Social Media Usage and Cultural Identity of Chinese Students in Malaysia

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Abstract
Social media has become increasingly important for international students and influence their cultural identity. However, there is limited research on the relationship between social media and cultural identity. This study conducted an online survey of 438 Chinese students in Malaysia to investigate the relationship between social media usage motivations (information, social, entertainment, and acculturation) and cultural identity (Malaysian and Chinese cultural identity). The data was analyzed using SPSS and AMOS. The results demonstrated that different motivations for using social media had varying influences on cultural identity. Regarding Malaysian cultural identity, only entertainment usage was unrelated, while acculturation usage had the strongest correlation. For Chinese cultural identity, entertainment and acculturation usage were unrelated, while information and social usage showed a positive correlation.
Keywords: Social Media, Use Motivations, Malaysian Cultural Identity, Chinese Cultural Identity, International Students

Introduction
Studying abroad has become increasingly common due to the progress of transportation technology and globalization. In 2020, more than 6.3 million international students were studying worldwide (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2022). Studying abroad can experience different cultural knowledge, broaden their horizons, and improve international student's ability to pursue better careers after graduation (Astarita & Patience, 2020). Nonetheless, international students moving to a culturally unfamiliar environment can cause stress and challenges as they simultaneously deal with two cultures (Xie & Chao, 2022).

Du and Lin (2019) suggested that individuals should strive to solve two problems in a cross-cultural setting. One is to maintain their identification with the ethnic (home) culture (ethnic cultural identity), and the other is to identify with the host culture (host cultural identity). This is what acculturation theory emphasizes. According to Sam and Berry (2016), acculturation primarily refers to the changes people undergo due to exposure to two cultures. One such change is a shift in one's cultural identity (Yu et al., 2019). Most previous studies have adopted the acculturation theory to examine the long-term experience of immigrants, with less attention paid to international students (Hofhuis et al., 2019).

Furthermore, cultural identity significantly influences an individual's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Li & Liu, 2017). For instance, previous research has shown that cultural identity can impact the psychological well-being of international students (Du & Lin, 2019). Poor psychological well-being may lead to severe consequences, such as mental illness (Bae, 2020) and dropping out of their courses (Pusztai et al., 2019). The escalating rate of international students dropping out has emerged as a major concern for the advancement of international education (Pusztai et al., 2019). This issue carries adverse consequences that extend beyond the students themselves, impacting their families and countries at large (Mennen et al., 2022). Given the significant role of cultural identity in the adaptation process, this issue must be addressed.

Social media has been found to shape users' cultural identity (Li & Tsai, 2015; Du & Lin, 2019). However, the relationship between social media and cultural identity has been insufficiently researched (Xu, 2022), particularly within the cross-cultural setting (Gaitán-Aguilar et al., 2022). Furthermore, it is unclear what social media usage behavior promotes cultural identity formation (Li & Tsai, 2015). As suggested by Li and Tsai (2015), future studies need to examine the effects of "functions of specific social media activities" on cultural identity (p.211). Therefore, the present study focuses on the relationship between motivations for using social media and cultural identity.

The Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia (MoHE) has been working to promote Malaysia as an education hub in Southeast Asia (Othman et al., 2020). According to the MoHE (2021), the number of Chinese international students studying at higher education institutes in Malaysia was 28,590 in 2021, accounting for 29% of the total international students in Malaysia. China is Malaysia's most important source country for international students (Hirschmann, 2020). However, limited research has been conducted on this group (Zhao et al., 2022). Therefore, the current study aims to examine the relationship between motivations for using social media and the cultural identity of Chinese students in Malaysia based on the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory and acculturation theory. By addressing the relationship between social media and cultural identity, this study bridges a gap in the existing literature. In addition, its specific emphasis on Chinese students studying in Malaysia enriches the research picture in the field.

Literature Review
Uses and Gratification Theory
Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory is essential in media studies and has a long history (Liu, 2015). It posits that audiences actively engage with media content rather than being passive recipients, driven by different needs and motivations (Katz et al., 1973). Furthermore, the theory focuses on understanding why individuals use media in their everyday lives. When people use media for specific motivations, they may derive satisfaction from their

consumption (Stafford et al., 2004). In essence, users employ specific media intentionally and goal-oriented to fulfill their objectives (Katz et al., 1973).

