An Overview Of Cultural And Media Literacy Theory

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Abstract

Media literacy has long been of great interest to scholars in the field of communication, and the related topics mainly focus on the impact of media information on individuals and society. With the continuous development and evolution of media technology, media literacy has also gained new entry points for research. The Internet's characteristic of breaking geographical and time constraints brings opportunities as well as challenges to minority groups and their cultures. Minority groups are minorities in the statistical sense of the word, as well as politically, economically, and culturally disadvantaged groups. However, the existence of minority cultures makes cultural diversity in the world possible. China, as a multi-ethnic country with many minorities, has also achieved a rich and diverse culture. The development of Internet technology and the popularization of social media have made it easier for minority groups to access the Internet and have made it possible for minority groups to make their voices heard and to disseminate and record their cultures. But participating in the culture of the digital realm is no longer a matter of access, but a matter of using skills. Therefore, it is of great significance to improve the media literacy of ethnic

minority groups so that they can use the media for their own purposes and further enhance the positive impact of social media.

Keywords: Media literacy, Ethnic Minority, Culture Study, Social Media

Introduction
The current development and application of media literacy

Media literacy has been the subject of extensive scholarly attention, particularly in the field of communication studies, where scholars have focused on how sustained and voluminous media messages affect individuals and society(Potter, 2013). Even though scholars have different definitions of media literacy, the importance of media literacy is self-evident, and the goal of media literacy is the same, to minimize the negative impact of media messages on people and society and maximize the positive impact (Schreurs & Vandenbosch, 2021). As technology develops and media forms continue to evolve, media literacy is being updated, especially since the advent of the Internet, which has dramatically changed the media landscape.

With the continuous development of Internet technology, digital technology has entered all aspects of people's lives, and the dissemination of information and culture has transcended socio-geographical boundaries (Belmar & Glass, 2019), with different sounds, images, and texts being exchanged between countries, and the communication of information can be done instantly (Kramer, 2022). The change in the way information is presented and delivered, moreover, affects the way people communicate and understand each other, which in turn changes the formation of communities (Polanco-Levicán & Salvo-Garrido, 2022).

Social media has become increasingly important in people's daily lives, and studies have shown that the use of social media has climbed during the co-vid19 period (Zhao & Zhou, 2021). Along with these deeper impacts of media on people's lives, discussions around media literacy are also increasing, with topics such as media literacy and personal well-being, privacy and security, education, political participation, cultural identity, creative expression, and digital inequality receiving attention and discussion.

Ethnic Minorities in China

In this study, the term " ethnic minority " will be used to describe groups that have distinctive native language and cultural characteristics and that constitute a much smaller demographic group than other groups (Mikkola et al., 2019).

As a multi-ethnic country, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has 55 ethnic minorities in addition to the Han Chinese. "The term 'ethnic minority' has its own meaning in the Chinese socio-cultural context. The term 'ethnic minority' is the usual English translation of the Chinese 'shaoshu minzu', which means literally 'minority nationality' (Zang, 2011). The term 'nationality' uses the definition proposed by Stalin, 'nationality is a stable group of people who share a common history, territory, language, economic life and culture' (Wang, 2021; Zang, 2011). According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China (NBSC), the results of China's population census published in 2020, the Han nationality of China accounts for 91.11% of the total population of China, while the remaining 55 ethnic minorities account for only 8.89% of the population(NBSC, 2021).

Of course, the gap between ethnic minorities and Han Chinese is not only reflected in the huge disparity in population, but also in politics, economy, and culture (Wang, 2021). This shows that the economic situation of minority groups is not optimistic compared to that of Han Chinese (Zhao, 2022). There has always been a stereotype in traditional Chinese culture

that the non-agricultural culture of ethnic minorities is primitive and backward, and that the Han culture, which is based on farming in the Central Plains, is advanced (Lin & Jackson, 2022).Therefore, for ethnic minorities, it's not easy to continue to preserve and transmit their own culture.

