The Chameleon-like Usage of Social Media and Acculturative Stress

A Qualitative Study among Chinese Students in Spain

Linlin Tang

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Linlin Tang

Supervisor: Carles Roca

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ABSTRACT

In the context of globalization and the growing influence of social media, we have little knowledge about the acculturation experience of Chinese people in Spain who hold both student and foreigner identity, and the role of social media in such a setting is unclear. In order to gain insight into these areas, this study conducted online interviews with 15 Chinese students in Spain. Through open coding and data analysis, seven kinds of gratifications obtained by using social media in the context of cross-cultural adaptation were identified. The study also found that Chinese students showed a chameleon-like pattern of switching between Western and Chinese social media based on different motivations. In addition, the seven most common sources of stress faced by Chinese students in Spain were discovered and an attempt was made to understand the role of social media plays in their acculturation experiences.

Keywords:

acculturation, social media, international students, Chinese, acculturative stress, uses and gratifications, chameleon-like

TABLES OF CONTENTS

Introduction

In the age of globalization, international exchanges are no longer limited to the economic and political realms, but now also include cross-border education. The flow of international students not only brings intellectual assets and potential workforce to the host country, but also leads to a direct economic impact. With the rise of China's middle-class population, 5.857 million Chinese people has studied abroad, which has increased by a factor of several thousand since China's economic reforms of the late 1980s (MOE 2018). The number of Chinese students studying abroad in 2018 was 662,100, which increased 8.83%, compared to the number in 2017(LAHT 2019). In addition, not only is there a huge number of students, but the number of counties they study in is also very large. Chinese students have studied in over 100 countries around the world and the vast majority of them go to developed countries such as the United States, the UK, Australia, Canada and Japan. When those different cultural groups and individuals contact directly and continuously, acculturation happens which results in changes of both culture and psychology (Berry 2005). Chinese international students have long been an interesting topic for scholars around the world to study, as such an enormous group carrying Confucian heritage and collective culture interacts with other Western society groups. However, study so far has mainly focused on those countries where there are most Chinese students(Zheng and Berry 1991; H.-I. Lee, Badiane, and Xu 2019; Wang and Mallinckrodt 2006; Church 1982; Forbush and Foucault-Welles 2016)

In recent years, due to the increased demand for Spanish-speakers in China and China's 'One Belt, One Road' initiative, more and more Chinese students have started to learn Spanish or experience life in Spain. Thus, there has been a growth in the number of Chinese students choosing Spain as their overseas study destination. In the 2015-2016 school year, the number of Chinese students studying in Spanish universities was only 8,397 while in the 2017-2018 school year the number increased to 10,588 (Sherry, Thomas, and Chui 2010). If the number of those who go to Spain to study at language schools and other types of educational institutions was taken into account, that number would be even bigger. As newcomers, overseas students face lots of challenges when they move to other countries. Very often, they are considered 'a vulnerable group' (Yan and

Berliner 2011) and facing various ‘acculturative stressors’ (Smith and Khawaja 2011). Additionally, given the great ‘social distance’ between China and Spain, the acculturation process will be more negative (Berry 1997) and Chinese students face a lot of obstacles to integration (Spencer-Oatey et al. 2017). In other words, Chinese students may have more challenges caused by the enormous difference in language, history, political ideology and religion, etc. While not as much study has been carried out on Chinese students in Spain as in other popular study-abroad countries, there are still a few studies which focus on Chinese students in Spain. For example, Domínguez has studied the experience of 100 Chinese students learning Spanish literature in Spain while the university’s first official language is Galician (Domínguez 2016). From the perspective of language competence, recent study has shown that language distance is a decisive factor in how easy it is to get accustomed to an unfamiliar language (Zhao 2019). In addition, both surveys and interviews were conducted to examine psychological, social and academic experience among 20 Chinese PhD students in Spain. Though these attempts have been made to observe and examine this group, in general, there is still a lack of sufficient research regarding the acculturation process of Chinese overseas students. In the new era and social context, what are the motivations and desires of Chinese students' cultural integration in Spain today? What kind of culture shock and acculturative stressors do they face there? How do they build social networks and interact with people in the hosting society? What is their self-identity cognition in a cross-cultural context? What strategies and measures should they take to better adapt to the unfamiliar environment and respond to academic challenges? Have the society and institutions provided enough help and support to help them through the adaptation process? These problems have received limited attention in literature, and we need further investigation to understand them better and accurately.

Over the past few decades, a large and growing body of literature has investigated and predicted the variables which affect a newcomer’s cross-culture adaptation (Mao and Qian 2015; Smith and Khawaja 2011; Berry 1997; Trebbe 2007). There is no doubt that interpersonal communication and media communication both play a crucial role in the acculturation process. One consensus among social scientists is that newcomers who effectively interface with individuals from the host culture are better adapted (Kim 1977). Furthermore, it has also been pointed out by Kim that mass media is more important for newcomers when they

are at the early stage of an acculturation process because of the limited knowledge of the new environment and limited contact with local people (Kim 1978). Given that previous research has mainly focused on traditional mass media, there is a need for a theoretical framework and fresh empirical evidence to analyze the role of social media in cross-cultural adaptation. First, social media has grown in popularity globally, particularly among the young generation. Second, it allows users to create both 'profiles' and 'connections' (Boyd and Ellison 2007), which offers newcomers an opportunity not only to maintain relationships with family and friends in their own countries, but also to contact individuals in the new environment. Third, the technology of social media and the way people use it is change all the time. Academic research on the human challenges posed by social media is also expanding, such as how social media has contributed to populism (Gil de Zúñiga, Koc Michalska, and Römmele 2020) and 'the unedited public sphere' conception proposed by (Bimber and Gil de Zúñiga 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to review and investigate further over time. Lastly, regarding Chinese overseas students whom this study addresses, they had formed a certain habits regarding using social media before they came to Spain, not only because social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube are banned in China due to its tight censorship (Shao 2018), but also China is a country with its own integrated and independent social media ecosystem('China Social Media Landscape' 2019). Thus, under such a unique and complex context, there is a rare and interesting opportunity to explore the pattern and influence of social media use of overseas Chinese diaspora in terms of acculturation.

Based on the context and scope of the topic addressed, the principal purpose of this study is to investigate social media's influence on Chinese students' acculturation experience in Spain, especially focusing on if and how their use of social media can tackle any acculturative stressors. In order to 'provide rich descriptive accounts of the phenomenon under investigation' (Pietkiewicz et al. 2014), this study is exploratory and interpretative in nature. The empirical research method used in this study is semi-structured interviews. We draw the research data from 15 Chinese students who have been studying in Spain in the last year, by applying the snowball sampling strategy. The data collected was based on grounded theory and analyzed through open three-level coding.

This dissertation is structured as follows: Chapter 1 reviews the background of research related to this field, the formulation of key concepts and theories, and related previous studies. Problem statement is formed on the basis of these two aspects; Chapter 2 explicates the methods for data collection and research procedures; Chapter 3 provides reports on the key findings with respect to the research questions; Finally, Chapter 4 discusses the major results, draws conclusions for theoretical and practical implications, and analyses the limitations of current study as well as offers a perspective for future research.

CHAPTER 1: Literature Review

In this chapter, prior research and scholarly contents regarding the conceptual areas of acculturation and media are examined. This chapter aims to find the literature gap and form a conceptual framework as well as propose the research questions for the study. A graphic depiction of the model is included as well.

International students as sojourners

In an increasingly diverse society, people from unique culture backgrounds are interacting more than ever. Terms such as immigration, migration, diaspora, sojourner, international students are very often seen in different genres of research. They are separated by scholar Kim (2001) into two divisions: 'long-term' and 'short-term' according to their intention to stay in the host country or go back to their own country, as such immigrants and refugees who plan to live more or less enduringly in the settlement country are considered long-term, while short-terms people, defined as sojourners, usually wish to return to their own country. Simply put, compared to immigrants, who might intend to settle down, the adaption situation of sojourners, such as international students, can be considered temporary. This is in line with Church's (1982) description of a sojourner which is 'relatively short-term visitor'. Our research aims to analyze international students and the previous literature that we reviewed is not only aimed at international students but also including people cross-broad in general. One reason is that though Berry (1997) has pointed out some differences in this adaptation process that different individuals might experience and he uses three considerations to distinguish them: 'voluntariness, mobility and permanence', there is still a consensus that all the individuals may share a common process of acculturation.

Within the context of Spain, immigrants from China are not a new phenomenon. As early as in the 1920s, the earliest immigrants arrived in Spain from Qingtian, Zhejiang Province (Nieto 2003). However, as mentioned earlier, it is only in recent years that many Chinese students have studied in Spain. There are also a few key differences between Chinese students who have gone overseas in

the past and those who are doing so these days. One significant difference is that nowadays more than 80% of the students return to China after they finish the study, which is an enormous change comparing to the returning rate in the past (MOE 2018). A study done in the U.S has examined the decisive factors in Chinese student's choice of returning to China. The primary reason is that there might be more opportunities for career advancement in China than in the host society, and family bound is the second most important concern (Cheung and Xu 2015). Accordingly, this may affect these Chinese students' motivation and desire to integrate and to some extent, indicates the outcome of their cultural adaptation. Another factor regarding the Chinese students is that they might have little time to adapt due to the fact that many of them do a one-year master's courses in Spain. That may intensify their difficulty to adapt themselves in the unfamiliar environment. Even though up to now work related to Chinese students in Spain has been lacking, while previous research has suggested that Chinese overseas students in the West are likely to have a high level of stress and find it difficult to adapt (Forbush and Foucault-Welles 2016)

Recognizing acculturation: from one dimensional to bidimensional

Human beings have a lengthy tradition regarding cross-cultural adaptation (Rudmin 2003). Concepts of acculturation have been modified as people continue to study it in the last century. As early as the end of the 19th century, based on observation of language and culture exchange of native tribes of America, anthropologist Powell initiated the word acculturation: 'The force of acculturation under the overwhelming presence of millions of civilized people has brought great changes' (Powell 1880, 46). This reflects a situation if one culture is conquered by mainstream culture, which lacks an equal perspective. Some scholars theorized it as: migrants go through a course of throwing away their original cultural and tradition and embracing the culture of the settlement society (Schwartz et al. 2010). Later, the conception of acculturation has shifted from one-dimensional to bi-dimensional (Smith and Khawaja 2011). Redfield and others conceptualized it as：'Phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into

continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups' (Robert, Linton, and Melville J 1936, 149). This definition is widely accepted because it avoids the role of the non-dominant culture being transformed and conquered in this process. In other words, it emphasizes the interaction and interplay between the two cultures, rather than the passive acceptance of one by the other.

