

Culinary and Couture Currents: A literature-based review of Korean Fashion and Korean Food Influence in India

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Abstract:

Objective- This review explores the factors and motivations driving the popularity of K-Fashion (Couture) and K-Food (Cuisines) in India and identifies how K-Dramas and K-Pop are shaping the cultural preferences of Indian audiences.

Background- The Korean Wave or Hallyu has witnessed a rapid growth and influenced its audiences around the globe. The rising engagement with K-Dramas and K-Pop has led to the diffusion of Korean culture and adoption of K-Fashion and K-Food among the Indian audiences.

Methods- A narrative literature review was conducted using two e-databases Google Scholar and JSTOR from 2015 to 2024. A proper search strategy of selecting relevant Journal articles/books/reports was implied based on selected search keywords, Boolean strings, and inclusion/ exclusion criteria.

Discussion & Conclusion- The review provides insights about the role of Korean mediascape in influencing not only the food and fashion choices but other aspects of K-culture too, particularly among Indian Youth. Regional and youth focused studies dominate the discourse, but there remains a research gap in terms of pan-Indian and rural perspective data. The review concludes that not only adoption is happening, but it is also reinterpreted within Indian contexts, suggesting a dynamic process of cultural exchange.

Keywords: Hallyu, Korean Fashion (K-Fashion), Korean Food (K-Food), K-Dramas, K-Pop, India

Introduction:

The Korean Wave, or *Hallyu*, refers to the popularity of South Korean Culture around the globe which influenced the youth culture, encompassing K-Dramas, K-Pop, K-Food, K-Fashion and other elements related to lifestyle (Biswas & Roy, 2023; Zaini et al., 2024). Hallyu term first used in late 1990's expanded far beyond East Asia, it gained a strong foothold in regions such as Middle east, Southeast Asia and recently South Asia, especially India (Raj, 2024). Hallyu 1.0, 2.0, 3.0 has only popularity related to K-Dramas, K-Pop, movies, music till 2015, it was after 2015 which is Hallyu 4.0 when craze for several other elements of K-culture began including fashion, food, blogging, cosmetics, etc (Bora, 2020) In India, the of K-Dramas came around 2006, first aired by Door Darshan (Kaisii, 2022) and K-Pop right after the mega hit of PSY's Gangnam style in 2012 began to flourish (Agrawal et al., 2024) this has led to the rising

interest particularly in K-Fashion and K-Food among other lifestyle aspects. K-Fashion, popularized by K-Pop idols and by the K-Drama characters is emulated by the fans (Jiju, 2023). The characters of the Dramas not only portray Korean clothing style/streetwear but also showcases skincare trends, ethics/values and foods like *ramyeon*, *kimchi*, *tteokbokki*, *dumplings*, *rice*, etc (Ganghariya & Kanozia, 2020) and they are now becoming a part of Indian youth's lifestyle. Both Fashion and Food domains not only offer new consumption trends but also offer insights about how South Korea is shaping audiences' perceptions through media platforms around the globe.

Purpose of the Study:

The main objectives of this review are-

- To explore the factors or underlying motivations driving the popularity of K-Fashion and K-Food among Indian Youth
- To identify how K-Dramas and K-Pop shape cultural preferences.

The rising cross-cultural flows as a result of globalisation makes this review significant to understand the influence and increase in global consumerism as a result of cultural hybridization (Bora, 2020). Several studies have mentioned the increased preferences and consumption of K-Dramas and K-Pop in India's media landscape, a systematic academic synthesis of how these formats impact fashion and food adoption remain limited. This review maps the scholarly perspectives focusing on fashion and food domains and contributes to media, cultural, and consumer studies uncovering underexplored and synthesizing existing research rather than collecting new primary data. Through synthesis, the paper identifies patterns, gaps, and areas for future exploration in the field of cross-cultural influence and acculturation.

Definition of Key Terms

- Hallyu (Korean Wave): The flow of South Korean culture, particularly through media content like K-Dramas, K-Pop, fashion, and food around the globe.
- K-Fashion: A way of styling clothes, accessories, or following make up and beauty trends originating from South Korea, often represented in K-Pop idols and K-Dramas, known for minimalism, gender-neutral, soft silhouettes, and contemporary streetwear.
- K-Food and Beverages: Korean culinary items such as kimchi, gimbap, ramyeon, jjempong (Spicy noodles), tteokbokki, and Korean BBQ, Soju, Beer and Fried Chicken popularized globally through K-Dramas, K-Pop idols social media and mukbang culture.
- K-Drama: South Korean television dramas/series that portray unique storylines and plots with melodrama, romance, and cultural narratives, showcasing Korean traditional culture with a mix of modernity widely consumed internationally via streaming platforms.
- K-Pop: South Korean pop music known for its production quality, choreography, and global fan culture, often serving as a driver for lifestyle and fashion trends, for example BTS, Black Pink, etc.

