

K-pop and Celebrity Luxury Brands Endorsements: Influence on Luxury Goods Purchasing Intention Among Spanish Gen Z K-pop Fans Review

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to study the influence of K-pop celebrity endorsements of luxury brands on the purchasing intentions of Spanish Generation Z fans. It combines quantitative data from an online survey with qualitative insights from an in-depth interview with a Spanish K-pop artist. The findings reveal that K-pop idols significantly impact the purchasing behavior of Spanish Gen Z fans, with 55% of participants having purchased products endorsed by their favorite idols. The study underscores the emotional connection and loyalty fans have towards K-pop idols, which translates into solid support for the endorsed luxury brands. Gender differences were noted, with female fans showing higher purchasing intentions influenced by celebrity endorsements. The study accentuates the pivotal role of social media in magnifying the impact of K-pop endorsements. Many fans, driven by idol endorsements, follow luxury brands online. These insights underscore the immense power of K-pop celebrity endorsements as a marketing strategy for luxury brands targeting the Gen Z demographic. The study calls for further research to explore the long-term implications of luxury brand loyalty and consumer behavior, highlighting this topic's ongoing relevance and importance.

Keywords: Luxury Brand Marketing, Celebrity Luxury Brand Endorsement, Spanish K-pop Fans, Luxury Purchase Intention, Gen Z.

INTRODUCTION

K-pop, short for Korean Pop, is part of the Hallyu Wave, a term used to describe the international spread of Korean cultural products such as music and television drama series called K-drama (Madrid-Morales & Lovric, 2015); it is a popular genre of music that originated in South Korea, characteristic for having visually appealing music videos, choreographed dance routines, and catching melodies. It combines various musical styles, like hip-hop, R&B, electronic dance music, and pop, that fulfill the complex desires of various consumer groups and maximizes capitalist profits (Ardhiyansyah, Maharani, Sari, & Mansur, 2021).

Most of the Western population first experienced the genre with the 2012 viral sensation “Gangnam Style” (Wirth, 2020) by Korean singer PSY. Although they did not understand the lyrics, the song inspired social media trends, especially short-length videos of people dancing and singing along clips. The younger generation has undoubtedly been incredibly receptive to K-pop and contributed to its diffusion and success in Spain. K-pop's innovative music production and strong social media presence have helped increase the genre's popularity with Generation Z in Spain and worldwide.

It is a well-known fact that celebrities' charisma and influence can shape consumer perception and purchase choices and elevate brand recognition. Luxury brands can effectively communicate their values and create emotional connections with consumers by leveraging celebrities' fame, influence, and aspirational qualities. Brand ambassadors enable consumers to associate personality traits and personify the brand by embodying the ambassador's recognizable and relatable characteristics (Siharath, 2021). This research examines whether the marketing strategy of celebrity luxury brand endorsements and ambassadors, particularly Korean pop stars, impacts Spanish K-pop fans, particularly Generation Z fans' purchase intention for luxury goods.

Celebrity endorsements are a marketing strategy brands use to improve advertisement effectiveness (Yang, 2022) and increase the brand's awareness and credibility (Nabil et al., 2022). On the other side, a celebrity brand ambassador is a similar marketing strategy; both make use of a celebrity image to promote a brand or product, but with a difference: being an ambassador for a brand means not only advertising for it but representing the brand image and values, adapting them as own, serving as a spokesperson for the brand. When a celebrity becomes a brand ambassador, the ambassador's actions and image influence the brand's behavior, performance, and reputation (Siharath, 2021). Throughout this investigation, both terms will be used interchangeably since K-pop idols serve as both; the difference is more contractual, and there is a fine line between when the idols are endorsers or ambassadors for a luxury brand.

Without much research on K-pop and celebrity endorsements in Spain, the present investigation aims to provide valuable insights regarding the efficiency of such marketing strategies in shaping Spanish K-pop fans' purchasing intentions for luxury goods. Most of the articles and research papers consulted for the literature review of this paper are grounded on different aspects of K-pop from a general approach, being that most investigations made have been from an Asian or American landscape, and results cannot be generalized to the Spanish fans because of the cultural differences. It is important to note that the primary target customers for the luxury brands participating in the K-pop star ambassador strategy are Chinese, a prominent player in the luxury market accounting for 35% of global sales (Yao, 2023), and Korean. These countries represent two of the biggest markets for luxury goods consumers, mostly due to their cultural association of luxury with social status and increasing purchasing power.

Research Objectives and Research Question

The present research aims to understand the Spanish Generation Z K-pop fan community and whether their purchase intentions of luxury products have been influenced by their favorite K-pop stars. It is divided into three main objectives, two of which have their own sub-objectives to help with the research's structure and the design of the investigation methods used. In this section, we can also find the questions this research tries to answer.

Objective 1: Explore the perspectives of Spanish Gen Z K-pop enthusiasts, examining the significance of K-pop in their lives. Analyze the influence of K-pop on their personal style evolution, assess their motivations for learning Korean, and express a desire to visit Korea inspired by their idols.

Objective 2: Examine the consumer behavior of Spanish Gen Z K-pop fans regarding their purchasing habits influenced by K-pop idols. Determine the extent of their expenditure on K-pop-related goods, including albums, merchandise, lightsticks, concerts, and photo cards. Explore the perception of Spanish Generation Z K-pop fans on brand endorsements and luxury brand ambassadors in the K-pop scene.

