# How New Media Affecting Cultural Identity: Case Studies from Malaysia

**¹Ng Wei Liang & ¹Lee Kuok Tiung**

¹Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Malaysia Sabah

**Abstract:** In an age where digital media and the internet merge into a global network of communication, media play an important role in shaping cultural identity. This study examines the challenges media faces in preserving the cultural identity of societies in the face of rapid changes driven by globalization and technological advances. The study uses qualitative methods to examine various aspects of this issue. It focuses on how media outlets influence people's perceptions of themselves and others and can reinforce or transform cultural identities by in-depth interview. The in-depth interview findings highlight the specific challenges journalists face in this effort, focusing on gender differences, national identity, race/ethnicity, and media bias. Gender inequality emerges as a key challenge, with the media often perpetuating gender stereotypes and marginalizing women in various fields from the workplace to politics and popular culture.  Malaysian identity protection faces obstacles due to the coordinating influence of globalization and information systems. Similarly, media coverage of race and ethnicity perpetuates biases, leading to discrimination and moral issues, especially towards marginalized groups. Media bias, especially ethnic bias, perpetuates stereotypes, shapes public opinion, and threatens cultural identity by integrating suggestions into educational curricula to empower them for cultural engagement in the identity of the strong and protected.

**Keywords**: New media, internet network, cultural identity, Malaysia, society

## Introduction

New media have created a brand-new media atmosphere by data storage, visual media, and convenient transmission (Li, 2023). The merger of new media and culture may encourage culture's change and inventive growth, as well as the generation of new cultural aspects (Sutrisno, 2023). This transition involves both internal and outward shape modifications. The participation of new media makes culture not only a cultural promotion that stays in people 's mouth, but a cultural life that keeps moving in the media world (Guo&Zhang, 2022). People may learn about a culture through media consumption in this era (reed, 2018).

The media has always been an integral part of the cultural transmission process (Barkow, O'Gorman, &Rendell, 2012). With the advancement of media technology and the

deep integration of artificial intelligence and media, new media is infiltrating people's everyday lives, fostering new social practices, forging new social ties, and paving the way for the dissemination of culture in the modern era (Quan, 2017). Considering this, it is vital to organize the present experience of new media in transmitting culture and give references and inspiration for supporting creative transformation and inventive development (Gustafsson&Lazzaro, 2021).

Cultural identity is often viewed as a set of characteristics that are unique to a particular culture, but also innate to a specific people (Karjalainen, 2020). On the other hand, cultural identity has a structuralist character, in the sense that a particular culture is seen as a set of interrelated features, and therefore the concept of identity is treated as an alternative view of a set of distinctive or structural feature's identity implicitly implies a fixed identity (Bader, 2001). Cultural identity implies a sense of fixed characteristics, but also reflects the deeper meaning of stereotypes by the media (Radwan, 2022). Obviously, whether it is regarded as a characteristic, it shows that the issue of cultural identity has become more inescapable currently in media, and that it exists all around us, penetrates our lives, and thus enters our research horizons.

Malaysia has been a country that faces big challenges to maintaining the cultural identity of Malaysians. Malaysia as a multiracial and multireligious country made up of dozens of different races, the three biggest ethnic groups being Malays, Chinese, and Indians (Muhamat et al., 2012). According to Malaysian department of statistics population data, Malaysians have steadily been influenced by the media from time to time (mcmc,2023). Furthermore, the government's policies on political participation are clearly pro-globalization (Ojendal, 2005). In some ways, despite keeping their cultural identity, they are blending into the globalization culture (Yusof&Esmaeil, 2017). A significant proportion of young Malaysians who are influenced by the media are in such an awkward and conflicting situation about their cultural identity, and they are now heavily influenced by cultural integration. Cultural integration can cause people to lose their own cultural identities as they merge with others in media (mun, fern, & chin, 2015).

Traditional media, on the other hand, remains the competitive media of Malaysia's media advertising revenue, but it is falling year after year (Kdu,2020), whilst online advertising revenue is rapidly increasing. Even though traditional media's market share in Malaysia is rapidly being eroded by the new media industry, trust in traditional media advertising remains strong, particularly in the paper media sector, which includes newspapers and magazines (Ac Mizal, 2020). In terms of trends, Malaysians' time spent reading newspapers is predicted to decrease year after year, whilst time spent on digital platforms has increased dramatically. Malaysian internet users visit the internet mostly for the purpose of finding and receiving information with social media ranking second (sue howe, 2023).

Over the past few years, the media landscape in Malaysia has changed, changing the way Malaysians interact, form opinions, and make decisions (Taibi &Na, 2020). As digital media continues to develop, traditional media are also constantly innovating to keep up with the times and evolve with the times. Multilingual media offers an essential

platform for the creation of culture and discourse. Supporting Malaysia's coordinated growth with media in a variety of languages is strategically crucial (Chong, Ting, Chan, Lee, &Tay, 2023). English, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil are the four main languages spoken by Malaysians in the media sector. Malaysian media is boosting the nation's capacity to enact its own races-identity while ignoring other races (Othman, Esa, AbuBakar, &Mokhtar, 2021). Malaysian media industry has carried out several helpful investigations into digital construction, social media leveraging, integrated development, the creation of integrated media platforms, and the emphasis on high-quality production in response to the impact of new media and market changes in recent years (AhmadTajuddin, Bahari, Al Majdhoub, Balraj baboo, &Samson, 2022).

