

# Dancing Diplomacy in the Digital Era: A Qualitative Content Analysis of @ktti.kbriseoul's Cultural Narratives

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## Abstract

Prevailing state-centered frameworks in cultural diplomacy have largely neglected the dynamic representational practices of diaspora communities in digital spaces. Scholarly inquiry into how diasporas construct cultural and gendered identities via social media remains scarce, particularly within dance, a medium embodying the dialectics of gender, diplomacy, and national identity. This study analyses the Instagram account @ktti.kbriseoul, curated by the Indonesian Traditional Dance Group in Seoul, to examine its role in enacting gender negotiation, cultural diplomacy, and community representation. Through thematic content analysis of visual and narrative posts between June and July 2024, the research reveals patterns of visual composition, embodied performance, and networked relations that transcend mere documentation. The account functions as an active site of meaning-making, shaped by algorithmic logics and cross-cultural expectations, where narratives manifest as sustained performative practices of gender, hybrid identity, and diasporic emotional exchange. The findings advance theoretical discourse by shifting cultural diplomacy from institutional to participatory terrains, situating diaspora members as cultural agents who mediate identity through technology, performance, and visual engagement. This study underscores the diaspora's agency in producing cultural narratives that navigate and reshape both global configurations and the architectures of digital media.

## Keywords

cultural diplomacy; diaspora; hybrid identity; performativity of gender; South Korea

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## INTRODUCTION

Cultural diplomacy refers to the use of cultural expressions, values, traditions, and artistic practices as instruments for fostering mutual understanding, strengthening international relationships, and shaping a positive national image across borders (Layton, 2021; Sharma, 2019). Unlike coercive forms of political engagement, cultural diplomacy operates through attraction, symbolic exchange, and emotional connection, making culture a strategic resource within international relations (Goldman & Strachan, 2020; Asafo-Adjei, 2024). Traditionally, cultural diplomacy has been closely associated with state-led initiatives such as cultural institutions, embassies, international festivals, educational exchange programs, and official bilateral collaborations (International Crisis Group, 2024). However, the rapid expansion of digital technologies and global communication networks has transformed cultural diplomacy into a more participatory and decentralized practice, where non-state actors increasingly contribute to transnational cultural representation and interaction. This is involving social media as a tools for everyday social interactions that cross geographical boundaries and generations (Jolodhi & Rini, 2021).

In contemporary contexts, cultural diplomacy operates across diverse sectors and social domains, including education, tourism, performing arts, digital media, sports, and creative industries. Different countries employ cultural diplomacy through distinct mechanisms shaped by their political, social, and technological environments. South Korea, for example, has strategically mobilized popular culture and digital media through the global dissemination of the Korean Wave (*Hallyu*), while Japan has long promoted cultural diplomacy through anime, traditional arts, and creative industries. Similarly, Indonesia has utilized cultural festivals, traditional performances, and diaspora engagement as part of its broader soft power strategy in international settings (Issundarim et. al., 2021). In recent years, visually driven platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have ex-

panded the operational terrain of cultural diplomacy, allowing communities and individuals to participate directly in the circulation of cultural narratives and cross-cultural interaction (Dagres, 2022; Rawlins, 2021). Consequently, cultural diplomacy no longer functions solely through formal diplomatic institutions, but increasingly emerges from everyday digital practices embedded within global social media ecosystems.

Previous studies have examined cultural diplomacy through various theoretical perspectives and representational mechanisms. Existing scholarship has explored cultural diplomacy in relation to soft power, public diplomacy, nation branding, transnational communication, and digital participation (Molho, 2021; Alolaimy, 2020; Rösch, 2021). Research on digital diasporas has further demonstrated how social media platforms are used to maintain identity, sustain emotional networks, and negotiate belonging across national boundaries (Elsa & Bremberg, 2021; Ponzanesi, 2020). Other studies have highlighted the growing significance of participatory and community-based diplomacy, where non-state actors such as diaspora communities increasingly function as informal cultural mediators (Worthy et al., 2020; Kastoryano, 2024). Nevertheless, limited attention has been paid to how performative cultural practices, particularly dance, operate simultaneously as mechanisms of cultural diplomacy, gender negotiation, and hybrid identity construction within digital spaces. Existing discussions often privilege institutional diplomacy or focus primarily on identity maintenance, leaving the embodied and visual dimensions of diasporic cultural performance underexplored. This gap underscores the need to investigate how diaspora communities employ digital visual practices not merely to preserve tradition, but to actively reconstruct cultural narratives, negotiate gendered representation, and participate in alternative forms of cultural diplomacy within contemporary digital environments.

To address this gap, the present study draws upon three complementary theoretical perspectives. First, Stuart Hall's theory

of cultural identity and representation conceptualizes identity as a dynamic process of becoming rather than a fixed essence, enabling an examination of how diaspora communities continuously reconstruct cultural meanings through digital representation. Second, Appadurai's notion of mediascapes and transnational cultural flows provides a framework for understanding how diasporic identities are produced and circulated across digital environments that transcend national boundaries. Third, Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity offers a lens through which gender can be understood as socially enacted and repeatedly performed through embodied practices, including dance and visual performance. These perspectives are further situated within discussions of soft power and participatory cultural diplomacy, which emphasize the growing role of non-state actors in shaping cultural influence and international engagement. Together, these theoretical approaches enable a comprehensive analysis of how digital cultural performances function simultaneously as sites of identity formation, gender negotiation, and community-driven diplomacy.

