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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Discussing Social Media Using Affordance of Young Chinese Ethnic Minority Group Users

Lifu Li ^{1*}, Kyeong Kang ²

¹ Faculty of Business, City University of Macau, Avenida Padre Tomás Pereira, Taipa, Macau SAR, China

² School of Professional Practice and Leadership, University of Technology Sydney, 15 Broadway, Ultimo NSW 2007, Australia

*Corresponding Author: Lifu Li, School of Professional Practice and Leadership, University of Technology Sydney, 15 Broadway, Ultimo NSW 2007, Australia; Email: Leaf.Lee@zohomail.com

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ABSTRACT

The study explores young Chinese ethnic minority group (EMG) users' social media using affordance for engagement when they engage in intercultural contact on social media platforms. Grounded on the affordances theory, the relationships between influencing factors and using affordance have been presented in the research framework. Through interviewing fourteen EMG participants, critical findings in this paper have also been discussed in the final section, such as young Chinese EMG users who understand the original language supporting multi-language engagement, focusing on cultural content and following EMG influencers. Based on the comparison among various influencing factors, several suggestions have been provided for social media platform designers and related departments.

1. Introduction

Social media is an online platform where users can communicate and share different content with others ^[1]. Convenient functions on social media platforms, including real-time video interaction, text content posts, group chat, and danmuku functions, are beneficial for users to produce original content and interact with others ^[2,3]. During the process of online interaction, more and more online users are attracted to engaging the online community and accepting the mainstream culture ^[4,5]. For instance, Facebook, the most popular social media platform worldwide, attracted more than 2,375 million monthly active users in 2019 ^[6]. The number of active users on the WeChat platform has increased to 1.2 billion by the end of

2019 ^[7]. Popular social media platforms have been deeply embedded in people's daily lives, and users will increasingly spend more time on online platforms ^[8]. Meanwhile, the structure of users is diverse, not only reflecting on their gender, age and income level but also showing the division of ethnic group background. Unlike the major group, ethnic minority group (EMG) individuals have a different cultural background and living environment, which significantly impacts their social media using affordance ^[9]. For instance, island music is popular among Australian South Sea Islanders, which means they could prefer to focus on and produce music content, and the silver jewellery is essential in the Chinese Miao group's daily life, and their communication content might be related to jewellery on social media platforms ^[10,11]. Rich

cultural content benefits the heritage of cultural diversity and contributes to the inclusiveness of the online cultural ecosystem^[12].

However, influenced by the mainstream culture produced by the major group users on social media platforms, more and more young Chinese EMG generations engaging in intercultural contact have to experience psychological contradictions, and many of them tend to accept the mainstream culture and abandon their original cultural knowledge^[13,14]. Although this tendency is conducive to enhancing cultural unity and stability in China's online cultural ecosystem, it is not helpful to the inheritance and development of multiculturalism. Specifically, in China, Tibetan Buddhism, regarded as a peaceful religion, can command peace and harmony, which is useful for modern residents to release working pressure^[15]. The complex farming systems designed by the Yao group in Yunnan province of China have some guiding significance for developing agriculture and enriching social content^[16,17]. Therefore, encouraging the development of EMG culture on social media platforms can improve China's online cultural ecosystem and promote the transmission of EMG knowledge among the major group community.

Unlike old individuals conforming to stereotypes, young Chinese EMG generations have more opportunities to be involved in intercultural contact and understand both EMG's original culture and mainstream culture^[18,19]. This online intercultural experience could potentially influence their social media using affordance, which refers to the particular environment on social media platforms that permit some social behaviours^[20]. As the definition displayed in Khan et al.'s research shows, the affordances theory explains that perception of the environment can inevitably lead to some course of action^[21]. Hence, its theoretical background and value could be applied to analyse online users' behaviours on social media platforms. For example, most young Chinese EMGs are familiar with their unique language and writing systems, leading them to focus on multilingual engagement^[22]. Meanwhile, specific cultural knowledge, such as folk songs and hand works, affects young Chinese EMG users to pay more attention to the cultural content rather than regular content produced by the major group users^[10,11]. Influenced by original religion and customs, Chinese EMG users probably have a strong cultural identity and tend to follow influencers with a similar cultural background^[23]. These specific social and cultural aspects would play a significant role in young EMGs' using affordance, potentially influencing the online cultural ecosystem on social media platforms. Based

on the above argument, the first aim is to explore: *How do EMG language, EMG cultural knowledge, and EMG cultural identity influence young Chinese EMG users' social media using affordance?*

