



HOW FACEBOOK COMMENTS REFLECT CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF  
CHINESE TRANSNATIONALISM IDENTITY: A PRELIMINARY RESEARCH OF  
NETIZENS' COMMENTS ON SIN CHEW DAILY FACEBOOK PAGE TOWARD  
COVID-19/ WUHAN CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

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LEE YU QIAN

## DECLARATION

I declare that the material contained in this paper is the end result of my own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL sources be they printed, electronic or personal.

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This research paper attached hereto, entitled “*How Facebook Comments Reflect Certain Characteristics of Chinese Transnationalism Identity: A Preliminary Research of Netizens’ Comments on Sin Chew Daily Facebook Page toward COVID-19/ Wuhan Coronavirus Outbreak*” prepared and submitted by LEE YU QIAN in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Communication (Hons) Journalism is hereby accepted.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Abstract</b>	1
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction</b>	
1.1 Research Background	
1.1.1 The Rise of Social Media	2
1.1.2 Malaysian Chinese Identity and News Media Preferences in Malaysia	5
1.1.3 A Case Study of Facebook Netizens' Comments on Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)/ Wuhan Coronavirus	8
1.2 Problem Statement	
1.2.1 The Influence of Emerging Social Media and Online Public Sphere	11
1.2.2 Chinese Transnationalism and Discourses of Identity	12
1.3 Research Questions	14
1.4 Research Objectives	15
1.5 Scope of The Study	15
1.6 Significance of The Study	16
1.7 Limitations of The Study	17
<b>Chapter 2 Literature Review</b>	
2.1 The Development of Internet and Social Media	18
2.1.1 A Brief History of Facebook and Its Usage	21
2.1.2 Jürgen Habermas's Public Sphere Model	23
2.1.3 Analyse Netizens' Comments: The Power of Discourse and Text and Stuart Hall's Representation Theory	25
2.2 Chinese Identity, Chineseness and Chinese Transnationalism	
2.2.1 Identity	28

2.2.2	Chineseness and Chinese Transnationalism	30
2.2.3	The Power of Communist Lead China	34
2.3.	The History of Malaysian Chinese Identity and Its Continuity	38
2.4	The Relationship of Malaysian Chinese with China	
2.4.1	The Power of Media and The Influences of China on Malaysian Chinese Media's Evolution	44
2.5	Chinese Associations and Chinese Education: Its Relations with Text and Potential Reflections on Facebook Text	50

### **Chapter 3 Methodology**

3.1	Overview of Qualitative Research	55
3.1.1	Deductive Qualitative Content Analysis	57
3.1.2	Systematic Literature Reviews	58
3.1.3	Case Study	59
3.2	Sampling Frame	60
3.3	Brief Execution	61
3.4	Roland Barthes's Mythologies as Methodological Consideration	62
3.5	Coding Method: NVivo as Data Management Tool	63
3.6	Operational Definition	64

### **Chapter 4 Finding and Analysis**

4.1	The Assortment of the Ten Posts/ Themes Identified	66
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4.2	Total Number of Comments Collected	66
4.3	Facebook Comment Analysis	
4.3.1	First Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments	67
4.3.2	Second Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments	72
4.3.3	Third Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments	74
4.3.4	Fourth Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments	76
4.3.5	Fifth Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments	79
4.3.6	Sixth Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments	82
4.3.7	Seventh Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments	85
4.3.8	Eighth Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments	88
4.3.9	Ninth Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments	90
4.3.10	Tenth Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments	93
<b>Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusion</b>		
5.1	Discussion	96
5.1.1	Social Media as a New Public Sphere: Facebook and Its Capability to Encourage and Facilitate Public Opinion	96
5.1.2	Chinese-language Cyberspace: A New and Challenged Space For Being Chinese	100
5.2	Conclusion	106
5.3	Recommendations for Future Research	107
<b>References</b>		109



## **Abstract**

This study is aimed to explore and analyse the reactions of the netizens on one of the popular social media, Facebook in Malaysian Chinese community toward the outbreak of COVID-19. It focuses on the media contents that solely posted by Sin Chew Daily on its Facebook page as well as the comments wrote by the Facebook users below. Through collecting and breaking down the comments of the Facebook users, this study further means to recognize how comments may mirror certain attributes of Chinese ethnonationalism and Chinese transnationalism identity, as well as to which topics in Facebook posts commentators relate on the most due to COVID-19 outbreak or so-called Wuhan Coronavirus. With the end goal of the study, four unique sorts of news articles identified with COVID-19 and the relating comments are analysed. All of the news articles that the paper will analyse are chosen from a trustworthy media source, Sin Chew Daily. Sin Chew Daily is among the major Chinese newspaper publications which having the most noteworthy readership and circulation in Malaysia. In order to provide deeper insights to fully understand the scope of study, theoretical frameworks for instance Jürgen Habermas's Public Sphere Model and Stuart Hall's Representation Theory were used.

## **Keywords**

Malaysian Chinese, identity, comments on Facebook, COVID-19/ Wuhan Coronavirus, Sin Chew Daily

## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Research Background**

#### **1.1.1 The Rise of Social Media**

The Internet has been widely used as a platform for individuals and the society to articulate about significant social issues. Networking innovations permit quick, unmediated, two-way correspondence and in this manner more straightforward and direct public participation (Fenton, 2012). It further proved the phenomenon of new media have changed the society and the general population so dynamic individuals are no longer just onlookers that standing outside. For instance, social media alludes to various online devices that encourage the creation and sharing of exceptionally interactive and user-generated content. Social media is identified with, however not synonymous with, the broader idea of information and communication technology (ICT) (Gunitsky, 2015). The influence of the emergence of online services like Facebook, Twitter and so on is often not to be underestimated. Among the most popular social media tools are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and so on. The number of Facebook utilization and engagement is increasing while selection of other platforms such as Instagram and Twitter holds consistent (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). Due to the vast development and evolution of social media in the past decades, there is broader democratic space provided in order to fit in with the desires of the netizens to express their perspectives and opinions unreservedly over the current political, social, economic, religious, racial and environmental issues all over the world.

With the development of social networking sites (SNSs) and digital media sharing formats, news content has been progressively described as associating individuals outside the newsroom through virtual interest gatherings and networks, prompting scholarly discussions

about their ability for engaging non-columnists as guardians (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Besides, there is a lot of proof in both developed and developing nations recommending that individuals who take part in civic and political activities, including protest behaviour, are frequent users of social media (Valenzuela, 2013, as cited in Bekkers, Beunders, Edwards, & Moody, 2011; Earl & Kimport, 2011; Pearce & Kendzior, 2012; Valenzuela, Arriagada, & Scherman, 2012; Yun & Chang, 2011). Undeniably, there were more and more researches indicated that social media has become as a source for news, a platform to mobilize information and express political opinions. Besides, social media regards as vital for modern political activism and other forms of political action.

According to Katz and Gurevitch's (1974) typology, people use media for observation, personality development, social connections and entertainment (Valenzuela, 2013, as cited in Katz & Gurevitch, 1974). Truth be told, the use of social media in order to urge for social change is far reaching in numerous different nations. This phenomenon is also common in Malaysia. Also, social media life can be utilized intentionally to look for news such as following BBC News on Twitter, just as a hotspot for accidental exposure to news such as browsing the profile of a friend on Facebook and discovering a connect to a BBC News story (Valenzuela, 2013). Thus, it is common to find that users of these latest communication channels have become aware of its impact at initiating and convincing individuals to act or do something, for instance change a nation's political framework, discuss some sensitive issues and so on. Virtually, it helps increasing social media users' knowledge of public issues and many other aspects as social media are incorporated into daily life.

Indeed, social media sites are virtual stages for intuitiveness and information exchange. It draws public's dissemination and media's attention when few sensitive public issues emerged and formulated on the network through forum, blog, news sites, instant messaging groups and so on due to certain issues. The individuals who feel curious and worry about the issues' development will effectively contribute online towards the advancement of the Internet in order to inquiry the truth of incidents related to specific topics. After that, they will engage actively to share as well as spread the content. Therefore, Dahlberg (2001) concluded that Internet gave the users an instrument to compose messages at their own pace, comprising a greater channel for a rational-critical form of discourse. The active Internet users have increased another opportunity of discourse and started communicating their point of views online.

The study utilizes the most popular social media in the globe, Facebook as a platform to collect the comments from the Malaysians. "Every established news media outlet has a Facebook page in which articles are shared for free with Facebook users who had liked the media's page." (Curci-Wallis, 2019). In short, Facebook has made life, for a significant number of its users, extremely advantageous as currently there is a wide range of various media content are shared on a Facebook user's news feed. Generally, the information shared on Facebook is theoretically free adopted by the general users and found in one space which makes it advantageous to get to too. At the same time, social media advertisement is another a new tool utilized by some identified sponsors to channel out certain information.

According to Internet World Stats (n.d.), which updated for June 30, 2019, among the Malaysians, over a large proportion (81.2%) of them would likely use the Internet. At the

same time, the Facebook subscriber data which updated for December 31, 2018 indicated that there were around 22,000,000 citizens own a Facebook account among the 32,454,455 population in Malaysia. On the other hand, regarding to the statistics published by Statista Research Department, (2019), it showed the number of Facebook users in Malaysia is expected to reach 24.2 million in 2023, up from 22 million in 2017. Therefore, it would not wrong to say that Facebook is the most well-known interpersonal organization around the world. Watching videos, liking content via button, reading articles, giving comments are among the popular functions and activities that provided to the Facebook users.

### **1.1.2 Malaysian Chinese Identity and News Media Preferences in Malaysia**

The media is one of the most significant sources of information. Using social media to get news from media permits an individual to take part in the public eye regardless of whether they are not encountering it straightforwardly. The vast majority see the media as a type of power, a typical wellspring of authentic information, which means individuals take data gave by the media as assumed worth and do not questioned the wellspring of the data (Curci-Wallis, 2019, as cited in Adler & Clark, 2011). It proved that the media as well as these news agencies included online news and traditional mass media are influential in feeding into the political culture by creating a new stage for discussions.

Thus, the study focused on investigating the comments under the posts published by Sin Chew Daily's Facebook page. Sin Chew Daily is among the major Chinese newspaper publications in West Malaysia. It has the highest readership and circulation in Malaysia (Yean, 2012). As a vernacular newspaper in multi-ethnic Malaysia, Sin Chew Daily is additionally expected to function its "traditional role" of imparting data, driving open talk and

crossing over society, and safeguarding society (Luan & Beng, 2018). Consistently, Sin Chew Daily regularly changes its job so as to serve the various needs of its readers, the society and the country. Sin Chew Daily also always exposure to issues identified with ethnicity and religion. On the other hand, past studies showed that various news organizations have started moving commenting from their websites to Facebook, in light of the certain suspicion that commenting on Facebook is a proportional or liked substitute (Kim, Lewis, & Watson, 2018).

Besides, it is critical to take note of the incredible assorted variety among overall Chinese populaces and some key contrasts in identity issues between those living in Greater China and Chinese living somewhere else. Abroad Chinese populaces over the recent hundreds of years have encountered a wide scope of different associations with their new grounds of residence and with their ancestral homeland. Ethnic Chinese populaces in the newly independent nation-states of Southeast Asia tended to root and localize in Southeast Asian societies. For instance, among the descendants of Chinese immigrants had shifted and rooted as cultural citizens of Malaysia, a Southern Asian country. Therefore, since most Chinese living in remote nations have embraced nearby nationalities, it is critical to recognize the minority of “Overseas Chinese” who are Chinese nationals and most of outside nationals who are ethnic Chinese (Wang, 1993). Most of Malaysia’s ethnic Chinese came from Guangdong and Fujian. They can be distinguished sub-ethnically as Cantonese, Hokkien, Teochew, Hakka, Hainanese and so on.

As many authors have mentioned, transnational linkages between far reaching populaces are regarded as a common phenomenon, yet ongoing advances in transportation and

communications innovation have exponentially expanded the speed, scale, and sorts of transnational streams around the world. The researchers and experts have discovered that the expanding transnational associations inside the Chinese sphere have raised the concepts ‘Greater China’ and ‘Cultural China’ to portray Chinese connections that rise above the country state. (Carstens, 2003). This is because starting in the late 1970s, China has made a true leap in its economy and self-advancement that have driven, in the previous two decades, to the dynamic economic impacts globally. Hence, it is obviously to find that during the main portion of the twentieth century, most of Malaysian Chinese kept on recognizing all the more expressly with Chinese beliefs and practices.

At the same time, how the media present news affect the news consumption too. As such, Chinese language newspapers become channels that spread shared requests just as stages to secure the common privileges of the Malaysian Chinese. Sin Chew Daily, earlier known as Sin Chew Jit Poh is a main Chinese-language newspaper in Malaysia that has been operated during the British colonial period in 1929 (Ahmad, Ahmed, Wakichan, Halem, Hussin, & Ganiyu, 2017). Sin Chew Daily has transparently situated itself as the medium to protect the Chinese culture, as the representative of the Chinese-educated community concerning of Chinese education and language (Luan & Beng, 2018). According to Malaysia’s 2019 Media Consumption Report (2019), Sin Chew Daily is the most frequently read Chinese newspaper, with 67% of respondents chose Sin Chew Daily as their news source, following up by China Press with 36 percentage of the respondents. It was a survey conducted by market research company, Vase which consisted of 1,031 Malaysians as respondents in order to investigate the Malaysians’ present media consumption to find out the most accessed news sources and how they feel about the web and innovation.

In addition, the survey revealed social media is the top digital media platforms which respondents frequently use or access (89%). However, online newspapers or news portals are their second choices, which consisted of 41%. These statistics further proved the importance of collecting the netizens' comments under the Facebook page of Sin Chew Daily in Malaysia. It has a greater impact to the public. The Facebook page of Sin Chew Daily has over 1.7 million likes. The paper utilizes content analysis as well as the collection of data as methods approach. At the end, the paper also examines the reactions of the netizens in Malaysia Chinese community regarding to the ongoing COVID-19 and to further understand the Malaysian Chinese identity.

### **1.1.3 A Case Study of Facebook Netizens' Comments on Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)/ Wuhan Coronavirus**

#### ***Case Introduction***

Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) or Wuhan Coronavirus that break out dramatically from Wuhan, China on 2019 is considered as an epidemic crisis and the reactions of the netizens in Malaysia play an important role in illustrating certain characteristics of Chinese transnationalism identity. Moments following exposure of Wuhan coronavirus, social media users flooded Facebook, posting queries about this new coronavirus. These exceptionally obvious and consistently updated messages in some ways has brought up the issue about the impact of social media towards the public. Hence, the study attempts to find out the methods of reasoning for netizens' comments as well as their interaction online in order to reveal potential complexities and nuances of such comments in detail. This is because there is as yet a constrained comprehension on the attributes of netizens taking part actively in giving comments online. Are they do it for no reason in particular? How the netizens in Malaysia



made use of online platforms to direct diverging critiques or expressing their own preferential standpoints? These inquiries have not been tended to in the exploration to date and should be investigated. Therefore, the study will focus on inspecting how the netizens responsiveness associates with a post's content. Further group analysis will be conducted in order to affirm the commentators' behaviours and their collective cognitive abilities.

Under the pressure of a fierce outbreak caused by the new coronavirus, Chinese authorities on January 23 morning closed off Wuhan, a city of more than 11 million people. 2019-nCoV will become our mutual unforgettable memories, particularly for those who have gone through such a traumatic experience with this disaster. It happened during the Lunar New Year and has spread halfway around the world. For instance, United States, Singapore, Japan, Malaysia and so on. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared a global health emergency over the outbreak of this novel coronavirus on Thursday, January 30 (Joseph, 2020). Besides, health officials believe the virus was initially transmitted from animals to humans, but that human-to-human transmission of the flu-like illness is presently happening. The symptoms appear to begin with a fever, trailed by a dry cough and it is believed that the virus can cause extreme intense respiratory infection.

On February 9, Chinese authorities said that the infection would briefly be named the Novel Coronavirus Pneumonia, or NCP because local people in Wuhan have discovered disappointing and slandering to name this rapidly-spreading virus using the name of the city (Westcott, Renton & Dewan, 2020). Subsequently, BBC News (2020) reports on February 11, "The World Health Organization says the official name for the disease caused by the new coronavirus is Covid-19." "We now have a name for the disease and it's Covid-19," WHO

chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters at a press conference in Geneva. It is believed that this action was to keep away from perplexity and derision of any gathering or nation. “We had to find a name that did not refer to a geographical location, an animal, an individual or group of people, and which is also pronounceable and related to the disease. Having a name matters to prevent the use of other names that can be inaccurate or stigmatising. It also gives us a standard format to use for any future coronavirus outbreaks,” the WHO chief further said. The name can straightforwardly convert to COronaVirus Disease 2019.

On February 4, BBC News (2020) reports there have so far been in excess of 17,000 affirmed instances of the coronavirus in China. About 361 individuals have passed away because of this virus. Besides, outside China, there are in excess of 150 affirmed instances of the coronavirus in the globe. It is unexpected, sudden and overwhelming. Undeniably, cases have been identified in a growing number of other international sovereign and experts expect the number of people infected will keep rising. Therefore, global public opinion has also focused on this new deadly coronavirus as well as everyone sparked their concerns on this issue and is eager to express their opinions through social media from all over the world. This is because of the flow of information becomes more and more convenient, the general public are able to accept online information quickly. For example, criticism of Chinese people began to appear on the Internet such as advocating for the exclusion of the Chinese, and even rumours spread that a large number of Chinese people purchased of face masks in the market that eventually caused the surgical masks to be out of stock in Malaysia and so on. However, netizens in Malaysia expressed nuanced, polarizing comments in this case. Vice versa, there were also a large number of kind people gave an enthusiastic response and donated materials

continuously to China. Hence, it seemed interesting to explore the reactions from Malaysian Chinese society in this advanced technology era.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

### **1.2.1 The Influence of Emerging Social Media and Online Public Sphere**

In the recent years, the substantial increase in Internet coverage has encouraged the development of intelligent gatherings that permit the general population, including those from lower financial gatherings, to uncover issues in the public arena. Social pressure regularly stops individuals in ordinary eye to eye interchanges to state what they need since they stress over cultural backfire (Curci-Wallis, 2019). Nevertheless, the public sphere is fundamentally significant for present day social orders. Public sphere is a part of the public activity where individuals can examine their political and social perspectives (Habermas, 1989). Habermas (1991) further defined “public sphere” as “a domain of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed” (p. 398). All things considered; Habermas figured the public sphere as a vote-based space where open interests, sentiments, motivation, and issues are framed, changed, and exchanged by citizens’ proactive participation (Robertson, Vatrapu & Medina, 2010). It fills in as a gathering wherein to convey on the whole significant issues and permits the citizens to illuminate themselves about cultural advancements as well as to observe and control political, monetary and different elites (Gerhards & Schäfer, 2010). In short, as indicated by this model, public communication ought to be consist of a wide scope of relevant topics, assessments and contentions. It further tends to make progress toward the shaping of wide-ranging “popular inclusion” of various people. It increases the level of participation of the people.