Methodology: An Approach to identify the relevant studies

This literature review is based on a narrative review approach, ideal for synthesizing interdisciplinary cultural phenomena. It is mainly guided by methodologies described in three articles of Green et al. (2006), Greenhalgh et al. (2018), and Pautasso (2020). These articles basically emphasize on structuring narrative reviews for clarity and rigor by focusing on synthesizing different studies to recognize patterns and gaps or inform about the trends of a particular phenomenon (Green et al., 2006; Greenhalgh et al., 2018;

Pautasso, 2020). Methodologies suggested by these three articles in this study inform the review's qualitative synthesis of Hallyu's influence on Fashion and Food choices in India, prioritizing interpretive coherence over rigid systematization.

Search Strategy:

A systematic approach was followed to find out relevant peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and reports. The literature was searched using public/open-access academic e-databases to ensure comprehensive coverage and accessibility including Google Scholar and JSTOR as primary sources, supplemented by targeted searches on Academia.edu, and ResearchGate. These electronic databases were selected as they provide extensive indexing of studies based on Hallyu and its cultural influence in India as the requirement of this review.

Search terms and Strings:

The searches were limited to keywords and Boolean operators based on the title and objectives of the review to find relevant studies. This process made it feasible and ensured in finding the focused studies and meeting inclusion and exclusion criteria. The keywords included "K-Fashion," "K-Food," "India," "Korean Wave," and "Hallyu India." The Boolean search strings were:

- ("Korean Wave" OR Hallyu) AND ("K-Fashion" OR "Korean fashion" OR "Korean clothing") AND India
- ("Korean Wave" OR Hallyu) AND ("K-Food" OR "Korean food" OR "Korean cuisine") AND India
- ("K-Dramas" OR "Korean dramas") AND ("fashion influence" OR "clothing influence" OR "food trends" OR "food influence") AND India
- ("K-Pop") AND ("consumer behaviour" OR "fashion influence" OR "fashion adoption" OR "food preferences") AND India

The above-mentioned keywords and Boolean strings focused on studies that explored about Hallyu's impact on fashion and food preferences on Indian audiences. This helped in locating focus results of relevant literature for the review.

Selection Criteria:

Inclusion- The criteria set for selecting the studies for this review focused on studies addressing K-Fashion, K-Food, or Korean Wave (Hallyu) influence on fashion and food preferences in India. The studies should be in English language and under open access to ensure accessibility and maintain ethical considerations of equitable access. The literature search focused on relevant studies published between 2015 to 2024 which makes it a decade, this time covers the mainstream rise of Hallyu in India, provides recent research and enough volume while keeping it focused

Exclusion- The criteria for eliminating studies in the literature search was to not include studies published before 2015, were non-India focused, to maintain geographic specificity. Studies were taken only from the selected databases- Google Scholar, JSTOR, Academia and ResearchGate, any study from unverifiable sources was excluded to maintain the authenticity and credibility of the review.

Discussion:

K-Fashion and the Korean Aesthetic Appeal

Hallyu's cultural spread since the early 2000s has significantly influenced the fashion choices of Indian