In addition to considering the influence of original culture, the study also analyses the impact of mainstream culture created by the major group users on social media platforms. Compared with various EMG original cultures, the content of mainstream culture is relatively single and coherent, mainly influenced by the current economy, politics and culture, such as the Wanghong (female celebrity) economy and Chinese Mandarin language environment^[24]. For example, in Australia, EMG immigrants from different cultural backgrounds gradually adapt to the mainstream culture produced by the English-speaking country and change their original language, eating habits and lifestyles^[25]. The same phenomenon also occurs on China's social media platforms, such as focusing on famous live streamers, using similar platforms, and watching popular entertainment news. This could lead the online cultural ecosystem to tend to simplification, which has an adverse impact on Chinese EMG cultural diversity. Thus, in addition to discussing the effects of EMG culture, the second research aim is designed based on the influence of mainstream culture. It is proposed as follows: *How does the mainstream culture affect young Chinese EMGs' using preference and the online cultural ecosystem?*

The study both contributes to theoretical and practical implications. Regarding the theoretical implication, this paper analyses young users' social media using affordance based on their cultural backgrounds, which is ignored by previous studies^[26,27]. In detail, young Chinese EMG users' cultural environment potentially affects their using habits and platform-using preferences. Meanwhile, to analyse EMG users' using preferences, this paper draws on the affordances theory to design the research model, which is helpful for scholars to understand the effects of the online cultural ecosystem. Regarding the practical implication, the research results clearly present positive and negative factors, which is beneficial to guide related departments to support cultural diversity and build a comfortable online cultural ecosystem.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Firstly, the paper reviews literature related to EMG's original culture and mainstream culture, aiming to establish the foundation of the qualitative analysis. Secondly, the study presents the methodology process, including data collection and analysis, and the research results are also provided. Thirdly, based on the results of interview data analysis, the research framework has been proposed in the section

on critical findings. Finally, theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

2. Literature review

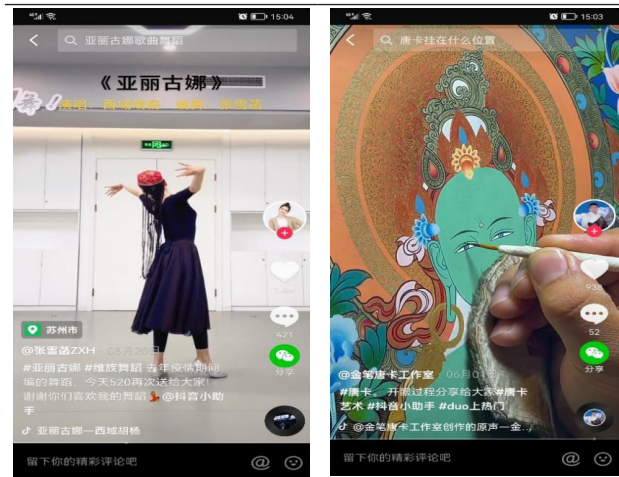
2.1 Chinese EMG original culture

Unlike the major group users, the social media use affordance of most Chinese EMG users is influenced by their original culture, including language, customs, and religious background. According to the definition presented by Maurer-Fazio and Hasmath (2015), in addition to the major group Han, 55 EMGs get officially recognised by Chinese governments and comprise 8.49% of the population (approximately 117 million) [9]. Unlike the major group living on China's east coast, most young EMG residents are from the northwest, north, northeast, south and southwest regions, such as the Tibetan group and the Yugu group from Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau [9,28]. The closed geographical environment protects the local EMG language system. For instance, local educational departments encourage young EMG students to learn and speak their original language, although the Chinese government have designed Chinese Mandarin as the official language [29]. Meanwhile, as a unique group cultural symbol, older EMG residents would be willing to pass on their language to the next generation, thus maintaining the continuation of group culture [30]. This could result in most young Chinese EMG users preferring to use a platform that can provide a multi-language function, which is convenient for them to operate and beneficial for them to conduct EMG language.

Moreover, EMG's traditional cultural knowledge includes thoughts, skills, and practices passed on from generation to generation within a group, potentially affecting young Chinese EMG users' watching interest and focusing content. To be specific, the folk dance and folk songs from the Uygur group are based on long folk poems, reflecting their group history and lifestyle, as **Table 1** shows [31]. Thus, compared with typical users, the Uygur group users would pay more attention to the folk dance and folk song content, enhancing folk culture diversity on social media platforms. Meanwhile, influenced by religious knowledge, the identification of architecture colour is more prominent among the Tibetan group, and the Tibetan Thangka art is regarded as a crowning jewel by Tibetan residents (**Table 1**) [32,33]. Hence, the specific religious knowledge would potentially impact young Chinese EMGs' social

media using affordance, like focusing on religious content and subscribing to EMG channels.