However, at the opposite of the spectrum, social media has been blamed for presenting dangers for some Internet users, especially the young generation who actively expressed their perspectives online. Social media has been utilized to encourage “new” violations. For instance, rumours and gossip, in the feeling of finding out about something casually and informally regularly before official receivers, have consistently been a piece of mainstream researchers (Vestergaard, 2017). Be that as it may, rumours as well as gossip can get misrepresented as they spread, yet in any case safeguard an inward centre of exactness (Vestergaard, 2017, as cited in Mishra, 1990). In other words, social media nowadays can be described as uncontrollable, rising above power hierarchies and spreading information clamorously and quickly. As of late, there have been numerous instances of social media spreading rumours or triggering controversies by adding critical comments regarding to the issue of the ongoing COVID-19. It has received a heavy amount of aggressive discussion in different social media platforms. Hence, there is a need to study how social media platforms might contribute to the construction of free commenting media environment in the cyberspace.

### **1.2.2 Chinese Transnationalism and Discourses of Identity**

The second part of this paper will be emphasized on the identity discourses of Malaysian Chinese descents in cyberspace as well as the rising of Chinese transnationalism. This paper contributes to the understanding of Chinese transnationalism as well as Malaysian Chinese Identity. The discourse on ethnic identity is a controversial research topic. Apart from this, the Internet has been considered as another medium with profoundly various properties from conventional broad communications (Chan, 2005, as cited in Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996). Without a doubt, with progresses in worldwide correspondences and transportation advances,

it benefits in the development of aggregate cultural identities by Malaysian Chinese. At the same time, a few researchers have contended that new media advances (particularly the Internet) advance unstable, different, fluid identities and work against the solidification of ethnic identity (Chan, 2005, as cited in Poster, 1995; Turkle, 1995). Therefore, the paper on the other hand turns attention to how the Internet is fully utilized by them in the construction of identity.

China's ascent has been joined by an upheaval of nationalism. The Communist state has propelled a broad purposeful propaganda campaign of instruction in nationalism since the 1990s to guarantee loyalty in a populace. The Communist state has misused nationalism to help re-establish the authenticity of the Communist system and fabricate an expansive base of national help during the change toward a post-socialist society (Zhao, 2009). Nationalism is closely related to online governmental issues in China that it tends to be found in each type of electronic correspondence such as sites, email, SMS, texting and so on – the totality of which establishes an advancing web of hyperlinks, activists and broad social textures (Qiu, 2006). According to Wu (2005), Chinese cyber-nationalism can be understood as a non-government supported ideology or development that has started, existed, and created on China's online sphere in the previous decade (1994-2005). This surging cyber-nationalism has been a remarkable issue in the recent years. It aims to advance the nationalistic causes among Chinese nationalists around the globe through Internet and online sphere.

Furthermore, there are four distinctive Chinese countries keep on existing today. The paper is going to discuss one of these four, which is “Chinese who dwell in other parts of the world but retain a continuing sense of Chineseness, who feel that residence or citizenship in another

country does not prevent political and cultural attachment to China.” (Chan, 2005). As an independent country in Southeast Asia, Malaysia exhibits a special setting for a contextual analysis on new ethnic Chinese. As we known, Malaysia as of now possess an ethnic Chinese larger part in its populace, not to mention the majority of whom are local-born descendants of immigrant arrivals up to the 1940s. And they are well known as Malaysian Chinese. In other words, Malaysian Chinese are those who born in Malaysia. The fact is, we have called Malaysia home because of our precursors cruised over and lived in this land, dated back to hundreds of years ago, which is in the fifteenth century. The history and evolution of ethics Chinese as well as the relationship between the China and Malaysia’s ethnic Chinese will be further explained in chapter two.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

Therefore, the study proposes to ask the following research questions:

*Research Question 1:* How do Facebook users’ comments reveal the influence of online public sphere in promoting free and plural societal communication?

Over the most recent 10 years, user-generated content has become progressively mainstream on the Internet. An ever-increasing number of individuals today take an interest in content creation, instead of just utilization (Halpern & Gibbs, 2013). Apart from this, individuals are obsessed with Facebook because Facebook serves as an implement of social connections and gives a method for recording continuous collaborations (Richardson, & Hesse, 2009). The fact is, the articles posted on Facebook pages gave a social sphere where individuals can write comments whatever they like without dreading social pressure and reaction from this present reality.

*Research Question 2:* How do Facebook users' comments about the outbreak of COVID-19 or Wuhan Coronavirus reflect certain attributes of Chinese ethnonationalism and Chinese transnationalism identity?

The topic of 'what does being Chinese signify' has for some times been inquired, by researchers throughout the years, coming full circle in a noteworthy expansiveness of studies (Chan, 2018). At the same time, "the everyday identity formed by the Malaysian Chinese is fluid, dynamic and situational" (Lee, 2009). 'Older' and 'modern' Chinese identities were isolated where the 'older' identities alluded to patriot recognizable proof with terrain China, and 'modern' identities alluded to confined national identities (Hirschman, 1988). Today, Malaysian Chinese is composed of individuals of the third generation and beyond who are making distinct claims of belonging to and rootedness in Malaysia. However, it is notable that Malaysian Chinese remain passionate and aware with the so called overseas Chinese community affairs, especially when China is rising as a worldwide force and broadening its impact far and wide. Through critical discourse of the text and comments, the study will reflect the ideological underpinnings of Malaysian Chinese netizens' interactions during COVID-19 outbreak.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

1. To study and understand the impacts of Internet in influencing the Facebook comments and shaping the public sphere.
2. To explore the assorted variety of netizens' comments on the outbreak of COVID-19 as well as to find out and comprehend the characteristics of Chinese Ethnonationalism and the construction of Malaysian Chinese identity.

### **1.5 Scope of the study**

The scope of the study is concentrated on analysing the comments as well as words wrote by the Chinese netizens under Sin Chew Daily's posts on Facebook that related to the issue of COVID-19. Facebook page of Sin Chew Daily will be the primary and only social media platform to be studied as it is the most favourable Chinese newspaper in the Malaysian Chinese community. The study distinguished four fundamental kinds of issues and collected these posts or news articles related to COVID-19. These four issues were recognized as the most regularly highlighted in the topic. For instance the lack of face mask, the new protests in Hong Kong fuelled by COVID-19 and so on. These types of posts are considered as emotional posts and are among the most highly popular category as its fundamental goal is to propel individuals to feel positive sentiments. The timespan for the assortment of the information goes from December 2019 to early February 2020. This period is considered to be the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak from Wuhan, China. In addition, according to the master's thesis from Curci-Wallis (2019), the study analysed the top 100 comments which had the most likes and replies. Hence, in this study, the posts or news articles chosen to be analysed are met the requirements of around 200 to 300 comments and above. It is because that the more comments under the posts demonstrates that Facebook users are bound to be keen on the talk of the article or certain issues. Besides, considering that this is solely a preliminary research and the lack of qualitative text analysis tool, the affordability of the study in analysing the text and its meanings is estimated 200 to 300 comments.

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

In the first place, the study could provide information on the issues of COVID-19. This would expectedly heighten the awareness of the public in preventing the outbreak of



coronavirus. The findings of this research would also bring various impacts towards the benefits of society considering that Internet as well as social media such as Facebook news site plays an important role in this advanced technology and modern era. Concentrating on peak periods of discussion, recognized utilizing huge information, the paper intently sees how the public interact and communicate through commenting online too. Nevertheless, this study also intends to provide a framework for future research as well as improve the researchers' understanding about how has media changed and its roles in promoting social change, the netizens' responses to epidemics as well as the perspectives of Malaysian Chinese on their identity in the cyberspace. Lastly, this study would be beneficial to the Chinese community as this study tries to answer the baseline question: "Who I am?" or the identity of Chinese. The study broadens the knowledge of the Malaysian Chinese about their everyday identity as Chinese in Malaysia.

### **1.7 Limitations of the study**

There are numerous limitations in this study while collecting and analysing the comments and words using by the netizens through Facebook. First and foremost, this is because the time allocated to complete the first three chapters of this final year project is only 14 weeks. However, collecting 300 comments or above under each post is very time consuming. Therefore, the Facebook users' comments taken for analysis have been limited and solely certain issues will be discussed. Nevertheless, the outbreak of COVID-19 is unexpected, sudden and overwhelming. Thus, the lack of prior research studies on this topic limits the scope of study too.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 The Development of Internet and Social Media

The Internet and social media have fully penetrated into our daily lives, which is an inevitable phenomenon. The development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is both an output and a medium in the process of reshaping social and political change (Orrù, 2014). First and foremost, present day methods of correspondence and the flexibility of new Internet-based media make keeping associations across tremendous separations both simpler and fundamental (Aguirre & Bell, 2018). They empower, for example, families to keep up consistent collaboration and feel a feeling of closeness in spite of being isolated by distance (Aguirre & Bell, 2018, as cited in Madianou & Miller, 2012; Miller, 2011; Pertierra, 2012). Existing studies have recommended a few methods by which Internet based life can impact aggregate activity, for example, giving mobilizing data and news not accessible in other media, encouraging the coordination of demonstrations, permitting users to join political discourse and making chances to exchange opinions with others (Valenzuela, 2013, as cited in Bennett & Segerberg, 2011; Chadwick & Howard, 2008; Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2011). Indeed, people are progressively dependent on the Internet for regular exercises, for example, the adoption of daily news, paying bills or basically keep in touch with our family and friends.

The Internet has numerous special and beneficial highlights that can assist outsiders with developing a feeling of cultural belonging too. It is dissimilar to traditional vernacular newspapers with a limited readership. For a long time, for all intents and purposes the main route for readers to openly comment on the news was to do so through letters to the editor in newspapers (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002). However, with the advancement of the Internet and

news sites in the late 1990s, the number of comments online is increasing. The speed of correspondence and the worldwide reach offered by the Internet permits quick activation of ethnic networks during basic occasions (Chan, 2005). Besides, the generally lower expenses of distributing on the Internet gives diaspora societies, regardless of how little they are, with the way to convey among themselves for an enormous scope (Chan, 2005, as cited Zhang, & Hao, 1999). In short, Internet is cross-regional and developed as a new culture as all the Internet users are accessible to any kind of information in this digitalized planet no boundaries. The social structure as well as social behaviour change due to the transformation of communication environment.

Secondly, the Information and Communication Technology tools are encouraging effective communication. It is worth mentioning that social networking sites (SNSs) has the potential to democratise communication. Social networking communication enables the individuals to access and stay connected with one another online 24 hours a day. Social networks, particularly Facebook developed in popularity and significance, setting up itself as a powerful tool for sharing information, goals and opinions (Orrù, 2014). Social networking sites (SNSs) provided a new form of social interaction through their multiple communication channels. Besides, social networking sites (SNSs) advance the formation of common interest groups that assist users in planning aggregate activity (Valenzuela, Park & Kee, 2008). Interaction thorough social networking sites as well as social media might be very effective at activating people to engage in a social process.

“A word on definitions: the term ‘social media’ is related to, but not synonymous with, the more general notion of information and communication technology (ICT). Social media refers to a number of online tools that facilitate the creation and sharing of highly interactive and user-generated content. These

include networking sites, bulletin board systems, chat rooms, micro-blogging and instant message services, as well as photo and video-sharing sites.” (Gunitsky, 2015).

Several research findings published the discourses about the role of social media platforms in facilitating open discussion, especially on account of news content (Braun & Gillespie, 2011). Social media can likewise advance individual and gathering personality development by permitting different channels for relational criticism, peer acknowledgment, and reinforcement of group norms (Papacharissi, 2010). In addition, social network concentrates on comprehending how patterns of relationship associate people, individuals, gatherings or associations produce chances and contexts for human behaviour (Mustafa, Kandasamy, & Yasin, 2015). Furthermore, social media serves as a basis for the people to pick up knowledge into the conditions of others through discussion and social correspondence, associating with family, companions, and society resulting in imparting enthusiasm for aggregate issues. By permitting individuals to think about thoughts, expand contentions, and reflect on the data gained, discussion on social media is a useful way as social media is functioned as a tool to create, distribute and share information. Social media also can encourage access to an enormous number of contacts, subsequently empowering social developments to arrive at minimum amount. Among the several roles and functions of social media as mentioned previously for instance a tool to communicate, a way of self-expression, the study paid more attention to its role in the formation or construction of representation as well as identity. The cultural identity may affected by the growing influence of social networking sites (SNSs) as well as social media as the construction of identity is the main point of discussion in this study. The visible rise in the use of social media in Malaysia in the recent years subconsciously made a remarkable increment in netizens’ interaction with others on social media platform. Specifically, Facebook, the chosen social media platform as unit

analysis in this study is regarded as a fluid stage for introducing and overseeing the changing individual and social identity.

### **2.1.1 A Brief History of Facebook and Its Usage**

Facebook remains the most mainstream social media platform, with its users visiting the webpage more consistently than users of other social media sites. Facebook was first launched in 2004 for educational purposes. Mark Zuckerberg is the founder of Facebook. Facebook's advancement is recorded in a more extended Web historical point of view with the end goal of recognizing a general system for Internet improvement. On 4 February 2004, the Web administration thefacebook.com opened for understudies at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts as it became feasible for Harvard understudies to make a profile page with individual data and to keep in touch with one another (Brügger, 2015). Subsequently, the site was available to American universities. It was nothing unexpected that Facebook developed rapidly and its increment in the quantity of users and users' eagerness has proved that Facebook was an accomplishment in the first phase.

The progress to the second stage in the historical backdrop of Facebook as media content occurred in the spring of 2006. In May 2006, Facebook quit being a simply education-based system and opened up to representatives of specific organizations, for instance Apple and Microsoft (Brügger, 2015). At that point it got conceivable to make new kinds of Facebook pages, aside from individual profile pages. In November 2007, Facebook started to concentrate on urging organizations to take part in this developing interpersonal organization (Vorvoreanu, 2009). Furthermore, an increasingly modern and coordinated promoting stage was added to the straightforward standard publicizing stage: the Facebook Ads administration,

which was propelled in November 2007 (Brügger, 2015). The subsequent stage kept on extending full power after 2008, which is to present Facebook in cell phones. Lastly, Facebook, which initially focussed on college-aged undergrads, gain the 28% of users who beyond the age of 34 as a fast-growing demographic group in 2010 (Wilson, Gosling, & Graham, 2012). Facebook drastically characterizes as connecting the people around and it would not wrong to say that Facebook had triumphed over the other social networking sites in the recent years. At the same time, the reason Facebook became more and more popular is it constantly kept upgraded with rolling out some new features.

Nowadays, in United States, around eight-in-ten online Americans (79%) presently use Facebook, a 7-rate point increment from a review led at a comparable point in 2015 (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). Rambe (2012) also claimed that “Facebook is among the most trafficked social networking sites (SNSs) on the Internet.” The fact is that Facebook has formed into a great number of spaces or sub-stages, which makes it progressively significant for researchers to dissect the space as numerous and specific circumstances (Schwartz, 2015). Additionally, Facebook’s characteristic on its obscuring of the gap among private and open discussion through ‘imagined audiences’ and ‘collision of contexts’ (Rambe, 2012, as cited in Boyd, 2011). People use Facebook to keep up connections inside their interpersonal organization. At the same time, to create and articulate their identities online (Stern & Taylor, 2007; Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008). Due to the all the competitive advantages owned by Facebook, the number of Facebook users definitely keeps on increasing in a dramatic rate not only in United States, but all over the world.

On the other hand, Facebook comments are helpful for exploring certain implications on the grounds that dissimilar to conventional media, a large portion of the comments are typically introduced in their unedited structure (Felicia, 2018, as cited in Chiluya & Ajiboye, 2016). Similar with numerous other Internet-based platforms, Facebook not just give approaches to convey, yet additionally work as foundation of self-articulation, portrayal and character development (Aguirre & Bell, 2018, as cited in Ellison, 2013; Hiller and Franz, 2004; Wandel and Beavers, 2010). Facebook is well known over a wide swath of segment gatherings and in various nations, so it offers a special wellspring of data about human conduct with levels of ecological validity that are difficult to coordinate in most basic research settings (Wilson, Gosling, & Graham, 2012). Briefly, Facebook enables the users to conduct an informal and unregulated discussions where democratic expression of views is allowed. Specifically, Facebook presents a progressively mobile stage for introducing and overseeing individual and social personality as well as identity through the ‘comment’ function on Facebook.

### **2.1.2 Jürgen Habermas’s Public Sphere Model**

In order to analyse how the digital media can shape identity issues, the study applies Jürgen Habermas’s Public Sphere Model. First and foremost, Habermas (1989) contended that the public sphere is a domain that rose in a particular period of ‘bourgeois society’ and it is established as:

- A space that mediates between civil society and the state;
- A place where the public organizes itself;
- An arena in which ‘public opinion’ is formed.

The emergence of bourgeoisie during the early Europe Middle Ages attempted to engage in the public affairs or public concerns as argued by Habermas, all the citizens have the ability to engage in the society. However the inclusiveness is limited by an irrational critical and undemocratic thinking's environment. For example, the way the mass media operate during the period of traditional print media: there is no interaction between the editors as well as media with the audiences or readers. The public opinion may shaped or dictated by the government, media ownership, advertisings interests or public relations. Nevertheless, to characterize the boundaries of the public sphere, Dahlberg (2004) contended it is the type of communication, but not the content after reviewing Jürgen Habermas's Public Sphere Model. He further explained,

“When talking of the public sphere, Habermas is not talking about a specific, bounded public, but the whole array of complex networks of multiple and overlapping publics constituted through the critical discourse of individuals, community groups, civic associations, social movements, and media organizations. By the public sphere, Habermas is also referring to the idealized form of public reasoning.”

