

REJUVENATING CHINESE OPERA THROUGH THE  
INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY:  
A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON MALAYSIAN CHINESE  
YOUTH ACCEPTANCE

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INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY:  
A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON MALAYSIAN CHINESE YOUTH  
ACCEPTANCE

By

**ANG KOK YEW**

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**ABSTRACT**

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**Ang Kok Yew**

Chinese Traditional Performance such as the Chinese Opera is slowly turning into a dying performing art in Malaysia. With dwindling audience and fewer youths expressing interest in it, this intrinsic part of the Chinese heritage is on the verge of becoming extinct due to modernization. However, past studies on traditional performing art have indicated technology integration into the art would be able to rejuvenate it. This study seeks to explore the potential of integrating technology into Chinese Opera. This raises a couple of fundamental questions: Would the integration be able to rejuvenate Chinese Opera? Would it be able to cause the arts to be seen as contemporary rather than traditional? To address these issues, this study employed a qualitative method to explore the potential of technology integration in Chinese Opera and the acceptance towards it as a result of this integration. In order to do so, this research was conducted in two phases – Phase 1 (an overview of youth perception towards Chinese Opera) and Phase 2 (Malaysian Chinese youth’s perceptions towards opera after exposing them to videos of Chinese opera being played with some elements of technology). In phase 1, 9 focus group discussions involving young Chinese Malaysians were held to discover their acceptance of Chinese Opera and the factors that shape their views. They were then invited to a second focus group

discussion session in Phase 2 and were shown videos of Chinese Opera performance with technology integration. Their views of such Chinese Opera performances were sought to observe their thoughts and insights. Through this study, the researcher examined the impact of technology integration into Chinese Opera by looking at Malaysian Chinese youth acceptance. It is hoped that by doing so, this study can contribute to the knowledge of rejuvenating traditional art through technology. The findings of this study show that the acceptance from the Malaysian Chinese youth towards Chinese Opera are very positive. As the youth audience is constantly looking for contemporary and fresh entertainment, the findings of this research indicates that the integration of technology into Chinese opera is capable of rejuvenating the identity of the performing art without affecting the fundamental values that define it. In conclusion, technology integration must be aligned with other aspects of Chinese Opera rejuvenation in order to help Chinese Opera to adapt so that it will be seen as culturally appropriate by Malaysian Chinese youth.

*Keywords: Chinese Opera, Cultural Rejuvenation, Malaysian Chinese Youth, Technology Integration*

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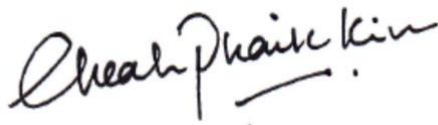
*For my family, thanks for always feeding me with healthy and delicious food. Thank you in believing in me. To my mum and my late grandmother, thank you in showing me the beauty of Chinese Culture especially in this study, Chinese Opera (戏曲). I am still excited every time to be able to watch this performing art with you.*

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## APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation/thesis entitled “REJUVENATING CHINESE OPERA IN MALAYSIA THROUGH THE INTERGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY : A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE MALAYSIAN CHINESE YOUTH ACCEPTANCE” was prepared by ANG KOK YEW and submitted as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Science at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman.

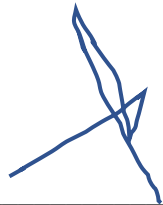
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**FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE**  
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**SUBMISSION OF THESIS / DISSERTATION \***

It is hereby certified that Ang Kok Yew (ID No: 1700893) has completed this thesis/dissertation\* entitled “REJUVENATING CHINESE OPERA THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON MALAYSIAN CHINESE YOUTH ACCEPTANCE” under the supervision of Associate Professor Dr. Cheah Phaik Kin (Supervisor) from the Department of Public Relations, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, and Associate Professor Dr. Chin Yee Mun (Co-Supervisor) from the Department of General Studies, Faculty of Creative Industries.

I understand that the University will upload softcopy of my thesis/dissertation\* in pdf format into UTAR Institutional Repository, which may be made accessible to UTAR community and public.

Yours truly,



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Ang Kok Yew

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Terms used throughout this study are operationally defined as follows

Abbreviation	Remarks
Virtual Reality (VR)	Virtual reality involves the creation and experience of environments (Latta & Cheng, 1994)
Augmented Reality (AR)	Augmented Reality is a variation of Virtual Reality. AR allows the user to see the real world, with virtual objects superimposed upon or composited with the real world. (Kaufmann, 2003)
KLPAC	Kuala Lumpur Performing Art Centre
DPAC	Damansara Performing Art Centre
PPAC	Pulau Pinang Performance Art Centre
NGO	Non-Profitable Organizations

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

Chinese Opera is a hybrid performing art made up of different types of performances that have existed in ancient China and have gradually developed over more than a thousand years. The Chinese Opera has then entered its mature performing form during the Tang Dynasty in the thirteenth century. The early forms of performance of the Chinese Opera were viewed as plain and simple, but over time, Chinese Opera performers introduced various forms of art, such as music, song and dance, martial arts, acrobatics, as well as literary art into the performance routine seen today. The Chinese Opera performance reflects a special, fundamental, pure and stable Chinese identity and simultaneously, depicts the constancy and timelessness of China (Lei, 2016).

Chinese culture and art are spread to Malaysia through written Chinese journal, Chinese Opera, and classical novels from China, whereas some were literally brought in by Chinese migrants from time to time (Seong, 2015). Initially, the Chinese migrants lived within the social compound among those other than their dialect groups and clans. This scenario generated a level of intra-ethnic diversity in their initial relationships with each other. The Cantonese and Hokkien tended to be urban traders while the Hakka were farmers or workers (Carstens, 1996). In this earlier era, Chinese Opera was accepted as a form of entertainment and was played during festive occasions in various Chinese dialects.

However, the events that took place in Malaysia after the Second World War had changed the way the Chinese lived in many aspects. Politically, Malaya was moving into the pre-independence phase which gave rise to multiple issues related to ethnicities. Concurrently, under the New Village resettlements, the British relocated many Chinese ethnic migrants in order to stifle the post-WWII communist insurgency. The new villages consisted largely of Chinese people and followed Chinese medium schooling as what we practicing currently in our country, Malaysia (Kay & Khaild, 2020). The sub-ethnic divisions among the Chinese community due to the new village settlement became vague. The residents spoke in multiple dialects and Mandarin was used as the context of formal Chinese medium school in the new village (Nyce, 1962). Economically, Malaya (later Malaysia) went through a lot of changes and market-based economy became dominant. As a result, modernization swept in alongside the significant changes in the social and political spheres of the Chinese way of living. Since then, Chinese Opera as the art form itself fails to change and be accepted as culturally suitable, it progressively becomes a lost performing art.

