




The Motives and Behavior of Malaysian Chinese Using China's Social Media

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The Motives and Behavior of Malaysian Chinese Using China's Social Media

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Abstract

With the increasing number of overseas users of China's social media (CSM), this study aimed to explore the motivation and behavior of Malaysian Chinese in using Chinese social media platforms. A questionnaire was done to 219 Malaysian Chinese, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis in SPSS. The results show that Malaysian Chinese use CSM with high frequency and duration. Their main motives are information, entertainment, and interpersonal interaction. The results indicated that entertainment motivation ($\beta=0.448$, $p=0.000$), information motivation ($\beta=0.348$, $p=0.000$), self-presentation motivation ($\beta=0.142$, $p=0.047$), and social motivation significantly ($\beta=-0.249$, $p=0.000$) affected the use of CSM among Malaysian Chinese, while business motivation did not. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the patterns of Malaysian Chinese usage of CSM and their motivations, which is crucial for marketers and advertisers trying to target this group on social media platforms effectively. Moreover, the findings of this study have important implications for cross-country communication and exchange within the same ethnic culture.

Keywords: Motivation; behavior, regression analysis, Malaysian Chinese, China's social media.

[\[Sustainable Development Goals: Quality Education\]](#)

1. Introduction

The rapid development of information technology has led to the increasing popularity of social media platforms worldwide. According to Appel et al. (Appel et al., 2020), social media is used by billions of people worldwide and is rapidly becoming one of the defining technologies of our time, with the total number of social media users globally estimated to grow to 3.29 billion users by 2022, representing 42.3% of the world's population. In recent years, the number of overseas users of China social media (CSM), such as Douban, Xiaohongshu, and Weibo, has grown significantly (Hu et al., 2020). With the development of financial and online technology in China, social media has exploded in China, and several influential social media have been born (Lipschultz, 2017). For example, WeChat, Weibo, TikTok, Douyin, and Xiaohongshu. As of 2019, Douyin became the most popular app in China and was launched in 2017 as an international version of TikTok, which received much attention worldwide (Yaqi et al., 2021). As of June 2018, the population of TikTok exceeded 500 million monthly active users globally, surpassing Twitter (Omar & Dequan, 2020).

Xiaohongshu is also popular overseas, and it has been called China's Instagram, leading overseas Chinese purchases and cultural sharing (Jie et al., 2021). These platforms have become essential tools for daily interactions, including communication, entertainment, shopping, and information dissemination, among other functions.

Due to the rapid growth and influence of social media, related papers and studies have experienced a considerable increase in the past few years (Gan & Wang, 2015). Research has shown that people adopt social media for many motives, such as entertainment motive (Croes & Bartels, 2021; Hsu et al., 2015), information motive (Chen & Kim, 2013; Chung & Koo, 2015; Hsu et al., 2015), interpersonal motive (Chen & Kim, 2013; Hsu et al., 2015), self-presentation motivation (Hsu et al., 2015; Kircaburun et al., 2020), and business motivation (Dahnil et al., 2014; Mikalef et al., 2013). Previous research has supported some of the motivational influences on social media usage behaviors, such as Seidman's (Seidman, 2013) finding that self-presentation motivations and a feeling of belonging influence people's use of Facebook, and Muralidharan and Men (Muralidharan & Men, 2015) found that peer communication and engagement motivations influence people's social media shopping behaviors. Du et al., (2022) found that fun was the primary motivation for Chinese Millennials to use TikTok. However, few studies have explored the relationship between the behavior and motivation of overseas Chinese using China social media.

But there is some research on the transnational communication of co-ethnic cultures. For example, Tirumala (2009) explored the role of Bollywood films in constructing and sustaining the cultural identity of second-generation Indian Americans. Ju and Lee (2015) investigated how Asian American young people consume transnational Korean pop culture and how Korean media serves them. However, with the growth of China's social media, the needs of overseas Chinese are also changing. While there are many studies on people's motivation to use social media and Chinese users' motivation to use CSM, there are still few studies on the motivation of Chinese users living overseas (e.g., Malaysian Chinese). 2000 years ago, Chinese people began migrating to other Asian countries, especially Southeast Asia (Poston Jr & Wong, 2016). By now, overseas Chinese are present in almost every country worldwide. In 2011, there were 40.3 million Chinese living in 148 countries or regions in the world (Poston Jr & Wong, 2016), a number that refers to the number of people who do not live in the People's Republic of China. The majority of these Chinese reside in 35 countries in Asia, with approximately 29.6 million, or 73.3% of the total, including 6.5 million Malaysian Chinese (Poston Jr & Wong, 2016). The transnational communication of CSM among overseas Chinese deserves to be noticed.