On this Malaysian media phenomena, Malaysian cultural identity mostly relates to racial features (Holst, 2012). Previous research focus on uncovering culture and ethnicity based on the basic distinctions in media between the literature in these two cultural settings (Kellner, 2011). In terms of cross-cultural exchange with other culture, such as the mutual interaction and penetration of two cultures, the previous research has investigated how media preserve their own cultural identity (Matsaganis, Katz, &Ball-Rokeach, 2011). While Malaysia haven't conducted research regarding the challenge of maintaining culture that fills in this gap. This study seeks to investigate how Malaysian media expert and university students think about the challenge in maintaining their cultural identity, particularly in Malaysian environments by this research objectives:

1) To identify and analyse the key challenges faced by Malaysian media in maintaining the cultural identity of Malaysian society.
2) To evaluate how cultural identity is represented in Malaysian media, including print, broadcast, and digital platforms.
3) To examine the perceptions and attitudes of Malaysian audiences towards the role of media in maintaining their cultural identity
4) To analyse the influence of government policies and regulations on the media's ability to preserve and promote cultural identity in Malaysia.

**Literature review**

The media is a channel for shaping identities and facilitating community formation. Argues that new media provide mechanisms for people to imagine the state and facilitate the formation of a culture (Aziz, 2022). The formation and maintenance of culture requires a cultural identity, which is different from an individual, but is a personal experience, a cultural norm shared by the family, group and the surrounding (Karjalainen, 2020). Media is one of the foundations of the existence of all kinds of communities, and its formation requires that culture circulates among members in the medium of objects and texts, and this process is influenced by media forms (Kirillova, 2020). Compared with traditional media, new media represented by the internet and mobile phones have changed the way people produce identities and construct communities (Mohamed, 2020). New media have also led to more frequent encounters between different groups, and identity and network communities have become key words for understanding society (Gallacher, Heerdink, &Hewstone, 2021).

Through new media, Malaysian individuals can choose their own identities more freely, and while they are liberated, they also face identity crisis (Leong, 2019); globalisation has facilitated increasingly frequent transnational exchanges, and in the process of encountering the other culture, Malaysian dynamically reposition their identities between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, which may bring about cooperation, solidarity and the dissemination of culture identities, and may also activate the sense of identity of and cause conflicts (Sulaiman, 2024). According to (Christian, Day, Díaz, &Peterson Salahuddin, 2020), it leads to cooperation, solidarity and the dissemination of cultural identities.

Previous studies have identified cultural identities from different perspectives. First, beliefs are the ultimate essential characteristic because the identity of tradition must relate to human activities (Edara, 2017). Second, cultural identification has a fixed social group, stemming from interactions and relationships between people related to shared information, production, evaluation, and reputation while proof by history, society, social norms or certain agency (Huddy, 2001). Third, the identity of culture is a collective phenomenon that represents the non-secular activities, behaviour, materialized products of many people in a certain period and to a certain extent; individuals can't represent a culture (Snow, 2001). Fourth, the way of life is specific to each state, group or institution with amazing differences that make up different cultural identities at a specific time (Gupta&Ferguson, 2008). Finally, consistency within a nation, group, or institution ensures that a way of life has a particularly unified content material that includes social form activities or materialized goods that shape the premise of the way of one cultural identity (morgan, 2010).

New media has changed public boundaries and provided channels for individual cultural transmission (Hollenbaugh, 2021). Media and platform organisations actively use cultural aspects to attract public attention and traffic (Nielsen&Ganter, 2022). The rich language of digital media, including images, videos, pictures, etc., has a greater ability to convey emotions than text. However, digital media also connects individuals into culture anxieties, providing a platform for the construction of various types of communities which has led to the stereotypes (Baym, 2015). The digital structure of culture shapes the ways in which people imagine themselves in relation to others, to a culture, to a country (Gere, 2009).

The process of cultural anxieties involves cultural diversion and moral panic. People now are aware of the differences between themselves and other groups in terms of language, skin colour, values, spatial location, etc., and aware of their cultural identity on media (Weedon, 2004). Cultural identity can both construct difference and make some differences due to the cause of differentiation (Dhamoon, 2010). Multi racial of people can be found everywhere, but which differences to ignore and which to regard as the key element in distinguishing them is the product of cultural interpretation, a political, social, and cultural process, which necessarily includes cultural identity (Barth, 2010). Cultural identity stimulates people's sense of self and encourages the development of subjectivity. It escalates disagreement, causing moral panic (Critcher, 2006). Because identity is

relational, when it refers to a crime or unmoral issue that done by a culture, it also pulls them into the media (Hall, Winlow, &Ancrum, 2013). Cross- cultural conflict is basically established in such a way that it suggests a cultural gap, and it causes a culture to be concerned about other culture offending against them (Elmer, 1993). The carriers of cultural identity group are widely disseminated through Malaysian media, individuals seek channels of expression and spread on semi-public and public platforms, with significant social consequences. The medium allows all the things related to moral panic regarding cultural identity to spread rapidly and have a wide range of impacts.

**Theory of moral panic**

Theory of moral panic is based on media against specific individuals or groups who do not understand or do not conform to the mainstream values of the society (Farr, 2021). Mass media may be an element of a movement, but theory of moral panics have a specific target to hit and are usually an expression of anger rather than immature fear (Hughes, Rohloff, David, &Petley, 2011). Moral panics are often associated with sexual themes and involve new or widely disseminated ethnic minorities, which can sometimes lead to riots (Critcher, 2006).

