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Negotiating India-Korean Cultural Hybridity in Hallyu: A Discourse Analysis of Film Made in Korea

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Abstract
This study examines how India–Korea cultural hybridity is represented and discursively negotiated in the film Made in Korea (2026), considering cultural power relations and the commercial context of transnational media. It applies Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, covering text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice, supported by Homi K. Bhabha's Third Space concept and Peirce's semiotics for reading cultural signs. Data were collected through repeated viewing and documentation of the 113-minute film, from which four scenes were selected: hanbok, hybrid Indian–Korean cuisine, language exchange, and multilingual music. The findings show that hanbok and cuisine position Korean culture as the more referential element, whereas language exchange and multilingual music show more reciprocal negotiation. Filmmaker and media discourse further indicate that the meaning of hybridity is contested through production, circulation, and interpretation, while the blending of both cultures creates potential commercial value. The study concludes that India–Korea hybridity in the film is an uneven negotiation rather than assimilation or equal exchange, with Korean culture acting as the stronger reference and commodification remaining a potential. It extends Fairclough's framework to cultural hybridity and underlines the importance of dialogical cultural communication for transnational media creators.

Keywords: Cultural Commodification, Cultural Hybridity, Critical Discourse Analysis, Film Made in Korea, Hallyu

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INTRODUCTION

Digital technology significantly strengthens cultural exchange between Korea and India with the growth of Hallyu, particularly Korean music and dramas, which influence consumption patterns, lifestyles, and the Indian public's interest in Korean products and tourism (Samosir and Wee 2023). Supported by social media and streaming platforms, digital media also accelerates the dissemination of Korean culture and shapes the engagement of the youth from both countries in cross-cultural interactions (Gutierrez-Jauregi, Aramendia-Muneta, and Gómez-Cámara 2026). However, cultural tradition differences have the potential to cause friction, necessitating a process of adaptation and mutual understanding in cross-cultural interactions (Suyimeng, Shahir, and Ismail 2025)

The commodification of culture arises because, in global cultural practices, intercultural relationships are not always in a balanced position (Fithratullah 2019). In the film Made in Korea, why does this film use Korea as the center of the narrative space? Why are images of modernity, progress, and global mobility more often associated with Korea? Does Indian culture appear as an equal partner, or rather as a culture that must adapt to the Korean cultural space? The questions discuss the issue of how the imbalance of cultural positions can be read through the representation of hybridity in films. The importance of examining the relation between hybridity, power relations, and the possible commodification of culture within the framework of global media.

The film Made in Korea is interesting to study because it presents a meeting of Korean and Indian cultures within a narrative space that reflects the dynamics of cultural representation amid the development of the global film industry. The use of Korea and India as narrative spaces can be understood as part of the story construction that brings together the cultural characteristics of both countries within a shared space of interaction and cultural exchange. The meeting opens up space to see how both cultures are represented, exchanged, and negotiated within the context of the global media industry (Alfarsi and Gurney 2025). On the contrary, this film presents Indian culture through the use of the Indian language by the main characters, costumes that represent Indian identity, music that blends Korean and Indian languages, and the depiction of the story's setting taking place in both countries. The meeting of these two cultures then forms cultural hybridity that is evident through the blend of language, clothing, food, music, and songs in the lives of the characters. Thus, Made in Korea not only presents the cultural spaces of Korea and India as part

of the storyline but also depicts their interaction through the process of cultural exchange and negotiation, resulting in forms of identity and hybrid cultural practices.

The representation shows that cultural hybridity is not entirely free from power relations. Although Indian and Korean cultures both gain space through language, fashion, food, music, and characterization, Korea, as the main narrative space, and Indian culture as part of that encounter, opens up a space to see how the representation of both cultures shapes positions and power relations in the discourse of hybridity. Thus, the equality in the emergence of cultural elements does not always indicate equality in position within the discourse. Korea can be understood as a culture that serves as a point of orientation, while Indian culture is present in the process of exchange and the formation of hybridity (Wang and Li 2022).

