



How Does Cantonese Media Affect Chinese Cultural Identity Among Malaysian Chinese?

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Abstract

Cantonese is the carrier of Chinese cultural memory and nostalgia. Malaysian Chinese people have constructed their ethnic cultural identity using Cantonese media. Nevertheless, it remains relatively unclear how Cantonese media affects the construction of Chinese cultural identity in three dimensions (cognition, emotion, and behavior). The present study examined the relationship between Cantonese media use and Chinese cultural identity among Malaysian Chinese in these three dimensions. Based on a survey questionnaire and in-depth interviews with ethnic Chinese in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the analyses yielded three main findings. First, media exposure and the perceived recreational, cultural, and instrumental value of Cantonese media use had a significant positive impact on Chinese cultural cognition. Second, the perceived recreational and cultural value of Cantonese media had a significant positive impact on Chinese cultural emotion. Third, the perceived recreational and instrumental value of Cantonese media had a significant positive impact on Chinese cultural behavior. We highlight the importance of perceived recreational, cultural, and instrumental value and exposure to Cantonese media in shaping three dimensions of Chinese cultural identity and suggest attaching importance to and supporting the development of native language media for the diaspora to realize the integrated development of cultural globalization and diversification.

Keywords: Cantonese media use, Chinese cultural identity, Chinese cultural cognition, Chinese cultural emotion, Chinese cultural behavior

1. Introduction

The impact of Chinese-language media use among overseas Chinese on their cultural identity has always been an important issue. Chinese cultural identity is formed based on the Chinese core culture (Wu et al., 2013). It is a complex whole consisting of knowledge, beliefs, art, morality, laws, customs, and any other abilities and habits that people obtain as individual members of society and as a group (Tylor, 1871). As a matter of “becoming as well as of being” (Hall, 2021), cultural identity is generally divided into cultural cognition, emotion or attitude, and behavior or behavioral intention (Pan et al., 2019). Each dimension can be constructed by particular forms of media use.

Media use affects people's cultural identity (Anderson, 2006). Cantonese media is the carrier of Chinese cultural memory and nostalgia in Malaysia, which is a multiethnic, multireligious, and multicultural country. Taking Malaysia as an example, this study explored the impact of Cantonese media use on Chinese cultural identity among Malaysian Chinese, which is of great significance to the exploration of original cultural media and its effect on cultural identity among transnational diasporas. In the existing empirical research, media use is generally divided into media exposure and perceived value (recreational, cultural, instrumental, etc.). Media is an important factor in constructing cultural identity (Anderson, 1983). However, how does Cantonese media affect cultural identity among Malaysian Chinese in terms of cultural cognition, emotion, and attitude? This question remains unclear.

This study tried to fill this research gap. We designed a research scheme in which we constructed a measurement index of Chinese cultural identity and Cantonese media use. We combined both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore this issue. The study findings indicate that Cantonese media use among Malaysian Chinese has different modes of influence on their Chinese cultural cognition, emotion, and behavior. The study contributes to the understanding of media use and the construction of cultural identities in diaspora groups.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Three Dimensions of Chinese Cultural Identity Among Malaysian Chinese

Chinese cultural identity is a complex whole consisting of knowledge, beliefs, art, morality, laws, customs, and any other abilities and habits that people obtain as members of the Chinese ethnic group (Hall, 2021; Tylor, 1871). It is part of a person's self-conception and self-perception and is related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality, or any kind of social group that has a distinct culture. In this way, cultural identity is characteristic of both the individual and group members sharing the same cultural identity (Ennaji, 2005), including the immigrant groups' relative degree of integration, assimilation, and marginalization in their home country and in the mainstream culture of the host country (Eyou et al., 2000). It is generally divided into cognition, emotion or attitude, and behavior or behavioral intention (Pan et al., 2019). In empirical research involving overseas Chinese, Chinese cultural identity can be divided into three dimensions of cognition, emotion, and behavioral intention (Wu et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2011).