The theory of moral panic was coined by Stanley graham, he used the theory of moral panic to describe how the British media in the 1960s portrayed the youth culture of the time and the social repercussions it caused (Cohen, 2011). Scholar pointed out that the media tended to repeat a behaviour to create repression of a particular community (hunt, 1997).

In this research, the theory of moral panic can be depicted when this research applies to the challenges of media in maintaining the cultural identity of the society. The theory of moral panic can align with this study by asking this research questions:

1) Why does it target some groups and behaviours by Malaysian media?
2) Why do certain focal points intermittently disappear or are completely marginalised by Malaysian media?
3) Malaysian audience's perspectives on cultural identity in the media?

Theory of moral panics in practice tends to pick the most vulnerable and easy targets, be the minority group who lack a voice, the poor or immigrants (Goode&Ben-Yehuda, 2010). This line of enquiry must avoid a certain essentialist homogenising tendency, such as moral panics are an effort to self-segregate the racial in Malaysia (Nain&Kim, 1999). Indeed, there have been some panics in which people from different people, while other social forces have often been reluctant actors (Thurlow, 2006). Scholars have investigated the homosexuality in the United States by theory of moral panic (Lumby&Funnell, 2011). Indonesian scholars have investigated labelling, stereotypes, race and globalization issues in media by theory of moral panic (Lim, 2013). Overall, these studies stated that different parts of society with different races or cultural- identity in the process of moral panics and norms.

Despite many criticisms, the theory of moral panic remains a vibrant theory in media. Argues in defence of the concept that the purpose of moral panic theory is to test whether an issue has been distorted and exaggerated in such a way as to trigger a massive overreaction (David, Rohloff, Petley, &Hughes, 2011). In contrast, cultural identity of the minority group that needs attention in the media can be ignored but does not mean that the problem does not exist (Walsh, 2020). Regardless of any arguments about the complexity of its message or the impact on its audience, the media still plays an important role in creating moral panics, with all the exaggerations, distortions, and overreactions that they entail (Marsh &Melville, 2011). Theory of moral panic is ultimately based on the view that one of the core functions of social science is to assess assertions made about the status of socially problematic or minority groups (Ward Jr, 2002).

**Methodologies**

This research uses a qualitative research methodology as it aligns closely with our research objectives and facilitates a comprehensive exploration of the perspectives held by university students, journalists, media practitioners regarding this research phenomenon. The data collection process employed a combination of purposive and convenience sampling techniques. Semi-structured elite interviews were utilized to gain a deeper understanding of the issue at hand.

This study has interviewed 6 university students and 9 media practitioners, which consists of 15 respondents. The university students are chosen by researchers who are related to media studies, postgraduate students, and PhD candidates. These fifteen respondents are from different races and different areas of Malaysia specifically from Johor, Labuan, KualaLumpur, Penang, Sarawak, and Sabah. Due to the language constraints, different language has been applied into different types of interviews. Thus, 15 respondents will interview individually through online meetings and physical interviews. Table 1 is the respondent details of this study.

Table 1: demographic of interviewee

| **Name** | **Gender** | **Race** | **Major /job scope** | **Origin** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Students 1 | Female | Chinese | Mass communication Students | Sarawak |
| Students 2 | Male | Chinese | Master candidate in business administration | Johor |
| Students 3 | Male | Malay | Master candidate in anthropology and sociology | Sabah |
| Students 4 | Female | Malay | Master candidate in anthropology and sociology | Melaka |

| Students 5 | Female | Dusun | Phd candidate in marketing | Sabah |
| Students 6 | Male | Indian | Phd candidate in political sciences | Perak |
| Media practitioners 1 | Female | Chinese | Social media influencer | Johor |
| Media practitioners 2 | Male | Chinese | Full time content- creator | Penang |
| Media practitioners 3 | Female | Malay | Full time content-creator | Kuala lumpur |
| Media practitioners 4 | Male | Indian | Video production manager | Kuala lumpur |
| Media practitioners 5 | Female | Chinese | Broadcasting journalist | Kuala lumpur |
| Media practitioners 6 | Male | Chinese | Reporter | Kuala lumpur |
| Media practitioners 7 | Male | Dusun | Reporter | Sabah |
| Media practitioners 8 | Female | Malay | News-editor | Johor |
| Media practitioners 9 | Male | Malay | Radio announcer | Labuan |

All the questions are created based on the theory of moral panic by literature review. The interview questions used in this study were organised around three major themes: people's understanding of media, people's perceptions of maintaining Malaysian cultural identity in media, and the usage of media based on their culture. These questions acted as research tools, providing useful insights into each of these topics. To prevent bias, the researchers prevent people of certain ages or races from choosing from this study. Through data analysis, researchers were able to get a deeper knowledge of these themes and produce new insights that might help guide future study.

This study employed reflexive thematic analysis. It emphasises pinpointing, examining, and recording patterns in the data. Themes are patterns across datasets that are important for describing phenomena and are reflect with specific research questions. This study was performed through a six-stage coding process to create established, meaningful patterns. These stages include familiarising with the data, generating the initial code, searching for themes in the code, reviewing the themes, reflecting, and naming the themes, and generating the final findings.