Since the 1980s, scholars have shown interest in establishing links between media use motivations (needs or goals), the outcomes of media use, and personal factors. Rubin (1994) supported the fruitful direction of combining U&G theory with media effects research, proposing that "concepts such as needs, motives, uses, and gratifications sought are used in an equivalent manner as antecedents to behavior; effects, consequences, gratifications obtained, and outcomes appear as the consequence of the behavior" (p. 424). This study considers cultural identity as the outcome.

With the development of social media and the increasing number of users, scholars have applied this theory to analyze the usage motivation in the social media environment. With the acceleration of global mobility, the cross-border media usage of mobile groups has attracted the attention of scholars. Lee and Ma (2012) pointed out three main motivations for using social media: information usage, social usage, and entertainment usage. This perspective was also demonstrated by (Yu et al., 2019; Manu et al., 2023). Information usage is the collection or dissemination of information to solve relevant problems. Sin and Kim (2013) believe that social media meet the information needs of international students in host countries in finance, health, and current news. Social use mainly refers to maintaining existing relationships or establishing new social connections (Guo et al., 2014). Entertainment usage includes obtaining entertainment, escaping stress, and passing the time (Lee & Ma, 2012), such as browsing friends' pages and playing games.

As Reece and Palmgreen (2000) advocate, specific circumstances may lead to more specific motivations for media usage. An empirical survey of Chinese students in the United States found that acculturation usage is a new demand in the cross-cultural environment (Wang & Quan, 2013). Acculturation mainly refers to using social media for second cultural learning to obtain a better experience in the host country (Wang & Quan, 2013). Thus, in the current research, motivations for using social media include information usage, social usage, entertainment usage, and acculturation usage.

Acculturation Theory
Acculturation theory is an essential theory on cultural identity in cross-cultural adaptation research (PHO, 2018). Acculturation is often described as the change an individual experience due to exposure to two or more different cultures (Sam & Berry, 2016). When two cultures come into contact, the key issue involved is cultural identity, specifically how individuals perceive their ethnic culture and the culture of the host country where they live (Chao & Yen, 2018).

However, early acculturation theories support a uni-dimensional model, believing that individuals would gradually lose their ethnic cultural identity to fully identify with the host culture in the acculturation process (Bauman, 2005), which is consistent with the assimilation view. Berry (1980) proposed a bi-dimensional model, arguing that maintaining host and ethnic cultural identities are independent, and individuals can maintain both cultural identities simultaneously. Thus, dual cultural identities may be constructed during acculturation (Pastor et al., 2022). Most international students may choose to return home after living in the host country for some time, and the bi-dimensional model is more suitable (Wu, 2023). The term "host cultural identity" in the present study denotes Malaysian cultural identity. In contrast, "ethnic cultural identity" refers to Chinese cultural identity. Therefore, this study applied a

two-dimensional acculturation approach and proposed that Chinese students in Malaysia may have a strong or weak identification with both Malaysian and Chinese culture.

Motivations for Using Social Media and Malaysian Cultural Identity
Several studies have demonstrated that different motivations for using social media have different effects on cultural identity. Li and Tsai (2015) believe cultural values can be maintained and strengthened through continuous information access and social interaction. By making friends with locals, international students can obtain and exchange information through text, photos, or videos to understand the host country's culture (Adikari & Adu, 2015). Thus, individuals who use social media to interact may help reduce prejudice and increase acceptance of "others" (Ngai, 2019).

Liu et al (2018) further explained that social media provides users with a convenient and extensive channel to increase their exposure to the host culture to learn more about its values, norms, practices, and related knowledge. For example, social media is a powerful tool for learning foreign languages (Ngai, 2019). Social media provides access to the cultural knowledge of the host country that is not available in daily life (Lai et al., 2020). For example, watching documentaries from the host country on social media can help people understand their points of view to avoid offensive behaviors and cultural misunderstandings (Lai et al., 2020). Through in-depth interviews with 15 international students in China, Zaw (2018) found that acquiring Chinese cultural knowledge may effectively change international students' stereotypes and prejudices towards China. In short, social media provides a platform for individuals to engage with culture (Raman & Harwood, 2016). These findings support that the use of social media for information, social, and acculturation is positively correlated with host cultural identity.

