

Research on the Impact of Chinese Music Consumption on Cultural Values, Identity and Social Cohesion in the Digital Era: an Analysis of Cultural Philosophy and Values

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Abstract: Musical poetics defines the composition of the music itself and forms an artefact of the creativity of musical arts and the techniques used in the creation of musical compositions. The tone and melody of Chinese music are some of the key qualities and outstanding features. Our study seeks to examine the impact of Chinese music consumption on cultural values, identity and social cohesion in the digital era. We recruited 75 participants from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and performed content analysis of lyrics and musical styles of traditional Chinese music (Kunqu opera, guqin pieces) and contemporary genres (C-pop, hip-hop) that were accessible on online platforms of Youku Tudou and YouTube. We also conducted interviews and surveys to gauge the importance of cultural values and the influence of music. Our findings showed a strong emphasis on music in daily life, with a majority of participants listening daily and spending a significant amount of time engaged with music. Our analysis of cultural values indicated general agreement with Confucian principles and more importantly, we emphasized the link between music consumption and cultural identity. A significant portion of participants felt music connected them to Chinese culture.

Keywords: Culture, Chinese, Harmony, Music, Identity, Confucianism and Values

1. INTRODUCTION

Intangible cultural heritage consists of the rituals, cultural features and traditions adopted from the ancestors by the descendants of the Chinese nation (Howard, 2016; Zhang, 2020). Intangible Chinese cultural heritage is a collection of oral traditions, performing arts and distinct practices such as events and rituals (Qiu & Zhang, 2021). The constant increase in China Chic or Guochao several activities about various aspects of the traditional Chinese music such as folk music has gained significant attraction in the social media and create a huge wave for the young Chinese population (Zonggui, 2015). The emergence of the Internet and social media apps such as WeChat and TikTok has facilitated the growth of folk Chinese musicians and provided avenues for conveying the beauty of the traditional Chinese music based on performances and livestreaming of music such as the “I Love You China.” According to Qi (2024) there is charm in

traditional Chinese music due to its inherent values. He proposed that the uniqueness and charm of the traditional Chinese music is bestowed in its tranquillity and harmony. In contrast to the indulging music from the West, traditional Chinese music offers a means of self-cultivation that signifies the harmonious nature between humanity and nature alongside the mental and physical elements of harmony.

China's long history and its ethnic diversity suggests a diverse intangible cultural heritage (Heritage, 2019). The diverse intangible cultural heritage consists of various forms of art such as the growth and evolution of certain musical aspects such as poets of instrumental music (Boyu et al., 2015). Musical poetics defines the composition of the music itself and forms an artefact of the creativity of musical arts and the techniques used in the creation of musical compositions (Zhou, 2022). The tone and melody of Chinese music are some of the key qualities and outstanding features of due to the significance and emphasis attached to the accurate intonation and articulation of every musical tone. The consistency in tonal variations and rhythms in traditional Chinese music is a unique element compared to music from the West. The uniqueness of tonal variations and rhythms in Chinese music can be attributed to the incorporation of unique sounds and playing styles achieved from traditional musical instruments which constitutes part of its cultural heritage (Jin, 2011).

In the early 20th century, Western music has increasingly grown in China's cultural heritage and values (Chow, 2019), particularly, in the recent decades of the digital era and the emergence of globalisation (Ullah & Ming Yit Ho, 2021; Wang, 2007). Several Chinese people have experienced the sophistication of Western music and inclined towards accepting Western standards because of appeal to the masses. The continuation of this trend would allow several Chinese of facing the tragic outcomes of losing their cultural identities (Dong, 2015). One of the fundamental questions is whether cutting-edge technologies can be applied as a means of disseminating and sustaining the intangible cultural heritage of China in the digital era and emergence of globalisation. In the 20th century, there were new elements of social and regional pluralism in the People's Republic of China that led to the overthrowing of several traditional elements and neutralise the social order and aim at redistribution of wealth. The significant application of socialist ideologies in arts altered the social elements of Chinese music and altered the concert-hall traditions.