**Table 2: theme and sub-themes of the present study**
**Findings**

| Theme | Sub-theme |
|---|---|
| **Globalization and moral panic** | Cultural diversity |
|  | Cross- cultural exchange and integration |
|  | Economic inequality |
|  | Youth and cultural identity |
| **Gender equalities and moral panic** | Gender identity |
|  | Gender roles and expectation |
|  | Workplace gender disparities |
| **Race/ ethnicity bias and moral panic** | Discrimination |
|  | Ethnic minority presentation in media |
|  | Racial justice |
| **Labelling and stereotypes and moral panic** | Media influence on stereotypes |
|  | Implicit bias and impact |
|  | Social perception and prejudice |

Following a thorough review of the available data, we decided that 4 primary issues stand out as especially important: the challenges of globalization, and second, gender equalities, race, and ethnicity bias, labelling and stereotypes. These four themes appear to be of the utmost relevance when assessing the entire picture offered by the data, and this study feels they need serious attention from all parties concerned. By concentrating on these issues in more depth, we expect to obtain a better understanding of the challenges of maintaining cultural identity in the Malaysian media landscape. Finally, this study wants to use this information to influence future decision-making processes and promote positive change towards a more effective and sustainable media.

**Theme 1 globalization and moral panic**

In today's fast-paced and technologically evolved world, globalization in media is a tool that may be extremely effective. As one media practitioner stated, cultures such as Chinese culture, Korean culture, westernization and Japanese culture are spread over the internet, not only in Malaysia, but Malaysian media users especially young users can also indulge in the other country's culture.

while students declare that globalization in media does not extensively affect their cultural identity, many media practitioners trust that globalization has a profound effect on the media panorama. Numerous interviewees referred to that globalization has delivered about an extra various media environment and multiplied exposure to international content material and perspectives. However, in this environment, there's also a recognition of the enormity of maintaining conventional cultural identities.

"Globalization gives opportunities for cultural trade, but it additionally gives hurdles for safeguarding our awesome cultural historical past. One primary reason is the lack of viewership for news regarding cultural stories. Without audiences, media struggle to generate income and preserve their operations " (media practitioners 6)

"The Malaysian media sometime portrays the foreign world perfectly that some Malaysians begin to yearn for other cultures and lose sight of their own, especially on China or Singapore" (media practitioners 8)

Culture is learned. If Malaysian youth keep watching foreign culture in the Malaysian media for a long time, they will gradually be affected when they grow up. Malaysian should be aware of their own Malaysian identity(media practitioners 2)

I do have friends who are seriously influenced by Korean culture through the media. They dress up and look Korean and somehow look-down about their own nation-identity culture.
(students 3)

another student pointed out that most Malaysians are not aware of their identity such as appearance, food, the way they talk, which is gradually being impacted by the media. The same students also remarked that culture is something that you acquire in ways that you are unaware of in life. Moreover, all the interviewees highlighted the high-quality aspects of globalization promoting cross-cultural exchanges, specifically in understanding and appreciation of different cultures. However, because of the dominant influence of foreign media content, some interviewees are worried about the homogenization of cultural identities.

"as a radio announcer in Labuan FM, to reach a larger audience and increase user engagement, we must incorporate cultural characteristics from other nations." (media practitioners 9)

"Intercultural exchanges have become wealthier in the media; however, Malaysians need to be wary of the obliteration of our personal culture." (media practitioners 2)

Cultural integration occurs in the exchange and dialogue between two or more cultures. This is the process of "integration". In other words, in Malaysia and global cultural exchange, it is difficult for us to use a single or regional culture as a label to identify a

single cultural phenomenon. On the contrary, in the process of global media cultural dissemination, a new trend of cultural hybridization occurred in Malaysia (media practitioners 6)

Some media outlets tend to simplify the cultural landscape of countries like Malaysian Chinese and China by presenting it as static and homogeneous. Instead of offering a comprehensive view, they generalize culture, overlooking its diversity and complexity. (students 1)

''the local Chinese media is "too nationalistic, and Chinese people love to spin in their own circles." this means that some groups do not agree that the local Chinese media over exaggerates Chinese culture. I believe that "racial harmony is best."'' (media practitioners 1)

The globalization theme underscored the effect of financial disparities on media get entry to and representation in Malaysia. Participants observed that prosperous or city groups tend to experience extra visibility inside the media, even as marginalized organizations face obstacles to participation and representation because of constrained resources and investment constraints. This monetary inequality exacerbates current disparities in media illustration, hindering efforts to sell cultural diversity and inclusivity.

"We are just a small station in Labuan. Even compared to many places in Malaysia, we remain small in comparison to international media companies. When media entities possess greater financial resources, they can effectively disseminate culture to other countries." (media practitioners 9)
"Westernization has significantly influenced and boosted the field of cross-cultural communication in Malaysia. On one side, it celebrates diversity, but on the flip side, it tends to enforce a model of market economy, capitalism, and liberal democracy akin to that of Britain and the United States onto a nation globally. This leads to a replication of political, economic, social, and cultural norms, essentially creating duplicates. The primary driving force behind this phenomenon remains the pursuit of profit." (media practitioners 8)

**Theme 2 gender equalities and moral panic**
Malaysia boasts a rich heritage steeped in gender culture, with certain customs ingrained in societal consciousness, shaping an autonomous notion of gender. These include transgender, binary gender expectations, and classifications within traditional paradigms represent social constructs. Most of the respondents think that in a culture where gender is strictly delineated into right or wrong, male, and female, achieving equality and fostering tolerance. Gender biases often manifest in media merely adhering to ingrained