However, limited research exists on the relationship between entertainment usage and host cultural identity. Gomes (2015) conducted in-depth interviews with 47 Asian students studying in Australia and proposed that watching Australian films could help them understand Australian culture and better integrate into Australia. Similarly, Çömlekçi (2020) showed that soap operas and movies about the host country could impact the host cultural identity by providing an understanding of cultural norms and customs. Based on the above research, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: Social media information usage is significantly related to Malaysian cultural Identity.
H2: Social media social usage is significantly related to Malaysian cultural Identity.
H3: Social media entertainment usage is significantly related to Malaysian cultural Identity.
H4: Social media acculturation usage is significantly related to Malaysian cultural Identity.

Motivations for Using Social Media and Chinese Cultural Identity
Nowadays, international students can stay instantly connected to their ethnic culture through social media (Omori & Schwartz, 2022). However, there is limited research on the relationship between motivations for using social media and ethnic cultural identity. Information seeking and communication with people in the home country can enhance ethnic cultural identity (Li &Tsai, 2015). Based on data from focus groups, Alencar and Deuze (2017) found that obtaining information from the participant's home country was associated with a desire to preserve their ethnic cultural identity. Social media allows international students to stay connected to their home culture while living, studying, and socializing in a foreign country (Omori & Schwartz, 2022). For example, international students can keep abreast of social,

cultural, and political debates in their home countries and stay up-to-date with the latest news via social media (Çömlekçi, 2020). Besides, international students can connect with their relatives and friends in their hometown and obtain the latest information about their motherland, thereby strengthening their ethnic cultural identity (Hu et al., 2020). Thus, using social media for information and social is conducive to improving ethnic cultural identity.

However, few studies exist on the relationship between entertainment usage and ethnic cultural identity. Gomes (2015) concluded that digital technology allows international students to access entertainment content in their home countries. Moreover, entertainment products help individuals maintain their ethnic cultural identity since using the Internet to consume entertainment allows individuals to replicate their daily life in their home country to the host country (Gomes, 2015). Entertainment content can maintain the international students' sense of belonging to the ethnic culture by displaying familiar content, language, and cultural features (Martin et al., 2013). Likewise, the relationship between acculturation usage and ethnic cultural identity has not been systematically studied. More recently, through in-depth interviews with Chinese students in Germany, Maeder-Qian (2018) found that Chinese students may develop a stronger sense of pride in their Chinese identity after understanding different cultures comprehensively. Murdock (2017) also supported that cultural contact may lead to reflection, with ethnic cultural identity becoming prominent. However, these findings have not been demonstrated in the age of social media. Therefore, this study proposes that learning Malaysian culture can enhance the understanding of both cultures, make Chinese students aware of the uniqueness of Chinese culture, and thus enhance Chinese cultural identity.

H5: Social media information usage is significantly related to Chinese cultural Identity.
H6: Social media social usage is significantly related to Chinese cultural Identity.
H7: Social media entertainment usage is significantly related to Chinese cultural Identity.
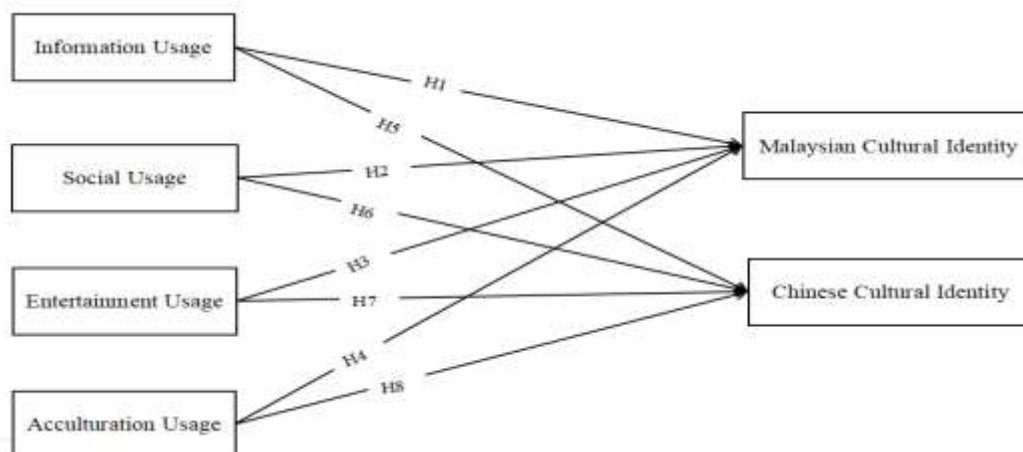*H8: Social media acculturation usage is significantly related to Chinese cultural Identity.*