Against this background, the present study examines the Instagram account @ktti.kbriseoul, managed by the *Kelompok Tari Tradisional Indonesia* (KTTI) under the auspices of the Indonesian Embassy in Seoul, as a digital site of cultural diplomacy, identity negotiation, and diasporic representation (Lee et. al., 2020). Rather than functioning merely as a repository of cultural performance documentation, the account serves as a space where cultural meanings, gender identities, and diasporic experiences are visually articulated and publicly negotiated. Employing thematic content analysis of visual materials, captions, and digital interactions (Noviani et.al., 2024; Sethole & Legodi, 2021; Ferretti, 2021), this study investigates how traditional dance practices are mobilized as instruments of cultural diplomacy, mechanisms of hybrid identity construction, and expressions of gender performativity within the contemporary digital ecosystem. The study's originality lies in its integration of cultural diplomacy studies,

diaspora theory, digital media analysis, and gender performativity within a single analytical framework, an approach that remains relatively limited in existing scholarship.

This study addresses two central research questions: (1) in what ways does the content of the @ktti.kbriseoul account reconstruct cultural, gendered, and diasporic identity narratives among Indonesians abroad; and (2) how do these representational practices project an alternative model of cultural diplomacy in the digital era? By engaging with these questions, the study seeks to advance understanding of diaspora communities as cultural agents who do not merely preserve traditions, but actively negotiate identities, perform gendered meanings, and reshape cultural narratives through participatory visual practices. In doing so, the research contributes both empirically and conceptually to scholarship on cultural diplomacy, diaspora identity, gender performativity, and the evolving role of digital platforms in contemporary cultural representation.

## METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach, employing thematic content analysis (Fahadi, 2022) to explore how cultural diplomacy and gender performativity are constructed through the @ktti.kbriseoul Instagram account. Thematic content analysis was chosen for its capacity to uncover latent meanings embedded within both the visual and narrative elements of digital media (Perera et.al., 2021). The strength of this method lies in its ability to identify patterns and structures of meaning that are not always explicitly articulated (Barizi et.al., 2024). Within this context, the study seeks to identify the cultural strategies employed by the Indonesian diaspora to promote their national cultural identity in South Korea through digital spaces (Lee et.al., 2020; Dwifatma & Beta, 2024). The data set for this research comprises all publicly available posts published on the @ktti.kbriseoul Instagram account between 1 January 2023 and 30 June 2024. Across this

period, the account produced 164 posts, encompassing photographs, videos, and textual narratives (captions), each systematically organized and classified.

The unit of analysis in this study comprised three principal elements: (1) visual representations, encompassing bodily movements, costumes, stage properties, and expressions captured in photographs or videos; (2) textual components, including captions and hashtags that convey both explicit and implicit messages; and (3) public engagement, measured through metrics such as the number of 'likes' and comments. Each piece of content was examined for its intrinsic meaning (embedded within the content itself) and extrinsic meaning (linked to the content's social or cultural function).

The data analysis process was conducted in three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. First, the open coding stage involved identifying surface-level themes emerging from the visual and narrative content. Second, these themes were consolidated into broader categories such as 'cultural diplomacy', 'hybrid identity', and 'gender representation' during the axial coding stage. Finally, selective coding was employed to construct interpretive narratives explaining how the account operates simultaneously as an informal agent of cultural diplomacy and as a site of identity negotiation within a transnational context. Coding was carried out manually using thematic worksheets, designed on the basis of preliminary research and the guiding theoretical framework. To enhance the validity and credibility of the findings, the study incorporated data triangulation through digital observation and brief interviews. Digital observation was conducted over a two-month period to monitor real-time interactions, posting frequency, and the contexts in which content was disseminated. Additionally, the study carried out interviews with four participants: two active members of KTTI and two Indonesian diaspora followers based in South Korea.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Diaspora Cultural Mediation on Instagram: Repositioning Diplomacy and Visual Representation

#### Instagram as a Space for Cultural Representation: Visualization, Adaptation, and Narrative Negotiation

The narrative content shared by the @ktti.kbriseoul account demonstrates a sophisticated strategy of diasporic cultural representation, imbued with symbolic nuance. For instance, the post titled "Behind The Scene #KTTITampil Yewon Festival, Seoul, 2 May 2025" captures the humanistic and authentic dimensions of the intensive rehearsal process prior to the performance<sup>1</sup>, which fosters a sense of trust and personal closeness within the community. Conversely, the post entitled "Road to #KTTITampil in Indonesia Diplomatic Reception 2024, Indonesia Embassy in Seoul" (30 October 2024) presents a more formal and ceremonially framed visual narrative<sup>2</sup> portrays KTTI as an official representative within a state-level event. The shift from the private sphere of rehearsals to the diplomatic stage illustrates a dual representational strategy, intertwining emotional affiliation with the symbolic embodiment of the nation within a single digital channel.