Understanding the behaviors and motivations of overseas Chinese in using CSM is crucial for marketers and advertisers who seek to effectively target this group on social media platforms. Furthermore, the results of the study have important implications for the cross-national exchange and communication of the same ethnic cultures. Therefore, this study aims to explore the relationship between the motivation and behavior of Malaysian Chinese in using CSM. Based on the existing literature and theories, this study proposes the following research objectives and constructs a framework (Figure 1):

- 1, To explore the behaviors and motivations of Malaysian Chinese using Chinese social media.

2, To verify the relationship between the behaviors and motivations of Malaysian Chinese using China's social media.

Information motivation (IM), Entertainment motivation (EM), Interpersonal motivation (IPM), Self-presentation motivation (SPM), and Business motivation (BM) influences the use of CSM by Malaysian Chinese.



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the study.

2. Methods

The objective of this study is to investigate the behaviors and motivations of Malaysian Chinese in using China's social media and to verify their influential relationships. Data was collected through an online questionnaire, and 219 Malaysian Chinese who actively use Chinese social media platforms participated. The questionnaire consisted of three parts, collecting demographic information, measuring Chinese social media use (CSMU), and the motivations (MCSM). The data was analyzed using SPSS 23, including descriptive statistics, reliability and validity checks, and multiple regression analysis to determine the influence of five MCSM variables on CSMU. The findings will help understand the motivations behind Malaysian Chinese social media use and its impact on CSMU.

Participants

A total of 219 Malaysian Chinese who actively use Chinese social media platforms responded to the online questionnaire. Participants were recruited through a call for participants on various social media platforms, including Facebook, Xiaohongshu, Douyin, Weibo, and Instagram. The inclusion criteria were that participants had to be Malaysian Chinese and actively using China's social media platforms.

Measures

The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part collected demographic information, including age, gender, education level, and occupation. The second part measured Chinese social media use (CSMU) and included questions about the frequency of use and duration of use (Bryant et al., 2007). According to Lin and Wang (2006), satisfaction has been considered as an important

factor in deciding to continue using information systems, so satisfaction was also chosen as an evaluation indicator for CSMU.

The third part measured the motivation of China's social media use (MCSM), a scale modified by Hsu et al. (2015) and included 12 items measuring five variables: Entertainment Motivations (EM), Information Motivations (IM), Interpersonal Motivations (IPM), Self-presentation Motivations (SPM), and Business Motivation (BM). The participants were asked to rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data collection

The questionnaire was distributed online using Google Forms from October 1, 2022, to October 10, 2022. Participants were provided with a brief introduction to the study and were informed that their participation was voluntary and anonymous. All participants can withdraw from the survey at any time. They were also assured that their responses would be kept confidential and used only for research purposes. Participants signed a consent form online. As of October 10, 2022, 230 responses were received, eliminating incomplete responses, leaving 219 final responses.

Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software 23. Before data analysis, the reliability and validity of the data were examined by SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the demographic characteristics of the participants and to summarize the responses to the CSMU questions.

Descriptive analysis is a statistical method used to summarize and describe a data set to reveal information about the basic characteristics, distribution, trends in concentration, and degree of dispersion of the data (Ott & Longnecker, 2015). In this study, descriptive analysis can provide the mean, median, plural, maximum, and minimum values of the data, which can help the researcher understand the overall situation of the data.