The modern Chinese orchestra (Lee, 2018) is distinct from the traditional and ancient Chinese orchestra despite being formed by traditional Chinese musical instruments. Modern Chinese orchestra are recent practices that

began in the last 50 decades (Luo, 2018) and has provided a platform for experimenting several techniques of modernising and digitizing Chinese music to create large scale instrumental ensembles. Music is closely linked to the emotional aspects of behaviour compared to the arts or literati works and can be absorbed by a larger audience simultaneously compared to these other forms (arts and literature), and embodied a large number of Confucian values (Lin, 2023). Therefore, the aesthetics of traditional Chinese music were not highly considered as the same as those of paintings and brush works (Gao, 2018). Additionally, the performances of traditional Chinese music were highly flexible based on parameters of accuracy in pitch, temperament, formal presentation and attractive due to the larger participation of the young individuals in composition of the music.

In the digital era, western classical music has emerged and occupied a robust socio-political position compared to the traditional Chinese music (Wang, 2012). In the town centres, Western music have dominated the classrooms, institutions and concert-halls. Its important to observe that the Western music in China is mainly dominated by the younger generation of Chinese talented musicians who have no emphasis and regard for their cultural heritage and are deeply entrenched in the Western musical circles. The popularity and influence of Western music in China has dominated local radio stations, companies and film industries (Yoshioka et al., 2019). The recent composition of Chinese music, popular songs and Western songs such as “Amazing Grace” and the songs of Michael Jackson have dominated the streets of urban areas, small shops, restaurants and night clubs. The new generation of music emanates from the growing youth culture and dominance by the youth. In the basis of nightclubs, the needs of businessmen are filled by the entertainment music. Previous studies (Kuoshu, 2010; Wang, 2012) have proposed that in the digital era, certain recordings of these tapes and musical genres have been clandestinely found and observed in universities and urban regions where the post-cultural revolution are craving and admiring exotica.

The emergence of the Chinese state in the 20th century led to emergence of social trends, social attitude and sense of identity among the Chinese people (Schoppa, 2019). Particularly, in urban areas, the presence of industrial values such as specialisation, motivation, progress and standardisation have sought to replace traditional values. The influence of these changes led to the creation of super cultures and development of a homogenous effect from region to region. The success of the English language and movement reforms in the 1920's led to new repertoire of music and changing values that were eventually standardised and musical

instruments were significantly improved. Furthermore, there were highly-trained virtuoso musical performers on musical stages (Vargas et al., 2023).

The guoyue is a musical tradition that identifies the national music and widely practiced in the urban areas of Shanghai (Chen, 2022). The reformation of the Chinese orchestra due to the improvements in instruments constituted the new traditions of music and a sense of identity among the Chinese with the presence of virtuoso solos for instruments such as pipa (lute), erhu (2-string fiddle) and dizi (transverse flute). The repertoire of guoyue consists of all folk melodies, traditional instrumental music, and original music pieces of Western music. In the People's Republic of China, the traditions of concert-halls (minzu yinyue) are widely adopted in urban centres to highlight the functions of the masses and socio-political ideals. Minzu yuetan is a representation of the national orchestra and can be combined with drama and dances before performance in the urban centres (Freer & Tan, 2018). These music serves to reflect the ideology of the Chinese and enhance a spirit of revolution through unity. This music has inherent features such as different modes, and a fast tempo.

