

USE NEW MEDIA TO IMPROVE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' CULTURAL IDENTITY

Tan Shuxin, and Lee Keok Cheong

Abstract – People especially the young people are faced with the exchange, collision, and integration of different cultures in the context of globalization. Cultural identity is crucial, not only for a country or a culture, but also for individuals' self-identification. This research answers the question regarding the impact new media content on university students' cultural identity in China. A questionnaire survey was carried out on a sample of 600 university students. Instruments used was ethnic identity scale (MEIM-R). Quantitative data collected was analyzed using Independent Samples T-Test, variance analysis, regression analysis and other analyzing methods. The finding has come out: the content that new media conveys has impact on university students' cultural identity in China. It is recommended that educators should help strengthen university students' cultural identity with the assistance of new media.

Keywords – globalization, new media, cultural identity, media content

I. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, with the development of digital technology and all kinds of new media, time and space are compressed, and the cultures of different nationalities and countries are colliding violently worldwide. Cultural conflicts and cultural assimilation are going on, which, to some extent, test the cultural identity as the foundation for the survival of a nation and a country. Globalization has brought us a new economy and unprecedentedly advanced technologies, including new media. New media is a way to provide users with information and services through computer networks, wireless communication networks, satellites and other channels, as well as terminals such as computers, mobile phones and digital TV sets, using digital technology. Identity is influenced by a particular concept of "community", which can also be considered as a cultural boundary, and thus produces the cognition and definition of the "identity" of the individual and others. Cultural identity comes from the relationship between different members of our culture and other cultural evaluation and judgment, associated with a specific cultural pattern, and presents a confirmation of cuckoo common culture between members of the culture, is a definition of self, the difference between others and group, reinforcing each other the same feeling to condense into a group which has the common cultural connotation (Monica, 1995). Cultural identity reflects people's perception and understanding of common history,

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common historical experience and cultural symbols, as well as the instinct and emotion of cultural members to protect their own way of life and cultural characteristics (Sun, 2015). Some scholars raised their concerns on university students' cultural identity. They are worried that influenced by cultural globalization and the import of Western values transmitted by new media, university students may generally have an identity crisis. However, other scholars hold that the influence and living space of different cultures have gained unprecedented opportunities to expand, because cross-cultural communication and the vigorous development of new media constantly stimulate the original expression within each culture, and people's cultural identity has been strengthened rather than weakened. The rise of new media facilitates the formation and reinforcement of close-knit cultural groups which are homogenous (Akfirat et al., 2016). It enables individuals to communicate and interact with members of the same culture at greater ease which in turn drives social cohesion bonding.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Firstly, there are challenges of living in a global village with high-speed Internet and all sorts of content brought by new media. People especially the university students face with the collision, confrontation, communication and integration of different cultural systems. Secondly, it is pivotal to cultivate the undergraduates' proper thinking habits towards different cultures and help them understand and strengthen their cultural identity in front of massive amount of information on media. Thirdly, few research has been done on how to enhance cultural identity among undergraduates in China especially with the help of new media.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

New Media

Globalization is more than the development of activities throughout the world, globalization allows the world to be connected no matter the distance from user to user (Carey,2019), since the rise of new media has increased communication between people all over the world and the Internet. In the middle of the 1990s, the phrase "new media" became widely used as part of a sales pitch for the influx of interactive CD-ROMs for entertainment and education. The new media technologies include a wide range of Internet-related communication tools such as blogs, online social networking, virtual worlds, and other social media platforms (Friedman, 2008).

The phrase "new media" refers to computational media that share material online and through computers. New media as computer technology used as a distribution