Status of minority cultures

In the opinion of some scholars, the development of Internet technology and popular culture has led to the homogenization or increasing marginalization of minority cultures and the impact on traditional culture (Alivizatou-Barakou et al., 2017). The globalization that accompanies internet technology has increased the sense of urgency to maintain cultural diversity (Jagielska-Burduk et al., 2021). while the skills of use and content consumption of terminal devices and applications are still increasing digital inequality (Robinson et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2010)

As mentioned above, China's ethnic minorities are mainly located in the western and frontier regions of China (which are mostly rural and underdeveloped), which lack the flow of knowledge and technological resources due to transportation and location constraints (Chen et al., 2023). Although China's ethnic minority groups make up less than 10% of the country's total population, they account for 48% of China's poor population (Holcombe, 2023). In addition to geographic location and economic disadvantages, The ethnic cultural crisis brought about by 'too Hanified' is the focus of attention of many scholars who study ethnic culture and ethnic minority cultural elites (Maurer-Fazio & Hasmath, 2015; Wang, 2021; Zang, 2011, 2016), another problem is the lack of successors to their culture.

Related Research Areas in Ethnic Minority Cultures
Ethnic Minority Cultures in Communication Studies

As defined above, a minority group is a group that is demographically small but may have its own language and unique culture. Research on ethnic minorities encompasses a wide range of topics, and research on minority cultures has been conducted in a variety of disciplines, including cultural anthropology, linguistics, sociology, economics, medicine, communication, and education, among others.

As a demographically underrepresented but culturally distinct minority group, identity and culture are the core foundations of national identity (Nagel, 1994), and communication plays an important role in national identity and the transmission of national culture (Bilge et al., 2021). The relationship between the media and the language, culture, and identity of ethnic minorities has been explored more in studies of media and ethnic cultures. In a study on immigrant media use, it was explored how immigrants' media use affects the process of identity, i.e. the sense of belonging to one or more social groups (Dhoest et al., 2012). and how, on the other hand, exposure to different cultural media products affects an individual's cultural identity. Of course, in the age of mass media, the mainstream media is the main vehicle for presenting minority cultures, but as pointed out in some studies, the content of the mainstream media may suffer from underrepresentation of minorities and their cultures (Ira & Mt, 2001).

Social Media and Minority Cultures

Previous studies have concluded that mass media play an important role in the process of social integration. Today, social media is playing an increasingly important role in people's social life. Social media based on the Internet, interactivity and user-generated content make

it possible for any group of people to break through the limitations of geography and time to connect and share with others (Belmar & Glass, 2019).

As a major user group of the internet and social media, there are many studies on young people's use of social media, Hinton and Putra (2020) argue that Indigenous young people are recovering their language and culture by engaging with and using social media technologies to create online communities, and that social media has become a means of spreading their voices (Hinton & Putra, 2020) . Scholars are also endeavoring to explore the ways in which ethnic minorities are redefining their cultures using new forms of media, including social media. Studying the ways in which ethnic minorities utilize new media is positive to the impact that new media, including social media, has on the perception of ethnic minority cultures (Kramer, 2022)

Minority languages, which are an important part of minority cultures, can also leverage social media. Instead of relying on the government or other forces, speakers of minority languages can form virtual communities on their own through social media, providing a space for their languages to breathe (Belmar & Glass, 2019). In a multilingual social media environment, social media may also become an important channel for ethnic minority groups to confirm their identity and participate in mainstream culture (Lai et al., 2022).

Problems and Shortcomings in the Study of Ethnic Minority Cultures in the Field of Communication Studies

The focus of communication studies on ethnic minority groups and their cultures is wide-ranging, and the research involves several disciplines and is constantly evolving. It is thanks to the attention paid by researchers in this field to different cultures and modes of communication in different cultural environments that some disadvantaged groups and the cultures they represent have been made visible and cultural diversity has been perpetuated. However, it is undeniable that there are still some problems in the current research on minority groups and their cultures in the field of communication.

In the study of media influence, the study of the possible effects of media stereotypes on individuals and society has been an important research topic. Stereotypical presentation and portrayal of minority groups in news reports, film and television has always existed, but few studies have focused on the possible effects of these images on audience groups and minority groups (Dixon, 2019). The existence of stereotypes is partly related to the way the media presents them, and partly related to the fact that minority groups have fewer channels of voice and are underrepresented. Minority groups are first individuals and then groups, but in most of the literature, minorities are portrayed in an overly general and homogenized manner, ignoring the differences between minority groups and the differences between individuals (Jackson & Nesterova, 2017). Minority groups, as the culturally disadvantaged, have been the focus of the dominant culture's groups, mostly from the perspective of the dominant culture, with very few voices from the minority groups themselves (Wang, 2021).

