

# **PERSONAL AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF K-MEDIA CONTENT: A STUDY AMONG YOUNG CONSUMERS OF NORTH EAST INDIA**

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## **Abstract**

While globalization prompts the development of universalization of culture, hybridization of culture is growing simultaneously. These cultural effects can be stimulated, reinforced, and mediated by traditional mass media, Internet and Web 2.0, and also by interpersonal communication (Bonfadelli, 2016). South Korean Culture is spreading at an unexpected rate across the world including Indian diaspora (Ganghariya and Kanozia , 2020)with the significant role played by the visual media like television and film . North –East India sharing international borders becomes one of such places for easily sharing transnational cultures. Korean wave or Hallyu, a mix of the Korean convention and western culture, with capacity to change the Korean culture into current without unexpectedly parting from its convention is evident in Korean dramas and K-pop (Bok-rae, 2015; Otmagzin and Lyan, 2014). The study explored with quantitative data gathered from the youth K-content consumers reveals the degree of Personal and social integration of K content among the youth in Kohima, North East India, who are regular consumers of Korean media and its spread beyond the border territory. The study also further explains the theory of Uses and Gratification and the cultivation of transnational culture with Hallyu wave.

**Key Words:** Hallyu, Hybridization of Culture, Koreanization, Universalization, Kohima,

## **Introduction**

Hallyu or the Korean culture had its spread across the world since 1990s along with Korean popular dramas in Asia, Middle East and Europe. It later labelled to any Korean products, like drama, films, food, cosmetics, games, animations etc. With the advent of new media technologies Hallyu waves has been continuously spreading across the nations. Gradually it sculpt as Korean popular culture generated outside Korea. According to Choi (2015), it encapsulates multiple categories of contents. Essential contents (Television dramas, K-pop and other media products; Semi essential contents (Films, video games, performing arts and foods); Para Hallyu products and services (cosmetic products, tourism, fashion items. plastic surgery, and language services; Distributive channels (Broadcast/ cable tv overseas cultural educational institutions social network media / internet); Short/ long term effects, sales improvement in content industries and retail business, positive impacts on national image or branding, higher competitiveness in inter-national trade and public diplomacy. Hence it can be attributed as a cultural phenomenon or process conceding cultural production independently of content production. This culture is being shaped and spread by its fans themselves.

Hallyu products such as K-Dramas, Films and Pop music provides western content with Asian values. Thus, it gives both global and local linkage (Shim,2006). Researchers find various reasons for adapting to this new culture. When a local media is not able to deliver the desired content and the proximity of the country, geography certain a set of cultural offerings rendered by the local media and experience offered by the other media. Straubhaar (1991) argues that it can also include customs, ethnic appearance and values.

Hallyu products demonstrate commonalities and familiarities shared with that of the culture of the country. They are easily identifiable factors like faith, family contexts, and practices which are positively acceptable by the Asian communities. This becomes one of the reasons for easy acceptability of Korean Culture (Ryoo, 2009). A media product with low cultural elements of the receiving country will be less acceptable compared to media products with high cultural discount. According to media dependency theory developed by the American Communication Researchers, one of the reasons for depending the media by the audience is that it helps to function the social roles and let it make the audience depend on the media (Ball-Rokeach & De Fleur, 1976). Therefore, considering the above facts, the North -Eastern states make conducive context for the rapid spread of Hallyu culture in India. The focuses to find the personal and social integration elements of Korean media and gratification and positive correlation with media exposure and adaption of behaviour.

