**Research Article**

# Scrolling to Cultural Shifts: Exploring K-Culture Representation and Engagement on Instagram Page of Korean Culture Centre of India

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

Cultural dissemination of Korean culture is transcending borders worldwide beyond streaming platforms to digital avenues like social media. Extensive research studies explore the rise of Hallyu through entertainment media, yet the role of official institutions in fostering fandom via social media remains underexplored. This research investigates how the official institution, Korean Culture Centre India (KCCI) utilizes Instagram as a platform to represent and promote Korean culture among Indian audiences. Grounded in Framing theory and employing Braun and Clarke's Thematic analysis, the study analyzes recurring cultural themes and frames on KCCI's Instagram page content and explores the audience engagement through analyzing likes, comments, and shares. To achieve the objectives, thematic and engagement analysis is performed to examine six months (July-December 2024) posts of KCCI's Instagram. The findings highlight the Hallyu wave promotion and engagement-based posts and frame dominance in shaping cultural representation and audience interaction with Korean culture in India.

## INTRODUCTION

The mode of accessing and receiving information has been revolutionized with time by social media (Bado & Nyangau, 2012). This shift has not only changed consumption but also transformed how various organizations/ institutes communicate with the audience (Mishnick & Wise, 2024). Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, TikTok, and LinkedIn let organizations engage with larger audiences, disseminate information to the target audiences and receive feedback (Galan et al., 2015). South Korea is often known as a highly developed digital media equipped nation (Yoon, 2018). It has been given several names like "a broadband nirvana" (Lee, 2012), "a smartland" (Jin, 2017), and "digital Korea" (Jin, 2017; Kim, 2021). Thus, South Korea has been implementing its digital media strategies to reach audiences worldwide. Government policies have broadened the reach of its domestic culture industries to penetrate different countries. The establishment of 42 Korean Cultural Centers in 32 countries is a way of promoting South Korean culture worldwide and India is one of them (Korean Cultural Centre).

Mass communication platforms like TV, radio, newspaper, magazines and the internet help in the process of exploring and learning new cultures, their values and norms (Masgoret & Ward, 2006). These days, digital platforms play a crucial role in shaping the perceptions and thoughts of viewers about new cultures as mobile devices are quite handy these days and information can be accessed across nations. Korean popular culture and media has evolved throughout the globe also known as Hallyu wave (Ganghariya & Kanozia, 2020). There is a noticeable consumption and rise of viewership of Korean content in India as well (Statista, 2022). Not only are K-dramas available on digital platforms or K-pop events leading to the rise of likeness towards Korean culture but social media pages on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, etc. are also one of the important parts of the process.

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There are numerous social media pages framing and posting Korean drama/music/movies related content for various purposes. But the Korean Cultural Centre India (KCCI) pages on social media platforms are the official pages. Among which @koreanCultureCentreofIndia is the Instagram page of the Korean Culture Centre in India having highest followers compared to other KCCI's social media accounts across, Facebook, YouTube, etc. To understand how this official organization frames and represents Korean culture on its social media pages to engage with audiences, this study focuses on identifying and analyzing the thematic patterns of various Themes and Frames of Korean cultural content posted on KCCI's Instagram page. The study also focuses on examining the audience engagement across the identified Themes, Frames, and Post type on KCCI's page.

### Theoretical Framework

This study involves (Braun & Clarke, 2006) thematic analysis framework to identify content themes and grounded in Framing theory (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974) to analyze how KCCI frames the content in the identified themes based on the selected posts of KCCI's Instagram page. Thematic analysis, defined as a process for identifying, analyzing and interpreting patterns (themes) in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). "It involves a six-step process: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, generating initial themes, reviewing themes and defining and naming themes." Frame is defined as a "schema or interpretive structure" that helps its viewers and consumers to understand and make meaning of social happenings and interactions (Goffman, 1974). In his work, *Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm,* he mentions "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicated text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/ or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman, 1993). Framing theory from Entman (1993) and Goffman (1974) provides a basis to explain that media selectively emphasize certain aspects of reality to shape audience interpretation. In this paper, the focus is on Instagram posts by KCCI as they serve as frames that highlight specific cultural aspects about Korean culture.

