



# AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF K-WAVE (HALLYU) ON THE CONSUMPTION PATTERNS AND CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS OF GEN-Z FEMALES IN SURAT CITY

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**Abstract:** This empirical study looks into how Gen-Z women in Surat City's consumption habits and cultural perceptions are affected by the Korean Wave (Hallyu). The study examines how exposure to Korean media influences consumer behaviour in the beauty, fashion, and culinary industries using a quantitative research approach. The study measures the overall perceived position of the Korean industry and assesses the relationship between media frequency and the adoption of Korean lifestyle items using inferential statistical approaches. According to the results, the Korean industry has effectively established an aspirational market position in Surat.

**Keywords - K-Wave, Hallyu, Gen-Z Females, Surat, Consumer Behaviour, Cultural Perception.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Korean Wave, or Hallyu, is the term used to describe the amazing spread of South Korean culture in India during the past ten years, particularly in the form of K-pop music, K-dramas on television, movies, fashion, and even language. Since its inception in the late 1990s, this cultural movement has spread around the world, including India. The impact of the K-Wave on Indian youth has been significant. Identifying the advantages and possible disadvantages of this worldwide phenomena, the study seeks to offer a thorough grasp of how the K-Wave is changing youth culture in India.

The Chinese phrase "Hallyu" means "Korean Wave." The term is used to describe the extraordinary rise of Korean popular culture, which includes everything from online games and Korean food to music, movies, and drama, to mention a few. The K-Wave has become a worldwide sensation since its inception in the late 1990s. Initially originating in China and Japan, Hallyu later extended to Southeast Asia and a number of other nations, where its influence is still very much felt today.

## II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The country's North-eastern states were the first to introduce Korean cultural products, and the 2010s saw a surge in the consumption of Korean entertainment products, such as K-pop, K-dramas, anime, and many more. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world and people started relying heavily on internet platforms for everything from entertainment to education, the popularity of Korean cultural items reached a zenith. During these challenging times, Korean music groups such as BTS, popularly known as ARMY in India and other countries, became increasingly popular.

K-pop, K-dramas, and other Korean entertainment have become more popular among Indian youth, frequently at the expense of traditional regional films and Indian TV series. This trend is noteworthy because it reflects a wider shift in cultural preferences, with many young Indians now favouring foreign entertainment over homegrown efforts.

In India, Korean food is becoming more and more popular, and Korean eateries are opening up in big cities. The Indian palette, which is renowned for its rich spices and varied tastes, is introduced to new flavours by dishes like kimchi, bibimbap, and Korean BBQ. Culinary exchanges and food festivals have become widespread, promoting a greater understanding of Korean culture via its food.

Korean fashion, which is typified by minimalism, pastel colours, and a blend of high fashion and streetwear, is currently being adopted by a large number of young Indians. The popularity of Korean skincare products, such as BB creams and sheet masks, has also surged, with many young Indians adopting the multi-step Korean skincare regimen.

Indians are becoming more interested in studying Korean because they want to access South Korea's educational and career possibilities and comprehend Korean media without the need for subtitles. Korean language classes are becoming more and more available at Indian universities and language schools, and there are active cultural exchange initiatives that promote academic and cultural interactions between the two nations.

### III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(Sajeevan & K, 2025) in their study explores the Hallyu (Korean Wave) phenomenon and its profound effects on young Indians. Social media and the internet have played a major role in its expansion, strengthening South Korea's economy and reputation internationally. The study investigates how Indian youth absorb and modify aspects of Korean culture and how this affects their self-awareness and sense of self. It concludes that rather than cultural imperialism, Hallyu is a symbol of inspiration and cultural interchange.

(Spashta & Bab, 2024) The study evaluates the current state of the Korean Wave and its effects on youth, both good and negative, using quantitative data. It looks into how the Korean Wave affects young people's interests and behaviour, such as their fascination with Korean culture, desire to learn the language, and attraction to Korean TV series and music. The study's overall goal is to comprehend how Indian youth's beliefs and behaviour are influenced by the Korean Wave.

(Das & Bhattacharjee, 2023) in their study demonstrates how culture can transcend time and location, as evidenced by the recent rise in popularity of Korean Pop Culture and Korean dramas among Indians, particularly young people, known as the Hallyu Wave. Indian youth are experiencing a dynamic cultural transition as a result of the influence of Korean music, dramas, and cinema. In addition to documenting the trade between the two cultures, this study emphasizes the relationship and cultural adaption brought about by Indian youth's increasing consumption of Korean pop culture.