Figure 1. Research framework

Methodology
Respondents
The respondents were recruited through *Wenjuanxing,* an online questionnaire survey platform widely used in China. The questionnaire links were distributed to Chinese students studying in Malaysia on social media platforms. According to Taro Yamane's formula (2003), $n=N/(1+N(e)^2)$, the population (N) in the study is around 28,590. The sampling error (e) is 5%,

so the minimum requirement for sample size is 400. Finally, 438 Chinese international students participated in the study.

Measures
Motivations for Using Social Media
Motivations for using social media include four dimensions: information usage, social usage, entertainment usage, and acculturation usage. The informational usage scale with three items was adapted from (Wang and Quan, 2013). The social usage scale consists of four items, adapted from (Hughes et al., 2012; Chang and Zhu, 2011). The entertainment usage scale with four questions was adapted from (Whiting and Williams, 2013; Kim et al., 2011). The four-item acculturation usage scale was adapted from Yang et al (2004), which investigated the motivation to learn the host country's culture and language or to integrate into the host country's society through social media. Respondents in the study indicated their level of agreement with each statement using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represented "strongly disagree" and 5 represented "strongly agree."

Cultural Identity
Based on the bi-dimension acculturation theory, two corresponding scales of host and ethnic cultural identity were adapted from (Ryder et al., 2000; Mezzich et al., 2009). The scale measures respondents' preferred values, holiday celebrations, and social relationships through items. Each scale has eight questions, using a 5-point Likert-response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

General Information
In this study, the general information includes two aspects. On the one hand, the respondent's age, gender, education level, and length of time spent in Malaysia were investigated. The study measured the length of time respondents lived in Malaysia by the number of months while also surveying their social media usage patterns, such as the time spent on social media per day and the frequency of daily use.

Statistical Analysis
SPSS 26 and AMOS 26 were used for data analysis, including descriptive and inferential analyses. The descriptive analysis mainly includes mean and standard deviation. Besides, correlation analysis among variables was also conducted. To analyze the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. Path analysis was used to identify the relationship between variables.

Results
Preliminary Analysis
Based on the information shown in Table 1. Four usage motivations were significantly related to Malaysian cultural identity. In contrast, entertainment usage and acculturation motivations were unrelated to Chinese cultural identity. It is worth noting that there was no significant correlation between Malaysian cultural identity and Chinese cultural identity ($r = .05$, $p > .05$). This indicates that these two cultural identities are independent of each other, which is consistent with scholars (Ngo & Li, 2016; Yoon et al., 2020). The results support the bi-

dimensional acculturation model in which individuals can identify with the host culture does not represent the rejection of the ethnic culture (Yu et al., 2019).

Additionally, the skewness and kurtosis of the variables were checked to confirm normality (Hair et al., 2018). Kline (2011) believes that the absolute value of skewness is less than 3, and the absolute value of kurtosis is less than 10, indicating that the data is normally distributed. The absolute values of skewness and kurtosis of all variables in this study were lower than the cut-off values (see Table 1); hence, normal distribution was not a concern.

Table 1
Correlation matrix of the variables

Variables	Mean	SD	IU	SU	EU	AU	MCI	CCI	Skewness	Kurtosis
IU	2.98	0.77	1						0.10	-0.46
SU	3.20	0.73	0.29***	1					-0.23	-0.42
EU	3.15	0.78	0.22***	0.24***	1				-0.12	-0.52
AU	3.15	0.75	0.31***	0.20***	0.35***	1			-0.09	-0.51
MCI	3.28	0.71	0.45***	0.45***	0.21***	0.50***	1		-0.11	-0.48
CCI	3.80	0.76	0.16**	0.18**	0.05	0.03	0.05	1	-0.67	0.10

Note: (1) IU=Information Usage; SU=Social Usage; EU=Entertainment Usage; AU=Acculturation Usage; MCI=Malaysian Cultural Identity; CCI=Chinese Cultural Identity; (2) **p < .01,***p < .001.