social norms and cultural convictions. Interestingly, many media practitioners think it lies in its excessive focus on culture at the expense of one's lived experiences. With the rise of digital technology, the gender issues undergo redefinition mediated by the media. traditionally, media additionally play a role in gender position together with how males and females are displayed in drama, men are expected to be the authoritative, at the same time as girls are often seen as a household. These roles are reinforced through media representations that spotlight these convention expectancies. However, this inflexible delineation can stifle character expression and perpetual inequality. We still have a long way to go. (media practitioner 4) i see how the media regularly reinforces those traditional paradigms, portraying male and woman roles in approaches that align with lengthy-standing cultural norms. However, this strict delineation makes it tough to achieve gender equality and frost tolerance. We want to expand our perspectives and include the lived reviews of folks that no longer suit neatly into those classes like girl is for man. The rise of virtual generation offers a completely unique opportunity to redefine and undertake these outdated norms, promoting a greater inclusive gender expertise." (media practitioners 3) Gender disparities inside the Malaysian media industry have been obvious in interviews, with women facing demanding situations in professional advancement and management positions in comparison to their male counterparts. Members noted discriminatory practices and unequal opportunities as key limitations to gender equality within the administrative centre, underscoring the need for centred interventions to deal with systemic gender inequalities. "in the media industry, workplace gender issues are quite apparent. For instance, there is a strong preference for hiring women in broadcasting roles. This preference extends to other positions like accounting and administrative roles, where advertisements often indicate that they are looking for female candidates. The reason given is that women are perceived to be more detail oriented. (media practitioners 5) The findings revealed a sturdy adherence to binary gender portrayals in Malaysian media, possibly limiting non-binary and transgender humans from visibility and illustration. Individuals emphasized the need of portraying various gender identities in extra inclusive methods if the media want to reflect the complexities of gender experiences in Malaysian society. our conventional customs strongly impact how gender identity is perceived are presented. Media frequently adheres to those norms, that may perpetuate biases and limit the visibility of non-binary and transgender individuals. Our cognizance has been an excessive amount of on keeping cultural traditions at the expense of recognizing and validating the numerous reviews of gender. With virtual technology, we've got an effective tool to focus on these numerous studies and venture societal norms, promoting an extra nuanced and inclusive representation of gender Malaysia." ( media practitioners 8)

In Malaysia, homosexuality remains a controversial topic in the media. Authorities have recently tightened controls, with the government clamping down on annual LGBTQ groups and two states considering tightening penalties for homosexuality. (students 4)

We report on the Malaysian government's emphasis in taking the needs of the most vulnerable into consideration when protecting human rights. LGBTQ and transgender

people are vulnerable to violence and discrimination. Media practitioners are unable to take any measures to protect the lgbt community from violence and discrimination because of government relations. (media practitioners 7)

**Theme 3 race/ethnicity bias and moral panic**

In Malaysia, respondents believe that biased ideas and expressions regarding ethnicity are not confined to targeting ethnic minorities in the media. In fact, they can extend to discrimination based on religious belief, social class, and more. Given Malaysia's multi-racial society, it is essential to be well-prepared in the media by respecting diversity, protecting minority groups, and challenging discrimination.

The Malaysian government is taking a strict stance on the 3r issues: religion, race, and royalty. All the media are typically cautious about touching these topics, but the real challenge lies in the influence of social media. On these platforms, anyone can discuss and manipulate these sensitive issues using the power of language, making it difficult for the government to regulate them effectively, as seen with recent type c issues. (students 1)

"To be honest, as a Chinese Malaysian, I've noticed that biased ideas and expressions frequently appear in the media, especially between the Malay and Chinese communities. The media has a powerful impact on public perception, and a significant issue is the lack of cultural transmission between ethnicities. For example, during the recent kk mart and mc Donald boycott issue, many Chinese Malaysians didn't understand why it was happening, and some even reacted by criticizing Malays saying something like you are destroying Malaysia's economy. This misunderstanding is a major reason why discrimination occurs—we don't understand each other well enough." (media practitioner 2)

Media illustration frequently overlooks the complexities of our multi-racial society. The problem isn't always pretty much ethnic bias; it extends to racial justice we know. For instance, drinking beer, a few races will think that this altitude became incorrect and need to prohibit. We love to comment on other races from perspectives. It is imperative to renowned and fight the biases that influence other ethnic and religious corporations. (students 6)

Some interviewees think that the media has a duty to challenge these biases through supplying balanced coverage that includes the views of all minority ethnic. They must spotlight the achievements and struggles of different minorities, to make certain an honest and complete portrayal of our society.

Representing the indigenous communities of Sabah and Sarawak, I frequently see how media can marginalize our voices. Our issues aren't just about ethnicity, however also about being not noted due to geographical issues. The media wishes to do greater to carry the memories of indigenous peoples into the mainstream, highlighting our wealthy cultures and the specific challenges face. It's critical to push for more inclusive representation that respects our history and addresses the inequalities enjoy. (media practitioners 7)

Analysing media from my course angle (business), it's clear that biases often intersect with issues of class and ethnicity. Media coverage tends to favor the more affluent, marginalizing the lower socioeconomic groups who might also belong to ethnic minorities. (students 2)

**Theme 4 labelling and stereotypes and moral panic**

Most interviewees think that media have the potential to influence certain stereotypes or labelling. Following media reports on the general characteristics of a particular phenomenon or group, individuals may form specific labels or stereotypes that align with these characteristics. The most frequently designated labels and stereotypes are those that constitute the definitive set for the races. Implicit bias and social prejudice may be obvious in the media.