Objective 3: Explore the perception of Spanish Generation Z K-pop fans on brand endorsements and luxury brand ambassadors in the K-pop scene. Assess their inclination toward purchasing luxury products endorsed by K-pop idols, exploring whether they have purchased or are considering purchasing such items. Investigate the phenomenon of purchasing similar but lower-priced products of luxury items due to idol influence among Spanish Gen Z K-pop fans.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Celebrity brand endorsement, a marketing strategy harnessing a celebrity's influence to promote products or services, has evolved as a persuasive tool that enhances brand awareness and credibility by fostering consumer identification with the featured celebrity (Nabil et al., 2022).

Since the early 1900s, celebrities, including actors, athletes, and royalty, have frequently featured in advertisements spanning various product categories, from beauty to household items. These collaborations capitalize on renowned figures' widespread appeal and influence to engage a broader audience and generate positive consumer responses toward the advertisement and the endorsed product (W. Lee & Um, 2014).

Luxury products are high-quality, expensive goods that may not be a day-to-day necessity but represent the buyer's status (Zhang & Cude, 2018). These goods can exhibit a positive correlation between price and utility (Yao, 2023) and are often used to express self-attitude and social status (Yang, 2022). Consumers of luxury goods seek status, self-expression, and emotional connections with brands.

Luxury brands can develop strong connections with consumers through ambassadors with a high-level recognition factor and big fan armies (Chitrakorn, 2021). Especially in today's digital era, characterized by technological advancements and social media's pervasive reach, brands can effortlessly target specific demographics, further amplifying the impact of celebrity endorsements. K-pop artists are used as brand ambassadors of international luxury brands, helping the brands reach a younger global audience (Gutiérrez Ravé Villalón, 2023).

Celebrity Luxury Brands Endorsements and their Impact on Consumer Purchasing Intention

Celebrity brand endorsements help influence consumers' purchasing intentions toward a brand or product. Nabil et al. (2022) defined purchase intentions as the intention to purchase or obtain a product or service, thus reflecting the consumer's desire to purchase a specific product from a specific brand. Consumers make buying decisions based on specific impulses and motives (Annissa & Paramita, 2021), with familiarity and trust being two.

In the luxury sector, celebrity endorsement happens with partnerships between high-profile celebrities and luxury brands, where celebrities leverage their fame to promote and represent the brand's product, business, or services (Nabil et al., 2022). These endorsements aim to elevate the brand's prestige, attract affluent consumers, and create aspirational value by associating the image of exclusivity and prestige with the celebrity's glamour, sophistication, and desirability. These high-profile celebrities have a global fan base, allowing luxury brands to reach a broader audience and expand their international presence. Celebrity endorsers can significantly amplify the brand's visibility and recognition on a global scale (Nabil et al., 2022).

In this sense, celebrities often serve as aspirational figures for consumers, embodying qualities like success, attractiveness, and lifestyle that consumers admire or wish to emulate (M. Özer, Özer, Ekinci, & Koçak, 2022). This aspirational appeal can create a positive association between the celebrity and the endorsed brand, influencing consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards the product or service. The bigger the emotional and cognitive bond the consumer forms with the celebrity, the more they are attached to celebrities and brands, and the more loyal they become to the latter (M. Özer et al., 2022).

To maximize the benefits of such endorsements, the celebrity should not endorse too many products or competing brands (Khan, Memon, & Kumar, 2019); the brands also face challenges such as maintaining authenticity, avoiding overexposure and over-reliance on celebrities, managing potential risks to brand reputation from celebrity controversies and scandals, and ensuring ethical advertising practices must be navigated carefully.

Spry, Pappu, and Bettina Cornwell (2011) suggest that the endorser's credibility indirectly impacts brand equity when this relationship is mediated by brand credibility. It also suggests that a celebrity endorser should be perceived as credible based on their attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness. The same results can be found in Sufian's (2021) study and Nabil et al. (2022): celebrity luxury brand endorsement has an impact on purchase intention, especially when measuring the aspects of celebrity endorsement, which are celebrity credibility, celebrity expertise, product-celebrity match-up, physical attractiveness, and trustworthiness.

It is essential to understand that cultural factors play a significant role in influencing luxury celebrity endorsements. Some cultures have different perceptions of luxury products or services and celebrity status, making the objectives of the marketing strategy distinct (Hennigs et al., 2012).

For example, South Korean luxury goods consumers are driven by increased purchasing power, desire to show off, and outwardly exhibit social standing (A. Kim, McInerney, Smith, & Yamakawa, 2020). Korea's luxury market growth stems from the middle class's desire to reflect their increased richness and social status.

In China, celebrity endorsements help build a strong brand image, where the perception of luxury is closely linked to social status and prestige. Being desired to be admired and accepted as a member of an elite group is a reason for buying luxury products (Liang, Ghosh, & Oe, 2017). Chinese society's collectivist nature is a key factor where the opinions and behaviors of others significantly impact individuals. This dynamic is particularly evident in the realm of celebrity influence, where endorsements hold significant sway in shaping consumer preferences.

Generation Z

Generation Z represents a significant and influential population segment shaping cultural, technological, and social trends (Aristizábal González, Moreno Carmona, Santana, & Villamil Tovar, 2021), Gen Z is a generation marked by technological advances, unlimited access to the internet and information, and the arrival of new means of communication. Gen Z is known for online social interactions, using technology and social media platforms for

connectivity and self-expression, and the capacity to create inclusive and supportive communities where they feel they belong.

Gen Z is committed to social justice, sustainability, and inclusivity and advocates for causes like climate change and LGBTQ+ rights (McKinsey & Company, 2023). Gen Z flocks to corners of the internet to discuss their passions and interests with those who share them, like K-pop fans. They bond with people they know and those they have only met online (McKinsey & Company, 2023). Their influence is seen in their entertainment choices, favoring streaming services and platforms like Instagram and TikTok, and in their contributions to art, music, and fashion.