### **Hallyu in India**

Korean waves made its entry in India through its pirated music CDs in early 90s to 2000s in North Eastern States. The growth of internet and the ban of Hindi Films in North-Eastern states fostered the spread of Korean media in Manipur and other parts of the region(Reimeingam, 2017). The wave further spread to South and Northern part of the country among youth through their friend's circle and internet (2018). The Korean ambassadors together with India organized various cultural programmes, studies and market potentials of K-wave. Gradually, Korean films and dramas got remade in Hindi and Tamil. Door darshan (India's public broadcaster)broadcast the Hindi version of the K- Serial 'Emperor of the Sea' as 'Samudra Ka Badshah' in 2006 (Pisharoty 2006). And another popular drama 'jewel in the Palace' after an year. Establishing the Korean cultural centre in India, in 2012, made significant interventions to foster the spread of K culture in the country. It focused to conduct K-pop festivals, map the spread of K- drama, establish Korean language learning centres etc. (Gogoi, 2017, Kanozia & Ganghariya 2021).

There is a growing interest in Korean media content in the preference of Hallyu wave than the western media content (Academic study report Neela, 2018).K- Beauty is fairly popular among Indians. K- pop and K- drama seems to have had their biggest breakthrough in India during the ongoing pandemic where people found more time to explore different kinds of contents and language (Economic times, Nov 17, 2020).

### **K- waves in North Eastern States of India**

Northeast has a unique geographical and cultural identity and subsequent consolidation of territory with neighbours. It is composed of eight states sharing borders with Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and China and Siliguri corridor connected to the mainland India. 'The

Classic' was the first hit Korean movie in Manipur (2003),” Full House’ in Mizoram (2004), and ‘A moment to remember ‘in Nagaland (2004). It was very distinct that the youth on their online messages carried its reflection. It became very common to use words like *anyong*(bye), *aniocio*(hello), *sarangai* (I love you)etc in their online messages (Athikho, 2017). The youngsters continue to imitate the language and hairstyle of their favourite stars in salons (cited in Kuotsu, 2013 and Kanozia & Ganghariya, 2021). It has to be noted that this region’s lifestyle and socio-cultural tastes are different from that of the mainland.

The paper traces evidences based in Kohima (the capital of the state North-eastern Nagaland) and also the adaptation of Hallyu culture in the lives of youth from other parts of the country. The state Nagaland has unique culture compared to other North Eastern States with major population of tribal community, who embraced Christianity in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The resemblance in physical features of the people offer a means to get attached to this wave. Such similarities help to develop better adaptability to Hallyu wave. The complete absence of Hindi films and drama in North Eastern region is a barrier at the same time the similarity in the physical appearance brings better adaptability to this wave in the region. The reasons to adapt the wave in other partsof the country may not be the same and has not explored in detail. Study by Athikho (2017), Report ToI, 2020) suggests that Korean language which has no similarity with the native language or the main land language of the country was not barrier in this process.

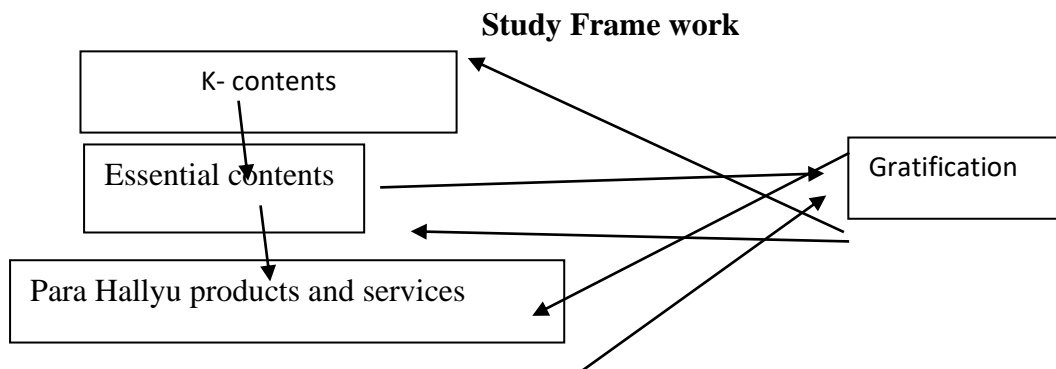
Religious values and cultural similarities play vital role in promoting the wave. Nagas are fond of music and dance. Similarly Korean history shows the people’s love for music and dance in various agricultural contexts. The dramas carried religiously connected idioms and values which got well marketed by the Korean media industry. Cultural proximity is highlighted as the early adaptability of K wavein North East India (Ro, 2013, Royoo, 2009, Yang 2012)