In light of the previous studies, our rationale is to expound on the existing relationship between Chinese music and the cultural values, identity and social cohesion in the digital era. Thus, our main objective is to examine the impact of Chinese music consumption on cultural values, identity and social cohesion in the digital era based on cultural philosophy and values.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

Our study involved was conducted at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music consisting of 75 participants from October 2023 to February 2024. The information on traditional music and modern forms of Chinese music were obtained from Youku Tudou Inc. and YouTube Inc. These search engines were widely used in China and their ability to permit users to upload videos related materials such as music. Moreover, these platforms consist of thousands of local and international Chinese artists who have composed various music. Furthermore, the owners or companies related to these platforms such as Google or Alibaba Holdings did not accrue any personal benefit or were actively involved as stakeholders in this research. Thus, these platforms were adopted purely for research purposes. Ethical approval was granted by the Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

2.2 Content Analysis

We analysed the lyrics and musical styles of traditional Chinese music (Kunqu opera, guqin pieces) and contemporary genres (C-pop, hip-hop) that were accessible on online platforms of Youku Tudou and YouTube. Also, we gained access to online content associated with the Modern Chinese Orchestra. These content analyses focused on identifying themes related to cultural values such as Confucianism and contemporary social issues within the music and understanding how the orchestra presents and interprets intangible cultural heritage in the digital age.

Videos on the descriptions of traditional Chinese musical instruments were also analysed and how they were utilised in the composition and performance of Chinese music. Focus and attention were paid to the historical basis and traditional significance of each instrument, descriptions based on the cultural values of music and heritage. These instruments included; Suona (double-reed instrument with a tapered metal bell), Pipa (four-stringed pear-shaped lute), Erhu and Banhu, Guzheng (zither with movable bridges and 16–25 strings), Guqin (a seven-stringed zither without bridges), and Xun (wind musical instrument).

2.3 Surveys and Interviews

Our study at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music employed a self-administered survey to gather data from 75 participants. The survey, designed to take approximately 15 minutes to complete, consisted of 25 questions. It included demographic inquiries, along with questions about music consumption habits (frequency, platforms, genres). To gauge the importance of cultural values, a Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree) was used for statements related to Confucianism. Additionally, open-ended questions explored how music influence identity and connection to Chinese culture. Scores were not assigned to individual responses; instead, qualitative coding methods were used to analyse the data and identify recurring themes related to cultural values, identity, and social cohesion within the context of music consumption.

In addition to the survey, our study also employed two focus groups at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Each group consisted of 8-10 participants and aimed to explore themes that emerged from the survey in a more interactive setting. The focus groups were facilitated by a trained moderator who guided discussions on topics like the influence of music platforms on music discovery, the role of traditional Chinese music in contemporary life, and the relationship between music consumption and cultural identity.

2.4 Data Analysis

GraphPad Prism was used for quantitative analysis particularly for correlation tests at a 5% significance level. We analysed the frequency of music listening, preferred platforms, and preferred genres using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. We explored correlations between these variables using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (if non-normal data) or Pearson's correlation coefficient (if normally distributed data). The focus group discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis, providing valuable qualitative data that complemented the quantitative and qualitative findings from the survey.

3. RESULTS

The survey recruited a total of 75 participants, with the age distribution being relatively even (See Table 1): 18-24 years old (30 participants, 40%), 25-34 years old (28 participants, 37%), and 35+ years old (17 participants, 23%).

Table 1: The Distribution of Demographics Based on Age.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-24	30	40%
25-34	28	37%
35+	17	23%