As acculturation is not simply a single discipline study due to the many factors that influence it. It has branches of research designed into sociology, psychology, communication and other disciplines. Lots of scholars have put up with different dimensionalities or theoretical framework trying to study on the mechanism and predict the acculturation level (Croucher 2011; Berry 2005; Taušová et al. 2019; Ye 2005). A commonly accepted concept is that proposed by Berry (2005), who argues that we should understand the process of acculturation in terms of cultural context and individual psychology respectively. Scholar Graves (1967) has made an important distinction between acculturation of both group and psychological level, and the psychological changes are among individuals. One reason accounting for the significance of the distinction is because it provides two variables to analyze the relations, especially given that not all individual of the group equally engage in the overall acculturation undergone by their group (Berry 1997). The current broadly accepted acculturation approach is Berry's two-dimensional model which suggests that there are two dimensions in acculturation, one is the acceptance of the culture of the host country, and the other is the preservation and development of the original culture. (Berry 1997) In other words, for Chinese students in Spain, when they leave their hometown and enter an unfamiliar cultural Western society, they are likely to experience some challenges caused by the gap between the Chinese culture and the Spanish culture. Acculturation has become a question of how to constantly adjust and adapt within the original and existing culture. Additionally, some key features of the acculturation process have been illustrated, such as daily foodstuff, use of media, social interactions, languages, self-identification and participation in both cultures (Cleveland et al. 2009)

Ward and his colleagues have contributed in distinguishing between psychological and sociocultural dimensions of adaptation during the transition course (Searle and Ward 1990; Ward and Kennedy 1993; Colleen Ward; Antony 1999) that psychological adjustment that can be interpreted by stress

and coping mechanisms, which is broadly influenced by ‘personality, life changes, copying style and socio support’, while sociocultural adaptation is defined by behavior ability, which is best described through a context of social skills and culture learning. On the other side, Kim (2017) claims that newcomers in cross-cultural context follows a process that begins from ‘stress’ to ‘adaptation’ and finally to ‘growth’. And through learning approach, such as communication with people from host country can speed up the acculturation process, while engaging more in communicating with people from one’s own country has an opposite influence. A study of 51 non-native individuals living in the U.S. proved this found that those who communicated better with local people leaded to a greater outcome of adaptation. (Kim and McKay-Semmler 2013)

Culture Shock and Acculturative Stressors

When individuals enter an unknown environment, they tend to have culture shock: a wide range of symptoms such as ‘fear of physical contact with people, refusal to learn the new language, or fears of being robbed or taken advantage of’ (Oberg 1960, 178). And later Pederson defined it as an initial adjustment process to new situation (Pedersen 1995). For example, when Chinese people come to Spain and find out about the common Spanish greeting habit as kissing on both cheeks which differs completely from the norm of handshaking in Chinese society, they are likely to face culture shock. Oberg (1960) argues this kind of anxiety is caused by losing their familiarity of the social symbols and people vary significantly in the extent when they experience culture shock. From the first few days to the new environment, people will be in the honeymoon stage, until when they need to deal with the actual problems in life, they start to develop a hostile and aggressive attitude, feeling a sense of crisis even uses stereotypes to summarize the host country, and eventually as people improve their language proficiency and have more knowledge of the new environment, they will be in a recovery state and finally reach the fourth stage of adjustment accepting and enjoying life in the host country (Oberg 1960). But how intercultural skills can alleviate cultural shock to bring faster adaptation and change is still unclear in the literature (Presbitero 2016). Contemporary perspective is to see such problems in regard to culture shock as a kind of stress caused by contact

and lacking skills, which can be managed with through gaining of certain skills(Zhou et al. 2008). For example, learning language of the host country or talking to people, consuming media.

Therefore, when the newcomers interact in the new cultural environment, they will encounter different degrees of acculturative stressors, which includes any psychological, physical or social degradation in health, and these stressors generally leads to 'anxiety, depression, marginal and alienated feelings, increased psychosomatic symptoms, and confusion in identity' (Williams and Berry 1991; Berry and Annis 1974). Berry suggests people can distinguish the sources of acculturative stresses by evaluating major life-changing events (Berry 2006). A reliable measure approach is the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS) of Ward and Kennedy (1999), which covered a number of psychological and sociocultural stress issues. In terms of international students, prior studies have been done to examine what kind of life changes assessed as most problematic for oversea students (Chataway and Berry 1989; Zheng and Berry 1991). Smith and Khawaja (2011) have suggested five major acculturative stressors that foreign students are most likely to encounter frequently, including language obstacles, educational related problems, sociocultural pressure, discrimination and other practical problems, such as financial stress. Further research is demanded in the arena to assess whether international students' various cultural backgrounds influence on their assessment of changes in life. In addition, various factors including personality, cultural knowledge, social support (Cohen and Herbert 1996), and degree of interaction have been noted as affecting acculturation (Berry 2005). At present, not much studies have been done to examine the connection between social media usage and acculturative stressors.

Attitudinal strategies and Approaches

People choose to vary acculturation strategies with regards to acculturative stress, based on two attitudinal dimensions of acculturation conceptualized by Berry (1997): ‘cultural maintenance’（desire to maintain home culture identity）and ‘contact and participation’(desire to interact with people from the host society). Three empirical studies were conducted to compare this bi-dimensional model with a unidimensional model, and it proved that the culture heritage and

mainstream dimensions can vary independently. Thus, a two-dimensional model can provide a wider variety of viewing perspectives and research functions than the traditional one-dimensional approach. (Ryder, Alden, and Paulhus 2000). In order to assess this bi-dimensional acculturation, the Vancouver Index of Acculturation (VIA), a self-report tool is considered with validity and reliability (Testa et al. 2019). An integration-assimilation-separation-marginalization framework of acculturation strategy is defined according to an individual's positive or negative attitude regarding these two dimensions. ① Integration: engagement in both cultures. ②Assimilation：only being part of the host culture. ③Separation： preservation of own culture is more important. ④ Marginalization: alienation of either own culture or host culture. People who use marginalization strategy are more depressed and with poorer mental health than any of the other groups, those who use separation or assimilation lies somewhere in between and the best way, according to (Berry 1997) is integration. Prior study has supported the positive psychological outcomes are linked with integration strategy. For example, study of 321 Brizilians in Japan has shown that integration leads to positive well-being and lower level of acculturative stress (Scottham and Dias 2010). Other scholar, however, also has argued that the strategy taken by individuals are influenced by both group and personal factors which is hard for newcomers to integrate as their willing. (Phillimore 2011)

To illustrate the key factor influencing the acculturation process, Ward, Bochner and Furnham have developed an ABCs (Affect, Behaviour and Cognitions) approach, consisted of ① the stress and coping framework ② the culture learning approach. ③ the social identification perspective. This model not only describes that stress and skill shortfalls as key characteristics of cross-cultural interaction and adaptation, but also acknowledges the importance and impact of identity (Ward et al. 2001). As for the stress and coping approach, it can be best understood as an active process of people managing different stresses in cross-culture environment. Personality and situational factors as well as degree of life change are relevant variables. In terms of culture learning, which built on the assumption that newcomers generate acculturative problems due to difficulties in handling their daily social contact. Thus, adaptation comes as learning the culturally relevant skills and knowledge needed to negotiate a new cultural environment (Bochner 1972). While for the social identification theory, it focuses on the cognitive part of acculturation which refers to people's perception in regard

to changes of culture identity and relations with inter-group in the cross-culture process (Zhou et al. 2008).

Media Consumption in Acculturation

Studies on diaspora's intercultural adaptation and media consumption separately is not a young field. Ruben (1986) noted people's social communication behavior consists of two unseparated parts: interpersonal communication and mass communication. And both aspects with local people are two important factors in the process of individuals' cross-cultural adaptation (Kim and McKay-Semmler 2013). Accordingly, newcomer's acculturation level is strongly associated with both interpersonal communication and media consumption (Ye 2005). Prior study has demonstrated the use of media seems to be important in shaping people's cross-cultural adaptation experience (Kim 1978) or closely related to acculturation in particular(Trebbe 2007). In addition, by a survey study of 400 Korean people in the U.S, Kim (1978) has found that immigrant's shifting of cultural preference can be more clearly derived from media consumption than from interpersonal communication pattern. During the early phase of newcomer's process of acculturation, media could particularly play a vital role (Ryu 1976). As for foreign students, when they first come to the unfamiliar environment, they have limits to interpersonal communication due to the language barrier, social network or academic stress. Thus, media could be relatively easy access for them, as for being 'anytime, anyway' (Yu, Foroudi, and Gupta 2019). With media consumption, newcomers can be provided important sources of cultural information(Reece and Palmgreen 2000; Ughaerumba and Lawrence-Hart 2016). Along with culture transmission, other two functions identified are: environmental surveillance and correlation of various aspects of society (Lasswell 1960).

Many researchers have studied on the role of traditional mass media plays in people's experience of acculturation, especially examined the different impact of using media of host country and of home country (Cunningham and Nguyen 1999; Ye 2005; Kim 2010; Lee and Tse 1994; Pastina 2005). Take the study of Indian students in America for example, it has shown that their motives and usage of watching American TV program is influenced by their need for acculturation (Reece

and Palmgreen 2000). Another study has found the Korean immigrants' engagement with American mass media links to a high acceptance of American's culture value but creating alienation to their native culture identity (Moon and Park 2007). Kim(1977) has pointed out that exposure to media of host country can reduce uncertainty by improving language skills and to add a personal experience of living in the new society. On the other side, both benefits and disadvantages have been studied in regard to the media consumption of people's original country. The key outcome of exposure of ethnic media is that it can facility ethnic identity and preserves culture heritage, which can reduce loneliness and/or homesickness as well as increasing a sense of belonging (Haslam et al. 2009; Hendrickson, Rosen, and Aune 2011). This is in line with Ye's previous study (2005) that by using Chinese supporting groups online, it can reduce the acculturative pressure of Chinese international students. However, in a long term, it might become a barrier in adaptation (Jeffres 2000).