### **1.1 Background of the study**

Chinese Opera has been classified by UNESCO as one of humanity's intangible heritage (Kurin, 2004). In today's world, modernity is causing traditional arts to be rapidly forgotten by its community. This is due to failure of traditional arts to adapt to changes and to stay relevant to today's diversions and interests. As a result, most of the traditional performing arts are viewed as culturally inappropriate which then leads to traditionalization of the culture. Modernity has caused the traditional performing art and traditional culture to be



forgotten due to shifts in the appeal and demands from the community, especially among the younger generation (Syafri, Fadhil, Sugandi & Miko, 2020). This leads to the traditionalization of the practicing culture or art in one community. Chinese Opera is one of the traditional performances that is not exempt from facing a similar fate. As Chinese Opera is usually performed in the traditional way, it seems that it failed to attract the interest of youth to enjoy this dying performing art. Due to this reasons, Chinese Opera is viewed as irrelevant and too old-fashioned to the Chinese youth.

Numerous regional branches of Chinese Opera exist, in which the Beijing opera, the Cantonese opera and Teochew opera are among those seen as the most notable ones, in addition to others such as Hokkien and Fuzhou opera (Beiyu, 2018). For a long time, the Chinese Opera staged in Malaysia has not much changes on the acting and fundamental of the cultural performance. At present, Chinese Opera is staged as a religious ritual (Guy, 2005). As Chinese Opera is also originally performed to the Chinese deities in the early years, it is seen as having a larger significance in that it serves not only as a way to provide people with aesthetic entertainment to both human and deities, but it also serves as a means to learn philosophy, politics, literature and morality in general. In other words, the Chinese Opera is a unique performing art in its flexibility to serve as an entertainment to the Gods as well as to the living people. However, such uniqueness is also contributing to its failure to remain as a relevant performing art to the contemporary and progressive society.

Chinese Opera has originally been brought to Singapore and Malaysia in the early years of the 19th century from mainland China by the Chinese immigrants(Wei-Ming, 1991). According to Teh (2015), some differences can be observed in how Chinese Opera in China and those across the Asia Pacific are performed, but the differences are not significant as the performers are still playing it using the traditional dialect and performing style. Most of the stories and scripts of the play is still well preserved by the performance troupes who passed them from the older generation.

One of the oldest styles of Chinese opera is the Teochew Opera (from Guangzhou) where its history dates back from more than 500 years and its origin can be traced from the mid-Ming Dynasty (mid-1500s) era. In the current context, Chinese Opera troupes are invited to perform at a particular location or temple, where one of the stagehands (performance committee) will determine the types of performance to be played in the presence of community leaders of the Chinese association in the community. The Chinese Opera troupe will usually perform the story that has been selected by the temple committee to be presented to the deities during the celebration. Most of the performers in Chinese Opera troupes consist of adults and elderly artists who would have had more experience in performing the operas. Every performer will have its own role in the story such as in the classical plays known as '*banxianxi*' that showcases performances to imitate the goddesses, '*daxian*', big deities and '*xiaoxian*', small deities. Normally '*daxian*' will be performed during an engagement period while '*xiaoxian*' is usually performed every afternoon during the performance period. These shows are performed as rituals for the immortal gods and other spiritual

beings as a form of entertainment, with chairs provided for the audiences. Examples of these characters include 'Guanyin' (The Goddess of Mercy) and 'Sun Wu Kong' (Monkey King). Similar to the Chinese Opera, Malaysia's hand puppet theatre, normally known as '*PoTeHi*' (布袋戲), is also performed in the honour of the deities during the earlier days, with audiences watching from the front of the stage. On such occasions, devotees of the deities stage marionette theatres (or operas) for thanksgiving and also for the amusement of a specific deity (Tan, 1981). Staging such traditional performing art to serve as an entertainment to the deities is a normal scene in the Taoist temples across the Southeast Asia region.

The religious life of the Chinese immigrants and their needs for entertainment was interwoven. Unlike in today's world, entertainment activities such as watching a play was not common. In the past, such form of entertainment like Chinese Opera required funding and resources. Booking and preparation needed to be in place and secured before the show could take place. As such, the Chinese immigrants could only afford Chinese Opera during festive occasions and temples usually became the organizing institutions. Consequently, Chinese Opera was always viewed as a religious art even though it was not meant to be solely serving religious rituals. One of the implications of such association is that Chinese Opera is no longer performed and appreciated by the young generation. Traditional arts such as Chinese Opera has seen a decrease in interest and is not widely accepted as a form of entertainment. In Singapore, it has become more challenging since with higher income and ample of leisure time, consumers rather spend their money and energy on watching vacuous videos,

wandering in shopping complexes or even going for holidays in foreign lands (Chua, 1989).

The exposure to the modern media where English language has become the main medium of communication has also led to the alienation of cultural traditions due to the rapid transformation of social and political structures. Besides that, westernization has also given rise to the new definition of social norms which tend to undermine traditional values and lifestyle, thereby provoking cultural conflicts in Singapore (Chua, 1989). Chinese Opera has been ‘traditionalized’ (seen as a traditional performing art) by the Chinese community as time passes and the younger generation has lesser opportunity to enjoy and appreciate the traditional performing art.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

In Malaysia, the government has been actively promoting and helping to conserve the cultural heritage of performing arts to the younger generation (Azmi, Ramli & Zaky, 2017). However, the feedback and responses were not positive. The younger generation tends to choose and follow popular culture instead. Traditional performing arts have been viewed by them as irrelevant and boring as it fails to adapt to the changing time.

The issue of Chinese Opera turning into a dying form of performance does not just happen in Malaysia. In fact, it has become a global issue where Chinese Opera has been observed to lose its relevancy as a cultural identity in other Chinese cities as well. Cultural identity refers, in contrast, to the content

of values as guiding principles, to meaningful symbols, and to life-styles that individuals share with others, though not necessarily within recognizable groups (Boski, Struss & Tlaga, 2004). In China for example, it was claimed that the audiences of Chinese Opera are ageing and there is a lack of new blood performers, triggering the threat to the art and eventually leading to its extinction (StarOnline, 2016). The lack of interest in Chinese Opera among the youth sparked the imbalance in the ecosystem of the traditional art as the older performers are not able to groom new protégés to continue the art form. A similar fate is affecting other forms of traditional art too. For example, the traditional art of the indigenous people in the state of Sarawak is in the midst of disappearing due to the lack of interest among the younger generation that triggers the alarm of its demise. Even though Chinese Opera managed to survive up till today, the numbers of young audience are not growing while the ageing audience are dying off (Kristof, 1990). According to Chai, Swee, Tan and Lee (2018), “In Pulau Pinang, where the majority speak Hokkien, Chinese Opera, especially the Cantonese troupe is fighting an uphill battle to keep the art from disappearing.” The younger Chinese youth is not keen to learn and practice the cultural performance to keep it alive because they fail to understand the content and context of the performing art.