Gradually, Internet appeared as a stage to discuss the contemporary global issues. The public sphere is distinguished from the past. “The Internet is an extension of the public sphere, where critical and rational discussions are to be held” (Ruiz, Domingo, Micó, Díaz-Noci, Meso, & Masip, 2011, as cited in Dahlberg, 2001). Yochai Benkler (2006) further advocated the public sphere made the individuals easier to impart messages successfully as well as permits people to reorient themselves from passive users or audience members to potential speakers and members in a discussion due to the popularity of the Internet. Besides, Manuel Castells (2009) claimed the development of the new public sphere in the network society continues by creating conventions of correspondence between various correspondence forms.



The literatures indicated people can freely involve themselves in such a public sphere as well as take part in the discussion of the bearing of the society for example the discussion dependent on conversational fairness, equality and so on.

However, Habermas argued that public sphere is solely shaped when the communicative rationality inside the informal interaction occurred in a public space of democracy. Thus, in the Internet era, Habermas also doubted the effectiveness and potential of this new sphere as a rational debate. Fuchs (2014) agreed that only every individual acts politically in like manner for a joint objective that cultivates participatory democracy rather than financial and state power, social association will transform into a public sphere. This is thereby what Habermas proposed, a sphere that liberated from particularistic controls such as state restriction and from private possession. ‘Equality’, ‘rationality’, ‘vertical relationship’, ‘truthfulness of expressions’ are among the few essential presumptions as well as elements when discussing the transformation of public sphere.

### **2.1.3 Analyse Netizens’ Comments: The Power of Discourse and Text and Stuart Hall’s Representation Theory**

Commenting on the news is the most widely recognized type of participation in contemporary news use, and it is absolutely one of the most well-known types of citizen engagement online. In view of the developing ubiquity of leaving and reading comments online, these spaces for open talk have become a significant issue for communication research (Kim, Lewis, & Watson, 2018). “The textual nature of social media” may bring about interchanges that are more “goal oriented” than face-to-face conversations (Valenzuela, 2013, as cited in Berger, 2009). News comment sections remain generally utilized and possibly generative types of

open talk (Ruiz, Domingo, Micó, Díaz-Noci, Meso, & Masip, 2011). Furthermore, the feature of comment on Facebook enables its users as well as the netizens utilize their real Facebook account and identity when engaging in any discussion online. Hence, how the commentators foster their public participation through their uses of texts, language is essential to be further investigate. This is an important part to understand the key concepts of cultural studies such as representation, discourse, text and so on.

According to Stuart Hall (1997), representation is a basic piece of the procedure by which meaning is delivered and exchanged between individuals from a culture and it comprised by the utilization of language of signs and pictures which represent or speak to things. On the other hand, Fairclough (2003) proposed, the term 'discourse' (in what is broadly called 'discourse analysis') implies the specific perspective on language being used as a component of social life which is firmly interconnected with different components. In general, the term 'language' indicates verbal language such as words and sentences. And lastly, the term 'text' refers to "any actual instance of language in use" (Fairclough, 2003) included visual images, sound effects, transcripts of conversations, just to name a few. The interpretation of text can be viewed as a complicated procedure with different various perspectives which involves a matter of understanding. It included the study from what words, sentences or longer stretches of text mean to furthermore the intentions or attributions of the writers attempt to express. Thus, to interpreting text and determining certain ideologies underlying the texts, discourse analysis is an elective way to deal with it. Rather than concentrating on the media texts or the original posts wrote by the author or editor, the discourse analysis approach endeavours to get a handle on the comments left as well as its verifiable implications of writings and uncover their fundamental and concealed presumption. The study thus moves to a discourse analysis of the netizens' comments and texts. Stuart Hall contended, "It isn't the individual

components of a discourse that have political or ideological meanings, it is the manners in which those components are composed together in another discursive formation” (Grossberg, 1986). Discourse is the most significant demonstration of identifying with ‘text and textuality’ (Roman & Roman, 2014). Also, discourse is defined as “language as social practice determined by social structures” (Orrù, 2014, as cited in Fairclough, 1989). Briefly, discourse somehow formed the social orders and our awareness of the world. Consequently, the texts as well as the written or spoken language is glanced on as in a consistent and shared relationship with social issues, so it is continually socially moulded and socially forming (Orrù, 2014, as cited in Fairclough, 1995). In other words, discourse is the utilization of language comparative with social, political, and social developments as language plays a non-linguistic role in the representation of social relations. It contains a process of producing meanings within a space. Hence, texts included oral, written or multimodal are to a certain extent, liable for framing identities, knowledge, and relationships.

Under the impact of social constructionism, identity has become the result of individuals’ social practice (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 2003) and is developed during the period of interactive negotiation of different social practices for example discursive practice, and it is changeable (Ye, Cheng, & Zhao, 2019). For all the reasons counted up until now, it is normal that there ought to be a connection between generally frequency of social media use in the contemporary life and the construction of identity. The Internet as well as social media platform (Facebook) presents bipolar powers in the manner an ethnic is imaged. Past research has demonstrated that observations about the nature and reaction of users could influence a message maker’s practices (Gans, 1957; Goffman, 1959; Ross, 2014). Thus, the study emphasizes on a qualitative exploration of how online discussion is conducted and examines the netizens’ comments to understand their certain features as a Chinese. The study proposes

focusing the most well-known type of crowd interest, comments in news. The rise of the usage of commenting online as a new form of interaction and expression of opinions sparked as an interesting topics in the researches relating communication.

## **2.2 Chinese Identity, Chineseness and Chinese Transnationalism**

### **2.2.1 Identity**

“In a world of global flows of wealth, power, and images, the search for identity, collective or individual, ascribed or constructed, becomes the fundamental source of social meaning. This is not a new trend, since identity, and especially religious and ethnic identity, has been at the roots of meaning since the dawn of human society. Yet identity is becoming the main, and sometimes the only, source of meaning in an historical period characterized by widespread destructuring of organizations, delegitimization of institutions, fading away of major social movements, and ephemeral cultural expressions.” (Castells, 2000).

Identity is a key concept in cultural studies. According to Chris Barker (2012), self-identity is the originations we hold about ourselves and our passionate recognizable proof with those self-portrayals while social identity refers to the expectations and suppositions that others have of us. Therefore, identity is about similarity and difference, about the personal and the social, ‘about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others’ (Weeks, 1990). In other words, it always concerns about ‘perceived similarities’. Identity is about a procedure that is socially developed and interceded, challenged, various, and liquid and which speaks to individuals’ lived encounters over existence.

However, identity is subject to change. Stuart Hall's (1996) proposed identity is constantly an impermanent connection to places of subjectivity. Identity seen across various timescales conceivably gives data about what parts of one's identity are progressively malleable and thus open to modification. As individuals relocate across borders, the recreation of identity might be enhanced because of the occasionally extraordinary social and semantic changes that can happen.

On the other hand, Barker (2012) mentioned, ethnicity, race and nationality are other forms of cultural identity. Firstly, race typically referred to certain biological features for instance skin colour and appearance. The idea of "racism" fundamentally developed and assumed as an important concept in self-representation as a member of a community. This concept moved ceaselessly from its natural premise towards new, and increasingly inconspicuous, ways of exploitation, mainly focused on social and cultural components (Orrù, 2014). Secondly, according to Dahbour (2002), the concept of national identity has been utilized with expanding recurrence, particularly by philosophers contending for the authenticity of a standard of political self-assurance. Benedict Anderson (1983) even characterized nation as an 'imagined political community'. He further investigated how nationalism functioned as an issue of "symbol, social relationships, and categories of consciousness".

This is apparent in the development of the Chinese conventional national character. Prior to present day times, China followed the Huaxia (华夏) thought that "those unfamiliar" to them most likely have various personalities, as this concept is regarded as 'Huaxia-centralism' (Wu, 2012). It brought a huge impact to the Chinese. For example, the delimitation between the inside and the outskirts, oneself and different, has had a significant

effect on the development of Chinese conventional social personality. These glorified mental self-view terms: “Confucian”（儒家）, “virtue”（美德）, “superiority”（优越感）, “World Empire”（世界帝国） have generally established the premise of Chinese national-cultural identity. This is much increasingly clear when a culture with solid financial and military sponsorship affects another gathering.

Thirdly, based on Appiah (2004), ethnic identity is characterized as an individual’s perception on their participation in a social gathering and the value and passionate significance attached to that enrolment. At the point when oneself treats the different as an element of distinction and endeavors to bring it into its own circle, oneself acquires a solid feeling of personality and of belonging. In short, ethnic identity can be alluded to a feeling of having a place with a specific or accepted ancestry and origin. However, Max Weber (1978) declared there was a link between nationality and ethnicity in that the two of them share an unclear implication that “whatever is felt to be distinctively common must derive from common descent”. For example, it is notable that since the 1911 upheaval drove by Sun Yat-sen, the construction of Chinese identity is to a greater extent, viewed as a political develop rather than of a cultural creation, particularly to those “Chinese Overseas”. The concept of Chinese identity is rather complicated to be embrace by the Malaysian Chinese. From the foundation of the People Republic of China (1949) to the present, the Chinese ethnic identity keeps changes in a different path.

### **2.2.2 Chineseness and Chinese Transnationalism**

Werner Meissner (2006) is a China’s researcher who proclaimed that the concept of China and Chinese identity began to spread in the nineteenth century. “Chineseness”（中国性、华

人性) alludes to the nature and awareness of being Chinese, in understanding the connections inside and among Chinese social orders (Lo, 2016, as cited in Wang, 1993; Harding, 1993). Furthermore, Lee (2014) claimed Chineseness as ‘everyday-defined’. China’s Qing dynasty encountered a traumatic defeat by the stronger Western powers. Therefore, the character of being “Chinese” was to a great extent made in the late nineteenth century by Qing tradition scholarly people as a reaction towards the intrusions of Western forces (Irgengioro, 2018). It indicated that their national consciousness was beginning to awaken in the late nineteenth century. They shifted from the concept of ‘Huaxia-centralism’ as well as embodied by Confucianism and the belief of ‘they are at the center of the world’s civilization’. And, indeed, the founder of the Republic of China, Sun Yat-Sen became the representative among these nationalists in the mainland China. Thus, Chinese nationalism can be regarded as a new creation under the external threats faced by China.

Gradually, the identity faces a transcultural problem. There were literatures contented that the thought of Chineseness can be defined as a racial type of recognizable proof reaching out beyond the boundaries of the nation-state (Gabriel, 2013). Andrea Louie (2004) also argued it has took into consideration the presence of a class of individuals of Chinese descent who no longer live on China soil however who are as yet viewed as racially Chinese. Louie’s contention is related to the Malaysian case, where Chineseness is comparatively comprehended as far as the essence of race. Chineseness characterized by a few components, specifically language, culture, association with terrain China, and ideas of ethnicity, just to name a few (Chan, 2005, as cited in Lee, 2014). In short, it is a subjective term as it depends on how the people characterize themselves and are seen by others. For instance, the Chinese in Malaysia always define themselves as “Malaysian Chinese”, despite the fact that the ancestors of the Malaysian Chinese were originally immigrants from China.

On the other hand, “Chinese overseas” can be translated as 华侨 which alluded to those Chinese nationals who incidentally dwelling abroad. This “Chinese Oversea” or Huaqiao (华侨) identity was politically developed in the range of 1880 and 1950 and was utilized first by the Royal administration and afterward by reformist and radical emissaries sent to another country to disturb among ethnic and abroad Chinese (Benton, 2003). The distribution area is mainly in Southeast Asia such as Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia and so on. The fact is, from the period of sojourning, Chinese overseas began to build up and make contributions to their own society in respective terrains. Looking at the range of chronicled encounters and the changing social situations, there has additionally grown another awareness of identity. Thus, Wang (1993) proclaimed:

“Today, ‘huaqiao’ (华侨) no longer includes those who have become foreign nationals. Since most Chinese living in foreign countries have adopted local nationalities, it is important to distinguish between the minority of ‘Overseas Chinese’ who are Chinese nationals and the majority of foreign nationals who are ethnic Chinese.”

Apart from Huaqiao (Chinese overseas) (华侨), Huayi (Chinese descendants) (华裔), Huazu (ethnic Chinese) (华族), Huaren (Chinese people) (华人) are the subsequently label given to these Chinese migrants and their posterity (Cheun, 2016). These were the numerous steps included in the process of identity change and new personality formation among the Chinese and their descendants. However, in English, they are solely unified translated to ‘Chinese’.

In the recent years, globalization imagines the formation of transnational systems, whose distinguishing proof with a specific state does not get rid of the sustaining of a transnational



identity, or identities for that matter (Lincicome, 2005). The condition of globalization is somehow interconnected with the mobility of cultural through cyberspace. “Trans” indicates both traveling through space or across lines, and changing the idea of something. Thus, transnationalism alludes to the cultural specificities of worldwide procedures, which follows the variety of the utilizations and originations of “culture” (Law, & Lee, 2006, as cited in Ong, 1999). It is a process of dispersing and expanding the social, political as well as cultural elements beyond the sovereign jurisdictional boundaries of nation-states. The result is, identity is constantly challenged by the fluid lawful and social portrayals of migrants.

In further characterizing “Chinese transnationalism”, Sun and Sinclair (2015) proposed the three elements of development and circulation; connectedness, streams, linkages, and systems; and a removing from customary culture. Indeed, Chinese transnationalism is changing with China turning into a significantly more dynamic and powerful country. As China turns into an increasingly self-assured player in Chinese transnationalism, it additionally brings the “Chinese overseas” into its monetary and social circle. In other words, the Chinese who sojourned in Southern Asia countries as well as their next generation became China’s economic weapon. China has endeavored to utilize the abroad Chinese people group as a network of influence abroad and to develop and recommend that their definitive faithfulness is to China, as opposed to their “adopted home”. For instance, Chinese Malaysians become significant accomplices and members in the development of China (Barker, 2018). The impact of the spread of Chinese transnationalism’s ideology in Malaysian Chinese society is, the ethnic Chinese in Malaysia have little feeling of loyalty to the “host country” and recognize it as “home country”. It seemed dangerous to the society.

### 2.2.3 The Power of Communist Lead China

Before the nineteenth century, China exists as an empire rather than a nation-state. After the Xinhai Revolution (辛亥革命) occurred in 1911, the Qing dynasty ended as the last empire dynasty and the Republic of China (ROC) (中华民国) is established in China. However, in 1949, the Kuomintang (KMT) (国民党) is defeated by Communist Party of China (CPC) (中国共产党), which subsequently formed the government in China, People's Republic of China (PRC) (中华人民共和国) until now. In Chinese history, China Proper might itself be isolated, succumbing to remote intrusion, or breaking down into various adversary Chinese states. Be that as it may, the consequent stage in the dynastic cycle was that, in time, the realm would reconstitute itself. A solid political power would reunify the areas of China Proper, restoring a ground-breaking focal government (Harding, 1993). It is regarded as a unique element in China political culture. It seemed as a true statement when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) succeed in reunifying the China in a significantly progressive way.

Within China, the concept of strong nationalism which emerged in the nineteenth century always flooded among the Chinese. The major thought is clear: to a large number of Chinese's netizens nowadays, devotion to the country takes priority over other identities, belief systems and political activities (Qiu, 2006). Nationalist emotion is authoritatively communicated as 爱国 or 爱国主义. Nationalism is a successful instrument of the Communist state on the grounds that a chronicled feeling of injustice on account of other nations is profoundly established and a 强国梦 (the fantasy of a solid China) is truly shared by all strolls of Chinese individuals (Zhao, 2009). In other words, patriotism is a lot of

present day thoughts that focuses individuals' loyalty upon the nation-state, either existing or wanted.

For instance, AOL Time Warner's CNN news service (television and Internet) keeps on being restricted in China (Weber, 2003). 'Netizens' even set up nationalistic sites, for example, [www.anti-cnn.com](http://www.anti-cnn.com) (with a thematic tune entitled 'China's Return to Prosperity Cannot Be Prevented') and [www.dalai-liar.com](http://www.dalai-liar.com) (Liu, 2012). There was a song rapped by a cub and joined by a video flowed substantially in the Internet too, with the title 'Do not be too CNN'. This expression 'don't be too CNN' became one of the most well-known online articulations in China in 2008 (Liu, 2012). All of these are a type of nationalism among the Chinese in China in the cyberspace. Nationalism comprises the 'most feasible political talk among Chinese netizens (Liu, 2012, as cited in Qiu, 2003). It is considered as an effort made by the government who attempts to control the Internet and contends as an endeavor to keep up social order. It resulted in counteraction of the liberal capability of the Web. In other words, the administration utilizes every single accessible medium innovation to control data spread that unsupported the present political or monetary circumstance and, hence, ensuring national security. Hence, it would not wrong to say that the leaders and administrators have an important role in developing the concept of nationalism.

The concept of nationalism not only made a great extent of impact in the domestic, however to a huge number of Chinese all over the world through the convenience bringing by the cyberspace in the late twenty century. China is full with historical, regional and administrative complexities, as well as the procedures of Chinese transnationalism and globalization have made social orders and economies significantly more incorporated and

associated (Barker, 2018). As China rose all through the 1990s as probably the biggest economy in the globe, the Chinese state set out on a portrayal of innovation and social distinction that is focused in Asia (Weber, 2003, as cited in Ong, 1996). The term “Greater China” (大中华) is no longer strange for the people all over the world in the past decade. The term has showed up in the title texts of significant papers and magazines and has been the subject of meetings supported by noticeable research organizations. It in this manner joins different expressions such as “the new world order,” “the end of history,” “the Pacific Century” and the “clash of civilizations” (Harding, 1993). Harding (1993) further categorized it into three subjects, which are ‘economic integration, cultural interaction and political reunification within the international Chinese community.’ It can be simply understood as the new connection among the remote Chinese people group. This idea can be all the more complicatedly characterized as a marvel that involves different intra-Greater China communications, which force a few procedures that quicken both the incorporation and breaking down among Chinese social orders (Lo, 2016, as cited in Shambaugh 1995; Cheung 2004). All of these China’s assertive actions towards the Chinese in the globe aims to expand themselves and depict China as a profoundly regarded universal actor and in this way improve their domestic authenticity.