Table 1. Examples of EMG cultural content on social media platforms.



The folk dance from the Uygur group on the TikTok platform

The Tangka art from the Tibetan group on the TikTok platform

Furthermore, living in a unique cultural environment, young EMGs could have a solid cultural identity. Cultural identity is the identity of belonging to a group, and it not only exists among different countries but also occurs among different groups. Most EMG residents have a robust cultural identity because of their religious and historical background, resulting in them preferring to build trust with their group members [34]. Based on the influence of cultural identity, young Chinese EMG users would follow influencers who have a similar cultural background to them rather than popular influencers recommended by social media platforms. This is beneficial to enhance cultural diversity and improve the online cultural ecosystem. Cultural identity exists on social media platforms and significantly affects users' social media using affordance, which has been proved by previous studies [35-37]. Still, few explore its influence based on young Chinese EMG background. Therefore, it is significant for this paper to analyse the EMG cultural identity and discover its relationship with young EMG users' social media using affordance.

2.2 Mainstream culture

Mainstream culture is the widespread culture on social media platforms influenced by the current economy, politics and social phenomenon, and it is held by the majority of individuals, such as the entertainment celebrity phenomenon in China and the Korean wave in America [25,38,39]. With the development of urbanisation and modernisation, more young generations, including young Chinese EMG

users, are willing to integrate into mainstream culture and abandon their original culture gradually. This is because that, incorporating it into the mainstream culture can provide young Chinese EMG users with an easy way to interact and communicate with their peers' group, increasing their sense of belonging during online social activities [25]. Under the impact of mainstream culture on Chinese social media platforms, young EMGs' cultural, racial, and religious identities will fade dramatically [40]. This might also be reflected in their social media using affordance, such as using official language, following the major group influencers and sharing regular content as ordinary users. Existing studies have identified the disappearance of EMG culture and designed corresponding protection strategies [41-43]. However, few of them discover a similar issue occurring in China's online cultural ecosystem and negatively impacts young Chinese EMG users' thinking of cultural diversity. As the using preferences of young EMGs are becoming similar to the major group users, EMG culture will be neglected on social media, which is unbeneficial for protecting cultural diversity and preventing the development of the online cultural ecosystem.

2.3 Online cultural ecosystem

The online cultural ecosystem is the non-material benefit that users can obtain from online social content, and the ecosystem presents intercultural relations and includes creation, differentiation and consolidation, as **Figure 1** shows. Existing studies research intercultural ecosystems based on different country backgrounds, and their explorations are confined to offline mode [44-46]. Still, few of them analyse the cultural interaction between EMGs and the major group in the online cultural ecosystem. An improved cultural ecosystem can enhance the quality of users' life and benefit their physical and spiritual experiences [47]. Specifically, China's mainstream culture can foster social cohesion and promote the stability of the network environment [48]. Subculture, especially EMG's original culture, can boost cultural diversity and enrich Chinese users' spiritual experience [49]. Both of them play important roles in Chinese users' online social experience and improve China's online cultural ecosystem. Meanwhile, most young EMG generations grow up with the Internet, and their way of thinking is potentially influenced by virtual communities and online cultural environments. Compared with multi-culturalism and interculturalism, the single cultural content produced by the Chinese major group users on social media can easily cause young EMG users to develop a fixed mindset rather than a growth mindset [50]. Thus, regarding the online cultural ecosystem, the balance between mainstream culture and EMG's original culture is significant for developing online social communities and the online cultural ecosystem.

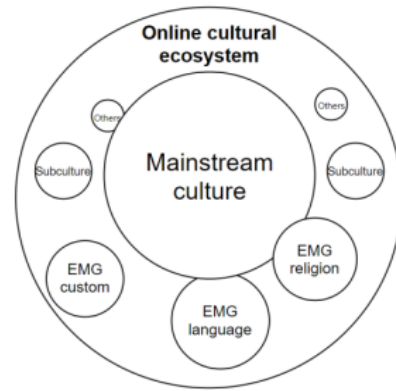


Figure 1. The online culture ecosystem map.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research setting

Most existing scholars analyse users' social media using affordance based on their ages, genders and occupations, but almost none of them focuses on their cultural background, i.e. users' EMG background [51-53]. To discover young EMGs' using preference, this paper refers to the affordance theory and explains how the online culture ecosystem impacts young EMG users' social media using affordance [21,54]. As **Figure 1** shows, the current study explores the influencing factors from two sides, including EMG original culture and mainstream culture. Due to the lack of related research results, qualitative research, like the case study and interview method, is more reliable for this study than the quantitative study [55,56]. Qualitative research pays attention to the "How" and "Why" questions, which is helpful for researchers to have a deep understanding of the target group and explore the relationships between the phenomenon and context [55,57]. Meanwhile, due to the COVID-19 situation, the interview has been promoted through the Internet, increasing the flexibility of the interview form.