This three-dimensional scale of cognition, emotional adherence, and behavior is the classic measurement used to assess cultural identity (Berry et al., 1987). The concept and measurement of the Chinese cultural identity of overseas Chinese are based on the Chinese core culture (Wu et al., 2013). Chinese cultural cognition refers to the recognition of Chinese language, customs, festivals, historical figures, and values (Lu, 2001; Wu et al., 2013). Chinese cultural emotion refers to a sense of belonging to Chinese culture and cultural identity, including a sense of love for and pride toward Chinese culture, a sense of responsibility and mission of inheriting Chinese culture, and adherence to the Chinese cultural identity (Wu et al., 2013; Zou et al., 2021). Chinese cultural behavior involves participating in or practicing Chinese culture, which refers to the degree of accordance with the concepts and norms of Chinese culture (Wen et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2013).

Although existing empirical literature has generally interpreted the connotation of Chinese cultural identity, the literature has not comprehensively and effectively measured cultural identity among Malaysian Chinese. Therefore, we designed a specific questionnaire to measure Chinese cultural cognition, emotion, and behavior. Our study could promote more empirical research on cultural identity among Malaysian Chinese.

2.2. Cantonese Media Use Among Malaysian Chinese

Cantonese is one of the main languages for daily communication among overseas Chinese and the carrier of cultural inheritance. Linguists have noted that although the main origin of Malaysian Chinese is Fujian rather than Guangdong, Cantonese has become the dominant dialect in the Malaysian Chinese community due to the popularity of Cantonese media (Chan, 2021). Before the 1950s, Cantonese was mainly used by the Malaysian Guangdong dialect group. However, with the dissemination of Cantopop culture, especially Hong Kong films, in Malaysia, Cantonese gradually became the lingua franca in the Malaysian Chinese community residing in the middle of the Malay peninsula and ultimately spread across Malaysia (Pillai et al., 2021).

Related research in the field of linguistics has focused on the role of Cantonese media, dominated by Cantopop culture, in shaping Chinese cultural identity (Chu, 2017). Cantonese media use has been further decomposed into recreational, cultural, and instrumental aspects in related research in the fields of history and communication. The existing literature has discussed Cantonese media use based on perceived recreational, cultural, and instrumental value (Fong, 2004). First, the spread of entertainment products such as Hong Kong films and TV shows has filled the entertainment vacuum of Malaysian Chinese, meeting the perceived entertainment value needs of Malaysian Chinese with humorous story settings and nonsense (mo lei tau) video narratives (Matondang, 2016). Second, Cantopop culture is an important component of “cultural China,” which embodies the cultural homesickness of Malaysian Chinese. Through Cantonese media use, the cultural memory of ethnic Chinese is strengthened and their cultural emotions are satisfied (Wang, 1993). The strong feelings of the Nanyang Chinese toward Chinese cultural traditions have made Cantonese songs popular in Malaysia and a tool for them to soothe their homesickness (Su, 2022). Third, frequent Cantonese media contact also ensures they share common topics, which makes Cantonese media a common link for the Malaysian Chinese community (Carstens, 2003; Wang & Chong, 2011). Therefore, Cantonese media undertakes the instrumental function of Cantonese language inheritance (Zhou et al., 2017).

2.3. Construction of Cultural Identity by Cantonese Media Among Malaysian Chinese

The construction of cultural identity for a diaspora is a very engrossing issue (Hall, 2021; Wade, 1999). The existing literature on the construction of cultural identity by Cantonese media has focused on pop culture in Hong Kong (Chee-Beng, 2000). Related studies jointly pointed out the recreational and cultural value of Hong Kong pop culture and its role in the “imagined community” of shaping “cultural China.”

In terms of the effect of Cantonese media use on Chinese cultural identity, studies on the role of Cantonese media are prominent. Hong Kong media is the leading representative of Cantonese media. The influence of Hong Kong media on Chinese cultural identity is closely related to the perceived value of media use in the entertainment, cultural, and instrumental domains (Wang & Chong, 2011). Although Malaysian Chinese audiences clearly distinguish between the various forms of transnational Chinese media produced in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China and their preferences vary among viewers based on age, gender, educational background, and place of residence in Malaysia, Hong Kong productions are clearly the most popular. Similarities between the experiences and perspectives of Hong Kong and Malaysian Chinese have been examined as possible explanations for this preference (Carstens, 2003). Through various daily singing practices in the original Cantonese dialect, the cultural identity model in the social structure can be embedded in the collective memory of generations of Malaysian Chinese, shaping their Chinese cultural

identity (Peng, 2011). Cantonese media provides multifaceted values in the process of constructing Chinese cultural identity.