## Literature Review

Social Media's "scrolling" culture exposes users to curated content, shaping preferences, engage emotionally for cultural promotion via algorithms that prioritize visual appeal (Bucher, 2018). As observed on the social media pages in the context of Korean culture, scrolling lets audiences consume a mix of entertainment, informational, promotional, lifestyle, heritage, educational, subtly embedding cultural appreciation into daily digital habits. This aligns with (Couldry & Hepp, 2017) mediatization concept, which says that the continuous exposure on digital platforms to media content shapes social practices and cultural identities, a phenomenon which is evident in the growing Indian interest in Korean culture. The younger demographic particularly relies on digital media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube for for cultural engagement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), increasing hallyu's reach through active involvement of the audience on the digital platforms and fostering fandoms to participate and propagate the cultural content (Jenkins, 2006; Reimeingam, 2014).

Korean Cultural Centres established by the South Korean government across nations, play an important role in promoting Korean culture and making a strong foothold among the audiences through cross-cultural engagement. Chua and Iwabuchi (2008) research study mentions that these centres conduct offline events like contests, workshops, exhibitions and posts entertaining, informational, promotional content posts on online platforms to enhance and promote cultural diplomacy, with social media platforms serving as cost-effective too to reach broader audiences. These official institutions/ organizations intend to have a balanced representation of entertainment along with heritage and other cultural aspects unlike the fan-driven pages solely focused on entertainment, aligning with Nye's (2004) soft power theory, where cultural promotion enhances a nation's global influence. The KCCI's Instagram page stands out as a case study in India, bringing Indian audience's attention through focused content that encourages their participation in Korean culture through contests, workshops, engaging and entertaining content, a strategy supported by (Yoon, 2019) findings on fandom-driven cultural diffusion.

This paper analyzes the KCCI's Instagram page, which has highest follower count (78K) compared to other digital platforms accounts like YouTube (28.1K Subscribers) and Facebook (66K followers), reflecting that Instagram is the prominent among other platforms as a digital hub for Korean culture in India. Several prior studies explored Hallyu's spread through entertaining platforms (Kim, 2016), but the role of official institutions on social media remains underexplored. This study examined past six months posts of KCCI's Instagram (July-December 2024), built on existing literature to analyze thematic patterns and audience engagement, offering a deeper understanding of official institutional social media accounts shape cultural narratives in a digitally connected world.

### Research Questions

**RQ1.** *What are the dominant themes in Korean Cultural promotions on KCCI's Instagram page?*

**RQ2.** *How do audience engagement levels vary across different cultural themes on KCCI's Instagram content?*

## Research Methodology

This paper focuses on the identification of the represented themes on KCCI's Instagram page for cultural representation and analyzes audience engagement levels across different themes, subthemes, Instagram post type (Image/ Videos/Reels/ Carousel), and frame types. To achieve the objectives, the study employs a mixed-method research approach. Qualitative content analysis was employed to identify dominant themes, subthemes, and the associated frames for the selected posts, while quantitative engagement analysis assesses digital interaction across the same posts from the KCCI's Instagram page, leveraging metrics such as likes, comments, and shares. MS Excel and Python were used to analyze and visualize the data.

### Sampling

Purposive sampling was applied to focus specifically on KCCI's Instagram page, as it serves as the official representative of Korean cultural diplomacy in India and has the highest follower count compared to its other social media accounts. The sample includes 162 Instagram posts published between 1st July 2024 to 31st December 2024 on KCCI's page. This six-month time frame ensures updated and comprehensive representation of engagement strategies employed by KCCI's Instagram page, it covers the presence of both seasonal variations and ongoing promotional patterns in the data (Neuendorf, 2010). covers a good number of posts aligning with the medium-term sampling recommended by previous social media content analysis, to ensure data reliability without overrepresentation of short-term fluctuations (Riffe et al., 2005). This timeframe, a year prior to submission, reflects recent trends without short-term bias.