audiences in terms of K-Fashion (Kaisii, 2022). (Kumari & Khare, 2023) discussed the soft masculinity portrayal through the actions of male characters as a reason behind the preference of consuming K-Dramas by the female spectators which also results in getting influenced by the fashion choices of the character (Ghosh, 2023). (Nunez, 2023) while studying electronic products in K-Dramas, discovered that Korean fashion has captured Asia where Tokyo and Hollywood have mostly ruled the mainstream culture. He also mentions the importance of social media in accelerating the Korean wave. (Kaisii, 2022) mentioned how young viewers in North-East India are attracted towards the stylish dresses and suits represented by the actor/actresses and they try to emulate the fashion of Korean idols and actors. This demonstrates an aspirational shift toward Korean fashion, beauty and style standards. (Jiju, 2023) describes K-Fashion as characterised as androgynous, colourful, and bold, the K-Pop idols wearing minimalist jewellery, having piercing, applying nail paints indicates towards the more gender neutral and feminine fashion sense as represented. (Erda, 2021) discusses that from Gen Z to the older generation everybody is going crazy about watching the K-Dramas and then adopting the same clothes and beauty items. (Jose, 2022) in his work found that the youth's exposure to K-Dramas and K-Pop has a significant correlation with the acceptance of K-culture including its fashion. The respondents in his study mentioned that K-Pop fashion is an element of gratification for them. While most of the studies focus on youth and female spectators, (Singh, 2022) studied the age group from 15 to 45 and discussed the rise of Korean wave in India after Covid-19, popularity of K-wave led to the influence of celebrities' fashion choices on the fandom. Fans not only wish to have similar clothes or food as the celebrities, but they also regularly receive Korean fashion magazines, photographs, and K-Fashion goods through trans-border trade. (Sharma et al., 2022) says that entering Aizawl in current time feels like entering some South Korean city as youngsters are in bucket hats, spring skirts, which seems like they copied from Korean fashion. His respondents shared that K-Fashion is highly appealing and distinct that they want to imitate it. The fandom mentions that K-drama are so addictive that there is urge to live the way South Koreans do in the dramas and the hype is such that fashion brands like Mumuso, Gashena, and Beccos stores in major Indian cities ships huge amount of good to North-east region (Ghosh, 2023). (Jose, 2022) study found that among 104 respondents 67.3% look for similar clothes after consuming K-Dramas. (Ganghariya & Kanozia, 2020) stated in their paper that Korean fashion is the least explored subject in the academic literature based on their study on Korean related research work from 2000 to 2019. But the available studies show the impact of K-Dramas and K-Pop is significant and needs to be researched well. The cross-cultural appeal across borders and especially in India of Korean fashion, is seen not only in clothing but also in the adoption of broader stylistic codes, such as make-up, skincare routines, hairstyles/colouring and accessorizing by both male and female fans of K-Dramas and K-Pop.

K-Food: Culinary Fascination and Consumption Patterns

“Global Hallyu Survey of 2021” mentioned in its report that the primary consumers of K-Food were Asian women aged between 29 and 31, and they also spend more time on K-Dramas, films, beauty, etc (Bora, 2020). This indicates that viewers of K-Dramas are mainly females, and the viewership is related to the consumption of K-Food (Hanshik) and other products as well. Globalisation leading to cultural hybridisation of K-culture in India is prominent as K-wave influences fans to imitate food and fashion habits (Jiju, 2023). In this study among 95 responses, 68.4% agreed that K-wave has made them interested in eating K-Food. There was a time when Chinese food made its place and Indians Indianised the Chinese food in their own way, these days Korean food seems to be the new Chinese in India as everyone is

discussing it (Erda, 2021). The craze of Korean things is like never before, Ramyeon, Kimchi, Tteokboki, Bibimbap, Bulgogi, Soju and Bokbunja ju etc are the food and beverages that are heard frequently among Indian youth these days and served in almost all corner of the world (Ganghariya & Kanozia, 2020). The Korean food culture has significantly increased among Indian audiences, often mediated through K-Dramas and social media (Nunez, 2023). Food is known to play the main character and a central role in the K-Dramas along with the actor/actresses (Biswas & Roy, 2023; Nair, 2024). K-Dramas like Extraordinary Attorney Woo portrayed female lead's boss death wish to have noodles from a specific shop, how female lead herself only preferred Gimbap to eat, Business Proposal represented female lead and her best friend drinking beer and eating tteokbboki whenever they met to discuss their life, these dramas not only show you the food but the frames specifically focuses on the whole process of cooking from chopping to serving the dish. (Biswas & Roy, 2023; Singh, 2022) detailed how continuous watching of K-Dramas often triggers an urge and fondness for Korean food eaten by celebrities, linking screen-based narratives with real-world food practices. (Singh, 2022) in his study found that fandom interest in K-Drama/K-Pop results in the purchase intention of K-Food, out of 160 sample, 95.63% agreed that they purchase or are interested in purchasing Korean food/snacks or other products like big bowls, kitchen utensils, chopsticks, etc. Not only because of taste, but the respondent mentioned that Koreans are less obese indicating healthy food and food habits like Kimchi is rich in fibre, giving them reason to eat Korean food. Similarly, (Raj, 2024) also mentions that 73.4% preferred to eat Korean cuisine and 50.2% expressed newfound interest in eating K-Food out of 237 responses in Kerala after watching celebrities eating K-Food. The ministry of Commerce and Industry also reported a rise in consumption of K-noodles (Biswas & Roy, 2023). (Jose, 2022) discusses that elements like clothes, food, music, etc are significant in personal integration, respondents in his study said that K-Food representation in K-Dramas is a reason why they prefer K-Food over Indian food, around 67.30 % respondents out of 104 prefer K-Food in Kohima, this indicates that exposure to K-Dramas or K-Pop is directly related to preferring K-Food or other K-products. (Nair, 2024) noted this effect of exposure to K-Dramas/pop and rise in popularity of K-dishes like ramyeon and Kimchi in Kerala. (Ghosh, 2022) extended this insight by identifying imitation intention as a crucial factor behind Korean food consumption as the owner of Café TOV located in South Kolkata stated two major tendencies, one K-Food lovers are not just foodies, they enjoy the packaging of Korean entertainment culture that they are living the exact life like Korean celebrities and not Korean per se, a pattern echoed by (Reimeingam, 2015), who documented similar phenomena about the fans, those who like K-movies/dramas also like K-Food, fashion, etc. (Singh, 2022) also highlighted that though Korean food is not much advertised in India directly, the rising consumption of K-Food is visible, and markets need to be aware about it and should not ignore it. Thus, Korean cuisine operates both as a cultural artifact and a commercial commodity in India.