Overall, research on the construction of Chinese cultural identity through the use of Cantonese media in Malaysia is still in the stage of qualitative analysis and theoretical discussion. How do we measure Chinese cultural identity? How do we measure Cantonese media use? How does Cantonese media use affect Chinese cultural identity in different dimensions? These questions all need to be clearly examined and clarified. Therefore, this study sought to verify the effect of Cantonese media use (media contact and perceived recreational, cultural, and instrumental value) on Chinese cultural identity (cognition, emotion, and behavior) using survey questionnaires and interpret the model results through in-depth interviews.

3. Materials and Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

The questionnaire was divided into three sections pertaining to Cantonese media use, Chinese cultural identity, and demographic data. Before distributing the questionnaire on a large scale, we invited three experts—a Malaysian historian, a linguist, and a communication scientist—to modify and improve the questionnaire items. Meanwhile, we conducted field surveys and identified 10 respondents to participate in in-depth interviews to explore vivid humanistic themes behind the data. The characteristics of the interviewees are shown in the Appendix.

The questionnaires were collected in September 2021. Some older ethnic Chinese have only received English education and cannot read Chinese; therefore, the questionnaire was provided in both Chinese and English. The respondents received a monetary incentive to fill out the questionnaire. During the distribution process, the identity of the respondents was repeatedly confirmed to match the research objectives. The questionnaire survey was conducted by research team members from the Department of Southeast Asian Studies, University of Malaya, Malaysia, and the Department of Journalism, Xiamen University, Malaysia Branch. The respondents filled in the questionnaire based on their interpretation of the questions. A multistage sampling method was used to select residents aged 15 years or older from five regions, namely Bukit Bintang, Setiawangsa, Kepong, Lembah Pantai, and Cheras. We used the equal distance sampling method to choose 2000 households, from which ethnic Chinese households were selected. From the selected ethnic Chinese households, we used the Kish table to randomly select persons over 15 years of age for the survey. We obtained 479 valid survey samples. The questionnaires were distributed, filled in, and collected on the spot. For adolescents (14 years old or below), we selected 163 ethnic Chinese survey participants from five Chinese language schools, namely Kuala Lumpur Chinese Primary School, International Primary School, National Primary School, Independent Secondary School, and National Secondary School, based on random sampling within the schools according to their school ID. All respondents under 14 years old were given hard-copies of the questionnaires, and teachers assisted the students to complete the questionnaires. Ultimately, we received 642 valid questionnaires.

3.2. Measurement of Variables

3.2.1. Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this study was Chinese cultural identity. As shown in Table 2, 29 items were measured. The items were all measured using a five-point Likert-type scale (1 =

do not understand, agree, or participate, 5 = I completely understand, agree, or participate). The higher the score for each indicator, the higher the Chinese cultural identity. We averaged the scores of the items corresponding to each dimension to create overall scores for the three dimensions, as shown in Table 2.

Table 1. The Three Dimensions of Chinese Cultural Identity

Dimensions	Items	References
Cultural cognition	Chinese Lunar New Year Lantern Festival Tomb-Sweeping Day Dragon Boat Festival Ghost Festival Mid-Autumn Festival Double Ninth Festival Confucius, Li Bai (李白), Sun Yat-sen (孙中山), and others Confucianism Cognition of Cantonese language Learn Cantonese	Lu, 2001; Wu et al., 2013; Yang, 2012
Cultural emotion	I really agree with Chinese culture I appreciate Chinese culture I am proud of Chinese culture I usually do things according to Chinese culture It is important for me to maintain and develop Chinese culture I enjoy living in an environment imbued with Chinese culture I am willing to promote Chinese culture	Wu et al., 2013; Zou et al., 2021
Cultural behavior	Spring festival couplets Hosting family reunion dinners Giving or receiving lucky money Malaysia Yeesang Tomb sweeping Making rice dumplings Guessing lantern riddles Celebrating Bai Tian Gong Dragon and lion dance Chinese martial arts Chinese calligraphy	Bhugra, 1999; Wen et al., 2019

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Three Dimensions of Chinese Cultural Identity

Variables	n	M	SD
Chinese cultural cognition	642	3.78	0.76
Chinese cultural emotion	642	4.00	0.88
Chinese cultural behavior	642	3.52	0.82

Note: M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

3.2.2. Independent Variable

Using a five-point Likert-type scale, we measured all items; the higher the score for each item, the higher the degree of media contact and the perceived value of the media. We averaged the scores of the items corresponding to each dimension to create overall scores for the four dimensions, as shown in Table 4.