As stated in Statista's (2023) report, the global luxury goods market is projected to grow from US\$354.8 billion in 2023 to US\$418.9 billion by 2028, driven by factors like increased spending from China and the U.S., the influence of millennials and Gen Z, and the resilience of online channels.

Although young, they exhibit interest in the luxury goods market; in fact, D'Arpizio, Levato, Steiner, and Montgolfier (2024) predict that by 2030, the luxury goods market will reshape, and one of the factors is that the younger generation (Generations Y, Z, and Alpha) are set to become the biggest buyers of luxury, representing almost the 85% of global purchases. The younger consumers of the luxury market, Millennials and Generation Z, 2025 will represent 55% of the market (Yang, 2022). Generation Z purchases luxury goods three to five times faster than millennials (Harlow, 2023) and prefers brands that show a personality and uniqueness but are also well-known and recognized (A. Kim et al., 2020).

Background: K-pop Global Phenomenon and K-pop Stars Luxury Brand Endorsements

The K-pop phenomenon, extending beyond its musical origins, has significantly influenced popular culture, particularly in fashion and luxury branding. With their vast global following and popularity, attracting younger customers and key opinion leaders (Lazazzera, 2022), K-pop idols are highly sought-after endorsers for luxury brands, blending the sophistication of high fashion with the dynamic world of K-pop.

Langer (2024) affirmed, that connecting with a dynamic, youthful pop culture assists legacy brands in appealing to the Gen-Z audience. Endorsements by K-pop idols inject luxury brands with a fresh and vibrant allure, drawing in a new wave of consumers inspired by their idols' lifestyles and fashion statements. The aspirational allure of these collaborations cultivates brand loyalty and stimulates consumer interest in owning luxury items endorsed by their favorite idols, influencing buying choices and shaping brand perceptions.

In recent years, the global appeal of the genre has been linked not only to the different influences in music but also to technology and social media content distribution (Madrid-Morales & Lovric, 2015). K-pop has gained more popularity globally, attracting a dedicated fanbase known for its passion and loyalty to its favorite artist or band. This success can be attributed to factors like the convergence of social media platforms high-quality production values, distinctive sounds, and the charisma K-pop idols show in their performances (S. Lee & Nomes, 2015).

Luxury brands collaborate strategically with K-pop idols, capitalizing on their star appeal and fashion-forward image. Joint campaigns often spotlight idols in exclusive photo shoots, fashion shows, and marketing events, presenting the brand's latest offerings while embodying luxury and refinement through the idol's distinctive flair and charm. These collaborations are crucial in helping the brands win over Asian consumers and Gen Z in general (Langer, 2021).

Endorsements by K-pop idols inject luxury brands with a fresh and vibrant allure, drawing in a new wave of consumers inspired by their idols' lifestyles and fashion statements. The aspirational allure of these collaborations cultivates brand loyalty and stimulates consumer interest in owning luxury items endorsed by their favorite idols, influencing buying choices and shaping brand perceptions (Tan, 2022). Reading about products from brands that K-pop idols collaborate with being sold out is common. For example, Louis Vuitton's \$1,330 carrot pouch sold out after being seen in a selfie posted by Korean group BTS member RM (Tan, 2022).

However, while the partnership between K-pop idols and luxury brands presents significant opportunities, it also challenges authenticity and cultural awareness. Making a forced collaboration that does not feel natural can destroy more brand equity that it creates (Langer, 2021). Brands must ensure a genuine alignment between the idol's persona and the brand's values to connect authentically with fans and navigate cultural nuances to avoid potential missteps that could alienate diverse audiences.

Brand Notoriety, Brand Awareness, and K-pop Marketing

Notoriety in marketing is consumers' knowledge of a particular brand. When many users know that a brand exists, this notoriety is high. In this way, notoriety implies the ease with which a brand remains in the consumer's mind. In contrast, Brand Awareness consists of not only the consumers knowing about the brand but also how well they know it. Celebrity endorsements will boost business brand awareness (Annissa & Paramita, 2021).

The brand image is how consumers think of a brand and is defined as customers' perception of the Brand (Annisia & Paramita, 2021). This image is formed by designing a communication strategy that helps consumers understand the brand's characteristics.

In K-pop, brand image is the principal strategy for promoting the artists, creating a unique style, personality, story, and concepts for each group and idol that can differentiate them from the others (Gómez-Marbán, 2023). The term idol is used to represent the idea of a role model, an aspirational figure who evokes admiration and respect. Trzcińska (2018) explained that each one of the groups formed in K-pop has a central concept; some are cute, some funny, others mysterious, good boys, good girls, sexy, high schoolers, or mature, depending on which connects to their target/fan group age. The central concept stays the same but suffers variations each time a new release occurs after a short break. In this sense, K-pop idols do not just release music and albums; they make "comebacks," meaning they introduce a new concept.

The concept involves all the elements linked to the "comeback" or music release: the video, the clothes, the make-up, the hairstyles, the song genre, the dance routines, the album packaging, such as colors, and even the stage performance and decorations (Ardhiyansyah et al., 2021).

Another marketing strategy K-pop employs is to create a close connection between the artist and the fans by interacting with fans through social media, streaming, live events, Q&As, showcases, fan signs, and fan meetings. This creates a parasocial relationship, primarily through social media, giving fans a sense of being friends and having an apparent unique relationship (Rodríguez-Castillo, 2020) with their favorite idols.

