Singapore sent me DVDs of *Boys Over Flowers*, claiming this Koreanovela is ‘even better’ than my beloved Taiwanese version of the same story. I watched the first disc of *BoF* one lazy day and have been hooked ever since,” she said.

Malumaglen, meanwhile, was introduced to Korean TV dramas through her mother in 2003: “I was actually out of the country when these dramas started. I learned from her about *Autumn in My Heart*. At that time I wasn't interested. When I came back I got a chance to watch *Winter Sonata* and I got hooked from then on.”

The next common way they got introduced to Korean TV dramas was through Korean pop music. Through listening to K-pop, other forms of Korean entertainment such as Korean dramas piqued their interest. Shared Xl_petite: “I first heard DBSK and BoA's music back in 2003. The dramas started around the same year with *Autumn in My Heart* being the first one. I watched the drama in its original form but it was ‘Tagalized’ by GMA7 a few years later.”

One informant, an English tutor to Koreans, shared that her interest in Korean pop culture in general was motivated by her desire to understand Korean culture better so that she can reach out to her students. Consumption of Korean pop cultural products was thus used as a tool for work firstly, before becoming something that the informant enjoyed. Said Hwa-young:

“I started watching Korean dramas two years ago. In a bid, to build a stronger rapport with my students, I forced myself to listen to KPOP songs specifically Big Bang and 2ne1. I think because their music has a more global feel to it. The melodies have a distinct Korean sound but also has a Western flavor to which I am more familiar with. Surprisingly, I loved what I heard and began listening to them on a regular basis. From watching music videos, my curiosity for the Korean culture deepened. I went against my nature and watched *Boys Over Flowers*, the first drama I have ever watched. In the beginning, watching the dramas was just a way to understand my students better but I ended up appreciating the art itself.”

From TV dramas dubbed in Filipino, they began watching these dramas on DVDs either as a way of catching up with their K-drama fix in the midst of their busy schedules, re-watching their favorite TV shows on weekend marathons when they're free, or as their preferred way of watching K-dramas without the fixed and inflexible TV time slots.

“For dramas, I use the DVD player only because the dramas shown on TV are dubbed in Filipino. I am pro-Pinoy but just more comfortable reading and watching in English. I watch when I can. There is no specific schedule. When I have spare time (which does not come by often), I try to catch up on good ones I have missed or look up recommendations from students and friends,” said Hwa-young.

Internet: Best way to watch K-dramas

With vast improvements in internet technology in terms of speed, video quality and timeliness came another way in which these women satisfied and fulfilled their Korean drama viewing. Among the interviewees, the internet is the most popular way of watching K-dramas because it offers TV shows round-the-clock on its huge database of old and currently airing K-dramas. Be it downloading these dramas on torrent sites or watching these through internet streaming sites like Kimchidramas.net which offer English subtitles made by “fansubbers”, what has become important for most of these women is the way they can conveniently watch these dramas without relying on timeslots dictated by local TV.

“I use the internet for my source of anything and everything Korean. Cable television is not always available and the timeslots don't always work with my schedules so I try to catch up through the net,” said Xl_petite.

The internet as a medium of speed allows these women to be in the loop on new TV dramas airing in Korea and (if they have time) to synchronize their viewing with Koreans and other Kdrama fans in Asia. Said Yeniwantschange, “[I download] torrents+softsubs from fansubbers. You get awesome video and sub quality real time especially since I've been watching dramas as soon as they are released.”

Their increasing reliance on the internet to satisfy their K-drama viewing greatly reflects the ongoing media

convergence around the world, meaning, “interlocking of computing and information technology companies, telecommunications networks, and content providers from the publishing world of newspapers, magazines, music, radio, television, films, and entertainment software” and which, in a nutshell, brings together “computing, communications, and content” (media convergence , 2012, para. 1).