Table 3. The Four Dimensions of Media Use

Dimensions	Items	References
Media exposure	Media contact duration Media contact frequency	Huang et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2013; Panek, 2014; Ting-Toomey, 1981
Perceived recreational value	Makes me laugh Fills me with positive energy Relaxes me	Albert, 2021; Swaid & Wigand, 2012; Wan & Chew, 2013
Perceived cultural value	Makes me understand Cantonese culture Makes me understand Malaysian Chinese culture	
Perceived instrumental value	Helps me learn Cantonese Allows me to maintain my Cantonese skills Allows me to learn about popular topics	

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of the Four Dimensions of Media Use

Variables	n	M	SD
Media exposure	642	3.24	1.30
Perceived recreational value	642	3.42	1.02
Perceived cultural value	642	3.51	1.01
Perceived instrumental value	642	3.50	0.95

Note: M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

In addition to these variables, we collected demographic data from respondents, including gender, generation, education level, monthly household income, whether they ever attended a Chinese school, and whether they had ever lived in a Chinese new village, as control variables. The sample characteristics are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Control Variables

Variables	Item	n	%
Ever lived in a Chinese new village	No	149	23.21
	Yes	493	76.80
Monthly household income	0 to 9 150 RM	462	71.96
	9 151 to 16 640 RM	139	21.65
	16 640 RM or above	41	6.38
Education level	Elementary school or below	150	23.36
	Junior high school	94	14.64
	High school	142	22.19
	Foundation or technical college	61	9.50
	Undergraduate	157	24.45
	Graduate or above	38	6.00
Ever attended a Chinese school	No	24	3.74
	Yes	618	96.26
Gender	Male	311	48.44
	Female	331	51.46
Generation	Early youth (14 or younger)	163	25.39
	Youth (15 to 35)	179	27.88
	Middle age (36 to 60)	180	28.04
	Old age (61 or older)	120	18.70

3.3. Method

We constructed a regression model of Chinese cultural identity:

$$CCI_{ik} = \alpha ME_{ik} + \beta_1 Value1_{ik} + \beta_2 Value2_{ik} + \beta_3 Value3_{ik} + \sum_{j=1}^4 \gamma_j Control_{ik}^j + \varepsilon_{ik}$$

In this equation, k = 1, 2, and 3 represent Chinese cultural cognition, emotion, and behavior, respectively. The independent variables were Cantonese media exposure (ME), perceived

recreational value (Value1), perceived cultural value (Value2), and perceived instrumental value (Value3). The control variables were: having lived in a Chinese new village, monthly household income, education level, having attended a Chinese school, and gender.

4. Results

Table 6 presents the regression estimation results on the effect of Cantonese media use on the three dimensions of Chinese cultural cognition, emotion, and behavior.

Table 6: Regression Results

	Cognition		Emotion		Behavior	
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Media exposure	0.085*** (0.019)	0.059** (0.020)	0.004 (0.022)	-0.051 (0.021)	0.016 (0.022)	-0.011 (0.024)
Perceived recreational value	0.201*** (0.033)	0.155*** (0.033)	0.246*** (0.037)	0.215*** (0.035)	0.255*** (0.038)	0.208*** (0.039)
Perceived cultural value	0.092** (0.035)	0.112** (0.035)	0.260*** (0.039)	0.331*** (0.038)	0.008 (0.040)	0.041 (0.042)
Perceived instrumental value	0.131*** (0.036)	0.102** (0.039)	0.045 (0.041)	-0.030 (0.042)	0.169*** (0.042)	0.129** (0.047)
Ever lived in a Chinese new village (yes)		0.142* (0.055)		0.230*** (0.059)		0.131* (0.066)
Monthly household income		0.091* (0.045)		0.013 (0.048)		0.156** (0.054)
Education level		0.083*** (0.023)		0.042 (0.025)		-0.031 (0.027)
Ever attended a Chinese school (yes)		-0.001 (0.118)		0.006 (0.127)		0.206 (0.141)
Gender (female)		0.051 (0.049)		-0.119* (0.052)		-0.077 (0.058)
Youth		0.043 (0.100)		-0.035 (0.107)		0.434*** (0.119)
Middle age		0.139 (0.090)		0.014 (0.097)		0.412*** (0.108)
Old age		0.077 (0.083)		0.065 (0.089)		0.263** (0.099)
Observations	619	604	619	604	619	604
R2	0.324	0.390	0.335	0.411	0.238	0.284
Adj. R2	0.320	0.377	0.331	0.400	0.233	0.270