The Fans/Fandom

The primary demographic for K-pop is teens, particularly young females (Trzcińska, 2018), which coincides with a teenage propensity toward celebrity worship, which has been used to capture merchandising opportunities (Bland, 2019) and makes these idols the perfect platform to advertise products and services. They are highly loyal to their idols (Ardhiyansyah et al., 2021), with some having communities where they develop strategies to help their favorite K-pop idol or group sell out the product they are endorsing or wearing; this last one in hopes of giving them more opportunities for collaboration with brands, especially luxury brands.

K-pop fandoms are characterized by their passionate devotion and emotional connections to their favorite artists. Fans form deep-seated bonds with idols, identifying with their stories, personalities, and values. K-pop fans emphasize the importance of empathy and identification with the idol (Rodríguez-Castillo, 2021), and this emotional connection fosters strong loyalty, driving them to support idols through album purchases, concert attendance, and engagement in endorsed products. They prefer brands endorsed by idols, buying cosmetics, fashion items, and accessories to emulate their style. This boosts sales and visibility for the group as fans actively promote endorsed products.

With their community, K-pop fans laboriously work as prosumers and produce various content (Williams & Ho, 2016; Abidin & Lee, 2023) by organizing themselves to create content about their group, like translating the song lyrics into different languages and sharing fan-made videos of their idols, such as stage performance videos focused on an individual group member (P. Kim & Hutt, 2021).

As defined by Ardhiyansyah et al. (2021) research about the marketing tactics used in K-pop, fanaticism is characterized by an exceptional devotion to an object. This devotion involves both passion and dedication, with 'extraordinary' indicating something beyond the usual level. An example of fanaticism is seen in the K-pop fan community, where members actively share information about K-pop idols.

Social media streaming and engagement metrics are essential in the K-pop community to maintain the celebrity-fan relationship (Abidin & Lee, 2023). K-pop fans try to ensure that their favorite idols or groups are trending topics, lead the music charts, and sell stadiums (Coscarelli, 2020); they engage in specific practices like 'summing' ['스밍'], mass streaming and purchasing of digital releases, 'tupyong chonggong' ['투표총공'], coordinated voting for live music shows, and 'murukku chonggong' ['문구총공'], mass posting or searching to boost search trends, to demonstrate loyalty to their favorite K-pop stars and increase their visibility (Kim & Hutt, 2021). These efforts aim to grow the fan base for competitions. In return, K-pop stars offer exclusive opportunities, such as livestreaming events, to connect intimately with their fans.

Nevertheless, it is only sometimes a competition; K-pop fans love to spread and grow the genre following. They enjoy showing friends and family all about K-pop and their idols or educating others about it. Collaboration between fandoms is made to share the mutual support of the genre and the success of their favorite groups (Kang et al., 2021).

K-pop fan communities organize group orders (GO) to buy albums, merchandise, or other goods related to

their idols. The main reason to buy in bulk is to lessen the shipping cost and process, buy the goods directly from the country of origin, and get them cheaply (Pérez-Moya, 2022). The GOM, the Group Order Manager, makes and distributes the purchase.

It is essential to mention that K-pop fans do not always act in the best ways, and some practices can have negative connotations (Jung, 2012). Commenting and arguing online with other fandoms, other social media users or anti-fans, who can be former fans who started to dislike a show or artist after a change in the style they could not approve (Trzecińska, 2018), is common; K-pop fans tend to insist that their ideas and their favorite group are correct and ignore all the facts or arguments that do not align with their thoughts or beliefs (Chung, Beverland, Farrelly, & Quester, 2008).

Finally, we need to acknowledge the existence of "Sesaeng" fans, the obsessive stalker kind of fans who try, by all means, to become remembered by an idol. These fans not only invade the idol's private lives but also come up with other radical ideas, such as breaking in and installing CCTV cameras in idols' residencies, perusing them, sometimes causing accidents, or getting acquainted with the idol's family (Trzecińska, 2018).

The Stock Sold-out Effect

When a K-pop idol recommends or wears a product, it is often a guaranteed sell-out (Kandangwa, 2023). K-pop news source KpopStarz reporter Robyn Joan wrote in August 2022 that it is unsurprising that K-pop groups and solo artists wield significant influence, particularly the more popular ones. A prime example is when a product sells out or experiences a surge in sales after a favorite idol (bias) endorses it.

Mendoza (2023) named different times K-pop artists have been the reason for a sold-out product; some of the stars mentioned were K-pop idol Jungkook from the renowned band BTS, who was doing a live stream and talking with fans when his drinking mug became a hit. Fans flocked to e-commerce sites to buy it, making the product temporarily sold out and being re-stocked in different variations by the brand.

These instances showcase the significant economic influence of K-pop fans, highlighting their role as a formidable force in consumer activism and collective mobilization (Kim & Hutt, 2021).

Besides buying and streaming practices, K-pop fans enthusiastically engage in sociocultural activities, including fundraising, charitable donations, and volunteering during emergencies (Jung, 2012), in the name of their idols.

METHODOLOGY

The research strategy was meticulously crafted, employing two data collection methods that proved to be highly practical and efficient. These methods were selected with utmost care to ensure comprehensive insights into the phenomenon of K-pop fandom among participants, considering the researcher's practical limitations and the study's circumstances (Álvarez Rammos, Heredia Ponce, & Romero Oliva, 2019).

The online survey played a pivotal role in data collection. It was designed to capture participants' demographics, their level of engagement with K-pop, their purchasing behaviors influenced by K-pop idols, and their attitudes toward K-pop culture, providing crucial insights for the study.