Review of K -wave spread reveals that most of the Hallyu wave studies have been carried out in the high-income countries and in Asian region records 63% of the studies. And fewer studies are recorded from South Asia (4%) (Neela, 2018). Hallyu wave is also noted as a strong wave against the Cultural imperialism or the Americanization. Considering this context, the study is very significant to understand the reflection of Hallyu wave in one of its strongly culturally reflective region- Nagaland. Understanding the nature of gratifications also becomes significant in the fast-changing sociocultural technology driven world especially by the youth who are rapid adaptors of media and its para products and services.

### **Methodology and materials**

The study attempts to bring evidence of Hallyu wave and its adaptation among the youth in Kohima and also its reflection among the youth in other parts of the country. It also further explores the gratification elements among the youths who consume K contents. Both primary and secondary data were analysed to explore the gratification of using K contents. Quantitative method was deployed to determine the basic nature of exposure to K- contents. Open ended questions gathered the views on reason to use which intern used to determine gratification. To measure the relationship with media use and leniency towards Hallyu related products and activities, co-relation test is used. The views on K- content users were

gathered from both primary and secondary sources. For the secondary source, published and unpublished reports of feature stories/articles and academic research within one year are used. The primary sources are the open questions gathered from the respondents and also the opinion based Linkert scale used in the questionnaire survey.



Audience dependency is on media is high in which media serves several central information functions. Gerbner (1998) explains in the cultivation theory, the phenomenon of repeated exposure to the media leads to shape the mindset of the television viewer. There is a high chance for a transnational consumer of K programmes be influenced by its content. They can also be easily linked to the para Hallyu products and services. The strong presence of Korean industry in India and its ranges pay pretty much value to enforce its market encouraged by both the countries (Mohan, 2017). The repeated use derives from the gratification derived out of particular media use. Here ,gratification is tested based on affective elements such as personal integrative and social integrative gratification. Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, (1973) presumes that the audience actively seek the particular media to gratify their specific personal need. Blumler (1973) points that the user’s gratification derives from media content, degree of exposure to media and social context. Here mass media competes with non media related source and help create a need for itself and a balance with the two, thus help cope with circumstance around them. According to this theory, the audience determine the value of the content. They will be more inclined to use the media where the audience find the media gratifies their needs which are central to their desires.

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

**Table 1: Age of the respondents**

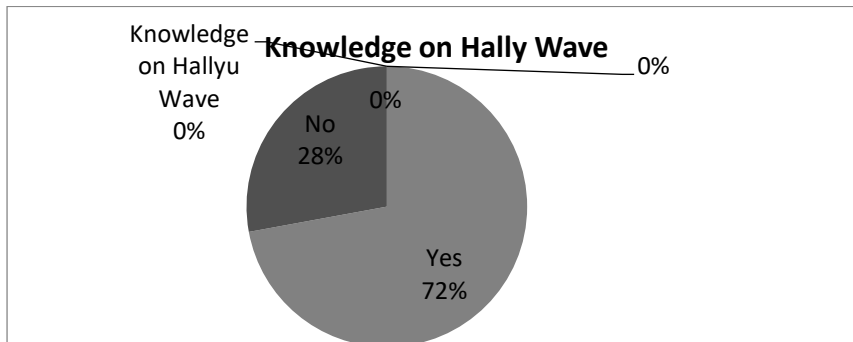
<b>Age:</b>	12-17	18-23	24-30
<b>Total</b>	28	46	30

As per the table 1, respondents represent the age group of adolescents and young adult. 28 persons belong to 12-17 years, 46 belong to 18-23 years, and 30 belong to 24- 30 years. Table 2 shows that a significant majority are aware of Hallyu wave and around 15% are not aware of it.