### Data Analysis

The data for analysis is divided into thematic analysis and engagement Analysis. Thematic analysis followed (Braun & Clarke, 2006) framework, using frequency based and interpretative coding to identify sub themes clustered into broad themes via inductive coding. For Engagement analysis, the count of likes, comments, and shares were considered for each post. The data analysis was performed using Python, which facilitated frequency calculations, correlation tests, and generated visualizations such as bar charts and heatmaps to identify thematic patterns and engagement trends, enhancing the precision and scalability of the analysis (Wickham, 2016).

### Findings

Analysis of 162 posts from thematic and engagement analyses, reveals KCCI's systematic and strategic use of Instagram to disseminate and promote Korean culture while fostering interaction with Indian audiences. These results are discussed in relation to relevant concepts and theories.

### Thematic Patterns in KCCI's Instagram Content

#### Frequency Analysis of Themes

The analysis identifies five broad themes emerged (Figure 1): Hallyu K-Wave promotion in India (55 Posts), Korean Cultural Festivals & National Celebrations (36 Posts), Cultural Exchange, Community Engagement & Social Media Campaigns (36 Posts), Korean Language Education & Literary Promotions (23 Posts), and Korea-India Diplomatic & Institutional Collaborations (12 Posts) under which content is promoted. These broad themes were driven from sub-themes which reflected that majorly curated content is based on K-pop, Korean Festivals, K-food, Clothes, Dance, and Language (Figure 2). The highest frequency themes were promotional, and engagement driven to attract the Indian fandom aligning with KCCI's role in cultural diplomacy.

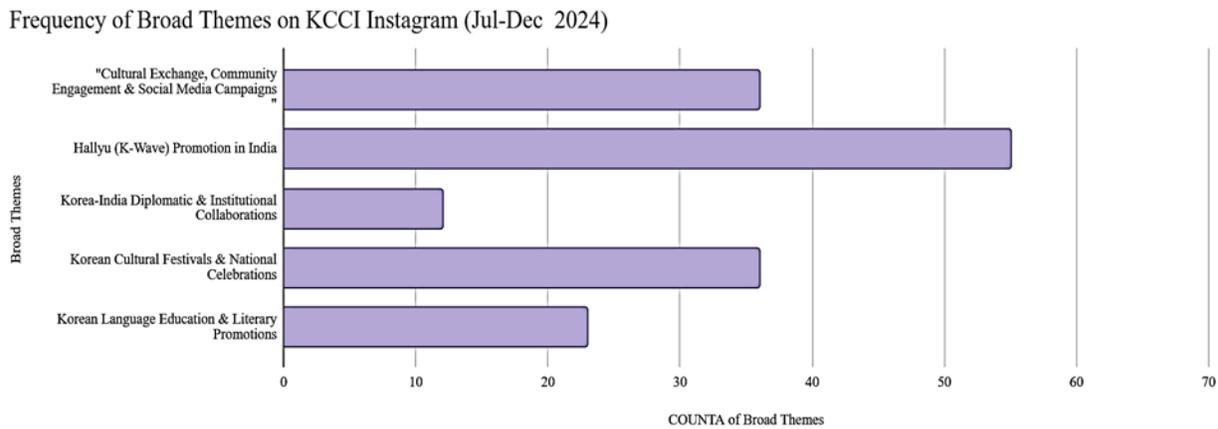K-pop artist exclusive performances, contests, music and dance challenges posts are highest in numbers aligning