The digitalization of this representational process mobilizes visual aesthetics and textual narratives as subtle instruments of diplomacy within what is broadly framed as "content." This content is animated through short-form videos (reels), engaging transition effects, and carefully curated lighting, all attuned to Instagram's algorithmic logic and the dynamics of the attention economy to elicit positive engagement from digital natives. Beyond this, bilingual captions in Indonesian and English/Korean, alongside hashtags such as #KTTITampil, #IndonesiaCulture, and #IndoKorea50th, operate as narrative devices for crafting soft storytelling that fuses visual aesthetics with the emotional resonance of diaspora life. It is underlining that visuality is a site of power negotiation, not mere aesthetics," a point underscoring the central

role of visual style as both a diplomatic medium and a mechanism for negotiating identity (Skrzypulec, 2021).

Viewed through this lens, the diplomacy and identity negotiation evident in the @ktti.kbriseoul account signals a paradigmatic shift in cultural diplomacy practice. The account's diverse content can be read as everyday diplomacy, a form of diplomacy emerging organically from community life rather than from formal policy (Adler-Nissen & Eggeling, 2022). The visual and narrative strategies embedded within @ktti.kbriseoul demonstrate how members of the Indonesian diaspora act as cultural agents, integrating inherited traditions, digital technologies, and visual storytelling to reconfigure both identity and diplomatic meaning. Consequently, the account's output is far more than mere cultural documentation; it is a vehicle of symbolic mediation and community-driven digital diplomacy, engaging global audiences while affirming the agency of the diaspora in shaping cultural narratives.

#### **Cultural Promotion as Subtle Diplomacy: Frequency, Visibility, and the Repositioning of Non-State Actors**

The posting frequency of the @ktti.kbriseoul account demonstrates the regularity of a curated and strategic practice of cultural representation. Between January and June 2025, an average of five posts per month were identified, featuring cultural activities including performance documentation, rehearsals, and diplomatic collaborations. The formats used are varied, ranging from reels as the dominant format for reaching a wide audience, feed posts for maintaining visual aesthetics, and stories for temporary communication and real-time presence. When expressed as a percentage, reels account for more than 50% of posts each month. This has to some extent indicated a high level of platform awareness within the community. This pattern shows that the cultural promotion practices carried out are systematic and follow the logic of digital content distribution.

The digitization of this content strategy demands an acute understanding of both algorithmic dynamics and platform aesthetics. KTTI appears to recognize that the success of cultural messaging depends not solely on the narrative substance but equally on the way content is visually and temporally packaged to align with Instagram's algorithmic expectations. Employing simple cinematic techniques, natural lighting, and soft filters that resonate with contemporary visual trends, KTTI demonstrates deliberate adaptation to these "invisible rules" of the platform (Rodriguez & Piccoli, 2025; DeVito, 2022). This aligns with the notion of algorithmic visibility, which posits that active social media users adjust their production methods to comply with the operational logic of algorithms. From this perspective, the visibility achieved by @ktti.kbriseoul stems from a sophisticated grasp of the attention economy, wherein human attention is treated as a scarce and valuable resource, commodified within the digital and marketing spheres.

Platforms such as Instagram are intentionally designed to structure users' time and attention through mechanisms of repetition and visual stimulus (Voinea et.al., 2024). Within this framework, the diaspora community is not merely conveying a message; it is consciously cultivating audience retention by selecting optimal durations, employing provocative captions, and maintaining a rapid narrative rhythm. This practice illustrates the diaspora's adeptness in navigating the digital landscape, where the effectiveness of cultural representation is contingent not only upon the quality of substance but upon the strategic capitalization of that substance within the architecture of algorithms. The resulting content reflects a visualization of culture as a negotiated space between traditional meaning and the demands of representation necessary for global receptivity and appeal.

As an agent of the diaspora community, @ktti.kbriseoul embodies the principles of grassroots diplomacy, a concept that has gained prominence over the past

decade (Boulanger & Massari, 2022; Vadiati, 2022). Rather than awaiting directives from formal institutions, the Indonesian community in Seoul engages with the transnational cultural landscape as autonomous actors, leveraging digital media to negotiate their cultural positioning. The transcultural dance that forms the account's core content is not merely presented as performance but is produced, edited, and disseminated into the global public sphere entirely through the agency of the community. This approach reinforces the argument that diaspora are active agents of soft power, deploying the emotive and cultural capacities inherent in performing arts to construct informal diplomatic bridges. Such a practice manifests diplomacy in a form that is horizontal, participatory, and embedded within context.