It is worth mentioning that the term ‘Greater’ was also used by Japan when it occupied Asian countries during the World War II in the twenty century. It, so called ‘The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere’, was an ideological solidarity of Asia under the surface of common advantage and government assistance of Japan and different countries inside the Sphere (Giles Nathaniel, 2015). However, its failure reason was, the flawed objective of true co-prosperity in this policy for the nationalists in Southeast Asia. Despite its failure, the best inheritance of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere is the introduction of nationalism

in Southeast Asia (Giles Nathaniel, 2015). It played a significant lead job. It is because embarrassment in the wars with Japan virtually made new sentiments of patriotism in China.

In the late 1970s, the term “Greater China” (大中华) further emerged to talk about the development of monetary ties between Hong Kong and mainland China that was caused by the post-Mao reforms and to feature the possibilities that a comparative development may happen in the business relations among Taiwan and the mainland China (Giles Nathaniel, 2015). In other words, the mainland Chinese government has hence used a progression of approaches to invigorate business relations with Hong Kong and Taiwan. Under the concept of “Greater China”, social collaboration of individuals of Chinese descent, again across global limits has been expanded.

Apart from this, the term ‘imagined community’ is considered as another political means used by the China government to make, intercede and continue social impression of Chinese innovation. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Benedict Anderson’s (1983) ‘imagined community’ is an imagination in constructing a nation. It further utilized by the China government in order to let the Chinese believed and perceived themselves as a particular group although the lack of face-to-face communication. Nowadays, the idea of ‘imagined China’ is reflected in the flexible systems found in China’s present social and financial administration models, evoked through the formalization and execution of spiritual civilization and which show inside government media approach and guidelines (Weber, 2003). Apart from domestic community, the transnational Chinese community is another “imagined community” that came to reach out over the globe. This idea of “spiritual

civilization” has been a piece of the talk of present day Chinese society since the open door policy in China was started in 1978.

Lastly, it is worth repeating that the word “Chinese transnationalism” emerged in 1980s. He and Guo (2000) attempted to comprehend the multifaceted idea of Chinese nationalism by recognizing state nationalism from mainstream patriotism, and super nationalism from ethno-patriotism. The Communist Party state creates the conventions and social images for the Chinese country and characterizes the substance of enthusiasm. Super nationalism is a pan-Chinese nationalism that advocates a Great Chinese Nation (大中华民族) (Chan, 2005). By supporting a worth framework that persistently evokes the uniqueness of the Chinese race and advancement of Confucian and communist qualities, outside media groups strengthen the idea of a localized modern Chinese ‘world’ as discrete from the worldwide world (Weber, 2003). Besides, there were numerous studies proved the significance of Southeast Asian district, particularly Malaysia to the rising China’s desire, and furthermore to the developing influence and abundance of China and expanding transnational associations inside the Chinese sphere. Also, the development and reconciliation of financial action in the Asia-Pacific locale are resulting from the “Chinese transnationalism” (Ong & Nonini, 1997). All of these demonstrated the capacity of China’s government in using its soft power to expand its influences towards the Chinese all over the world.

### **2.3. The History of Malaysian Chinese Identity and Its Continuity**

Again, Malaysia is a multiethnic country. As we known, the politically overwhelming ethnic gatherings are the indigenous Malays, who structure a slight larger part of the populace, followed by the Chinese and a littler Indian minority. However, the apparently developing

polarization among these three significant races is a developing concern as it is considered as a danger in nation building or nation solidarity. Past researchers claimed, provincial Asian social orders, in contrast to the basically homogeneous western countries, shared neither a typical social will nor social bonds (Gabriel, 2013, as cited in Furnivall, 1944). Besides, Donthu & Cherian (1992) contended that individuals with more grounded ethnic personalities are substantially more faithful to their ethnic gatherings and conventional values, and are additionally bound to carry on in manners predictable with these values. At the same time, regardless of the fast modernization of Asian nations through connecting into worldwide economic development and generally stable political and social request, there remain worries over issues of cultural autonomy (Weber, 2003). It seemed as a problem to the Malaysian government to foster a true national reconciliation. It is because ethnic groups can be viewed as a political power in the country. And, the truth is, ethnic strain in our country, Malaysia was long-standing ingrain as well as heritages from the provincial time frame.

According to Department of Statistics Malaysia (2019), Malaysia's populace in 2019 is assessed at 32.6 million and Chinese ethnic group consisted of 22.8%. The history of Malaysian Chinese has been briefly mentioned in Chapter 1 and further elaborated in this chapter. This particular gathering, Malaysian Chinese is an intriguing exploration focus for this study to investigate the cultural identity of ethnic Chinese. This is because Malaysian Chinese are less "acculturated" than Chinese in neighboring nations of Southeast Asia, for example, Thailand and Philippines. (Freedman, 2001). In the worldwide setting, Malaysia is nevertheless one of the numerous areas where new Chinese migrants created their footholds. Despite the fact that most of Chinese community in Malaysia do not bolster the recommendation that Southern Asia turned into China's "backyard", however there remains Malaysian Chinese who consider China as their "motherland" (祖国). Indeed, even some

of them accept that as China rises and its impact extends, the lives of abroad Chinese in Southern Asia will enormously improve. They didn't understand they had turned out to be vulnerable focuses of destructive, populist political sentiments. However, there is a certain objective historical context in Malaysian Chinese society.

There were few waves of the movements of the Chinese migrants. Truly, the Chinese have hundreds of years old dwelling in Malaya since the times of the past. Their appearances in Malaya happened in a few stages that can be arranged in three primary stages comprise of the earliest settlements of the Chinese, during the British provincial time and the post-autonomy Malaya. First and foremost, in the earlier period in fifteenth century, Malacca was in the underlying phases of its improvement and development and looked for the insurance from China specifically from the Ming Dynasty (Abdullah, 2013). Zheng He (郑和) subsequently acknowledged the status of Malacca as a focal point of universal exchange had spared Malacca from the dangers of Siam (Wang, 1991). Gradually, as Malacca appeared as a successful international trade center, there were traders from the countries throughout the world including China, India, Arabs, Persia and furthermore merchants from Europe. A large number of the Chinese traders, a considerable lot of whom are came from Fujian region, married the local ladies and settled down in Melaka. At the same time, during this period, Princess Hang Li Po of the Ming Dynasty was sent from China to marry the Sultan of Malacca, Sultan Mansur Shah. The princess also carried with her a company of 500 high-positioning youngsters and a large amount of hundred handmaidens as every one of whom inevitably settled in Peninsular Malaya. These escorts of Hang Li Po were defined as the ancestors of this Peranakan Chinese community (Tan, 1993). It is accepted that some of them had intermarried with the local Malay community, birthing another ethnic grouping known as the Chinese Peranakan, now and then just alluded to as Baba and Nyonya. This was the



starting point of the diplomatic relation between China and Malaya and the earliest recognizable settlement of the Chinese in Malacca.

Secondly, the second wave happened in the nineteenth century. As the British colonial system expanded its grasp over the whole Peninsular Malaya in this period, the number of labors in different ethnic groups that imported into colonial Malaya was increasing in a mushrooming rate. The British imported the apparently hardworking Chinese and Indians to Malaya to develop their regional exploitation and this made a division of work on a racial premise (Law, & Lee, 2006). After the 1820s, a larger number of Chinese immigrants entered the Malay Peninsula and concentrated on Sungei Ujong, Selangor and Perak (Chen, 2012). The reason was these places are rich with tin mining. Besides, the reason for the large number of Chinese people moving out during this period was that China suffered from the revolutionary war of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. In 1860, the Convention of Peking further allowed their citizens to go abroad to work as contract labors in order to seek a better life. They are well-known as “coolie” who work in labor-intensive industries. In order to seek for protection, most of these workers joined the secret society (private party) and became the members. The workers who worked in the mining industry were mostly members of these types of secret societies as they provided material needs and security secure to these poor workers. Slowly, these Chinese ancestors settled in Malaya and created particular territorial characters that veered from those on the Mainland China.

Last but not least, the third wave started during the post-autonomy Malaya. In 1957, Malaysia gained independence from the colonial British. At the same time, from 1949 to 1990, Chinese movement to Southeast Asia basically stopped and most of the Chinese diaspora changed

from “migrants” to “citizens” of the new country-states in that area (Cheun, 2016). Among abroad Chinese who settled in Malaya, social convictions and practices were formed by their Chinese origins, yet in addition through associations with individuals from other ethnic societies, just as by the British provincial presence. Then, as Malaya moved towards autonomy from Britain, Chinese inhabitants were urged to concentrate on the development of an all the more locally defined Chinese Malayan social personality (Carstens, 2003, as cited in Carstens 1988). For example, after the World War II, the strong identity rose as Chinese started to consider themselves not just in relation to the colonial British but as Malaysian Chinese.

However, there is coexistence in society that the Chinese still held transnational linkages and binds to Chinese social customs and practices despite the independence of Malaysia. It proved that the newly independent Malaysia unable to set up a national identity with cultural plurality at that time. Instead, cultural dissent remains the majority in the society. In addition, Freedman (2001) characteristics the fruitless cultural assimilation of the Malaysian-Chinese to state strategies and foundations, particularly to instructive organizations and arrangements that are one-sided. This phenomenon was actually a hidden danger left by the British colonial government. The colonial British had given different administrative powers to the different ethnic groups as well as controlled and ruled all the ethnic groups in a mediate and subconscious way during its colonial period (Chen, 2012). As indicated by Law, & Lee (2006), the very idea of ethnicity is regularly controlled by political and monetary elites, just as white collar classes, for preparing assets to seek after their own advantages. Hence, this “divide and rule” (分而治之) policy implemented by colonial British had created ethnic cleavages among these three major ethnic groups. It would not wrong to say that this was an alternate ethnic division that purposely delineated along the political measurement. The

consequent post-war ethnic clashes and gaps were to some degree the outcomes of this policy. Therefore, the colonial authorities had a huge impact as they tend to had planned a lot of totally exclusive and exhaustive ethnic classifications to arrange the populaces among the people in Peninsular Malaysia.

Then, the cultural conflict in Malaysia society is still continuing. It is unavoidable that cultural conflict will affect the nation-building campaigns. The riot which occurred in 13<sup>th</sup> May 1969 in Malaysia is considered as another turning point of Malaysia's history and politics. After the 13<sup>th</sup> May incident in 1969, the importance of national unity re-valued and re-emphasized. Thus, in 1971, the government implemented the "National Culture Policy" (Dasar Kebudayaan Kebangsaan, 国家文化政策), whose main purpose was to create a united and harmonious "Bangsa Malaysia". However, the National Culture Policy propelled by the government seemed to support the "Ketuanan Melayu" (Supremacy of Malay culture) as national character (Matondang, 2016). Besides, Kumar (2012) contended such government policies such as New Economic Policy, National Culture Policy and so on contributed to further protect the advantages of the Malays. It is because the three major principles in this policy were the national culture must be founded on the indigenous (Malay) culture; appropriate components from different cultures might be acknowledged as a component of the national culture, and lastly Islam is a significant segment. After a great deal of negotiation and discussion offered by government and mediators, the Chinese acknowledgment of "the subordination of Chinese sub-ethnic languages and cultures to Bahasa as national language in the reality of multicultural society in Malaysia" (Matondang, 2016). Otherwise speaking as the implementation of National Culture Policy, the cultural tension in Malaysian society kept on-going for few years as the Malaysian Chinese have not halted the battle to protect their

cultural values. Nevertheless, the Chinese began to comprehend how to make a social adjustment with the new strategy in a more peaceful manner.

## **2.4 The Relationship of Malaysian Chinese with China**

### **2.4.1 The Power of Media and The Influences of China on Malaysian Chinese Media's Evolution**

Liebes and Katz (1990) remarked that the media is to be viewed as an instructive open door where characters and occurrences are portrayed as needs be to in the end structure the social personality of a general public, and not only a medium to spread data with the end goal for one to be progressively educated. Katz and Gurevitch (1974) also contended that people use media for observation, identity construction, social connections, and entertainment. Appiah (2004) argued that “ethnic identification is a contributing cultural variable in media use” (p.314). He additionally discovered past investigations had agreed with the statement: people are impacted by media content that depict characters with whom they relate to or discover similarities with. There is a connection between media content and gathering recognizable proof. Furthermore, media framing effectively affects crowds' relationship with specific social gatherings as media frames could be intended to initiate or deactivate an assortment of other social identities too (Richardson, 2005). In Malaysia, over all media, no matter public and private nor newspapers and television programmes, transmits information or content that dependent on ethnic gatherings is an usual norms in the society.

The traditional print media, particularly newspapers and periodicals had made a huge contributions in creating perpetual Chinese people group, initially invoking the reformist and revolutionary movements in China, followed by attempting to hold significant parts of

Chinese culture. In the late Qing Dynasty (清朝), the Royal administration and its diplomats endeavoured to impact Chinese abroad, as a feature of a worldwide crusade to outfit their assets and loyalties and to undermine support for the reformist Kang Youwei (康有为) (1858-1927) and the revolutionary Sun Yat-sen (孙中山) (1866-1925) (Benton, 2003). It indicated that, started in 1880s, it had come to esteem its abroad countrymen as a wellspring of capital and aptitudes and searched for methods for impacting them. Kang Youwei and Sun Yat-sen competed to win support among abroad and ethnic Chinese for their political ventures and advanced thoughts of the “expatriate sojourner”. It might be reasonable to consider Lat Pau (叻报) as the primary Chinese paper that made and distributed in Chinese in what is currently Malaysia, founded by a trader, See Ewe Lay (Lent, 1974). A significant feature of the vernacular newspapers is their inclination to focus on occasions imperative to their separate networks (Ahmad et al., 2017, as cited in Shaari et al., 2006; Yang and Ishak, 2011). The publications of Lat Pau would in general be preservationist as it supported the Qing Dynasty of China. The original intention of newspapers and periodicals was more inclined to report the activities in China.

Followed by the foundation of Tong Meng Hui (同盟会) by Sun Yat-sen in August 1905 in Japan. Then, Sun Yat-sen and the revolutionists shifted from Singapore to Penang in 1910-11 and discovered Kwong Wah Yit Poh (光华日报) as fundamental propaganda tool (Lent, 1974). In addition, these revolutionists were dedicated in displaying such newspapers, periodicals and magazines for Chinese overseas viewing in order to provoke their sentiments and raise funds. The result is, the impact of Sun Yat-sen and his gathering in the long run came to obscure that of Kang Youwei around the world in the primary decade of the twentieth century. Indeed, Sun Yat-sen’s thoughts and practices have played a role in

promoting and democratizing Southeast Asia and the world in history, particularly to the Malaysian Chinese society which led to their specially contributions to the success of Xinhai Revolution in 1911.

Besides, newspapers began to gain a considerable numbers of readers as it functioned for exceptional needs of their ethnic gathering. The Chinese newspapers and publishing house played important roles no matter in the reorganization battle sparing the Qing ruler or the unrest to set up the Republic of China. It used to be a powerful tool to gain the intense reactions from the Chinese diaspora. It is the relationship between the traditional print media in Malaysia with China. In addition, the Peking government had given essentially no consideration to the abroad Chinese as well as the new system requested the political and money related help for the Southeast Asian Chinese (John, 1964). On the other hand, with the progression of time and the 'brutal policies of the Cultural Revolution' in China, there was a phenomenon showed that Malaysian Chinese started to build up their national local identity rather than defined a strong identification with nationalism in China. Thus, the newspapers industry in Malaysia continues to reach another milestone and serve another functions such as build up the national ideologies and interests in the post-war era. After the invasion of Japan and the end of World War II, it was also another blossoming period of the Chinese newspapers. For instance, two significant newspapers emerged: the distribution of Nanyang Siang Pau (南洋商报) in 1923, owned by Tan Kah Kee (陈嘉庚) and Sin Chew Jit Poh (星洲日报) founded in 1929 by Aw Boon Haw (胡文虎) (Lent, 1974). The fact is, during the Japanese occupation as long as 3 years and 8 months, the Malaysian Chinese people's national consciousness was improved, and they realized the importance of

establishing an independent and autonomous country with other ethnic groups. These local Chinese community tended to defend their own political interests in their own “homeland”.

Continue on, the development of the Malaysian media industry has detonated since the 1980s, simultaneous with the accompanying advances embraced by the government, for instance changing control towards print media, privatization strategy of communicate media and thrust of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) in the executives, business and in the regular exercises of society (Rahim, & Pawanteh, 2010). Many researches alluded that the major mainstream newspapers are possessed legitimately by the administration or claimed by the segment gatherings of the Barisan Nasional (BN) alliance government (Ahmad, Ahmed, Wakichan, Halem, Hussin, & Ganiyu, 2017). The transformation of media is occurring associative to the advancement of technological, bringing about a generational move away from “traditional media” to “new media”.

Specially, in the current years, the media industry’s development in Malaysia is partially influenced by China. As we known, social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Google, just to name a few were not permitted to access as there is Internet censorship in China, where the published information is filtered and controlled by the government. At the same time, China used to control the public opinion through propaganda in keeping up its long-term political stability as well as international affairs. Propaganda (宣传) is a key instrument and significant political task to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to deal with administration, as well as recognize between propaganda focused at local crowds and that which is focused at foreigners. The CCP’s Office for Foreign Propaganda (OFP, otherwise known as the State Council Information Office) is responsible for giving authority

explanations to the outside media (Brady, 2012). Associated with the SEAC (State Ethnic Affairs Commission, 国家民委) Culture and Propaganda Section, they also issue normal direction to China's outside promulgation news sources, for example, China Daily, Global Times, China Radio International, CCTV-9 and CCTV-4 on the right remote publicity line on China's ethnic issues. The Ministry of Culture is accountable for China's outside social purposeful publicity, under the initiative of the CCP Foreign Propaganda Group (Brady, 2012, as cited in Li 1996). Therefore, China had created a mature system in overseeing domestic and foreign opinions, particularly related to ethnic matters. For instance, the official state-run press agency, Xinhua News Agency has more than 180 news departments all inclusive, distributing news content, photos, sound or video programs; China Central Television (CCTV) has more than 70 remote agencies, broadcasting to 171 nations and locales (Yang, 2015). At the same time, by the 1990s, worldwide media organizations, numerous in publicizing, were moving into China to exploit the rising customer economy and new open doors for advertise improvement (Barker, 2018). Apart from keeping on to interfere foreign or international affairs through expanding media impacts abroad, China's media obstruction is affecting Chinese diaspora communities too. To narrow down the impacts of CCP's global media towards the overseas Chinese community, such news coverage and programming are beneficial in advancing nationalism feeling. It is because in the case of Malaysian Chinese society, they are still interested in exploring the Chinese identity, but in a different way to previous generations.