Cultural hybridity in Made in Korea can also be understood in relation to the commercial logic of the global media industry, which makes culture an attraction for international audiences. The combination of Indian and Korean elements through language, fashion, food, music, and the portrayal of both countries presents cultural diversity as something appealing for global audiences to consume (Cruz, Seo, and Scaraboto 2024). Cultural hybridity in Made in Korea is negotiated through discourses of collaboration and cultural exchange that confront the allure of Hallyu and transnational media circulation, thereby generating potential commercial value in the global media industry (Hijriyani et al. 2025; Salsabila and Gita Sukmono 2025). Thus, the discourse of hybridity in Made in Korea not only represents the meeting and exchange of Indian-Korean cultures but also demonstrates the potential commercial value when this cultural diversity is present in the context of the global media industry oriented toward the appeal of transnational audiences (Ardyarama, Junaedi, and Sukmono 2022).

Research by Divyanshi Gaur and Sunder Rajdeep found that the increasing popularity of K-drama and K-pop has made Korean media an effective means of encouraging Indian youth to learn the Korean language. Exposure to Korean media not only influences language learning strategies through subtitles, translations, and digital materials but also shapes cultural identity and opens up educational and career opportunities related to Korea (Gaur and Rajdeep 2024).

Research published by Rubal Kanozia and Garima Ganghariya indicates that the popularity of Korean culture in India is shaped by cultural proximity and hybridity, facilitating the acceptance of K-drama and K-Pop among Indian audiences. Korean media, despite its distinct cultural origins,

conveys values such as family, emotions, and social ties that resonate with Indian culture, fostering a sense of connection among viewers. The integration of global cultural aspects with the Korean local identity enhances the allure of Hallyu in the Indian market. The results suggest that the triumph of Hallyu is influenced not only by the caliber of cultural items but also by the capacity to create cultural engagement through hybrid representation (Kanozia and Ganghariya 2021).

Although previous research has shown the role of Hallyu in identity formation, language learning, and audience reception in India, these studies generally focus on how Korean culture is accepted, adapted, and negotiated by the audience through the concepts of cultural proximity and hybridity. On the other hand, studies on cultural hybridity more often explain the mixing and negotiation of intercultural identities, but have not fully revealed how hybrid cultural representations in transnational films simultaneously involve power relations and generate commercial value through cultural commodification (Giovani and Ritzky Saibi 2026). This research fills that gap by analyzing how India-Korea hybridity is represented, negotiated, and commodified in the film Made in Korea using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, Homi K. Bhabha's Cultural Hybridity Theory, Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics, and the concept of cultural commodification.

Based on the discussion above, this study aims to analyze the representation of Indian–Korean cultural hybridity in the film Made in Korea (2026) through Critical Discourse Analysis. Rather than viewing the film merely as entertainment, this study positions it as a cultural text through which cultural identities, representations, and power relations are constructed and negotiated (Berkovich and Benoliel 2024; Solong and Pattiasina 2025). The analysis focuses on how Indian and Korean cultural elements are represented, how their interaction constructs cultural power relations, and how such hybridity is negotiated within the commercial logic of the global media industry. The novelty of this study lies in three aspects. First, in terms of its object, it shifts the focus of Hallyu scholarship from audience reception, fandom, and Korea–West or East Asian encounters to an inter-Asian encounter between India and Korea, a relation that remains underexplored even though both countries are major producers of popular culture. Second, in terms of its analytical framework, it integrates Fairclough’s three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis with Bhabha’s concept of cultural hybridity and Peirce’s semiotics, which allows verbal and visual signs in the film to be traced systematically from the textual level to discursive and sociocultural practice, rather than describing hybridity only at the level of representation. Third, in

terms of its argument, it does not treat hybridity as an inherently equal or emancipatory "third space" but demonstrates how hybridity shifts into cultural commodification, in which cultural difference is curated, ranked, and marketed as global media appeal. Through this approach, the study contributes a critical understanding of how transnational films represent cultural hybridity while simultaneously reproducing cultural hierarchies and transforming cultural differences into commercial value.