Furthermore, a significant component of the research was an in-depth, semi-structured written interview with Xenia, a Spanish K-pop fan and artist. This interview was of utmost importance in exploring her experiences, motivations, and perceptions of K-pop as an artist and fan. The insights derived from this interview are of significant value in understanding the underlying factors that attract fans to Korean pop and Korean culture.

Research Sample

This study's sample consists mainly of Spanish Gen Z, aged between 12 and 23, who self-identify as K-pop fans. Although Generation Z's exact age range is not determined, and depending on the source, it can vary from 2 more years, this research considers the range 12 to 23 years old, but for data collection purposes, it permitted the participation of fans older than 23. The 107 participants in the online survey were recruited through K-pop fan communities and social media platforms.

Data Collection Process

The data collection process commenced with distributing the survey for two weeks through acquaintances on social media platforms, K-pop fan forums, and pertinent online communities. Participants' responses were

collected anonymously to ensure the preservation of confidentiality.

The research questionnaire, meticulously crafted to align with the three primary objectives of this investigation, is structured in blocks for a better analysis. This thoughtful organization ensures a comprehensive exploration of the perspectives of Spanish Gen Z K-pop enthusiasts, delving into the deep meaning of K-pop within their lives. It also allows for thorough scrutiny of the consumer behavior of Spanish Gen Z K-pop fans, mainly focusing on their purchasing habits influenced by K-pop idols. Finally, it seeks to expound on the perceptions of Spanish Generation Z K-pop fans concerning brand endorsements and the role of K-pop artists as luxury brand ambassadors, thus shedding light on the effect this aspect of the K-pop scene has on the fans.

RESULTS

As mentioned, the survey had three filters to collect the correct data from the desired target. For that reason, the sample dismayed in number throughout the process, starting with 107 participants, only 85 of them being part of the research target, Generation Z, and 73 whose favorite K-pop idol or group was an endorser or ambassador for a luxury brand. It is important to note that this last sample group, our primary focus, consists of individuals deeply interested in K-pop idols as endorsers and ambassadors for luxury brands, making it highly relevant to our research.

Quantitative Descriptive Statistics Analysis of the Survey

The data gathered through the survey indicated that boy groups are more popular; 55.29% answered that they follow mainly K-pop boy groups and 16.47% girl groups, while some participants stated that they follow both, together with K-pop solo artists. When asked what got their attention about K-pop, the main aspects were the music, visual aesthetic, and video clips. After becoming a K-pop fan, 23.80% participate in online K-pop communities to meet other fans and organize events and meetups.

The answers gathered from the second block of questions about the purchases and consumption related to K-pop indicated that the majority had purchased more than 15 K-pop albums; the main reason for purchasing is the extra content that comes with them, such as photo cards or song lyrics. 67.10% admitted using group orders to buy albums, and only 31.80% had bought light sticks from their favorite K-pop group.

When asked about how much they considered to have spent so far buying albums and products related to their favorite idol or group and going to concerts, the majority, 35.30%, stated to have spent more than 500€, 32.90% between 100€ and 400€, and 31.8€ between 50€ and 100€. 55% of the participants answered that they had purchased products from brands their favorite K-pop idol or group endorsed, while 45% said they had not made such purchases.

The third block of questions, designed to learn the sample perceptions of K-pop idol brand endorsements and luxury brand ambassadors and their buying intentions related to these brands, concluded that 84% believe that luxury brands use K-pop idols and groups to sell more, and 60% have become aware of such brands thanks to their favorite idol or group.

Regarding the questions explicitly related to the purchasing intention of luxury products, 67% admitted to having bought or would buy a product from a luxury brand so the brand could continue working with their favorite K-pop idol or group, and 33% answered not to 89% of the participants answered “yes” to buying the cheapest product from a luxury brand to support their favorite idol or group, and 11% answered no. When presented with the following statement, “If I had enough money, I would purchase a luxury product from the brand promoted by my favorite K-pop idol or group,” 31.50% and 28.80% agreed. In comparison, 9.60% and 8.20% disagreed, and 21.90% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Regarding the questions explicitly related to the purchasing intention of luxury products, 89% of the participants answered “yes” to buying the cheapest product from a luxury brand to support their favorite idol or group, and 11% answered no. To the affirmation of “If I had enough money, I would purchase a luxury product from the brand promoted by my favorite K-pop idol or group,” 31.50% and 28.80% agreed to the statement. In comparison, 9.60% and 8.20% disagreed, and 21.90% neither agreed nor disagreed.

To the question of whether they have bought a similar product to one from the brand their favorite idol or group is an endorser or ambassador of, 73.30% answered no, 17.80% said yes, and 6.80% admitted to having done so on several occasions. 37% and 9.60% indicated that they disagree with the statement, “If my favorite K-pop idol or group were not the image or ambassador of a luxury brand, I would not consider buying their products.” 19.20% agreed, while 34% neither agreed nor disagreed.

The answers to the last two survey questions intended to determine whether the participants followed luxury brands on social media because their favorite K-pop idol or group was the brand image or ambassador and what brands their favorite idol or group collaborates with. 44% answered yes to following the brands, 37% do not follow, and 19% have considered following.

In terms of which brands collaborate with the survey participants' favorite K-pop groups or idols, Louis Vuitton comes first with 20% of answers, followed by Dior with 18%, Celine with 14%, Chanel and Gucci with 11%, Prada with 9%, Bulgari with 3%, Valentino with 6%, Balmain with 3%, and Versace with 1%.