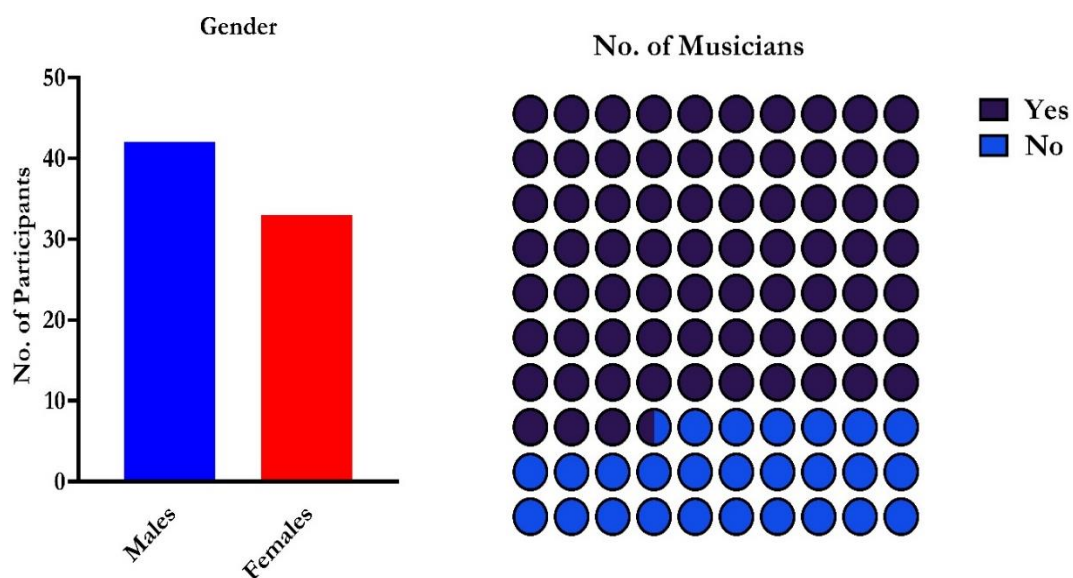


Figure 1: A Standard Bar Chart (Gender) and a dot plot (No. of Musicians) showing the distribution of participants based on gender and the number of musicians.

In terms of gender, there was a slight majority of males (42 participants,

56%) compared to females (33 participants, 44%) (see Figure 1). Interestingly, the majority of participants (55 participants, 73%) identified as musicians, while the remaining 20 participants (27%) did not (see Figure 1).

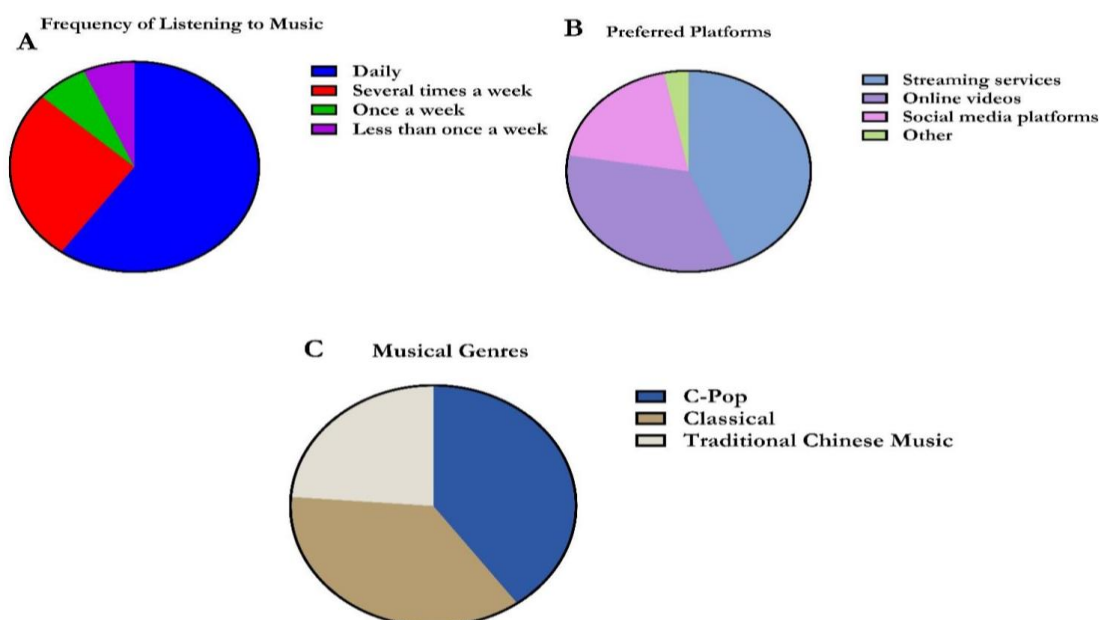


Figure 2: Pie-Chart analysis of Musical Consumption Habits based on frequency of listening to music (A), preferred mode of listening (B) and favourite genres (C).