platform – New media are the cultural objects which use digital computer technology for distribution and exhibition. e.g. (at least for now) Internet, Web sites, computer multimedia etc. New media has allowed people to express themselves through blogs, websites, videos, pictures, and other user-generated media. New media “radically break the connection between physical place and social place, making physical location much less significant for our social relationships (Croteau, & Hoynes, 2003)”. New media as digital data controlled by software, and in fact, all cultural objects that rely on digital representation and computer-based delivery do share a number of common qualities. New media is reduced to digital data that can be manipulated by software as any other data. Now media operations can create several versions of the same object (Manovich, 2003). In this research, new media is any media—from newspaper articles and blogs to music and podcasts—that are delivered digitally. It becomes even more complicated to define when you consider that as technology continues to advance, the definition continually changes. According to Baidu Baike, new media is a form of communication that uses digital technology to provide information and services to users through channels such as computer networks, wireless communication networks and satellites, as well as terminals such as computers, mobile phones and digital television sets. From the perspective of space, “new media” specifically refers to the media corresponding to “traditional media” at present. Supported by digital compression and wireless network technology, with its large capacity, real-time performance and interactivity, it can finally realize globalization across geographical boundaries. The new media industry has achieved remarkable development results with distinctive characteristics, showing great vitality and innovation. The next generation of Internet is coming (Tian, Wang, Huang, 2022).

Cultural Identity

“Identity” was put forward as a psychological concept by Freud in 1921 in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego: The Future of an Illusion*, and its logical starting point was from human self-cognition. People are not solitary existence, but a kind of social existence. People's self-cognition is also based on social existence and social relations formed thereby, people are often through the other to understand themselves, therefore, the cognition of others directly related to self-cognition. In this book, Freud (2005) comes to the conclusion: “A primary mass is a number of individuals who have put one and the same object in place of their ego ideal and consequently identify with each other.” He believed that identification refers to the process of psychological and emotional convergence between individuals and others, groups or imitative figures, and individuals create their own identity by turning to others’ identification.

The psychologist Erikson (1968) believes that identity is a developmental structure, an individual self-conscious awareness of one's own identity, or a psychological convergence of the characteristics and ideals of a certain group. Erikson systematized “identity”

based on Freudian theory. In his book *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, Erikson (1968) mentions the importance of identity in the formation of adolescent personality and self-identity. In his view, the sense of self-identity is an individual's sense of familiarity with himself and his confidence in his future life. He divides self-identity into four aspects: individuality, integration and wholeness, conformity and continuity, and social solidarity. In these aspects, an individual not only confirms his current identity, but also his own development and future identity. Giddens is one of the representative figures in the research on identity in sociology. In Giddens' theory, identity is composed of self-identity and social identity. Giddens believes that self-identity is an individual's reflection on himself, while social identity is an individual's emotion that is consistent with other individuals through learning under the influence of the surrounding environment. Therefore, identity is of great significance to individual growth (Giddens et al., 2021).

In recent years, cultural identity has become an important topic in social psychology and cross-cultural psychology. The Social Identity Theory is the part of the study of cultural identity. Tajfel (1978) defines social identity as an individual's recognition of belonging to a particular social group and awareness of being one of that group. The emotion and value that a member brings to himself. Social identity comes from group membership. Individuals identify their own group members in social classification, resulting in internal group preference and external group derogation. Zheng Xiaoyun (1992) regards cultural identity as people's tendency consensus and recognition of culture. People use common cultural symbols, adhere to the same cultural concept, follow the same way of thinking, and pursue a unified cultural ideal, which is the basis of cultural identity. Cao Qingao (2020) points out that the core of cultural identity is their own identity, the sense of belonging to the group culture they belong to and the understanding of values such as cultural concepts, ways of thinking and norms of behaviour. Scholars generally believe that cultural identity plays a crucial role in the identity of an entire country and nation. Huntington (2004) believes that cultural identity is the most meaningful thing for most people. He pointed out that in the post-Cold War world, the main differences between peoples are cultural, not political, economic or ideological. Based on the existing researches at home and abroad, we can see that cultural identity is a person's identity and the culture they belong to. It occupies a very important place in individual identity and will greatly affect individual's national identity.