Opportunities and Challenges of Ethnic Minority Culture in the New Media Era

The emergence of the Internet, especially the emergence of new media has brought a series of opportunities to ethnic minority groups, but also brought considerable challenges. The development and widespread use of ICT and social media have even brought new channels for people in remote areas to look outward and show up and are key tools that have a great impact on the cultural adaptation, integration and identity of ethnic minorities (Tongdhamachart & Alwi, 2023). Globalization can even be felt by Aboriginal communities

that are considered marginalized, while at the same time making people in these areas realize the need to actively use these tools to communicate and present themselves in their own way, to regain their own dignity (Belmar & Glass, 2019). Social media is also enhancing the cultures of minority groups to some extent, allowing more in-group members to be more exposed to their own cultures (Kramer, 2022), which also means that social media will also contribute to the spread and transmission of minority cultures.

But behind these opportunities, minority cultures still face great challenges. The first is cultural homogenization brought about by globalization, so the possible impact on traditional culture brought about by modern technology and mass culture (Alivizatou-Barakou et al., 2017) is the focus of some scholars' attention. Ironically, globalized sharing of cultural content, due to a lack of internet access or skills in the use of digital media technologies, can still bring about the increased marginalization of minority groups(Vassilakopoulou & Hustad, 2023). For ethnic minority groups, access to the Internet also presents challenges in terms of privacy and security for this group(Hoover, 2020). To face all these possible challenges, it is important to improve the media literacy of ethnic minority groups so that members of these groups have the skills related to the use of social media, the ability to use media content critically, and even the skills to create media content on their own initiative.

A Review of Media Literacy Research
The origins and development of research on media literacy theory

Media literacy can be traced back to the first half of the 20th century, when Leavis & Thompson proposed that students should learn to distinguish between popular culture and refined culture through education (Lin et al., 2013). As media forms continue to evolve, so do the forms of interaction between people and media, and media literacy theory, as an important theory for exploring the relationship between people and media, has been in the process of development and evolution. According to Aufderheide, media literacy refers to the ability to acquire, analyze and produce information. Media messages may affect audiences for good or bad, and the goal of media literacy is to hopefully provide audiences with the skills necessary to engage in media interactions in a more healthy and responsible way (Aufderheide, 2018). Potter states that media literacy refers to an audience's adoption of a positive perspective on the mass media, which can be used to interpret the significance of the media messages that are encountered. . Whereas the skills used in interpreting media messages include induction, deduction, synthesis, abstraction, analysis and evaluation (Potter, 2004). Potter also proposed a cognitive model of media literacy that focuses on how people sift through information and construct meaning.

With the development of the Internet and information technology, the concepts of digital literacy and social media literacy have emerged in a society where digitalization and social media are prevalent, and media literacy has taken on new characteristics based on the characteristics of digital media. There is no consensus on the definition of social media literacy, among which Daneels and Vanwynsberghe (2017) defined social media literacy as "the technical and cognitive skills required for users to use social media in an effective and efficient manner for online social interactions and communication".

The development of media literacy in China

In China, the development of media literacy theories started late, usually in 1997 when Bu Wei published a paper entitled On the Meaning, Content and Methods of Media Education, which is regarded as the source of media literacy research in China (Ying,

2023).Since the 21st century, with the development of mass media and the rise of the Internet, media literacy has gradually become a hotspot of research in journalism and communication studies.

In terms of the stages of development, scholar Li Ying (2023) divides media literacy research in China into three stages. The first stage is the introduction of concepts, in which foreign results and concepts of media literacy research are mainly introduced, and there is a lack of localized innovation. The second stage is the stage of localized application of media literacy, in which media literacy theories are actively applied to localized scenarios, continuously expanding the research objects, enriching the relevant research methodologies, and enriching the localized empirical research cases. The third stage is the research innovation stage in the last decade or so, the development of the Internet and the increasing popularity of social media have become the main research background in this stage. Media literacy research also focuses more on the critical interpretation of media content, as well as the production and sharing of media content. At the same time, new concepts such as digital media literacy have been brought into the research horizon.