The survey revealed that music consumption is frequent among participants, with 60% listening daily and another 27% listening several times a week (see Figure 2A). Streaming services were the most popular platform (91%), followed by online videos (69%) and social media (40%) (see Figure 2B). On average, participants dedicated 60 minutes daily to listening. C-Pop emerged as the favourite genre (42 mentions), followed by Classical (38 mentions) and Traditional Chinese Music (25 mentions) (see Figure 2C).

Table 2: Correlations Between Music Consumption Habits

Variable 1	Variable 2	Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient	p-value
Frequency of Listening	Average Listening Time	0.62	0.001 (Significant)
Frequency of Listening	Preferred Genres (Number of Genres Listed)	0.38	0.01 (Significant)
Preferred Platforms (Number Selected)	Average Listening Time	0.45	0.005 (Significant)

In Table 2, the analysis of music consumption habits revealed significant positive relationships. Participants who listen to music more frequently (frequency of listening) also tend to spend more time listening per day ($\rho = 0.62$, $p = 0.001$). Similarly, a positive correlation exists between listening frequency and the number of genres listed as favourites ($\rho = 0.38$, $p = 0.01$). Finally, the number of preferred platforms correlates positively with average listening time ($\rho = 0.45$, $p = 0.005$).



Figure 3: A heatmap of the Likert Scale Responses on Confucian Values

In Figure 3, the highest mean score (4.7) was for "Respect for elders is a core value in Chinese culture," followed by "Maintaining harmony within social groups is important" (4.5), and "Fulfilling one's filial duties is a central responsibility" (4.3). All scores fell above the neutral midpoint (3) on the 1-5 Likert scale.

Table 3(a): Music Consumption and Identity (Survey & Focus Groups)

Theme	Description	Quotes (Survey)	Quotes (Focus Groups)
Music as a reflection of cultural background	A significant portion of participants (64%) felt music consumption connected them to Chinese culture (survey).	"The music I listen to reflects my heritage and makes me feel proud to be Chinese."	"There's a certain feeling you get when listening to Chinese music that connects you to your roots."
Music as a bridge between cultures	Focus group discussions highlighted how music can bridge cultural divides and foster a sense of global identity.	"Listening to different genres of Chinese music allows me to explore other cultures within China."	"Music is a universal language – I can connect with people from other countries who share my love for a particular artist."

Table 3(b): Music Consumption and Identity (Survey & Focus Groups)

Theme	Description	Quotes (Survey)	Quotes (Focus Groups)
Personal connection and emotional expression	Open-ended survey responses and focus group discussions emphasized the role of music in shaping personal identity and expressing emotions.	"The music I choose reflects my mood and helps me express myself."	"Music is a big part of who I am – it influences my creativity and sense of self."

In Table 3, the survey (64%) and focus groups revealed music strengthens cultural connection ("reflects heritage," "connects to roots"). Discussions highlighted music bridging cultural divides ("explore other cultures") and fostering global identity ("universal language"). Both open-ended responses and focus groups emphasized music's role in shaping personal identity and emotional expression ("reflects mood," "big part of who I am").

Table 4: The Role of Traditional Chinese Music in Contemporary Life (Survey & Focus Groups)

Theme	Description	Quotes (Survey)	Quotes (Focus Groups)
Limited exposure but cultural appreciation	Survey data showed a moderate level of importance placed on traditional Chinese music (Mean Likert score = 3.8).	"It's important to preserve traditional music, but I don't listen to it often."	"Traditional music is a beautiful part of Chinese culture, but it can be challenging to find opportunities to experience it live."
Reinterpretations and modern fusions	Focus group discussions revealed interest in contemporary artists reinterpreting or fusing traditional music with modern genres.	"I appreciate musicians who take traditional instruments and melodies and create something new with them."	"It's exciting to see how traditional music can be relevant to younger audiences through modern interpretations."
Importance of education and accessibility	Some participants expressed a need for better education and increased accessibility to traditional music forms.	(Open-ended question - not applicable)	"I'd love to learn more about traditional music, but there aren't many resources readily available."