The ecology of performing arts such as Chinese Opera have become unbalanced in such a way that there are no new audiences, and it is slowly being forgotten day by day. Chiu (2017), in her recent study, argued that the society nowadays is much more westernized and this contributes to the lack of appreciation and interest towards the traditional Chinese music. In the same

study by Chiu (2017), the author found that the lack of appreciation caused the loss of skilled performers, amateurs and also the younger audience. As the demand towards entertainment has change over the years, traditional art is fast left behind in the mind of the youth. That being said, in the recent years, traditional art is being rejuvenated with new elements and technology in order to be view as contemporary art again.

The recent integration of technology into traditional art such as the Chinese Opera with the use of 3D virtual humans helps to preserve the art form (Zhou & Mudur, 2006). Ferrarese (2017), in an interview article discussing his study on a local Hokkien *potehi* (Hand Puppet) troupe found that this art form somehow attracted the young generation and audiences because the performance provided digital subtitles. This interview supports the early hypothesis that the integration of technology and modern elements into traditional performing art helps to regain its identity. Lina (2019) reported that animation gives Qin Opera new life and has become young people's new favourite. This shows that when a traditional art is integrated with the new way of performing and technology, it will be able to attract the interest of youth. In Malaysia, one such example of a well-known traditional folk art that has been made popular with technology is *Wayang Kulit*: a group of artists introduced a Star Wars themed characters into the puppetry art and opened the eyes of the younger generation to its beauty. As a result, the new contemporary concept is well received by the younger audience throughout Malaysia and Singapore. Chuo (2015) in an article has explained that the idea to rejuvenate the traditional art is driven by the concern that *Wayang Kulit* has become a forgotten art form (Shah, 2015). For example, to boost the

interest of the younger generation of a local community, a group of contemporary artists is attempting to introduce the *Bidayuh* tribe's traditions and customs to the younger audience (Martin, 2017). The action of rejuvenating the traditional art into a contemporary art is important as it helps to elevate the traditional practice so that it can be viewed as relevant to them.

As studied by Chung, Lee, Kim and Koo (2017), the use of Augmented Reality (AR) technology to understand the experience by the users on the cultural heritage tourism in Korea was found to have an effect on the behavioural intentions toward the heritage site. Li's (2017) study found the following,

“VR-based multimedia teaching is a development tendency of Chinese folk-art performance in the future, and the immersive, interaction and imagination of VR technology makes VR-based multimedia teaching to be of great application value in the education field. Games and interactive quiz can be also designed to attract more young people to know about the art.(pp. 28-40)”

Thus, it is important for this research to understand the acceptance of the Malaysian Chinese youth in integrating technology into the traditional art form to make it relevant and to boost interest on it again. As time passes by, culture will evolve to fit in a society what its community perceived as relevant and enjoyable. Hence, for performing art that seems to be embedded with identity of traditional value, the primary question emphasizes on the need to keep it

continuously adapting to the current needs and trends in order to stay contemporary to its audience.

Lei (2016) stated that the Chinese Opera's adaptability is the reason why it can still survive till today because it can be manipulated to fit any occasion and represent various identities as showcased by the performance. However, it is important to note that, even with the flexibility in Chinese Opera, the art still face serious challenges to attract the younger audience. As discussed in this study, technology do play a potential role as a medium of rejuvenation in order to help traditional art such as Chinese Opera to achieve its contemporary value. However, as it serves as a medium of rejuvenation, technology cannot be solely depended upon as the primary determinant of survival. Chinese Opera will need to adapt to the changing time and the waves of modernity that we are facing each day in order to be relevant to the new Chinese generation. The current and active performing troupes need to understand the changes in the audience's demand, especially the younger generation choices of entertainment consumption so that they can keep themselves up-to-date with the current trends so that Chinese Opera can be viewed as a contemporary performing art to the younger generation.

This study supports the importance of rejuvenating and preserving the traditional art practice as the older generation will need to pass the skills and knowledge to the younger generation to ensure that the cultural practice will not be forgotten in the future. One of the reasons why the Chinese Opera has lost its touch is due to the nature of its content and music played. The younger



generation wants something to be more in-trend rather than the traditional music that is performed. Ho (2015) reported that Chinese teenagers preferred popular music genre in their daily lives and in school. Most of the students have their own preferred music idol and groups. However, Chinese Opera has been seen as a traditional performing art and has always been associated to religious performance. Besides that, most of the youth are not able to enjoy and appreciate the story performed in Chinese Opera as the story are seen as outdated and the characters dull and monotonous. With the current poor demand towards the Chinese Opera performance, the opportunity for the Malaysian Chinese youth to get exposed with this dying art diminishes too. The same situation happens in Taiwan, Hong Kong and China where the twenty first century Chinese theatre performance faces the competitions from other art and media forms that is in the market (Bernard, 2019)

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

The Chinese Opera calls for a rejuvenation through the incorporation of technology so that its identity can be rebuilt in such a way that the young Chinese of Malaysia can see it as a contemporary performance again. Malaysian Chinese youth view the Chinese Opera as a traditional and religious performing arts, whereby Chinese Opera is seen as an art form of the past and for older people. In this sense, it has been ‘traditionalized’, a perspective that turns performing art such as Chinese Opera to be seen as no longer relevant and belongs to the past. The youth has lost interest in traditional performing art as they view it as not practical and related to them anymore. Thus, rejuvenation seems to be a way of turning Chinese opera into contemporary art again.

Hence, it is crucial for Chinese Opera to be revived with modern contemporary values without affecting its fundamental core elements that define the Chinese Opera's structure performance. This could provide the opportunity for the Malaysian Chinese youth to view Chinese Opera as a relevant performing art to them once again in the hope that Chinese Opera could regain its identity and popularity.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

Based on the above research problem, this research seeks to answer three research questions that serve as the fundamental pillar for this study. The research questions posed are:

##### **Research Question 1. How do Malaysian Chinese youth perceive Chinese Opera?**

In this research question, the researcher seeks to understand how does the Malaysian Chinese youth view Chinese Opera as a performing art as in whole. It is important for the researcher to understand the perspective of the Chinese youth on why they perceived Chinese Opera in such a way.