These findings suggest that cultural promotion via Instagram is not simply an extension of institutional agendas but a form of soft diplomacy that emerges from below. The diaspora community engages in diplomacy rooted in emotion rather than elitism, and in participation rather than protocol. Consequently, the content functions both as a cultural narrative and as a relational instrument, connecting global audiences with authentic diasporic cultural experiences. This demonstrates that in the digital era, cultural diplomacy need not await formal sanction; it can develop organically within communities that recognize representation as a matter of strategy as much as substance. Here, cultural diplomacy assumes a renewed form rooted in community, amplified through algorithms, and extended to the world via participatory aesthetics.

#### **Re-reading Cultural Diplomacy: Theoretical Dialogue and Empirical Contribution**

The decentralization of cultural diplomacy observed in the practices of @ktti.kbriseoul underscores the need to revisit the classical assumption that soft power is solely the prerogative of the state. Soft power relates to cultural appeal, values, and foreign policy serve as strategic instruments

through which states influence others without coercion (Galella, 2024; Vladimirova, 2022). Yet, in the contemporary digital context, such influence is no longer controlled exclusively by state actors; rather, it is mediated through the cultural practices of communities, as exemplified by the Indonesian diaspora in South Korea. Through its Instagram presence, KTTI functions as a conduit for the subtle dissemination of Indonesian cultural narratives, free from the constraints of formal bureaucracy, yet potent in shaping a positive image of the nation.

The nation, as an official institution, no longer acts in isolation in constructing its cultural identity. States today operate in tandem with autonomous non-state actors who emphasizes the strategic role of civil society, NGOs, and diaspora networks as state partners in shaping global opinion (Ridwan et.al., 2024). KTTI exemplifies this through a distinctive blend of performing arts, rehearsal documentation, and interactive, participation-driven digital promotion. Diaspora engagement in public diplomacy is not merely supplementary but increasingly central to the cross-cultural communication process (Melissen, 2005).

The state, as a symbolic entity, is now reconstituted by the diaspora through cultural representation on social media that not merely media consumers but also producers of new cultural spaces that reflect hybrid identities and transnational affiliations (Bruce, 2022). In the case of KTTI, this is evident in the deliberate choice of distinctive visual formats, bilingual captions, and participation in local cultural festivals that weave together Indonesian and Korean narratives. In other words, @ktti.kbriseoul does more than promote culture, it creates a space for the articulation of diaspora identity, negotiated both creatively and affectively, resulting in a fluid, adaptive, and grassroots-driven manifestation of cultural diplomacy.

In another aspect, "from bellow's context does not signify subordination, but rather marks the epicenter of a more intimate, contextually grounded, and affectively

charged form of diplomacy. This is in line with the concept of everyday diplomacy (Marsden, Ibañez-Tirado, and Henig, 2016). Routine activities, such as dance rehearsals, video uploads, and comment-thread interactions, emerge as forms of cross-cultural communication imbued with diplomatic value. KTTI's presence extends beyond formal festival appearances into the digital every day, where proximity, humors, and spontaneity are foregrounded, dimensions rarely achievable within the rigid protocols of state institutions. In doing so, this digital diaspora practice enriches the discourse of diplomacy by broadening its participatory and affective dimensions as new sources of soft power legitimacy.

Here, power denotes the capacity of the diaspora community to generate cultural resonance that is both affectively compelling and transnationally recognizable. This study contributes significantly to the literature on cultural diplomacy by demonstrating that soft power can be configured in more democratic forms through the affordances of digital media. From state to community, from institution to local initiative, from protocol to participation, this is the epistemic leap offered by the study. Through such an approach, cultural diplomacy is reframed not merely as an extension of a state's foreign communication strategy, but as an everyday practice in which diaspora members negotiate identity, forge affiliations, and expand the meaning of nationhood within fluid, open, and digitally mediated spaces.

### **Hybrid Identity Narratives and Diasporic Self-Representation**

#### **Dual Identity in Visual and Symbolic Spaces**

Identity representation in digital spaces no longer exists as a singular construct but emerges at the intersection of cultural heritage and the social context in which diasporic communities are situated. The visual discourse curated by @ktti.kbriseoul illustrates Indonesian cultural heritage reinterpreted within the Korean socio-cultural landscape through adaptive symbolic

strategies. In posts themed around public cultural performances [such as "Road to #KTTITampil The Together's Day" (17 May 2025)] the use of bilingual banners, dual-language captions (Korean-English), and familiar interaction with Korean audiences signals a deliberate contextualization of meaning. This indicates that cultural identity is not transplanted in its entirety from the homeland but is re-woven through visual media to engage new audiences within a different social milieu.

The juxtaposition of traditional Indonesian costumes with Korean stage design reflects a symbolic integration of two cultural spaces. Korean-language captions accompanying rehearsal and performance uploads embody a strategic and inclusive approach to cross-cultural communication. This practice moves beyond mere cultural preservation, positioning diaspora as active agents in redefining national identity through an intercultural lens. Symbols such as Korean-language stickers, bilingual poster design, and adapted bodily gestures aligned with local etiquette further reveal a performative identity open to new social interactions. In this context, social media functions as a meeting ground that facilitates the fluid exchange and negotiation of meaning.