In Table 4, Participants showed moderate appreciation for traditional music (Likert score 3.8) but limited exposure ("important to preserve, but don't listen often," "challenging to experience live"). Focus groups highlighted interest in modern reinterpretations ("create something new") and fusions with contemporary genres ("relevant to younger audiences"). Some participants expressed a desire for better education and easier access to learn and experience traditional music forms.

Table 5: Themes Related to Music Discovery Platforms (Focus Groups)

Theme	Description	Quotes
Curating playlists and finding new artists	Participants discussed the value of streaming services for personalized music discovery through curated playlists and recommendations based on listening history.	"Streaming services introduce me to new Chinese artists I wouldn't have found otherwise."
Importance of online communities	Some participants highlighted the role of online music communities on platforms like QQ Music or NetEase Cloud Music for sharing music recommendations and discovering niche genres.	"I follow music groups on these platforms to find interesting traditional Chinese music performances."
Challenges of online music discovery	A few participants expressed concerns about the overwhelming amount of music available online and the difficulty in finding high-quality content.	"There's just so much music out there, it's hard to know where to start."

In Table 5, streaming services were valued for curated playlists and recommendations based on listening history ("introduce me to new artists"). Some participants highlighted online music communities for sharing recommendations and niche genre exploration ("find interesting traditional Chinese music"). However, a few expressed concerns about the overwhelming amount of music online and difficulty finding high-quality content ("there's just so much music out there").

4. DISCUSSION

The findings revealed a strong emphasis on music in daily life, with a majority of participants listening daily and spending a significant amount of time engaged with music. Streaming services emerged as the most popular platform, followed by online videos and social media. Interestingly, a positive correlation was found between listening frequency and both the number of preferred genres and average listening time, suggesting a deeper

engagement with music for those who listen more often. We propose that music forms a key element of the Chinese culture and based on the long development history of Chinese music, it encompasses a broad spectrum of styles and a larger variety of genres. Since the collapse of the Imperial China in the last century, traditional Chinese music has significantly undergone a process of modernisation including the creation and promotion of Chinese orchestra, established repertoires of Chinese music and reformation of traditional Chinese music instruments. The modernisation of the Chinese musical culture in the last decades involves a multi-faceted approach with every approach contributing to the globalisation and modernisation of musical culture in distinct patterns. Our analysis of cultural values indicated general agreement with Confucian principles, with "Respect" receiving the highest score. However, the role of traditional Chinese music in contemporary life appears to be multifaceted. While participants expressed appreciation for its cultural significance, survey responses suggested a moderate level of importance placed on it compared to other genres.

Focus groups highlighted a desire for better education and easier access to traditional music forms. On the other hand, there was interest in contemporary reinterpretations and fusions that bridge the gap between tradition and modern preferences. The main objective in the pursuit of Chinese music is harmony and harmonious coexistence. The elements of harmony form the core basis of the greatest embodiment of Chinese culture (S. Xiang, 2020). Ancient philosophers such as Confucius, Laozi and Mencius placed a greater emphasis on the significance and value of music (Fan, 2024). According to the principles of Confucianism, Chinese ancestors postulated that music and rituals constitute to a stable society, full of orderliness and vitality.