Social media in acculturation

With the progress of information and communication technology, media research in acculturation has been shifting to social media or new media in general. As mentioned above, international students tend to be influenced by interpersonal communication and media communication. As for social media, it functions in both of interpersonal and mass communication. In addition, given that internet is an alternative for people who felt less satisfied and valued in face-to-face communication (Papacharissi and Rubin 2000), the emerge of social media use, especially among young people could might lead to some new phenomenon that previous studies that had not covered yet. International students can overcome the limitations of time and space, not only keep in touch with the original social relations network of their home country, but also establish new social relations networks rooted in the host country. A recent study conducted by scholar Yang (2018) investigated the role of American social media such as Facebook and Twitter played in acculturation process and adaptation outcome of Chinese students in the U.S by a survey. The result showed that more often Chinese students use Western social media platforms, the better they adapted in the American society. Similar study has been done in the U.S to exam how Chinese professionals' usage of

Facebook influencing their interactions with host country and it has revealed a complexity of connection between social media use and identification management. (Mao and Qian 2015). Other scholars have studied on how social media usage can improve or decline people's favor toward cultural values. Based on a survey of 996 Hispanics, the study has shown that there is a positive correlation between using English-language social media and identifying with mainstream American culture. While by consuming Spanish-language social media, it strengthens their identification with the Hispanic culture (Li and Tsai 2015). One problem of the study is the social media usage framework it applied. For example, they just used frequency as a variable to study on the usage of social media which could not explain the usage difference when people who have the same frequency of using social media, but with different usage motivation. Therefore, Future research should better measure how people use social media, such as by examining specific social media activities or the motivation behind. One recent attempt is to investigate 'self-identification' in moderating social media use and outcome of acculturation, and it suggests there is a positive correlation between strong self-identification with better host culture adaptation (Yu, Foroudi, and Gupta 2019).

On the other side, social media is a fairly recent phenomenon which presents more complexity in a variety of different cultural contexts. Hence, it is a way of expanding our knowledge of media use in terms of acculturation. In this topic, as mentioned early, Chinese students have already formed a completely different social media use habit, not only because they use different social media platforms than in the West but also because they have developed some unique usage behaviors in the context of Chinese society. Take WeChat, a 'super-sticky' social media platform in China as an example, it is more than a social network service or simply a Chinese version of WhatsApp. It takes on the role of multiple Western platforms in China, has been an essential part of people's daily life, as well as being one of the most popular mobile payment services in China (Qu et al. 2015; Montag, Becker, and Gan 2018; Gan and Wang 2015) Therefore, to recognize the role of such new social media, we might need to beyond the traditional media framework, to investigate their influence in regards to sojourn students' day-to-day life scene. This is a new gap generated by the development of social media which lacks investigation in prior studies from a cross-culture adaptation perspective.

Media uses and gratifications

Previous study has explored on the relationships between acculturation, acculturative motivation, and media use and the result shows that Chinese students in the U.S who have a higher need for acculturation is more likely to engage in internet and TV (Trebbe 2007). In other words, motivation could be an important factor between media use and acculturation which might explain the 'why' and 'how' questions among Chinese students in Spain. One common approach can be applied is the 'Uses and Gratifications Theory'(Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, 1973-1974). As an approach focusing on users, not what the medium does, it proposes that the user's choice of medium is based on specific motives to obtain both psychological and behavioral satisfaction (Weiss 1976). Although it is criticized for neglecting the use of media in society, in general, it is still considered 'providing a cutting-edge theoretical approach in the initial stage of each new mass communication medium' (Ruggiero 2018).

In practice, a study focusing on Asian Indian people in the U.S has suggested that there are eight motives for them to watch American TV and the purpose of acculturation is one of them (Reece and Palmgreen, 2000). Based on previous study, Whiting & Williams (2013) has found ten types of gratifications that people obtain by using social media, such as 'social interaction, information seeking, pass time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, convenience utility, expression of opinion, information sharing and surveillance/knowledge about others'. In terms of Weibo and WeChat, two main Chinese social media platforms, prior study has revealed three types of gratification by using them: content gratification, social gratification and hedonic gratification (Gan and Wang 2015). As for Chinese overseas students, it is still not clear which can best describe the needs are they aim to meet through using social media while entering an unknown society and facing different kinds of acculturative stressors and challenges.

Problem Statement

A closer look at the literature on the role of media, especially social media plays on acculturation, however, reveals some gaps and indicates the direction for further study. Recent empirical study on social media research in this field is lacking. Scholars are still not very clear about how and for what purposes are using social media, especially outside of the U.S (Boyd and Ellison 2007) given the fact that different host societies may lead to different cultural stress for the international students. It requires a diversity of cultural context of studies in this field. Additionally, the connection between social media use and cross-cultural adaptation which lacks an analysis of the underlying mechanisms still remains to be explored. One possible reason lies in the fact that research in this area is usually conducted through quantitative research methods, thus lacking a deeper understanding of the complex motivations behind the phenomenon of media use and acculturation. Further qualitative research should be done to explore this topic in depth. In addition, other environmental factors may also need to be examined, such as the scale of Chinese community, language difficulty, the cultural differences. To evaluate the media's role in the acculturation process, it is necessary to acknowledge well the acculturative stressors that foreign students may have. Moreover, prior work has mainly focused on the mass media in terms of acculturation while nowadays the media technology and people's media consumption habits are changing rapidly. Along with the positive aspect, we should not neglect the negative effect it might has. One challenge might be to uncover the connection and of the consumption of social media and acculturation experience.

The purpose of this research project has therefore been to investigate the nature of Chinese students using social media and identify the main sources that contribute to the stress and difficulties in terms of their acculturation experience, as well as to shine light on the connection of these two dimensions in order to understand better of the emerging role of social media in cross-cultural adaptation.

The primary research questions guiding this study are as follows:

RQ1. What are the social media usage patterns of Chinese students in Spain?

- What's their motivation to use social media? Are their needs met by the usage of social media?

- What's their preference of using Chinese and Western social media platforms?

RQ2. What are the main acculturative stressors Chinese students are facing in Spain?

RQ3. How do Chinese students feel the use of social media affects their experience of acculturation in Spain?

Based on aforehand literature conclusions and in order to address the questions outlined above, this research will be conducted by a framework [1] combined with 'Media Use and Gratification Theory'(Weiss 1976) and 'the Four Acculturation Strategies' (Berry 1997) to investigate the link between Social media use and acculturation process. The possible acculturative stressors (Smith and Khawaja 2011) that Chinese students encounter in Spain will be examined as well as their motivation to use social media and preference of Chinese/Western social media platforms. As social media is an important communication medium for overseas students, in-depth understanding of the role of social media, under the context of cross-cultural adaptation, can help people to understand the issues that Chinese students in Spain may face as well as offer better suggestions for them to cope with the situation by the wise use of social media. In the future, more detailed research work in this field can be conducted on the basis of this research.

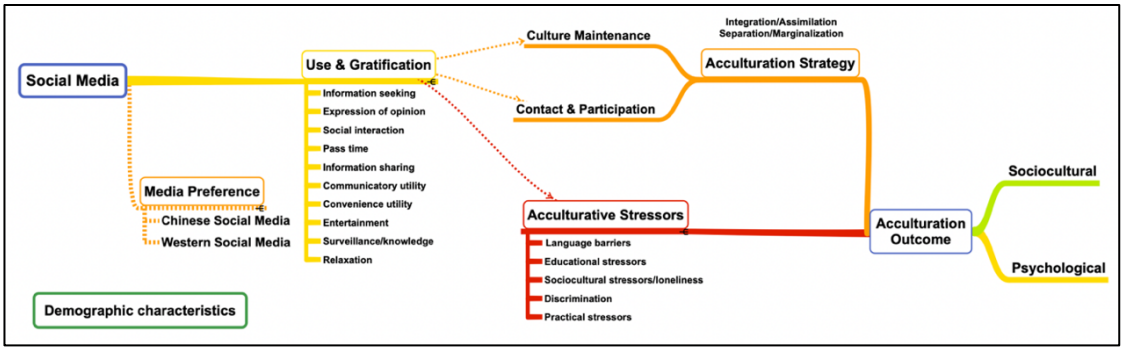

Figure 1: Framework of the study

[1] Figure 1: The framework of the study

CHAPTER 2: DATA AND METHOD

Overall approach and rationale

According to (Pietkiewicz et al., 2014), qualitative research aims 'to provide rich descriptive accounts of the phenomenon under investigation'. In this paper, the main concern with the way Chinese international students using social media and their acculturation experience, rather than transforming phenomena into numbers to get statistical outcome. A semi-structured interview is preferable in this study as it helps the interviewer to complete the interview without imposing too much structure (Miles and Jeremy 2005, 150). By preparing an interview guide which is a set of topics and questions prepared in advance, such an interview would have the advantages of both structured and in-depth interviews. The participants will be empowered to talk openly, and the interviewer can flexibly make the necessary adjustments during the interview. As for the method and sequence of questions, the way the interviewee answers, there are no specific requirements.

For this reason, the research uses qualitative methodology by conducting semi-structured interviews online with 15 Chinese students who have been studied in Spain. The aim of a qualitative interview-based approach can contribute to depict and explore people's experiential life in terms of various of aspects which can best address the research questions proposed. Another reason for doing so mentioned earlier, more qualitative work should be done to fill the research gap by having a comprehensive and deep understanding of the proposed topic.