Malaysian Chinese people group, with the development of correspondence innovation since 1980s and the advancement of Internet in 1990s, have had the chance to connect with Chian as well as Asia Pacific nations. By sitting in front of the TV projects and VCD, the Chinese abroad networks in Malaysia approach the Chinese culture as social creations (Matondang,



2016). Chinese transnational media are influencing local discourse about Malaysian Chinese culture and social formation in a new form. China used to make a huge effort to grow “friendly” relations with private media proprietors and correspondents in abroad, urging them to make their own substance that advances key stories supported by China. Therefore, it led to the quick development of the local media or content industry. For instance, in the film industry, Malaysian Chinese used to use their semantic and social assets to become members as versatile inventive work and co-creation accomplices with China (Barker, 2018). Furthermore, the content industry is translated as an industry of culture that not merely make and distribute content in the types of information, entertainment and education programmes, however disperses society esteems, ways of life and standards to its intended interest group (Rahim, & Pawanteh, 2010). These unlimited progression of media substance may unwittingly impact the perception of its audience. Habermas (2006), for instance, contends that institutional characters such as companies are especially powerful “in the formation of public opinions and the distribution of power interests” (p. 419). For example, with their unmistakable structures and substance, China’s contemporary territory motion pictures, TV shows and music are getting well known among the Malaysian Chinese, progressively overwhelming Hong Kong and Taiwan as significant social habitats for the Chinese diaspora (Cheun, 2016). The second example is: Malaysian singer Priscilla Abby (蔡恩雨) attended the China TV program, “Our Chinese Heart” (中华情) and alluded to China as her “motherland” as well as she said “I’m home!” when she remembered her experience of watching the People’s Republic of China’s flag-raising in Beijing (The News Lens, 2018). These were a few of the phenomenon sprang up in the Malaysian Chinese society, resulting from the non-directly penetration of CCP’s propaganda through supporting the local media industry in identifying with transnational social structures. All of these actions are deemed as “soft power” strategies utilized by Chinese Communist Party (CCP) government. In short,

China, especially under the administration of Xi Jinping, is currently occupied with a gigantic crusade to impact news sources and media audiences around the globe.

## **2.5 Chinese Associations and Chinese Education: Its Relations with Text and Potential Reflections on Facebook Text**

The education system is particularly extraordinary in Malaysia as its development is typically affected by the economic and political issues in our country as well. And there is no denying the fact that Chinese education and Chinese schools have needed to confront innumerable dangers to their endurance throughout the years and with the development of the national education system. There are Malays even contended that Chinese education is hindering Malaysia from the improvement of a national culture and the establishment of national solidarity (Lee, 2000). However, nowadays, Chinese schools in Malaysia have in reality made some amazing progress and picked up ubiquity even among the non-Chinese guardians. To trace back to review its struggles, it can be divided to five phrases from the historical perspective of Chinese education, (Wang, 2014, as cited in Wang, & Xu, 1985).

1. 1786-1920, Chinese community engaged in developing the Chinese education. Thus, some old-style Sishu (私塾) might had existed and the classes is conducted in different Chinese dialects, mainly received help from the government in China;
2. 1920-1942, the colonial government, British interfered as well as offered some assistances in the development of Chinese education. Thus, some new-style Mandarin schools built up;
3. 1945-1957, pre-independence period when Chinese schools began to localize their textbooks, supported basically by group and dialect associations;
4. 1958-1970, the change of Chinese secondary schools to English-medium schools as the initial step to bring together the education system as the revival movement led by Chinese associations started;

5. 1971-1985, the change of English schools into Malay-medium schools under the National Ideology and New Economic Policy and reception of simplified Chinese characters and Hanyu pinyin in the new curriculum (Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Rendah, KBSR).

Also, to be noticed, the educational institutions are among the major components in the Chinese cultural movement. Chinese associations had contributed a lot in preserving Chinese education (维护华教). Dong Jiao Zong (DJZ) (董教总) is among the famous Chinese organization who mobilizes the Chinese society to preserve Chinese culture through the establishment of vernacular schools. Dong Jiao Zong is consisted by Jiao Zong (United Chinese School Teachers Association of Malaya, UCSTAM) (教总) and Dong Zong (United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaya, UCSCAN) (董总). Apart from this, the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) (马华) also actively participated in the rallies in Chinese community in order to safeguard the Chinese education.

In 1960s, the new Education Act likewise finished money related help to Chinese schools and administrative sponsorships were just for schools which utilized Malay or English, the official languages, as the medium of instruction (Wang, 2014). In other words, Chinese secondary schools confronted with the choices of either surrendering Chinese as the medium of education so as to be acknowledged into the national framework or to keep on instructing in Chinese and stayed outside the national framework (Lee, 2000). At the same time, as ensured in the Constitution, to be taught in ethnic language or native language, was viewed by the Malaysian Chinese as their right. Thus, Chinese language education had the option to keep giving a pathway to understudies in Malaysia to learn in Mandarin and graduate with a Unified Education Certificate (UEC) (Barker, 2018). In addition, in reality, these independent

Chinese schools (独中) which credited to their responsibility to safeguard Chinese education in the general public, faced financial difficulties with lack of funds in a long period.

Started from the late 1970s, Chinese associations and Malaysian Chinese people occupied with a progressing negotiation with government authorities over the structure and substance of Malaysian national Culture, urging the administration to perceive specific Chinese traditions and practices as authentic segments of Malaysian national identity (Carstens, 2003). It can be sided with certainly that Chinese associations made several efforts in requesting official status for the Chinese language in order to spare Chinese instruction from further decrease. Despite the fact that the goal of this development was not accomplished, it made the overall population mindful of their language rights and the significance of the Chinese language. Chinese education continually turned into a significant wellspring of contention in the ethnic relations as such contentions that mainly initiated by Dong Jiao Zong were especially intense revising 1973 to 1990, and arrived at a peak in 1987 (Lee, 2000). The Chinese Independent Schools in Malaysia also started to develop consistently and steadily after 1980s. As the cultural procedure proceed, there were even Malaysian Chinese who ultimately sent their kids to Taiwan or Hong Kong when they needed the youngsters to learn Mandarin and Chinese culture (Matondang, 2016). At the same time, there were few private colleges founded by the Chinese community for instance The Southern College in Johor Bahru in 1990, The New Era College in Kajang in 1998, and The Han Chiang International College in Penang in 1999 (Wang, 2014, as cited in Tay, 2003). These private colleges were welcomed by the Chinese people group because as for the Chinese who pursuing in national-type secondary schools, it stays hard for Chinese understudies to get enrolled into the public colleges and universities due to the quota system at the tertiary level too. To sum it up, there is no doubt that education has assumed a significant job in the Chinese people group as an

approach to keep up Chinese culture and identity and secure their Chineseness right now in such a multi-ethnic society.

On the other hand, China had built up its diplomatic relations with Malaysia since the 1970s. From that point forward, there has been expanding connection between these two countries. The ascent of China in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in an extent expanded the significance of the Chinese language as well as the capability in Chinese language is related with Chinese identity and Chinese market (Wang, 2014). In October 2003, Malaysia's fifth Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi proposed to build up an Institute of China Studies (ICS) in University Malaya after he visited Xiamen University in China as it was viewed as a positive advance toward new degrees of social, financial and political associations among them, and in China–Malaysia relations for shared advantage and upgraded respective ties (Cheun, 2016). After that, Xiamen University Malaysia, the first China university overseas campus was established too. In this respect, there is relationship between Chinese heritage-language socialization and its influences in the literacy texts in traditional Chinese diaspora community. The educating and learning of Chinese cultural values and ideologies is often intertwined with someone's literacy of text. How the educators utilize the chance of language and literacy instructing to give cultural values and ideologies to the students or understudies? And, it has to be noticed that, the values and identities, in any case, are not static but rather changing over the ages and with the on-going procedure of transnational development and globalization (Li, & Zhu, 2014). The reaction of the Malaysian Chinese during negotiating identities through the process of language and literacy learning can be seen and investigated from the text as well as the comments they wrote on Facebook. The text somehow reflects their certain identity, attitude, ideology or stance. Similarly, the social standards and ideologies are verifiably

transmitted through express displaying of linguistic skills, for instance by the substance of the structures the instructor produces.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Overview of Qualitative Research

“Qualitative research is multi method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin, & Lincoln, 1994).

Qualitative research is a wide umbrella approach portraying a few explicit research strategies and ideal models that depend on the collection, analysis, and interpretation of non-numerical information. Another direction of qualitative research that contrasts fairly from that of quantitative research is a faith in the significance of archiving and breaking down “society” convictions (Whitley, & Crawford, 2005). For example, it is frequently utilized in the researches of social sciences as it is the prime strategy for examination in human science and anthropology. Qualitative research centers predominantly around three zones: language as a intends to investigate procedures of correspondence and examples of collaboration inside specific social gatherings; depiction and understanding of abstract implications ascribed to circumstances and activities; and hypothesis working through finding examples and associations in qualitative data (Tesch, 1990). Also, it has to be noticed that qualitative research is commonly centered on the smaller scale level of social collaboration that forms regular daily existence. In other words, it is suitable to be apply in studying a targeted populace in order to understand their in-depth social lives.

Besides, Malinowski (1990) expressed that qualitative research intends to comprehend a phenomenon from a “local” perspective that over all accentuates emotional importance and

experience. At the same time, qualitative analysis takes into account ambiguities or logical inconsistencies in the information, which are an impression of social reality (Denscombe, 2010). Therefore, the study generally emphasizes on the respondent's point of view. And also, qualitative research deliberately endeavors to archive the complication and assortment of experience. There are no conventional benchmarks in qualitative research identical to control estimations, essentialness tests and so on. It is a useful method in examining implications, understandings and the processes and relations of social life.

All things considered, in the first place, this study embraced a qualitative research method. This preliminary research of netizens' reactions toward Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) or Wuhan Coronavirus outbreak in the cyberspace is a primarily exploratory research that helps the people to increase a comprehension of fundamental reasons, sentiments, and inspirations. It provides insight to the problem in constructing Malaysian Chinese identity and reflects certain characteristics of Chinese transnationalism identity through Facebook comments in Sin Chew Daily Facebook page. In other words, qualitative method is selected in this study in order to deeper comprehend the social truth of Malaysian Chinese people, gatherings and societies as almost as conceivable as its members feel it or live it. It is necessary to directly observe the ways in which these targeted population, Malaysian Chinese interact in public and further interpreting the words or images they expressed to understand its underlying meanings as well as ideologies. However, it is notable that the creation of information and the interpretation of meanings during data collection and analysis in a qualitative research is legitimately constrained by the researcher who works as the "human instrument" for the investigation.



### 3.1.1 Deductive Qualitative Content Analysis

Secondly, the research data is collected and analyzed using one of the methods of qualitative research, content analysis, which the study uses to categorize the topics of the Facebook posts and further analyzes the polarity of the posts and comments. Content analysis is cautious, comprehensive, deliberate assessment and understanding of a specific collection of material with an end goal to recognize patterns, themes, inclinations and implications (Goodman, 2011, as cited in Berg, 2009). Berg (2009) further declared that it is “chiefly a coding operation and data interpretation process”. Furthermore, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is utilized as an interpretive or expository framework due to the predominance text-based nature of Facebook discourses. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is basic to the investigation of social or interactional power in light of the fact that ‘discourses’ are intrinsically part of, and impacted by social structure, and delivered in social communication (Rambe, 2012, as cited in Van Dijk, 2003). In this way, through an assessment of Facebook text messages, the relationship among the discursive Facebook users’ selections of words and representations and concealed indication of intensity can be unfolded. Also, through interpreting the data as well as comments collected, the study pays attention to the general features of subjective experience in the society. The change of the current structures, connections, and conditions that shape and oblige the improvement of social practices in associations and networks as well as the historical, social, cultural and political elements in Chinese community can be observed through critical content analysis. In short, the study aimed to provide knowledge and understanding about the concept of Malaysian Chinese identity by discovering the underlying meanings of the commentators on Facebook. Nevertheless, the shortcomings of the use of qualitative content analysis method included its extension is genuinely constrained, and the authenticity of the Facebook account or the use of fake Facebook account, just to name a few.

In addition, the study moves from theory to data, all the information are then collected and analyzed through a deductive approach. Deductive qualitative research typically includes progressively front-end work. Deductive reasoning is a hypothesis testing process which begins with a built up hypothesis or speculation, and tries to check whether the hypothesis applies to explicit occurrences. In addition, bringing formal deductive reasoning into qualitative research can signify a significant advance towards guaranteeing conviction in qualitative research findings (Hyde, 2000). On the other hand, the researcher utilizes the deductive qualitative content analysis (QCA) when a few perspectives, past research discoveries, speculations, or theoretical frameworks in regards to the marvel of intrigue exist (Armat, Assarroudi, Rad, Sharifi, & Heydari, 2018, as cited in Elo, & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Mayring, 2014). Theory-guided in this research is an effective way to find out the preliminary appearance in the Chinese society especially through the cyberspace. The researcher of the study emphasized on verifying and clarifying what has all the earmarks of being developing in the Malaysian Chinese society and identifying recurrent patterns of themes or concepts that could potentially reveal certain characteristics of Chinese transnationalism identity.

### **3.1.2 Systematic Literature Reviews**

A systematic literature review is a composed search through literature with an end goal to respond to an engaged inquiry with inclusion and exclusion criteria for this paper. The significance of efficient reviews can be summarized in their capacity to examine past research and further disperse research discoveries. A progressing literature review was applied to keep it grounded in existing investigations, just as to help manage it along the most ideal scholarly course. Thomas (2013) contended that, “A literature review can be a method

to comprehend the wide context in which an investigation is occurring.” Undertaking it will carry the researcher into contact with key speculations and contributors to the subject they are concentrating on, acquainting him or her with terms and giving him or her firm hypothetical ground on which to examine results. The existing research literature in Chapter 2 regarding on the common phenomenon in Malaysian Chinese society is viewed as a data set as well as source of theory building and has been reserved a part of the information to be achieved and then test its implications with data. However, it is not the major research method, it is in any case a significant apparatus for the advancement of the undertaking. Moreover, guaranteed a proficient execution both during the composition of the paper and investigation periods, and furthermore during the drafting and refining measure.

### **3.1.3 Case Study**

There are various methods utilized in qualitative research such as case study, grounded theory, ethnographic research, observations, in-depth interview, just to name a few. Every has its possess standards, which incorporate examination plan and point, however all generally utilize a little example of members since qualitative research concentrates of the nature of the data ordered (Quick, & Hall, 2015). In qualitative research, case studies are the favored method when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being presented, when the researcher has little authority over occasions, and when the attention is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real life context” (Hanley-Maxwell, Al Hano, & Skivington, 2007, as cited in Yin, 2003). This study apply a single case study as a specific unit of analysis, which is the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) or Wuhan Coronavirus as a specific case to deeper comprehend due to its uniqueness. The outbreak of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) or Wuhan Coronavirus is a contemporary event in the globe and it has occupied the public

sphere since January 2020. When the coronavirus burst out, it used to be the main topic in the media discourse and flooded nearly the entire public discussion. As of February 2020, COVID-19 is also taking its toll on the world, causing deaths, illnesses and economic despair. Through an adequate depth and adequate knowledge of this issue, the study is aimed to analyze in order to expand and generalize the theories selected and to further explain the general phenomenon in Chinese community. Thus, the next step is to narrow down the focusing point of this virus, the theme of interpretive content is set.

### **3.2 Sampling Frame**

In qualitative research, there are three sampling methods, purposive sampling, quota sampling, and snowball sampling, which are the most widely recognized testing techniques utilized (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). Among them, purposive sampling is used as it depicts a procedure that purposely enrolls people or gatherings with the imperative segment or clinical features into the exploration, permitting the investigation to be grounded in a nearby setting. However, it is commonly not important to predefine an accurate or alluring number of respondents before the exploration starts (Whitley, & Crawford, 2005). Therefore, the specific respondents of this study is initially and mainly targeted on Malaysian Chinese community as they are regarded as appropriate participants. It has to be noticed that, the commentators collected are all able to read as well as write Chinese. The study will intentionally attempt to test gatherings or people that may extend the decent variety of the information. Also, after starting testing and examination as well as check on validity, the study will move the concentration to this subgroup for top to bottom inspecting and investigation. Despite the sample size will be narrow down and ordinarily little, it guarantees sufficient portrayal and blocks untimely ends. As a result, only those netizens who are able to

read the articles or Facebook posts in Chinese and comment in Chinese or Mandarin were available and included in the research.

Besides, the publication dates selected are important to note. The time frame for collecting the sampling was December 2019 to early February 2020. This is because this period is regarded as the peak of the infectious cases occurred in Wuhan, China as well as its starting broke out period before it spread to all over the world.

### **3.3 Brief Execution**

As mentioned previously, to attempt to answer the research questions, this study will analyze the corresponding comments of Facebook posts about the outbreak of COVID-19/ Wuhan Coronavirus, as the overall theme of the posts ultimately contributed to reflect the characteristics of Chinese transnationalism identity. As such, articles or Facebook posts selection proceeded. For the comment analysis, the study selected Sin Chew Daily Facebook page as it is popular for its media credibility. Sin Chew Daily is comprised of a positioning of the most significant Chinese newspapers publication dependent on the amount of the Malaysian Chinese populace Sin Chew Daily reach.

A total of 10 posts as well as news articles on Sin Chew Daily Facebook page were randomly selected. From all the 10 posts selected for inclusion, information was recorded respectively and systematically in Chapter 4 for this review. The number 10 was picked for manageability and with an end goal to accomplish the required criteria. These posts was selected to satisfy one criteria. That is, all of these 10 posts successfully reached or attracted about 200 to 300

comments and above. In other words, a total of around 2000 to 3000 comments will be analyzed. ‘A large amount of comments can be an indicator that Facebook users find the information posted in the Facebook articles interesting and socially relevant’ (Curci-Wallis, 2019). Then, the resulting sample of 10 Facebook posts was then reviewed and a proper coding process will be conducted in order to make the messy comments quantifiable and able to fully represent the majority netizens’ certain characteristics. The ten posts have been categorized to numerous themes according to its characteristics of issues in order to further analyze it. As such, Table 1 shows the assortment of the ten posts.