(Nandal, 2023) in the study demonstrates how commercialization has led to the emergence of cultural radical equality while concurrently causing cultural hybridization. Cultural fusion, which combines Western lifestyles with Korean customs, gave rise to the Korean Wave (Hallyu). Korean dramas and movies show how a society may change without losing its customs. The increasing popularity of Korean dramas, films, and fashion in north-eastern India has sparked a lot of curiosity, particularly among young people. People in the area frequently find it difficult to relate to mainstream Indian culture due to cultural differences, while Korean content seems more relatable. The Korean Wave's popularity is further enhanced by the actors' attractive looks, fashion trends, realism, and fluid storytelling.

(Sarma, 2023) examines the impact of K-pop on Indian youth in this research, with an emphasis on fandom activities and consumption trends. Responders between the ages of 18 and 30 who are involved with K-pop were surveyed using questionnaires distributed through friends, acquaintances, and K-pop social media pages. Many Indians have only recently begun to listen to K-pop, according to the report. Despite the existence of vibrant fan communities, many people continue to be passive supporters. According to the study's findings, K-pop is an expanding sector in India with significant room for future research.

(Abigail & Jaggi, 2022) in the study comprehends the strong appeal of the Korean Wave's cultural products. It investigates the relationship between Korean cultural items and fan involvement as well as the effects of text and images in Korean material on Indian viewers. The project also looks into whether audiences may produce their own content by using these texts and images to improve their language proficiency and cultural awareness. It delves deeper into a communication process that starts with how Korean content is perceived and received and ends with the creation of audience-generated content, which helps explain why Hallyu is becoming more and more popular.

### IV. OBJECTIVES

1. To quantify the current level of awareness and identify the primary sources of exposure to Korean culture among the Gen-Z females in Surat.
2. To determine if the geographical location (Zone) within Surat City significantly influences the level of awareness regarding Korean cultural trends.
3. To evaluate and rank the perceived quality and popularity of different Korean sectors (Drama, Music, Food, Beauty) based on user satisfaction ratings.
4. To examine the relationship between the disposable income of Gen-Z females and their yearly spending habits on Korean beauty, food, and fashion.
5. To assess the extent to which the frequency of watching Korean media acts as a driver for the consumption of Korean skincare and makeup products.
6. To investigate the correlation between exposure to Korean media and the frequency of consuming Korean food/cuisine among the target demographic.
7. To analyse whether the length of time an individual has been exposed to Korean culture significantly impacts their perception of Korea's industrial position in India.

## V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 1. Purpose of the study:

The study helps Surat's business houses in recognizing the K-Wave as a potential economic opportunity in the food and beauty industries. It also adds to the expanding corpus of literature on "Hallyu" in India, concentrating on a non-metropolitan city that is rising quickly. The study provides information about the "Brand Image" of Korea among young Indians.

### 2. Research Design

This study employs a Descriptive and Analytical Research Design. It is descriptive as it profiles the awareness and preferences of Gen-Z females, and analytical as it uses inferential statistics to test relationships between media exposure and consumer behaviour.

### 3. Target population:

The study's demographic includes as Gen-Z females of Surat City, Gujarat who were born roughly between 1997 and 2012. This group was selected because of their high level of computer literacy and interest in international cultural trends.

### 4. Sampling Technique and Sample Size:

- **Sampling Technique:** Convenience Sampling (a non-probability sampling technique) was used to reach respondents through Google form.
- **Sample Size:** 212 respondents from various geographical zones of Surat

### 5. Sources of Data:

- **Primary Data** – Collected from respondents through Structured Questionnaire in which questions were categorize in following sections:  
Section I: Demographic Profile (Area, Income, Age).  
Section II: Awareness and Exposure to Korean Culture.  
Section III: Consumption Patterns (Beauty, Food, Clothes).  
Section IV: Perceptions of the Korean Industry's position in India.
- **Secondary Data** – Through journals, websites, blogs, research articles, magazines, etc.

### 6. Statistical Tools:

Various statistical tests like Chi-square, Cramer's V, Spearman Rank Correlation, Mann-Whitney U, Frequency distribution and Weighted Average Mean are applied to study the objectives framed. SPSS software package was used to obtain test results.