Population selection and sampling strategies

The research questions proposed above are aimed to study on Chinese students who are/ have been studied in Spain in the last year. It means students who recently graduated are also included. This is due to the comprehensiveness of the investigation. Given that many of the students studying in

Spain are one-year graduate students, which means in the research sample, there might be quite a few students who have lived in Spain for less than a year. According to previous studies, a person's cultural adaptation is closely related to the length of time of settlement (Berry 1997). Including newly graduated population can enrich our understanding of this group. Although the self-report on media usage during Spain is relatively vaguer by this way, considering that this is not a quantitative survey which requires more specific numbers in terms of media usage, such as frequency, length of time, etc. In additiona, media usage in general a relatively stable and fixed behavior, therefore, by including students who have graduated recently can provide richer and more comprehensive information for the research. Therefore，the population for this study is: People with Chinese nationality, who are/have been studying in Spain in the last year, aged between 18 and 39, living in Spain for at least 3 months. They should not be living with Chinese immediate family during their stay in Spain.

This qualitative study aims to research and analyze a specific group of people. In this case, a group of Chinese students studying in Spain. Therefore, less than 20 participants could be a proper sample size because it not only helps to build a close relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, but also enhances the natural openness of communication between the two parties (Crouch and McKenzie 2006). This research uses the snowball sampling strategy, beginning by approaching researcher´s personal acquaintances who meet the criteria and then asks them to refer other future participants through their personal contact and social network, until 15 participants are interviewed.

Data collection methods

Taking into account both space constraints, time and budget savings (Janghorban, Roudsari, and Taghipour 2014), this study was conducted through online interviews by using WeChat (a social media platform commonly used by Chinese people). Participants all received a message of an

informal explanation of the study and be asked to approve ethical consent before they are allowed to participate in the interview. [2]

The interview questions were developed to examine how motives and gratifications for social media use were reflected in Chinese students' cross-culture adaptation process. Through the interview guide, the interviewer not only asked about how and why social media is used by participants, but also attempted to find out how this kind of use is related to their particular acculturation experience. The interview proceeded from open and wide-ranging question to close and narrower ones, beginning by basic personal background and overall description of participant's life in Spain, and then introducing their social media consumption. Follow-up questions were asked to explore directly on more details.

The data collection process took place over 10 days, starting with a pilot testing of the interview. After slightly adjusting the questions in the interview guide [3], formal online interviews were conducted with each of the 15 participants.[4] In the process, all the interviews were audio recorded based on consent. Notes were also taken while the interviews were being conducted. These interviews were conducted in Chinese and lasted from 30 to 60 minutes, with an average of about 40 minutes.

Figure 2: Demographic sheet of participants

Case No.	Gender	Age	Original city	Total time in Spain	Location in Spain	Primary study	1st time to study abroad	Future plan	Spanish proficiency	Language used in class
A	Female	23	Tier 1 city	0.5 - 1 year	Barcelona	Postgraduate	Yes	Return to China	low	English
B	Male	29	Tier 1 city	3-5 year	Barcelona	Language only	Yes	Not sure	Intermediate	Spanish
C	Female	27	Tier 1 city	1-3 year	Malaga、Barcelona	Language、Postgraduate	No	Return to China	Intermediate	English+Spanish
D	Female	25	Tier 1 city	1-3 year	Sevilla、Barcelona	Language、Postgraduate	No	Return to China	Intermediate	English+Spanish
E	Male	27	Tier 1 city	1-3 year	Barcelona	Language、Postgraduate	No	Return to China	Intermediate	Spanish
F	Female	27	Tier 1 city	> 5 year	Tarragona、Barcelona	Exchange、Postgraduate	No	Work in Spain	high	Spanish
G	Female	23	Tier 2 city	0.5 - 1 year	Barcelona	Language	No	Not sure	low	Spanish
H	Female	37	Tier 1 city	1-3 year	Barcelona	Postgraduate、Language	No	Not sure	low	English
I	Female	30	Tier 1 city	3-5 year	Barcelona、Madrid	Language、Postgraduate	No	Stay in Europe	Intermediate	English
J	Female	35	Tier 1 city	> 5 year	Madrid	Postgraduate、Doctoral	Yes	Not mentioned	high	Spanish
K	Female	36	Tier 1 city	1-3 year	Barcelona	Language	No	Stay in Spain	Intermediate	Spanish
L	Female	20	Tier 1 city	0.5 - 1 year	Madrid, Barcelona	Language、Undergraduate	No	Go to another country	Intermediate	Spanish+Catalan
M	Male	20	Tier 1 city	0.5 - 1 year	Madrid, Barcelona	Language、Undergraduate	No	Go to another country	low	English
N	Female	23	Tier 1 city	0.5 - 1 year	Barcelona	Postgraduate、Language	No	Not sure	low	English
O	Female	26	Tier 2 city	0.5 - 1 year	Barcelona	Postgraduate	Yes	Go to another country	low	English

[2] Appendix 1: The Interview invitation for participants
[3] Appendix 2: The Interview guide
[4] Figure 2: The demographic sheet of participants

Data analysis procedures

Both notes and audio-recording from the interview were used in the data analysis procedures and audio were transcribed in its original language before being analyzed. The transcription was analyzed by using the software NVIVO 12. In order to ensure the validity of the data, the researcher contacted the respondents when there was a possible ambiguity of understanding in the content's interpretation to ensure that the meaning of what the respondents wanted to convey was correctly understood.

According to Ground Theory coding guidance, we should put up with analytical questions of the data we have collected (Charmaz 2006, 42). Therefore, the data structure follows a method proposed by Gioia et al (2013) for generalizing and conceptualizing systematic research data as following:

① '1st order concepts' (open coding)：Guided by research questions, this initial analysis involved detailed exploration of texts by reading between the lines of interview transcripts and reviewing of the notes, as well as thinking about what participants said. Initially, a total of 416 items of 1st order categories were identified which basically keeps the terms used by participants.[5] Memos were taken during coding to capture some possible connection or interesting finds when it´s necessary.

② And then on the basis of comparing similarities and differences, all the 416 categories were sorted and abstracted into 26 items of '2nd order themes' which connect the '1st order categories' to theoretical themes describing the phenomena regarding this research topic. For example, all the '1st order categories' descriptions regarding how participants aim to use social media to seek the information they need are categorized under a '2nd order themes' named 'INFORMATION SEEKING'.

③ To aggregate the dimensions (selective coding). By checking all the '2nd order themes', and then we created generalized conceptual categories based on their relevance. For example, all social media-related codes fall under the third level coding as 'SOCIAL MEDIA USES AND GRATIFICATIONS'. By doing so, a coding structure were finally formed on the basis of '1st order

[5] Appendix 3: The 1st order categories

terms' and '2nd order themes'. It offers a graphical depiction of how raw data had been converted into terms and themes and enables to examine whether the finding is new. By following the three steps of coding procedure, we finished the analyses of the data collected and formed a coding structure. [6]

Since the researcher herself is a Chinese national studying in Spain, it somehow shares the same cultural and life background with the interviewees, which allows for a deep understanding of the participants' voices when interpreting the data. However, researcher still had to always bear in mind to remain reflective and distinguishes one's own voice from that of the interviewee to ensure objectivity of the data interpretation.

[6] Figure 3: The coding structure

Figure 3: The Coding structure

1st order concepts	2nd order themes	Aggregate Dimensions
Mainly use social media to get information of my intrest and hobby	INFORMATION SEEKING	SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND GRATIFICATION
Use social media to look for apartment		
Prefer to share more positive thing on social media	EXPRESSION AND PRESENTATION	
Use social media to record life		
use social media to keep in touch with people	SOCIAL INTERACTION	
student's online group is helpful in finding people with same hobby		
To gain some cultural knowledge	ACHIEVEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL	
To improve my language		
without social media my life in Spain would be boring	ENTERTAINMENT & PASS TIME	
I mostly watch video		
I mainly use social media to get news	SURVEILLANCE	
To get information about china is more valuable than of Spain		
I don't have chance to use Wechat pay now	CONVENIENCE UTILITY	
At beginning, I always forgot to bring my wallet when I go out because I use mobile to pay all the time in Bejing		
Concern of too much junk information	PROBLEMATIC USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA	
Wasting time and disattraction		
Use Bilibili to watch video more than youtube	PREFERENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM	
I use western social media to explore the new world		
I watch TV less now	USE OF OTHER MEDIA	
Listen to radio to improve my language		
I speak very little Spanish	LANGUAGE BARRIERS	ATTRIBUTION OF ACCULTURATIVE STRESSOR
My main pressure is from language study		
Fear of being fail in the class	EDUCATIONAL STRESSES	
At beginning i had lots of pressure from study		
had a few minor discriminations	DISCRIMINATION	
Discrimination experience from local bank		
Feel China is better after living in Spain	CONCERN ABOUT SECURITY	
Experienced of crime before		
Lack sociocultural knowledge about Spain	SOCIOCULTURAL STRESSES	
I feel pressure seeing spanish people didn't care about Covid-19		
Pressure of uncertainty of future plan	CONCERN ABOUT FUTURE	
Difficult to find a job here		
Miss food in China	PRACTICAL STRESSES	
It's difficult to deal with clerks in government department		
Feel more close to Chinese culture	CULTURAL MAINTENANCE	ACCULTURATIVE ATTITUDE & MINDSET
I feel proud of being Chinese		
Feel like to close myself	INTERCUTURAL PARTICIPATION	
It's important to adapt yourself to local lifestyle		
Communication is most important in acculturation	CONCEPT OF SUCCESSFUL ADAPTATION	
Adaptation is according to one's own goal		
Acculturation is painful but necessary	OVERALL EXPERIENCE	PERCEIVED ACCULTURATION EXPERIENCE
Most people I met are nice to me		
I'm surprised foreigners don't wear slippers in their rooms.	CULTURE SHOCK	
no culture shock becuuse i consumed some spanish media before		
It wouldn't affect me a lot	PERCEIVED IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA	
it meets my needs in some way		
Attracted by the language, culture and people	MOTIVATION FOR STUDYING IN SPAIN	DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS
For further education opportunity		
I spent a year in Cuba as an exchange student.	PREVIOUS STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE	
Coming to Spain was my first time studying abroad.		
I can go to foreigner's party alone	PERSONALITY	
I' m not very social.		