##### **Research Question 2. What sort of technological integration that would be suitable for Chinese opera?**

In this research question, the researcher wants to understand from the Chinese youth's perspectives on the type of technological integration that they feel is suitable to be integrated into a traditional performing art such as Chinese

Opera.

**Research Question 3. Would integration of technology turn Chinese Opera to be seen as contemporary again?**

For this research question, the researcher intends to understand that if technology will be able to give Chinese Opera a facelift after it is rejuvenated with contemporary elements.

**1.5 Research Objectives**

In order to answer research questions, these objectives will serve as a guide for the researcher. The research objectives are as follows:

**Research Objective 1. To explore the Malaysian Chinese youth's perception on Chinese Opera.**

The objective is to understand and explore the Malaysian Chinese youth on how they perceive Chinese Opera in Malaysia.

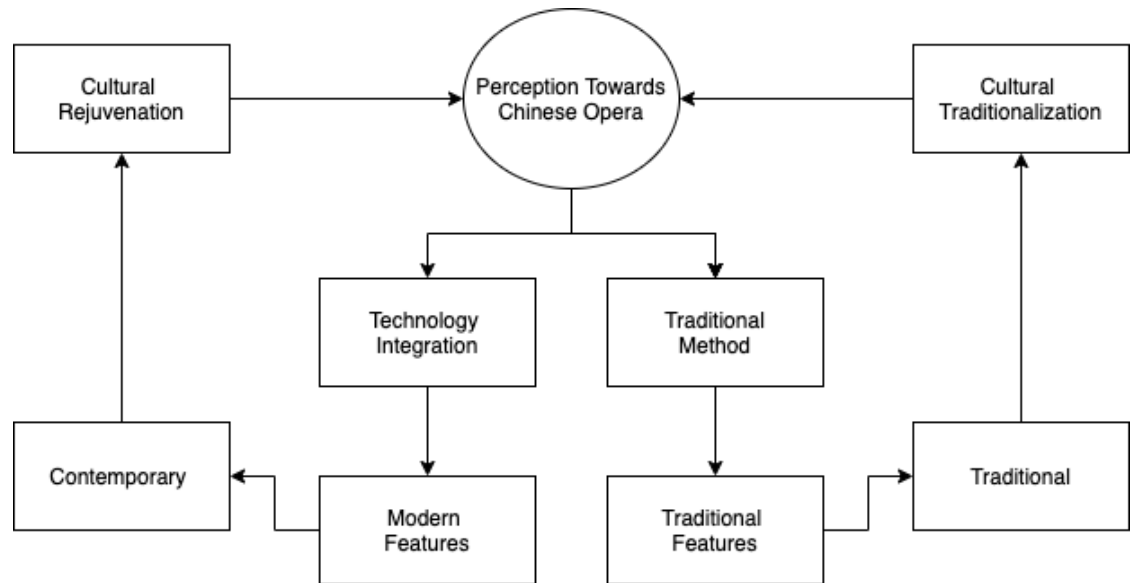
**Research Objective 2. To discover the type of technology integration and non-technological factors that can be integrated into Chinese Opera.**

The objective is to discover the potential technology integration that can help to rejuvenate Chinese Opera in Malaysia.

**Research Objective 3. To review the acceptance of technology integration in Chinese Opera among the Malaysian Chinese youth.**

The objective is to discover the potential technology integration that can help to rejuvenate Chinese Opera in Malaysia.

### 1.6 Conceptual Research Framework



**Figure 1.1: Proposed Conceptual Research Framework**

The proposed conceptual framework in this study attempts to link the perceptions and integration of technology into traditional arts Chinese Opera. If Chinese Opera is still being performed using the traditional way, it will cause the art to be blanketed with the perception it is old, and that the young audience could not understand it, leading to the decrease in the appreciation of this art. This subsequently will create the perception that Chinese Opera is old and not relevant to the Malaysian Chinese youth, forcing the art into cultural traditionalization. On the other hand, the rejuvenation of Chinese Opera with technology integration will have provide it with modern features, in the hope that the dying art can be appreciated part of the contemporary art once again by the Malaysian Chinese youth. In other words, cultural rejuvenation will help to

give Chinese Opera a new face lift so that it will not be view as a religious performance anymore, and consequently, it will be able to evolve accordingly to the changing time.

The term traditionalization is used in the framework to support the static and unchangeable concept. According to Simpson (2000), “The idea of traditionalization emerged as folklorists were shifting their thinking from products to processes, from stable texts to creative acts.” Traditionalization of culture and practices make it become a practice of the past (Moyo, 2016). However, Cohen (2019) pointed out in his study that digital media are being domesticated and made self-aware, creating a process of reflexive art traditionalization. He noted further that when a traditional art remains grounded in the local and traditional form, it fails to respond to the shifting of media and time. The notion of a practice of traditionalization of social life, where experiences constantly bring about new modes, definitions, and values, can form an important theoretical method for understanding rationalistic and nationalistic revival movements. Traditionalization may help to clarify how members of a particular cultural group see themselves and their practices. It can also help to explain how and why cultural groups attempt to validate the revival of such traditions by giving them a sense of continuity and legitimacy (Schoemaker, 1994). In this sense, traditionalization will turns a certain of practice of culture into a part of culture that is viewed as no longer relevant and unable to adapt to the change of time. A recent study by Wang, Rattchaiwong and Zhang (2022) shows that traditional performance has changed from ritual, ethnics to

entertainment and commerce while the emotional culture foundation has been continuously removed.

In this study, the researcher does not seek to adapt and re-create the impression of a new form of Chinese Opera. Instead, the researcher aims to explore an extended meaning of the notion of rejuvenating the traditional performing art by giving it a new breath so that it can be viewed as contemporary again and not been gradually deserted by the Chinese community, especially the young ones. Once the traditional performance is viewed as traditional, it will only cause the youth to perceive the art as irrelevant and outdated for them. This will cause the art itself to experience traditionalization and make it harder for it to suit the younger generation taste and consumption. To further support the definition of traditionalization, Ou, Shi, Deng and Lin (2020) argued that if traditional practices and handicraft continues to develop, it must also advance with time to adapt. Traditional practices and handicraft need to keep with time at a steady pace and constantly adapt to the modern life and demand. Traditional practices and art should provide updates and services that audience really need and are able to consume.