Note: The values represent standardized regression coefficients and standard errors (in parentheses). The reference groups were: never having lived in a Chinese new village, never having attended a Chinese school, male gender, and early youth.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

To more clearly show the effects of media use on the three dimensions of Chinese cultural identity, three figures displaying the marginal effect of key variables were developed according to the regression results in Table 6.

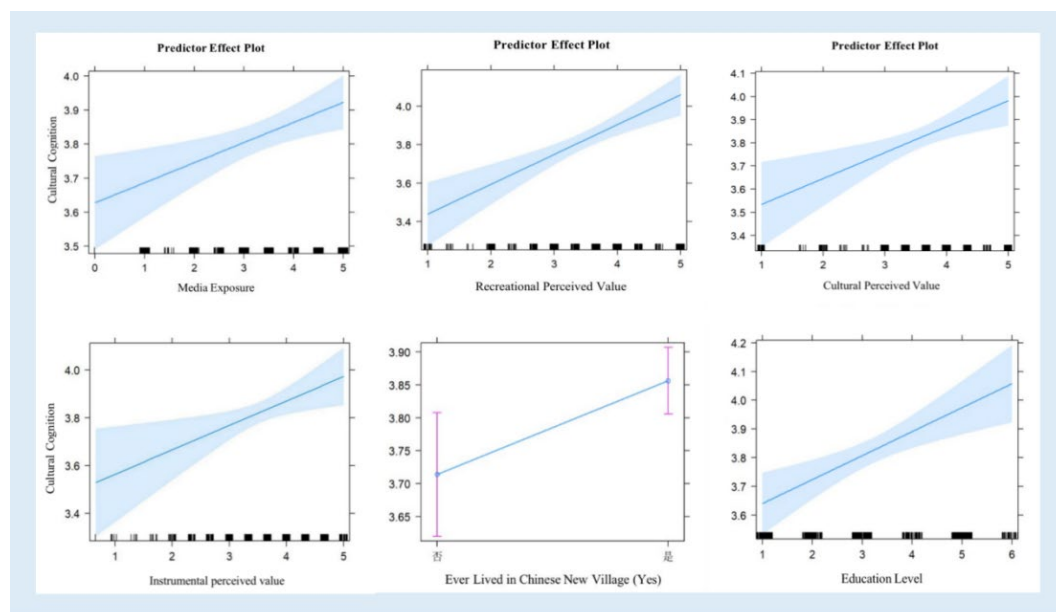


Figure. 1. The Effects of the Different Variables on Chinese Cultural Cognition

Model 2 used Chinese cultural cognition as the dependent variable. As shown in Figure 1, Model 2 indicates that media exposure and perceived recreational, cultural, and instrumental value had significant positive effects on Chinese cultural cognition at different levels. Malaysian Chinese who had lived in a Chinese new village had a higher cognition of Chinese culture than those who had not. The higher the monthly household income, the higher the cognition of Chinese culture. The higher the education level, the higher the cognition of Chinese culture.

