



Negotiating Identity and Adaptation: The Influence of Chinese-Language Internet Media on Chinese Communities in the UK

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ABSTRACT

This study enhances the discourse on the impact of Chinese-language online media on the intercultural adaptation and cultural identity of Chinese individuals in the UK within the contemporary global media environment. The research suggests that digital media platforms may assist Chinese individuals in the UK in advancing from the stages of denial, defence, and minimisation to the acceptance stage by offering emotional and social support online. Nonetheless, Chinese-language online media may not significantly promote the transition of Chinese individuals in the UK from adaptation to integration, hence underscoring their function in maintaining Chinese cultural identity in the UK.

Keywords: Chinese-language internet-based media, cultural identity, Chinese cultural identity, Chinese diaspora, Chinese social media

1. Introduction

Immigrants always spend part of their time consuming their mother-language media (Lee & Tse, 1994; Hmida et al., 2009; Wang, 2014). In the era of traditional media, Chinese-language media in the host country, which was typically represented by overseas Chinese-language newspapers, used to be one of the few important and available media through which overseas Chinese could maintain emotional connections with and access news about their homeland. Nowadays, the prevalence of internet-based media has broken down the time and space constraints and means overseas Chinese may visit sites and consume the content of Chinese domestic media in the same way as people in China. As substitutes for overseas Chinese-language newspapers in digital age, Chinese-language internet-based media play a special role in the intercultural adaptation of overseas Chinese. Previous researches have made abundant achievements about the development of overseas Chinese media in the world-wide. However, there is a lack of research on the field of effects of mother-language media consumption on intercultural adaptation of overseas Chinese in the current global media environment. In order to fill the research gap in this area by offering fresh insights and knowledge, this study chooses Chinese individuals living in the UK as its research subject and investigates the effects of Chinese-language internet-based media on Chinese individuals' intercultural adaptation. Based on this, the following research questions were created for this study: What effects do various forms of Chinese-language online media have on Chinese individuals' ability to adjust to a new culture in the UK? And what effects does Chinese people's intake of Chinese-language online media have on the way they form their cultural identities in the UK?

The term "Chinese-language internet-based media" refers to online content produced in Chinese for or by Chinese people. "Chinese people in the UK" refers to Chinese individuals who live in the UK, including first-generation Chinese immigrants and Chinese sojourners; they are either Chinese nationals or consider themselves Chinese. The researcher initially collected 306 valid surveys using an explanatory sequential mixed techniques approach. This study further separated Chinese individuals in the UK into three categories: Chinese immigrants, Chinese workers, and Chinese students, based on the results of the questionnaire survey data analysis. Based on this, four focus groups were set up: one for Chinese students, one for Chinese workers, one for Chinese men, and one for Chinese women. The researcher also carried out 10 semi-structured in-depth interviews with Chinese immigrants as participants. Finally, content analysis was used as the main data analysis method to work with qualitative data collected from focus groups and interviews.

This paper was organized in the following manner. At first, to further identify research gaps of the field, the paper reviewed previous literatures on intercultural adaptation, the impact of media consumption on intercultural adaptation, and internet-based media and identity of diaspora. Second, details of research procedures including research design, sampling, and data analysis methods were discussed in the research methods chapter. Third, research results were presented and interpreted with data collected through research methods mentioned above. Finally, findings of this paper were summarised and discussed in a broader field, limitations and suggestions to the future research directions were addressed.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Intercultural Adaptation

Intercultural adaptation was defined as “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into direct and continuous contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns either or both groups (Redfield et al., 1935). Lysgaard (1955) suggested people’s adjustment to a new culture is an ongoing process that can be divided into temporary adaptation, crisis, recovery and adjustment. Oberg (1960) created the term ‘culture shock’ to describe the feelings of anxiety when an individual come into a new culture. Adler (1975) suggested the changing psychological state of intercultural individuals in their intercultural adaptation process can be summarised as a five-stage model: honeymoon, culture shock, initial adjustment, adaptation, and integration or independence. In this research, the five-stage model will be used to identify the status of intercultural adaptation of Chinese people in the UK, then further explore the impact of Chinese-language internet-based media consumption on their different stages of intercultural adaptation.