**Figure 1:** Frequency of Broad Cultural Themes on KCCI's Instagram page Jul-Dec 2024

with Ryoo's (2009) findings that entertainment acts as the primary vehicle for Hallyu's worldwide expansion. Other posts informing about traditional festivals of South Korea and cultural fusion-based content like Kimchi workshop, Korean Chicken and win free Korea Trip, Photo contest-based engagement campaigns are observed. This dual approach of cultural promotion along with fan engagement aligns with the KCCI's role as an official institution aiming to foster cultural outreach (Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008). Lower frequency of language and diplomatic posts suggests a focus on accessible and interactive content to catch the attention and engage the users (Jang & Paik, 2012). This focus suggests KCCI leverages Instagram's visual and algorithmic strengths (Bucher, 2018) to amplify popular culture, embedding it into Indian digital habits. The results reflect that KCCI's page is not just an informative, promotional or entertaining, but the institution is strategically, encouraging active participation through competitions, campaigns, workshops, and direct engagement with Indian fans to enhance its growth.

## Frame Analysis of KCCI's Posts

Frame analysis guided by Entman (1993) and Goffman (1974), identified five most common frames (Figure 3): Hallyu expansion and the cultural soft power (55 Posts), Active Fan Engagement and Cross-Cultural fusion (38 posts), Celebrating Korean Traditions in a Global Context (34 Posts), Korean language as a Gateway to Cultural Integration (23 Posts) and Strategic cultural diplomacy
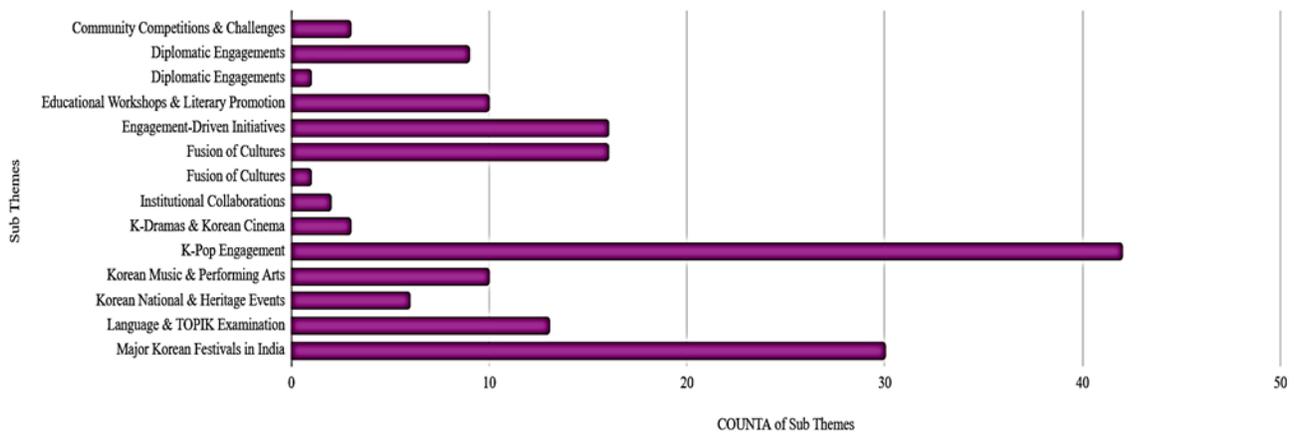


**Figure 2:** Frequency of Sub Cultural Themes on KCCI's Instagram Page Jul-Dec 2024
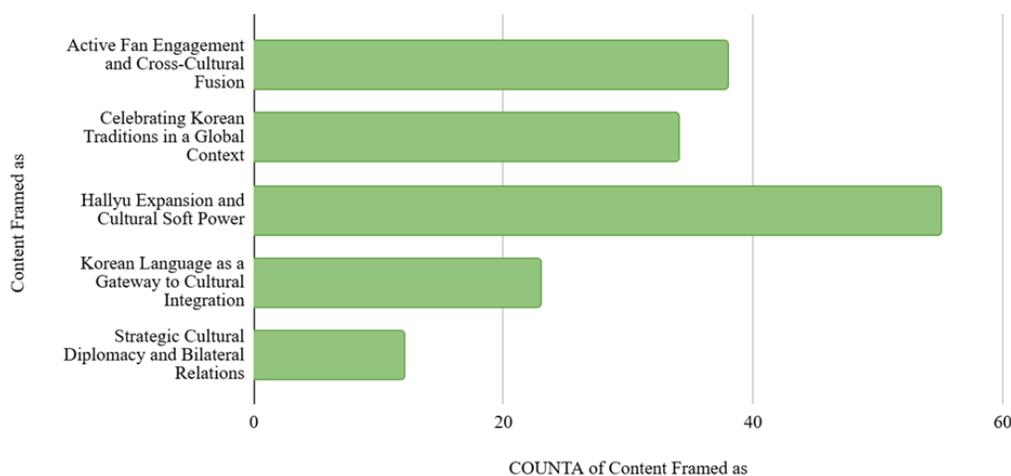