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

The aim of this study was to learn as much as possible about the social media use of Chinese students studying in Spain and their cross-cultural challenges as well as to seek insights into the interplay between the two. The findings reported here are based on 15 online semi-structured interviews conducted in May 2020. The researcher examined participants' social media use behaviors and acculturation experience, dissected the connections between the core categories from the data collected and compared these key themes identified. On the basis of the data structure formed and literature review, we came up with the results from the responses to the three research questions we posed earlier.

RQ1: The social media usage patterns

➢ Extent of social media use

With the prevalence of new media around the world, it's no surprise that social media is the dominant media types that Chinese students engage with and use on a daily basis. All participants reported that they use social media almost every day in their cross-cultural life. However, the degree of use and reliance varies. some individuals portrayed themselves as a high social media user:

> *I use social media extremely often, almost 7-8 hours a day. If you count time spent watching YouTube, I can spend about 10 hours a day.* （*Participant C, Female, 27*）

While some others also use social media, they don't see themselves spending a lot of time and energy on it:

> *I actually don't use social media for a particularly long time because the time I can use is already allocated to other things. For example, working out for over two hours and cooking*

takes time, so I actually use social media for about two hours a day if I'm using it. *（Participant D, Female, 25）*

Almost all participants talked more or less about some of the negative aspects of using social media, such as talking most about *'fake news', 'Bias and negative content', 'information explosion' and the resulting 'distraction' and 'waste of time'*. However, it is undeniable that for Chinese students living in Spain, with identities of both students and foreigners, who face the challenges of the new environment, social media remains the most important medium in their life. This is also consistent with the results obtained from the interviews regarding the use of other media which indicates that traditional media such as newspaper and televisions has been marginalized. With the exception of a few isolated cases, there was a mention about using other media, but only for the purpose of improving foreign languages.

I had a TV where I lived before, but I couldn't understand it when it was on, for me, it is just a background music. *（Participant H, Female, 37）*

I listen to Spanish-language radio shows to practice the language, not to learn what news they're talking about, because that's not what I need to do. (Participant L, Female, 20)

- **Media use preferences with a chameleon-like nature**

In the interviews, it was found that almost all of the interviewees exhibited a distinctly chameleon-like behavior of using social media living in Spain. Namely, when Chinese students are living in Spain, they are active on both social media platforms from China and the West simultaneously. In the field of sociology, the chameleon effect is used to describe the 'unconscious mimicry of one's interaction partners' postures, manners, facial expressions and other behaviors, so that one's behavior changes passively and unintentionally to match that of others in one's current social environment' (Chartrand and Bargh 1999). In this study, the researcher borrows this concept in an attempt to show that Chinese students in Spain have changed their existing social media consumption, presenting a more complex situation with the inclusion of Western social media. A

major difference exists, however: this change among Chinese students is not an unconscious imitation. According to the theory of Media Uses and Gratifications, the choice and use of media is based on the motivation of the users. Likewise, Chinese students are acting like chameleons on both Chinese and Western social media in order to gain different gratifications. Another biological concept amphibian might also explain this dynamic well. Amphibious behavior is originally used to describe animals which can live both on land and in water (Nieder 2001). Due to factors such as Cyber Great Firewall in China (Segal 2017) and language differences, participants reported that they need to switch between various Chinese and Western social media platforms constantly, as such, for example, they can maintain contact with their home country as well as to build relationships with the new society. This simultaneous activity on social media with two cultural contexts exhibits a chameleon-like behavior.

Further questioning revealed that this amphibious tendency may have occurred before the Chinese students left China, but less obvious. Based on the demographics of the respondents, who were born in the 80s and 90s, comes from China's most developed Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities, and have mostly been exposed to the Internet as well as being highly educated, it is not surprising that they know how to break through China's Internet blockage using tools such as VPNs and have experience using Western social media. In fact, 10 out of 15 of the participants already have had one or more western social media accounts when they were in China, but its actual use became more frequent after coming to Spain.

> *I used Twitter before I left China, and I occasionally opened it to read news about Western celebrities, such as tweets from my favorite celebrities, and then Tinder, which I only used after I came to Spain. And for Facebook, which I used to sign up for, but I didn't use much. (Participant C, Female, 27)*

➢ Gratifications driven by different motivations

By examining in detail, the 1st order codes related to social media motivation, we extracted seven categories of satisfaction gained from using social media， which are ①Social interaction ②Surveillance ③Expression and presentation ④Information seeking ⑤Achievement of knowledge and skill ⑥Convenience utility ⑦Entertainment. Further analysis and comparison of the seven categories of coding revealed different levels of satisfaction gained and the choice between using Chinese or Western social media. There are a variety of complex considerations behind the phenomenon of using them. As mentioned，the chameleonic behavioral is mainly reflected in the fact that these participants choose different social media platforms to reach a specific purpose of use and thus meet different needs and gratifications.

● Social interaction

Take the example of social usage purposes，All participants mentioned that they used WeChat to interact with family and friends in China, while only using WhatsApp or Instagram to connect with local friends and classmates in Spain.

> *All my friends on WeChat are Chinese and my Spanish friends are on WhatsApp. (Participant J, Female,35)*

> *I use WeChat to communicate with my friends in China, and I use WhatsApp to communicate with my foreign friends, because basically it is impossible for me to reach them by using other platforms. (Participant H, Female, 37)*

> *I communicate with my Chinese classmates on WeChat, and if there are foreign classmates, we communicate on WhatsApp or Skype. (Participant N, Female, 23)*

In their accounts of the events surrounding the use of Western social media to interact with foreign friends or classmates, it shows a relative weak tie to maintain the relationship with them. The way

they use it seems to be less active than the way they use with co-national people. As one interviewee said:

> *When I first started using Instagram, I could only give them Likes and nothing else, so I uninstalled Instagram a few times because I didn't think it was useful. Then I learned that Instagram has some other features, like you can pose your 24-hour-a-day updates, and you can also participant in group chat, and then I think those are the two features that I use more often now. （Participant L, Female, 20）*

- **Surveillance**

Likewise, the same chameleonic feature is shown in the purpose of staying up to date with news. It was frequently mentioned that they use Chinese social media platforms like WeChat and Weibo to access news and social updates in China as well as using Western platforms such as Twitter and WhatsApp group to be informed with local news or news generated by the West. However, one difference noticed was that less than a third of the respondents reported they subscribe on Chinese diaspora media account on WeChat as their sources for news content from Spain only. Two discrete reasons emerged from this. First reason is the language barrier as described by (Participant O, Female, 26). Second reason is the lack of familiarity with the media sources available in host country (Participant C, Female, 27). Both of them lead to use of media platforms they are already familiar with and to obtain information in their native language.

> *About what's happening locally in Spain today, such as what the latest confirmed case figures are for the recent Covid-19 epidemic, all of which I only follow through WeChat public news account. Because with the Spanish local news, I can neither read nor understand. （Participant O, Female, 26）*

> *On Twitter, for example, I lack knowledge of foreign media and bloggers; after all, I'm new here and I can't judge the reliability of the information they provide. Instead, on Chinese social media, after all the years I've lived there and I know the country well. So I am able*

to get the news through authoritative channels on Chinese social media and I have the ability to distinguish and judge the news I have got. （*Participant C, Female, 27*）

In addition, concern about biased news and favor of firsthand reporting, some participants cultivated a tendency to check both Chinese and Western social media platforms for the habit of verifying news facts.

If I only used Chinese social apps, I could also know what's going on over here, but the messages I receive are translated and processed by other people, thus it's very common that it may be taken out of context or biased. I feel like I can get direct information in local social media sources without being misled by others. （*Participant L, Female, 20*）

- **Expression and presentation**

One of the distinguishing features of social media from traditional media is that the user is no longer just a recipient of information, but also a generator. Whether as the concept of 'performance' (Goffman 1959, 120) or 'exhibition' (Hogan 2010), one´s profile, a retweeted photo or a comment, they are all an act of self-presentation. For Chinese students in a cross-cultural context, their presentation of self may be more complex on the dual social media platforms and in front of different audiences which was also reflected in the content of the respondents' feedback below:

For example, if I post a photo of selfie on Instagram, I don't care too much about how my body looks like… Because, you know, when we look at our foreign friends, we seem to think that foreigners are more natural when they take selfie. Not using a lot of filters or to touch up the body or anything like that… It has caused me to feel like… when I'm posting photos of myself, sometimes I feel like It should be more natural, I don't know... Maybe there's a part of me that wants to cater to their cultural mentality as well, so I want my post to be more natural or… not too fake. For this reason, I don't use filters or the beauty effects or anything I used to do in Chinese social media. But if I need to post it on my Chinese social

media platform, I'd still choose to do more touch-ups to my body in the photo. （Participant C, Female, 27）

I do have a focus when delivering information on social media. If I feel that some contents may not be appropriate for the culture in China, I will actually just post on Instagram…like some of the Western celebrity's news. （Participant M, Male, 20）

Apart from the concern of culture differences which participants have perceived in social media use. Furthermore, a recurrent topic in the interviews was a sense amongst interviewees that they are more likely to share positive content about their cross-cultural life experience on social media, rather than sharing negative experience. As one interviewee put it:

I'm a person who is very willing to share emotions on social media, but I also bear this in mind that I don't want to spread negative emotion. So, I'll check to see if I'm going to create a negative emotion for someone else before I post anything, and if I feel like it will, then I will not post this feed. （Participant M, Male, 20）

Interestingly, these positive expressions are not only on an individual level, but also sometimes on a national group level. All three interviewees spoke of a sense of mission to 'speak for the country' when expressing themselves on social media. This refers not only to posting positive information about China on Western social media, but also to spreading positive content about Spain in Chinese social media.

Not long ago at the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia when the news became a social media sensation in China. The fact that it's a highly followed topic means it's a better step forward. So I just shared it on Instagram, because people in the West, in my class anyway, would have thought China is an extraordinarily conservative country that bans homosexuality altogether. So, I'll just like, share it to show how we're progressing. (Participant O, Female, 26)

Although most of the interviewees claimed that they would not publicly express their negative experiences and emotions on social media, by setting up groups of friends and only sharing negative experiences with particularly close friends on social media, they can ease the mood to some extent.