Moreover, the interview research set includes four parts. Firstly, the expression of interest is distributed among young Chinese EMGs through e-mail, and young EMGs interested in participating in the research have been recorded by researchers. Secondly, the researchers select young EMG participants who have rich platform-using experiences, such as TikTok and Kuaishou platforms, and they are familiar with EMG's original culture and mainstream culture on social media platforms. This is beneficial in making comparisons between the influence of EMG culture and mainstream culture. Then, the research background and research aims are introduced to the final interview participants (14 EMG participants), ensuring they understand the research topic and enhancing their answers' accuracy. Finally, four main questions have been translated into the Chinese language and are presented to them one by one, and additional questions will be provided.

ed according to their real-time feedback. The average interview takes about 20 minutes, and all interview content has been recorded in the form of text or audio. All records are under the interviewees' permission.

Furthermore, based on the research aims, the study selects Chinese EMG users as study samples for two reasons. Firstly, fifty-five EMGs are officially recognised in China, and the amount is much more than Western EMGs. Meanwhile, as a multi-ethnic country, Chinese EMGs constitute 8.5 per cent of the national population, amounting to 117 million^[9]. Among these EMGs, nine EMG populations are more than 5 million, such as the Zhuang group, the Man group, the Miao group and the Hui group^[58,59]. Secondly, the division of EMGs in China is more detailed than in the West, and the division method is based on language, writing system, religion, living areas and history rather than country background and race^[9,60]. Therefore, China's EMGs are more representative and more suitable as research samples than other countries.

3.2 Data collection

The data collection follows two principles: represent-

ativeness and comprehensiveness. Based on the ethnic classification study promoted by Ma (2008) and Bender (2016), 55 Chinese EMGs can be divided into seven main groups based on their languages, writing systems, religions, marriage rate with the major group, living areas and ethnic characteristics, as **Table 2** shows. The current study refers to this kind of classification, aiming to decrease the difficulty of data collection. For instance, the main group 1 includes Tibetan, the Yugu group, the Menba group, the Luoba group, and the Tu group because they have similar language and writing systems, and most believe in Tibetan Buddhism^[58,61]. The main group 2 includes the Hui group, the Sala group, the Dongxiang group, and the Baoan group. Considering the EMG classification, the data collection focuses on the seven main groups, including group 1, group 2, group 3, group 4, group 5, group 6, and group 7. To cover all EMG classifications, the study invites two interviewees from each group, and it ensures that the participants are familiar both with EMG culture and the major group. The method design would be helpful to increase the efficiency of data collection and reduce the difficulty in data analysis.

Table 2. The classification of Chinese EMGs.

| Main group | Language and writing | Religion | Marriage rate with the major group | Living area | Ethnic characteristics |
|--|----------------------|------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Group 1 (Tibetan, Yugu, Menba, Luoba, Tu) | Independent | Tibetan Buddhism | Inter-ethnic marriage | Western areas (Xizang and Qinghai province) | Religious culture, painting (Thang-ga) |
| Group 2 (Hui, Sala, Dongxiang, Baoan) | Mandarin | Islam | Inter-ethnic marriage | Scattering throughout the country, and some of them living in Ningxia province | Food culture (kebab, hand-pulled noodles) |
| Group 3 (Man, Hezhe, Xibo) | Mandarin | No obvious religious beliefs | High marriage rate with the Han group | Scattering throughout the country, and some of them living in northern areas | Costume (chi-pao) |
| Group 4 (Mongolian, Elunchun, Ewenke, Dawoer) | Mandarin | Multiple religious beliefs | High marriage rate with the Han group | North area (Inner Mongolia autonomous region) | Folk Songs, sports (wrestling) |
| Group 5 (Korean) | Independent | No obvious religious beliefs | Low marriage rate with the Han group (10%) | North-eastern areas (Jilin province) | Language |
| Group 6 (Uyghur, Kazakh, Uzbek, Tajik, Kirkiz, Tatar, Russian) | Independent | Most believe in Islam | Inter-ethnic marriage | North-western areas (Xinjiang province) | Religious culture, local landscape |
| Group 7 (Miao, Yi, Lisu, Wa, She, Gaoshan, Lahu, Shui, Naxi, Jingpo, Mulao, Zhuang, Buyi, Dong, Yao, Bai, Tujia, Hani, Dai, Li, Qiang, Bulang, Maonan, Gelao, Achang, Pumi, Nu, Deang, Jing, Dulong, Jinuo) | Mandarin | Multiple religious beliefs | High marriage rate with the Han group | Southwest areas (Yunnan, Sichuan, Guangxi province) | Handmade goods, folk dance, folk song |

Source: ^[58, 61].