**Figure 3:** Frequency of Types of Frames represented on KCCI's Instagram Page Jul-Dec 2024

and Bilateral Relations (12 Posts). This indicated that KCCI frames its content primarily around Hallyu's global influence, fan engagement, and cultural celebrations which are informative, promotional and experiential as well.

Hallyu expansion and Cultural soft power frame having 55 posts (Figure 3) includes posts that are, informational, promotional, and engaging and it is the most dominant frame among all five frames. This suggests that KCCI has a narrative building strategy to position Korean culture as globally influential. Nye's (2004) concept of soft power also states that the exports of cultural means function as tools of global influence. The high engagement with Active Fan engagement and cross-cultural fusion frames having 38 post (Figure 3) shows how fusion frames lead to participatory nature of K-culture fandom (Jenkins, 2006), reinforcing theories of fandom-driven cultural diffusion (Yoon, 2019). The Broad themes discovered through analysis were checked to find which themes are represented under different Frames. The analysis showed that Hallyu (K-Wave) Promotion in India appeared with the maximum number of post which is framed in the Hallyu Expansion and Cultural Soft Power frame (Figure 4). Other broad themes like Cultural Exchange, Community Engagement & Social media Campaigns as shown in (Figure 4) is framed under Cross- Cultural Fusion. To represent and engage the Instagram users towards Korean Festivals, KCCI created posts under frame celebrating those traditions with Indian audiences. This indicated that KCCI is utilizing K-Wave as a soft power tool in making its cultural roots strong. Also, showcasing Korean Traditions as celebrations post with the Indians in India makes it relatable and interesting for other users. KCCI doesn't only stick to K-pop music, dance, drama or festivities content but they are consciously trying to demonstrate Korean traditions and language-based frames that are promoting and educating audiences beyond entertainment.



**Figure 4:** Frame Types across Broad Themes on KCCI's Instagram Jul-Dec 2024

## Audience Engagement with KCCI's Instagram Content

### *Engagement across broad theme*

Engagement varied by theme (Figure 5) based on likes, comments, and shares of KCCI's six months posts reveals how Indian users of Instagram interact with KCCI's content across various themes, frames, and post types. Cultural Exchange, Community Engagement & Social Media Campaigns (211190 average engagement), Korean Cultural Festivals & National Celebrations (99461 average engagement), and Hallyu wave promotion (89130 average