Gaps and Cultural Negotiations

Despite numerous works on Korean Wave studies and growing literature, there remain several crucial gaps to be covered. Researchers like (Agrawal et al., 2024; Bora, 2020; Raj, 2024; Reimeingam, 2015) have studied the Northeast and Southern parts of India, pan India based studies are not much in number. The academic discourse leans towards descriptive studies, more in-depth research work is needed in this area. Also, the difference in the reception of urban and rural might vary, more studies can be conducted based on this. Although, (Ghosh, 2022; Ghosh, 2023) offer preliminary insights on how identities are being shaped, yet more Cultural negotiations-based research about how Indian fandom reinterpret or localize

Korean content are understudied. Several studies marked the similarity status of culture, which is leading towards the adaptation of it, majorly in the North-eastern part, as they find their looks, and food habits quite the same. Cultural hybridity, as observed by (Jose, 2022) and (Raj, 2024), needs to be situated within larger debates on media globalization and identity politics.

Limitations of the Review

As clearly indicated by Green et al. (2006), Greenhalgh et al. (2018), and Pautasso (2020) that narrative reviews are vulnerable to selection and bias. This narrative literature review also has certain limitations. Since it is primarily based on publicly accessible papers from Google Scholar and JSTOR accompanied by Academia and ResearchGate, the review may have excluded some high-impact articles with richer facts and findings as subscription-based journals but kept in exclusion criteria. Additionally, most of the reviewed works are based on qualitative or anecdotal evidence, which limits generalizability. Furthermore, the studies were majorly from 2015 to 2024, the review may have left the prior studies with initial level influence studies. Since, this review particularly focuses on K-Fashion and K-Food, other components of Hallyu wave like K-beauty, K-Pop, lifestyle, games, technology, values and ethics, fandom economics, or gender performance were just touched upon and not studied deeply. Therefore, future research should aim for methodological diversity and broader audience inclusion to map the full extent of Korean cultural influence in India.

Conclusion:

This review presents a synthesized view of the growing body of literature that reflects the rising influence of Hallyu among the Indian fandoms. The popularity and consumption of K-Dramas and K-Pop is such that Korean couture aesthetics and culinary traditions have entered Indian popular culture as symbols of aspirational lifestyle leading to cultural alignment with East Asian modernity. The literature provides insights that Indian fandom, particularly youth, urban, and mostly females, engage with Korean culture through the lens of K-Dramas, K-Pop, and social media both emotionally and performatively by choosing the Korean fashion, food habits, digital fandom practices, etc.

Most of the studies were based out of the North-Eastern and South regions, indicating how this cultural engagement unfolds in context specific ways. North-Eastern people find similarity with the Koreans and are vulnerable to adopt the culture. However, the gaps persist in the literature as studies are not pan-Indian, they also do not cover all age groups, and much of the existing research in this area remains descriptive and localized. More work needs to be done covering these gaps and discovering deeper insights about the cultural hybridization of Korean culture in India.

As Indian youth preferences are shifting towards Korean culture and it is increasingly embedded in their experiences, future research must delve into exploring long-term sustainability of these trends, their impact and influence on identity of the fandoms, and the challenges and opportunities rising with the same. This review was only focused on fashion and food choices, but the literature also reports about the rising consumption of other Korean products too, like cosmetics, make-up and beauty trends, skincare, electronics, language, gender traits, etc. The studies also need to work on the area to find how and in which ways Indian audiences reinterpret the foreign cultural forms. Addressing these questions will not only cover the academic gaps in the literature but also deepen our understanding of cultural globalization. It will also help in understanding how Indians are negotiating with the transnational media flow.

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