## VI. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

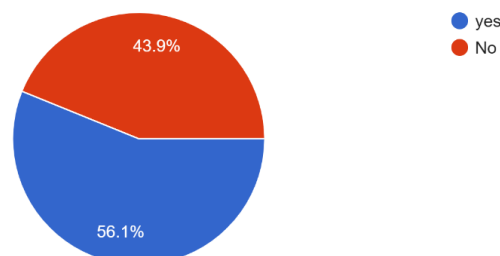
1. Because the study employs convenience sampling, it might not accurately reflect Surat's whole population. The outcomes are most representative of Gen-Z females who are digitally active.
2. Because the data is specific to Surat City, the conclusions could not apply to Gujarat's rural areas or larger cities like Mumbai where product availability varies.
3. As the data is collected via Google Forms, the responses rely on the participants' memory and honesty regarding their spending habits and media hours.

## VII. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

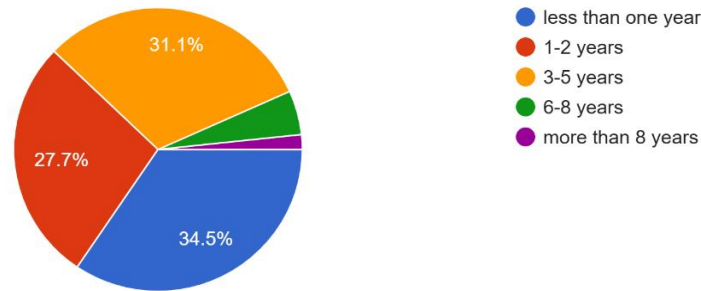
### 1. Awareness and Exposure to Korean Culture

Are you aware about Korean culture?

212 responses

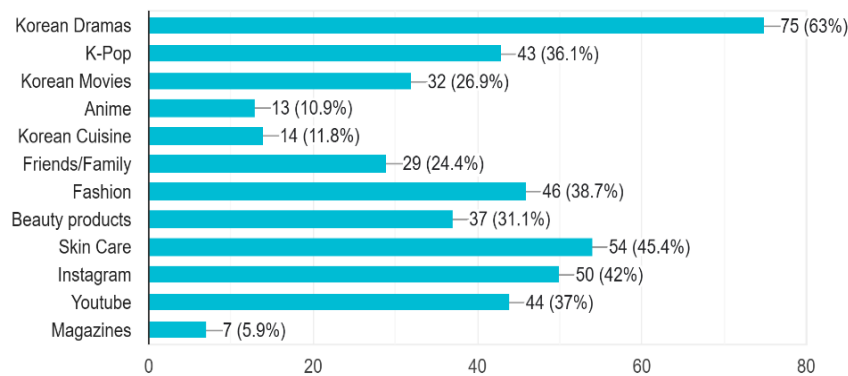


According to the findings, 56.1% ( $n=119$ ) of respondents were familiar with Korean culture, whereas 43.9% ( $n=93$ ) said they were not. This indicates that the populace polled has come to recognize Korean culture to a significant extent. There is still need for more cultural exposure and transmission, though, as evidenced by the sizable percentage of responders who are ignorant.



**Duration of Exposure to Korean Culture**

The graph displays the duration, 119 respondents who were aware of Korean culture have been exposed to Korean culture. The majority (34.5%) have been exposed to Korean culture for less than a year, followed by those who have been exposed for three to five years (31.1%) and one to two years (27.7%). Just 5% of people have been exposed for six to eight years, and only 1% to 2% have been exposed for more than eight years. This suggests that Korean culture is becoming more and more popular in recent years, as the majority of responders are relatively new fans



**Sources of awareness for Korean culture among GenZ females in Surat**

The graph displays how 119 participants were exposed to Korean culture. The most influential source, according to the majority of respondents (63%), was Korean dramas. Skin care (45.4%), Instagram (42%), fashion (38.7%), YouTube (37%), and K-pop (36.1%) come next, demonstrating the significant influence that digital media and lifestyle trends have in promoting Korean culture. The contributions from other sources, including Korean films (26.9%), friends and family (24.4%), Korean food (11.8%), manga (10.9%), and periodicals (5.9%), were relatively lower. Overall, the results indicate that the main ways that Gen-Z in Surat are exposed to Korean culture are through Korean entertainment and social media.

## 2. Relationship between Area of Living in Surat and Awareness of Korean Culture

**H0:** There is **no significant relationship** between the area of living in Surat and the awareness of Korean culture.

**H1:** There is a **significant relationship** between the area of living in Surat and the awareness of Korean culture.

**Table 1 - Result of Pearson Chi-square Test**

Statistical Parameter	Value
Chi-Square Statistic	15.1171
Degrees of Freedom (df)	8
p-value	0.0569
Result	Not Significant (at 5% level)

*n=212 respondents*

Since the p - value (0.0569) is greater than the standard alpha level of 0.05, we fail to reject the Null Hypothesis (H0). This means there is **no statistically significant** relationship between the area of living and cultural awareness.