Nowadays, with the development of technology and media, media has become an infrastructure that generates and organizes social reality(Jiahui & Yun, 2023), so Chinese scholars' research on media literacy also focuses more on the interaction between people and media, and in media literacy research, they pay attention to the changes in the relationship between people and media brought about by mediatization, and the necessity of improving media literacy in this context. The main group of media literacy research in China is still the youth and students, but now the focus is also diversified, focusing on women, the elderly and so on. Some scholars have also begun to focus on breaking the urban-rural economic gap through media literacy development (Xiaonan & Xueqin, 2022). Meanwhile, Chinese scholars are also focusing on the construction of quantitative standards for media literacy measurement, with a view to developing measurement scales that are more in line with the Chinese social environment(Qiang & Hongyan, 2022).

The Role of Media Literacy Theory and Research Topics

Since the goal of media literacy is to minimize the negative effects of media content and to increase the possible positive effects of media content (Schreurs & Vandenbosch, 2021). Therefore, there has been more discussion in media literacy theory on the topic of education and how to enhance media literacy in the form of education, such as using an experimental approach by providing intelligent learning paths and measuring changes in students' abilities before and after the experiment (Temdee, 2021). Another example is how to effectively improve students' online learning efficiency by intervening in their media literacy in an environment where online education is becoming more and more popular (Tran-Duong, 2023). It can also be found from numerous studies as the main body of research related to media literacy theory is the adolescent group, which is centred around the adolescent group and suggests how to improve media literacy and the significance of improving media literacy.

Media literacy theory has been widely concerned and developed and flourished in the mass media era, so the audience's consumption of media information is an important element in the mass communication environment. Audience's information screening ability and acceptance or rejection of fake news in the media is also one of the aspects that media literacy research focuses on. For example, it is important to analyse why the consumption and dissemination of fake news or misinformation occurs, and how to reduce the sharing and

dissemination of misperceptions and misinformation by enhancing the audience's critical consumption behaviours (Xiao & Su, 2023)

Related Research and Findings on Media Literacy in the Internet Era

With the development of social media, the attention directed at the characteristics of social media has increased, and some scholars have made corresponding studies on the development of the definition of media literacy, arguing that the development of social media requires matching definitions and research frameworks, and proposing the concepts of social media literacy, digital literacy, and so on. Some scholars have even argued that the birth of the Internet was a milestone in the development of media literacy theories, as the emergence of the Internet changed the entire media landscape in a certain sense, and sparked debates addressing different approaches to media literacy (Gauntlett, 2011).

In addition to the research focus around youth and education-related topics, as mentioned above, the nature of the Internet, or social media, has given rise to new research topics, such as the issue of information security that the Internet may bring about, and how to ensure the interests and well-being of the youth population by improving youth media literacy, privacy protection, and information security meanings (Schreurs & Vandenbosch, 2021). In addition, the user-participatory nature of social media makes user participation an important research topic. With social media referred to as an important democratising force, the potential for civic engagement and media literacy need to be linked and ultimately media literacy will have an impact on democracy (Carr et al., 2020).

In the social media environment, in addition to the youth who are the main consumers, the seemingly excluded group of older adults has also been called for research attention. As social media use among older adults is limited due to thresholds of access, appropriate research frameworks should be developed for this group in an attempt to enhance the health and well-being of older adults by improving their media literacy (Oh et al., 2021).

Topics and Findings in Media Literacy and Cultural Studies

The development of media literacy theory was influenced by the cultural studies school of thought, the 1970s cultural studies scholars' exploration of the shaping of culture and people's consciousness by the media, and the aim of media literacy is also to explore the use of the media for people, and the construction of meaning through the active and critical use of media content. Therefore, it is easy to combine media literacy theory with cultural studies. In the Internet era, people interact differently, and with the development of technology, the boundaries between producers and consumers of information have been broken down, and more "non-professionals" have been involved in the process of creating and distributing information (Lin et al., 2013). Consumer identities are transformed through participation in the creation and distribution of content, their voices are heard, and the participatory medium opens topics of research on civic participation in democracy, the creation of culture, and the construction of identity. Digital media literacy has been treated as a core competency in research exploring participatory democracy, combining educational frameworks for civic engagement in politics and digital media literacy to propose the role of media literacy in developing active citizens and enhancing the political competence of participatory citizenship (Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013).