Moreover, drawing on the literature review and suggestions from young Chinese EMG participants before formal interviews, the final interview question version has been designed as **Table 3** presents. All interview questions can be divided into four sections: the relationship between EMG language and multi-language engagement, the relationship between EMG cultural knowledge and focusing cultural content, the relationship between EMG cultural identity and following influencers, and the relationship between mainstream cultural influence and using preference. The design logic of the interview questions follows the “How” and “Why” formulas, benefiting guiding participants to have deep thinking ^[55].

As **Table 4** shows, the EMG interviewees are from nine different provinces, and four of them are from Xinjiang province (28.57%), and three of them are from Jilin province (21.43%), meeting the distribution of ethnic minorities in China. Meanwhile, most of them (71.43%) are between 26 and 32 years old, and all are under 32 years old, belonging to young EMGs. Regarding interviewees’ gender, 50% of them are male, and 50% are female. 71.43% of them have more than three years of social media platform-using experience. For the educational background, 35.71% of them are post-graduates, and 28.57% are undergraduates. All of them are familiar with EMG culture and mainstream culture on social media platforms.

Table 3. Interview questions.

| Section | Question |
|---|---|
| 1. EMG language and multi-language engagement | What is your opinion about the live streaming platforms which can provide multilingual engagement? Why do you think multilingual engagement is necessary or unnecessary (primarily focusing on the interviewees whose group has an independent language system)? |
| 2. EMG cultural knowledge and cultural content | What kind of content do you focus on, such as entertainment, sports, culture, live shopping, or friends’ moment? Why is it similar or not similar to your peers from the major group? |
| 3. EMG cultural identity and influencers | What kind of influencers do you prefer to follow? Why do you follow the influencers who have a similar cultural background to you? |
| 4. Mainstream cultural influence and using preference | What particular using behaviours do you have, such as using time, shopping platforms and focusing content? Why does your using preference is similar to the major group or not? |

Table 4. The basic information of interviewees (N=14).

| ID | Main group number | Specific EMG | Age | Regions | Social media platform using experience | Educational background |
|----|-------------------|------------------------------|-------|--------------------|--|------------------------|
| 1 | Group 1 | The Zang group (Tibetan) | 26-32 | Qinghai province | >3 years | Graduates |
| 2 | Group 1 | The Zang group (Tibetan) | 26-32 | Xizang province | >3 years | Graduates |
| 3 | Group 2 | The Hui group | 19-25 | Henan province | 2-3 years | Undergraduate |
| 4 | Group 2 | The Hui group | 19-25 | Xinjiang province | 1-2 years | Undergraduate |
| 5 | Group 3 | The Man group | 26-32 | Jilin province | >3 years | Postgraduate |
| 6 | Group 3 | The Man group | 26-32 | Xinjiang province | >3 years | Postgraduate |
| 7 | Group 4 | The Menggu group (Mongolian) | 26-32 | Hebei province | >3 years | Postgraduate |
| 8 | Group 4 | The Menggu group (Mongolian) | 26-32 | Neimenggu province | >3 years | Graduates |
| 9 | Group 5 | The Chaoxian group (Korean) | 26-32 | Jilin province | >3 years | Postgraduate |
| 10 | Group 5 | The Chaoxian group (Korean) | 26-32 | Jilin province | >3 years | Postgraduate |
| 11 | Group 6 | The Weiwuer group (Uygur) | 19-25 | Xinjiang province | 2-3 years | Undergraduate |
| 12 | Group 6 | The Weiwuer group (Uygur) | 19-25 | Xinjiang province | >3 years | Undergraduate |
| 13 | Group 7 | The Tujia group | 26-32 | Chongqing province | 2-3 years | Postgraduate |
| 14 | Group 7 | The Li group | 26-32 | Guizhou province | >3 years | Doctoral student |

Finally, all interview participants have accepted higher education in China, and they are proficient in the Chinese language. Before promoting data analysis, researchers translated Chinese into English, which is necessary for original content division and coding.