<b>Themes/ Issues Identified</b>	<b>Number of Posts/ News Articles</b>
The lack of face masks	3
Sensationalism/ Emotion incitement	3
Strike called by Hong Kong healthcare workers	2
Eating bats	2

*Table 1 The key issues related to COVID-19/ Wuhan Coronavirus.*

### **3.4 Roland Barthes’s Mythologies as Methodological Consideration**

Roland Barthes believed that everything can be a myth as ‘myth is a system of communication that is a message’ (Barthes, 1972). At the same time, myth is the utilization of languages and images. Language, discourse and so on and be used to mean any critical unit. For Barthes, words and objects share practically speaking the sorted out ability to state something; simultaneously, they are ‘signs’. On the other hand, Barthes proposed his semiotic model in ‘Myth Today’. Myth is also can be viewed as a “semiological” system.

Semiology is a study that considers significations apart from the content and it proposes the connection between “signifier” and “signified”. In other words, “sign”, “signifier”, “signified” are three essential elements. The explanation with regards to why these concepts were taken into the methodological consideration is on the grounds that it will help in the interpretation of underlying meanings encoded in the written comments. Applying Barthes’s semiotic theory, the study separated the way toward the process of reading signs (reading the news articles posted by Sin Chew Daily on its Facebook page) and concentrated on analyzing their reactions influences unconsciously by various cultures or social orders (the actions of commenting under the posts).

### **3.5 Coding Method: NVivo as Data Management Tool**

“The researcher is considered to be an active element of the research process, and the act of research has a creative component” (Suddaby, 2006, p. 638). The coding process is comprised with posing diagnostic inquiries of the information, classifying sections of information with a short name (a code), and utilizing these codes to sort and build up a comprehension of what's going on in the social circumstance being considered. In order to help the researcher with the extensive bulk of qualitative research data, a computer-aided data management, NVivo is used as a tool in this paper. The software program NVivo is one modernized instrument that can help a qualitative researcher as it viably manages extensive amounts of qualitative data (Bazeley, 2003). Specifically, NVivo is intended to encourage the development of social organizations distinguishing the content and structure of respondents’ opinions (Richards, 1999). Besides, NVivo helps the researcher’s capacity to show profound associations, adding solidarity to the method (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thus, NVivo allows the researcher to easily proceed with the data analysis process as well as collect and compile data in categories and themes.

Consequently, the researcher uses NVivo to input the data, which were all the comments collected in order to generate word cloud particularly. Depaolo & Wilkinson (2014) argue that a word cloud gives a graphical representation of information that permits a watcher to frame a brisk, natural feeling of a text. This device is an simple approach to share significant level information. In other words, word cloud is considered as a pure text summarization as it offers an overview by refining text down to those words that show up with highest frequency. Such an outline is useful to find out about the number and sort of themes present in a collection of text. Based on the results, the researcher additionally implemented the coding process into separate meanings and themes.

### **3.6 Operational Definition**

An operational definition outlines a measurement for evaluating something of interest (Clark Church, 2004). A basic segment of an operational definition is measurement. A basic and exact meaning of measurement is the task of numbers to a variable where this paper is intrigued. These numbers will give the raw material to the measurable investigation. It is a method of refining the customary perceptions, permit the researchers to go past basically portraying the presence or nonappearance of an occasion or thing to indicating how a lot, how long, or how exceptional it is. With measurement, the observations of the paper become more exact and reliable. By operationally defining the term, at that point, makes the idea observable by expressing what the researcher does to measure it. During analyzing in Chapter 4, the frequent words discovered among the 200 to 300 comments in each post will be defined as positive, negative and neutral word in expressing their own point of views. Different from the official dictionary definition or or denotative meaning, it focuses on its



connotative meaning, the feelings and affiliations associated with a word, contingent upon how a word has been utilized over the long run.

## Chapter 4 Finding and Analysis

### 4.1 The Assortment of the Ten Posts/ Themes Identified

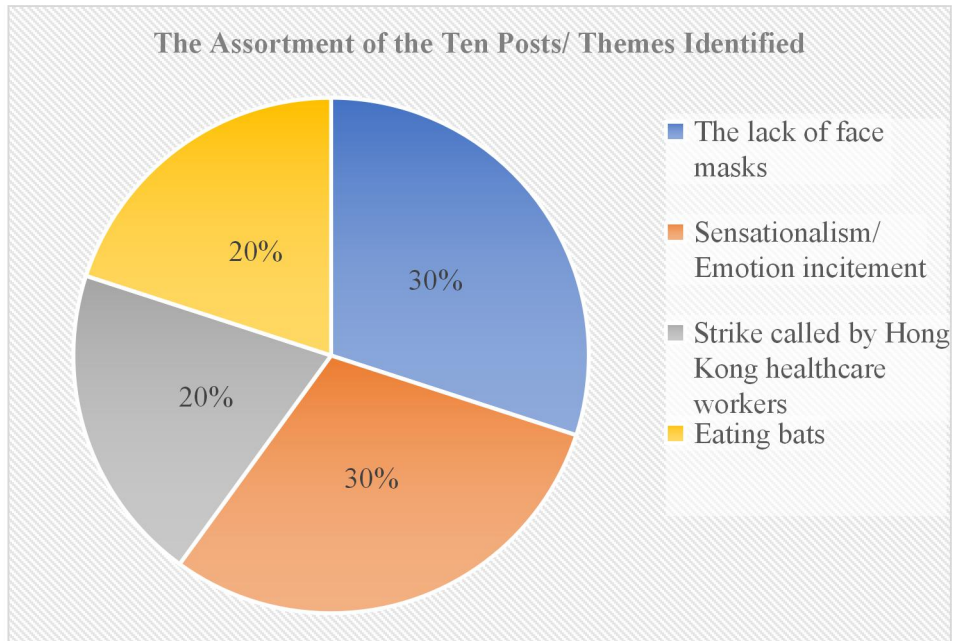


Diagram 1: The Assortment of the Ten Posts/ Themes Identified

### 4.2 Total Number of Comments Collected

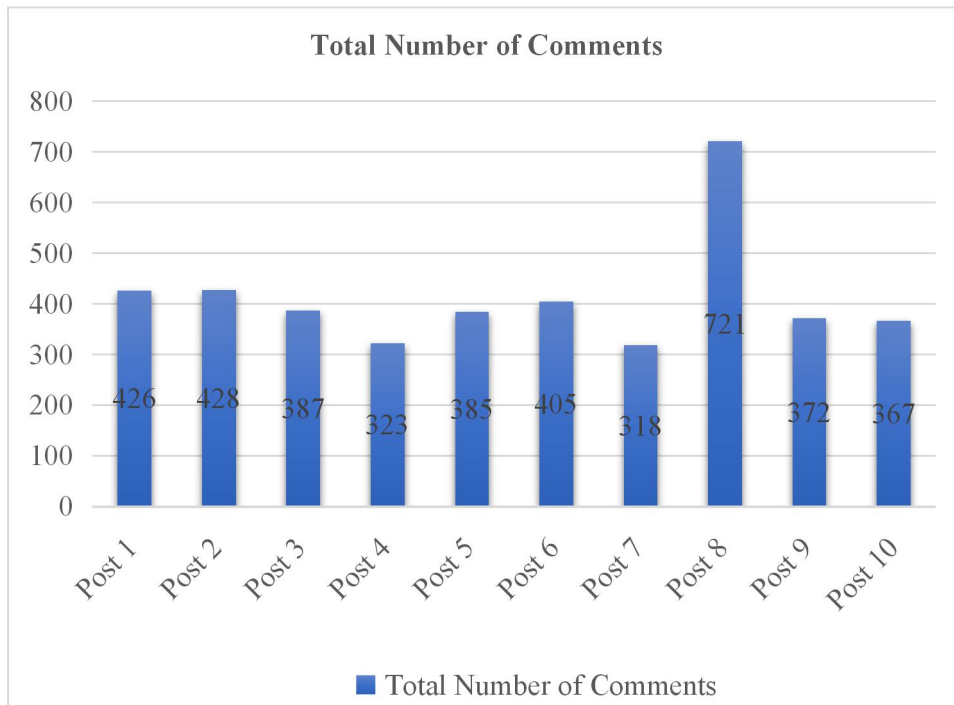


Diagram 2: Total Number of Comments Collected

### **4.3 Facebook Comment Analysis**

#### **4.3.1 First Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments**

##### *Posts Info and Summary*

In the first place, a short content summary is provided below in order to illustrate what the information in the posts as well as news articles chosen is about. Firstly, the first three posts are categorized as the face masks issues. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2020), ‘wearing a medical mask is one of the prevention measures that can limit the spread of certain respiratory viral diseases, including COVID-19.’ Thus, the use of face masks has become ubiquitous once epidemics begin in China and the demand of face masks is increasing at an alarming rate and even there is a subject of shortages of face masks in certain countries. On the other hand, China is the major facemask producer in the globe, adding to half of worldwide creation. However, a general facemask wearing approach would put a huge weight on the facemask supply (Wu, Huang, Zhang, He, & Ming, 2020). At the same time, due to the proof that the Chinese all over the world still maintain a caring attitude towards China's affairs, they have extended their assistance such as donating face masks to China during the initial phase of COVID-19/ Wuhan Coronavirus in China. It is to be noticed that currently, various public health agencies and governments have various voices and suggestions regarding the action of wearing face masks as a widespread convention. For instance, looking back to our country, Malaysia, “the public authority has made it necessary, effective August 1, to wear face masks inside public transportation, crowded public spaces, and areas where social distancing is impossible” (Code Blue, 2020). Despite this fact, the ‘face mask issue’ has appeared as a main concern among the public.

1.



马来西亚星洲日报 Malaysia Sin Chew Daily  
10 February at 11:04 · 🌐

也有网民要议给香港的口罩一定要印上“我是中国人”  
#星洲日报 #sinchew  
关注更多国际大小事: <http://bit.ly/SCworld>

**中央调度  
1700万口罩给港  
中国网民  
群情激愤**

SINCHEW.COM.MY  
有网民气愤表示：“全中国人民买不到口罩，原来供给白眼狼了”、“会闹的孩子有糖吃”。 -【星洲国际】

👍👍 585 426 comments 223 shares

*Diagram 3: First Facebook post collected*

This post was published on Sin Chew Daily’s Facebook page on 10th February 2020. The article is titled: *China’s government offered 17 million face masks to Hong Kong: dissatisfaction aroused among China’s netizens*. It can be found <https://www.facebook.com/SinChewDaily/posts/3248958581829227>. At the time of the analysis the article had been shared 223 times, had 585 likes and 426 comments. The article is about the mask shortage faced by the Hong Kong’s government. Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lim indicated that although the situation of lacking face masks in mainland China was more severe than in Hong Kong, the government had received 17 million face masks from mainland China as it scrambled to address deficiencies brought about by the destructive COVID-19. Reviewing the news article, Carrie Lam’s remarks once again provoked the China netizens’ long-standing dissatisfaction with the ongoing 2019 - 20 Hong Kong protests, also known as Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement. There was a

wave of resentful emotion on the Internet. The China netizens expressed their anger and indignation in Weibo, the one and only social platform in China.

### *Comment Analysis*



*Diagram 4: Wordcloud generated from the comments under the first chosen Facebook post*

The researcher discovered NVivo to be valuable for information stockpiling for recording associations, comments, and updates. Using NVivo software as mentioned in Chapter 3 previously, the researcher moved moderately rapidly through the information, finished “open coding” and proceeded onward to creating “core categories,” working at a more dynamic level rashly. A total of 426 comments had been inputted and generated into the word cloud above (Diagram 4). Highlighting key terms of the wordcloud, 口罩 (face masks) is in the middle of the wordcloud. Also, 中国 (China)、香港 (Hong Kong)、政府 (government)、暴徒 (rioters/ thug/ desperado)、骨气 (moral integrity)、妈妈 (mother) are among the frequent 2 words’ terms found in the wordcloud. To in depth deciphering its portrayal and investigate the concealed significance, 暴徒 (rioters/ thug/ desperado)、骨气 (moral integrity)、妈妈 (mother), the high frequency of such negative words represent the hidden attitude of the

netizens who commented under Sin Chew Daily Facebook page. The relationship between Hong Kong and mainland China gives no indication of fading away as “Anti-government” protests have shaken Hong Kong for quite a long time against plans to allow extradition to mainland China. The opponents claimed that the extradition bill would gambled presenting Hongkongers to unjustifiable preliminaries and brutal treatment as it would have took into account criminal suspects to be removed to territory China in specific situations. They additionally contended the bill would give China more noteworthy impact over Hong Kong and could be utilized to target activists, journalists, as well as the media. At the end, it triggered the protests as countless individuals rampaged. Conflicts among police and activists have become progressively brutal, with police discharging firing live bullets and protesters assaulting them back and tossing petroleum bombs. Chinese president Xi Jinping has cautioned against dissidence, saying any endeavor to separate China would end in “bodies crushed and bones ground to powder” (“The Hong Kong protests”, 2019). Undeniably, the China government is tend to slam “terrorist-like” attacks on its citizens by pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong. China, as well as its state media had looked to outline the protests as “terrorism”, for instance Xu Luying, spokeswoman of the central China government’s Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office once expressed the strongest condemnation of these “terrorist-like” actions (中央政府对类似“恐怖主义”的行为表示最强烈的谴责。), just to name a few. Indeed, the information from the central government showed that it was trying to control public opinion, and it successfully determined what kind of demonstration’s information is obtained overseas and in the mainland China.

Observing the comments, the research found that the netizens are used to label the protests as ‘riots’ or ‘terrorism’ too. These negative words create enormous distinctive importance with protests. The Facebook users wrote comments that utilized such negative words, which they

expressed by statements that described the Hong Kong people as 废青、白眼狼、会闹的孩子 (a person who disrupts the social order; a naughty “child”). The majority of the commentators or netizens used prejudice and exclusion by describing the Hong Kong people. On the other hand, apart from two-words, there are a numerous of phrases appear, such as “香港人不懂得感恩” (Hong Kong people don’t know how to be grateful)、 “香港废青抵制中国货” (Doesn’t Hong Kong rioters boycott China goods?)、 “中共妈妈不会抛弃自己的孩子” (A mother will not abandon their children). The majority of the commentators seemed influenced by the concept of Chinese ethnonationalism (中国性、华人性) and Chinese transnationalism, believing the information delivered by the China government, behaving as a Chinese nationalist. It becomes clear when reading the following comments: “反中的五大诉求之一 - 抵制中国货物，怎么这种时候就没有骨气了呢？” (If they boycott China goods, how come the Hong Kong people lose their backbone to accept the face masks now?)、 “中国网民说得对！” (The China people are right!) However, only a minority from the commentators were somewhat neutral and left comments such as “维稳是中共的拿手把戏，即维护国家局势和社会的整体稳定。” Bringing the meaning that, a small part of the netizens perceived it as a key tool or ethnic propaganda (宣传) in the CCP approach to governing or keeping up China’s drawn out political stability, as well as its foreign relations.

### 4.3.2 Second Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments

#### *Posts Info and Summary*

2.



马来西亚星洲日报 Malaysia Sin Chew Daily  
13 February at 09:00 · 🌐

口罩身价, 今非昔比.....  
#星洲日报 #sinchew  
关注更多国际大小事: <http://bit.ly/SCworld>

**打爆车窗偷走8盒口罩**

SINCHEW.COM.MY  
新冠肺炎疫情爆发后, 市面上出现口罩荒, 如今还有车辆被打爆车窗, 车内8盒口罩不翼而飞。-【星洲国际】

👍👎😂 张永杰, Vivian Gan and 5.6K others      428 comments 7.9K shares

*Diagram 5: Second Facebook post collected*

Secondly, the second post is also categorized under the face masks issues. This post was published on Sin Chew Daily's Facebook page on 13th February 2020. The article is titled: *Blasting car windows and stealing 8 boxes of masks*. It can be found <https://www.facebook.com/SinChewDaily/posts/3257436377648114>. Noticeably, the article had been shared 7.9K times, had 5.6K likes and 428 comments. The article is about a robbery through impacting a car window happened in Hong Kong in order to steal the eight boxes of face masks from the car. Looking into this international news article, Hong Kong police received a report from a 53-year-old man, said that the window of his car parked on the side of the road was blown out. There were 8 boxes, containing 160 pieces of N95 Respirators in the car missing and suspected of being stolen. The police further reminded the public to take





钱的口罩” (valuable masks)、 “这是一种犯罪的行为” (This is a criminal act), to criticize them. In overall, the comments are enough to prove that is typically disallowed in the general public. Criminals ordinarily face negative results in the network including loss of trust between the individuals from the general public.

### 4.3.3 Third Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments

#### *Posts Info and Summary*

3.	 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Diagram 7: Third Facebook post collected</i></p>
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The third article shared on Sin Chew Daily Facebook page has over 1.3K likes, has been shared 1.3K times too and 387 comments. This post was published on 14th February 2020. The article is titled: *Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs - 4 manufacturing factories in Malaysia with a daily output of 627,000 masks*. It can be found



term of Chinese is slightly emphasized. However, confronting the current shortage of face masks in our own country, Malaysia, the netizens are tend to express their feeling of anxiety, fear, worrying in social media, revealing an impact of online public sphere in promoting free and plural societal communication. There were intense discussion and significant calls by the public online for the government and authorities to solve this evident issue, the availability of face masks as the entire world is scrambling to get them.

#### **4.3.4 Fourth Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments**

##### ***Posts Info and Summary***

The fourth to sixth posts selected are identified as well as the presence of sensationalism features are found. Sensationalism is frequently characterized as far as its ability to incite consideration or excitement reactions in the audiences or viewers (Vettehen, Nuijten, & Peeters, 2008, as cited in Grabe, Zhou, & Barnett, 2001). Sensationalist highlights of a news article increment passionate excitement, which thusly builds the netizen's curiosity of the post and further express their stands of points or perceptions. In other words, emotional reactions among the netizens have been provoked as these news are containing human interests that able to attract the attention of the netizens. Ultimately, various opinions as well as different voices in the virtual community may be studied due to the human sensitivity to this kind of information. For instance, to date, facing the deadly coronavirus and fear of not knowing what comes next, the netizens tend to express comfort and willingly to fight together against this globe's enemy.

4.