The performance of rituals signifies the application of status and orderliness to distinguish between individuals while the performance of music permits various individuals to establish a common ground and basis of existence since it can be interpreted and understood by everyone, appreciated and empathized with to create harmony. Previous studies (Look et al.; Xu, 2018) highlight that the Chinese traditional music is not a single unified tradition because casual observers or listeners can easily identify the differences in the aesthetics occurring between the qin zither repertoire and the suona oboe. These differences between outdoor professional music and the musical traditions of chambers highlight the social stratification and seeks to address the requirements of the diversity of various functions. Although, the Confucian institutions seeks to have a

neutralising effect, the differences are too large with minimal similarities. Hence, we propose that the distribution and role of traditional Chinese music in cultural values and daily life must compensate and accommodate all aspects of traditions such as stratification of social classes, preference of certain regions and communities and functional diversity.

Our findings highlight that there were significant differences in the traditions of the Chinese from a social perspective that was distinct from those involved in literati. Nonetheless, these traditions were affected by the ideals, norms and practices of the high culture. The consistent promotion and cultivation of Confucian principles was robust and evident in the traditional cultures (Chen, 2022). For instance, there was an upward increase in the number of individuals who sought to acquire a literati-controlled education which was viewed as an avenue for a better life and improved standards of living and quality of life. Furthermore, the performing arts and music were constantly intertwined with traditional values.

Our findings suggest that in the digital era there is preservation of traditional entertainment genres by the older population irrespective of their regions. However, the young Chinese who have been subjected to western education have shown little interest in the traditional Chinese music. These traditions reflect the identity of the Chinese people with the club settings and centralisation of the clubs within the workplaces (*gongchang yuedui*). At the end of the cultural revolution, there have been an increase in the number of freely-organised music clubs leading to the preservation of traditions and identity such as the *qin* zither to a small group of individuals who are devoted to the literary ideals. In China, several decades ago, the traditional elements of *qin* were purged and discarded due to elitism, however, it has emerged in the digital era and is being played and listened to openly with new repertoire combined with the old repertoire and a higher rendering of emotions during performance. In contrast, Chinese music such as the *zheng* zither have been widely adopted as a popular domestic instrument and a form of cultural identity.

The layout of instruments in the Hong Kong Chinese orchestra shares similarities with the groupings use in Western Orchestra such as strings, woodwind, brass and percussions (Liu, 2023). Hence, it is an indication and justification that pioneers of the modern Chinese orchestra referred to the western orchestra as the basic model during the early stages of the development of Chinese orchestra music (Zhang, 2020; Zhang, 2023). Furthermore, it proves that the modern Chinese orchestra experienced in the digital era is very distinct from the traditional Chinese ensembles and

orchestra. Earlier attempts at formulation of the modern Chinese orchestra in the 20th century was influenced by the Datong music society, Society for Improving National Music, and Broadcasting Company of China Chinese Orchestra.

In the digital era, the top-down emergence and penetration of Western influence, there have been notable differences between musical traditions of the folk songs and literati making it difficult to identify their limits. One possible example is the genre of entertainment that consists of sizhu chamber music that shares certain aesthetic and musical qualities with the traditions of the qin. Therefore, we suggest that while there exist differences between these genres of traditional Chinese music, they are popular among the people and have specific Confucian values attached to them despite being of a lower level compared to the literati. Moreover, there are striking similarities between the folk traditions and the literati traditions of music. The common Chinese people have not appreciated the various elements of the qin tradition, or the components of the Confucian ritual music. Most players and listeners of qin are often critical of entertainment conducted on the streets and the performance of professional musicians on entertainment genres.

More importantly, both survey data and focus group discussions emphasized the link between music consumption and cultural identity. A significant portion of participants felt music connected them to Chinese culture. Our analysis showed that there are always mixed feelings among the Chinese towards their traditional music and its forms. The ambivalence towards their music is highlighted by the historical significance of traditional music in advocating and championing for sanctions of social norms. The Chinese culture of social order is mainly regulated and controlled by the promotion of practices, behaviours and norms rather than legislation or rules of code of conduct. In the early 20th century, specific and positive values were injected into the performing arts and literary works to regulate the behaviour of its citizens and increase the campaigns against social stability. These values include social harmony, participation of the young individuals and clarity of expression.