3.3 Data analysis

To discover the specific phenomena, a rigorous quali-

tative case study should be implemented in this study, including the process of transcribing, coding, and data-model exploring [55,57,62]. Firstly, the sound recordings of interviews are transcribed into written materials, and the language has also been translated from Chinese to English, benefiting the coding process. Secondly, the original contents are marked as a different colour based on their primary meaning, such as the supporting content marked as red colour and the opposing content marked as yellow

colour. The percentage in **Table 5** shows participants' opinions on the influencing factors, benefiting to systematically analyse the study results. Thirdly, the original contents are translated into simple codes to reflect their actual opinion. Then, similar concepts are divided into the same categories, such as supporting multi-language engagement

and following EMG live streamers. Finally, based on the data analysis results, the research framework presenting EMGs' social media affordance has been established, including influencing factors and specific relationships. Examples of analysing and coding processes are shown in **Table 5**.

Table 5. Example of codes.

| Category | Codes | Original content | Percentage |
|---|--|---|------------|
| Multi-language engagement is necessary for young EMGs | Enhancing cultural diversity | “Providing a multi-language platform can be beneficial for EMG users to use various online resources, which can help us keep up with the development of the society and know new things.” “It can enhance cultural exchanges of different EMGs and also diversify the platform environment.” | 71.43% |
| | Being convenient to operate | “I think it would be convenient if online platforms could provide multi-languages for EMG users. I know one reason why many Tibetan users tend to use the Apple mobile phone in the past few years because it can provide a Tibetan operating system.” “Multi-language engagement can provide convenience for EMGs, especially during interaction and communication.” | |
| Multi-language engagement is unnecessary for young EMGs | Unfamiliar with group language | “I do not know how to speak EMG’s original language, so multi-language engagement is unnecessary for me.” “Although the Tujia group residents have Tujia language, there is no heritage.” | 28.57% |
| | Learn the major group language | “In modern society, everyone must learn Chinese, so I think the multi-language platform will disappear.” “Mandarin Chinese is a compulsory course in school, and we need to use Mandarin Chinese to communicate with most classmates.” | |
| The content focus is different from the major group | Pay more attention to EMG cultural content | “I prefer to pay more attention to entertainment and architectural culture information about EMGs, and other EMG students have similar preferences to me.” “Our Chaoxian group (Korean) residents concern more about the cultural relations between China and South Korea, and we are interested in the food culture content produced by our own group.” | 57.14% |
| The content focus is similar to the major group | Similar to the major group users | “The online content concerned me is similar to others from the major group, and there is no difference due to ethnicity.” “Various contents will be paid attention to, which is similar to the major group users.” | 42.86% |
| Follow popular live streamers | Interesting live streamers | “I prefer to watch live broadcasts sharing personal life, no strict requirements for ethnic-cultural background.” “I like to pay attention to live streamers who present happiness, share meaningful news and spread positive information. It has no relationship with cultural background.” | 78.57% |
| | More concerned about the practicability | “I prefer to follow live streamers introducing children’s products because I have two children at home.” “Live streamers who can present practical information are my first choice.” | |
| Follow EMG live streamers | Similar cultural background | “Follow Korean funny up owners, such as Tony Okk, Korean 보검, delib factory, because they have a similar cultural background to me.” “Like to pay attention to the inheritors of Tujia culture and related scholars.” | 21.43% |
| Usage habits influenced by the mainstream culture | Follow the mainstream culture | “Focus on mainstream content introduced by social media platforms.” “Affected by the mainstream culture of China, I usually like to use Taobao.” “I will post content on WeChat, Weibo, Station B, and Douban. Shopping will be on Taobao, Jingdong, Dangdang, Pinduoduo. All of them are influenced by Chinese mainstream culture.” “Preferences about shopping platforms using are influenced by the mainstream culture.” | 92.86% |
| No obvious usage habits | No particular platform usage habit | “There is no special platform usage habit for me, and it is not affected by EMG culture or mainstream culture.” | 7.14% |

4. Discussion and implication

4.1 Key findings

Based on interview results, the research framework showing the relationships between influencing factors and social media using affordance has been established. According to **Table 5**, the study divides influence into three levels based on participants' approval ratings, including low impact (0%-33.33%), medium impact (33.33%-66.66%) and high impact (66.66%-100%). For example, EMG language highly affects young EMG users to focus on multi-language engagement because 71.43% of EMG

participants claim that multi-language engagement is necessary on social media platforms. Cultural identity plays a subordinate role in the behaviour of focusing on EMG influencers because 21.43% of them support this viewpoint. Meanwhile, a healthy online cultural ecosystem should be established on balance between EMG and mainstream cultures [63]. As **Figure 2** shows, the social media affordance influenced by the original culture positively impacts China's EMG cultural environment, and the affordance based on mainstream culture plays a negative role. With the popularity of mainstream culture, EMG culture will face the crisis of disappearing, and the online cultural ecosystem will lose its diversity and vitality [64].