Bennett (1986; 1993) subdivides the expression of an intercultural individual into six stages, denial, defence, minimisation, acceptance, adaptation, integration. Hammer (1989) proposed eight variables which may affect newcomers changing from one stage to the next. The eight variables are respectively: social support from the host country, shared social network, attitudes of host country members toward sojourners, communication modality of sojourners and the locals, stereotypes, cultural identity, cultural distance between home culture and the host culture, and proficiency in the host country’s language (Hammer, 1989). On this basis, this paper will discuss how Chinese-language internet-based media impact on the intercultural adaptation of Chinese people in the UK by acting on the eight variables.

2.2 The Impact of Media Consumption on Intercultural Adaptation

Immigrants always spend part of their time consuming these mother-language media. Hmida et al. (2009) researched Maghrebins living in French, and found that most of the Maghrebins consume both of French-language media and their mother-language Arabic media. Lee and Tse’s (1994) research found that many long-time immigrants from Hong Kong spend a lot of time consuming Hong Kong media, although they have lived in Canada for more than seven years. Many scholars have demonstrated that the media consumption of immigrants will impact on their intercultural adaptation process (Dalisay, 2012; Kim, 1977; Lee, 1989; Shoemaker et al., 1985). According to Kim’s (1977) study, which involved testing 400 Korean immigrants in America, those who are more motivated to adapt to their new culture will utilise the media in their new nation more often. Immigrants can access information and news on political, social, and other elements of the host country, acquire the local language, and get familiar with the local culture by using the media of the host country (Dalisay, 2012; Lee, 1989; Shoemaker et al., 1985).

There is continuing debate as to how mother-language media consumption impact on the intercultural adaptation of a diaspora. Park (1922) argued that mother-language media may have a positive impact on the intercultural adaptation process of migrants by published news of the host society to help migrants better adjust to the new life; However, Park (1922) also pointed out that the deeply nationalistic characteristics of some mother-language media such as newspapers created by patriots has obstructed the integration of immigrants to some extent. Research by Click (1980) into Chinese sojourners in Hawaii also proved this point. On this basis, Kim (2001) argues that the use of mother-language media obstructs the intercultural adaptation of the diaspora. Nevertheless, the research of Wang (2014) suggests that virtual communities formed on mother-language internet-based media platforms are important approaches for Chinese sojourners in Germany to construct a group identity and seek assistance. This facilitates sojourners’ process of intercultural adaption and offers them social and psychosocial assistance. Therefore, more research is required to determine the degree to which Chinese people’s intercultural adaption in the UK is facilitated or hindered by their mother tongue media use. This study will add to the corpus of research on the effects of mother-language media consumption on the intercultural adaptation of diaspora members by examining the effects of Chinese people’s consumption of Chinese-language internet-based media on their intercultural adaptation process in the UK.

In the new media environment, the question of how the consumption of internet-based media impacts on intercultural adaptation of a diaspora has become a hot research topic (Adikari & Adu, 2015; Wang, 2014). For many diasporas, internet-based media consumption is a pathway to social integration that helps them to adapt the new social environment (Timmermans, 2018). Internet-based media not only provides more avenues than traditional mass media to publish news and information, but it also provides social support and a platform for interpersonal communication. Social support is a key avenue for a member of a diaspora to alleviate intercultural adaptation pressures (Gudykunst, 2005; Hammer, 1989). The research of Adikari and Adu (2015) found that social media can help international students socialize with others, share knowledge about the host society, and reduce the stress of intercultural adaptation. Compared with traditional mass media, internet-based media, particularly social media, may have a greater and deeper impact on the intercultural adaptation process of a diaspora. This paper will delve into this area.

2.3 Internet-based Media and Identity of Diaspora

Identity refers to how an individual understands and constructs his relationship to the world through time and space, and also relates to a person’s understanding about the future (Norton, 2000). From the perspective of cultural studies, identity can be seen as a kind of within representation, a changing essence, but strategic and positional (Hall, 1996, 2003; Schofield & Kupiainen, 2015). Identity is a fabrication, according to Hall (2003), who also characterises cultural identity as a concealed oneness that is never fully realised, constantly in progress, and always produced inside, not outside, representation. Hall (2003) mainly emphasizes two aspects of cultural identity: On one hand, the ‘oneness’ of cultural identity refers to shared common