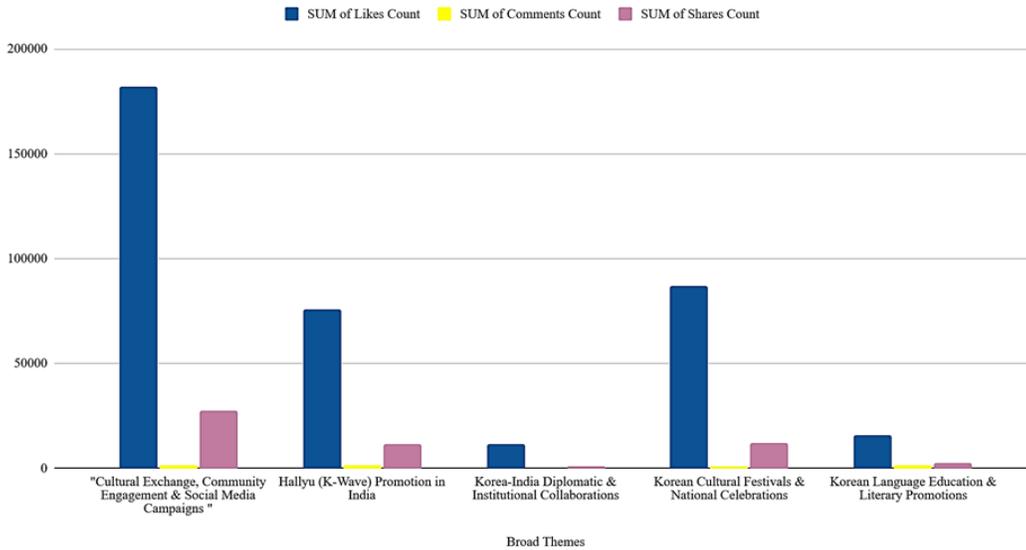**Figure 5:** Average Engagement per Broad Theme on KCCI's Instagram Page Jul-Dec 2024
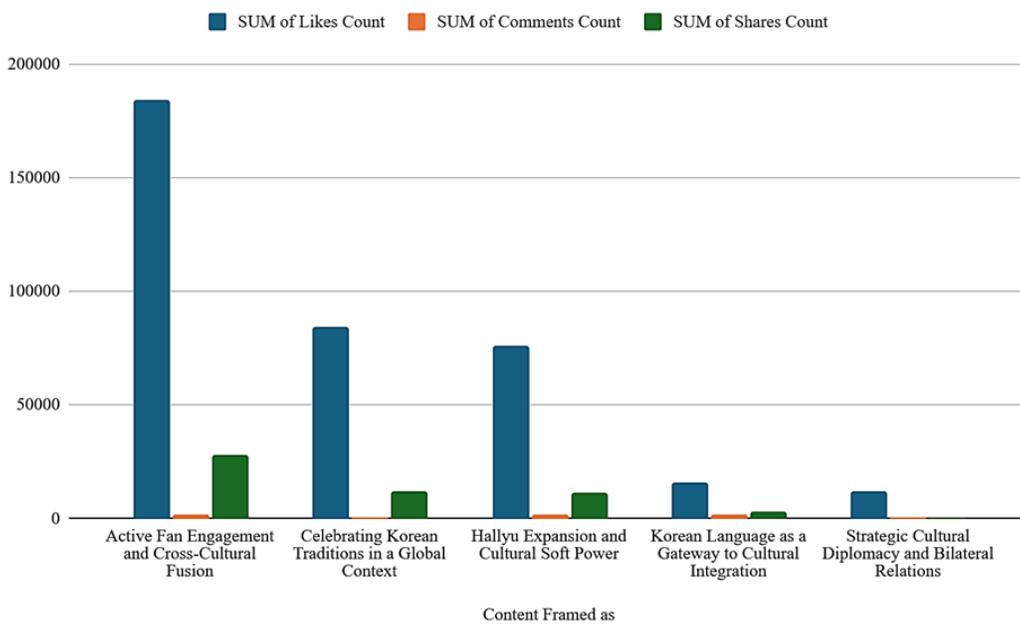


**Figure 6:** Average Engagement per Type of Frames on KCCI's Instagram Page Jul-Dec 2024

engagement) likely leading due to their interactive and entertaining nature, also they have a higher number of posts compared to other themes. Korean language education (19808 average engagement) and diplomatic collaborations (12622 average engagement) with lower engagement as they had fewer posts as per the analysis, suggest a preference for popular over educational content as they are still expanding their culture in India. It is indicated that only likes-based engagement is at its peak compared to share and comments. This reflects that there is still a long way to go for making active involvement of the audience in Korean culture.