As a cultural group consciousness and cultural belonging consciousness existing in human society, cultural identity has the following functions: Firstly, cultural identity is the basic value orientation of cultural groups. Cultural identity formed in long-term practice has strong stability. Once a cultural identity is formed, it remains in people's mind for a long time, even if the cultural value orientation and the surrounding objective things may not coincide. Secondly, cultural identity is an important cohesive force for the existence and development of ethnic groups. If an ethnic group does not identify with its own culture, then this ethnic group is also in danger of extinction, it is

impossible to get long-term existence and development. On the contrary, if an ethnic group has a high sense of identity with its culture and a strong sense of belonging, it will still have a strong cohesion and survive and develop even if the ethnic group has gone through vicissitudes of life and even if the external clothes and costumes have changed. Thirdly, cultural identity is the glue of cultural groups. In the development of human society, due to the influence of many factors, a cultural phenomenon tends to be not based on one ethnic group, but cross-ethnic. If the culture exists in more than one group, then there is a consensus on this point, which psychologically links these groups together to form a cultural group.

Behind any cause, there must be an invisible spiritual force. More importantly, this kind of spiritual power must be closely related to the social and cultural background of the cause (Weber, 2002). In the process of the development of a nation and a country, the development of culture is a crucial factor, it is related to the future of the nation and the country, a nation and a country if the loss of their own culture, it will be difficult to achieve development (Zheng, 1992). Cultural identity is a process in which people accept and recognize a culture and practice it consciously. People tend to internalize their own spiritual system through the recognition of some external culture, and use this spiritual system to guide practice. Cultural identity is realized in the process of mutual transformation between internalization and externalization. Once cultural identity is formed, it will have an effect on individuals. On the one hand, for an individual, cultural identity not only becomes a part of the ideological system of the individual, guiding his ideas and behaviors, but also is his identification mark, and is the standard and basis for him to seek and integrate into a certain group. On the other hand, for groups, cultural identity is one of the core elements of community formation and an important basis for distinguishing us and them. The reason why human society can produce the "imaginary community" as Benedict Anderson said is because of the identification of a certain culture, so the cultural identity has the function of strengthening cohesion and centripetal force. At the same time, cultural identity satisfies the spiritual pursuit of human beings and builds the spiritual home of human beings (Zhong, 2014). In this sense, a nation should not only maintain its own cultural characteristics, but also actively learn excellent foreign culture. If a nation fails to absorb beneficial external culture to enrich itself and constantly sublates the dross in its national culture, it will eventually hinder the development of the nation. The appropriate point is to create a system based on one's own national and national culture, while constantly integrating and absorbing advanced factors from other cultures (Zheng, 1992) Cultural identity is not only an important way to realize the modernization of national governance system and governance capacity, but also an important goal to realize the modernization of national governance system and governance capacity. It constructs the legitimacy base for the existence of a country, is the expression of national soft power, and is an important way to resist the invasion of cultural hegemony and maintain national cultural security. Qiao Zhilong and Teng Chi (2019) believe that

cultural identity is conducive to strengthening the common value consciousness of people of all ethnic groups and building a common spiritual home, and is conducive to avoiding ideological collision, conflict of interests, and imbalance between regions among different ethnic groups, and plays an important role in maintaining border stability and national unity.

According to the social identity theory, Chinese cultural identity is the core part of Chinese people's identity, which reflects the sense of belonging and pride that Chinese culture brings to every Chinese. When people live in a cultural background with large differences in values and norms, the construction and development of individual cultural identity will face great challenges due to cultural conflicts between values and norms followed by different groups (Zhang, 2006). Therefore, how to make a choice in this situation, better social adaptation has become an individual urgent problem to be solved. From the perspective of social identity theory, Chinese cultural identity plays a decisive role in each Chinese's cultural identity and sense of belonging.