METHODS

Data analysis was conducted using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, which consists of three interconnected dimensions: text, discursive practice, and social practice (Jolliffe 2010). The analysis begins with the text dimension, which examines the linguistic and visual features of selected scenes, including dialogues, narratives, costumes, food, music, setting, and interactions between characters that represent Indian–Korean cultural hybridity. To support the analysis of the selected film data, this study also employs Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory as a supporting analytical framework to identify and interpret the signs contained in the four selected scenes presented in the Results and Discussion section. Peirce's semiotic approach is used to examine cultural representations through the relationship between signs, objects, and interpretants, particularly in identifying how visual and verbal elements convey meanings related to Indian and Korean cultural identity (Stanlaw 2020).

The discursive practice dimension analyzes how the discourse of cultural hybridity is produced, distributed, and consumed through the film, including narrative strategies, the representation of Indian and Korean cultures, filmmakers' perspectives, and media responses to the film. The social practice dimension examines how the cultural discourse represented in the film relates to broader social and cultural contexts, particularly the global popularity of Hallyu, cultural globalization, cultural power relations, and the commodification of culture within the transnational entertainment industry (Alves de Oliveira 2025). These three dimensions are analyzed sequentially but interconnectedly to identify how hybridity is represented at the textual level, negotiated through the production and circulation of the film, and shaped by broader social and commercial contexts. The interpretation is further supported by Homi K. Bhabha's Cultural Hybridity Theory to explain cultural negotiation and encounters, and the concept of cultural commodification to

examine how cultural elements are transformed into commercial value within the global media industry (Mukherjee 2016).

The film, with a total duration of 113 minutes, was initially viewed in its entirety to identify scenes containing potential representations of Indian–Korean cultural relations. Data were collected through observation and documentation by repeatedly viewing the film and recording relevant scenes, dialogues, visual elements, costumes, food, music, language, and character interactions. The selection of scenes was based on three criteria: (1) scenes that display Indian or Korean cultural symbols relevant to cultural interaction or hybridity, such as clothing and food; (2) scenes containing dialogues that indicate cultural negotiation or adaptation; and (3) scenes that portray culture as an object of consumption or commodification. Based on these criteria, four scenes were selected as the units of analysis. The unit of analysis consists of selected scenes containing explicit or implicit representations of Indian–Korean cultural hybridity. The four scenes were selected because they were considered the most relevant and representative of the research focus and provided analytical evidence for addressing the three research questions concerning cultural hybridity, cultural power relations, and the commercial logic of global media.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the Film Made in Korea

Made in Korea is a cross-cultural coming-of-age comedy-drama film written and directed by RA Karthik and released globally on Netflix on March 12, 2026. This 113-minute film uses Tamil, Korean, and English as a reflection of its transnational characters, which are a hallmark of its narrative. This film stars Priyanka Mohan as Shenbagam (Shenba), a young woman from Tamil Nadu who has a great interest in Korean culture and aspires to visit South Korea. The presence of actors from India and South Korea, such as Rishikanth, Park Hye-jin, Baek Si-hun, and Jae-hyeon Jang, further strengthens the representation of cultural encounters that are the main focus of the film.

Figure 1.



Made in Korea Film Poster

Narratively, Made in Korea tells the story of Shenba, who leaves India to fulfill her dream of living in South Korea. However, that dream did not fully align with the reality her faced. Shenba must face various challenges as an immigrant, ranging from cultural differences, difficulties in adapting, to issues of identity and social relations. Through the journey of the main character, this film showcases the dynamics of cultural migration, the process of identity negotiation, and the influence of media globalization and the Hallyu phenomenon on the Indian youth. In its production process, RA Karthik revealed that the film is inspired by various historical and cultural similarities between the Tamil and Korean communities, which are then manifested through the use of language, food, family traditions, and popular culture of both countries.