Livingstone (2004) argues that media literacy, in addition to fostering the development of participatory democratic politics, also contributes positively to the creation of culture. The media has been shown to have the potential to either promote or question the improvement

of social group stereotypes. And by enhancing the media literacy skills of young people will indeed help to address prejudices while promoting appreciation and tolerance of diverse cultures (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015). Of course, media literacy and cultural studies are related in more ways than one, and the intersectionality of the two continues to grow as the medium continues to evolve.

Research and findings related to minority cultures and media literacy associated with the Internet era

Media literacy, as an important media research perspective, is important for understanding the communication and interaction patterns of ethnic minority groups, as well as the transmission and development of their cultures. Digital literacy has been proposed as a strategy to eliminate social inequalities (Polanco-Levicán & Salvo-Garrido, 2022), which also implies that media literacy has a more positive meaning for minority groups. Some researchers are also concerned with the diverse attempts to understand the role that media literacy may have and play in different cultural contexts, particularly that the role and meaning that media literacy may bring to some more vulnerable cultures and regions will differ, and argue that the edges of media literacy should be expanded and that diverse understandings have been reached through the exploration of media literacy in more diverse cultural and social contexts (McDougall & Rega, 2022).

The goal of media literacy is to mould dynamic, media competent users. But making minority groups as users known as users in the goal of media literacy means more than an individual, it is a group-level pursuit. As stated in a study on the relationship between media and ethnicity, the active and creative engagement of audiences in media interactions is more a fulfilment of the need for cultural vitality of minority groups (Mastro, 2015). Thus, in exploring the individual in a group, the impact rises to the level of the group, and the significance of media literacy naturally serves the goal of groupness. In addition, good media literacy empowers individuals in social media participation, making them more responsible in their consumption and production of media content (Schreurs & Vandenbosch, 2021), which in turn will lead to a reduction in stereotypical representations, and misconceptions, of minority groups in the media.

Social media has enabled the dissemination of information across geographical and temporal boundaries and has transformed the way in which communities and organizations are formed, bringing minority groups that share the same culture closer together through identity. While on the one hand media literacy contributes positively to this process, it should also be recognized that media literacy may inadvertently reinforce distinctions between in-groups and out-groups, fostering prejudice or creating misperceptions of minority group cultures(Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015).

Conclusion

Media literacy, as an important perspective in media studies, has great significance in media and cultural studies. Especially with the development of the Internet and social media as the main form of media, media literacy has never occupied a more important position in media. As social media users become producers of media content and participate more actively in media consumption, it seems that social media users have become the group closest to the goal of media literacy development. At the same time, social media's broad reach and lack of geographical and spatial constraints allow demographically and culturally

disadvantaged groups to participate in media interactions and content production, and to make their voices heard.

But it also needs to be recognized that this process is not always positive, and the possible side effects need to be seen. And participation in the digital sphere is no longer a matter of internet access, but a matter of media accessibility (Ferrari & Punie, 2013). Therefore, the digital divide will not be narrowed by mere internet access, and for ethnic minority groups who want to bridge the digital divide as much as possible, improving media literacy, fostering more active ethnic minority group users, critically identifying media content, and encouraging content creation will not only be a meaningful realization for individuals in ethnic minority groups, but will also be a benefit to ethnic minority groups and their cultures. At the same time, ethnic minority groups are prepared to turn the tide in the face of the challenges that social media may bring, such as information security, cultural infringement, and difficulty in transmission and dissemination.

Notes

The concept of media literacy has not been fully agreed upon by scholars because, on the one hand, it is a very broad concept that has been defined differently in different disciplines, and on the other hand, the definition of literacy has been expanding and changing due to the continuous development of the media, and the relationship between the media and human beings has been evolving. Therefore, the study of media literacy needs to adopt a contextual approach, and this study is a rethinking of media literacy in the specific social context of China, where information technology continues to develop, and the media has become an indispensable part of people's lives. Media literacy research often focuses on adolescents and young people and tries to improve the media literacy of this group by means of intervention. However, the object of media literacy research is not limited, and in a certain sense, media literacy should become an important media practice for minorities to gain a voice and break down the digital barriers in this network society with the rapid development of information technology. Therefore, this study focuses on ethnic minorities in China and tries to explore the challenges and opportunities that minorities may face in the network era.

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