Measurement Model Analysis
According to the threshold value suggested by Byrne (2016), the structural equation modeling results indicate a good model fit with the data. Specifically, X^2/(df)=1.31, which is less than the accepted value of 3; CFI =.98 and TLI=.98, which are greater than the accepted value of .90; RMSEA=.03, which is less than the cut-off point of .08; SRMR=.04, which is smaller than the recommended value of .05.

Based on the information in Table 2, the average variance extracted (AVE) of the variables was greater than 0.5. The composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha of each measurement exceeded 0.7. Additionally, the square root of AVE was greater than the correlation coefficient among the variables (see Table 3), which indicates that discriminant validity was met. Thus, the data were suitable for further analysis.

Table 2
Composite reliability and convergent validity of the measurement

Construct	Indicators	Loadings	CR	Cronbach's α	AVE
Information Usage (IU)	IU1	0.76	0.82	0.82	0.60
	IU2	0.74			
	IU3	0.82			
Social Usage (SU)	SU1	0.74	0.83	0.82	0.54
	SU2	0.71			
	SU3	0.76			
	SU4	0.73			
Entertainment Usage (EU)	EU1	0.78	0.85	0.85	0.59
	EU2	0.78			
	EU3	0.76			
	EU4	0.77			
Acculturation Usage (AU)	AU1	0.77	0.83	0.83	0.55
	AU2	0.70			
	AU3	0.76			
	AU4	0.74			
Malaysian Cultural Identity (MCI)	MCI1	0.75	0.90	0.90	0.52
	MCI2	0.76			
	MCI3	0.71			
	MCI4	0.71			
	MCI5	0.66			
	MCI6	0.77			
	MCI7	0.70			
	MCI8	0.72			
Chinese Cultural Identity (CCI)	CCI1	0.74	0.91	0.91	0.57
	CCI2	0.75			
	CCI3	0.77			
	CCI4	0.73			
	CCI5	0.79			
	CCI6	0.75			
	CCI7	0.75			
	CCI8	0.75			

Table 3.
Assessment of discriminant validity using Fornell and Lacker (1981)

	IU	SU	EU	AU	MCI	CCI
IU	**0.78**					
SU	0.29	**0.74**				
EU	0.22	0.24	**0.77**			
AU	0.31	0.20	0.35	**0.74**		
MCI	0.45	0.45	0.21	0.50	**0.72**	
CCI	0.16	0.18	0.05	0.03	0.05	**0.76**

Note: IU=Information Usage; SU=Social Usage; EU=Entertainment Usage; AU=Acculturation Usage; MCI=Malaysian Cultural Identity; CCI=Chinese Cultural Identity.

Descriptive Characteristics of the Demographic Information
According to Table 4, females accounted for 55.3% of the 438 respondents. The majority of the respondents were not married, accounting for 75.8%. Nearly half the respondents (48.2%) were pursuing a bachelor's degree. The average age of the respondents was 25.70 (SD = 5.81), and 57.3% were between the ages of 18 and 25. The average number of months lived in Malaysia was 14.58. The most extended period of residence in Malaysia was six years. 59.8% of the respondents had resided in Malaysia for a year or less.

Table 4
Demographic information of respondents (N=438)

Demographic characteristics	Categories		N	Percentage (%)	
Gender	Male		196	44.7	
	Female		242	55.3	
Marital status	Married		89	20.3	
	Not married		332	75.8	
	Separated/Divorced		17	3.9	
Education level	Bachelor's degree		211	48.2	
	Master's degree		99	22.6	
	Doctoral Degree		128	29.2	
Variables	**Min**	**Max**	**Mean**		**SD**
Age	18	43	25.70		5.81
The length of residence in Malaysia (months)	6	72	14.58		9.75

Patterns of Social Media Usage
According to the data in Table 5, 43.8% of the respondents indicated that WeChat was the most used social media. This finding is consistent with Ju et al. (2021), who reported that Chinese students are more likely to use Chinese social media abroad. 42.2% said they checked their social media accounts more than six times daily. Only 5.7% reported they did not check them every day. As a result, most respondents (94.3%) used social media daily. 16.9% of respondents reported using social media more than six hours daily. In addition, 61.6% actively used three social media accounts. One possible reason is that Chinese students commonly depend on Chinese social media platforms such as WeChat to sustain connections with their relatives and friends in their home country. Nevertheless, they also find it necessary to utilize other social media platforms to engage with the local population in Malaysia. Simultaneously using multiple social media platforms enables them to maintain connections with their home network and the local community.