The film with a theme of cultural hybridity, Made in Korea, becomes interesting because it presents a collaboration that is relatively rare in contemporary Asian cinema, namely between India and South Korea. This film not only represents the meeting of two cultures but also shows how global popular culture shapes the imagination, aspirations, and identity of the younger generation. On one hand, the film presents a narrative of harmonious cultural collaboration. However, on the other hand, it also opens up space to question the imbalances in representation and cultural power relations in the framework of globalization and Hallyu. Therefore, Made in Korea becomes a relevant object of study through the perspective of Homi Bhabha's Cultural

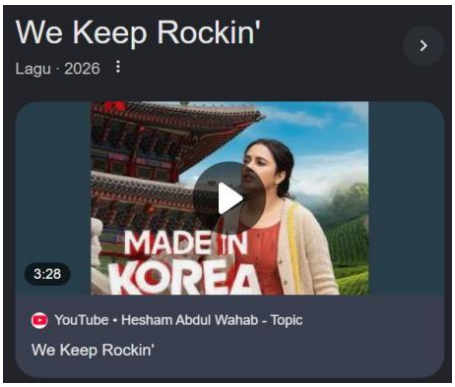
Hybridity and Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis to understand how meaning, identity, and cultural relations are constructed in the film.

Textual Representation of India–Korea Cultural Hybridity

To see how Indian and Korean cultures are represented and negotiated in the film Made in Korea, the selected scene was analyzed using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Three elements were used for the analysis: discourse practice (interpretation), socio-cultural practice (explanation), and text (description) (Fairclough 2013). These three dimensions were used to elucidate the cultural elements displayed in the scene, how the hybrid cultural discourse is formed, and itselation identity and power relations in the context of transnational culture. The results of the analysis of the selected scene are presented in the table below.

Table.1

Scene	Representamen (Sign)	Object	Interpretant
 Figure 2 The Use of Hanbok as a Form of Cultural Adaptation	A hanbok worn by an Indian character while walking with an elderly Korean woman in a traditional Korean palace.	The hanbok as a representation of Korean traditional identity, culture, and cultural practices.	The hanbok signifies the Indian character's engagement with and adaptation to Korean cultural practices. It represents an encounter between Indian and Korean cultural identities through clothing.
 *Figure 3 Indian Kimchi Fried Rice as a Culinary Acculturation*	A dish that combines Indian and Korean culinary elements through the use of fried rice and kimchi.	Indian and Korean culinary traditions brought together in a single food form.	The combination signifies the formation of a hybrid culinary practice through the integration of elements from both cultures in everyday life.
 *Figure 4 Indian–Korean Language Exchange in Musical Negotiation*	The use of multiple languages in interpersonal and musical interaction, including Korean and languages associated with the Indian cultural context.	Language as a representation of Indian and Korean cultural identities and intercultural interaction.	The use of multiple languages signifies cross-cultural communication and identity negotiation. Language becomes a sign of cultural interaction that extends beyond a single cultural identity.

 *Figure 5 Cultural Collaboration through Multilingual Music*	The integration of Korean, English, Tamil, Malayalam, and Hindi in a musical performance.	Music and language as a space for IndiaKorea cultural collaboration and transnational cultural expression.	The combination of multiple languages signifies the formation of a hybrid cultural expression that does not belong exclusively to one culture. It represents cultural collaboration and the creation of a new form of cultural expression through musical and linguistic integration.

Analysis of Indian–Korean Hybrid Culture Based on Fairclough's CDA

Figure 1. The Use of Hanbok as a Form of Cultural Adaptation

The representation of hanbok functions as a cultural sign referring to Korean traditional identity and cultural practices. From Peirce's perspective, the hanbok serves as the representamen, Korean traditional culture as the object, and cultural adaptation as the interpretant. Based on Fairclough's CDA, the use of hanbok by the Indian character in a traditional Korean setting represents cultural encounter while constructing a discourse of adaptation in identity negotiation. At the sociocultural level, this representation suggests that Korean culture occupies a relatively more referential position when adaptation is primarily directed toward Korean cultural practices.

Figure 2. Indian Kimchi Fried Rice as Culinary Acculturation

The dish combining Indian and Korean culinary elements functions as a sign representing the encounter between two culinary traditions. In Peirce's semiotics, the hybrid dish is the representamen, Indian and Korean culinary traditions constitute the object, and the formation of a hybrid culinary practice represents the interpretant. Through Fairclough's CDA, this combination constructs a discourse of hybridity through everyday consumption, where cultural boundaries are negotiated through food. At the sociocultural level, the scene reflects transnational cultural exchange and suggests the potential commercialization of cultural difference through a consumable cultural form.