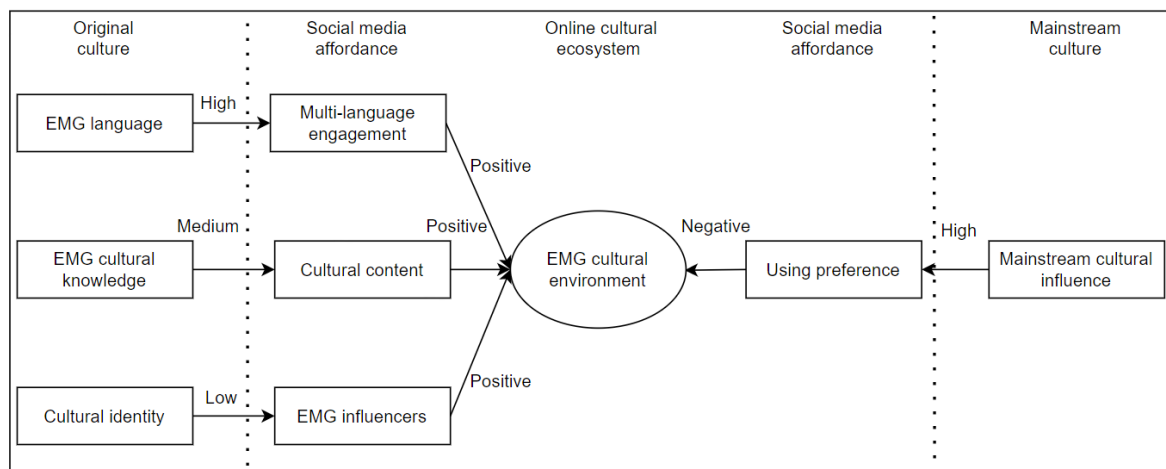


Figure 2. The research framework.

The influence of EMG culture

Most young Chinese EMG users have different languages and writing systems from the major group users, which means they have specific requirements for platform functions, i.e. multi-language engagement and EMG cultural service. Hence, as Figure 2 presents, the first key finding is that, the platform providing multi-language options is attractive for EMG users and has a significantly positive influence on the development of the EMG cultural environment. 71.43% of EMG participants think multi-language engagement is necessary for young Chinese EMG users. Meanwhile, living in a unique cultural background, some young EMG users inheriting cultural knowledge pay more attention to cultural content and related EMG content. 57.14% of interviewees claim that they prefer to focus on cultural content related to their groups, like the architectural culture of the Tujia group and the food culture of the Chaoxian group. Abundant cultural content plays a vital role in promoting the diversity of the online cultural ecosystem. Thirdly, regarding influ-

encers on social media platforms, 78.57% of EMG interviewees tend to follow popular influencers or influencers presenting practical information. Some of them with solid cultural identities would focus on the influencers who have a similar cultural background or speak the original language. Therefore, to establish EMG cultural environment and promote an online cultural ecosystem, platform function and cultural content should be concerned by platform designers and related departments.

The influence of mainstream culture

Mainstream culture reflects the prevailing attitude and the value of China's online society, significantly affecting young Chinese EMG users' social media using affordance. As a widespread culture, mainstream culture is held within a large number of online users on social media platforms [25]. These online users have similar preferences, such as using the same shopping platform, following the same influencers, and focusing on the same online content. Compared with EMG culture, mainstream culture tends to be unitised. Based on the research results

(Figure 2), almost all (92.86%) young EMG participants claim they are influenced by mainstream culture, resulting in their using preferences being similar to standard users. This plays a negative role in the development of the EMG cultural environment and harms the cultural diversity in the online cultural ecosystem.

4.2 Theoretical implications

Previous scholars discover young Chinese users' social media using affordance based on their genders, ages and educational background, but few of them do research on their cultural background [4,12]. Unlike major groups, young Chinese EMG users living in the unique cultural environment have specific habits and platform-using preferences, reflecting on their language used, online content focused, and live streamers followed. Thus, the study contributes to the behaviour research of young EMG users. Secondly, based on the interview data analysis, the research framework has been built in this paper. It presents the relationship between different influencing factors and EMG users' social media affordance. Through comparing participants' responses, suitable strategies can be provided for related departments to improve the online cultural ecosystem.

Finally, due to limited research analysing young Chinese EMG users, this paper promotes qualitative research and interviews 14 young EMG users from seven main groups, which is helpful in discovering EMG users' using affordance comprehensively. Meanwhile, through analysing young Chinese EMG participants' responses, researchers can explore specific influencing factors and have a deep understanding of young EMGs' using behaviours.