Quantitative Statistics Correlation Analysis of the Survey

To answer the research's main question and to determine if the Spanish K-pop fans, mainly Generation Z fans, intention to buy luxury brands products is affected by the fact that their favorite idol or group is an endorser or ambassador of the brand, we need to determinate if there is a relation between these two variables, for that purpose, a cross-tabulations relation analysis between relevant variables of the survey has been done with the use of IBM's statistics program, PSPP.

In data analysis, a relationship or relation is a fundamental concept that denotes the association or connection between two or more variables. This relationship can manifest as positive, negative, or neutral, and understanding it is key to interpreting data. The p-value, a pivotal measure in hypothesis testing, serves as a tool to measure the significance of results derived from statistical tests. It essentially indicates the likelihood of observing the obtained results, or results more extreme, under the assumption of the null hypothesis being true. In the context of this research, a p-value would signify whether the endorsement or ambassadorship of luxury brands by K-pop idols exerts any influence on the purchase intentions of Spanish Generation Z fans towards these brand products. Its primary function lies in discerning whether the outcomes of a study hold statistical significance.

On the other hand, Cramér's V emerges as an effect size metric associated with the chi-square test of independence. This metric plays a crucial role in data analysis as it quantifies the strength of association between two categorical variables, thereby elucidating their degree of correlation.

After explaining all the above, the analysis's results read as follows (**Table 1**):

Table 1. Variables Relation to Gender

Gender *	V Crammer	P Value
K-pop has changed dressing style and aesthetics in general	0.190	0.194
Have you purchased any product endorsed by a favorite K-pop idol or group	0.130	0.576
If my favorite K-pop idol or group were not the image or ambassador of a luxury brand, I would not consider buying their products	0.370	0.010

Almost half, 47.10%, of the sample, confessed to altering their dressing style and aesthetics upon embracing K-pop fandom. This substantial figure underlines the profound sway of K-pop culture, which extends beyond music to shape personal identity and expression.

The cross-tabulations of the gender variable with other crucial variables yield intriguing results: There appears to be a potential link between the change in style and aesthetics after becoming a K-pop fan and gender ($V=0.190$, $p=0.194$). While this connection is not yet statistically significant, it presents a promising trend that warrants deeper exploration.

Delving into the purchase of products endorsed by a beloved K-pop idol or group in relation to gender, the data uncovers a connection ($V=0.130$, $p=0.576$). While not statistically significant, this connection suggests that both male and female fans may be swayed by endorsements from their favorite idols, albeit to different degrees, underscoring the nuanced nature of K-pop's influence.

Notably, a robust and statistically significant correlation emerges between gender and the hesitance to consider buying a luxury product without their favorite idol or group's endorsement ($V=0.370$, $p=0.010$). This discovery suggests that female fans, in particular, may attach significant value to their favorite idols' endorsements, indicating a deeper level of brand loyalty and trust influenced by their beloved K-pop figures.

The relationship between age and the belief that luxury brands use K-pop idols to sell more is strong ($V=0.330$, $p=0.048$), indicating that younger fans are more likely to perceive luxury brands' strategic use of K-pop

idols to boost sales. This reflects an acute awareness of marketing tactics among the younger demographic.

On the other hand, there is no significant relationship between age and the likelihood of not considering purchasing a luxury product if their favorite idol or group is not an endorser or ambassador ($V=0.240$, $p=0.464$). This suggests that fans across different age groups may uniformly consider or dismiss the importance of idol endorsements when it comes to luxury purchases (see **Table 2** for details).

Additionally, there is no significant relationship between purchasing products endorsed by their favorite K-pop idol or group and the belief that luxury brands use K-pop idols or groups to sell more ($V=0.090$, $p=0.759$), indicating that the perception of luxury brands leveraging K-pop idols for sales only sometimes translates into purchasing behavior influenced by such endorsements (see **Table 3** for details).

Table 2. Variables Relation to Age

Age *	V Crammer	P Value
I believe luxury brands use K-pop idols to sell more	0.330	0.048
If my favorite K-pop idol or group were not the image or ambassador of a luxury brand, I would not consider buying their products	0.240	0.464

Table 3. Variables Relation to Have you Purchased any Products Endorsed by Favorite K-pop Idol or Group

Have you purchased any products endorsed by favorite K-pop idol or group*	V Crammer	P Value
I believe luxury brands use K-pop idols to sell more	0.090	0.7590

The analysis found that not considering purchasing a luxury product if their favorite idol or group was not an endorser or ambassador had a strong relationship with considering buying a luxury brand product to have something in common with their favorite K-pop idol or group ($V=0.370$, $p=0.090$), indicating that fans who are unwilling to buy luxury products without their idol's endorsement are also likely to buy such products to feel a connection with their idols, reflecting a deep emotional engagement with their favorite K-pop figures.

Additionally, there is a strong relationship between not considering purchasing a luxury product without their favorite idol's endorsement and having purchased the cheapest product from a luxury brand to support their favorite K-pop artist ($V=0.36$, $p=0.055$). This suggests that fans who prioritize idol endorsements are also inclined to make minimal purchases from luxury brands to show support for their favorite K-pop artists, even if it involves buying lower-cost items (see **Table 4** for details).