Table 5
Patterns of social media usage of respondents (N=438)

Variables	Categories	N	Percentage
The most frequently used social media	WeChat	192	43.8
	WhatsApp	133	30.4
	Facebook	45	10.3
	Instagram	37	8.4
	Twitter	16	3.7
	QQ	12	2.7
	Others	3	0.7
The number of social media accounts used actively	One	24	5.5
	Two	39	8.9
	Three	270	61.6
	Four	69	15.8
	More than four	36	8.2
The frequency of checking social media accounts per day	not everyday	25	5.7
	1-2 times	66	15.1
	3-4 times	97	22.1
	5-6 times	65	14.8
	More than 6 times	185	42.2
Time spent on social media per day	Less than 1 hour	40	9.1
	1-2 hours	115	26.3
	3-4 hours	122	27.9
	5-6 hours	87	19.9
	More than 6 hours	74	16.9

Hypotheses Testing

As shown in Figure 2, information usage ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$), social usage ($\beta = .32$, $p < .001$), and acculturation usage ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$) were significantly related to Malaysian cultural identity. Thus, H1, H2, and H4 were supported. However, entertainment usage had a negative but non-significant influence on Malaysian cultural identity ($\beta = -.06$, $p = .26$), rejecting H3. Information usage ($\beta = .13$, $p = .03$) and social usage ($\beta = .15$, $p = .01$) positively related to Chinese cultural identity, H5 and H6 were supported. Contrary to expectation, entertainment usage ($\beta = .00$, $p = .10$) and acculturation usage ($\beta = -.05$, $p = .41$) were unrelated to Chinese cultural identity. Thus, rejecting H7 and H8. Thus, entertainment usage was not associated with both cultural identities.
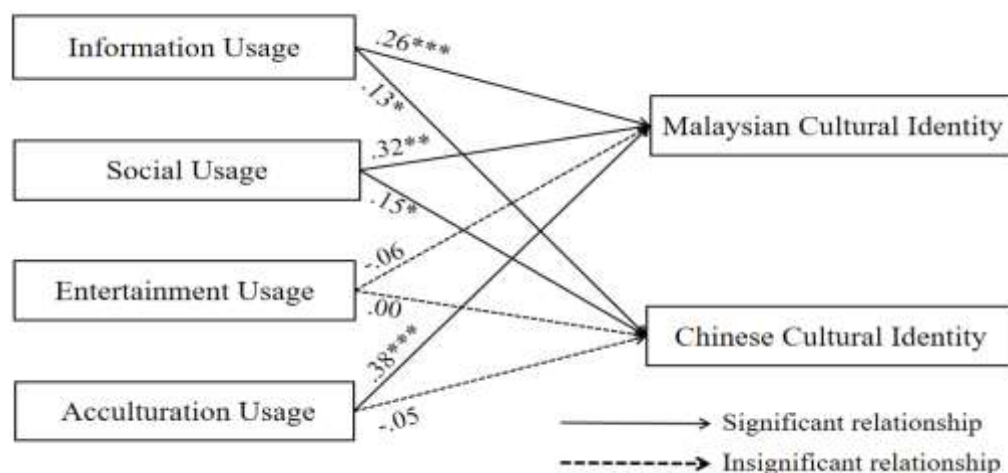
Figure 2. Path coefficients for the effects of social media usage on cultural identity (N=438)
Note: * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001; Model Fit: χ^2(df) = 1.28, CFI=.98, TLI=.98, RMSEA=.03.

Table 6
Results of Hypotheses

Relationship	Standardized Estimate	S. E.	C.R.	P-value	Results
H1 IU→ MCI	.26	.06	4.83	***	Supported
H2 SU→MCI	.32	.06	5.94	***	Supported
H3 EU→ MCI	-.06	.05	-1.14	.26	Rejected
H4 AU→MCI	.38	.06	6.69	***	Supported
H5 IU→CCI	.13	.07	2.16	.03	Supported
H6 SU→CCI	.15	.06	2.50	.01	Supported
H7EU→CCI	.00	.06	-0.01	.10	Rejected
H8 AU→CCI	-.05	.06	-0.83	.41	Rejected

Note: (1) IU=Information Usage; SU=Social Usage; EU=Entertainment Usage; AU=Acculturation Usage; MCI=Malaysian Cultural Identity; CCI=Chinese Cultural Identity; S.E.=Standardized Error; C.R.= Critical Ratios; (2) *** p<.001