In the context of this study, traditionalization involves the unconscious and conscious process of the Chinese community to 'traditionalize' Chinese Opera to what it is today. The identity of Chinese Opera has strongly shifted, and it has been associated as a religious performance besides being viewed as an art for the elderly and to the dead. As Chinese Opera is not seen as relevant to the Chinese youth, the practice is getting distinctly forgotten over the time. The

identity construction of a tradition, in this case the Chinese Opera in Malaysia, has been shifted to a religious view as time passed. When ‘traditionalization’ happens, the perception towards a certain practice harms its nature and affects the stabilization of the performing art and causes it slowly to be viewed as irrelevant to the community. This will then gradually make the performance art to be forgotten in the sense that no one will practice it and no new audience will be there to enjoy it anymore.

On the other hand, if some changes i.e., technology are integrated with in the performance attributes, traditional arts would be injected with modern features. This may cause the art to be seen as contemporary and therefore, be able to attract the younger generation to enjoy it. Contemporary, as perceived by the Malaysian Chinese youth, is when this art form is viewed as hip and trendy for them. To achieve cultural rejuvenation, there must be a magnitude of change to the cultural expression, the flow-on effect, depending on its significance of cultural expression. This is determined by the practice and its contribution to maintain the social culture, the individual and the community (Carter & Beeton, 2004). It is crucial to attract the youth’s interest to learn the traditional performance as they will be the one to ensure that the art can be sustained and preserved for the next generation. Hence, the researcher argues that culture and traditions should adapt to the changes brought by the modernity to remain relevant.

In this study, Malaysian Chinese Opera is seen as an unpopular and dying performance art. It is also often viewed as a religious performance as it has been

only performed during the yearly deity's celebration and festive season such as Hungry Ghost Festival which falls in the seven months of the lunar calendar. It is important for such perceptions to be changed. Technology integration is hoped to be able rejuvenate the performing art to be seen as a contemporary art once again to change the perception of Chinese Opera as an art form that is strongly associated to religious performance.

### **1.7 Research Scope**

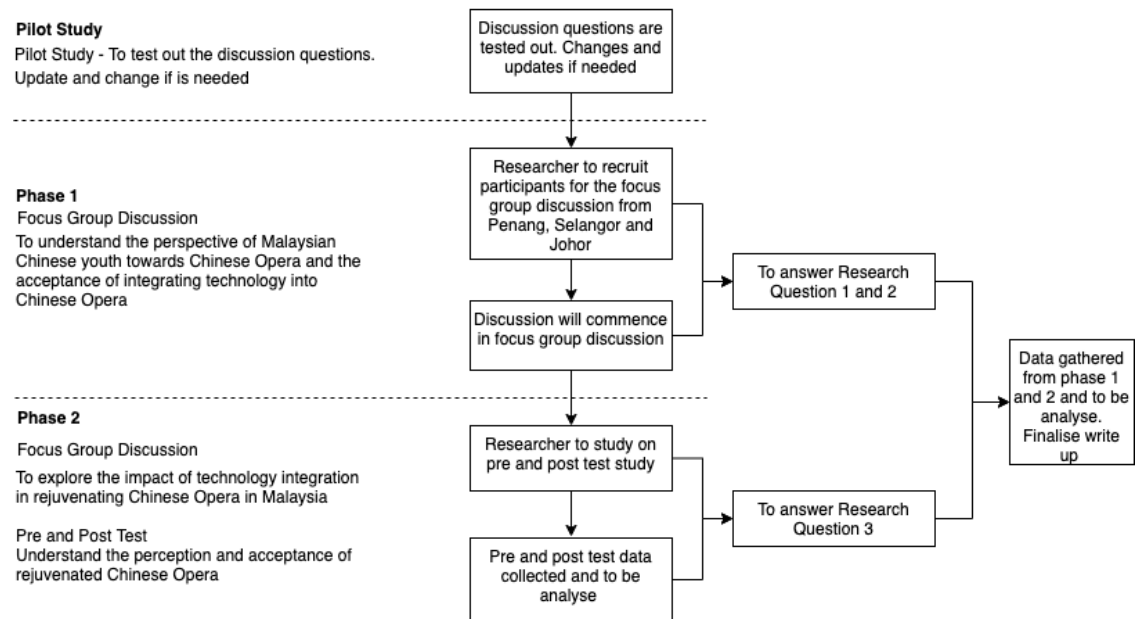
This study focuses on Malaysian Chinese Youth perception and acceptance of Chinese Opera from three states with the highest number of Chinese ethnicity population which are Pulau Pinang, Selangor and Johor. Malaysian Chinese youth aged between 15 to 30 years old participated in this study, as suggested by the Youth Societies and Youth Development Act 2021. Participants in this study include tertiary education institution students, young working adults from urban and rural cities as well as major cities from the identified three states in Malaysia. This study focuses on the interplay of interpretation of contemporary and traditional Chinese opera in Malaysia. In addition, this study also examines the importance of incorporating technology into traditional performance.

### **1.8 Study Flow**

This study is divided into two phases. The first phase of this research is to gain the insight of the Malaysian Chinese youth perception towards the identity of Chinese Opera. In this phase, the researcher also seeks to understand the type of technology integration that is seen suitable to be integrated into the



traditional Chinese Opera. Meanwhile, in Phase 2 of the study, the researcher wants to understand whether technology integration will improve and help Chinese Opera to be seen as a contemporary performing art again. Lastly, the researcher seeks to understand and explore the perception of Malaysian Chinese youth after the Chinese Opera has been integrated with modern values. The flow of the analysis is shown in Figure 1.2.



**Figure 1.2: The 2 main study phases for this research**

## 1.9 Significance of Study

This study aims to explore the acceptance of Malaysian Chinese youth towards technology integration in traditional performing arts and the reasons behind their lack of appreciation to Chinese Opera performance. This study benefits the traditional performance in Malaysia, specifically Chinese Opera so that the heritage will be conserved and passed down to future generations. Such information offers the community a better understanding of what is happening

with the current state of the Chinese Opera scene in Malaysia. It is important to restore its identity as one of the most exquisite performing arts for the Chinese community.

This research would also contribute to closing the information gap on whether technology incorporation influence the appreciation of traditional art. In addition, this study helps to examine technology as a rejuvenation medium. Technology is seen as a significant and potential tool that helps to improve the identity of the traditional art form as it is readily available and ubiquitous to the younger generation. The main issue is addressing how Chinese Opera is constantly perceived as a traditional performing art by the Chinese youth and shifting the identity from a performing art to a contemporary performing art. The youth show poor interest in learning and appreciating the dying art, consequently, creates a huge gap that connects them to the art itself. According to Zhou and Mudor (2006), attempts to use technology to record the Chinese Opera have helped to conserve the art. So, it is important to find out whether a similar trend is applicable to Malaysian Chinese youth in this study.