Figure 3. Indian–Korean Language Exchange in Musical Negotiation

The use of multiple languages in musical and interpersonal interaction functions as a sign of Indian–Korean cultural encounter. In Peirce's framework, multilingual communication is the representamen, Indian and Korean linguistic and cultural identities are the object, and cross-cultural communication and identity negotiation form the interpretant. Through Fairclough's CDA, multilingual communication constructs a discourse of identity negotiation, with language functioning as a medium for exchanging cultural meanings. At the sociocultural level, multilingualism reflects transnational communication and indicates a relatively more reciprocal form of cultural negotiation than the adaptation represented through hanbok.

Figure 4. Cultural Collaboration through Multilingual Music

The integration of Korean, English, Tamil, Malayalam, and Hindi into a musical performance functions as a sign of India–Korea cultural collaboration. From Peirce's perspective, the multilingual performance is the representamen, cultural collaboration and transnational expression constitute the object, and the formation of hybrid cultural expression represents the interpretant. Through Fairclough's CDA, the integration of multiple languages constructs a discourse of cultural collaboration and transnational identity by bringing Indian and Korean elements into a shared musical expression. At the sociocultural level, the scene demonstrates a more reciprocal form of cultural negotiation within the context of transnational media and cultural production.

Overall, Figures 1–4 show that India–Korea cultural hybridity in Made in Korea is constructed through clothing, food, language, and music, with different patterns of cultural negotiation. The use of hanbok and the culinary combination tend to demonstrate adaptation to Korean cultural elements, while language exchange and multilingual music reflect more reciprocal forms of negotiation. From Bhabha's perspective, these four forms of cultural encounter represent a Third Space, where Indian and Korean identities interact and produce new cultural forms. However, based on Fairclough's CDA, this hybridity does not occur entirely on equal terms, as Korean cultural elements occupy a relatively more referential position in certain scenes. Thus, Koreanization is understood not as cultural assimilation, but as a tendency for Korean cultural elements to function as a relatively stronger reference in the construction of India–Korea hybrid cultural representation.

Discursive Practice: Filmmaker, Media, and the Struggle over Meaning

Analysis of three external sources shows a difference in orientation in the construction of the meaning of Made in Korea. The interview with the filmmaker/director places the film more as a space for collaboration and cultural exchange between India and Korea. In contrast, the two media sources tend to focus on the aspects of public appeal and the commercial value of the film. In the textual dimension, the differences are evident through the choice of language and the emphasis on issues used by each source. In discourse practice, these positional differences indicate that the meaning of the film is not only determined by the production side but also negotiated through the process of media reporting and interpretation. In socio-cultural practice, this difference indicates a discursive tension between film as a medium of cultural collaboration and film as a product in the transnational media industry with a market orientation. Thus, these three sources indicate a process of negotiating meaning between the interests of cultural representation and commercial interests.

This chapter examines the dimensions of discourse through cultural hybridity based on the perspective of Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, where the meaning of a text is not only shaped by its creator but also reproduced through the interpretation process by various parties. In the film Made in Korea, there is a difference in the construction of meaning between the director and the media in interpreting the cultural hybridity of India-Korea. Director RA Karthik constructs a narrative that this film is a reflection of the increasingly close cultural relationship between India and Korea in the era of globalization, as the director mentioned in his interview with Elle India, written by Ekta Sinha, on March 13, 2026 (Ekta Sinha 2026).

> *"Words like 'amma', 'appa', 'anna', and even expressions like 'ayyo' exist in both languages, there are similarities in traditional clothing too. Tamil culture has the sari and veshti, while Korea has the hanbok. Even the food has surprising connections. In Tamil food we have rasam, sambar, poriyal. In Korea you have kimchi, banchan, soups and stews. The flavours and the idea of sharing many small dishes are quite similar."*

Through the similarities in language, cuisine, traditions, and the increasing popularity of Hallyu in India, films are positioned as a meeting space for two cultures that negotiate with each other without placing one as a superior culture. The cultural relationship between India and Korea is reflected in the adaptation of Indian cuisine to suit Korean tastes, as well as being influenced by

the long history of cultural exchange, including the cultural transmission of Buddhism from India to Korea (Park, Cheriyan, and Yeon 2022). Furthermore, both countries share cultural values that emphasize the importance of family and harmony in social life (Czekalska 2024). Hybridity is understood as a form of cultural collaboration that arises from the increasingly interconnected Asian societies.