historical experiences and cultural codes. Moreover, the 'oneness' is also regarded as the base for forming community. Social identity theory argues that individuals identify with the group which consists of other people who have the similar cultural backgrounds to them, and they see themselves as members of the group (Somani & Guo, 2018). On the other hand, the 'becoming (or 'being')' emphasizes the continuity of the process, that the future is as important as the past (Hall, 2003). It means that cultural identity is not an innate or fixed essence, but a positioning (Hall, 2003). As members of the Chinese people in the UK share common historical experiences with other Chinese people, they still identify themselves as Chinese for some time after they leave China and have begun their sojourn in a host country. However, they may blend into the host culture gradually in the future, then their identity will change and no longer display Chinese cultural identity.

Nowadays, cultural identity is shaped by global media flows (Chopra & Gajjala, 2011). Hall (2003) pointed out that globalisation may have three main consequences for the cultural identity of the diaspora. Firstly, the established outline of national identity is challenged by the pressures of cultural diversity. Secondly, there is a growing sense of local identity. Finally, there is the production of new identities. Therefore, with the influence of globalisation and multiculturalism, people, especially those in diaspora groups, there is an inevitable tendency to construct hybrid identities pushed by cultural hybridisation. Diasporas are always caught in the conflict between the new local identity and the original identity. Organista et al. (2010) suggest that through integration strategy an individual may become bicultural. The new formed cultural identity of diaspora member is the product of cultural hybridisation which need to be further explored in this research.

With the appearance and constant innovation of modern communications technology, the links between individual members of a diaspora and virtual communities have witnessed exponential growth (Shuter, 2017). Brinkerhoff (2009) used the term "digital diaspora community" to describe the creation of online virtual diaspora communities through the consumption of media on the internet by diaspora members of the same country. The term "digital diaspora" has two important implications. While diasporas are people who share a common ethnicity or country (Brinkerhoff, 2009; Karim, 2003; Ponzanesi, 2020), virtual communities are created online utilising shared interests, a common language, cultural norms, and other similar elements (Al-Rawi & Shahira, 2018). Some scholars have explored diaspora groups from the perspective of virtual diaspora community construction. For example, Boumba (2018) investigated the cultural identity and self-expression of the 'virtual community' created on social media by Brussels' second-generation Congolese young diasporas. This study will also provide actual findings regarding Chinese individuals in the United Kingdom to the topic.

3. Research Methodology

This study is based on pragmatism and employs an explanatory sequential mixed technique. It starts with a questionnaire survey to gather quantitative data, then moves on to focus groups and semi-structured in-depth interviews based on the quantitative data analysis. Participants in this study are chosen by meeting the following criteria. First, they should be adults over 18 years old; Second, they should be Chinese ethnic or hold Chinese nationality or consider themselves as Chinese; Third, this study focuses on the use of Chinese-language media, so the focus group participants should have experiences on Chinese-language media consumption and be able to read in the Chinese-language (simplified Chinese characters or traditional Chinese characters); Fourth, this study sought to explore the intercultural adaptation and identity change of Chinese people, so the focus group participants should have abundant intercultural life experiences or have live in both the UK and China for more than half a year. In addition, this research required focus group participants to get together to conduct a face-to-face discussion, thus all the focus group participants needed to physically live in the UK.

The researcher initially collected 373 questionnaires, 306 of which were totally completed, to explore Chinese-language media consumption, intercultural adaption status, and cultural identity among Chinese individuals in the United Kingdom. The questionnaire utilised in this study consisted of three components. The first portion asked for basic information, which including gender, age, level of education, the length of time that the participant has stayed in the UK, and the purpose for which the participant came to the UK. The second portion focused on Chinese-language internet-based media consumption, which was the primary purpose of this poll. The final component of the questionnaire asked about intercultural adaptation and the creation of cultural identities, both of which were connected to the participants' psychological states.