Regression analysis was used to test the influence of the five MCSM variables on the use of CSM among Malaysian Chinese. Regression analysis is a statistical method, popular in social science research, that can be used to explore the relationship between two or more variables while controlling for other factors that may influence the outcome (Uyanık & Güler, 2013). The standardized coefficients were used to compare the relative importance of each motivation in predicting the use of CSM among Malaysian Chinese. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

3. Results

Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity of the questionnaire were tested before conducting data analysis. The Cronbach's alpha values for CSMU and MCSM were 0.897 and 0.896, respectively, indicating high internal consistency. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy for CSMU was 0.701, for MCSM was 0.887, and for the total questionnaire was 0.797, well above the value of 0.60, and $p=0.000$, indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis (Pallant, 2020).

| | Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | | Cronbach Alpha |
|-------|-------------------------------|----------|----------------|
| | KMO | P | α |
| CSMU | 0.701 | 0.000*** | 0.897 |
| MCSM | 0.887 | 0.000*** | 0.896 |
| Total | 0.797 | 0.000*** | 0.865 |

KMO 0.6; P=1%

Table 1: Reliability and Validity**Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample**

The sample consisted of 219 participants, with 83 (37.9%) males and 136 (62.1%) females. Of the participants, 10 (4.57%) were less than 18 years old, 85 (38.81%) were between 18 and 24 years old, 52 (23.74%) were between 25 and 30 years old, 26 (11.87%) were between 31 and 35 years old, and 46 (21%) were over 35 years old. The participants in this study have a diverse range of educational backgrounds. The highest level of education was a degree, which accounted for 49.77% of the participants. High school (24.66%) and diploma (18.26%) were also significant educational categories. A smaller percentage of participants had postgraduate qualifications (7.31%). Overall, the study had a mix of participants with different levels of education, which may impact their motivation to use China social media. Most of the participants are students (38.36%), indicating a younger demographic. The general office staff (22.37%) and private owners (10.96%) make up a significant portion of the participants and likely represent a mix of professionals from various industries. The presence of housewives (4.57%) suggests a diverse gender mix and individuals who prioritize domestic duties. Unemployed individuals (11.87%) may provide insight into factors such as the economy or job market affecting the study results. Civil servants (2.74%) are likely employed by government agencies, while the "others" category (9.13%) includes a variety of non-traditional occupations. Overall, the range of occupations represented in the study suggests a diverse sample with a variety of backgrounds and experiences.

| | Number | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|--------|----------------|
| Sex | | |
| Male | 83 | 37.90% |
| Female | 136 | 62.10% |
| Age category | | |
| Less than 18 | 10 | 4.57% |
| 18-25 | 85 | 38.81% |
| 25-30 | 52 | 23.74% |
| 31-35 | 26 | 11.87% |
| More than 35 | 46 | 21.00% |
| Level of education | | |
| High School | 54 | 24.66% |

| | | |
|----------------------|-----|--------|
| Diploma | 40 | 18.26% |
| Degree | 109 | 49.77% |
| Postgraduate | 16 | 7.31% |
| Occupation | | |
| Students | 84 | 38.36% |
| General office staff | 49 | 22.37% |
| The private owner | 24 | 10.96% |
| Housewife | 10 | 4.57% |
| Unemployed | 26 | 11.87% |
| Civil servants | 6 | 2.74% |
| Others | 20 | 9.13% |

Table 2: Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample

Descriptive statistics

Table 3 showed that Malaysian Chinese participants often used China social media with an average frequency of 3.868 (SD = 1.393) and an average duration of 3.219 (SD = 1.471) on a 5-point Likert scale. The participants were generally satisfied with their use of Chinese social media platforms, with an average satisfaction level of 3.639 (SD = 1.293) on a 5-point Likert scale.