The dynamism of visual spaces curated by diasporic communities is not merely a cultural showcase, but an arena for identity negotiation enacted through everyday representational practices. Instagram operates not only as a medium for documentation but also as an instrument of articulation that interweaves values from the homeland with those of the host society. Representation, an ongoing process of construction [never complete, constantly reconstituted in response to the surrounding social environment] rather than a static, essentialist entity (Worthy et al., 2020). Each post goes beyond delivering a narrative of nationhood, offering instead new forms of attachment to the spaces in which diasporas live and act.

The diasporic identity articulated through @ktti.kbriseoul embodies a dual-

lity that is not mutually exclusive but mutually enriching. Indonesian cultural elements are not presented in purist form, but reconfigured to resonate with contemporary audiences. This produces a hybrid identity, marked by negotiated aesthetics, language, and social expression. Personalized captions in Korean, alongside visual aesthetics attuned to Instagram's platform logic, reveal an intentional strategy in the performance of identity. This approach reflects the view of diasporic identity as performative, something enacted rather than possessed (Appadurai, 1996).

Thus, visual representation on social media becomes not a mere reflection of the past, but a projection of culture continually reassembled within shifting power relations and the evolving digital sphere. Dual identity here is not framed as a dilemma, but as a strategy for building inclusive and communicative intercultural bridges. This phenomenon demonstrates that digital media functions not only as an archive of cultural memory, but also as a primary infrastructure shaping diasporic cultural expression in the present century.

#### Traces of Glocalizations: Cultural Crossings in Dance Practice

The collaborative performance blending *Indang*, a traditional *Minangkabau* dance, with *Sogo*, the Korean hand drum, has generated a new visual landscape in diasporic cultural practice. In the @ktti.kbriseoul postdated 21 April 2024, a rehearsal video entitled *Indang x Sogo Practice: Celebrating Friendship in Dance* presents choreography emphasizes cultural parity rather than hierarchy, to create a culturally relevant identity across local and global contexts (Cabañes & Uy-Tioco, 2022). In this framework, dance collaboration is not perceived as a biased amalgamation of values, but as a visual strategy that broadens the reach and resonance of the heritage culture.

The use of bilingual captions and hashtags such as #IndoKorea50th and #FriendshipThroughDance reinforces the intercultural message embedded in the perfor-

mance narrative. Its reveals the creation of a cultural bridge, representing reciprocal ties between the Indonesian diaspora and the Korean local community where distinctions are not erased but creatively managed to foster emotional and aesthetic intimacy (Huang et.al., 2022). Korean-language captions serve not only as an inclusion strategy, but also as a sign of the diaspora's openness to new audiences, signaling a cultural repositioning within the Korean media landscape.

Moreover, the transformation of KTTI's collaborative dance form cannot be detached from the dynamics of social media as a performative visual arena. Instagram's algorithm appears to encourage the reproduction of short, rhythmically engaging content with aesthetic appeal. In response, KTTI adapts tempo, visual composition, and movement repetition patterns in its collaborative choreography. This affirms the role of media logic in reshaping cultural expression, where the platform's visual logic actively influences both the form and the communicative intent of the performance (Altheide, 2020). In the diasporic context, such adaptation is not seen as the degradation of tradition, but as an affirmation of cultural resilience through strategic transformation.

By integrating a Korean local instrument into the structure of an Indonesian dance, KTTI enacts an active and deliberate model of cultural negotiation, which leverage aesthetic contexts to assert their collective existence and identity (Kolokytha, 2022). It is become the logic of glocalization in its everyday performativity. Through these collaborations, the diaspora not only introduces Indonesia to Korea but also creates a meaningful hybrid "third culture" rich in symbolic significance.

#### Digital Self-Representation: Diaspora as Subject, Not Object

Initially, the @ktti.kbriseoul account functioned as a repository of narratives produced by and for the diaspora community alone. Over time, this archive of documented activities shifted in meaning, be-

coming an articulation of cultural identity within the context of visibility contests. This transformation is evident not only in performances that increasingly attract attention, but also in the growing sophistication of captions, emojis, visual irony, and structured hashtags. Today, @ktti.kbriseoul consciously assembles its “self” in a public, open, and often highly strategic manner. This reframes the classical understanding of representation, moving from speaking about to speaking as (Siow, 2023).

In the post dated January, 11th 2024 entitled Welcome 2024, the visual narrative is not framed as a farewell party spectacle, but instead as an intimate moment of dining, camaraderie, and internal humor within the diaspora. The use of local language, relaxed body gestures, and emojis disrupts the assumption that cultural diplomacy must be formal or grandiose. Such content affirms the role of digital platforms not merely as vehicles for information dissemination, but as spaces for participation and subversion. Theory of ambient affiliation emphasizes that the use of reflective or humorous captions here creates networks of emotional affiliation that connect geographically dispersed diaspora members with local audiences on an affective, rather than purely informational (Wang & Luo, 2024).

Rather than following a singular narrative of nationhood, representation in @ktti.kbriseoul is plural and multilocal. Individual differences are expressed through varied dance styles, costume choices, and shooting angles across posts. The diasporic body is thus not treated as a homogeneous object but as an active entity rewriting cultural discourse in the digital medium that confirm on hybrid innovation logics (Browder et.al., 2023).