After analysing data from a questionnaire survey, the researcher separated Chinese people in the UK into four focus groups in order to further investigate the influence of Chinese-language media on the intercultural adaption of various groups of Chinese people in the UK. There were four focus groups: Chinese students, Chinese workers, Chinese males, and Chinese females. In addition, this study conducted ten semi-structured in-depth interviews with primarily Chinese immigrants. In this study, Chinese immigrants are defined as all Chinese persons who came to the UK for immigration purposes, or who have resided in the UK for many years and have a permanent resident visa, or who have become UK citizens. Chinese immigrants in this research are primarily first-generation Chinese immigrants who have lived in both China and the UK. All of the data were taken in the UK three months prior to the Covid-19 epidemic, from January 2020 to March 2020. Finally, because the research focusses on text data obtained during focus groups and interviews, content analysis was primarily employed to analyse qualitative data in this study.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Chinese People's Intercultural Adaptation in the UK: The Effect of Various Chinese-language Internet-based Media

The analysis of the questionnaire survey results revealed that nearly half of the respondents said they rely heavily on Chinese-language internet-based media; however, participants who had lived in the UK for more than 20 years had a lower reliance on Chinese-language media than other participants (see Fig.1). The qualitative data also shows that Chinese immigrants who have resided in the UK for more than 20 years and have a high level of

localisation rely less on Chinese-language online media. For example, participant H (2020) and participant P (2020) in a Chinese male focus group who have both lived in the UK for 27 years said that they usually use UK local media, and the only Chinese-language internet-based media they now use is WeChat, which they primarily use to communicate with their Chinese friends.

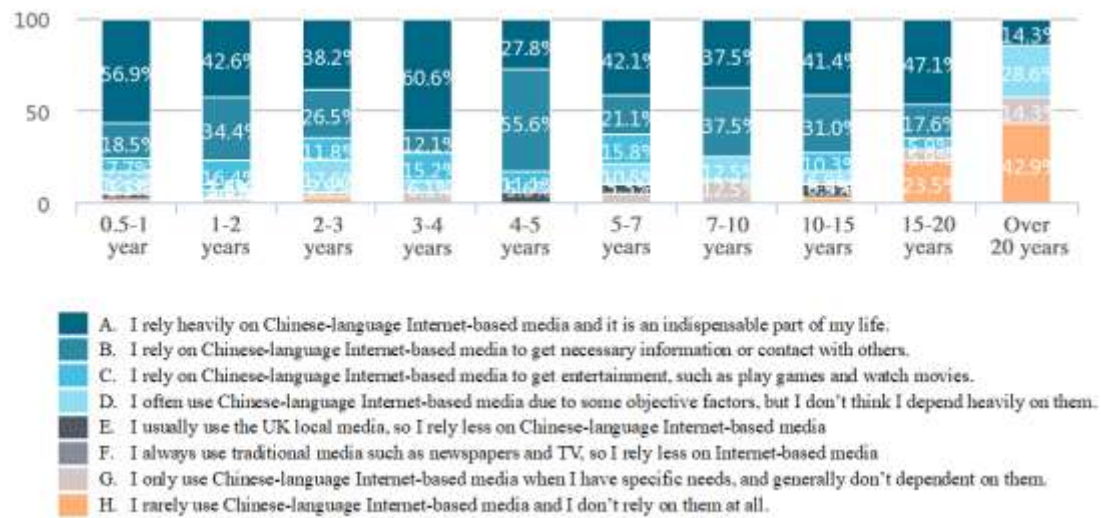


Fig. 1 The correlation between Chinese visitors' duration of stay in the UK and their use of Chinese-language online media