**Table: 2 Respondent’s knowledge on Hallyu Wave**

<b>Knowledge on Hallyu Wave</b>	
Yes	No
75	29

Total	104
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**Figure 1: Knowledge on Hallyu wave**

As per the Figure 1, 72% of the respondents have the knowledge of Hallyu wave and 28% do not have. This means a great majority of the youngsters are aware of the Hallyu wave and around 1/4<sup>th</sup> of them do not have the knowledge.

**Table 3: Respondents Exposure to K -content**

SI No.	Nature of exposure	Yes	No	Total
1	Frequent exposure to K Drama	77	27	104
2	Frequent exposure to K-pop music	72	32	104

As per table 3, a significant majority watch K- drama and almost similar number also frequently exposed to K- pop music. Therefore, both K-drama and music are popular among the youth.

**Table 4: Hallyu consumption and areas of personal integration**

SI No.	Area	Yes	No	Total
1	Following the choreography shown K-pop music videos	53.80%	46.20%	100%
2	Look for similar clothes to shop that are shown on Korean dramas	67.3%	32.7%	
3	Participate in K-pop festivals held	39.4%	60.6%	
4	Preferences of Korean food than Indian food	67.30%	32.70%	
5	Feeling connected to Korean culture than Indian culture	39.40%	60.60%	

As per the table 4, more than half who watches K- pop music follows its choreography (53.80%) 46.2% does not. Which means watching K – drama has greater influence on its

audience. 67/3% try to find similar cloths they found in the drama. A good number also (39%) participate in K- Festivals. Another good majority prefer (67.3%) Korean food than Indian food. 39.4 % feel connected to Korean culture than Indian culture, where as 60% does not feel so. As food, cloth, music, dance and festivals are significant elements of personal integration, it is evident that there is a great degree of personal integration takes place among the consumers of K- media content.

Influence of the media can create identification of self interests and concrete interaction patterns. This can intern lead to integration of elements related to the particular media content to the real time practices. Generation and availability of such products and contexts of practices accelerate this process. The result of such amalgamation of two cultures generate and propose newer wings of the culture. Hallyu wave is established and promulgated widely through this process. Table 5 exposes the positive correlation with the exposure to K wave and its impact on consumers.

**Table 5: Positive correlation test exposure to K -wave and impact on consumers**

	Yes (no. of Respondents)		Positive (Number of responses)	Correlation test value
Frequent exposure to K- Drama	77	find similar clothes to shop that are shown on Korean dramas	70	0.849662
		Preferences of Korean food than Indian food	59	0.69149
		Feeling connected to Korean culture than Indian culture	62	0.691489845
Frequent exposure to K- pop music	72	Following the choreography shown K-pop music videos	56	0.720082
			Total-104	

- *Negative response are not included in the test, as it is observed to be very less.*

There is a significant relationship with those frequently watch K drama and who try to find similar cloths they find in shops used in the dram. Similarly, their preference for Korean food, feeling connected to Korean culture than Indian Culture. Exposure to K- pop music also has significant relationship with the same choreography they follow which is shown in the music video. Therefore, it is very evident that both essential and semi essential content consumption creates significant cultural impact on the K content consumers. It is also evident

that Hallyu wave is very strongly present among the young generation of Kohima and other young K media consumers.