According to Su (2021), Chinese culture identity is the unanimously recognized cultural identity formed in the development history of the Chinese nation. Chinese cultural identity is based on the Chinese traditional culture which embodies the culture and wisdom of all ethnic groups in China. From the perspective of cultural categories, the Chinese traditional culture includes philosophy, literature, history, calligraphy, fine arts, music, dance, martial arts, technology, architecture and so on. The development of Chinese history mainly depends on cultural characteristics. People of all ethnic groups hold a very positive attitude towards Chinese culture and try their best to integrate into it. Fei Xiaotong believes that the pluralistic unity of the Chinese nation is actually very similar to the pluralistic unity of Chinese culture (Fang, 2021). This nation absorbs foreign cultures, gives play to their essence, eliminates their dross, and forms a culture with a common identity, which is what we call Chinese cultural identity (Fang, 2021). The cultural concept, way of thinking and norms of behavior in cultural identity all reflect certain value orientation and value. Therefore, the core of cultural identity is value identity. It can be seen that in the process of constructing Chinese cultural identity, each nation inherits and enriches Chinese culture, thus laying a cornerstone for the maintenance of Chinese cultural concepts. In Xinjiang province, for example, ethnic cultures have always been rooted in the fertile soil of Chinese civilization and are an integral part of Chinese culture. Due to their different living environments, different ethnic groups, such as the Uygur and Kazak, have formed various cultural forms, such as oasis culture and grassland culture, showing a multi-cultural pattern of coexistence of different ethnic cultures, which has always promoted the prosperity and development of Chinese culture. Generally speaking, Chinese cultural identity indicates that the Chinese nation uses cultural identity as an intermediary. Internally, it recognizes and influences the value of Chinese culture, especially its inner essence. Externally, it manifests itself as a cultural character with a particular charm and an internationally recognized reputation.

Chinese cultural identity is embodied by the sense of belonging of the members of the Chinese nation to seek common ground internally and seek differences externally. Always have a sense of loyalty with respect and love for Chinese culture on all occasions. Cognitive understanding of Chinese culture; Emotionally accepting Chinese culture; The attitude of trying to inherit Chinese culture in behavior. The connotation of Chinese cultural identity reflects the cultural emotional unity and sense of belonging formed by various ethnic groups in the long communication and cooperation. There is no longer discrimination and estrangement among all ethnic groups, and the people of all ethnic groups can share the benefits of the relatively stable Chinese cultural model that has been formed together. The people of all ethnic groups unanimously recognize the ideas and values under the guidance of Chinese culture. It does not mean that one culture will replace many cultures, but rather the harmonious coexistence, mutual understanding and respect, mutual absorption and integration of various cultures contained in the recognized Chinese cultural model.

Media Content's Impact on University Students' Cultural Identity

For a long time, the academic community has not reached a consensus on how the content of media communication affects individual cultural identity. Some scholars argue that the role of media content should not be overstated. However, some other scholars insist that the influence of cultural products communicated by media should be at the core of the formation of individual cultural identity (Kellner 1995), because cultural products provide raw materials for individuals to construct cultural identity. This study supports the latter argument. Edward Hall, the founder of intercultural communication, pointed out that "culture is communication, and communication is culture". In his book *Communication as Culture*, James Carey (2019) regards communication as a ceremony of the audience gathered through group or community identity, and interprets the communication ceremony as the maintenance of the social community culture in time. In 2019, in Han Xiaowen's research on the influence of Chinese and foreign cultural products on Chinese university students' cultural identity, it is found that, in the era of globalization, the content of cultural products has an impact on university students' cultural identity. Furthermore, more exposure to cultural products with Chinese cultural content can enhance the cultural identity of university students. In 2014, Wu Shiwen and Shi Yibin conducted a study on the national cultural identity of audiences exposed to different media types and media content forms. The results show that the exposure of audiences to Chinese cultural content in electronic books, newspapers and television can predict their Chinese cultural identity, and the more exposure, the higher their Chinese cultural identity. It is concluded that the audience's contact and participation through various ways in the new media era can better shape the audience's values (Wu, Shi, 2014). Zhu Duogang and Ren Tianhao (2020) analyzed the influence of media on the young's national identity based on the survey data of Chinese netizens'

social consciousness. The results proved that the young' national identity was the result of media construction, and different media would have different construction effects. New media and digital technologies act as independent factors that significantly transforms contemporary social, cultural and national identities. A study conducted by Mihelj and Jiménez-Martínez focuses on digital media and digital platforms as tools through which nationalistic sentiment can be shared and broadcast to targeted audience with the aim of advancing identity connections to a certain country or culture. The changing affordances of digital technology enables this shift. Digital technologies provide less visible but influential ways to reproduce individuals' sense of national belonging. Recent shifts in the global communication ecology have enabled the use of digital spaces to drive cultural identity (Mihelj et al., 2021). It can be seen that media use and exposure have a significant impact on undergraduates' cultural identity.