It is worth noting that the p-value is very close to 0.05. This "marginal significance" suggests that while there isn't a strong rule, certain areas like the Central Zone and South West Zone show noticeably higher awareness ratios, while the North Zone and South Zone A show slightly more people who are unaware.

### 3. Respondents Average rating for various Korean Categories out of 5

**Table 2 - Results for Mean Opinion Score**

Korean Category	Average Rating
Entertainment Media	3.79 / 5.0
Clothes & Fashion	3.75 / 5.0
Beauty Products	3.63 / 5.0
Food	3.54 / 5.0

*n=119 respondents who are aware about Korean Culture*

**Media is the Lead Driver:** Entertainment (K-Dramas/Music) has the highest average rating, confirming it as the primary "hook" that draws people into the culture.

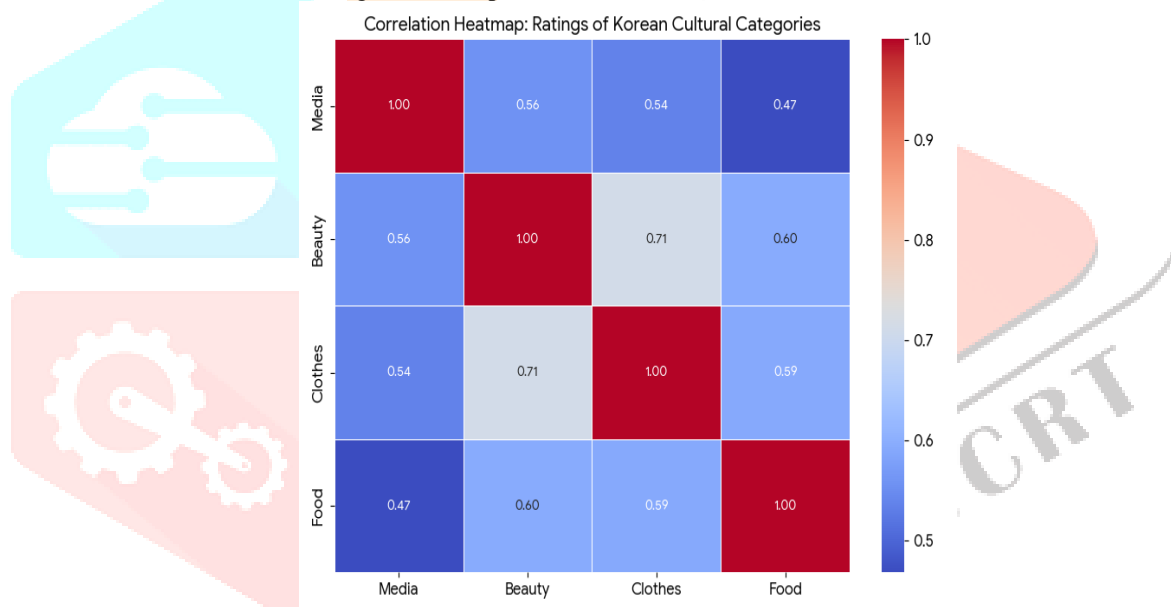
**Fashion is a Close Second:** There is very little gap between Media and Clothes (3.79 vs 3.75). This suggests that the visual style seen in media is highly desirable and well-received when translated into clothing.

**Consistency Across the Board:** All categories scored above a 3.5, which indicates a "Good to Very Good" overall brand image for Korean products in Surat. No single category is lagging significantly.

**The Food "Gap":** While Food has the lowest score, it's still a respectable 3.54. However, the lower response count suggests that while people like it, there is still a barrier to *entry* or *accessibility* for Korean food in Surat compared to watching a drama or buying a skin mask.

#### Correlation Heatmap

This test identifies how closely linked the ratings of different Korean cultural categories are. A value of **1.00** indicates a perfect link, while values closer to **0.70** show a strong relationship.



The "**Aesthetic Duo**" (Beauty & Clothes): Beauty Products and Clothes have the highest correlation (0.71) throughout your entire study. This implies that Surat respondents tend to embrace the full "Korean Look" rather than just one. If people think highly of fashion, they nearly invariably think highly of beauty items as well.