In the context of K-dramas’ availability on the internet, K-drama series are converted by owners of online streaming and downloading websites into digital forms that are then given subtitles by dedicated “fansubbers” in various languages and eventually uploaded on the internet. These are then accessed by viewers from all over the world, including the Filipinas under this study, either through downloading or online streaming. This also reflects today’s “flatter” publishing structure in that distribution is not just one-to-many (TV network distributing content to the masses), but many-to-many (various websites distributing content to the masses). Moreover, data also shows media fragmentation which divides and scatters audiences among the many avenues of accessing information available (media convergence , 2012).

All of these are the result of digital contents, in this case K-dramas, which are easily replicated and distributed on the internet. Of course, this undoubtedly raises the copyright issues as well as piracy, both of the K-dramas uploaded by multiple users on multiple sites and of the subtitles created by “fansubbers”, but is beyond the scope of this study.

The evolution of Filipina audiences’ K-drama viewing

Filipino working women like to take control of their TV viewing to accommodate other activities in their lives, such as their jobs. Thus, they use various media in consuming K-dramas according to their needs: free TV with Tagalog subtitles during their ‘newbie’ days in the K-drama wave, DVDs as they sought to ‘own’ their K-drama content so as to control their consumption at their own pace, and the internet for synchronized and timely viewing with Koreans and fellow fans around Asia as well as for easy retrieval of old Korean dramas they would like to see. English is also their preferred language since they are more comfortable with this than the Filipino language.

In addition, they are also heavy viewers who are willing to pursue other shows not broadcasted on free TV. This is shown by the dramas they have watched, most of which have not been shown on Philippine TV yet. Aware of various avenues of accessing these dramas, they do not limit themselves to free TV.

K-dramas, close family ties, and community orientation

Watching Korean TV dramas through the internet seems to be a shared activity between them and friends and family, as well as the larger internet K-drama viewing community. These women take K-drama recommendations from family and friends, trusting their tastes in TV shows.

On the micro level, the K-drama recommendations they get from family members reflects their orientation towards close family ties, a core Filipino trait. On the macro level, their willingness to synchronize their TV viewing with viewers around Asia through the internet reflects a community orientation that is common among Asians.

What Filipina working women like in Korean TV dramas: engaging story lines, high production value, portrayals of strong women, and charismatic actors

On storylines

The storylines attracted most informants to Korean TV dramas. Romantic comedies, in particular, were liked because of the clever twists and turns that occur throughout the journey of the characters. Said Hwa-young on *Boys Over Flowers*, “The plot was interesting and not predictable like the typical Pinoy soaps. You never expect how things will end up and they play particular attention to costume not to mention the amazing cinematography. I don’t enjoy watching local soaps. I’m a proud Pinoy but am bored with the local ones we have. I look forward to the day when our soaps reach a similar level of quality.”

The storylines are also said to be sticky. “The story got a lot of twist and turn [sic]. You really have to watch all episodes to understand the whole story till the end,” said Malumaglen.

As the dram unfolds, the informants were also hooked on the “unexpected combination of comedy, heart, and

the “pure” and “unadulterated” demonstrations of love of the characters.

They are also pulled by the story’s similarity to their lives. Hwa-young, for example, liked *Coffee Prince* because the story resonated with her current role in life—a teacher dealing with her students.

When asked if they can see themselves (or others around them) through the characters, most informants said yes. Some can see their younger selves in the characters.

“The reason I liked the female leads very much was because I could see myself in them, especially when I was younger; in being awkward, clumsy and naive. I think if I were in the same situation as them, I would have reacted the same way - Sacrificing for my family, pushing my love one away because I think he's better without me or I don't want to hurt other people etc,” shared Empress1816.

“A dreamy-eyed teenager who spent much of the 90s pining for Nick Carter, I found completely irresistible the plot of a young girl who infiltrates a boy band by impersonating her twin brother...” said Avlacs on the K-drama *You're Beautiful*.