University students are in the critical period of ideological growth, and the concept of nation and country is solidifying day by day. Their ability to acquire information is great, and education has a systematic, comprehensive and profound influence on the ideological growth of university students, which should guide them to forge a strong sense of cultural identity (Li, 2020). A study of US African immigrant youths find that cultural identities are subject of shifts and these shifts are impacted by participation in online, digital and social platforms. This finding gives rise to the potential for educators and policy-makers to better design educational opportunities for cross-cultural youths. The study provides support to the view that digital media induces cultural identity shifts and that education policies should reflect these forces to cater for the education needs of cross-cultural youths. The study highlights that cultural identities are subject to a continuously process of change over time (Nantw et al., 2017). Another survey on the media use shows that Generation Z in Thailand are more inclined to collectivist values, uncertainty avoidance and low power distance, and they are more politically, environmentally and socially progressive than the millennials. This has shown that different media contact habits will affect individuals' cognition of cultural identity; especially after the emergence of digital media, the constraint of technology on individuals has been largely eliminated, and the post-modern individuals have shown a characteristic of pluralism and mobility, which provides a new perspective for the cross-cultural education research of Generation Z (Farrell, Phungsoonthorn, 2020). One more article describes the Durban Plymouth Story Exchange, a youth media project facilitated by the author. The project attempted to use the creation and exchange of audio recordings between young people in Durban, South Africa and Plymouth, UK to encourage self-reflection, self-expression and cultural learning. By putting knowledge of self rather than knowledge of the Other at the centre of this project, the author/facilitator hoped the project would avoid some of the pitfalls of conventional multiculturalism. The growing accessibility of digital technologies has led to an increase in media projects enabling young people to connect and communicate with

international peers. These projects are often uncritically celebrated as opportunities for young people to learn something about a cultural “Other” and, in so doing, enhance their tolerance of difference, their consciousness of global issues, and their appreciation of diversity (Miller, 2010). In 2019, Han Xiaowen conducted a questionnaire survey of 295 university students. this paper explores the performance of Chinese university students' group cultural identity, and analyzes the impact of the consumption of local and western cultural products on the national and global cultural identity of university students. The results of this study confirm the impact of cultural product consumption on individual cultural identity, and cultural products provide raw materials for the formation of cultural identity. The study found that reading Chinese local news media, reading books published by Chinese authors, and watching Chinese TV programs had a significant positive impact on national state identity, while reading Western news media had a significant negative impact on national state identity (Han, 2019).

IV. METHOD

In this research, quantitative research is used, and it is carried out by a questionnaire survey. Through the survey to collect quantitative data, the researcher understands the reality of undergraduate students' cultural identity in China. The population for this research is totally around 60,000 undergraduate students, and there are around 20,000 in each of the three universities involved in this research. The 3 universities are chosen because of their similarity in size, level, major structure and course structure. They are all public universities which offer undergraduate education. All of these three universities offer a similar common curriculum covering all majors in the university, as well as a similar set of departments, program arrangement and distribution, and curriculum arrangement. During the questionnaire survey, 200 undergraduate students are selected at random from each university, and the total sample is 600 university students, which is around 10% of the population.

Questionnaire, considered as the most basic and important significant method, is chosen as one of the research method in the study. Questionnaire is a research method to collect relevant data by means of written questions for survey objects. It is a research method to express questions by asking questions and directly collect data for statistical investigation. It is the most widely used research method in quantitative research of social sciences at home and abroad.

Before conducting quantitative research, it is necessary to quantify each content. People’s cultural identity is the degree to which people recognize and accept the region where they are and the history, customs, values, material and intangible cultural heritage and lifestyle related to the original region.

In this research, the researcher used MEIM-R scale to measure university students’ cultural identity as below.

TABLE I: MEIM-R SCALE

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I have spent the time to seek out the history, traditions and customs of the Chinese nation.					
2. I have a strong sense of belonging to the Chinese nation.					
3. I understand very well what the Chinese nation means to me.					
4. I often do things that contribute to my understanding of the the Chinese nation background.					
5. In order to understand the Chinese nation better, I often communicate with others.					
6. I have a deep attachment to the Chinese nation.					