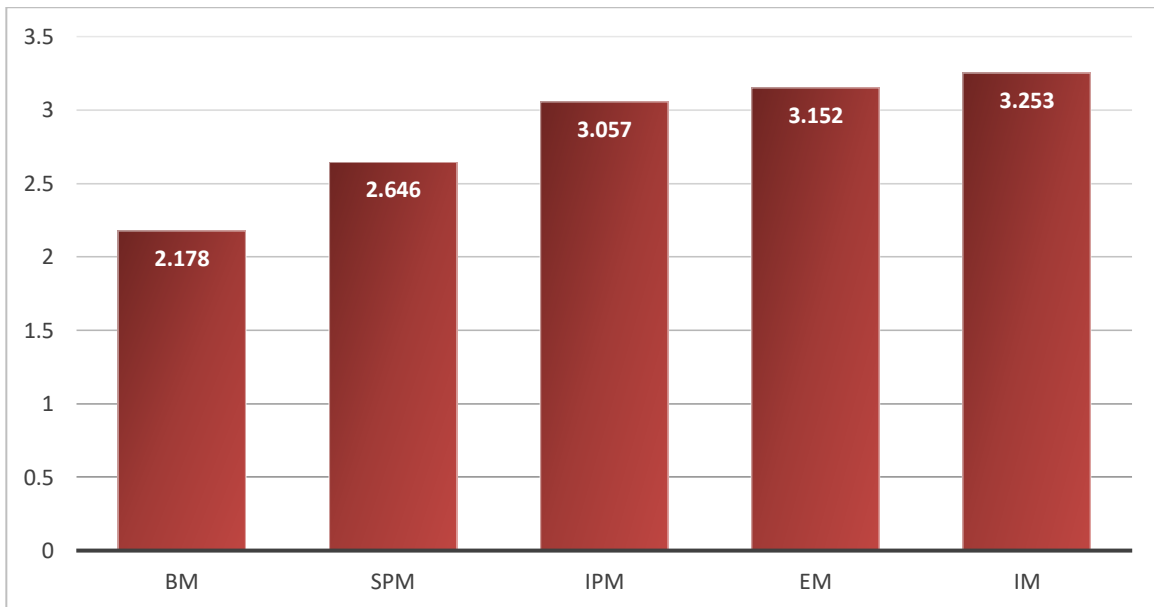
| Items | Max | Min | Mean | SD | Md |
|--------------|-----|-----|-------|-------|----|
| Frequency | 5 | 1 | 3.868 | 1.393 | 4 |
| Duration | 5 | 1 | 3.219 | 1.471 | 3 |
| Satisfaction | 5 | 1 | 3.639 | 1.293 | 4 |

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of UCSM

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics on the motivation of Malaysian Chinese to use CSM. The results show that the primary motivation for Malaysian Chinese to use CSM is to get information (M=3.253, SD=1.197), followed by entertainment (M=3.152, SD=1.008), interpersonal interaction (M=3.057, SD=1.221), self-presentation (M=2.646, SD=1.197), and finally business (M=2.178, SD=1.146) with a score of 5 on the Likert scale (Figure 2).

| Items | Max | Min | Mean | SD | Md |
|-------|-----|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| BM | 5 | 1 | 2.178 | 1.146 | 2 |
| SPM | 5 | 1 | 2.646 | 1.257 | 2.5 |
| IPM | 5 | 1 | 3.057 | 1.221 | 3 |
| EM | 5 | 1 | 3.152 | 1.088 | 3.333 |

| | | | | | |
|----|---|---|-------|-------|-------|
| IM | 5 | 1 | 3.253 | 1.193 | 3.667 |
|----|---|---|-------|-------|-------|

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of MCSM**Figure 2: Descriptive statistics of MCSM**

Regression analysis

Regression analysis is a statistical method used to examine the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. It is commonly used to estimate the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable, which helps to understand the strength of the relationship between them (Montgomery et al., 2021).

In this study, regression analysis of CSMU and MCSM was conducted by SPSS 23 and the results are shown in Table 5. The analysis of the results of the F-test can be obtained that the significance P-value is 0.000***, which presents significance at the level, so the model meets the requirements. the VIF is all less than 10, so the model has no multicollinearity problem, and the model is well constructed.

The equation of the model is as follows: $y = 1.052 + 0.046*BM + 0.142*SPM - 0.257*IPM + 0.519*EM + 0.367*IM$. Multiple regression analysis showed that entertainment motivation ($\beta = 0.448, p < 0.001$), information motivation ($\beta = 0.348, p < 0.001$), and self-presentation motivation ($\beta = 0.142, p < 0.05$) were positively associated with CSM use among Malaysian Chinese. Social motivation ($\beta = -0.249, p < 0.001$) was negatively associated with CSM use. However, business motivation ($\beta = 0.042, p > 0.05$) did not significantly influence the use of Chinese social media platforms among Malaysian Chinese.