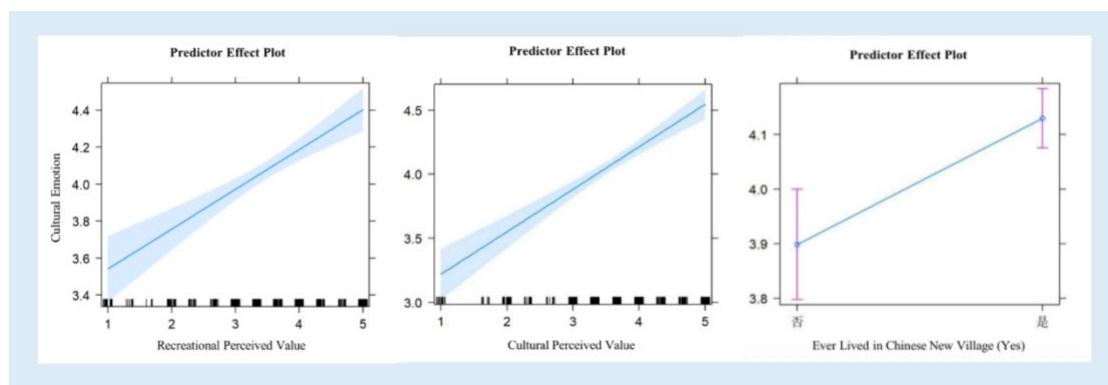


Figure. 2. The Effect of Different Variables on Chinese Cultural Emotion

Model 4 used Chinese cultural emotion as the dependent variable. As shown in Figure 2, Model 4 indicates that perceived recreational and cultural value had a significant positive impact on Chinese cultural emotion. Malaysian Chinese who had lived in a Chinese new village had stronger emotions toward Chinese culture than those who had not lived in a Chinese new village.

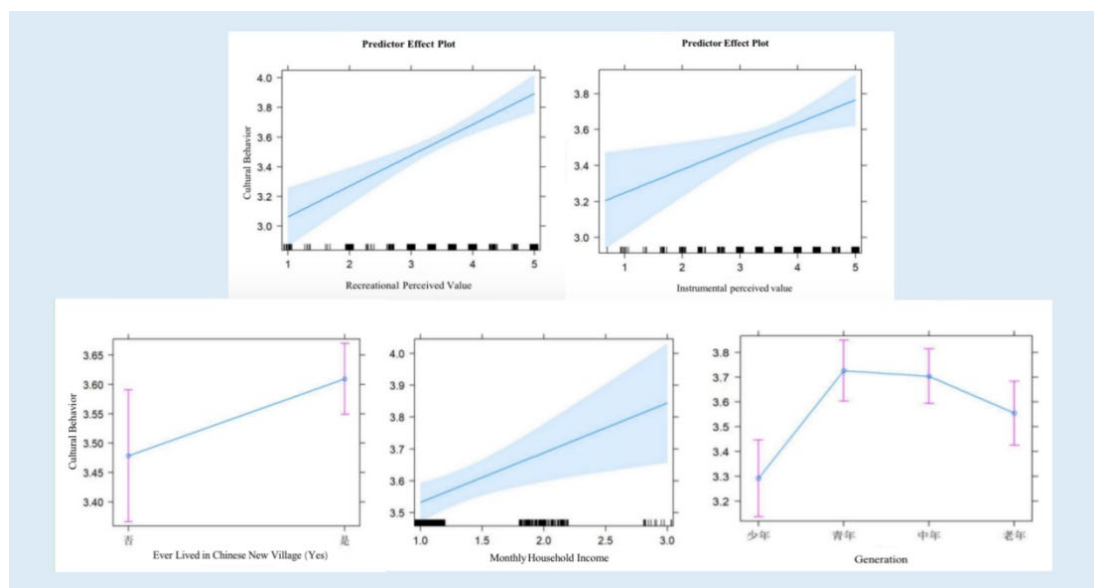


Figure 3. The Effect of Different Variables on Chinese Cultural Behavior

Model 6 used Chinese cultural behavior as the dependent variable. As shown in Figure 3, Model 6 indicated that perceived recreational and instrumental value had a significant positive impact on Chinese cultural behavior. Malaysian Chinese who had lived in a Chinese new village engaged in more Chinese cultural behavior than those who had not. The higher the monthly household income, the more involvement in Chinese cultural behaviors. Compared with early youth, the young, middle-aged, and old participants practiced more Chinese cultural behavior.

Overall, Cantonese media use presents different effect patterns on the three dimensions of Chinese cultural identity. Cantonese media exposure and perceived recreational, cultural, and instrumental value had a significant positive impact on Chinese cultural cognition. Perceived recreational and cultural value had a significant positive impact on Chinese cultural emotion, whereas media exposure and perceived instrumental value did not. The perceived recreational and instrumental value of Cantonese media had a significant positive impact on Chinese cultural behavior, whereas the degree of media exposure and perceived recreational value did not.