Parallelisms to informants’ and the characters’ life experiences in terms of their career were also made. “I guess I can relate the most with Tae-young from *Lovers in Paris*. Like her, I am cut off from family and friends, trying to find my place in a strange city (in this case, New York). I like the way she trudges on, even if a lot of the time she has no idea what she's doing. I'm a little like that,” reflected Avlacs.

“In *Winter Sonata*, the school and office life are ones that I can relate to as far as interaction with others is concerned. The extra-curricular activities like clubs and group outings, the pressure of being in a school with serious strict teachers, the uniforms...they all came back to me when I watched *Winter Sonata*. I've been the Vice President of my class before so I kind of understand Park Yoochun's and Song Joong-ki's characters in *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* (as far as being part of their class' leads). There's the need to be diplomatic but authoritative enough so majority of your peers follow and respect you. Then if something goes awry because of a bad call on your part, you bear the brunt of some tongue-lashing. In *Sungkyunkwan Scandal*, the politics and the intrigue kind of mirrors certain incidents I've come across although they're not as dramatic,” said XI_petite.

“I do see bits and pieces of myself in both characters. In Sun Joon, his patient and cool demeanor. From both of them, their love and interest in education and learning. From Sun Joon, his respect for tradition and the law. Upholding what is fair and just. From Yoon Hee, her willingness to work hard for what she wants. Her loyalty and love for her family. Her investment into her friendships,” said Hwa-young on the drama *Sungkyunkwan Scandal*.

The appeal of K-dramas among the interviewees in terms of storylines resonates with what most Asian audiences are also drawn to in K-dramas—that is, of storylines about family, romance, friendship, and business/career as well as tender and subtle expressions of love rather than sensual expressions that are common in Western TV shows (Korean Culture and Information Service , 2011). This finding validates Kwon (2006) and Espiritu’s (2011) assertion that young Filipino audiences possess cultural affinity with K-dramas despite the Philippines not being a Confucian society.

However, a slight difference in reception arises among the interviewees as they put a premium on the parallelism of the storylines to their careers (i.e., “trudging on” towards their dream careers and goals and navigating office politics) which reflects their status as career women and their nostalgia in seeing their younger selves in the storylines and the characters. In this regard, the interviewees had a “negotiated reading” of the K-dramas they watch in that the Confucian values of “prioritizing family” and subtle expressions of emotions (Korean Culture and Information Service , 2011) are accepted by them. However, they also see the larger role of women in the workplace and interpret storylines as such.

It is also worth noting that the interviewees’ attraction to unpredictable and sticky storylines and to the high production quality of K-dramas shows a certain degree of dissatisfaction with local Filipino TV shows. This aspect of K-dramas’ storylines can be a reason why the interviewees follow K-dramas more than locally produced TV shows.

On characters

The characters in these dramas also endeared the informants to their favorite dramas, with most informants citing strong, intelligent and spunky women as their favorite type of character. Ayame²⁹, for instance, saw how the lead character in her favorite drama *Ugly Young-Ae* was similar to Bridget Jones in the Hollywood movie *Bridget Jones' Diary*. "I love how feisty she is!" she said. She also favors female characters who "know what they want."

Hwa-young shared the same sentiment about *Coffee Prince*: "I liked the fact that the female lead showed a young, strong, independent girl unlike the typical soaps where they are usually portrayed as fashion-crazed, immature, or insecure." She also cited female character YoonHee in *Sungkyunkwan Scandal*, whom she described as someone who had guts. "I especially liked the fact that she did everything humanly possible to earn an education at a time when women were forbidden to do so. It was a good feeling to see a strong and smart woman going after what she wanted. I like her character a lot," she said.

For Xl_petite, the female protagonists "usually possess a certain kind of innocent guile that allows them to be able to stand up to their nemesis. They are able to maintain that 'goodness' though they sometimes go about it in a devious way."

For male characters, the informants took notice of two types of male portrayals. The first type is the high status, genteel males with a conflict to resolve.

This was how Empress1816 described the male leads in her favorite Korean dramas: "The male leads were born rich and thus grew up well-traveled, given the best education and had social graces but came from dysfunctional families. They were serious and confident, maybe even arrogant."