However, this construction of meaning is not fully accepted by the media. Various reviews indicate that the cultural representation in Made in Korea actually directs viewers more toward the imagination of Korea as a symbol of modernity, global mobility, and the dreams of India's younger generation. As stated in Cinema Express, written by Avinash Ramachandran, on March 13, 2026 (Avinash Ramachandran 2026).

> *"The idea of this cross-cultural exchange doesn't wow us, and even the makers seem more interested in ticking that box than in making it a big hurrah."*

Media criticism shows that Hallyu symbols, such as K-Pop, Seoul, Korean lifestyle, and the romanticization of Korean culture, have gained more dominant representation space compared to the exploration of Indian culture. Thus, the hybridity constructed in the film is seen as not yet producing an equal cultural dialogue, but rather resembling a process of Indian culture adapting to the allure of Korean culture. A review from The Hollywood Reporter India, written by Vishal Menon on March 20, 2026, added criticism to the film Made in Korea as a film that indicates following market algorithms (Vishal Menon 2026).

> *"Made In Korea is the most perfunctory a film could have been, given how it's made to cater to algorithms"*

This difference in interpretation shows that the meaning of the film is no longer entirely in the hands of the director, but is instead renegotiated by the media through a critical perspective on the cultural representations displayed.

There is a struggle of meaning between filmmakers and media that reflects the symbolic power relations in the representation of Indian-Korean culture. Although Made in Korea explicitly promotes cultural collaboration, the film still positions Korea as the narrative's focal point, shaping the dreams and identity of the main character. Hallyu functions as a soft power that influences cultural perceptions, identity, and modernity in various countries while simultaneously strengthening South Korea's position in the global cultural landscape. Thus, this film exists

between two discourses, namely the India-Korea cultural collaboration and the tendency toward Koreanization, making the hybridity displayed an arena of negotiation as well as a power relation influenced by the dominance of Korean popular culture.

Sociocultural Practice: Hallyu, Soft Power, and the Commercialization of Cultural Hybridit

In this study, Koreanization is understood as a process in which elements, norms, and symbols of Korean culture gain a more dominant position as a reference in the formation of hybrid Indian-Korean cultural representations. Koreanization is not interpreted as full cultural assimilation, but rather as a form of influence and normalization of Korean culture that is evident through processes of adaptation, use of cultural symbols, and the placement of Korea as a reference in cross-cultural interactions. This process can be identified through shifts in culture, language, and habits, namely when characters or cultural representations from outside Korea begin to adopt, use, or adapt to characteristics rooted in South Korean culture. Thus, the indicators of Koreanization in this study include changes or adjustments in cultural practices, language use, and habits that demonstrate the increasing influence of Korean culture in the interactions and formation of the India-Korea hybrid identity.

In the dimension of socio-cultural practices, Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis views texts as being shaped not only by the social, cultural, political, and economic contexts behind their formation. Cultural hybridity in the film Made in Korea is understood not merely as a meeting of Indian and Korean cultures, but also as part of the dynamics of the global cultural industry influenced by Hallyu, media globalization, and power relations (Loo and Loo 2021). Based on findings in the dimensions of text and discursive practices, this section examines how cultural hybridity in the film represents cultural collaboration, Koreanization, cultural commodification, and power relations in the construction of India–Korea culture in the Asian cultural industry.

Film Made in Korea cannot be separated from the broader influence of Hallyu as South Korea’s soft power, which contributes to the growing visibility of Korean culture in Asian societies, including India, and positions Korea as a reference for modernity and cultural aspiration (Quijano Herrera and Pérez-Tapia 2024). This influence is reflected in the selected scenes, where cultural hybridity is constructed through clothing, cuisine, language, and music. The analysis indicates an uneven pattern of cultural negotiation: Korean cultural elements more frequently

function as references for adaptation, particularly through the representation of Korean clothing and culinary practices, while Indian cultural elements are incorporated into these hybrid forms. At the same time, the language exchange and multilingual music scenes demonstrate a more reciprocal negotiation between Indian and Korean cultural elements. From Fairclough's perspective, this pattern suggests that cultural hybridity is not produced through a uniform process of exchange, but through diverse interactions in the production of cultural meaning. In this context, Koreanization is understood not as cultural assimilation, but as a process through which Korean cultural elements are incorporated, adapted, and negotiated within the formation of India–Korea cultural hybridity.