5. Interpretation of Model Results

Cantonese media has perceived recreational, cultural, and instrumental value. In-depth interviews showed that overseas Chinese pursue cultural memory through the use of Cantonese media, and understanding and staying connected to their ancestors' homeland is the main motivation for their use of Cantonese media:

“Although I can hardly understand the content of Cantonese opera, I am still moved by it. Cantonese opera arias have been heard from the record player at home since I was a child, and that was compulsory homework for my grandfather every afternoon. After listening to it, he would come to the balcony to look into the distance. I know he is looking at the motherland, looking at his hometown” (Interviewee 1, August 18, 2021).

Young Chinese reported being exposed to Cantonese media as part of daily family life. “I have no idea why I enjoy listening to Cantonese radio. My father plays ONE FM or 998 FM

every day when he drives me to school. Cantonese talk shows and Cantonese pop songs are always on air” (Interviewee 10, October 8, 2021).

Cantonese media exposure and perceived recreational, cultural, and instrumental value all had a significant positive impact on Chinese culture cognition. Cantonese media exposure improves the cognition of the Chinese language, writing, customs, festivals, and diet among Malaysian Chinese. In-depth interviews corroborated this finding: “Although my hometown is Fujian province of China, I learned Cantonese language from TVB [Television Broadcasts Limited] series since I was a child. Most people around me regard the Cantonese pronunciation in TVB dramas as the standard Cantonese pronunciation” (Interviewee 3, October 22, 2021). Malaysian Chinese learn Cantonese and inherit Chinese culture by watching TVB series produced in Hong Kong. Furthermore, local Cantonese radio stations in Malaysia also have a tradition of inheriting Chinese cultural knowledge. For instance, Cantonese radio dramas have always been the “signature programs” of local radio 998 FM, and many Cantonese radio dramas are based on traditional Chinese cultural themes (Interviewee 3, October 22, 2021). Other local Cantonese radio stations such as 8 FM and MY FM mainly focus on talk shows and music programs. The most common topics are Chinese food, entertainment, and customs, and some stations play classical Chinese music (Interviewee 3, October 22, 2021).

Perceived recreational and cultural value had a significant positive impact on Chinese cultural emotion. The content of Cantonese media integrates both entertainment and educational functions, which effectively enhances the audience’s Chinese cultural emotion. “We not only enjoy watching Hong Kong dramas and listening to Cantonese pop music, but also have a thorough knowledge of humorous Cantonese sayings, proverbs, and poems” (Interviewee 3, October 22, 2021). The sense of humor and cultural value of Cantonese folk similes, proverbs, and poetry are closely intertwined. “Cantonese has an irreplaceable sense of ease and humor, and more than half of the local talk show radio programs in Malaysia are mainly broadcast in Cantonese or mix the Cantonese language with other languages” (Interviewee 3, October 22, 2021). Cantonese media promotes the Cantonese language and, therefore, creates a Cantonese language “register formation.” Malaysian Chinese can shape their characteristics such as habits and accents, which are closely linked to each other through the notion of register (Agha, 2006). In this Cantonese language register space, Malaysian Chinese with the same accent have a sense of belonging. Whether they speak Cantonese or not, catchy Cantonese pop songs, emotional Cantonese movies, and humorous Cantonese radio occupy a large part of their memories of childhood and youth (Zeng & Agha, 2021). Consequently, Cantonese is like a knot, deeply connected to the heart of every Malaysian Chinese, thus influencing their Chinese cultural emotion.

Perceived recreational and instrumental value had a significant positive influence on Chinese cultural behavior. The entertainment media content represented by Hong Kong’s film and television programs and Cantonese pop music is of great significance for shaping the “imagined community” of “cultural China.” According to an interviewee, “Hong Kong’s film and television programs and Cantonese pop music are very important entertainment products for Malaysian Chinese, and they play an important role in our understanding of Chinese culture, enhancing Chinese cultural sentiment and determining how to behave” (Interviewee 5, October 24, 2021). Just as people use tools to act on the material world, they also use symbolic tools to regulate their behavior and relationships with others (Vygotsky, 2012). Among these symbols, language is the most important mediating tool; the bridge connecting society and the individual.