| | Unstandardized | | Standardized | t | P | VIF |
|------------|----------------|-------|--------------|--------|----------|-------|
| | Coefficients | | Coefficients | | | |
| | B | S.E. | Beta | | | |
| (Constant) | 1.052 | 0.188 | - | 5.596 | 0.000*** | - |
| IM | 0.367 | 0.08 | 0.348 | 4.597 | 0.000*** | 3.208 |
| EM | 0.519 | 0.083 | 0.448 | 6.277 | 0.000*** | 2.861 |
| IPM | -0.257 | 0.058 | -0.249 | -4.422 | 0.000*** | 1.778 |
| SPM | 0.142 | 0.071 | 0.142 | 1.994 | 0.047** | 2.837 |
| BM | 0.046 | 0.056 | 0.042 | 0.833 | 0.406 | 1.443 |

Table 5: Regression analysis of CSMU and MCSM

4. Discussions

In this study, we aimed to explore the relationship between the motivations and behaviors of Malaysian Chinese using CSM. According to the findings, the frequency, duration, and satisfaction of CSM use among Malaysian Chinese are at a high level. Their motives for using CSM are, in order, access to information, entertainment, socialization, self-presentation, and finally, business. Our findings revealed that entertainment motivation, information motivation, social motivation, and self-presentation motivation significantly affected the use of CSM among Malaysian Chinese. However, business motivation did not have a significant impact.

According to the first objective one. The study aimed to explore the motivation and behavior of Malaysian Chinese using China social media (CSM). Our findings show that the Malaysian Chinese participants have a high frequency and duration of CSM use, which suggests that CSM has become an essential platform for communication and social interaction among Malaysian Chinese. This finding is consistent with previous research that has shown that the use of social media has become an integral part of people's daily lives (Jacobson & Harrison, 2022; Rahmatullah et al., 2022).

Regarding the motivation for CSM use, the results indicate that getting information was the primary motivation for Malaysian Chinese, which aligns with previous research that has found that individuals use social media primarily to obtain information (Chung & Koo, 2015; Hsu et al., 2015). However, entertainment was the second most important motivation, which suggests that Malaysian Chinese also use CSM for leisure and entertainment purposes.

Interpersonal interaction was also an important motivation for CSM use among Malaysian Chinese. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have identified the social nature of

social media, where individuals use social media to connect and interact with others (Chen & Kim, 2013; Hsu et al., 2015).

Finally, the results suggest that self-presentation and business are the least essential motivations for using CSM among Malaysian Chinese. This finding is different from previous studies that have found that social media can be a platform for self-presentation (Hsu et al., 2015; Kircaburun et al., 2020) and business marketing (Dahnil et al., 2014; Mikalef et al., 2013). However, it is essential to note that this study focused on the motivations of Malaysian Chinese and may not be generalizable to other populations, and business motivation.

The second objective of this study was to verify the relationship between the motivation and behavior of Malaysian Chinese in using CSM. Previous research has found that social media use is motivated by various factors such as entertainment, social interaction, and self-presentation (Chen & Kim, 2013; Chung & Koo, 2015; Croes & Bartels, 2021; Hsu et al., 2015). The results of this study are consistent with previous findings, as entertainment motivation, information motivation, and self-presentation motivation were significant predictors of CSM use among Malaysian Chinese. However, our study found that social motivation hurt CSM use, which differs from some previous studies that have found social interaction to be a positive predictor of social media use (Whiting & Williams, 2013). This may be due to the cultural context and social norms of Malaysian Chinese, which could influence their perceptions of social media use. Therefore, this study adds to the existing literature on social media use by highlighting the unique motivations of Malaysian Chinese in using CSM and emphasizing the importance of considering cultural factors in understanding social media use in different contexts.

The results of this study have several implications for marketers and advertisers who wish to target Malaysian Chinese through CSM. Firstly, entertainment motivation was found to be a significant factor in the use of CSM among Malaysian Chinese. It is consistent with previous research that people's main motivation for using social media is entertainment, as shown in Lu and Lu's (Lu & Lu, 2019) study that people watch videos on Douyin for relaxation and entertainment. This finding suggests that marketers and advertisers can utilize entertainment-related content such as music, movies, and TV shows to engage with Malaysian Chinese users on CSM platforms. By doing so, they can increase brand awareness and encourage product consumption among this demographic.