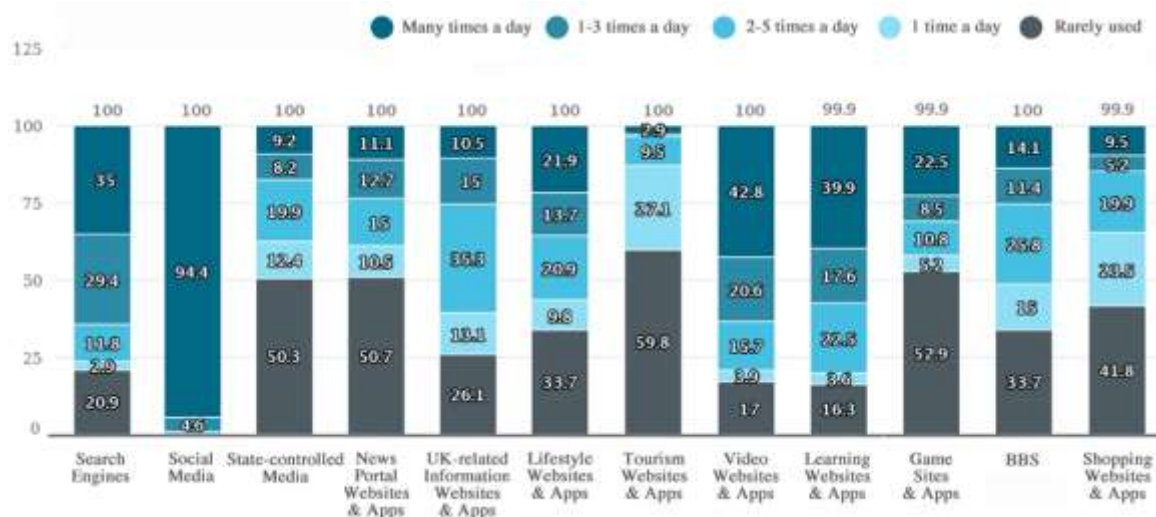


Fig. 2 The frequency with which Chinese individuals in the UK utilise various forms of internet-based media in Chinese

Chinese-language search engines are among the most commonly used forms of Chinese-language internet-based media by Chinese people in the UK, according to both quantitative and qualitative data from the questionnaire survey about the frequency of Chinese people's use of various Chinese-language internet-based media in the UK (as shown in Fig. 2). Additionally, the most popular kind of Chinese-language search engine is Baidu. Participants across all focus groups unanimously concurred that, despite their frequent use of Google as a search engine, they predominantly rely on Baidu for sourcing China-related news and information. Chinese individuals in the UK maintain a connection with China through the consumption of China-related content, which provides them with emotional and psychological support. In an interview conducted by X (2020), he mentioned his preference for using Baidu when searching for China-related news, attributing it to the platform's abundant and efficient retrieval of the desired information.

For Chinese persons living in the UK, Chinese-language search engines are crucial resources for cultural learning. They teach them British local customs, social values, norms, cultural attitudes, and behaviours that facilitate their acculturation. Chinese individuals in the UK constantly use Chinese-language search engines to get news and advice relevant to their daily life there. According to one participant in the Chinese male focus group (2020), he will use Baidu or Google if he wants to learn about British customs, social norms, or the legislation, or if he runs into a unique circumstance in the UK that he is unsure how to handle. Furthermore, according to a participant in the Chinese students focus group in Birmingham in 2020, seeing a doctor in the UK is too difficult and sluggish; she must first schedule an appointment with her general practitioner and wait for at least a week (Chinese students focus group in Birmingham, 2020). Therefore, when she has minor illnesses, she typically uses Baidu to look up her symptoms and then finds the medication that the physicians have prescribed online (Chinese students focus group in Birmingham, 2020). Therefore, on the one hand, Chinese-language search engines

aid Chinese individuals in the UK in comprehending and assimilating to British society. However, Chinese-language search engines also serve as barriers between Chinese and British society for certain Chinese individuals in the UK who have not yet assimilated into British culture.

According to data from the questionnaire study, 94.4% of respondents use Chinese-language social media often during the day (see Figure 2). Chinese-language social media platforms assist Chinese individuals in the United Kingdom in establishing and preserving their social networks and in receiving emotional support to meet their affective and stress-free requirements (Katz et al., 1973). Participant X (2020) said that social media helps him to access more information and establish stronger social relations. Participant D (2020) said he feels less lonely when he is using Chinese-language social media in the UK. According to participant L (2020), social media in Chinese has a significant beneficial influence on her adjustment to life in the UK. Without social media, she believes Chinese people in the UK would experience extreme loneliness and struggle to fit in with the English way of life. According to female participant L (2020), social media, particularly Chinese-language social media, helps Chinese individuals in the UK adjust more quickly. However, participant H (2020), who arrived in the UK 27 years ago, claims that he does not believe his life would be difficult in the UK without Chinese-language social media. He does, however, use Chinese-language social media to interact with his friends and family in China and watch news about China.