Among the demographic factors, having lived in a Chinese new village had a significant positive impact on Chinese cultural cognition, emotion, and behavior. The Chinese community is a space for maintaining and spreading Chinese cultural traditions, where overseas Chinese build Chinese culture and identity (Zheng & Gao, 2022). Growing up in a strong Chinese cultural environment can help people better grasp Chinese culture. Chinese new villages are settlements for ethnic Chinese in Malaysia who have retained the traditional Chinese cultural atmosphere; 85% of the residents of Chinese new villages are of Chinese descent, and they are the cradle of Chinese cultural heritage (Chin & Chang, 2022). The respondents who lived in Chinese new villages in this study were mainly from Jinjang, Air Panas, and Salak Selatan, all of which are traditional new villages in Kuala Lumpur with a strong Chinese culture (Interviewee 4, October 20, 2021).

As interventions against the inexorable laws of natural decay and forgetting, it is the perennial business of culture to translate the transient into the permanent—that is, to invent techniques for transmitting and storing culture deemed vital for the constitution and continuation of a specific group, including using words and visual forms to convey and store the group culture (Assmann, 2012). Therefore, as a group culture of overseas Chinese, Chinese culture needs to be inherited and continued through audiovisual Cantonese media to maintain its vitality. Cantonese media in China, especially Cantonese radio, television, and new media in Guangdong province, should connect with Cantonese media users overseas so that traditional Chinese culture and mainstream Chinese culture can be spread through mass communication channels.

Cultural edification should be natural and subtle. Forced attempts at inculcating Chinese culture in a multiethnic country will only push the younger generation further from Chinese culture (Lin & Jackson, 2019). As one respondent pointed out, “On the one hand, we have strong emotion about our homeland Guangdong culture. On the other hand, we have less interest in Cantonese media content from Guangdong, because the programs are boring, the form is rigid, and the language expression is monotonous” (Interviewee 9, October 25, 2021). Thus, although Malaysian Chinese have strong homeland cultural expectations, monotonous and boring content makes it difficult for Guangdong Cantonese programs to attract overseas audiences. Therefore, instrumental and cultural media content should be packaged in an entertaining form to realize a better cultural communication effect. Our study also provides evidence for similar media use and cultural identity construction issues in transnational diasporic ethnic groups.

6. Discussion

We measured Chinese cultural identity in three dimensions and the three values of Cantonese media use and constructed a regression model. The constructed model of Cantonese media use on cultural identity is an inspiring example of diasporic cultural identity studies (Xiao, 2017). Our study can provide insight into similar media use and cultural identity construction issues in transnational diaspora studies. Through the dissemination of recreational, cultural, and instrumental value, media in a homeland language can assume the functions of cultural dialog and emotional bridge, thus affecting the three dimensions of cultural cognition, emotion, and behavior of a transnational diaspora.

Therefore, there is a need to attach importance to and support the development of the homeland language media of diasporas (Hossain & Veenstra, 2017) to construct an imagined community of diasporic ethnic culture, which not only inherits the original (home) culture but also integrates the local culture to realize the integrated development of cultural globalization and diversification.

This study is a preliminary attempt to discuss the current influence of Cantonese media use on Chinese cultural identity. With the development of new media and changing habits of media use among Malaysian Chinese, Cantonese media use and Chinese cultural identity may experience distinct intergenerational differences. Oral history and network ethnography analysis could further explore intergenerational change in effect patterns and, therefore, gain more insight regarding this issue.

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Appendix

Characteristics of the interviewees

No.	Identity
1	Linguistic archaeologist (ancestral home: Canton)
2	Chinese historian (ancestral home: Hokkien)
3	Cantonese media maker (ancestral home: Hokkien)
4	Mandarin TV anchor (ancestral home: Canton)
5	Mandarin teacher (ancestral home: Canton)
6	Cantonese pop song musician (ancestral home: Canton)
7	Chinese filmmaker (ancestral home: Hainan)
8	Director of the Tzu-Chi Charity Foundation (ancestral home: Canton)
9	Stay-at-home mom (ancestral home: Teochew)
10	Primary school student (ancestral home: Hakka)

Notes

1. The establishment of new villages stemmed from the British colonial government of Malaya's efforts to cut off the Communist Party of Malaya's influence on the squatters during the "State of Emergency" (1948–1960). After the provision of food and medical supplies were obtained, the implementation of a concentration camp-style large-scale relocation plan for residents has since evolved into a community where Chinese live in Malaysia. See Qicai, H. (2020). From control to autonomy: A brief discussion on the development and current situation of Chinese new villages in Malaysia. *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture*, 1, 48.

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