The "**K-Lifestyle**" Cluster: Clothes and Food (0.59) and Beauty and Food (0.60) are significantly correlated. This suggests that the K-Wave is a lifestyle choice for a significant portion of Gen-Z, where interest in food is linked to interest in clothing.

**Media as the Influencer:** Beauty (0.56) and Clothes (0.54) have a moderate correlation with interest in media. This provides statistical evidence for the "Halo Effect" idea, which holds that watching K-dramas or music videos improves one's opinion of Korean consumer goods.

**The Food Gap:** Of all the categories, there is the poorest correlation (0.47) between media and food. This demonstrates that although the media may encourage consumers to sample the meal, the food's real ranking is more independent of whether or not they enjoy the dramas.



#### 4. Relationship between Annual Income level and Yearly Expenditure on Korean Beauty products, Food and Clothes

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no relationship between Annual income level and yearly expenditure on Korean Beauty Products, food and Clothes  
**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is significant relationship between Annual income level and yearly expenditure on Korean Beauty Products, food and Clothes

**Table 3 – Results of Pearson Chi-Square Test at significance level of 0.05**

Category	p-value	Result
Beauty Products	0.350	Not Significant
Korean Food	0.665	Not Significant
Korean Clothes	0.112	Not Significant

*n = 119 respondents who are aware about Korean Culture*

Based on the results above, here is how annual family income relates to yearly expenditure of GenZ females in different categories of Korean Culture

**Beauty Products (p = 0.350):** Korean beauty product spending is still mostly unaffected by family income. Regardless of how much money their family makes, the majority of respondents stay in the ₹0–₹1,000 annual spending range. This implies that rather than being a luxury habit that increases with affluence, Korean beauty care is today seen as an approachable entry-level interest.

**Korean Food (p = 0.665):** The association between this category and income is the weakest. In the lowest category of ₹0–₹2,000 spending is nearly constant across all income levels. This suggests that Korean cuisine is probably enjoyed in Surat as a “casual trend” or as an inexpensive, infrequent pleasure that doesn’t demand a lot of extra money.

**Korean Clothes (p = 0.112):** Compared to the other two categories, fashion has the largest potential correlation with income, although not being statistically significant. The majority of respondents still spend very little, but there is a little discernible shift as those with higher incomes enter the ₹3,000–₹6,000 and ₹6,000–₹10,000 expenditure groups.

#### 5. Influence of watching Korean Media on consumption pattern of Korean Beauty products

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant association between the frequency of watching Korean media and the consumption patterns of Korean beauty care products among Gen-Z females in Surat city.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** The frequency of watching Korean media significantly influences the consumption patterns of Korean beauty care products among Gen-Z in Surat city.

**Table 4**

Tests Applied	Value	Conclusion
Pearson Chi-Square	p = 0.007	The relationship is <b>Highly Significant</b> (not a fluke).
Cramer's V	0.278	The relationship has a <b>Large Effect Size</b> (it is a major driver).
Spearman's rho correlation coefficient	0.170	The trend is <b>Positive</b> (more media leads more usage).

*n = 119 respondents who are aware about Korean Culture*

The table provides a complete statistical profile of how Korean Media Exposure drives Beauty Product Consumption among Gen-Z in Surat. Here is the brief interpretation:

**High Reliability (p = 0.007):** The relationship is **Highly Significant**. There is a 99.3% probability that watching K-media directly affects beauty habits. This means findings are not a coincidence; the "K-Drama effect" is a real, measurable phenomenon in Surat.

**Strong Impact (Cramer's V = 0.278):** This indicates a **Large Effect Size**. It proves that media exposure isn't just a minor hobby it is one of the most powerful predictors of whether a person will use Korean skincare or makeup.

**Positive but Complex Trend (Spearman's rho Correlation coefficient= 0.170):** The **positive** value confirms that more media exposure leads to more consumption. However, because this value is lower than the Cramer's V, it suggests the relationship is **non-linear**. For example, even a small amount of high-quality exposure (like a viral trend) might trigger a big jump in usage, rather than it being a simple one-to-one increase.

#### 6. Influence of watching Korean Media on consumption pattern of Korean Cuisine

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is **no significant relationship** between the frequency of watching Korean media and the consumption pattern of Korean cuisine among Gen-Z in Surat.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a **significant positive relationship** between the frequency of watching Korean media and the consumption pattern of Korean cuisine among Gen-Z in Surat.