One of the primary information sources for Chinese people in the UK in previous decades was Chinese-language newspapers. These Chinese-language periodicals helped Chinese people in the UK acculturate by offering useful information such as information about recruitment, events in British Chinese communities, and rental property information. Nowadays, Chinese-language UK-related information websites have assumed this traditional function of Chinese-language newspapers. Chinese-language publications in the UK or individual social media bloggers frequently develop these websites. They gather and publish a wealth of useful information that Chinese people could find useful or interesting, such as details on British regional cuisine, festival events, deals, and travel recommendations. Similar to Chinese-language newspapers published in the UK, Chinese-language websites that provide information about the UK have a favourable impact on Chinese people's intercultural adaptation processes; they aid in their acculturation and help them adjust to British society. Participant C (2020) recalls that 10 years ago, Chinese-language internet-based media was less advanced than it is today, and there were fewer Chinese-language information outlets that might help immigrants assimilate into British culture. A Chinese immigrant who could not speak English well found it somewhat challenging to locate useful information in the Chinese language (Female participant C, 2020). To improve their lives in the UK, Chinese individuals may now access a wealth of knowledge about British culture online (Female participant C, 2020).

Participant M (2020) shares her experience about using a famous Chinese-language UK-related information website called Red Scarf; she said that if she needs to apply a visa in the UK, she usually searches for guidance on Red Scarf, this website published lots of useful information about the visa application process for Chinese people in the UK. Information on Red Scarf is usually updated in a timely fashion, and she can almost find everything she wants on the website; it is very convenient and she does not need to search English-language websites anymore, so she thinks Chinese-language UK-related information websites like Red Scarf are very practical (Female participant M, 2020). Participant ZE (2020) agreed with M and added that when she needs to get some useful information, she always made the subconscious decision to search by Chinese-language. ZE (2020) also thinks that Chinese-language UK-related information websites are very convenient, these websites have translated the information she needs into Chinese-language, that saves her time when searching and collecting information. Participant F (2020) added, "We feel easier reading Chinese than English, so although Chinese-language internet-based media is not the main way for me to get information, I like to read some interesting content on these websites."

Chinese-language websites with information on the UK, particularly those made by the UK. In addition to providing up-to-date news on Chinese groups in the UK and information about the activities of various British Chinese communities, Chinese-language newspapers also cater to the cognitive demands of Chinese individuals in the UK. In the meanwhile, Chinese-language UK-related information websites give Chinese residents in the UK a way to create online Chinese communities and assist Chinese immigrants in meeting their emotional, social integrative, and tension-free demands more rapidly (Katz et al., 1973). Participant X (2020) who is a member of the Hunan Chinese Association in the UK said, "Chinese-language UK-related news websites are very important to our Chinese community, they provide platforms for Chinese people in the UK to find and share information. Chinese groups based on these platforms make me feel like I have a fuller life".

4.2. Chinese People's Diverse Dependencies on Chinese-language Media in the UK

This research finds that due to differences among individuals such as age, personal character, purpose of sojourn, etc. Because they are at varying levels of intercultural adaptation, Chinese individuals in the UK exhibit varying degrees of reliance on Chinese-language internet-based media. According to this article, Chinese immigrants who are in the adaptation or integration stage show a comparatively low level of reliance on online media in the Chinese language. On the other hand, Chinese workers and students who are still adjusting to a new culture have a greater reliance on Chinese-language online media.

In detail, for Chinese immigrants, Chinese-language internet-based media is the spice of their daily lives in the UK, but also provides an important window for them to understand the situation in China. Moreover, some of them rely on Chinese-language social media to run their China-related business. Chinese-language learning websites and Chinese-language UK-related information websites are essential to the majority of Chinese students in the UK for their academic pursuits and day-to-day lives in the country (Chinese students focus group in Birmingham, 2020). Internet-based Chinese-language media are crucial avenues for Chinese workers to acquire amusement. According to participants in the 2020 focus group on Chinese workers, websites with information about the UK in Chinese can improve their quality of life there. Their primary source of news and other information is Chinese-language news websites. Social networking in Chinese is the best way for people to get emotional support and relieve work-related stress.

Overall, this study indicates that, by offering a variety of information and emotional support, Chinese-language internet-based media may, in the majority of cases, assist Chinese individuals in the UK in better adjusting to British culture on the sociocultural and psychological adaption scale. However, a heavy reliance on Chinese-language social media might keep Chinese in the UK in their information bubbles and hinder their ability to integrate into British culture (Sunstein, 2007). This research makes the case that Chinese-language internet-based media may aid or encourage Chinese individuals in the UK as they move from the honeymoon, culture shock, initial adjustment, to adaptation stage, in accordance with the five-stage model of intercultural adaptation process mentioned in the literature review above. During this process, Chinese individuals in the UK may perform differently, moving from denial, defence, and minimisation to acceptance or adaptation. Nevertheless, this study also asserts that Chinese-language online media does not support their transition from the adaptation stage to the integration or independence stage, and may rather work against them.