Discussion
This study examines the relationship between motivations for using social media and cultural identity of Chinese students in Malaysia. H1, H2, H3, and H4 demonstrate the beneficial impact of different motivations for using social media to enhance Malaysian cultural identity. Among the four motivations for using social media, acculturation contributed the most to Malaysian cultural identity. The results suggest that using social media for cultural learning is particularly effective in enhancing Malaysian cultural identity. The result is consistent with Zaw (2018), who emphasized that access to cultural knowledge can change international students' stereotypes and prejudices about the host country before they arrive. Similarly, information and social usage also benefit Malaysian cultural identity. The result is consistent with Li and Tsai (2015), who argued that continuous information exchange and social interaction can influence an individual's cultural values.

As expected, H5 and H6 suggest that the use of social media for information and social interaction contributes to a higher level of Chinese cultural identity. The result is in line with the findings of Hu et al (2020), who argued that social media provides a convenient channel for international students to obtain the latest information about the motherland and enables them to connect with their family and friends in their hometown, thus strengthening the connection with ethnic culture and enhancing their ethnic cultural identity.

Contrary to expectations, entertainment usage was not a predictor of Malaysian cultural identity. The result contradicts the findings of (Gomes, 2015). The reasons can be explained as follows. Respondents in this study primarily used Chinese social media (WeChat) and may be exposed to entertainment content from China. In addition, Asian international students are more inclined to entertainment products from the United States, South Korea, and Japan (Gomes, 2015). Thus, in this particular context, entertainment motivations may not significantly impact Malaysia's cultural identity. However, more research is needed to understand this issue.

Likewise, there is no significant relationship between entertainment usage and Chinese cultural identity. The possible explanation is that social media provides a variety of entertainment activities, such as games, movies, music, and funny video, and only entertainment activities involving cultural content may affect cultural identity. In the study, respondents primarily used social media to relieve stress. They may have had little exposure to entertainment products related to Chinese culture. This may also be because entertainment products with Chinese cultural elements on social media platforms are limited (Tian, 2022). In addition, acculturation usage was not associated with Chinese cultural identity. The result contradicts (Maeder-Qian, 2018; Murdock, 2017). However, the above studies used qualitative methods and did not focus on social media. There are two possible explanations. First, cultural learning on social media does not necessarily lead to cultural contact offline. Second, there are cultural similarities between China and Malaysia (Rui & Wahab, 2022). When learning about Malaysian culture, there may not be many cultural comparisons. Further research is needed to explore this relationship in detail.

Limitations and Implications

The study had two significant limitations. Firstly, it employed a non-probability sampling method, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to the entire population of Chinese students in Malaysia. To obtain more comprehensive results, it is necessary to include more representative samples. Secondly, the study utilized a cross-sectional design, which hinders the establishment of causal relationships between variables (Setia, 2016). Consequently, conducting more longitudinal studies is crucial to capture the dynamic nature of social media usage and cultural identity.

This study has two main implications. First, this study enriches the U&G theory in the new media environment, especially in the cross-cultural context. In addition to the common motivations for using social media, namely information, social, and entertainment usage, this study incorporated acculturation usage to account for the unique situations that international students face during their adaptation process. The results demonstrated that acculturation usage played a significant role in Malaysian cultural identity, highlighting the influence of different contexts on usage motivations and providing new insights into applying the U&G theory. Therefore, future research should combine with varying research settings to examine the motivations for using social media.

Second, this study also provides enlightenment for the development of acculturation theory. According to acculturation theory, host and ethnic cultural identity are independent dimensions. In addition, unlike previous studies, which mainly focus on the Western environment, this study focuses on Chinese students studying in Malaysia. It applies the theory to a new context to enrich the research results of the theory.

Conclusions

The primary objective of this study is to examine the relationship between motivations for social media usage and cultural identity. Despite the considerable focus on Chinese international students by cross-cultural scholars, their experiences within an Asian context, specifically in Malaysia, have received limited attention. The findings revealed that the four identified motivations for using social media exerted distinct influences on the two cultural identities. Furthermore, considering the impact of cultural identity on the adaptation of international students in the host country, as well as the pervasive use of social media and the growing population of international students, further research is needed to gain deeper insights into this topic.

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