Grassroots control over representation, via posts, highlights, and behind-the-scenes documentation, demonstrates that the diaspora is not only a mediator between cultures, but also a producer of new visual epistemologies. In this sense, @ktti.kbriseoul can be read as a repository of visual epistemics, a site where bodies, perfor-

mances, and narratives co-produce cultural knowledge through digital forms (Parr & Friston, 2017). Thus, digitalization does not merely expand access to culture; it shifts the locus of representational authority from institutions to the community itself.

### **@ktti.kbriseoul and the Dynamics of Hybrid Identity**

Hybridity can no longer be understood merely as a blending of cultures, but rather as a dynamic site of negotiation within a digital ecosystem governed by the logic of visibility. Identity is not given, but formed through ongoing processes of representation and articulation (Hall, 1996). In the digital diaspora context of @ktti.kbriseoul, however, identity emerges as a consciously orchestrated reconstruction. The account functions not simply as a repository of cultural memory, but operates in accordance with social media algorithms (Bucher, 2018). Self-representation is shaped not by static cultural roots alone, but by the interplay of the will to appear, the calculated demands of the platform, and the aesthetics of public legibility (Hurley, 2021). Hybridity here thus becomes a strategy of articulation rather than a mere outcome of cultural fusion.

This strategy unfolds within a tension between origins and the imperative of visibility. As a diaspora collective, KTTI does not merely represent Indonesian culture; it adjusts its modes of presentation to resonate with Korean audiences while remaining compatible with global algorithms. Bodies and cultures on social media are compelled to conform to “algorithmic visibility,” where aesthetics, rhythm, and emotion are treated as inherent commodities (Sued et. al., 2021). In this sense, the diaspora emerges not as a passive entity, but as a mediated subject actively engaging with technopolitical logics to construct its narrative.

The cultural narratives projected through @ktti.kbriseoul are inseparable with curated stories, manifestations of identity designed not only to reflect the self but also to compete in the attention economy of digital ecosystems (Chen, 2018). From vi-

sual composition and hashtag selection to lighting choices and video duration, there is a clear curatorial intention shaped by platform consumption logics. In the case of @ktti.kbriseoul such positioning must be renegotiated within a performative and visual framework dictated by platform logic. The diaspora thus becomes an entity that simultaneously produces and is produced by cultural and technological apparatuses.

Technology here is not merely a medium of transmission but an epistemic agent structuring representation. As argue, digital infrastructures actively shape the construction and communication of diasporic identity (Candidatu & Ponzanesi, 2022). In this study, the visualization of Indonesian culture, not only the substance of the content, but also the message design, publication timing, and emotional strategies, each working to ensure connection and visibility, to elicit positive psychological responses, and ultimately to sustain acts of cultural support.

The sustainability of representation on @ktti.kbriseoul is therefore not only about tradition or origin, but about how these traditions are reassembled within the platform's aesthetic logic, which privileges impact and engagement. Such engagement underscores that diasporic identity is productive yet never neutral. What is presented is not "Indonesia" in its fixed form, but an "Indonesia in the making", a performative construct that continually adapts, negotiates, and responds to digital structures (Trudeau, 2022). This finding deepens the discourse on hybrid identity, showing that it evolves from intercultural relations into a relationship between cultural agency and algorithmic systems. Hybridity, in this view, is not solely a cultural process but also a technological one, as the diasporic body operates within two simultaneous terrains: the symbolic and the systemic. From this standpoint, digital cultural representation can be read as a field of power and strategy, rather than merely a mirror of tradition.

### **The Speaking Body: Gender Performativity and the Power of Representation The Diasporic Body and Inscribed Roles**

The diasporic body, as represented in the performances of @ktti.kbriseoul, is not a neutral vessel but a culturally and politically inscribed site, continually negotiating visibility within intersecting frameworks of tradition, gender, and transnational spectatorship. In this digital performance space, the body becomes both the stage and the script, a medium through which cultural narratives, gender roles, and power relations are enacted and contested. These representations reveal how diasporic performers inhabit roles shaped by inherited cultural codes yet rearticulated in dialogue with their host society. Costumes, choreography, and gestural vocabularies drawn from Indonesian traditions are performed not in isolation, but reframed within the aesthetics and social expectations of a South Korean public sphere. This dual inscription situates the body as a hybrid text: one that carries the historical weight of origin while simultaneously adapting to the performative demands of a new cultural milieu.

In this process, gender becomes a visible axis of negotiation. The body in motion is not merely reproducing canonical forms, but engaging in a form of gender performativity (Butler, 1990) that is mediated by diasporic consciousness. Female dancers, for instance, may perform choreographies rooted in traditional codes of modesty and grace, yet their participation in contemporary, algorithmically-optimised visual formats introduces a layer of mediated agency. Likewise, male performers, often framed in leadership or instrumental roles, engage in a subtle recalibration of gendered presence, particularly in collaborative performances that foreground equality and intercultural partnership. Through the visual economy of Instagram, these bodies accrue meaning beyond the live moment. Camera framing, selective editing, and captioning reconfigure the ephemeral into enduring cultural artefacts. In this way, the diasporic body becomes a site of both representation and

authorship, a body that speaks, not only about tradition, but as a living interlocutor in ongoing conversations about gender, identity, and cultural diplomacy.