4.3 Chinese-language Internet-based media's effects on Chinese people's cultural identities in the UK

Since the internet is a vast virtual community, the media landscape it creates is largely distinct from that produced by conventional mass media. Chinese people in the UK are less reliant on traditional Chinese-language media than they formerly were, as was previously indicated. Individuals are free to select media outlets, media gadgets, and even media content preferences. Consequently, the way Chinese people in the UK consume media may have an effect on how their particular media ecosystem develops. However, people's cultural identity will be further impacted by the media environment, which will subtly and gradually alter their cultural cognition, emotion, behaviour, and so on.

Chinese individuals in the UK rely heavily on Chinese search engines, like Baidu, to obtain news and information about China. Chinese individuals typically use Baidu and other Chinese search engines using Chinese-language keywords. As a result, Chinese search engines give Chinese individuals in the UK access to the Chinese cultural environment that is produced by internet-based media in Chinese. Chinese individuals living in the UK browse several Chinese-language websites after clicking on the Chinese search engine to obtain various bits of information. Unquestionably, the majority of the content that Chinese search engines find is related to Chinese culture. This will create a media environment that is relevant to Chinese culture for Chinese users in the UK and aid Chinese individuals in strengthening their sense of Chinese cultural identity.

Furthermore, Chinese-language social media platforms are crucial for Chinese individuals in the UK to preserve their existing social relationships with other Chinese individuals and to establish new connections with Chinese groups in the UK. Chinese residents in the UK who use Chinese-language social media often stay in the social circles they established in China through these platforms, even when they physically reside in the UK. By giving them a familiar Chinese cultural setting online, this can temporarily ease the anxiety associated with intercultural adaption for Chinese individuals living in the UK. Nonetheless, a prolonged reliance on Chinese-language social media may make Chinese individuals in the UK less inclined to interact with non-Chinese members of British society, which might impede their ability to adjust to different cultures and cause them to maintain their original Chinese cultural identity.

According to this article, Chinese-language social media have emerged as new channels for Chinese individuals in the UK to create online communities. Chinese individuals in the UK have established a broad range of WeChat groups for various reasons, such as groups for student housing, second-hand items, new students, other town residents, and the like. These WeChat groups may be thought of as online communities made up of Chinese individuals living in the United Kingdom. Usually, members of these WeChat groups are fluid, and most of them do not know each other in real life; but they gather in the virtual community built through WeChat for common purposes. Benkler (2006) considered relationships among people in these virtual communities as a form of loose relationships, but these virtual communities are also able to provide sustained, intimate human relations, which are critical to meeting the psychological needs of Chinese people living in the UK. Thus, Chinese people in the UK who join these virtual communities will feel a sense of belonging and construct a new identity as members of these virtual communities. This can help them adapt more quickly to their new lives and the cultural environment of the UK.

However, these types of 'loose relationships (Benkler, 2006)' mentioned above may extend to real life. Chinese-language social media platforms and spaces facilitate communication amongst Chinese individuals in the United Kingdom. Chinese arrivals may rapidly establish a new Chinese social circle in the UK by participating in this type of virtual community, which is made up of Chinese individuals in the UK on Chinese-language social media. Nearly every participant in this study acknowledged that they typically use WeChat extensively in their everyday life. Chinese newcomers can associate with their Chinese friends and associates in the UK easily through various WeChat groups. As described by a participant from the Chinese students' focus group, "When abroad, Chinese people always like to stick to each other" (Chinese students focus group in Birmingham, 2020). Maintaining a Chinese cultural identity is simpler for Chinese immigrants to the UK when they interact and remain with other Chinese citizens. According to this viewpoint, social media platforms in Chinese will help Chinese individuals in the UK preserve their Chinese cultural identity.

