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Features Article

The Crash Landing of K-dramas in the Philippines

Korean dramas, more popularly known as K-dramas, have become a worldwide [phenomenon](#) that has infiltrated the hearts of Filipino people among others, as they have now become a contributor of Korean cultural content, one of South Korea's major exports. Due to the rising allure of Korean entertainment and the popularity of award-winning film Parasite and critically acclaimed boyband BTS, the appetite for Korean content has never been stronger than it is today, which caused a steadily growing interest in K-dramas.

The boom of K-dramas amid the COVID-19 pandemic

K-dramas have been popular in the Philippines for quite some time, from the Meteor Garden and Boys Over Flowers craze all the way to the My Love From The Star obsession that now serves as a catalyst of reminiscing simpler days when everyone binge-bought DVDs of movies and TV shows. As the years have passed, Korean dramas have become even more popular, which has been further amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sungshin Women's University professor Doboo Shim said, "the Korean wave is taking a new leap during these pandemic times" in the webinar "Korean Landed on You" held last September 25 by the University of the Philippines Korea Research Center. Industry experts have observed that Korean dramas have become even more popular with Filipinos amid the quarantine, with crowd favorites like Crash Landing on You, Itaewon Class, and It's Okay to Not Be Okay dominating the social media sphere. According to Thelma San Juan, veteran lifestyle writer, the prolonged quarantine restrictions have caused people to make Korean drama a part of Filipinos' digital diet especially with the presence of streaming site Netflix as they are forced into isolation.



It's Okay to Not Be Okay, one of the most popular 2020 K-dramas on Netflix. Photo by TVN.

The Allure of K-dramas in the Philippines

Let's face it: K-dramas are addicting. At the end of every episode, it seems that it keeps inviting you to more until it's suddenly 2AM and you have work the next day. Though sometimes riddled by the ever-so-predictable clichés, the K-drama formula has proven to be effective in keeping viewers glued to their screens, which begs us to ask the question: what is it with K-dramas that makes it so different from regular TV shows? Aside from the exuberant soundtrack, the good-looking actors, and the glamorous fashion, what is it that makes it so special? The [answer](#): excellent writing and the resonance viewers feel with the cultural values, especially in Asian countries.

“One big [factor] in the competitiveness of our dramas are excellent writers. Thanks to them, Korea has produced many dramas in different genres through various platforms that blurs boundaries between traditional and new media channels,” said Kim Hee Yeol, vice president of drama production for Pan Entertainment and vice chairman of the Korean Drama Production

Association in a webinar hosted by the Korean Cultural Center and Bonifacio Global City Arts Center last November 6. Aside from the excellent writing wherein cultural values and locations are shown, another factor that contributes to the success of K-dramas is the meticulous process it goes through just to get released. According to Mr. Kim, there is a 17 step process in producing a show, 7 of which are for pre-production, with the rest for the production itself.

During the early stages of this tedious process, the backbone of the drama is born. The scripts are emblematic of cultural values such as filial piety, industriousness, and hospitality that Asians tend to resonate with, particularly Filipinos, which adds to the allure of K-dramas. Viewers can watch these excellently made shows and see themselves in the characters, and thus begins the cycle of spiraling into the world of K-dramas.