4.3 Practical implications

The online cultural ecosystem is the non-material benefits that users obtain from online social content. Diverse cultural content built on the balance between EMG culture and mainstream culture helps maintain the stability of the cultural ecosystem, and the single cultural content mainly created by the major group users is not conducive to enriching the user's spiritual experience. During the process of establishing an online cultural ecosystem, several influencing factors play different roles. According to the supporting percentage provided by Chinese EMG participants, the impact comparison chart has been built as follows (Figure 3).

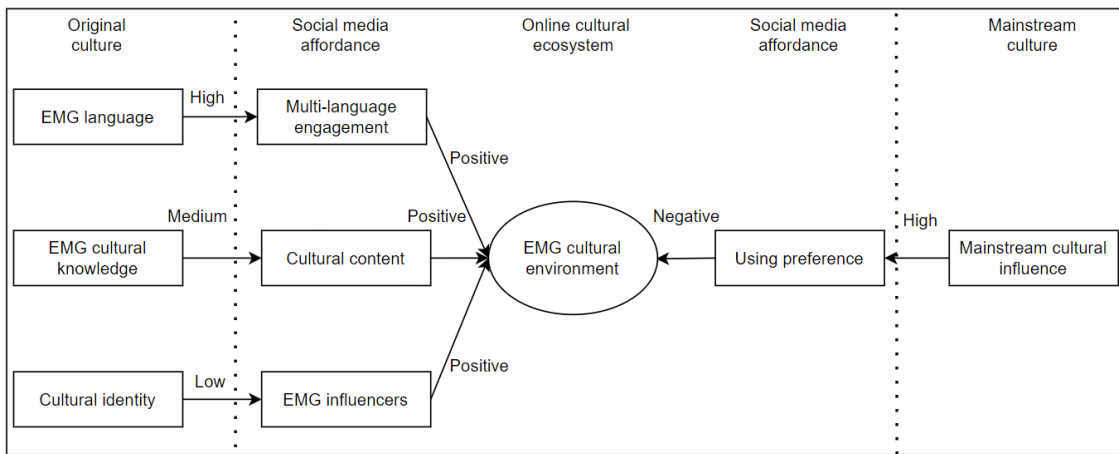


Figure 3. The influence rate of several factors.

As Figure 3 shows, platform function, cultural content, and EMG influencers play positive roles in China's EMG cultural environment, which is conducive to protecting EMG cultural environment and improving the online cultural ecosystem. Among these positive factors, the influence of platform function is more prominent than others, which means social media platform designers should pay more attention to the multi-language engagement function. Meanwhile, great cultural content and various EMG influencers are also attractive to young EMG users, which should be encouraged by social platform managers. In

addition to positive factors, mainstream culture plays a negative impact on EMG cultural environment. Influenced by mainstream culture, more and more young Chinese EMG users have changed their cultural characteristics and integrated into the standard user group, such as following the Wanghong (female celebrity) culture and using the Chinese Mandarin language [65]. Facing this tendency, related departments need to encourage young Chinese EMG users to keep their original using preferences and support cultural diversity.

4.4 Limitations and future study

Although the study presents the fundamental relationship between different influencing factors and users' social media affordance, it does not accurately present correlation coefficients and validate these relationships. Hence, the future study should combine the qualitative method with the quantitative method, and it needs to examine these relationships based on the partial least squares path modelling and variance-based structural equation modelling. Considering the number of influencing factors, future studies should also promote the importance-performance map analysis to compare them comprehensively. Secondly, the interview method developed in this paper covers all main EMGs, showing high representativeness. However, because of different cultural backgrounds, different Chinese EMGs could have other using habits. In detail, EMGs in northern China are more open, but EMGs in southern China tend to be graceful. Thus, the future study will promote the data collection from each EMG and present their social media affordance based on their unique cultural background. Finally, given the specific features of different social media platforms, young EMG users from different platforms could have unique social media using affordances. It requires future studies to promote a multi-group analysis based on users' platform using experiences.

5. Conclusion

The study explores young EMG users' social media affordance based on their unique social and cultural backgrounds. Unlike the major group users, EMG users live in a unique cultural environment and have specific language, religions and customs, which plays a significant role in their platform-using habits. Through interviewing fourteen EMG users from seven main groups, the relationship between influencing factors and using affordance has been presented in the research framework, i.e. EMG users who know the original language supporting multi-language engagement. Based on the comparison among various influencing factors, suitable suggestions have been provided for social platform designers and related departments, such as encouraging multicultural content, designing multi-language engagement, and recommending EMG influencers, which is conducive to improving the online cultural ecosystem and protecting cultural diversity.

Author Declarations

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement

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