> *I'll write down all the unhappy things on WeChat, but I just select people, some... only my trusted friends can see it. And then I write a lot, which is really just venting, and using the tweets in this way is kind of the equivalent to keeping a diary and then designate someone who can see it in a way.* （*Participant J, Female, 35*）

- **Information seeking**

In terms of information seeking, the data provided by the interviewees showed a different focus on the information they seek on Chinese and Western social media. Overall, Chinese social media platforms seem to be better served by providing information that can help them with the practical aspects of life in Spain. The reason for this is that online Chinese groups offer information on various life aspects，including renting an apartment, trading second-hand goods, applying for schools, processing documents and so on. Particularly in the early stages of Chinese students' arrival in Spain, joining such online groups for information exchange and mutual assistance is effective in reducing the practical difficulties that would be encountered by individuals in a new environment. For example, almost half of the participants reported they searched for rental information through WeChat's online group and were successful in renting their apartments in Spain. On the other side, Western social media seems to play the role of an information provider that allows outsiders to further enhance their enjoyment and better participation in local life，especially when participants expressed their interest in a particular overseas culture. They were more likely to use Western social media platforms even if similar content was available on Chinese social media platforms.

> *I follow some local information via Instagram to see if there are any new menu or event at the restaurant, and through Meetup I also know about the meetup events of my interests that*

are available to go to. （Participant E, Male, 27）

➢ Achievement of knowledge and skill

The satisfaction of gaining knowledge and skills through social media is motivated by the participants' desire to learn. The vast amount of resources available on social media is a great fit for their needs. Language learning, especially for international students, is one of the most frequently referred to issues, and Western social media platforms can provide a wide range of languages learning resources.

I've deliberately trained myself to watch YouTube videos of Spanish bloggers to work on my Spanish listening skills, or to speak or learn about things culturally. (Participant C, Female, 27)

I watch stand-up comedy on YouTube to improve my Spanish. (Participant E, Male, 27)

And there's a lot of Chinese content shared on Chinese social media that also helps meet their needs in terms of learning. In this regard, the use of Chinese and Western social media work in a complementary manner.

On Bilibili（a Chinese video sharing platform, like YouTube）, I'm mainly looking contents made by international students, skill teaching bloggers, such as how to learn foreign languages efficiently and so on, I will refer to the learning methods they share.（Participant I, Female, 30）

➢ Convenience utility

Whilst a minority mentioned that the mobile payment feature of Chinese social media platforms which is not widely used in Spain. Participant H (Female, 37) reported not being used to carrying wallets when she first arrived, which could lead to some awkward situations in life. However, there

are still some practical applications exist, such as paying for online courses through WeChat (Participant E, Male, 27), and during Covid-19, scan a QR code daily via WeChat before returning to China to declare personal health to the Chinese health management agency. (Participant M, Male, 20). Reports of the convenience utility of Western social media was rarely mentioned.

- **Entertainment**

Although extracted from Whiting and Williams's (2013) research into why people use social media, there are PASS TIME, ENTERTAINMENT and RELAXATION classifications. But in this study with 15 interviewees, for overseas Chinese students who face both academic and cross-cultural challenges, the border between the three categories seems to be blurry. Taking the example of watching short videos on social media, it is something that serves the purpose of passing time, entertainment and relaxation at the same time. YouTube from the West and Bilibili from China, both of these video-sharing social media platforms are commonly used by the respondents. Using this type of social media during free time is an important way for Chinese students in Spain to relax and unwind.

> *Without YouTube, I think my life here would be much less fun! （Participant E, Male,27）*

> *Because on Chinese video-sharing sites, for example, some TV series require membership to watch. So basically, for the stuff you can't watch in China, I choose to go to YouTube to watch the stuff that is blocked in China. （Participant D, Female, 25）*

> *Compared to YouTube, I watch Bilibili more…I can watch the videos which are not available on YouTube. （Participant A, Female, 23）*

RQ2: The acculturative stressors facing in Spain

Turning now to the acculturation experience, focusing on which factors were the most stressful for respondents during the process of intercultural adaptation in Spain. Seven broad themes emerged from the data analysis. Five of them are consistent with a prior study (Smith and Khawaja 2011) which put up with the possible acculturative stressors that overseas students are likely to encounter. They are: ① language barriers. ②educational stressors. ③sociocultural stressors ④ discrimination. ⑤practical stressors. In addition, according to the data extracted from our study on Chinese students in Spain, the other two major aspects that most often lead to students´ worry and anxiety are ⑥concern about security and ⑦concern about future. From the hierarchy chart[7] of the coding references regarding to acculturative stressor, we can see the approximate importance of these seven categories. It is clear that sociocultural and language pressures are the most prevalent, followed by education and discrimination, and lastly, the day-to-day problems in life as well as the psychological stress caused by uncertainty about security and future.

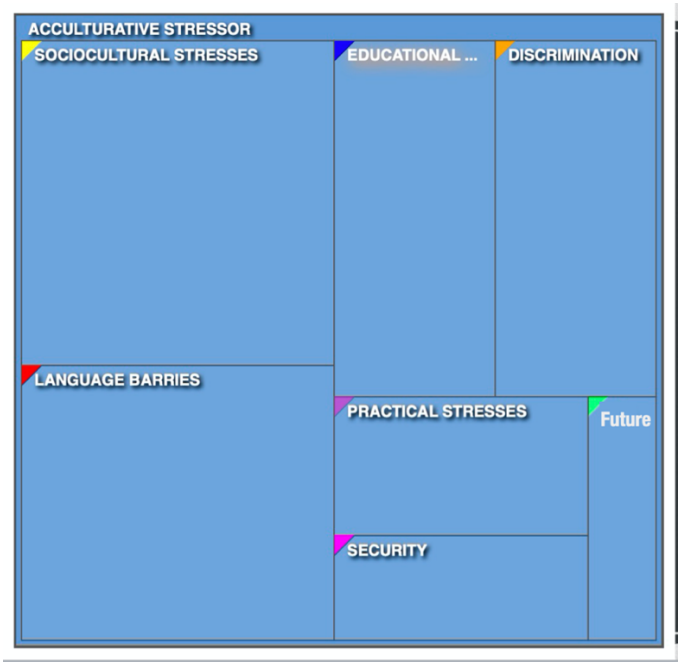

Figure 4: Hierarchy chart of acculturative stressors

[7] Figure 4: Hierarchy chart of acculturative stressors

- **Language barriers**

When it comes to acculturative stress, language stress was the first theme mentioned by almost all of the interviewees, except for two participants who have been in Spain the longest and had studied Spanish in the university in China. (Participant F, Female, 27 & Participant J, Female, 35) Not surprisingly, the language barrier is the most pressing issue for many people to overcome when moving to a country where the language spoken is completely different. Language proficiency is not only relevant to everyday life, but this theme also surfaces in the interviewer's descriptions of several other types of stressors. Talking about this issue, an interviewee said:

> *One of my biggest problems in Spain was that I don't speak Spanish, because I had always assumed that people over there in Spain were able to speak more or less English, but then I found out that there are people who really don't speak English at all, so it's almost impossible for me to communicate with people. And it caused stress in many aspects of my life, like going to the government office to get a residence card, I couldn't understand the documents in Spanish, so I had to hire an Agency. The school often sends out emails, but sometimes in Spanish, sometimes in Catalan, which is even more unreadable, and then facing with so much of this, I more and more feel like to ignore them. In addition, I even have to avoid online shopping since it's troublesome to communicate with the courier or browse the Amazon website in Spanish.* （*Participant A, Female, 23*）

More people felt that the pressure of the language was more likely to be associated with their studies, regardless of whether their course is in English or Spanish. As another interviewee said:

> *The pressure came from the fact that I couldn't speak Spanish well, because my major was taught in Spanish, so when graduate school first started, it can be especially stressful at that time when you find out that there's no way you can do research in a language you've studied for a year and reach the degree of knowledge same as that of a graduate student. And then because it's just starting, even our*

class, the majority of people are native Spanish speakers, or even the rest of those Chinese friends, they also studied Spanish as an undergraduate. I was the only one who couldn't keep up with the language because I only studied for a year which made me feel really bad for a while! （Participant C, Female, 27）

The extract above also supports the research arguments presented by (Chen 1999) that the anxiety caused by language proficiency interacts with other sources of stress in the academic and sociocultural fields. By comparing with participants who studied Spanish in university in China, they reported they had a much lower level of stress in terms of language.（Participant F, Female, 27 & Participant J, Female, 35）

- **Educational stressors**

As mentioned above, the level of language proficiency is also closely related to the student's academic performance. For students who have spent a decent time studying Spanish exclusively at a language school, the everyday language they learnt is not yet at the level of academic application, leaving them with greater academic challenges. The other point is due to the differences in the education systems of China and Spain. In the beginning, Chinese students who come to Spain for higher education are usually not used to the teaching style. As compared to China, where the teachers always tell the students what to do, here they are given more autonomy, wherein the Chinese students do not adapt well. In addition, they face a more difficult time with methods such as group discussions, teamwork, and presentations.

When I first came here, I felt a lot of pressure from my studies because there were several teachers and I was quite scared. I felt that the teachers here are kind of...how to say...not very responsible, they will arrange the homework, but it is not the same as the Chinese teachers do, I'm not quite sure how to describe it. They just give you an assignment which allows you to have a little more freedom to do it. So, there's more pressure on top of academics. （Participant F, Female, 27）

For example, in class you could go out without permission from the teacher, and then you could eat in class, and you could just raise your hand if you had any questions. The teacher will then discuss it with you. These were very uncomfortable for me, I felt very reserved at first … and I was afraid to go to the bathroom in class. （Participant O, Female, 26)

I had to write it all down in advance before I had to do a group discussion in class, and at home I had to memorize it before I dared to go up there and talk about it, and to this day I still feel very pressured. （Participant H, Female, 37）

Meanwhile, we found that Chinese students perceive far less stress in language schools than in universities, not only because of the difference in content difficulty but also because peer pressure in language schools is less than in universities.