The second type of male portrayal they like is the "adorable jerk." "Male protagonist is a jerk in an adorable way," says Xsnmae. And how? According to Avlacs, in terms of romance, this is the "poor little rich boy", that "sullen, moody jerk who keeps her [the female lead] hooked on his rare (and ergo, devastating) demonstrations of affection and thoughtfulness" a la Goo Jun Pyo in the K-drama *Boys Over Flowers*.

What makes these "jerks" adorable in the eyes of the informants is the transformation of male characters from "jerks" to sweet, loving guys. "Although the males are arrogant and self-centered at first, they became loving and loyal to the ones they love," commented Malumaglen.

The way the interviewees perceived the female characters as strong and intelligent women who know what they want shows that popular feminism is present in their consciousness. That one of the interviewees likened the K-drama character Young-Ae to Hollywood character Bridget Jones further confirms the pervasiveness of the idea of independence and agency among today's women.

It is interesting to note, though, that while female characters were described in a positive light, male characters were described in a mixed way. They were interpreted either as rich gentlemen with conflicts to resolve or as rich jerks who are somewhat adorable and eventually change into sweet, loving men because of their blossoming relationships with the female characters.

Female characters, meanwhile, were seen to possess positive traits but often had to work extra hard for approval from people (parents, bosses, and romantic interests, for example) and for a change in their status from a lower class to a better class. This seems to point to a negotiated reading of the characters where contradictions are present—Although "girl power" is lauded by the interviewees, the lower economic status of female characters compared to the male characters seem to be rationalized through perceptions of them as rich gentlemen battling internal conflicts and rich "jerks" who are adorable and who have the capacity to change. In other words, the men may be seen as "perfect" in outward appearance but in viewers' minds, this outward perfection is balanced by the hardworking, spunky, smart and cheerful nature of the heroines.

On actors

The cast was also a factor on why certain Korean dramas became listed as favorites. "I must admit that the actors in the drama often dictate whether or not I'd watch the show or not, regardless of the genre," shared Xl_petite.

“Aside from a very interesting plot, I appreciated the fact that the lead stars and some supporting cast were really very physically attractive,” offered Hwa-young.

On production value

The production value was also cited as a reason for liking Korean TV dramas. For example, Hwayoung was generous in praise for *I Need Romance*: “The sets were done well. Good production value. They spent a good amount of money to create stimulating backdrops and riveting cinematography. The actors performed well. I think they chose their sound tracks well. It really sets the mood and compels the audience to feel the emotion of each scene,” said Hwa-young.

Identification with strong female characters: An Asianized/Filipina-ized popular feminism

Filipino working women’s strong familiarity with American cultural products, owing to the Philippines’ status as a former colony of the United States, allowed them to see stark similarities between the American TV series *Sex and the City* and the Korean TV drama *I Need Romance*. In particular, they took notice of the representations of each woman character. Shared Empress1816:

“The girls [from *I Need Romance*] remind me of the girls from *Sex and the City*. The main female lead is like Carrie, who is successful, independent, knows what she wants and is in a relationship with a guy who has a problem with committing to marriage. I like that she did the smart thing to do; breaking up with a guy who’s no longer in love with her. The Korean Samantha - she reminds me of her because of her liberal views and how she takes control of her love life. She does not let the Korean norms prevent her from getting what she wants.”

For the interviewees, the characters in *I Need Romance* were strong women who resembled parts of themselves and the women around them, which is consistent with the representations they see in mainstream romantic comedies they watch. Romantic comedies as the most popular genre among Filipino working women did not stop them from identifying with strong women characters. They do not identify with damsel-in-distress types of characters. They also realized that there is more to Korean dramas than the romantic comedies that they’re used to.

“I see myself in them in a certain level of empowerment in terms of knowing what I want or saying what I want to say,” said Ayame29.