Table 5

Tests Applied	Value	Conclusion
Pearson Chi-Square	$p = 0.078$	The relationship is <b>Marginally Significant</b> (not a fluke, but influenced by other factors like availability)
Cramer's V	0.245	Media remains a <b>strong motivator</b> for food interest
Spearman's rho correlation coefficient	0.071	While the direction is positive, the low value suggests that food habits are interrupted by other factors like price or taste.

*n = 119 respondents who are aware about Korean Culture*

The table provides a complete statistical profile of how Korean Media Exposure drives Korean Food Consumption among Gen-Z females in Surat. Here is the brief interpretation

**Moderate Reliability ( $p = 0.078$ ):** The relationship is **Marginally Significant**. While the p-value is slightly above the strict 0.05 indicating a clear and observable trend. This suggests that while media exposure definitely influences food choices, the connection is not as absolute as it is for beauty products, likely due to external factors like local restaurant availability or specific taste preferences in Surat.

**Substantial Impact (Cramer's  $V = 0.245$ ):** This proves that for Gen-Z individuals who do consume Korean food, their media habits are one of the most powerful predictors of that behaviour. It confirms that the "K-Wave" is a primary motivator rather than a secondary influence.

**Positive but Weak Trend (Spearman's rho Correlation coefficient = 0.071):** The positive value confirms a **direct relationship**, meaning that as media consumption increases, food consumption tends to follow. However, because this value is much lower than the Cramer's V, it suggests the relationship is highly **non-linear and inconsistent**. For instance, a person might watch K-dramas daily but only eat the food occasionally due to high prices or lack of nearby options, making the day-to-day connection feel weaker.

#### 7. Impact of Korean Culture Exposure Duration on Perception that Korean industry have a significant position in India

**H0:** The length of exposure to Korean Culture significantly affect the perception of the significant position of Korean industry in India

**H1:** The length of exposure to Korean Culture does not significantly affect the perception of the significant position of Korean industry in India

Table 6

Mann-Whitney U	31.500
Wilcoxon W	892.500
Z	-.705
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.481
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.602 <sup>b</sup>

*n = 119 respondents who are aware about Korean Culture*

The above table ( $Z = -0.705$  and,  $p$  value = 0.481) show that the period of exposure has no statistically significant impact on cultural perception. Since the  $p$  value is well above the 0.05 threshold, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, suggesting that the length of time a person exposed to Koreana Culture does not fundamentally alter their view of the culture having significant position in India.

#### VIII. KEY FINDINGS

- There is no statistically significant relationship between a respondent's area of residence and their cultural awareness. However, a marginal trend suggests higher awareness in the Central and South West Zones compared to the North and South Zone A.
- Spending on Korean products is largely independent of family income. Most respondents spend minimally regardless of wealth, making K-beauty an "accessible entry-level interest" rather than a luxury. Consumption is seen as a "casual trend" with consistent low spending across all income levels.
- There is a very high correlation between interest in Korean Beauty and Korean Clothes. Respondents in Surat tend to embrace the full aesthetic rather than choosing just one category.
- A significant "Lifestyle Cluster" exists where interest in Food is moderately linked to both Beauty and Clothes, suggesting that the K-Wave is adopted as a holistic lifestyle choice.
- Watching K-dramas and listening to K-pop serves as a primary influencer for consumer habits.
- Media has the weakest correlation with Food, while dramas might encourage someone to try a dish.
- Media exposure is a highly significant predictor of beauty product usage while it moderately influence consumption Korean food.

8. The length of time a person has been exposed to Korean culture does not significantly impact their perception of Korea's industrial position in India.

## IX. CONCLUSION

Driven mostly by a "Visual-to-Consumption" pipeline, the K-Wave has transformed from a digital trend into a dominant lifestyle force among Gen-Z ladies in Surat. According to statistical data, there is a strong correlation between media exposure and the uptake of K-Beauty, making Korean goods affordable for people of all income levels. Cultural perception, on the other hand, is developed nearly instantly and does not change over time. When local availability moderates' high interest, there is a "Food Gap." In the end, the Korean sector has established an aspirational market position in Surat, where the media serves as the main driver of comprehensive lifestyle shifts in fashion, food, and beauty.

## X. FUTURE SCOPE OF STUDY

To find out if these consumption habits are the same across India's many cultural regions, future research might compare Surat with other Tier-2 Indian cities.

Research on how the "K-Wave" affects Indian Gen-Z men's grooming practices, fashion preferences, and sense of masculinity could be extended to male demographics.

Research might examine whether the growing interest in learning Hangul, which indicates greater cultural integration in India, is directly influenced by media consumption.

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