Many classmates of mine study really hard, they are the kind of people who would wake up at 5 a.m. and rush to the library. So, it was a kind of pressure on me. They would get 9.5, 9.9 kind of grades on every test, and I think I was mostly under this academic pressure afterwards. (Participant O, Female, 26)

- **Sociocultural stressors**

Sociocultural stressors are mainly reflected on difficulty of building and maintaining a social network. As prior research suggests, for Asian students, it is extremely difficult for them to make friends in the Western society (Smith and Khawaja 2011). A majority of the participant mentioned that they have more Chinese friends than foreign friends, particularly Spanish friends. Difficulty in forming friendships with locals might be compounded by the language barrier because not all Chinese students who come to Spain can speak Spanish or the official language of the region, but basically, they all have a fair basic knowledge of English.

I have both Chinese friends and other foreign friends, but no Spanish friends. So, by foreigners I mean my foreign classmates. Yes, basically, they are all foreign friends who can communicate smoothly in English. (Participant A, Female, 23)

I spend time with my Chinese roommates all the time. I also spend time with team members from the class, but in fact We interact little. The most we talk about are homework. (Participant D, Female, 25)

They speak very fast, and when I talk to them, I feel under pressure, and then I have less communication with them, and many students here use Catalan after class. And then I find it hard to integrate, and then I feel stressed and unhappy. (Participant L, Female, 20)

However，even for those Chinese students who have foreign or local friends, due to cultural differences, misunderstandings, or lack of empathy in their interactions, can often bring a sense of isolation, loneliness and loss as outsiders.

The things they're interested in are different from the things I'm interested in. For example, the movies we watch and the music we listen to are very different. As a result, when you talk to people, you don't know anything about what they're saying and you don't have a way to understand it, so it feels like there's no common ground to communicate, you don't talk about the same things, there's no sense of integration, and also for us, there's less concern and fewer resources about Europe, and some Latin American cultural and political things.
（Participant K, Female, 36）

At the language school, I spent most of my time hanging out with foreigners, but I found that our interests were very different. Sometimes they thought something was funny, like when I went to a party with just a few of my friends, and they said something they thought was funny and I didn't understand it, or maybe it was because I didn't understand the language or I couldn't follow it, or I just didn't think it was funny. That's when it gets a little awkward, a little lonely. (Participant C, Female, 27)

- **Discrimination**

The themes of discrimination recurred throughout the dataset of stressor. Although most interviewees mentioned that their teachers and classmates were very nice and helpful, and most Spanish people they met were friendly to them, still almost all of them shared own personal experiences of discrimination. We found that these kinds of experience can negatively affect their willingness to adapt and leads to psychological fear, worry, confusion and anxiety. In participants' accounts of the events surrounding discrimination, the most common is verbal discrimination in public, such as being racially discriminated against verbally on public transport or on the street. ass one interviewee said:

> *There was a time when my friend and I, both Chinese girls, got off a bus and there was a group of high school students looked boys, they saw us like we were clowns, and they were there yelling: Hey Chinese and screaming something else that I forgot, because they spoke in Spanish. Recently, after the outbreak of Covid-19, discrimination seems to have increased. At the beginning of the pandemic, only Chinese people wore masks. So, when you wear a mask outside, a lot of Spaniards think you have a disease or something and will stay away from you. I was on a train once and the carriage in front of me was full, and then my carriage wasn't even full because they didn't want to sit near me, because I'm wearing a mask…. There are also people who intentionally cough behind me and stuff like that. And I've seen graffiti that says China virus.* （*Participant A, Female, 23*）

> *It's pretty obvious that discrimination is happening. Mostly young people, some teenagers will come up to you and yell or say nihao*（*hello*） *or whatever, but obviously with sarcasm, and there's nothing you can do about it, it's just a negative experience that reminds you that you're a foreigner and you're not accepted.*（*Participant C, Female, 27*）

In contrast to this verbal discrimination, most students felt that it was just a behavior of a few individuals and not represent the society as a whole. However, the other experience of discrimination, mentioned by several participants, regarding struggle of opening a bank account in Spain, not only causes difficulty on ease of life, but psychologically, this

discrimination hurts their feeling more severely than random verbal discrimination on the street.

> *My Spanish friend took me to the bank to apply for a bank account and it still didn't work. The staff said it's just a requirement for us Chinese, which he himself admits is discrimination, and that's what the woman at the bank said that... Then I got a little angry, she was just trying to sell me insurance which I don't need, I already have insurance, and I pointed out to her that it's a form of forcing someone to insurance. You're selling bank cards, right? And then she said yes, she said yes! it's the same rule for Chinese, Russians, etc... My friend Pablo said it was the first time he had heard of it, because he was a local and he didn't know what foreigners facing, he didn't understand these things, and he was shocked.*
>
> *（Participant H, Female, 37）*

- **Practical stressors**

Basically, the participants didn't seem to have much stress from concerns regarding life in terms of food, clothing, housing and transportation. One explanation could be that the aforementioned online social media groups help newcomers to Spain to solve these kinds of practical problems. Nor did anyone mention that they were under financial pressure because they either received financial support from their families or had savings from a previous job. The main sources of stress mentioned seemed to be the same sense of disparity due to languages. For example, the difficulty in communicating with clerks working in the government office and the negative feelings of inefficiency, as well as the fear of unfamiliarity of access to medical care, etc.

> *There's a lot of pressure to get things done here. I believe that people who have lived in Spain and dealt with the government should encounter a lot of pressure in this area. Because China has really been more efficient in recent years, including going to government offices and all kinds of banking services and things like that. It seems like China has been pursuing highly efficient. But I find that this is not the case in Spain, including all of Europe, where*

they seem to think that it doesn't matter if they are less efficient, it seems to be a feature in Spain that makes it difficult to get used to when you first arrive, including getting your bank account, a residence permit and a number of other documents.（Participant C, Female, 27）

- **Concern about security**

If encountering discrimination in the public area doesn't stop Chinese students from going out, it seems that fears about security and safety are really reducing their motivation to participate and integrate in Spanish society. Of the 15 participants, 11 reported their own experiences of theft/robbery, or similar experiences from friends. In addition to their real-life experiences, the descriptions of insecurity that they often hear from others also increase their stress levels. Participant A's description provides a complete picture of the impact of insecurity stressor upon the sociocultural and psychological aspects of Chinese students' acculturation experience.

I have experienced being robbed of my phone while walking alone at night. It's more than the impact of theft. It's a sense of confronting the criminal directly. So，I'm just so disgusted with the lack of security in Spain, I want to return home badly and I didn't want to stay there. Because the lack of security there is so bad for me as a girl. My Chinese landlord always warned me not to go out at night… if I go out at night, I'm likely to get robbed and stolen. So, it's always given me that impression. Because China is so safe, I never thought it would be a problem to walk at night. I didn't want to stay in Barcelona. After the phone was robbed, as soon as the day got dark, I was already afraid to leave the house, and was completely afraid to go out, and that's what that incident did to me, the psychological impact is especially greater. I'm not a very social person, and after my phone was robbed I became even less social and less likely to go out, so I could only go to activities during the daytime, but even during the day I'm terrified of being robbed if I hear my own phone ringing outside. I keep having the feeling like someone is following me or someone is getting ready to rob me, so it feels like it's putting quite a bit of psychological pressure on me, I feel like I'm not

safe. The security aspect makes me less likely to approach strangers in Spain. (Participant A, Female, 23)

- **Concern about future**

According to the background information of the 15 interviewees, they came to Spain to study for various purposes, but whatever the reason is, the question they keep asking themselves is: what should I do after my study is over? Do I stay here or go back to China or somewhere else? Although the general trend is that more and more Chinese students are choosing to return to China, deciding about their future out of such choices often leads to stress and anxiety. This seemed to be more prominent for those participants who spent more time in Spain.

I'm going to have to choose whether I want to go back to my home country or if I want to get a job here. It's the uncertainty about the future direction that's causing me stress right now. (Participant B, Male, 29)

My second year was quite stressful because I was thinking about things that were six months away, which I thought was a bit too much anxiety. I did get quite anxious that year.（Participant I, Female, 30）

RQ3: The role of social media plays in acculturation

The results of the first two research questions have given us a picture of the social media usage of Chinese students in Spain and the acculturation dilemmas and pressures they face on a daily basis. On the basis of these two aspects, we focus more on examining the two datasets in the coding structure which is ACCULTURATIVE ATTITUDE & MINDSET and PERCEIVED ACCULTURATION EXPERIENCE, attempting to explore the link between social media use and acculturation outcome.

First, according to Berry's framework of acculturation strategy (Berry 1997), All participants claimed that they hold positive attitudes to maintain their identity and characteristics of home country and to maintain relationships with their host country. This seems to be in line with the finding of chameleon-like usage of social media from the traditional perspective in assessing the media effect on adaptation, that using media of home country helps to maintain ethnic heritage and using of media of hosting country facilitating culture identity of host country (Yang 2018).

Second, by asking participants that imagine the impact your acculturation experience in Spain would be if you didn't have social media. Some interviewees affirmed the impact that social media has brought to their participation in Spanish life. As one interviewee put it:

> *It's impossible for me to live my life here without social media. Because not only do I use social media to find friends, but I also use social media to find restaurants, interesting things, fun places to go, so it is closely related to my life. Anyway, I think it's impossible for me to not be on social media.* （*Participant I, Female, 30*）

However, there are interviewees holding an opposite opinion:

> *I think I might be more likely to reach out to more people and things in my life here. In fact, it's because of social media that I'm not as motivated to reach out to more people in my life.* （*Participant B, Male, 29*）

In general, Chinese students in Spain switch between Chinese and Western social media platforms, gaining various gratifications based on different use motivations. From the descriptions by participants, we have seen that certain cross-cultural pressures could be alleviated on the basis of needs being met. For example, watching YouTube videos for the purpose of acquiring knowledge and language skills can help alleviate language and educational pressures. Use of WeChat and WhatsApp to both maintain relations in home country and host country can reduce sociocultural stressor. Searching for information through online groups to get real-life support can lessen practical pressure in life. However, the over-reliance on social media that emerged in the interviews led to

wasting time, distraction, spreading of negative emotions, information explosion may also affect their life satisfaction and acculturative process. For Chinese students, the use of social media is more of a double-edged sword. It can be used as a tool and channel to improve acculturation outcome, but it is also important to consider the negative side effects it may bring to individuals.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION AND CONCULSION

Based on the results drawn from the interviews, this chapter discusses the deeper meaning and significance of the findings and attempts to better understand the results by comparing to previous related studies. Implications and limitations are also discussed.