Media has a substantial influence on the formation and reinforcement of stereotypes in Malaysia. When the media repeatedly portrays certain races in a specific manner, it shapes public perception. For instance, if the media continuously shows Malays are lazy, and those who rob are Indians." or "Chinese people are rich'. In fact, this is not a race issue, it is a personal issue, and the matter must be viewed separately. However, the media always likes to emphasize what this ethnic group is like, making everyone think it is true. (media practitioners 4)

Stories about crime or poverty within the Indian community may receive disproportionate attention, reinforcing a negative image that is not representative of the entire community. The impact on social perception and prejudice is significant. Other ethnic groups might view it through a narrow, stereotype lens, potentially leading to social tensions and misunderstandings. This can manifest in prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory practices in various aspects of life, from social interactions, home rental to employment opportunities. (students 6)

While discussing stereotypes, most interviewees did not solely refer to racial stereotypes but also depicted various minority groups that are subject to moral panic. In other words, a stereotype or labelling is regarded as a compilation of the most typical attributes of that group under examination.

"The impact of media on people's cognition, judgment, and worldview has evolved. Media has transitioned from concentrating on short-term effects to long-term effects. This shift emphasizes the subtle, enduring influence that media exerts on viewers. As a result, labels from certain cultures are becoming stereotypes such as banana, coconut people, Sarawakians and Sabahan living on the tree, etc. But i think most of the media are trying to change people perception on labelling or stereotype' (media practitioners 3)

We appreciate and treasure diversity. It doesn't matter what background we come from, but the media gives me a stereotype about Kelantan: that if you can't speak KelantaneseMalay, your food will be super expensive in Kelantan. (students 3)

Is Penang one better? BangsaJohor? Media are trying to persuade us that people from some states are superior to other Malaysians. Media should promote that what backgrounds we come from, we embrace every uniqueness of their cultural identity, and we celebrate the true Malaysian blend of each one of us. (students 1)

**Discussion**

The findings of this study highlight the complex interplay of media, culture, and social ideologies in Malaysia. The study provides a nuanced understanding of how moral panic manifests itself in Malaysian media by examining issues such as globalization, gender equality, racial and ethnic bias and stereotypes.

Theme 1 globalization has a significant impact on Malaysian media and cultural identity. Exposure to a variety of international issues provides opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and a broader understanding of global perspectives. However, this revelation also raises important challenges related to moral panic (Tan, 2022). The media highlights the dangers of cultural homogenization, where dominant foreign cultures overshadow local traditions and identities. For example, the influence of Korean, China, Indonesia culture on Malaysian youth shows how the media can change cultural attitudes and values. This phenomenon is consistent with Cohen's moral panic theory whereby social panic is amplified through media representations. Concerns about the loss of traditional cultural identity in the face of emerging foreign affairs underscore the need to balance the global influence of media with the preservation of local heritage.

Theme 2 gender bias in media representation is an important issue in Malaysia . Traditional gender roles through media images, reinforce social expectations and limit personal expression (Shiran, 2024). The preference for hiring women in some media roles due to perceived qualities such as detailed presentation reflects entrenched gender stereotypes. Additionally, the tension between the media's treatment of LGBTQ, transgender issues, and the need to incorporate cultural norms has been highlighted. The negative portrayal of the LGBTQ and transgender community shows insecurity from discrimination shows how the media can perpetuate moral panic by advocating conservative values.

Theme 3 racial and ethnic biases within the media contribute to social war and false impressions among Malaysia's many ethnic organizations. Snap shots of ethnic minorities frequently beef up stereotypes which could result in discrimination and social prejudice (Molla, 2021). Interviewees notice that these problems are exacerbated by loss of cultural contact and information between specific ethnic companies. An emphasis on racial justice and the need for balanced representation are vital to addressing moral panics. By highlighting the achievements and struggles of all races, the media can foster a greater inclusive society while respecting and celebrating variety. The authorities' stance on sensitive troubles along with religion, race and royalty in addition complicates the position of the media, consequently requiring a cautious method to ensure truthful and actual representation.

Theme 4 the role of the media in forming and reinforcing stereotypes is substantial. Implicit biases in media portrayals contribute to social reputations that have an impact on public trust (Elliott-Cooper, 2020). Stereotypes about one ethnic group or a group of people, such as the Malays being lazy or the Chinese being rich, banana people, etc often perpetuate harmful prejudices. The long-term effects of these stereotypes on social

mobility and opportunities underscore the media's responsibility for dynamic changes in these domains. The media is afraid to sell nuanced and inclusive knowledge about cultures, seeking to shift from short-term sentiment to long-term impact.

**Conclusion**

The findings highlight the pressing need for a more inclusive and culturally sensitive media environment globally. As the media landscape continues to evolve, it becomes increasingly important to adopt a multi-pronged approach that addresses the myriad challenges posed by globalization, gender bias, ethnic and racial prejudices, and stereotypes. This approach should be rooted in the understanding that media has the power not only to reflect society but also to shape perceptions and attitudes. This study also contributes to the theory and fulfilling the gap of how media affecting cultural identity.

To achieve a global impact while preserving local cultural identities, media practitioners worldwide must be mindful of the content they produce and disseminate. This involves a concerted effort to incorporate diverse cultural narratives that accurately represent the multifaceted nature of societies. By doing so, the media can play a pivotal role in fostering a sense of identity that is inclusive and respectful of all cultural backgrounds.

In addition to preserving cultural identity, the media must also be vigilant in its portrayal of gender norms. Traditional gender roles are deeply ingrained in many cultures, but the media can challenge and redefine these norms by showcasing a broader spectrum of gender identities and roles. This can be achieved through the portrayal of strong, diverse characters that break away from conventional stereotypes and offer more realistic and empowering representations.