Diagram 9: Fourth Facebook post collected

This post was published on Sin Chew Daily's Facebook page on 29th January 2020. The article is titled: *More than six thousand of medical personnel nationwide in China rush to Hubei to aid epidemic fight.* It can be retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/SinChewDaily/posts/3219881514736934>. To be noticed, the article had over 2.3K likes, had been shared 249 times and 323 comments. The article is about A huge number of medical personnel who left their family during Spring Festival in order to support and offer assistance in Wuhan, the focal point of COVID-19. These doctors and nurses served as the pioneers in the fight against the epidemic. The reporter of Sin Chew Daily wrote in a sensational way, describing the dialogue of these medical personnel who bear extraordinary physical and mental pressure working in the front line. "There's no other explanation, to work and battle at the hardest and most risky place is only my duty as a doctor." "It is our temperament to assume a pioneer part to dedicate ourselves at this pressing epidemic period." "Wuhan needs us."

## Comment Analysis



*Diagram 10: Wordcloud generated from the comments under the fourth chosen Facebook post*

A total of 323 comments were inputted and generated into the word cloud above (Diagram 10). Featuring major terms of the wordcloud, 加油 (fighting) is in the middle of the wordcloud. 付出 (dedication)、支援 (support)、医护人员 (health care workers)、致敬 (salute)、敬佩 (admiration)、感恩 (grateful)、谢谢 (thank you)、挺身而出 (stand up to sacrifice) are discovered in the wordcloud. It could be interpreted that the epidemic was an ideal open door for completing some long-standing ideological obsessions. Most commentators saw medical personnel's specific brave behaviour and applied it to praise the front line workers. In short, they successfully gain credibility in the eyes of the Chinese public. Stress on the gratefulness and exertion of the medical personnel in China, proclamation of etnonationalism is widely spread oversea, additionally, its repercussions for Chinese nationalism developed from past nationalistic missions in critical manners.

### 4.3.5 Fifth Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments

#### *Posts Info and Summary*

5.	 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Diagram 11: Fifth Facebook post collected</i></p>
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The next article published on Sin Chew Daily Facebook page on 2nd February 2020 was chosen because of its 9.9K likes, 6.8K shares and 721 comments. The article is titled: *Another miracle in 8 days, Wuhan's first coronavirus hospital officially completed*. The Facebook link is <https://www.facebook.com/SinChewDaily/posts/3229365877121831>. Construction of 火神山医院 (Huoshenshan Hospital/ "Fire God Mountain"), an emergency specialty field hospital in Wuhan in response to the epidemic completed after an eight days' construction. Regarding to the news article, the Wuhan's first coronavirus hospital that started to receive patients was intended to have 1,000 beds, with an area of 33,900 square meters for patients without any difficulty a deficiency of beds somewhere else in the city as

the epidemic spreads. The state media of China had declared they figured out how to manufacture their coronavirus hospital in only eight days, which is an amazing accomplishment. On the other hand, China is building a second hospital in Wuhan, 雷神山医院 (Leishenshan Hospital/ “Thunder God Mountain”), with a similar reason, committing to the treatment of coronavirus patients, with 1,600 beds. It is scheduled to be finished soon as well.

### *Comment Analysis*



*Diagram 12: Wordcloud generated from the comments under the fifth chosen Facebook post*

721, a plenty number of comments had been inputted and generated into the word cloud above (Diagram 12). Giving prominence to the frequent-appear word in the wordcloud, 中国 (China)、加油 (fighting)、工程 (project)、医院 (hospital)、举世无双 (The best or unparalleled in the world)、能力 (ability) are recorded. The comments can represent a range of views as several patterns emerged within the comment, including: “真快！” (So quickly)、 “神一般的速度！” (China speed - God’s speed)、 “中国屡创奇迹！” (China has repeatedly created miracles, has a record of completing things quick in any event, for massive



projects like this.)、 “中华民族最棒！” (The ethic of Chinese is the best!) It impressed millions of Facebook users. Besides, it is important to note that the analyzed news article itself utilized positive and praising words in portraying this China’s project. The hidden meaning decoded is increasingly apparent that they are impassioned, enthusiastic, on occasion passionate, discourse with regards to the Chinese population (中华民族). For those commentators who expressed their admiration toward China, they seemed influenced by “China Dream” (中国梦) that Xi Jinping recently advocated, building up sociocultural ties and apparently aware relations with the nation’s neighboring states. However, at the same time, 漏水 (water leakage)、豆腐渣工程 (tofu-dreg project)、偷工减料 (cutting corners) are used as the representation of disagreeing with this conviction. To further interpret it, the phrase “tofu-dreg project” is typically viewed as a sensitive shame of construction, particularly in China. At last beside the risk to human existence, “tofu-dreg project” make credibility issues for the public authority (Cary, 2012), sabotaging people in the globe’s confidence in the unwavering quality of China government in construction work. In all of these examples, the netizens draw a clear distinction in understanding and identifying the concept of Chinese transnationalism.

### 4.3.6 Sixth Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments

#### Posts Info and Summary

6.


**马来西亚星洲日报 Malaysia Sin Chew Daily**
...  
 2 February at 17:40 · 🌐

👍👍👍

#星洲日报 #sinchew  
 下载星洲网APP:  
 iOS: <https://goo.gl/TY1VKT>  
 Google Play: <https://goo.gl/KHCmHL>



DER SPIEGEL  
 CORONA-VIRUS  
**Made in China**  
 Wenn die Globalisierung zur tödlichen Gefahr wird

德国杂志:  
**新型冠状病毒**  
**中国制造**



SINCHEW.COM.MY

德国《明镜周刊》以新型病毒课题为封面，被中国大使馆批评歧视、制造恐慌、对立。 - 【星洲国际】




 Yu Lei and 916 others
 405 comments 139 shares

*Diagram 13: Sixth Facebook post collected*

Next, the subsequently post is also sorted under the theme of sensationalism. This post was published on Sin Chew Daily's Facebook page on 2nd February 2020. The article is titled: *German magazine says coronavirus made in China*. It can be found <https://www.facebook.com/SinChewDaily/posts/3229623613762724>. Obviously, the article had been only shared for 139 times, had 916 likes and 405 comments. It was reported that Der Spiegel, a German's leading news magazine published a headline, 'Coronavirus Made in China' over its front page paper. The article is accompanied by an image that indicates a man,

dressing in a red protective suit, a mask, and holding a red iPhone in his hand. “Coronavirus made in China” was a giant title, particularly enlarged and presented in yellow font. The China Embassy in Germany immediately denoted strong criticism of this news magazine for causing panic and radical discrimination. The China Embassy in Germany further issued a statement on its official website, stating that China is making every effort to prevent and control the coronavirus and thanks the international community, including Germany, for their contributions to China’s fight against the novel coronavirus epidemic.

### *Comment Analysis*



*Diagram 14: Wordcloud generated from the comments under the sixth chosen Facebook post*

Diagram 14 shows a wordcloud, generated by a total of 405 comments. 中国 (China)、德国 (Germany)、美国 (United States) are positioned in the middle of the wordcloud. 制造 (made)、歧视 (discrimination)、恐怖 (terrible/ scary) are mostly appeared too. Some netizens questioned the magazine’s use of this topic to ‘cause panic’. Here are a couple of examples: “你有证据吗？” (Do you have any evidence?) “为什么不是美国制造呢？” (Why isn’t it made in the United States?) “这难道不是歧视吗？” (Isn’t this discrimination?)

“落井下石的行为！” (It’s not good to hit a person when he is down.) Some Facebook users even ridiculed, “It was only in early February that you successfully launched the annual worst cover.” “It’s mutual blaming.” Nonetheless, other small portion of keywords that were used to express the opposite position included: “你这样说话就得罪中华胶了！” (You offended those who unconditionally support the CCP by speaking like this!) “这是事实啊，病毒的确是源自于中国！” (This is true, the virus did originate in China.) Specifically, 中华胶 and 慕洋犬 is a set of contrasting words, often appearing in the comments. 中华胶 is defined as the Chinese people who blindly support for the CCP government; while 慕洋犬 can be understood as a Chinese who admires foreign countries over his or her own country. These are the two major factions that have emerged on the social media platforms of Malaysian Chinese in recent years. From the words and textual narration above, it is composed different phenomenon as the COVID-19 pandemic denotes a critical change in how the Chinese population look at China. The fact is, netizens of this two factions fought in the freely public sphere, as well as various Chinese news media’s Facebook page. The result of findings indicates that the number of 中华胶 is larger than 慕洋犬 as maybe it is due to the rise of contemporary China, the effectiveness of the network China’s soft power to promote the awareness of the “Greater China” (大中华).

### 4.3.7 Seventh Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments

#### *Posts Info and Summary*

The third theme identified, strike called by Hong Kong health care workers during the outbreak of COVID-19/ Wuhan Coronavirus was discussed using the following two posts. It has to be noticed that the relationship between Hong Kong and mainland China remains conflicting. Early in April 2019, the extradition bill triggered the anti-government protests in Hong Kong. Their relationship shows no sign of dying down however it became worsened particularly during the spread of COVID-19. It is because the Chief Executive Carrie Lam's government declined to shut all its borders with China. Thus, a huge number of public sector health care workers in Hong Kong went on strike for the second day straight to request quick conclusion of the city's border with mainland China to forestall the spread of the destructive coronavirus (Elegant, 2020). In the meantime, apart from Hong Kong residents, the Chinese people in the globe have expressed concerns to this matter as it had an implication in a wider region. In Malaysia, the Chinese especially the young generation and those who engaged in political activities actively are not in consensus on which side to support. For example, some of the Chinese people may consider the public demonstration as acceptable and urging for democracy and human rights. At the same time, there remains a partially group of people in Chinese community described the protests as "a series of illegal violent incidents". The differentiating scenes and point of view summarize how the culture or identity have played to various crowds.

7.  马来西亚星洲日报 Malaysia Sin Chew Daily  
2 February at 23:10 · 🌐

“医管局员工阵线”在反修例示威中新成立。  
#星洲日报 #sinchew  
下载星洲网APP:  
iOS: <https://goo.gl/TY1VvT>  
Google Play: <https://goo.gl/KHCmHL>



SINCHEW.COM.MY  
香港新工会“医管局员工阵线”宣布，与政府谈判破裂，周一起开始一连5日的罢工行动。 - 【星洲国际】

👍👎😬 311      318 comments 36 shares

*Diagram 15: Seventh Facebook post collected*

This news article shared on Sin Chew Daily Facebook page has 311 likes, has been shared 36 times, furthermore had 318 comments. This post was published on 2nd February 2020. The article is titled: *The Hong Kong Hospital Authority staff front launched a 5-day strike*. The post can be retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/SinChewDaily/posts/3230206033704482>. This news article is an international news, showcasing a union for public hospital workers in Hong Kong decided to vow for a strike to demand Hong Kong' leader to close the city's border immediately in order to prevent the spread of a deadly coronavirus. It is mentioned that the strike was initiated by the newly formed union called the Hospital Authority Employees Alliance (HAEA). It seemed as a final desperate attempt to pressure the public authority of this semi-independent

China city to totally seal the outskirts with mainland China. Nonetheless, authorities contended that completely shutting the border would not be in accordance with World Health Organization (WHO) proposals as it is considered it a “prejudicial” way. At the end, disappointed by what they see as the public authority’s deficient reaction, 6,000 more health care workers had sworn to stroll off their work and go for strike, started from February 3.

### *Comment Analysis*



*Diagram 16: Wordcloud generated from the comments under the seventh chosen Facebook post*

Totally, 318 comments had been inputted and generated into the wordcloud above (Diagram 16). Observing the wordcloud, 香港 (Hong Kong)、罢工 (strike)、政府 (government) are in the middle of the wordcloud. 无知 (ignorance)、原形毕露 (betray the cloven hoof)、王八 (bastard)、汉奸 (traitor)、医德 (medical ethics) are found as negative words in the wordcloud that positioned in the centre too. The innumerable user comments did not seem to perceive Hong Kong people’s behavior as an act of pro-democracy protest. The netizens assume that as “shameful strike”, “irresponsible”, “selfish strikers”, “extremists/ terrorists”, just to name a few, even interrogated them, “Where’s the spirit of professionalism?” “They

are ignominious slackers while the COVID-19 goes rampant.” While some commentators align themselves with the medical staff, consider this to be all out inadequacy and that the public authority doesn’t have the foggiest idea what it’s doing. See some examples below: “We have no choice.” “This is the merely effective way to prevent the spread of the virus.” “It’s concerning on public interest.”

#### 4.3.8 Eighth Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments

##### *Posts Info and Summary*

8.  马来西亚星洲日报 Malaysia Sin Chew Daily  
3 February at 13:47 · 🌐

田蕊妮发火斥：“这是一个政客的态度吗？”  
#星洲日报 #sinchew 请关注 Esinchew-i  
追看更多娱乐新闻：<http://bit.ly/SCentertainment>



SINCHEW.COM.MY  
田蕊妮称香港特首林郑月娥拒与医管局员工阵线见面，形容她的态度像一个赌徒。--【星洲娱乐】

615 721 comments 73 shares

*Diagram 17: Eighth Facebook post collected*

This post was published on Sin Chew Daily Facebook page on 3rd February 2020. Retrieving from <https://www.facebook.com/SinChewDaily/posts/3231605706897848>, the article is titled: *Kristal Tin scolds Hong Kong Chief Executive for rejecting to attend negotiations on medical*



*workers' strike*. At the time of the analysis the article had been shared 73 times, had merely 625 likes but 721 comments. The article is about Hong Kong celebrity or famous artist, Kristal Tin expressed her anger due to the rejection of Hong Kong's leader, Carrie Lam in the subject of closing the border with mainland China. This is considered as the continuation of the development of medical workers' strike. In response to this issue, she bluntly criticized the Hong Kong Chief Executive, Carrie Lam for the safety of all Hong Kong people on her Facebook page. She wrote, "The front line medical workers requested to meet with Carrie Lam but she decided not to attend the negotiation. Is this the attitude of a politician? I think this is more like a gambler's attitude, but this time the lives of all Hong Kong people are staked! Hong Kong is positioned on a critical juncture!"

### *Comment Analysis*



*Diagram 18: Wordcloud generated from the comments under the eighth chosen Facebook post*

There are 721 comments had been put into NVivo in order to coding and creating wordcloud above (Diagram 18). Remarking the wordcloud, 香港 (Hong Kong)、罢工 (strike)、政府 (government) are frequently appeared as a two-word form in the wordcloud. The findings

showed a similar result with the previous post, only a trickle number of the commentators generally depicted the demonstrators or health care workers in Hong Kong as battling for their entitlement to self-assurance, headed to raising resistances by progressively violent security forces. “支持香港医护人员！” (Supporting the health care workers in Hong Kong!)、 “请特首出来谈判！” (Please come out for negotiations.) It is also worth noting that for the masses within the commentators, the conviction is reversed. They believed the “rioters” are stirring a dissident development, and, maybe, attempting to dispatch an unrest in Hong Kong. The most frequently heard accusation within the comments encompassed: “在这种非常时期，这是一种愚蠢的行为！” (In this extraordinary period, this is a stupid behavior!)、 “请医护人员将使命放在第一位！” (Have medical staff put their mission first?)、 “难道这不是威胁吗？” (Isn't this a threat?)

#### **4.3.9 Ninth Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments**

##### ***Posts Info and Summary***

Last but not least, the ‘eating bats issue’ had been discussed in the last two posts. “China to blame for coronavirus, because ‘people eat bats’,” Sen. John Cornyn, an American politician said to the reporter (Shen-Berro, 2020). However, the fact is, the origin or source of the outbreak of COVID-19/ Wuhan Coronavirus remain a mystery even as it was first identified in Wuhan, China and it continues to spread globally. In short, the globe has paid attention to the China people’s culture in eating wild animals. The China government had moved fast to response to this issue upon hearing the news. The government implemented a permanent ban with a decision titled ‘Comprehensively Prohibiting the Illegal Trade of Wild Animals, Eliminating the Bad Habits of Wild Animal Consumption, and Protecting the Health and Safety of the People’ (Barth, 2020). It would not be wrong to say that China’s top legislature

had immediately in taking action to completely prohibiting this unlawful trading of wildlife and eliminating the consumption of wild animals. Nevertheless, the comments and reactions of netizens regarding to this “eating wild animals’ culture” in China from different countries flooded online.

9.

 **马来西亚星洲日报 Malaysia Sin Chew Daily** 22 January · 🌐

官方证实病源了!  
#星洲日报 #sinchew  
关注更多国际大小事: <http://bit.ly/SCworld>



SINCHEW.COM.MY  
有网民流传一张“野味价目表”，指华南海鲜市场曾售卖各种类别的活野生动物。-【星洲国际】

 1.1K 372 comments 735 shares

*Diagram 19: Ninth Facebook post collected*

*Wuhan Coronavirus comes from wild animals* is the title of the post as it was posted on Sin Chew Daily Facebook page on 22nd January 2020. It can be retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/SinChewDaily/posts/3203159453075807>. During the period of the analysis the article had over 1.1K likes, 735 shares, in addition had 372 comments. The article is mentioning about a wet market in Wuhan, China that selling wild animals illegally,



#### 4.3.10 Tenth Facebook Post and Analysis of Comments

##### *Posts Info and Summary*

10.	 <p>Diagram 21: Tenth Facebook post collected</p>
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Obtaining from <https://www.facebook.com/SinChewDaily/posts/3206109352780817>, this post was reported on Sin Chew Daily Facebook page on 23rd January 2020. The article is titled: *No fear of coronavirus: China people eat bats' video goes viral online*. To be mentioned, the article had over 1.2K likes, 749 shares and received 367 comments. The article is about a video of a China woman eating a bat in its entirety at a restaurant. In the video, a stylishly dressed young lady holding a bat with chopsticks as she snacked on one of its wings. This revolting footage in the midst of coronavirus outbreak has been widely circulated online. It triggered anger online as many nations in the globe is combating against



individuals were attempted to see how the antecedent of the infection that causes COVID-19 arose out of horseshoe bats in China and arrived at people in the focal city of Wuhan. Thus, the comments are reflecting a phenomenon that people started to pay attention to the illegal wildlife markets in Wuhan that were not well-known in the earlier period, additionally require a prohibition on natural life markets and a finish to the business wildlife trade in the world, particularly putting language pressure and attack on China. Be that as it may, there is a little number of netizens have responded to the outbreak of COVID-19, considering the little populace that may consume these animals. “It is ridiculous as it is barely the dietary pattern of few individuals, but not the representation culture of China. ” “The epidemic isn’t culture-explicit or identity explicit.” The bigoted story and different voices from the netizens that immersed online media further proved the impact of Internet and social media in playing their roles, facilitating the sharing of ideas, thoughts in the virtual community as well as the public sphere.