### Gender as Performance: Reading the Body through Butler's Lens

The bodily performance enacted in the dance practices of the diaspora demonstrates that gender identity is not fixed but is produced through repetitive, contextually situated acts. In the 27 May 2024 post 3, two female dancers from KTTI performed the *Sapi Kerab* choreography [traditionally associated with male roles] donning customary male-coded elements such as the traditional headscarf (*ikat kepala*), a broad belt, and dominant gestures, including forceful stomps and assertive facial expressions. This visual representation clearly sought to obscure the performers' biological femininity in their enactment of the male *Sapi Kerab* dancer. Yet intriguingly, while the female body's presence in this male role suggested a shift in gender meaning within the front stage context, the choice of feminine-accented slip-on sandals as part of the costume subtly preserved a trace of their gendered identity. This visual contradiction seems to declare: "Even if muted, our female identity will remain present within our roles as male *Sapi Kerab* dancers." Gender performativity emphasizes that gender emerges through the repetition of acts within specific social frameworks, rather than from biological determinism (Rokhmansyah et al., 2022). In the diasporic space, however, these frameworks are shaped by the distinctive conditions of a limited yet flexible community. minority bodies often adopt a "strategic orientation" toward dominant norms (Bolderdijk & Jans, 2021). In this context, women creatively adapt their stage roles to meet choreographic structure and performance needs without fully replicating patriarchal patterns.

Role assignment is thus determined less by gender codification than by collective cultural labour and the urgency of national cultural representation. The visualisation of the body in this post may also be interpreted

as aesthetic agency, which understands choreography in contemporary spaces as a form of political bodily articulation (Kalmanlehto, 2023). Adopting a male role here is not merely about dismantling normative boundaries, but about introducing the female body into a domain conventionally reserved for male-coded performance, without submitting to its restrictive codes. This *Sapi Kerab* choreography thus operates as a site of power negotiation, between aesthetics, the social structure of the diaspora community, and the algorithmic logics of digital media.

Moreover, strategic embodiment within communities as a form of embedded critique of cultural expectations (Suh & Nguyen, 2018). In KTTI's case, the use of masculine accessories by female dancers cannot be reduced to functional necessity; it becomes a symbolic act that challenges the naturalization of gender roles in traditional dance. The stage aesthetics produced here do not reconstruct male identity but rather open an expressive space in which the female body occupies a symbolic gap, narrating cultural heritage through collective agency. This understanding underscores that, in the diasporic context, the body is not merely a marker of cultural identity but an active site of visual politics. Gender identity is presented not as stable or innate, but as the outcome of a complex interplay between community needs, stage logic, and digital mediation. Cross-gender role performances thus carve out space for implicit critique of dominant representational structures, while celebrating new forms of diversity within contemporary cultural practice.

### Masking and Unmasking Gender: Diasporic Bodily Performativity in the Reconstructed Logic of Traditional Dance

KTTI's masked dance performance during the Indonesian cultural promotion in South Korea on 17 May 2024<sup>4</sup>, foregrounded a striking interplay of visual and symbolic tension between biological embodiment and gendered costuming in diasporic performance practice. In slide four, a male

dancer appeared in the full costume of a female masked dance character [from a red *kebaya* and *kewer* to a chest covering and *andong*] yet his muscular build, prominent Adam's apple, and visible leg hair rendered his masculinity impossible to conceal. This deliberate juxtaposition enacted a visual contradiction that destabilized the conventional gender constructs embedded in traditional Indonesian dance.

Such reconstruction disrupts the long-standing codification of gender in classical performance. Here, the male dancer not only adopted another gender role but also refused to efface his biological masculinity, producing a layered performative ambiguity. This ambiguity is not merely an aesthetic flourish; it becomes an implicit critique of the binary gender roles upheld in the canon of traditional dance. The sharp contrast between the dancer's fluid, graceful gestures on stage (slide 4) and his assertive, physically dominant presence offstage (slide 6) [interacting with a female dancer in *Merak* costume] reveals two intersecting levels of performativity: the artistic and the social. In the context of decolonial body, it shows how the dancing body is not a passive vessel for cultural narratives but an active site of resistance and experimentation (Durham, 2024). Bodies exhibit different affective orientations in formal versus informal spaces, where dynamics of power, comfort, and social recognition shape movement and interaction (Coffey, 2020). The transition from onstage softness to offstage firmness exposes a situational shift in performative identity, governed as much by social context as by choreographic design.