UNESCO describes intangible heritage as the entirety of traditional creations of a cultural culture represented by a group of individuals and accepted as representing the expectations of a community (Fong, 2015). This study helps to explain how the convergence of technology with traditional arts will restore its importance. Chinese Opera is important to the Chinese's cultural development as it represents well the Chinese's identity. Today, in Singapore and Malaysia, the Chinese Opera is anachronistic in the same level. Chinese

Opera, for example, continues to be a sign of success in Singapore, whether it is a cultural symbol or Chinese opera performance (Lee, 2009). However, in Malaysia, Chinese Opera is facing the opposite fate where it is viewed as a traditional, obsolete performing art.

### **1.10 Thesis Outline**

This thesis contains 7 chapters in total. Each chapter represents a specific component of this research. To begin with, in Chapter 1, the researcher offers the overview of this study. This includes the problem statement, research questions, objectives, justification, and significance of this study. This is to give insights to the readers about the background of this research.

Detailed background information of the study is reported in Chapter 2. Various literatures that discuss perspectives related to the impact of social change on traditional and contemporary art, cultural adaptation and cultural appropriation, the background of Malaysia Chinese Opera and other related concepts are discussed.

Meanwhile, Chapter 3 articulates the research methods and processes adopted in this study, which in this case included the focus group discussion method for the first phase of the study and pre- and post-discussion on the videos shown in the second phase. Besides that, the researcher also explained the research flow and the research scope in greater detail in this chapter.

In Chapter 4, the results for Phase 1 are discussed in detail. As these findings give a very important picture to the readers on the perception towards the dying art in Malaysia, it is crucial for the researcher to explain what causes the identity to be constructed by Chinese youth.

In Chapter 5, the researcher clarifies the type of technical integration involving Chinese Opera that the Chinese youth are anticipating. Findings are significant, as this will allow dying performing arts and other traditional arts facing the same situation to recognise the effects of incorporating technology in order to help rejuvenate performance art. In line with that, non-technological factors are equivalent important to help Chinese Opera to be rejuvenated to be seen as a contemporary art again. Chinese Opera elements can be integrated into modern art and music to create a fresh image of the art itself.

Chapter 6 addresses the results of this study, which include the acceptance of Malaysian Chinese youth on technology incorporation into the Chinese Opera. The results of this chapter demonstrate the importance of technology as it is incorporated into the traditional performance art. This enables the reader to understand the perspectives of Chinese youth on the type of technology that they wish to see integrated into Chinese Opera. The findings of this chapter are essential as it shows the readiness of the Malaysian Chinese youth in accepting the rejuvenated Chinese Opera.

In Chapter 7, the researcher concludes the research and addresses the acceptance of Malaysian Chinese youth towards the incorporation of technology

into Chinese Opera and the factors that lead to the lack of appreciation towards the Chinese Opera scene in Malaysia. Limitations and suggestions for future studies are also provided to indicate a wider framework for this study.

### **1.11 Conclusion**

Traditional performing arts such as Chinese Opera need to continuously seek ways to improve and regain their status as an important and relevant cultural identity of the Chinese people as they did in the past. As they are rapidly becoming the dying emblems of the Chinese custom, the traditional art needs to be rejuvenated to make it relevant again to the Malaysian Chinese youth. Chinese Opera needs to be viewed as a contemporary performing art again to survive in future, or else it will constantly be viewed as an old-fashioned, religious performing art, leading to its traditionalization, and eventually its loss. For a traditional performance to be rejuvenated, technology integration is suggested so that there will be modern values featured and cultivated within the domain of this traditional performing art.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

Chinese Opera faces multiple challenges to keep itself relevant, especially to the Malaysian Chinese youth. The Malaysian Chinese youth show low interest in learning and appreciating the Chinese Opera, which is alarming as this primarily affects its survival. The number of young talents that show interest in the art is relatively low since it is often viewed as a performance for the elderly and religious. The perception of the youth towards the art is often associated with the Hungry Ghost Festival, or it is deemed to be seen as a religious activity that is usually carried out during the Taoists' deities' celebration as an offering. Chinese Opera is seen as a non-relevant and traditional performance to the younger generation.

In the past, Chinese Opera was considered entertainment for the elites and high-ranking officers. The performers hold a very noble and respected position (Lu & Xiao, 2000). When Chinese Opera was brought by the Chinese immigrants to Malaysia in the early years, it served as a basic form of entertainment to the immigrants. However, it was then gradually replaced by television and radio, which offered more varieties to the immigrants as time passed, and later, with more advanced technology, a greater range of entertainment became more accessible (Kwok-Bun & Sai-Shing, 2005).

The scenario for Chinese Opera has changed significantly today as the performers struggle to keep the dying art alive. Most of the performing troupes

only perform when there is a festive season. As Chinese Opera serves in forming one of the most significant identities to the Chinese people, the art needs to be practised and appreciated by the younger generation. Technology integration may be the solution the current situation to keep Chinese Opera relevant and to be seen as a contemporary art again. Chinese Opera can be adapted to the changing time, and this form of entertainment needs to be viewed as appropriate again. Therefore, technology integration for rejuvenation may be the answer.

## **2.1 Modernity and Its Impact on Traditional Arts**

Culture is responsible for human behaviours (Fobelova, 2000). As people come together in a society to form a community, their practices and culture are also formed. This then creates different cultural traditions, representing the different ethnicity and clans throughout the world with their own uniqueness. In each ethnicity, society takes various forms over time and space. Human behaviours are induced by culture (Fobelova, 2000). This diversity has been rooted in the cohesion and heterogeneity of human identities ( UNESCO's Draft Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001). Humans will continue to develop over time, and the culture that has been practised will need to adapt to time or else it will be forgotten when it is viewed as irrelevant.

Tan (2015, p.109) posited that “Traditional music in Malaysia seems to disappear quickly as the younger generation is more attracted to popular music which is more up-to-date and commercially driven”. With broader choices of entertainment offered in the modern days, the youth tend to consume entertainment that is seen as trendy with their favourite idols and artists. For

example, the K-Pop (Korea Pop Culture) phenomenon has found its way to promote Korean pop entertainment to the whole world with its ear-catching tunes, attention-grabbing dance moves and mesmerizing colourful music videos. Most youth embrace this new entertainment more openly compared to the traditional performing arts as they are closer to their generation's tastes and preference.