Addressing racial justice through the media requires a sincere commitment to showcasing meaningful and authentic images of racial and ethnic diversity. This means moving beyond tokenistic representations and engaging in storytelling that delves into the lived experiences of different racial and ethnic groups. By doing so, the media can help to dismantle prejudices and promote a more equitable and just society.

Furthermore, efforts to combat stereotypes must focus on creating long-term impact. This involves not only challenging existing stereotypes but also encouraging more nuanced accounts of cultural diversity. Media outlets should strive to provide a platform for underrepresented voices and ensure that their stories are told with depth and sensitivity. This can help to foster greater understanding and appreciation of cultural differences, ultimately contributing to a more harmonious and inclusive society.

For example, malaysia's media landscape offers valuable insights into these global challenges and opportunities. As a multicultural nation, malaysia faces the task of balancing diverse cultural identities while navigating the influences of globalization. The malaysian media's efforts to preserve local cultural identity, perform traditional gender norms, and promote racial justice through sincere and meaningful images can serve as a model for other countries facing similar challenges.

In conclusion, the role of media in shaping cultural identity is profound and multifaceted. By adopting an inclusive and culturally sensitive approach, media around the world can make significant strides in addressing the challenges of globalization, gender bias, and racial prejudices. Through sincere and meaningful representations, the media can achieve a global impact while preserving local cultural identities, promoting gender equity, and advancing racial justice. Future studies can have more studies on quantitative studies and in the context of other countries.

**References**

1. Ahmad Tajuddin, S. N. A., Bahari, K. A., Al Majdhoub, F. M., Balraj Baboo, S., & Samson, H. (2022). The expectations of employability skills in the Fourth Industrial Revolution of the communication and media industry in Malaysia. Education+ Training, 64(5), 662-680.
2. Aziz, A. (2022). Rohingya diaspora online: Mapping the spaces of visibility, resistance and transnational identity on social media. new media & society, 14614448221132241.
3. Bader, V. (2001). Culture and identity: Contesting constructivism. Ethnicities, 1(2), 251-273.
4. Barkow, J. H., O'Gorman, R., & Rendell, L. (2012). Are the new mass media subverting cultural transmission? Review of General Psychology, 16(2), 121-133.
5. Barth, F. (2010). Introduction to ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of cultural difference. Selected studies in international migration and immigrant incorporation, 1, 407.
6. Baym, N. K. (2015). Personal connections in the digital age: John Wiley & Sons.
7. Chong, P. Q., Ting, H. L., Chan, J. Y., Lee, S. Y., & Tay, S. C. W. (2023). Exploring multilingual Code-Switching in Malaysia through We-Media Perspectives. Journal of Chinese Language and Culture Studies, 2(2), 39-45.
8. Christian, A. J., Day, F., Díaz, M., & Peterson-Salahuddin, C. (2020). Platforming intersectionality: Networked solidarity and the limits of corporate social media. Social Media On Society, 6(3), 2056305120933301.
9. Critcher, C. (2006). Critical readings: Moral panics and the media: McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
10. David, M., Rohloff, A., Petley, J., & Hughes, J. (2011). The idea of moral panic–ten dimensions of dispute. Crime, Media, Culture, 7(3), 215-228.
11. Dhamoon, R. (2010). Identity/difference politics: How difference is produced, and why it matters: UBC Press.
12. Edara, I. R. (2017). Religion: A subset of culture and an expression of spirituality. Advances in Anthropology, 7(04), 273.
13. Elliott-Cooper, A. (2020). The four stages of moral panic. In I Refuse to Condemn (pp. 54-66): Manchester University Press.
14. Elmer, D. (1993). Cross-cultural conflict: Building relationships for effective ministry: InterVarsity Press.

15. Farr, B. (2021). A demographic moral panic: Fears of a majority-minority future and the depreciating value of whiteness. U. Chi. L. Rev. Online, 1.

16. Gallacher, J. D., Heerdink, M. W., &Hewstone, M. (2021). Online engagement between opposing political protest groups via social media is linked to physical violence of offline encounters. Social Media On Society, 7(1), 2056305120984445.

17. Gere, C. (2009). Digital culture: Reaktion books.

18. Goode, E., & Ben-Yehuda, N. (2010). Moral panics: The social construction of deviance: John Wiley & Sons.

19. Guo, L., & Zhang, L. (2022). Exploration on the application of new media interactive art to the protection of traditional culture. Scientific Programming, 2022.

20. Gupta, A., & Ferguson, J. (2008). Beyond 'culture': space, identity, and the politics of difference. In The cultural geography reader (pp. 72-79): Routledge.

21. Gustafsson, C., & Lazzaro, E. (2021). The innovative response of cultural and creative industries to major European societal challenges: Toward a knowledge and competence base. Sustainability, 13(23), 13267.

22. Hall, S., Winlow, S., & Ancrum, C. (2013). Criminal identities and consumer culture: crime, exclusion and the new culture of narcissm: Willan.

23. Hollenbaugh, E. E. H. E. E. (2021). Self-presentation in social media: Review and research opportunities. Review of communication research, 9.

24. Holst, F. (2012). Ethnicization and identity construction in Malaysia: Routledge.

25. Howe, Sue. "Social Media Statistics for Malaysia [Updated 2023]." Meltwater, Meltwater, 20 Mar. 2024, www.meltwater.com/en/blog/social-media-statistics-malaysia.

26. Huddy, L. (2001). From social to political identity: A critical examination of social identity theory. Political psychology, 22(1), 127-156.

27. Hughes, J., Rohloff, A., David, M., & Petley, J. (2011). Foreword: Moral panics in the contemporary world. In (Vol. 7, pp. 211-214): Sage Publications Sage UK: London, England.