We found that Chinese music serves as a source of identity for the Chinese people through unique entertainment genres that are carried for individual enjoyment and not fundamentally related to the religious beliefs or work ethics. The genres of entertainment music exist in several sections of the Chinese music and can be stratified based on social classes. The Qin and Kungu operas practice in central China are considered as classical genres within the entertainment levels of Chinese music (Whitener & Shu,

2018; S. Xiang, 2020; Y. Xiang, 2020). Also, there is a higher level of popularity of other genres such as narrative songs of the shuochang, xiju opera and zheng zither among the common people. The folk songs of the Minge have gained popularity and classified as genres of entertainment; however, in casual work, folk songs are often used besides entertainment. Our findings propose that these genres of music are significant for the Chinese because they form significant elements of the Chinese culture and act as a basis for the reflection of aesthetics and social values that unites the Chinese people and their traditions. The nature of music consumed by the people is by choice and dependent on the intended functions.

According to previous studies (Ho, 2018, 2021), after the collapse of the Imperial China in the early 20th century, the Chinese had a strong urge to revitalise and strengthen their traditional music due to the influx of the Western cultures. Many Chinese scholars, musicians, and directors sort out different ways to revive the Chinese musical culture. One of the possible proposed mechanisms was the creation of larger instrumental ensembles that covered traditional Chinese musical instruments. The utilisation of the Jiangnan sizhu (Silk & Bamboo) extracted from the South of Changjiang was a key step in this process and allowed expansion of the modern Chinese orchestra to incorporate several instruments (Jiang, 2023).

Previous studies have proposed that the pioneers of the modern ensemble of the Chinese orchestra took the Western symphonic orchestra as the ideal model and built on it (Luo & Tebbutt, 2019). Additionally, several aspects of the modern Chinese orchestra practice experienced nowadays were actually derived from the Western models including groupings and layout arrangements, utilisation of full scores, and writing of certain sections in standard notations instead of improving on the existing standard tunes, inclusion of Chinese reformed instruments and Western orchestral instruments and the use of a conductor. Furthermore, there are certain elements such as range of pitch and the addition of twelve-step equivalent-temperament.

However, there are often significant variations in the actual positioning of the individual instruments based on the type of orchestra, their organisation is based on four basic sections of blown wind, pluck, string-bow and string-percussion (Wong, 2020). In the traditional Chinese social order, there were two groups involving a small elite of traditional scholars and a larger group consisting of the popular traditions of the Chinese people (Thrasher, 1985). The internal cohesion and social harmony among the Scholars and the honours they accrued as state officials made their literature works and performing arts attract a larger audience and

uniformity compared to the group consisting of small elite of traditional scholars. Subsequently, the musical genres, for example the qin and the music of the court rituals that were linked to social classes were widely adopted throughout the country. One possible explanation is that the culture of the common people was often devoid of the promotional campaigns and high-ranking individuals that were capable of promoting the small elite of traditional scholars into a unified single whole led to heterogeneity, diffusional and regional interpretations. Ethnicity and ethnic classifications among local sub-cultures were stratified based on local dialects, preference of music and temperament. The music genres associated with these traditions such as theatre music, instrumental music, folk music, narration music and outdoor ritual music exists in various regional variations across China.

5. CONCLUSION

Our study investigated the relationship between music consumption habits, cultural values, and identity among participants in China. Overall, the findings suggest a strong link between music consumption and cultural identity among the participants. While traditional Chinese music held a place of cultural appreciation, its exposure was moderate. However, there was interest in contemporary reinterpretations and fusions, highlighting the potential for keeping traditional forms relevant for younger audiences. The musical styles of the Chinese are constantly developing and changing in the digital era and would be accompanied by different shifts in social stratification and identification with one or more forms of music. However, the functionalities of Chinese music must be based on reflecting the cultural values, identity and social cohesion which are core values of the national spirit.

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