When culture and practice are not relevant to the audience, it will lose its identity and slowly be forgotten. Szczepanski (2017) clarified that Chinese Opera was once a popular form of entertainment in China. During the Tang Dynasty, Emperor Xuanzong (712 A.D. - 755 A.D.) established the first national Opera Troupe called the 'Pear Garden'. However, the troupe was formed almost a millennium earlier in the Yellow River Valley during the Qin Dynasty. After more than a millennium of Emperor Xuanzong's death, Chinese Opera was still enjoyed by political leaders and commoners alike in many fascinating and innovative ways. The Chinese Opera performers were then referred to as 'Disciples of the Pear Garden', continuing to perform an astonishing 368 different forms of Chinese Opera.

As Chinese Opera faces a competition with newer forms of entertainment that other genres of performances offer, the competition increases. Tan (1984) in her study revealed that performances such as '*Ge-Tai*' (Song Stage) attracts a more extensive crowd compared to Chinese Opera when there is a religious festival held at the temple. The worshippers who visit the temple are also looking for current entertainment after their prayers to the deities. Singers usually



perform *Ge-Tai* with colourful stage lights, with evergreen pop songs that attract audiences. Meanwhile, Chinese Opera is usually presented with performers who are in dramatic makeup and repeated storylines with outdated scripts. Sometimes, famous local Chinese performers will be invited to host or perform at *Ge-Tai*'s stage, which will help the local temple to draw more audiences to get more donations and make the festive celebration more happening. The audiences for Chinese Opera are often older, while the younger audience will choose *Ge-Tai* instead. During *Ge-Tai* performance, evergreen and well-known hit songs are usually performed, and the audiences can engage and enjoy more than the traditional Chinese Opera performance. Besides that, *Ge-Tai*'s stage is usually more colourful with the usage of the latest lighting system, as compared to the one used in traditional Chinese Opera performances.



**Figure 2.1 : Example of *Ge-Tai* performed during the Hungry Ghost Festival month. The front row will be emptied as it is believed that the spirit will be seated there.**



Source: Image courtesy of Image courtesy from

<https://www.asiaone.com/entertainment/getais-auntie-killer>

**Figure 2.2: *Ge-Tai* performance usually draws huge audiences compared to traditional Chinese Opera.**

The Chinese Opera, Chinese puppet iron rod and glove puppets (*PoTeHi*) are often performed to entertain and provide offering to the deities in the early days, especially during the Hungry Ghost Festival month and other Taoists' festivals. However, as time passes, these traditional arts have slowly been buried by the current *Ge-Tai* stage, which offers more relevant entertainment to the devotees and worshipers who visit the temple and Hungry Ghost Festival prayer sites. As these performances are rarely staged nowadays, the younger generations do not get the opportunity to experience and watch them as frequently as the older generation did. Eventually, these traditional performing arts will somehow vanish in the minds of the young ones. The Chinese Opera is becoming an 'exclusive' performance art with little or no demand for the art to be staged. Therefore, to survive, changes in traditional performing arts are needed and crucial.

Ryder (1985) explained that young adults are more adaptive to technological change and urbanisation. According to Greenberg, Salmon, Patel, Cole and Sabido (2004, pp 192-206), “Entertainment, education and media are striving for social change”. Thus, traditional performance needs to undergo rejuvenation to be viewed as a relevant and up-to-date art for the younger generation today, especially in the new technology era that we live in.

Despite the various Chinese dialects that the Chinese Opera are performed in, Chinese Opera is constantly facing the challenge of low demand. According to Xinhua (2014), “Most traditional Chinese Operas still find it hard to win audience attention, especially the younger ones. It is not easy for this traditional art to win the hearts of modern people, especially the youngsters, who are spoiled by choices”. Entertainment has been a part of everyone’s life in this modern era as technology and technological devices are getting affordable and accessible. The crowds are pampered with a diverse range of entertainment. Youths are now able to select from a much greater and stimulating options of leisure pursuits (Furlang & Cartmel, 2006)

According to DeLeo (2008), before technology and electronics, people found simple ways to entertain themselves because there was no such thing as cable television. Technology has provided us with more creative ways to occupy our time and it has changed the way we consume entertainment and performances. In a way, technology provides audiences with more choices, widens up the performers choice of performance and changes the consumption in entertainment. Within this context, traditional art forms are traditionalized,

remained static and frozen in time. They are no longer seen as a part of the contemporary cultural practice. As a result, many traditional performing arts are on the verge of being forgotten. These traditional performances have failed to adapt to changes and thus is seen as inappropriate and old-fashioned.

## **2.2 Chinese Opera in Malaysia**

In 2022, the Malaysian Chinese comprised about 22.4% of Malaysia's total population, a slight decrease from the year 2020, which was 22.6% (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023). Most of them migrated from southern China to Malaysia during the British colonial period (late eighteenth to nineteenth century) when they brought in labourers from China and India (Li, 2016). When the Chinese migrated, they brought their cultures and practices to Malaya (Carstens, 2005). Chinese Opera is seen as a cultural and religious symbol to the Malaysian Chinese community. It represents the uniqueness of Chinese performance art that includes singing, performing, and acrobatics. Chinese Opera was brought by the Chinese immigrants from different provinces in China including Fujian, GuangDong, Ganxi and Shansu. The following are some descriptions of Chinese Opera features in Malaysia.

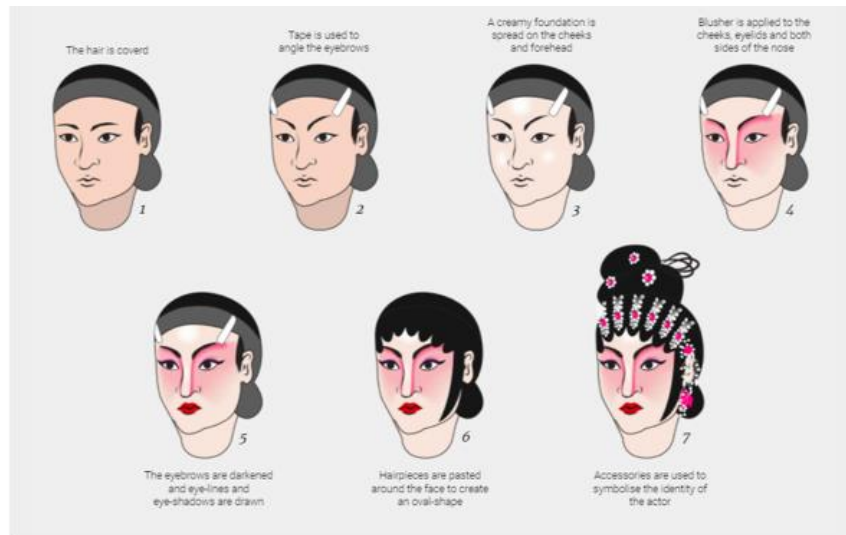
### **2.2.1 Makeup**

Chinese Opera makeup is particularly fascinating and rich in meaning. A character with mostly red makeup or a red mask is brave and loyal. The roots of the facial appearance in the operas are believed to come different sources (Liu, 1997). Yellow denotes ambition, while pink stands for sophistication and cool headedness. Black symbolises boldness and impartiality. Chinese Opera has a