## **Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusion**

### **5.1 Discussion**

This chapter aims to reiterate the research problems and succinctly summing up the significant findings. This research finds that coding utilizing conventional apparatuses, for example, colored pens, paper, and sticky notes supporting data analysis combined with digital software, for example, NVivo supporting data management provide a valid and tested analysis method for future research. Besides, while perceiving the limitations of the analysis, the research believes it has largely achieved this in the revised theory of Jürgen Habermas's Public Sphere Model and Stuart Hall's Representation Theory in research set out in 2. This research explored the comments and reactions of the netizens on one of the popular social media, Facebook toward the outbreak of COVID-19. The initially stated overall objective of this research was to explicate the certain attributes of Chinese ethnonationalism and Chinese transnationalism identity that are routinely underlied and connected with the Malaysian Chinese society. The study yielded various fascinating findings deserving of discussion.

#### **5.1.1 Social Media as a New Public Sphere: Facebook and Its Capability to Encourage and Facilitate Public Opinion**

In the beginning, as far as the underlying objectives, the research effectively enlisted the example of ten different contextual analyses and gathered and investigated information from the comments collected. First, the echoing findings from existing research, the research found that social media use promotes free and plural communication in the society. The result, a total of almost 4,000 comments collected demonstrates a correlation between the emergence of social media and its potential to facilitate public opinion as users' comments in this analysis play an influential role. In this way one can contend that the informative activity from commentators on Facebook pages could shape the premise of social activities. It would



not be wrong to say that online comments are emerged as a type of user-generated content. Furthermore, to be noticed, it is only one of the many Web 2.0 community oriented apparatuses adopted by sites, social media to empower users collaboration and interaction. The results of this research build on existing evidence of online comments are turning into a significant gateway for scholars to inspect online users reaction and embody certain behaviors. Seemingly, such ties feature the interactive engagement of the netizens. These ties appear to add more weight to the construction of Chinese identity.

Breaking down the Facebook users' ability of commenting, it gives a more clear image of the usage of social media, particularly Facebook that emphasis used in the research. This innovative ability investigation suggests that social media is as much a social wonder as it is a bunch of advancements. Nowadays, apart from functioning as a channel through which individuals obtain information in the society, social media users can further become essential for the information creation and scattering measure rather than simple collectors of content (Park, & Kaye, 2018). Extending earlier discoveries of a positive connection between news use via social media and democratic engagement (de Zúñiga, Puig-I-Abril, & Rojas, 2009), the results of this research contributes a clearer understanding of the capacity of social media, serving as interactive tool that allowed users to interact with others. There is a general consensus that it gives a free platform to discussion and along these lines encourages the development of public opinion.

In addition, the result and analysis of the research supports Habermas's theory that a public sphere is an open arena in public activity where people meet up to talk about and distinguish cultural issues, and through that conversation impact political activity (Habermas, 1991). The public sphere had undertaken different transformations and even, nowadays, social media is

considered as the principle mediator foundations of the public sphere. It was acknowledged as a fundamental precondition of deliberative vote based system where it expected to show responsibilities to opportunity and equity in the informative association between those participating in the deliberative cycle. It would thus be able to be contended that Facebook sticks to the model of disregard of status to the degree that public discourse happens on Facebook comment's zone. And also, access and participation of discussion using a social media account is free and merely the individuals who share the worry with other will partake in the discussion.

The idea of public sphere has been the hotly debated issue of contention since the times of Habermas. The development of electronic media greaterly affecting and at the same time changing the function of public sphere. Habermas has ordinarily upheld actual appearances yet the new media or Internet rises above that idea for what it's worth about associating the world, getting individuals the online dais to communicate, share, think and act on top of a person's democratic nature. However, the research would argue, through the analyzed comments, the results might suggest that the thought of public sphere is changing on the grounds that it is getting more powerful and enlivened with the indecent movement at which innovation is attacking the lives of the individuals. In this advanced age, where network society exists, it is just the intensity of thinking, which Habermas expressed in his hypothesis, which can be brought to compelling use. Virtual people group are equipped for taking democracy to the following level where people express their sentiment; set forth their voices, the distinction being that the capability of the online mode should be investigated.

Advanced media has huge force and it should be figured it out. The eventual fate of public sphere exists in systems administration in this time of digitalization. Computerized

organization can change social structures and the intensity of the individuals, their vote based rights won't be grabbed away from them. The gatherings and networks that effectively take an interest online for the improvement of the general public all in all through the guide of communication technology and make an open move, unquestionably utilizes reason as the backbone. Habermas, who was an extraordinary mastermind, could truly predict what could be better for society to make it a superior spot to live in. The thought of public sphere isn't getting old; it is just getting more powerful with the requirement for digitalization to be grasped. An agonistic public sphere is being shaped in the recent years as it appeared as one of the danger related to the conception of public sphere because each sectors in the market has been slowly become more professionalized and market-oriented, intervening in and bargaining the public sphere by reshaping public discussion in the present progressively different and complicated spheres.

However, the increasing actions of online expressing of feelings, particularly hatred, resentment, anger and so on in recent years make it an important and appropriate request to comprehend its negative impacts. The joint effort between the Internet and news media makes the expression of such emotions conceivable, prompting the development of an open public space between the state and common society. Rather than the ideal of rationality, emotions become a significant component in the public sphere (Tong, 2015). To get why, it merits separating a netizen's utilization of social media into two essential sorts, which are ordinary use and misuse. The space which is opened up seems, by all accounts, to be having a certain degree of harm that is really undermining or subverting democratic regimes. Indeed, social media or the public sphere, once seen as a significantly democratic technology, is progressively abused by several netizens in order to inflame social divisions. The very nature of how the netizens engage with Facebook may debilitate the establishments of democratic

systems. The rise of social media in the past decades has permitted fast correspondence among enormous gatherings of dissimilar individuals, giving citizens or netizens' activists new instruments for getting sorted out activities. And, at the same time, it is equally hard to quell the spread of improper remarks or inflammatory information online. To some degree awkward, it appears we need to concede a truth which is social media or the public sphere in how it's pre-owned now, can be utilized against democracy by means of information overburden or overloaded. Undeniably, social media or the public sphere should bear a portion of the blame for the plunge into online critics. This major platform seems to worsen the condition because it allows the savvy people to distribute their opinions, minimize rivals, unite their base, and fuel the social divisions that encouraged them to ascend to control, just to name a few. To sum it up, the abuse of social media can have all the more unobtrusively destructive impacts on a democracy. The downpour of information on social media overpowers current platforms' capability to spread significant information. Social media right presently is working as a sort of parody of the exemplary 'marketplace of ideas' method of the public sphere. Rather than the best thoughts winning out in free discussion, there are so numerous ill-conceived notions that the great ones essentially get overwhelmed.

### **5.1.2 Chinese-language Cyberspace: A New and Challenged Space For Being Chinese**

As planned, the research distinguished the results of inclusion from numerous netizens' points of view. The analysis demonstrated that the new articles and the analyzed corresponding comments all mirrored the previously defined attributes of Chinese ethnonationalism and Chinese transnationalism identity. These results should be taken into account when considering the construction of Chinese identity. The research would argue that the words and the themes identified from the corresponding comments was obvious to note that the public sphere as well as the reterritorialized Chinese-language cyberspace gives a

virtual space where Chinese character is continually haggled between different variables of reconstructing Chineseness. Facebook commentators responded and discussed the basic subjects that Chinese have for the most part influenced by the media in the reconfiguration of the creative mind of the cultural identity. In all the comments analyzed in each post, there were merely a few number of comments that varied in feeling or scrutinized the authenticity of the information introduced in the news stories. The mind dominant part of comments just acknowledged the substance of the news stories, without any inquiries posed. This conduct of acknowledgment, without scrutinizing the authenticity of the news stories, could demonstrate that the hegemonic power and the media have the potential to influence perceived realities, negative or positive. After all the phenomenon of perceived importance of topics is in line with the previously literature review, the claims of Bernal (2005); Hiller and Franz (2004); Parham (2004); Sinclair and Cunningham (2000) that these transnational people convey with them an aggregate memory of their country to the host nation, likewise, while ‘settling down’ in their new home, they keep up their binds with the country through transnational economic, social, cultural and so on empowered by the new information and communications technologies (ICTs).

What is significant is that, similar to the netizens in China, the netizens here seldom leap out of the news outline in the vigorously censored media and talk about the topic according to another perspective. While discussing the key issues related to COVID-19, for instance, the strike called by Hong Kong healthcare workers. among numerous others from the commentators, expressed their outrage towards this incident, considering the public authority or China government responsible. The results indicate that the majority of the Facebook users rolled back their categorization of Hong Kong’s conflict as a “riot”, applying it just to specifically violent occurrences. The focuses introduced in this part show that being an every

day schedule of these group of people, encouraging a solid in-group sensation of being ‘an authentic Chinese’ (中华民族), without doubting the China’s Beijing government that taken a firm expository position, saying the protest ‘gave indications of psychological warfare or terrorism.’ On the other hand, China’s President Xi Jinping has requested a finish to the violence, saying the “radical” protests had stomped on the city’s standard of law and that “halting the violence and reestablishing order” was Hong Kong’s most pressing endeavor (Yeung, 2019). Furthermore, the official statement and propaganda from the most influential media organization in China, such as 新华社 (Xinhua News Agency)、环球时报 (Global Times)、人民时报 (People’s Daily) turned out to be more severe, cautioning that ‘violent extremists’ are pushing Hong Kong into the ‘deep’. To a great extent, based on the findings of similar studies, a more plausible explanation is a subtle ideology dependent on an imagined nationhood that is conventionally communicated in individuals’ commonplace practices and broad communications through a ‘normal deixis’ highlighting to the homeland (Billig, 1995). As appeared in the findings, the identity labels utilized, the way of life inclination and commonality help the netizens to define as a ‘Chinese’. Because of the Internet, China is re-implanted in the character of these trans-Chinese netizens through the utilization of media.

There have been some exploration accomplishments on the development of the idea of Chinese ethnonationalism and Chinese transnationalism. With the rise of Chinese nationalism that advocates a Great Chinese Nation (大中华民族), there is an essential significance in understanding the inexorably decisive role that a rising China plays on the worldwide political scene. What is fascinating and essential to see is the way that propaganda (宣传), a vital apparatus in the CCP way to deal with governance has influential effect on Chinese public sphere. It consensuses with the hypothesis that CCP leaders have since quite a while

ago viewed creating propaganda as a significant political task (Brady, 2012). In view of this, the research found that China's ethnic propaganda not barely targeted at its citizens, nevertheless, focused on the foreigners as well as the "oversea Chinese". It mirrored the China government for quite some time held doubt that the Western world does not want China to become strong. China posses a good-evolved framework for overseeing homegrown and foreign opinion or sentiment on ethnic issues, and this framework is continually advancing to adjust to new emergencies (Brady, 2012). It showed consistent with the previous journals, claiming that China needs the set up US-drove worldwide network to recognize its "Chinese characteristics" as it joins the global order with its continued financial development and rising military strength (Bislev & Li, 2014). It is aimed to guarantee China's presence as a prosperous and solid country in the globe since China actualized the open-door policy started from the late 1970s and profoundly incorporated with that of the worldwide economy. CCP started network propaganda and focused on manipulating an explicit populace. It relates to the manners by which the design of a media biological system makes it pretty much helpless to dispersing these sorts of controls and lies. This is considered as a promulgation strategy that discover occasion to test and to develop, as well as the media environment gives the soil for network propaganda to additionally widespread in the globe.

Nonetheless, as the COVID-19 is sweeping the world, it has been a resonating disappointment in the fight for impact over worldwide general feeling. Indeed, the essential instruments of CCP rule as well as ethnic propaganda keep on assuming a significant function in CCP administration in domestic, but gradually, the Internet and mass communication technology started naturally challenge the party-state's absolute power to effectively participate in propaganda as protester voices in the foreign can break the 'pseudo-environment'. Although in the nineteenth century, Xi Jinping further focused on the

obligation of abroad Chinese to add to the acknowledgment of his ‘Chinese Dream,’ (中国梦) or so-called ‘great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation’ (中华民族伟大复兴), an consciously awakening may started to occur in the cyberspace. Its influence has been weakened a lot, because research results showed that a small number of Facebook users have begun to question and criticize the CCP government.

Last but not least, an attempt to answer the baseline question: “Who I am?” in the Chinese community, the research provides a new insight into the formation of a new sense of labeling as a Chinese. Through the finding and analysis within a homogeneous Chinese gathering, the research discovered another feeling of ‘being Chinese’ that is really taking shape as showed on the public sphere. As previous literature review mentioned, the apparently straightforward yet seemingly most convincing example is the frequently utilized word: ‘huaren’ (Chinese people) (华人), ‘huazu’ (ethnic Chinese) (华族) or ‘huayi’ (Chinese descendants) (华裔) (Yin, 2015). However, the fact is, although these words conveyed an implication of a homogenous gathering, the netizens recognized of their disparities in culture and nation of origin. They are culturally different from the China. It would not be wrong to state that the socialization experience which makes the Chinese in Malaysia label themselves as Chinese Malaysians. Malaysian Chinese have encountered localization, contrasting just in a matter of degree. Socialization impacts the manner by which people locate a specific ethnic significant and regular (Chee, 1997). In other words, the different experience of life, of socialization, impacts the discernment and importance an ethnic identity. For instance, while discussing the issue of “eating bat’s culture” in China, the word huaren (华人) is utilized often by the Facebook commentators to portray themselves, as well as China people (中国人) is used to describe the people in China, proposing that for a considerable lot of them, being Chinese has changed. From being a citizen from mainland China to an individual from a bigger Chinese



gathering. In particular, this changed significance of being Chinese is continually reminded as they recognized their cultural diversity. After they migrated and settled down in Malaysia since a few centuries ago, being Chinese turns into a separating and explained identity label. In any case, the significance of being Chinese has transformed to being a Chinese who need to battle for equivalent rights in their relatively host nation. As such, the netizens keep on seeing themselves as Chinese, however as ethnic Chinese but not China people because the locality stays basic of their construction of identity.

Again, as literature review demonstrated, the construction of identity moved endlessly from its characteristic reason towards new, and progressively subtle, ways of exploitation, fundamentally centered around social and cultural components (Orrù, 2014). Paleczny (2012) defined identity as the way toward building a picture of the world in the cognizance of the individual, an approach to adjust to reality that is continually under development. The marvels of globalization incorporate a set of variables and parts deciding the change of the cultural identity of individuals. Participation in public activity, particularly that which has a place with the domain of social action, is progressively controlled by the accessibility to the beneficiary of the substance of the message, communicated persistently by different telecommunication, including those of various ethnic or racial foundations. It fused into a new kind of identity of the members in the society. It is an intuitive space, the space of cultural transfer, and viewed as 'impermanent', 'extraordinary' and 'fluid' sorts of identity of the people. The zone of multicultural, general, globalized universe of mainstream society normally offers ascend to another kind of 'transient', 'transfer' and 'move' identity. In other words, it cultivates in a people certain cultural habits and attitudes. It reproduces cultural identities. Through the analyzed comments, the research observed that these netizens in

Malaysian Chinese society will never go back kind of Chinese in China as they are presently merely a part of the homogenous 'huazu' (ethnic Chinese) (华族) group in the globe.

## 5.2 Conclusion

This research sets out to investigate the impact of the Chinese-language online public sphere on the identity construction of Malaysian Chinese. The content analysis of the research indicated that how Facebook comments reflect certain characteristics of Chinese transnationalism identity. The corresponding comments of ten chosen Facebook posts about the outbreak of COVID-19 were fully analyzed. Online public sphere owns deterritorialising power and provides a virtual space where identity is continually negotiated between different factors and variables, such delineation allows this research to provide a nuanced understanding of how the Chinese media provide unique impacts for the construction of identity among the netizens. Besides, the contextual investigation introduced here give striking instances of the parallel connection among online comments that able to rise as a new interactive medium that keeps on creating, consuming, and negotiating new meanings and discourses. In addition, the ubiquity of online comments discloses the inexorably obvious and public nature of comments in facilitating the active users. Findings in this research proved the general view that with the rise of online digital media, identity is no longer rooted in places and is portrayed in hyphenated forms in the current period of globalization. The proof proposes that the social media or public sphere does not dissolve the discourse of identity, yet on the opposite may strengthen it.

In addition, to conclude, the research successfully identified the outcomes of involvement from numerous netizens' perspectives, giving an unusual view of an attitude of being Malaysian Chinese, its ethnic transnational linkages of China. Again, the explanation that the

Chinese phonetic transcripts are utilized here is that making an interpretation of these terms into ‘Chinese’ would be problematic in light of the fact that the term ‘Chinese’, for the majority of PRC individuals, suggests ‘people of China’ (中国人) or ‘China-Chinese’. At the end, Malaysian Chinese are both Malaysians and ethnic Chinese as they consider themselves to be one ethnic gathering. Be that as it may, the declaration of specific Malaysian Chinese identities is also impacted by many external factors, for instance the controlled media and so on. Thus, Malaysian Chinese identity is multi faceted as there are distinctive Chinese discourse gatherings in Malaysia. And, also, in general, they will keep on being ethnic Chinese, however their unbounded identity as ‘Huaren’ (华人) will change over the long run.

### **5.3 Recommendations for Future Research**

The main objective of this research was to explore the netizens’ comments under the issues that identified with the outbreak of COVID-19 and use the results to investigate the characteristics of Chinese Etnonationalism and the construction of Malaysian Chinese identity. The researcher perceived that there were various constraints to the research. One of the significant limitations faced during the research was the time factor or time pressure. The researcher was being new and unfamiliar with the NVivo software utilized occupied a portion of the time that was dispensed for the process of analyzing. Also, the time allocated to finish Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of this final year project is only 7 weeks. It would be suggested that additional time should be spent on acquainting the research results with the understudies and ideally the research in the future would yield a more critical outcome. Having plenty of time, a future study on the construction of Malaysian Chinese identity issue would be highly suggested with a bigger sample size. For generalizability, a research dependent on the findings should be led over the bigger area. It is because having a smaller sample size did not

provide much information or generate an important outcome. On the other hand, it is worth mentioning that the flare-up of COVID-19 is unforeseen, unexpected and overpowering. Consequently, the absence of earlier exploration concentrates on this subject restricts the extent of study as well.

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