Adapted from Phinney (2007)

Jean S. Phinney (1992) believes that identity is universal and members of all ethnic groups share a common ethnic identity. The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) created by him and it was first published in *The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure: A new scale for use with adolescents and young adults from diverse groups. Journal of Adolescent Research* in 1992. At present, MEIM scale has been widely used in the field of ethnic identity research. In order to improve the validity and reliability of the old version of MEIM, Phinney revised the MEIM scale and published in *Conceptualization and Measurement of Ethnic Identity: Current Status and Future Directions* in 2007. The revised version of MEIM (MEIM-R) consists of a total of six questions (Phinney, 2007). It measures three aspects of ethnic group understanding, ethnic group attachment and behaviour disposition. A 5-level Likert scale is used to record respondents’ agreement on specific statement items which are represented by 1-5 values: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree, which are graded from 1 to 5. The total score of

V. FINDINGS

Based on the relevant data obtained in the questionnaire survey, SPSS 26.0 was used to analyze, and Independent Samples T-Test was used to build scientific data models.

TABLE II: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Ethnic Identity	1.00	342	23.0897	4.69983	.26608
	2.00	258	12.9861	3.35160	.19750

In the table II, 1.00 represents the university students who have paid more attention to media content on Chinese culture than to other media content while 2.00 represents the university students who have paid more attention to other media content than to media content on

Chinese culture. As can be seen, 342 university students have paid more attention to media content on Chinese cultures, accounting for 57%, while 258 have paid more attention to other media content, accounting for 43%.

TABLE III: INDEPENDENT T-TEST OF ETHNIC IDENTITY

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-Test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	Sig. 2-Tailed	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Ethnic Identity	Equal variances assumed	20.903	.000	30.096	.000	10.10363	.33572	9.44431	10.76296
	Equal variances not assumed			30.491	.000	10.10363	.33136	9.45278	10.75449

According to table III, through the analysis of Independent Samples T-Test above, it is found that Chinese media content that university students are exposed to has a significant impact on their ethnic identity. The ethnic identity of university students who have paid more attention to media content on Chinese cultures is higher than that of those students who have paid more attention to other media content ($t=30.49$, $p<0.001$).

VI. DISCUSSION

The Agenda-setting Theory describes the ability to influence the importance placed on the topics of the public agenda (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002), holds that mass communication cannot usually decide the public's opinion on a certain event, but it can influence the public's attention on a certain issue. In other words, by arranging media content, the media can influence the facts and opinions that people pay attention to and the order of their conversation by providing information and arranging relevant issues. The agenda-setting Theory holds that the degree of emphasis of mass media on things and opinions is proportional to the degree of attention of the audience, and the audience will change their understanding of the importance of things because of the topics provided by the media. It can be seen that mainstream media can improve the agenda-setting ability, enhance the guidance of public opinion, improve the influence of negative topics in network public opinion, increase the attention of mainstream topics, form spontaneous and influential social topics, and play the role of media in constructing national cultural identity. Mainstream media in the era of mobile Internet to improve public opinion guidance should rely on new media communication forms, grasp the hot spots.

University students' cultural identity imagination and perception of China's national image are close to a kind of media reality. University students' cognition of social reality is largely influenced by the content conveyed by the media. Media content, especially new media content, has a profound impact on undergraduates' cultural identity. New media content should satisfy the university students' cognition, deepen their identification of traditional culture in interactive communication, and achieve the maximization of the effect of traditional

culture communication with precise cultural positioning (Qian, Yan, 2019).

VII. CONCLUSION

Based on relevant theories including new media, construction of cultural identity and so on, this study summarized and analyzed media content affecting university students' cultural identity in China, and proposed the relationship between new media and university students' cultural identity in China. Based on the above research combing and summary, the researcher believes that there are still shortcomings in this study and areas to be improved. Cultural identity is a dynamic system, which will be updated with the development of society. In the future research, researchers can further deepen the study of cultural identity, in order to make up for the deficiency in this aspect. Moreover, the number of questionnaire samples was not enough owing to the limited time. In the future research, the researcher can further expand the sample size and geographical range of sampling.

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