Secondly, our findings suggest that information motivation plays a significant role in the use of CSM among Malaysian Chinese. This finding implies that CSM platforms can be used as a source of information for Malaysian Chinese. It is consistent with previous research that people can discover global news and significant events through social media (Van Dijck, 2013), which can help them keep up with the events and expose them to a broader range of news and information (Hermida et al., 2012). For example, Weibo, which is known as China's Twitter, has a search function that allows anyone to post content on it, and audiences can access news and information in Chinese through it (Zhang & Pentina, 2012). Marketers and advertisers can take advantage of this by providing relevant and valuable information related to their products or services.

Thirdly, interpersonal motivation was found to hurt the use of CSM among Malaysian Chinese. This finding implies that Malaysian Chinese users on CSM platforms may not be primarily motivated by socializing and connecting with others. However, this finding is in contrast to the

general notion that socializing is one of the primary motivations for social media use (Chen & Kim, 2013; Hsu et al., 2015). Therefore, further research is needed to explore the reasons behind this finding.

Fourthly, consistent with previous research (Hsu et al., 2015; Kircaburun et al., 2020), self-presentation motivation was found to be a significant factor in the use of CSM among Malaysian Chinese. This finding implies that Malaysian Chinese users on CSM platforms may use social media as a means of expressing their identity, personality, and values. Marketers and advertisers can use this information to create personalized and targeted content that resonates with Malaysian Chinese users on CSM platforms.

Finally, our findings suggest that business motivations do not significantly influence the use of CSM by Malaysian Chinese. Previous findings suggest that business motives can influence people's use of social media (Olanrewaju et al., 2018; Salo et al., 2013), but the results of this study imply that CSM platforms may not be an effective medium for businesses to reach Malaysian Chinese users.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the motivations of Malaysian Chinese in using Chinese social media. This study contributes to the understanding of CSM usage motivations among Malaysian Chinese, a group that has been largely underrepresented in existing research. The insights gained from this study have practical implications for marketers and advertisers seeking to effectively target Malaysian Chinese users on CSM platforms. Additionally, this study provides a foundation for future research that seeks to explore CSM usage motivations among other Chinese diaspora communities living abroad.

The study's findings can inform transnational communication strategies for businesses seeking to communicate with Malaysian Chinese audiences. By understanding the factors that influence Malaysian Chinese's engagement with Chinese social media platforms, businesses can create communication messages that resonate with Malaysian Chinese users and build strong relationships with this group. The study's findings contribute to the broader understanding of Chinese diaspora communities' use of social media platforms. As Chinese diaspora communities continue to grow worldwide, understanding their motivations and preferences for using social media can help businesses and marketers develop effective communication and marketing strategies to engage with these communities.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study examined the motivations and behaviors of Malaysian Chinese in using China social media (CSM). The study results suggest that the frequency, duration, and satisfaction of Malaysian Chinese using CSM are high. Access to information, entertainment, and interpersonal interaction are the main motivations for their use of CSM. The findings showed that entertainment motivation, information motivation, and self-presentation motivation positively affected the use of CSM among Malaysian Chinese. Social interaction motivation hurt the use of CSM among Malaysian Chinese. This study contributes to the current body of knowledge on CSM use and provides insight into the factors that drive Malaysian Chinese to use CSM. The results of this study can be used by businesses to better understand and cater to the needs and motivations of

Malaysian Chinese consumers in their social media marketing strategies. Moreover, these findings have important implications for transnational communication among the same ethnic cultures, highlighting the role of CSM as a tool for Chinese to entertain, find information, and present themselves transnationally online. Overall, this study sheds light on the importance of CSM for Malaysian Chinese and underscores the need for businesses and marketers to take into account the unique motivations of this group when engaging with them on social media platforms.

6. Limitations and Recommendations

Despite the contributions of this study, some limitations need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the study relied solely on self-reported data, which may be subject to response bias. Secondly, the study only focused on Chinese social media platforms, which may not represent the full scope of social media use among Malaysian Chinese. Thirdly, the study was limited in terms of sample size and generalizability, as the participants were recruited through online platforms and may not be representative of the wider Malaysian Chinese population. Lastly, the study did not explore the cultural factors that may influence the motivations of Malaysian Chinese in using CSM. Future studies could address these limitations by using a larger and more diverse sample, incorporating qualitative methods, and exploring the role of cultural factors in shaping CSM use among Malaysian Chinese.

Declaration of Conflicts of Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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