This leads to what Barker termed as “*interplay of mediations*” wherein the relationship between media and culture contribute to people’s construction of cultural identity (Barker, 1999). In the context of Filipino working women, this implies that as they watch Korean TV dramas alongside cultural products from other foreign countries, and as they see the world of these foreign women and their relationships, they receive materials to work on in meaning-making and constructing who they are as Filipinas.

As an audience with a “consumption position” that is far removed from the original Korean context where these TV dramas were produced (Huat, 2006), Filipinas made meanings that are rooted in their own cultural context of close family ties, familial obligations, and willingness to sacrifice for the sake of the family/group.

Taking the interviewees’ impressions of their favorite characters in their favorite K-dramas and their impressions of the characters in *I Need Romance*, together with their cultural context, in the informants’ minds the strong woman:

1. Possesses agency. She knows what she wants and acts on it to achieve it. As Hwayoung said of the heroine in the drama *Sungkyunkwan Scandal*, “I liked that Yoon Hee had guts. Even if she did it for the sake of her family, I respect her for taking risks at all. I especially liked the fact that she did everything humanly possible to earn an education at a time when women were forbidden to do so. It was a good feeling to see a strong and smart woman going after what she wanted.”
2. Behaves with a blend of innocence and cunning. The discussant XI_petite sees this as “a kind of innocent guile that allows them to be able to stand up to their nemesis. They are able to maintain that ‘goodness’ though they sometimes go about it in a devious way.”
3. Is selfless. This selflessness entails an offering of the self for the sake of loved ones. As Empress1816 said, “I could see myself in them, especially when I was younger; in being awkward,

clumsy and naive. I think if I were in the same situation as them, I would have reacted the same way - Sacrificing for my family, pushing my love one away because I think he's better without me or I don't want to hurt other people, etc.”

There is also a certain awareness that K-dramas' portrayals of what they deem as strong women were not always present in earlier Korean TV dramas they watched. An example would be interviewee Yeniwantschange, a long-time Korean drama fan who noticed an interesting change with female protagonists through the years as well as her change in character preference:

“Earlier dramas I watched had women protagonists who had no backbone. They never fought for their interests which is why I did not really like those characters. Later dramas I watched had women protagonists who knew how to fight for their interests in a reactive manner meaning they will only fight for what they want when it is challenged. But I liked their spunk. This is similar to my personality.”

This affinity with strong women characters echoes Espiritu's (2011) study wherein college-age Filipino women identified with the “fighting spirit” of the female lead characters when faced with conflicts and hurdles. For these college-age women, empowerment means being able to fight back and defend one's self when people try to put them down.

The difference between young women's notion and working women's of a strong woman lies in the latter's more refined and well-rounded notion of what a strong woman is. That beyond a woman's “fighting spirit” is her drive to achieve what she wants while using both her mind and heart. This difference probably rests on working women's greater life experiences. Hence, their life context enriches their notions of empowerment.

East meets West in *I Need Romance*

Reception to the TV drama *I Need Romance* was warm. The informants, who are used to watching mostly romantic comedy types of Korean TV dramas, found *I Need Romance* different from what they're used to watching. The “explicitness of the love scenes”, for Avlacs, was “a bit surprising for a Korean drama.” Used to the “pure love” depicted in mainstream K-dramas they see, the women found the “realistic” portrayal of women refreshing. They particularly found the girl talk, bordering on crass and playful, similar to the way they would talk with their own girl friends. They related with the open, honest, and sometimes crass but playful way the women characters talked among themselves (i.e., boldfaced discussions about vibrators and fetishes). “I will have to agree with the way the ladies talk among themselves. Conversations with girl friends are usually like this,” said Ayame29.

Yeniwantschange had the same view, saying, “I like the relaxed, non-committed relationship of the leads. I liked the discussion about women and sex. This is how my friends and I discuss about things. Different views, different experiences, frank but hilarious discussions.”

Empress1816 described it as “more risqué when it comes to showing intimacy.” Nevertheless, some women like her were receptive to the show.