The representation of Korea in Made in Korea is not only influenced by cultural dynamics but also by the interests of the global media industry. As a film distributed through Netflix, the India-Korea collaboration leverages the popularity of Hallyu as a strategy to reach international markets. Hence, Korean culture appears not only as a narrative element but also as a high-value economic commodity (Kinsky et al. 2023). From the perspective of Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, this condition shows that cultural hybridity develops through the interaction and negotiation of Indian and Korean cultural elements, with both cultures contributing to the production of cultural meaning. Rather than positioning one culture as dominant, the film presents hybridity as a dynamic process in which Indian and Korean cultural identities encounter, influence, and adapt to one another. In this context, Koreanization is understood not as cultural dominance or assimilation, but as the incorporation and negotiation of Korean cultural elements alongside Indian cultural elements in the formation of a shared hybrid cultural identity.

Based on the overall analysis, this research suggests that the choice of Korea as the main cultural reference in Made in Korea is influenced by the broader popularity of Hallyu in India, which contributes to the association of Korean culture with modernity, global mobility, and desirable lifestyles (Hoare 2025). From the perspective of Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, this context indicates that Korea's soft power contributes to shaping cultural representations in which Korean cultural elements occupy a relatively more referential position, while Indian cultural elements are incorporated through processes of adaptation and negotiation. The findings further suggest that this hybrid representation has the potential to generate commercial value for both Korean and Indian media industries by drawing on the global visibility of Hallyu, transnational distribution through Netflix, and the appeal of cross-cultural content.

Therefore, rather than concluding that Made in Korea directly demonstrates cultural commodification, the findings suggest the commodification potential of cultural hybridity, in which the combination of Indian and Korean cultural elements can function as a culturally distinctive and commercially attractive form within the transnational media industry.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that India–Korea cultural hybridity in Made in Korea (2026) is not a uniform or fully symmetrical exchange, but a graded negotiation whose terms vary with the cultural form involved. Where hybridity is expressed through material and consumable forms, namely clothing and food, Korean culture serves as the point of reference to which the Indian character adapts; where it is expressed through language and music, the negotiation becomes more reciprocal. Koreanization is therefore best understood neither as assimilation nor as an equal partnership, but as the tendency of Korean cultural elements to act as the stronger reference within a hybrid space that Indian culture nonetheless helps to shape. The contrast between the filmmaker's discourse of collaboration and the media's reading of the film as market-driven further shows that this hybridity is not fixed in the text but remains contested as it circulates. In our view, this is what makes the film significant: the same recognizability that allows Indian and Korean elements to be combined also gives hybridity its commercial potential on a global streaming platform, although the analysis supports commodification as a potential rather than a demonstrated outcome. Theoretically, the study shows that combining Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis with Bhabha's Third Space makes visible the uneven positions that the notion of hybridity alone tends to conceal. Because these conclusions rest on four scenes of a single film and on filmmaker and media discourse, future research should compare several India–Korea media texts and examine audience interpretations through interviews or digital ethnography.

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Declaration of AI

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used several artificial intelligence (AI) tools to support the writing process. Claude (Opus 5.5, Anthropic) was used to assist in brainstorming ideas and preparing early drafts of the manuscript. QuillBot was then used to translate and paraphrase the manuscript from Indonesian into English, and Grammarly was used to correct grammar and improve readability. Scopus AI was used to help identify relevant international literature, and all cited sources were read and verified by the authors. These tools were used only as supporting aids and did not replace the authors' critical thinking, analysis, or interpretation. The authors retained full control over the accuracy, ethics, and validity of the content. After using these tools, the authors carefully reviewed and edited the manuscript and take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and content of this publication. No AI tool is listed as an author of this article.

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