

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-57162**Title: Framing Chinese National Culture in Southeast Asian Digital Media,.****Recommendation:****Accept after minor revision**

| Rating | Excel. | Good | Fair | Poor |
|----------------|--------|------|------|------|
| Originality | | ✓, | | |
| Techn. Quality | | ✓, | | |
| Clarity | ✓, | | | |
| Significance | ✓, | | | |

Reviewer Name: Abdul Haseeb Mir

Detailed Reviewer's Report

The research article titled "Framing Chinese National Culture in Southeast Asian Digital Media" provides a sophisticated and timely exploration of how digital platforms, specifically TikTok, have fundamentally altered the dissemination and reception of national culture. By shifting the focus from institutionally curated narratives to fragmented, algorithmically driven content, the study offers a nuanced critique of cultural communication in the age of "platformization." The author successfully argues that Chinese national culture in the Southeast Asian context—specifically Malaysia—is no longer a top-down project of authoritative narration but a negotiated, visually mediated experience shaped by platform affordances and everyday user engagement.

The narrative begins by establishing the theoretical shift from traditional cultural diplomacy to a "national culture communication" perspective. This framework is essential for understanding how cultural meanings are decentralized in the digital age. The author expertly describes how the "logic of the platform"—which privileges immediacy, recognizability, and affective engagement—reconfigures complex cultural histories into "digestible" moments. This transition from "explanation" to "exposure" is a central contribution of the paper, highlighting how digital media environments favor aestheticized versions of culture that can easily transcend linguistic and national boundaries.

A significant strength of the article lies in its application of framing analysis to a corpus of short-video content. The author identifies three primary frames: the "aesthetic-traditional" frame, the "everyday-modernity" frame, and the "cross-cultural-interactive" frame. The analysis of the aesthetic-traditional frame is particularly sharp, demonstrating how symbols such as the Hanfu or traditional tea ceremonies are "decontextualized" and turned into visual spectacles. The author rightly notes that while this increases

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cultural visibility, it often does so at the cost of depth, reducing heritage to a set of "shorthand" visual cues that fit the TikTok format.

The discussion on the "everyday-modernity" frame provides a necessary contemporary layer, moving beyond orientalist tropes to showcase China's technological and urban landscape. The author evaluates how creators use short videos to frame China as a site of hyper-modern convenience, utilizing themes of high-speed rail, digital payment systems, and urban architecture. This section effectively illustrates how digital media helps construct a "new" national image that competes with older, purely traditional archetypes. By focusing on the "everyday," the author demonstrates how national culture becomes embedded in the routine media consumption of Southeast Asian users, making the "foreign" seem familiar and accessible.

Furthermore, the paper tackles the complexities of the "cross-cultural-interactive" frame, where Southeast Asian content creators—particularly in Malaysia—reinterpret and "localize" Chinese cultural elements. This part of the research is vital as it highlights the agency of the receiver in the communication process. The author analyzes how Malaysian creators engage with Chinese trends, music, and food, creating a "hybrid" cultural space that reflects regional sensibilities. The narrative effectively argues that this "intermestic" (international and domestic) interaction creates a more resilient and relatable form of cultural communication than state-sponsored media could achieve.

In summary, this article offers a rigorous and insightful review of the intersection between technology, national identity, and regional soft power. It moves beyond traditional media effects theories to provide a deep inquiry into how algorithms and user-generated content co-create cultural meaning. The author's ability to weave together platform studies, cultural sociology, and qualitative content analysis makes this a significant contribution to the field of digital communication and Asian studies. It is an essential read for scholars and practitioners aiming to understand the future of cultural influence in an increasingly platform-dependent world.

Recommendations for Minor Revisions

Theoretical and Methodological Refinement

- **Algorithm vs. Agency:** The paper discusses "algorithm-driven" environments at length. The author should add a brief clarifying discussion on the tension between the "algorithmic push" and "user pull." Specifically, how much of this cultural framing is a result of the TikTok algorithm's preference for high-engagement aesthetics versus the conscious creative choices of the content producers.

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- **Sampling Justification:** While the Malaysian context is a strong focal point, the author should briefly explicitly state the criteria used to select the specific corpus of videos analyzed (e.g., view counts, hashtag popularity, or specific creator demographics) to enhance the transparency of the qualitative methodology.

Contextual and Comparative Nuance

- **The "Liyuan" Phenomenon:** The article would benefit from a brief mention or comparison with specific high-profile cultural ambassadors like Li Ziqi, whose work epitomizes the "aesthetic-traditional" frame mentioned in the text. This would provide a concrete, recognizable anchor for the theoretical arguments.
- **Political Sensitivity:** Given the geopolitical complexities in Southeast Asia, adding a short paragraph on how "national culture framing" navigates (or avoids) political sensitivities would provide a more holistic view of the communication environment. The author could discuss whether creators consciously sanitize content to maintain cross-border appeal.

Structural and Technical Elements

- **Bio Statement and Affiliation:** The bio statement on the final page notes the author is a Ph.D. student. For professional publication, the author should ensure that institutional affiliations are updated to the most current status and that the email provided is the primary academic contact for correspondence.
- **Visual Aid:** A table summarizing the "Three Frames" with their corresponding visual motifs, typical background music, and intended audience reaction would be an excellent reference tool for the reader to quickly grasp the study's findings.

Recommendation: Recommend for publication with minor revision.