Additionally, after arriving in the UK, Chinese individuals typically continue to use Chinese-language social media for a considerable amount of time. To obtain news and other information, they rely on Chinese-language social media and websites that are relevant to the Chinese-language UK. On the one hand, Chinese individuals in the UK continue to be influenced by the Chinese cultural milieu through Chinese-language social media, where they get news and information much like they did in China. However, some Chinese individuals in the UK only use Chinese-language websites to obtain the information they need about the UK; if they can find what they need on these Chinese-language platforms, they won't use the local British media. To a certain degree, people can preserve their previous cultural identities for a while because this will keep them from learning new things and assimilating into the new society.

Compared with the print media age, in this era of new media, Chinese-language online media offer additional channels and a wealth of information to meet the demands of Chinese individuals in the UK and to help them adjust to a new culture. The qualitative data gathered for this study shown that

Chinese immigrants may rapidly comprehend the British cultural background, including customs, social norms, rules and regulations, eating habits, and so forth, by using the material found on Chinese-language UK-related internet websites. This might, however, cause Chinese individuals in the UK to become overly reliant on these Chinese-language websites and therefore use the British mainstream media seldom. Long-term exposure to the Chinese cultural milieu online will prevent Chinese individuals in the UK from developing a new cultural identity inside British culture.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study makes the case that Chinese-language online media might facilitate Chinese immigrants' better and quicker assimilation to the host culture in the UK. However, by immersing Chinese people in a virtual Chinese cultural context, Chinese-language internet-based media may potentially deter Chinese people from assimilating into British culture, whilst providing new opportunities for Chinese people in the UK to create imagined communities. Chinese individuals in the UK have access to the Chinese-language online media that they typically consume back home, which keeps them content with their current level of acculturation by maintaining their Chinese cultural background and making them hesitant to advance and integrate into British society and mainstream media. Furthermore, Chinese people in the UK may be deterred from attempting to integrate into British society by the use of Chinese-language internet-based platforms like Weibo and WeChat, which are used to communicate with Chinese friends and family and to find emotional support. The content on these platforms may also have strong Chinese national characteristics.

Chinese-language newspapers in the UK were formerly crucial venues for Chinese residents to create their imagined Chinese community (Anderson, 1983). The traditional model of the Chinese community in the UK, which was created by Chinese-language media in the country, has evolved in recent years. Chinese individuals in the UK have new outlets to create imaginary communities thanks to Chinese social media. Chinese individuals in the UK have established a variety of WeChat groups for a range of objectives. These groups may be thought of as distinct virtual communities, and the social relationships that are formed there may carry over into their actual lives. By joining WeChat groups with other Chinese individuals in the UK, Chinese immigrants may establish new Chinese acquaintances and maintain their Chinese cultural identity. Additionally, a media environment infused with Chinese cultural aspects is created by Chinese search engines. As a result, Chinese individuals may find it simpler to preserve their Chinese cultural identity if they continue to consume media in Chinese. Additionally, some of the primary channels for Chinese individuals in the UK to obtain British local news and practical information about the UK are Chinese-language blogs or websites; these resources are crucial in assisting them in reducing their anxiety and assimilating more fully into British society. Long-term reliance on Chinese-language UK-related information websites, however, may encourage Chinese individuals living in the UK to stay in their information bubbles and lessen their desire to blend in with British society. This could slow down the process of creating their new mixed identity and, to some extent, preserve their Chinese cultural identity.

The study suggests that the more Chinese individuals in the UK rely on Chinese-language media, the less integrated they are into British culture. This suggests that further research may begin at this point. According to the research participants, Chinese-language internet-based media facilitates their quicker adjustment to life in the UK, and the Chinese cultural context that these media creates helps Chinese individuals in the UK preserve their Chinese cultural identity. The study analysed the living experiences of Chinese people in the UK over a decade ago, when internet-based media was not as common as it is today, in order to investigate if Chinese-language internet-based media may aid Chinese individuals in the UK in assimilating to British culture. All of the participants in this study, however, utilise Chinese-language internet-based media, and no control group of Chinese individuals who do not use Chinese-language internet-based media was established. It is difficult to find Chinese individuals in the UK who do not utilise Chinese-language media in the current media landscape. Therefore, it is challenging for this study to investigate the degree to which Chinese-language online media helped Chinese individuals in the UK adjust to their new life. By establishing a control group or employing other research techniques, future studies might investigate this issue.

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