## Engagement across frame types

Active Fan Engagement and Cross-Cultural Fusion frame (213610 Avg Engagement) has the highest engagement among other five identified frame types (Figure 6), reflecting that audiences are enthusiastic to actively participate in the activities and opportunities related to Korean culture (Jenkins, 2006; Yoon, 2018). Other frames Celebrating Korean traditions (97041 Avg Engagement) and Hallyu expansion (89130 Avg Engagement) are next in the queue of most engaging frame types. The high engagement on cross cultural fan engagement and Hallyu expansion frames, reinforce soft power's appeal (Nye, 2004), while language with 19808 and cultural diplomacy frames with 12622 average engagement lags, possibly due to less immediate appeal. This suggests that cultural aspects like language education and cultural diplomacy along with Korean cinema and dramas related themes are not framed as much as they should be.
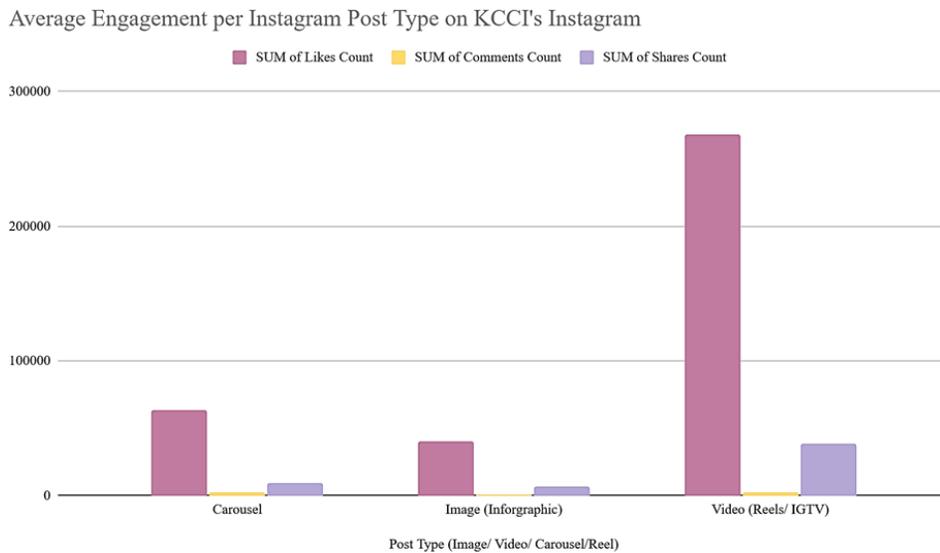


**Figure 7:** Average Engagement per Type of Posts on KCCI's Instagram Page Jul-Dec 2024
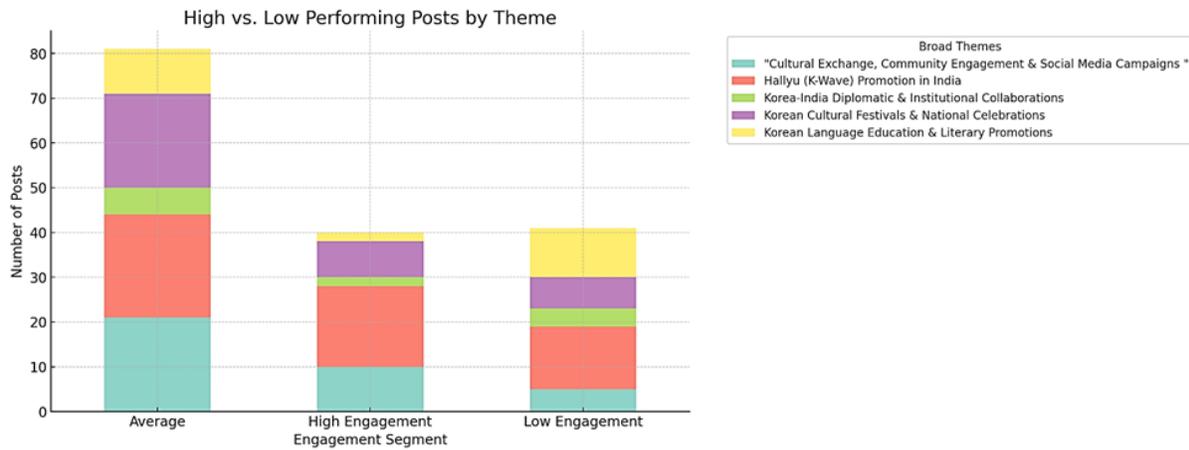