She continued, “I like that they tackle a different issue. Like what happens years after the usual ending of Korean dramas when one thinks they lived happily ever after. It's certainly something many women goes through at this time and age [sic]; how you fall into this state of comfort and companionship and you lose the romantic feeling when you first got together. Worse, boyfriends cheat and the women must decide what to do about it. It also tackles how women nowadays can be as much as a player as guys can. It also portrays the conservative views in relationship and marriage. So basically, this drama definitely is more modern and I think more realistic than the cinderellakorean dramas I'm used to.”

The interviewees thus went through a negotiated reading of *I Need Romance* in that although they initially expressed surprise that a K-drama produced by a Confucian society can be as “risqué” as this, they eventually got over the presumably shocking presentation and the packaging of this K-drama and saw a “realistic” portrayal of contemporary women's lives and issues they face—aging, cheating, marriage (or the lack of prospects for it), romance, etc. They also accepted the open and honest—and oftentimes crass but funny—conversations among women. Moreover, their identification with maintaining close relationships with friends, as in the hilariously honest girl talks depicted in the show, can also be viewed as a reflection of

the Asian culture of community and a resistance to the individualism that tends to be present in Western TV shows.

Popular feminism and the Filipina

These women possess a strong identification with portrayals of strong women in media, be it in an American TV show like *Sex and the City*, mainstream Korean TV shows like *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* and *Coffee Prince*, or non-mainstream Korean TV shows such as *I Need Romance*. This may be viewed as a sign that popular feminism, or the entry into mainstream media products of feminist ideas and images of “liberation”, “freedom” and “independence” (Hollows, *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture*, 2000), is strongly present in Filipino working women, who are consumers of both American and Korean cultural products.

However, popular feminism in the Western sense is not completely present, because the cultural proximity thesis is still apparent in the way the women identified with the successful career women portrayed in the drama, but negotiated the portrayal of a sexually liberated woman like SeoYeon (“Korean Samantha”) and the idea of cheating in a relationship. Although they acknowledge that this type of woman exists in everyday life, they do not necessarily agree and advocate it. Thus, they are more traditional in the sense that they are still drawn to the idea of “pure” and “unadulterated” love depicted in the Korean TV dramas that they are used to.

Said Hwa-young, “I do not necessarily agree with some ideas like that of the overly cynical and promiscuous girl friend. I do agree though that people like her character do exist and live a life similar to hers.”

That the women paid more attention to the portrayals of strong women and the “risqué”/ modern quality of the show more than the fashion styles of the characters (and the desire to emulate it) is also an indicator that “consumeristic femininity” (Yang, 2008) may not be as present among Filipino women as they are in the TV drama’s original Korean cultural context.

Thus, Filipino working women’s notion of a strong woman deviates from “consumeristic femininity”. Their notions of empowerment did not rest on acquiring consumer goods like the latest gadget or clothing to project an image of power. Rather, their “consumption position” (Huat, 2006) and context as middle class Filipino working women trying to make their way in the world enabled them to define empowerment and the strong woman as someone who knows what she wants and acts on it with a balance of mind and heart. Resonating with them are scenes such as their favorite characters beating the odds just to get education at a time when women were forbidden to do so, or scenes of being away from family and friends in an unfamiliar city as one trudges on toward her dream career.

Filipino working women’s identification with strong women is thus strengthened by K-dramas and allow this identification to be more “Asianized” and “Filipina-ized”.

Summary and Conclusions

This paper sought to understand Filipino working women’s consumption and reception of Korean TV dramas. It also sought to find out the images and representations that they see and identify with, as well as the meanings they construct from their Korean TV drama viewing.

This study found out that Filipino working women are drawn to Korean TV dramas because of the engaging story lines, high production value, portrayals of strong women, and charismatic actors. They related and identified with female characters’ strong desire for education, the hard work that goes into their careers, and their willingness to sacrifice for their families.