Table 4. Variables Relation to f My Favorite K-pop Idol or Group were not the Image or Ambassador of a Luxury Brand, I would not Consider Buying their Products

If my favorite K-pop idol or group were not the image or ambassador of a luxury brand, I would not consider buying their products*	V Crammer	P Value
Considered purchasing a product from a luxury brand to have something in common with my favorite K-pop idol or group	0.370	0.090
Have purchased the cheapest product from the brand to support them	0.360	0.055

The analysis indicates that the variables with the most significant association are the desire to purchase a luxury brand product to have something in common with their favorite K-pop idol or group and the inclination to buy a luxury brand product promoted by their favorite K-pop artist if they had enough money ($V=0.430$, $p=0.001$). This strong relationship underscores a deep-seated motivation among fans to connect with their idols through luxury brand purchases. Fans who consider purchasing luxury brand products to connect with their favorite K-pop idols are also highly likely to express a willingness to buy these products if they have the financial means. It highlights the aspirational aspect of their consumer behavior, which is driven by the influence of idol endorsements. The significant association suggests that these fans are not only emotionally invested in their idols but also view luxury brand purchases as a tangible way to emulate and support their idols (see **Table 5** for details).

Table 5. Variables Relation to If I had Enough Money, I would Purchase a Luxury Product from the Brand Promoted by My Favorite K-pop Idol or Group

If I had enough money, I would purchase a luxury product from the brand promoted by my favorite K-pop idol or group	V Cramer	P Value
Considered purchasing a product from a luxury brand to have something in common with my favorite K-pop idol or group	0.430	0.001

This finding is particularly relevant for luxury brands seeking to tap into the K-pop market. It demonstrates that effective marketing strategies involving K-pop idols can significantly impact purchasing intentions, especially among fans who aspire to align themselves with their idols' lifestyles. Brands that leverage K-pop endorsements can thus cultivate a loyal customer base that is both emotionally and financially motivated to engage with their products.

Qualitative Analysis: Interview

A written interview was conducted with Spanish artist Xenia to learn more about K-pop and its fans, especially Spanish fans. Apart from being the first Spanish artist to sing and perform in a K-pop style, Xenia belongs to the older Generation Z demographic of K-pop fans. The interview intends to provide a more in-depth and personal perspective of a K-pop fan's experience and motivations; being the interviewee in some way part of the K-pop industry helped to get more unique information.

Xenia, a 23-year-old artist from Barcelona, has been a dedicated K-pop fan since 2027. Her fascination with the genre was ignited by its vibrant choreographies, captivating performances, unique aesthetics, and the distinct focus on the entertainment industry in Korean culture. This love for K-pop, which she believes distinguishes it from other cultures, has been a pivotal force in shaping her artistic journey. K-pop has left an indelible mark on Xenia's creative expression, from being a fan to becoming an artist.

She stated that she feels more connected, in terms of music style, to boy groups, especially to her favorite groups, Stray Kids and Ateez, because "When all of them come to the stage, they make it theirs..." they do not feel intimidated by it, and it is something she also feels like the stage is her second home, and she gives it all. Xenia is not new to stages and performances; she attended one of Barcelona's top dance academies, Coco Comín, where she loved Pop music, especially from the United States, but felt like something was missing in the performances and stage presentation. After discovering K-pop, she started to pay more attention to the choreographies, stage presence and looks. K-pop has helped her find her sound and not feel afraid to be different.

When asked about how she felt about being the first Spanish artist with a K-pop music style, she stated:

"Being a pioneer in something always brings with it a mix of excitement and responsibility! As the first Spanish artist whose music is KPOP style, I feel like I'm on an adventure that fills me with emotion and wonder...However, it also has its difficulties because, being the first, it is always difficult to open the way; You encounter many obstacles. I have felt a mix of both things. Some people see this as something innovative and are interested in/support it, and others criticize it (everything new and different, and people usually reject it until it is consolidated). But as the saying goes: 'For tastes, colors'".

Regarding the opportunities K-pop had brought to her, she explained that she was able to start her music career after dancing in public and doing dance covers of K-pop songs, later performing in official K-pop events and contests, creating the online community that supports her, meeting one of her favorite artists, Jessi, dancing in her concert, and making friends with K-pop dancers who work with big names in the industry.

When asked about her social media followers, she said she is grateful to her fans, Xining, and sometimes felt pressured to create content, maintain her community, help it grow, or prepare and record her songs. About Spanish K-pop fans, she thinks what makes them different from other fans is their expressive and energetic nature.

Her opinion on the research topic, K-pop and luxury brand endorsements, is that the brand gets the most benefits from this marketing strategy for a young target. However, from the point of view of older demographics and brands, the artist gets the most benefits, as the artist can get more deals with the exposure.

To the question of if she has bought or would buy a product from a luxury brand because her favorite idol or group is the endorser or ambassador, she answered she only would buy a luxury brand product because of a necessity or utility; her favorite idol or group being endorser is a plus. Koreans, as a culture, are more inclined to buy luxury brand products to fit society and follow trends; when asked about her experience in Korea, she states that she has seen firsthand how Koreans use luxury brand products and somehow all have a similar style.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to explore the influence of K-pop celebrity endorsements on the luxury purchasing intentions of Spanish Generation Z fans. The findings reveal several key insights into the behaviors, perceptions, and motivations of this demographic, highlighting the powerful role of K-pop idols in shaping consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions.

Influence of K-pop on Consumer Behavior

The data collected through the survey indicates that K-pop celebrity endorsements significantly impact the purchasing intentions of Spanish Generation Z fans. This influence is deeply rooted in fans' emotional and parasocial connections with K-pop idols, often fostered through extensive social media engagement and content consumption. This emotional investment creates a profound loyalty and personal connection, leading to a strong inclination towards the idols' endorsed brands.