**Figure 8:** High vs. Low performing posts by themes on KCCI's Instagram Page Jul-Dec 2024

## Engagement across Type of Posts (Image, Carousel, Reels/IGTV)

Instagram lets users post content in 3 formats; 1. Carousel 2. Image 3. Video (Reels/IGTV). Thi study findings indicates that Video (reels/igtv) with average engagement of 309534 achieves highest metrics than carousel (74332 Avg. Engagement) and static images (48345 Avg. Engagement) (Figure 7), aligning with Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) findings on social media's preference for dynamic formats.

## High vs. Low performing posts

K-pop and fan engagement consistently have higher engagement rates compared to language or diplomacy focused content (Figure 8). This aligns with the concept of mediatization, which states that continuous exposure to content shapes cultural preferences (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). The findings indicate that KCCI uses Instagram successfully as an "interactive cultural bridge," as mentioned earlier, but it still faces challenges in engaging audiences with less commercial themes, a tension noted in global Hallyu studies (Oh, 2013).

## Limitations

This paper is limited to focus on single platform Instagram and a six-month timeframe, which may not capture long-term trends. Further research could explore other social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, YouTube) strategies and perform a comparative analysis, or examine audience demographics to refine engagement insights. Lack of demographic data limits understanding of the audience (likely young, urban Indians per Statists, 2022), and comparisons with other Korean accounts can be conducted in future research for comparative analysis as they were not feasible here.

## Conclusion

This study is based on how scrolling social media leads to cultural shifts, focused on analysing themes and assessing audience engagement on Korean Cultural Centre India's (KCCI) instagram page. The study explored how this page of an official institute represents and promotes Korean culture through Instagram among Indian audiences. The study addresses two research questions: what are the dominant cultural themes in KCCI's six-month posts (July-December 2024) and the engagement rates of audience engagement across identified themes, frames and post types. The thematic analysis based on (Braun & Clarke, 2006) six step framework, led to identifying five broad themes, among which Hallyu wave promotion, specifically K-pop, emerged as the dominating theme compared to other four identified themes, followed by cultural festivals, community engagement, language education, and diplomatic collaborations. Frame analysis also showed similar results that Hallyu expansion and soft power frame among other four identified frames emerged as the most prevalent frames, reflecting KCCI strategy to frame as promotional and informational to foster fan engagement through cross-cultural fusion. Engagement analysis showed higher audience interaction with participatory and entertainment-driven, aligning with Instagram's algorithmic preference for dynamic formats like reels.

As theorized by Nye (2004), findings of this study affirm KCCI's role as a cultural bridge, blending with heritage to enhance South Korea's soft power. Ryoo's (2009) observations of global entertainment appeal, aligns with the KCCI's emphasis on Hallyu wave on its page, while the interactive and engagement driven approach supports Jenkins' (2006) participatory culture framework. However, among several cultural aspects, the lower engagement and lesser number of language education and diplomatic posts suggests a challenge in balancing commercial appeal with cultural depth, as mentioned by Jang and Paik (2012). K-dramas and cinema are very popular in India like K-pop and their consumption is high but still KCCI did not put a single post about K-drama and only a few K-cinema festivals (Oh, 2013). This paper contributes to existing literature by exploring the role of official cultural institutions in digital cultural diplomacy, extending beyond fan-driven dissemination. In future, KCCI can enhance engagement by integrating educational content and diplomatic content in more interesting and reel format ensuring broader cultural appreciation and reach. This paper underscores social media's potential as a tool to foster cross-cultural exchange, offering a strategic model for other cultural institutions pages navigating the digital landscape.

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