Of all the media they use for accessing K-dramas, the internet is the most cited because it satisfies their need for speedy and high-quality access to content. Moreover, the internet also serves as a big database of sorts for K-dramas for these women.

This leads to this researcher’s first conclusion: That Filipina working women’s K-drama viewing has evolved to fit their needs, and that they are turning to the internet to find K-dramas more to their liking: subtitled in a language they are more comfortable with (English), presented with high production values, and made with engaging storylines and characterizations that reflect their lives as career women.

As they immersed themselves in K-dramas, they began to know more aspects of Korean culture as well. However, the meanings they glean from their K-drama viewing is based from their “consumption position”—one that is far removed from the original Korean cultural context. Because of the long-time influence of Western culture, and because of the Filipino culture they live in, they tend to blend these cultural elements into their reception of Korean TV dramas. Thus, messages were predominantly negotiated in their readings of K-dramas. That is, depictions of strong women characters, of liberation and of independence were accepted—a feminist idea propagated by Western culture. Depictions of compassion for others and love for the family within these same female characters, which are typical Filipino/Asian traits, were accepted as well. Negotiated, meanwhile, were images of sexually liberated women and of cheating as things that exist and can be tolerated in others, but not in their personal lives.

Thus, the researcher’s second conclusion: That Filipino working women’s reception of Korean dramas is based from their “consumption position”: a blend of cultural influences of Filipino, Asian and Western values and beliefs.

This study also shows that Filipina working women identify with strong women characters. By strong women, they picture someone who knows what she wants and acts on it, someone who behaves with a blend of innocence and cunning, and someone who is selfless and compassionate with loved ones. It can thus be concluded that popular feminism pervades the media they consume and the way they interpret media texts. Taking this assertion further, it seems that although they are watching a Korean drama, which is Asian in origin, the way popular feminism pervades their consumption and reception patterns indicates the strong presence of Western influences in the background.

This is tempered, though, by the presence of cultural affinity with Asian sensibilities. That is, although the Philippines is not a Confucian nation, cultural affinity was present among the informants in their traditional views on promiscuity, especially with the portrayal of the Korean Samantha in *I Need Romance*. Although they acknowledged the existence of a person like that, they did not necessarily subscribe to it. Moreover, their sense of empowerment is not entirely Western in the sense that empowerment is not equated to purchasing power—that is, empowerment is not equated to the clothes they wear and the things they own.

In the context of an Asian viewership, Filipina women’s identification with strong women differs from other Asian women in terms of the near-absence of consumeristic notions of empowerment, the lack of conflicting sense of self in terms of Confucian expectations of women and the demands of the modern workplace. It can be said that the Filipina’s notion of the strong woman is special in that it is a unique blend of spunk, intellect, compassion and selflessness.

Implication and Recommendations

The findings of this study suggest that Filipino working women’s consumption and reception of Korean TV dramas are influenced by the transnational flows of cultural products, based on a mix of Filipino, Western and Korean cultures that have influenced their identities during their mediated activities.

It is hoped that current findings will add to the growing body of literature on the Filipino audiences’ consumption and reception of Korean TV dramas. The current study opened a host of possibilities for future research in terms of media use and cultural reception.

First, the interviewees’ preference for accessing K-dramas through the internet, either by downloading files or by watching webstreaming sites, raised issues of copyright infringement and piracy. Future research can pursue this line of inquiry, including K-drama viewers’ value orientation and beliefs about copyright and privacy as well as its effects on the media and entertainment industry.

Comfort with the English language was also cited by some informants on why they prefer English subtitles when watching K-dramas instead of those dubbed in Filipino. It would be interesting to contrast the reception and meaning-making of those who watch Filipino-dubbed K-dramas (assumed to be those in the lower class) with those who watch English subtitled ones (assumed to be in the middle to upper classes). It would be interesting to assess the consumption and reception of Filipino audiences on similar themed programs such as the American *Sex and the City* and the Korean *I Need Romance*, or other similar types of shows, in the context of accepted, negotiated and rejected readings of these media texts.

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