Quantitative data indicates that 55% of participants have purchased products endorsed by their favorite K-pop idols or groups. This finding aligns with existing literature, which suggests that celebrity endorsements can significantly enhance brand appeal and drive consumer purchases (Nabil et al., 2022). Furthermore, 67% of respondents expressed that they would buy a product from a luxury brand to support the ongoing collaboration with their favorite idols, reflecting the profound emotional connection fans have with their idols. The qualitative insights from the interview with Xenia, a Spanish K-pop artist, further highlight the significance of these endorsements. Importantly, Xenia's personal experiences and observations align seamlessly with the quantitative findings, reinforcing the robustness of our research and emphasizing the role of emotional and cultural connections in shaping purchasing decisions.

Participants demonstrated a high level of engagement with K-pop merchandise, particularly albums, driven by the desire for additional content such as photo cards. This highlights Gen Z's apparent preference for visual content (Álvarez et al., 2019). Notably, their initial attraction to the genre was influenced by its visual aesthetic and engaging video clips.

Gender and Purchasing Intentions

The relationship between gender and purchasing intentions was also examined. The analysis found a significant association between gender and the consideration of purchasing luxury products if endorsed by favorite K-pop idols ($V=0.037$, $p=0.001$). This indicates that female fans, who constituted 88.2% of the sample, are mainly influenced by celebrity endorsements in their purchasing decisions. This gender disparity highlights the need for luxury brands to effectively design their marketing strategies to target female consumers within the K-pop fanbase. It also suggests that female Gen Z fans are more likely to form emotional attachments to idols, influencing their purchasing behavior.

Economic Influence and Brand Loyalty

The economic influence of K-pop fans is evident from their willingness to invest in luxury products endorsed by their idols. The economic impact of K-pop endorsements on luxury brand sales is evident from the survey results. A significant proportion of fans (67%) expressed a willingness to purchase luxury products endorsed by their favorite idols if they had the financial means. This aspirational behavior reflects a desire to emulate K-pop idols' lifestyles and fashion choices, which luxury brands effectively capitalize on. The intense emotional bond between fans and idols translates into brand loyalty, with many fans willing to buy even the cheapest product from a luxury brand to support their idols. Notably, 35.3% of participants reported spending more than €500 on K-pop-related products, including albums, merchandise, and concert tickets.

Furthermore, 89% of respondents confessed to purchasing the least expensive luxury brand product to show their support for their favorite idol or group. This behavior underscores the fans' unwavering commitment to supporting their idols and the brands they endorse, fostering brand loyalty and repeat purchases. The financial commitment demonstrated by these fans is a clear indication that K-pop endorsements are not just a fleeting trend but a significant factor in their purchasing decisions, underscoring the economic impact of these endorsements.

As discussed in the literature, the 'stock sold-out' phenomenon is a powerful testament to the immediate sales impact of K-pop endorsements. Instances of luxury products flying off the shelves shortly after being endorsed by K-pop idols underscore the potency of these endorsements in driving immediate sales and creating a sense of urgency among fans.

Social Media and Brand Awareness

The role of social media in amplifying the impact of K-pop endorsements was also highlighted. Most participants (44%) follow luxury brands on social media because their favorite idols are brand ambassadors. This finding not only underscores the crucial role of digital marketing strategies in engaging with the Gen Z demographic but also emphasizes the active role of Gen Z on social media. This discovery is consistent with the existing literature on how social media increases brand awareness and engagement. Social media platforms provide a space for fans to interact with content related to their idols and their endorsements, thereby increasing brand visibility and appeal.

Brands can use social media to create compelling content and interactive campaigns that resonate with this tech-savvy audience. The data strongly suggests that social media platforms are not just a tool but a vital channel for building brand awareness and driving engagement among Gen Z consumers. This underscores the importance of utilizing these platforms in the brand's marketing strategies.

CONCLUSION

The study's findings hold significant implications for luxury brands. The intense emotional bonds that fans develop with K-pop idols drive their purchasing behavior, with many fans willing to buy products their idols endorse to feel a connection with them. K-pop fans' deep emotional connection and loyalty towards their idols translate into robust support for the brands these celebrities endorse. Female fans show higher purchasing intentions influenced by K-pop endorsements, reflecting greater emotional engagement and brand loyalty. The immediate sales impact of these endorsements, as evidenced by the stock sold-out effect, is a clear indicator of the potential for luxury brands to quickly boost their sales by tapping into the passionate and dedicated K-pop fanbase. The study also underscores the importance of leveraging social media platforms to captivate Generation Z consumers, an essential strategy for enhancing brand visibility and fostering consumer engagement. Social media significantly enhances the effectiveness of K-pop endorsements by increasing brand visibility and engagement among fans.

While this study provides valuable insights, it is crucial to emphasize the need for further research to broaden the scope of the findings. A more extensive and diverse sample that does not exclude any fans regarding age is not just a suggestion but a necessity. This inclusivity would allow for more generalizable results, ensuring the findings apply to a broader range of consumers. From a Spanish perspective, the cultural perceptions of luxury goods can be another study that can help better understand the purchasing intentions of the Spanish population in general. Additionally, investigating the long-term effects of K-pop endorsements on brand loyalty and consumer behavior would offer deeper insights into luxury brands seeking to maintain their market presence. Understanding how these endorsements influence consumer behavior over time can guide the development of more effective marketing strategies.

In conclusion, K-pop celebrity endorsements represent a powerful marketing strategy that can significantly influence the purchasing intentions of Gen Z consumers. By aligning with the right endorsers and leveraging digital platforms, luxury brands can effectively connect with this influential demographic, driving sales and enhancing brand loyalty. The study highlights the need for brands to stay attuned to the evolving preferences of Gen Z consumers and to adapt their marketing strategies to maintain relevance and appeal continuously.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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