**Table.6. Gratification of K- content consumers.**

<i>Area of affective gratification</i>	<i>Element of gratification</i>
Personal integrative	watching K-dramas on Netflix because the stories are sweet and romantic and they appeal to Indian
	I like likes Korean dramas because of its “socio-religious values with touching ending besides dressing and good looking of the actors.”
	“the actors are smart and dressed well. The story is good and touching.
	I love the boys
	Max Indians, have aggressive nature, on the contrary I find Koreans to be calmer and more composed.
	I love how they look and speak, so gentle and beautiful
	I love <i>black pink</i> and I feel I look like Lisa. She is my inspiration so that’s why
	Storyline better than Hindi shows
	I like because of the K-pop fashion
	because of the Korean men and how they treat women ( positively)
	I feel that their thinking is not conservative and stereotypical
	“I just wanted to watch K-dramas without subtitles! But as I learnt the language and became more and more immersed in Korean culture
	My mother is half Korean so that’s why I have some Korean roots.
	contrary I feel racism is minimal in South Korea.
	I look more Korean than Indian as people tell me.
	My grandmother is Korean and she married my Indian grandfather
	because I look more Korean than Indian
	I like the Korean men a lot, they seem kinder and nicer so I would like to marry one and be a Korean wife.
	I look Korean. I can easily be settled in Korea
	my friends are into Korean culture that’s why
Cause I love the music and food	
I like their cute dressing scene and their makeup style	
	I like their traditional Korean cuisine. Rice, stew, kimchi specifically paech'u kimchi, spicy Ramen.
Social integrative	“Many start-ups and influencers are using Hallyu to sell their products
	With the fandom comes increased interest in Korean language, food, culture.... Anything that happens in Korea now catches on very quickly thanks to global fandoms,”

	Because I get teased on the basis of how I look by Indians.
	I feel they have a very nice clean country and are gentle.
	These days, they say ‘ <i>annyeonghaseyo!</i> ’—the Korean word for ‘hello’, which now trips easily over the Indian tongue

Based on the above data, multiple elements make the K wave to link to the personal life. Gratification in the area of personal integration is much higher to consume K media content and semi-essential products. Values like gentleness of men, appealing costumes of the characters and good storylines, reflection of good socio- religious values, romantic stories, easily identifying with the character at emotional level are significant gratifying factors for the youth in Kohima. Their physical appearance, family’s ties up with Korea becomes an another important element to personally integrate the media content in to their lives for the youth from Kohima. Social integrative elements are the common expressions in day today life like *annyeonghaseyo* for hello; food; fashion;feeling non –discriminatory among Korean Culture than being with Indians from of other states. The data also shows that the media influence lead towards better and faster acceptance of K –products. Besides this, the presentation of the country as clean and neat is also a social and personal integrating factor.

### **Conclusion**

Both essential content and para essential contents are largely consumed by the K- users in Kohima and also by the youth from other Indian cities. Both essential and semi essential content consumption creates significant cultural impact on the K content consumers. Hallyu wave is very strongly visible among the young generation of Kohima. It creates multiple level of gratification where the user is directly feeling connected with their family values, positive attitude towards men, beauty of the person, dress they wear, choreography of the music videos etc. The Korean media and para essential content consumers feel that the media carries highly acceptable culture and social values, which are found to be impressive and attractive to the Indian consumers especially for the youth in Kohima as they can identify with their physical appearance and with proximity. It can be concluded that the same effect can be found among the youth from other parts of the country. The people of Kohima feel more connected with their physical appearance, link with their family members and friends who are already adopted to Korean culture. There is a very close cultural proximity found among the K media and para media users and the Hallyu wave. The Korean products like food and cloths are remarkably acceptable and easily get integrated in to their lives. There is a significant correlation with the exposure to the consumption of Korean drama and music and acceptance of Korean culture, food, cloths and beauty products. Hallyu wave acceptance can be well explained by the higher degree of gratification in the area of affective gratification like non aggressive nature of men, decent way of dressing, romantic story line and appealing nature, non conservative and stereotypical characters presented in the media. Higher degree of gratification is also found in the personal integrative aspects which ultimately make the K -content more affective and acceptable which finally support the spread of Hallyu wave.



Limitation: The data is mostly limited to the youth in Kohima, Nagaland one of the North East Indian State and less number of data is taken from other parts of the country. Therefore, the proximity can not be generalized for the other parts of India.

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