28. Hunt, A. (1997). 'Moral panic'and moral language in the media. British Journal of Sociology, 629-648.

29. Karjalainen, H. (2020). Cultural identity and its impact on today's multicultural organizations. International Journal of Cross Cultural Management, 20(2), 249-262.

30. Kellner, D. (2011). Cultural studies, multiculturalism, and media culture. Gender, race, and class in media: A critical reader, 3, 7-18.

31. Kirillova, N. B. (2020). Media culture of a globalised world: Evolution of language technologies. Changing Societies & Personalities. 2020. Vol. 4. Iss. 4, 4(4), 427-440.

32. Leong, P. P. Y. (2019). Malaysian politics in the new media age: Implications on the political communication process: Springer.

33. Li, H. (2023). The Language of New Media Journalism on Short Video Sharing Websites:--A Case Study of Tik Tok Journalism. Academic Journal of Management and Social Sciences, 3(1), 33-41.

34. Lim, M. (2013). The internet and everyday life in Indonesia: A new moral panic? Bijdragen tot de taal-, land-envolkenkunde/Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia, 169(1), 133-147.

35. Lumby, C., & Funnell, N. (2011). Between heat and light: The opportunity in moral panics. Crime, Media, Culture, 7(3), 277-291.

36. Marsh, I., & Melville, G. (2011). Moral panics and the British media–a look at some contemporary 'folk devils'. Internet Journal of Criminology, 1(1), 1-21.

37. Matsaganis, M. D., Katz, V. S., & Ball-Rokeach, S. J. (2011). Understanding ethnic media: Producers, consumers, and societies: Sage.

38. Mohamed, S. (2020). New media, cultural imperialism and the Malay Muslim society in Malaysia. Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and Development, 5(29), 19-33.

39. Molla, T. (2021). Racial moral panic and African youth in Australia. International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 84, 95-106.

40. Morgan, D. (2010). The material culture of lived religion: Visuality and embodiment. Mind and matter, 14-31.

41. Muhamat, R., Don, A. G., Hamjah, S. H., Sham, F. M., Nasir, B. M., Ashaari, M. F., . . . Puteh, A. (2012). The history of ethnic relationship in Malaysia. Advances in Natural and Applied Sciences, 6(4), 504-511.

42. Mun, A. S., Fern, C. P., & Chin, L. C. (2015). Between ethnicization and globalisation: Mediating contesting cultural identities of Malaysian youths. Geografia-Malaysian Journal of Society and Space, 11(3), 73-82.

43. Nain, Z., & Kim, W. (1999). Much Ado About Nothing? Mainstream Research, Malaysian Media and Moral Pa. nics"'. JurnalKomunikasi, 15, 21-38.

44. Nielsen, R. K., & Ganter, S. A. (2022). The power of platforms: Shaping media and society (Vol. 16): Oxford University Press.

45. Othman, I. W., Esa, M. S., Abu Bakar, A., & Mokhtar, S. A. (2021). The Relevance of Knowledge of Nationhood in Malaysian Studies Courses: A Conveyance for National Unity Identity and The Integration of University Students' Self-Identity Post-Pandemic Covid-19 Era. Journal of Information System and Technology Management, 6(23), 01-20.

46. Quan, J. (2017). The influence of mobile platform digital image and information dissemination on visual culture. Int. J. New Develo. Eng. Soc, 1(3).

47. Radwan, M. (2022). Effect of social media usage on the cultural identity of rural people: a case study of Bamha village, Egypt. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 9(1), 1-14.

48. Reed, T. V. (2018). Digitized lives: Culture, power and social change in the internet era: Routledge.

49. Shiran, M. (2024). Backlash after Quotas: Moral Panic as a Soft Repression Tactic against Women Politicians. Politics & Gender, 1-27.

50. Snow, D. (2001). Collective identity and expressive forms.

51. Sulaiman, D. (2024). Legal Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Perspectives from Indonesia and Malaysia: Taylor & Francis.

52. Sutrisno, S. (2023). Changes in Media Consumption Patterns and their Implications for People's Cultural Identity. Technology and Society Perspectives (TACIT), 1(1), 18-25.

53. Taibi, M., & Na, T. (2020). The changes of media landscape in Malaysia: How citizen journalism poses threats to traditional media. Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication, 36(1), 396-380.

54. Tan, K. P. (2022). Neoliberal Globalization, Authoritarian Populism, and Moral Panics. In Singapore's First Year of COVID-19: Public Health, Immigration, the Neoliberal State, and Authoritarian Populism (pp. 1-21): Springer.

55. Thurlow, C. (2006). From statistical panic to moral panic: The metadiscursive construction and popular exaggeration of new media language in the print media. Journal of computer-mediated communication, 11(3), 667-701.

56. Walsh, J. P. (2020). Social media and moral panics: Assessing the effects of technological change on societal reaction. International Journal of Cultural Studies, 23(6), 840-859.

57. Ward Jr, R. E. (2002). Fan violence: Social problem or moral panic? Aggression and Violent Behavior, 7(5), 453-475.

58. Weedon, C. (2004). Identity and culture: Narratives of difference and belonging: Narratives of difference and belonging: McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

59. Yusof, N. M., & Esmaeil, Z. (2017). Reconstructing multiculturalism in Malaysia through visual culture. Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 8(4), S1.

60. Öjendal, J. (2005). Democratization amidst Globalization in Southeast Asia. Southeast Asian Responses To Globalization, 345.