Discussion

First, the results revealed the patterns of the use of social media among Chinese students in Spain. Social media is undoubtedly the primary form of media that Chinese students engage in their daily life in Spain. Compared to the previous media research on international students, which was mainly focused on traditional media, for example television (Reece and Palmgreen 2000; Trebbe 2007), the research on new media such as social media is more up-to-date and there is a bigger gap in academic research. By applying the Media Uses and Gratifications theory, we identified from the data collected from the Chinese students in Spain, there are seven main types of gratifications they obtained through the use of social media, which are: ①Social interaction ②Surveillance ③Expression and presentation ④Information seeking ⑤Achievement of knowledge and skill ⑥Convenience utility ⑦Entertainment. It is congruent with the work by Whiting and Williams (2013) which identified ten uses and gratifications by people who use social media. The slight difference is that in our study, we have integrated three types of gratifications which are pass time, relaxation and entertainment because we have a sense that, for Chinese students, under the pressure of being both 'foreigners' and 'students', the line between the three doesn't seem to be so clear. For instance, when a Chinese student wants to pass the time, browsing hilarious short videos via social media, or watching Mukbang (an online steaming show of people eating) is both entertainment and a way for them to relax.

Furthermore, a clear chameleon-like usage phenomenon was observed in Chinese international students, where they would have different preferences for the use of Chinese and Western social media platforms based on different motivations for media use and the gratifications they could obtain. Previous research mainly compares and analyzes the effects of Chinese students' use of

English or Chinese media respectively. This study is mainly based on user motivation, with an emphasis on active human choice. This dynamic, complex, motivation-driven tendency of social media use does not seem to have been specifically studied in previous literature. This research suggests that the impact of social media use on Chinese students' acculturation process should not be inferred simply by assessing the use of a particular social media. In terms of acculturation experience, we have noted seven main acculturative stressors that Chinese students in Spain normally have, of which obstacles related to language, education, interpersonal communication, discrimination and practical issues of life are in line with Smith and Khawaja's previous study (2011) that they are the most frequent acculturative stress experienced by foreign students. The other two identified stressors were uncertainty about the future and a lack of security about the environment in which they live. The former may be related to changes in the competitiveness of the international student market in today's global economic environment. The latter could be due to the fact that our interviewees were all from the two famous tourist cities of Spain, Barcelona and Madrid. There may be geographical differences in concerns about security and crime. Moreover, it appears that men are less anxious and stressful than women in this regard, whereas only 3 of our 15 respondents are male in this aspect may lead to bias.

On the one hand, driven by an individual's motivation, the use of social media can meet the various needs of international students in the new cultural environment, such as solving practical life problems. Keeping in touch with domestic contacts, establishing new personal contacts, etc. It echoes Li and Peng's study (2019) that social media has gradually become a vital communication tool for oversea students. However, it is also noticeable about the disadvantages of social media usage, such as time consuming and distracting, spreading of negative emotions, etc., which may also affect their cross-cultural experience to some extent. This finding supports a recent quantitative study on the association between motivational use of social media and problematic use behavior of social media (Kircaburun et al. 2018).

In addition to the above, possible interpretation bias due to gender and geography of the sample in this study. Other limitations should be acknowledged. First, this research is only aimed at a certain group of Chinese students who came to Spain after the age of eighteen. Students who are

under 18 years old are not in the scope of the study because normally they move to Spain with their parents and accordingly the acculturative experience is different. Second, since the study coincided with the Covid-19 outbreak and due to the long-term of social distance, it may have affected respondents' normal life experience, including social media use behavior. Such unprecedented and unique change might affect respondents' mood and psychological status as well. However, life changes in the cross-cultural process are inherently a major source of stress and this study can provide a rare opportunity for observation.

Although, this is a qualitative research which involves participants to self-report their social media use behavior and cross-cultural experiences. There may be a lack of comprehensiveness or less effective in proving a cause-and-effect about these two aspects. It is suggested future study could consider optimizing the method, such as through a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to further examine and predict the impact of social media on intercultural adaptation.

Conclusion

In the age of globalization, research on discrete populations is flourishing in various fields. At the same time, changes in people's media consumption have been unprecedented in the last decade. This rapidly changing social dynamic does not seem to have received corresponding academic research attention. On the other hand, recently China's influence in the world has differed from ever before, and it has made rapid development in the digital field and developed its own unique social media ecosystem. Thus, the cross-cultural challenges faced by Chinese students coming to the West to study today, and the media influences on their cross-cultural experience may all be completely different from the early Chinese students. In particular, with the introduction of China's ´One Belt, One Road´ strategy and the increase in cooperation and interaction between China and Spain, conducting research around Chinese students in Spain is of great importance to both countries in terms of cultural exchange, education and economic cooperation.

This research has studied a specific population in the context of both social media and intercultural adaptation. Through online interviews with 15 Chinese students in Spain, we firstly have identified seven motivations and gratifications for them to use social media. And based on the gratifications they gain from different social media platforms, it has revealed a chameleon-like feature of social media preference which is constantly shifting between Chinese and Western social media platforms. In addition, the study has shown the main sources of stress and challenges that Chinese students currently experience in their daily lives in Spain. Finally, this paper has related the complex social media use of Chinese international students to their intercultural strategies and perceptions of acculturation experience. In this article, it has concluded that social media can play a dual role in the intercultural process of Chinese students in Spain. These findings enrich the empirical research on intercultural and social media studies. It also provides an opportunity to advance the understanding of the connection between social media use and acculturation. It was conducted through the qualitative approach towards Chinese students in Spain, a noteworthy but somewhat neglected group, to fill gaps in academic research and inspire others to expand their research in the future. In the context of practice, this study helps us to better understand the challenges that Chinese students in the West face in their acculturation experience and sheds light on the appropriate use of social media to help them better adapt to intercultural life in Spain. From the perspective of the host country, a better understanding of the current situation of foreign students living and studying in Spain can contribute to helping the authorities and educational institutions improve student counselling services and provide more appropriate social support.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: The interview invitation

Appendix 2: The interview guide

Semi-structured interview guide

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS		
Name	Chinese name, foreign name? Why	
Age	Age	
Gender	Gender	
Original city	Original city	
Length of Stay	Length of stay , where to stay in Spain	
Study Status	What have you studied in Spain? Language used in class	
Motivation	What's your motivation to stay in Spain?	
Future plan	what's your future plan after study? Or Why did you choose to leave/	
Language proficiency	Which languages are you good at? What language do you use commonly in Spain?	
TOPIC	**MAIN QUESTIONS**	**PROBES\FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS**
Acculturation	Can you tell me about your story of coming to Spain?	Purpose? Why Spain? Previous experience in other counties/cities
	How would you describe your current life in Spain? Social culture & Psychologcal (School/Social environment/ social network) (Three words to describe your feeling overall)	Daily routine How do you like it? Ratio of Chinese friends/ Spanish friends/ international friends, classmates
	What do you find difficult when living and studying here?	Stressors: Language /Education /Sociocultural/Discrimination/ Practical problem
	Any example of which you were not used to it when first came? What you have done about it and how do you feel about it now?	Culture shock
	How do you consider yourself in terms of making efforts to get in the spanish society? Do you consider maintain original culture is valuable? participation in new society?	integration/seperation/assimilation/marginalization One word to describe your experience of acculturation in Spain
Social Media Use	What social media platforms do you have/ use? Why? Chinese / Western social media comparing	If this preference has been changed after arriving to Spain
	Describe the situations when you use any social media in Spain. Are you satisfied by using them? Any time you are not satisfied using social media?	Spain (frequency、motivation、number of friends(Local/Chinese) 10 use and gratification: social interaction, information seeking, pass time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, convenience utility, expression of opinion, information sharing, and surveillance/knowledge about others.
	What would it be like if your life in Spain were without social media?	postive/negtive importance of social media,why

Appendix 3: The 1st order categories

Name	Files	References
positive attitude on Chinese culture	15	17
positive attitude on participation in Spanish society	15	19
prefer to share more positive thing on social media	9	12
Security concerns in Spain	9	17
studied spanish before master's course	9	13
I prefer to share privately with close people, not by u...	8	9
language Barrie	7	13
use wechat most	7	8
use wechat to communicate with Chinese people	7	12
watch tv less now	7	7
attracted by Spanish language, movie, people, Euro...	6	6
first time to study abroad	6	6
mainly use english	6	6
mainly use social media to get information of my intr...	6	8
use of wechat helps to be close to friends in China	6	7
use wechat to be updated of what's happening in Ch...	6	9
attracted by landscape, food, weather in Spain	5	6
concers of disattraction and watsting time by using...	5	7
it is achievable to study in Spain	5	5
to study more	5	5
usre western social media more frequently when i a...	5	5
concerns about fake news on social media	4	5
find apartment by using online groups of wechat	4	4
for further education opportunity	4	5
had a few minor discriminations	4	4
have western social media accounts before	4	4
i check on controversial news from both sides of so...	4	5
i use various social media platforms	4	4
i dont rely on social media a lot	4	5
language proficiency is essencial	4	4
most friends are known from school	4	4
reaction towards normal discrimination	4	5
spanish nameis easy for foreigners to call me	4	4
teachers and classmates are helpful	4	6
use Chinese name in Spain	4	4
bond of family and friend in China	3	3
discrimination of bank	3	3
dont use other media	3	3
experienced discrimination in public transportation	3	3

416 items selected