The visual climax in slide seven [when the mask is removed to reveal the male dancer's face] delivers an ironic resolution. The femininity constructed through costume and gesture is shed in an instant, underscoring the temporariness and strategic nature of gendered performance in this context. This aligns with concept of strategic essentialism, where representation is consciously enacted for collective purposes without asserting the essential truth of that representation (Olaniyan,

2021). Within the diasporic frame, such flexibility in role assignment is not merely a technical solution to limited membership but a deliberate re-articulation of gender as an unfixed, continually renegotiated terrain. The performance thus challenges the rigidity of traditional dance codification and opens space for more radical modes of experimentation. Here, the diasporic body is not solely a custodian of heritage forms but an agent of redesign, recoding the logic of gender representation within contemporary visual culture. In this moment, gender representation in diaspora moves beyond adaptation toward a decomposition and reconstruction of norms once presumed to be immutable.

### **The Diasporic Body and the Power of Representation in the Digital Era**

The body displayed in KTTI's digital content reveals visible patterns that do not stem solely from cultural intent. Movement aesthetics, color composition, camera angles, and caption styles all indicate a representational logic shaped by the platform's visibility rules. This emphasizes the concept of algorithms that are not shaped by cultural values, but with technological rhythms (Kim & Lee, 2021). The choice of short-form, artistically styled reels with synchronized audio reflects an adaptive strategy geared toward virality, rather than purely ethnographic or substantive considerations.

The narrative of the body on social media is far from neutral; it emerges from the interaction between cultural performative logic and the technical logic of digital media. Technological structures generate their own aesthetic conditions, which often conflict with the principles of traditional expression (Richter, 2020). Dance sequences originally conceived as contemplative must be reformulated to be fast-paced, condensed, and visually striking to sustain audience attention. Instead of merely conveying a cultural message, the diasporic body begins to operate as an algorithmic adjustment, serving the demands of a global digital aesthetic. This model of visibility

positions diaspora as affective subjects who must read, respond to, and self-regulate according to both cultural and digital expectations. It can use as affective publics: digital publics formed through emotional resonance that is both measurable and adaptable (Liu & Shi, 2018). The dancer's body becomes a bridge between cultural memory and instantaneous impression, between fidelity to tradition and the competitive demands of visual circulation. Representation here is not only about display but also about survival strategies within a highly competitive symbolic arena.

This chain of representations constructs a diasporic visual landscape marked by two dominant poles: cultural self-expression and calculated visibility, which is related to human experience and media infrastructure (Maciej, 2024). This interface mediates the negotiation to preserve cultural performance while passing through the visual filters and temporal constraints of the platform. The visualization of the body thus takes on a dual function: reinforcing identity affiliation and ensuring the community's sustained presence in the digital sphere. Diasporic visibility in the digital era no longer merely appears as dispersed global citizens but as producers of representation who must address two domains simultaneously: cultural heritage and the attention economy (Lazzeretti, et.al, 2022). The diasporic body, once understood primarily as a site of identity articulation, has now become a medium of emotional diplomacy, adaptive performance, and a response to visibility metrics, its representational power shaped not by the formal centers of the state, but by the rhythms, tastes, and visual languages of digital platforms embedded in the logic of global affective capitalism

## CONCLUSION

This study finds that the Instagram account @ktti.kbriseoul is not merely a medium for cultural documentation, but a performative space that articulates the dynamics of diaspora identity through visual

expression, digital narratives, and collective practices. Cultural representation is not positioned as something stable or essential; rather, it is continually negotiated through digital aesthetics, platform strategies, and cross-context social needs. @ktti.kbriseoul has transformed Instagram from a simple communication channel into a locus for meaning making. The findings reveal that digital cultural diplomacy has shifted from a state-centric form toward a model sustained by community agency and citizens' emotional engagement. The primary contribution of this study lies in integrating a conceptual dialectic between diasporic identity (Appadurai), gender performativity (Butler), and distributed soft power (Galella). The context of diaspora is no longer understood as disconnection or alienation, but as an active and reflective site of cultural production. Social media becomes an instrument enabling bottom-up representational practices, shaped not by formal state mediation, but by affect, aesthetics, and cross-spatial solidarity. Accordingly, this study affirms the importance of reading diplomacy as an ongoing social process negotiated within participatory digital networks.

The strength of this study lies in its interdisciplinary approach, combining visual, performative, and narrative analysis to examine diaspora cultural practices. The richness of data from digital content enables an exploration of the body, identity, and community within a broader media framework. However, the primary limitation lies in the absence of an in-depth reading of platform algorithms and the lack of in-depth interviews with local non-diaspora audiences. These elements are important for empirically assessing cross-cultural resonance. Potential bias in visual interpretation may also arise if not contextualized with perceptions from users of diverse backgrounds. Future research is recommended to explore interactions between diaspora users and local publics through a digital ethnography approach that combines online observation with in-depth interviews, framed with thick description. Additional-

ly, subsequent studies could expand the scope of analysis to other platforms such as YouTube and TikTok, in order to open new perspectives on how visibility logics, algorithms, and cross-platform aesthetics shape distinct forms of cultural diplomacy. Such an approach would lead to a more comprehensive, contextual, and relevant understanding of cultural dynamics in digital diplomacy within an ever-changing global landscape.

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