long history in its facial makeup design. The source is known to be closely related to masks. Records show that people dyed their faces and hands in various colours, wearing animal and bird skins and even blackening their teeth. Such primitive decoration patterns developed into masks used to worship the gods or as gestures to drive away bad spirits.

Fierce and far-seeing characters are mostly blue, while crazy and impulsive conducts are shown in green faces. Those with white faces usually represent the characteristic of villainous, traitorous and skilful characters. Finally, a clown character has a little pattern in the centre of the face that links the eyes and the nose.

The Chinese opera involves acting, singing and acrobatics, which sometimes is also called “the small-painted face” performing the act. Since it takes years to master making up the characters’ faces in the show, the senior performer usually teaches his pupil on how to create the image. Simplicity and meaning are two remarkable features that make Chinese opera distinctive. As there is no proper education and systems in how the Chinese Opera’s makeup steps are conserved by the troupes, the actor and actress usually master their makeup skills by practising, hence making the process harder to be followed by the young apprentice.



Source : Image courtesy of

<https://multimedia.scmp.com/infographics/culture/article/3036661/cantonese-opera/index.html>

Figure 2.3 : The makeup process of an actor/actress in Chinese Opera can take years to master.



Source : Image courtesy <https://learning.hku.hk/ccch9051/group-42/>

Figure 2.4 : Types of makeup for a Chinese Opera performance.



**Figure 2.5: Behind the scene of the makeup process to prepare the actress for a Chinese Opera performance by a senior performer**

### **2.2.2 Dialect and Storylines**

Troupes of different dialects have different stories that have become popular. For example, the Cantonese troupe has always played the “Butterfly Lover” and “General of Six States”, the Hokkien troupe performed “Madam White Snake” and Teochew played “Journey to the West”. All of these dialects would also have different elements in their performance: the Cantonese troupes focused more on singing; the Hokkien on acrobatics and props while the Teochew’s focused on their instruments, singing and acrobatic skills (Goh, 2018). Teochew Opera has its uniqueness in the performance where they use

more Chinese musical instruments than any other dialect performances (Werle, 1975).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the most performed dialects in Chinese opera in Malaysia are Hokkien, Teochew and Cantonese. These performances are unique in Malaysia as the performers are still performing in their original dialect and form. At the same time, China has become more modern and contemporary, where the Chinese experimental opera has emerged in the region as well. As China has a bigger Chinese population, it is easier for the performers to experiment with a new way of performing to attract younger audience's interest. For a native dialect speaker, it is relatively recognizable from the performance and tone used in their performance. However, this might come in handy for those who do not speak the dialects, and especially Chinese opera is principally performed in the traditional tune. Some Chinese are not able to converse in their mother tongue and they are being labelled as a 'Banana' which means yellow at the outside and white inside (Delcroix, 2022). Some well-known Chinese Opera actress represents their performing troupe for every Chinese opera dialect, as shown in Figures 2.6, 2.7 and 2.8.





**Figure 2.6 : Goh Hui Ling – Teochew Opera well known actress in  
Malaysia**

**Image courtesy of <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lloyd512/2674801868>**



**Figure 2.7 : Yang Li Hua – Taiwanese “Living National Heritage” who is  
famous in the Hokkien Opera. Source image courtesy  
[http://hkmdb.com/db/people/image\\_detail.mhtml?id=15101&image\\_id=235038&display\\_set=eng](http://hkmdb.com/db/people/image_detail.mhtml?id=15101&image_id=235038&display_set=eng)**



**Figure 2.8 : Choy Yim Heong – The Malaysia Grand Dame of Cantonese Opera. Image courtesy of <https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/star2.com-video/2015/05/22/elizabeth-choy-him-heong-malysias-grand-dame-of-Chinese-opera>**

### **2.2.3 The Characters**

Zheng et al. (n.d) identified 4 main character types that usually appear in a Chinese Opera show. There are the ‘*Sheng*’, ‘*Dan*’, ‘*Jing*’ and ‘*Chou*’. In Chinese, *Sheng* may mean "strange" or "rare", but the main man is one of the most recognizable characters. *Dan*, meaning "morning" and "masculine" contradict the character's feminine nature. *Jing* means "clean", while the pictures on the face seem dirty and bold in their characters. Finally, *Chou* often portrays the animal cow in Chinese, which is sluggish and late in some respects. *Chou* characters, on the other hand, are generally active and robust (Wu, 2016).

### *Sheng*

Sheng is divided into a number of subcategories, such as Senior, Junior, Acrobatic, Junior Acrobatic, Child, Red-face, Poor, Official, etc. These are categorised based on the traits of the position. Male jobs are either in the military or in the civil service. The performers are primarily prepared for three roles: the Senior Male Role, or Lao Sheng, a middle-aged or older man with a beard; the Junior Male Role, or Xiao Sheng (Hsiao Sheng); and the Acrobatic Male Role, or Wu Sheng, a guy with a military tenor and extraordinary acrobatic skills.

The majority of the actors in Wu Sheng are acrobats, yet occasionally they have roles that call for a lot of action. In military or civilian performances requiring advanced acrobatic abilities, they can play any role. The fight scenes, which in Beijing's opera take on a stylized shape, as well as sequences from mythological legends, in which immortals and demons crawl over the stage demonstrating their expert ability, serve as examples of these actors' skills. Battle play involves the careful and rapid use of swords and spears, which prevents the attacker from ever reaching his victim. The performer clothes and contorts his body, occasionally also turning clips. Timing for these motions must be extremely precise. The Wu Sheng's acrobatic traits are made even more striking by his numerous flame feathers on his cap, four tiny flags or pennants on his back, and high-heeled boots. These features are all present if he is a young military officer. His attire, especially in famous plays, is frequently vividly coloured. Due to his great acting and acrobatic abilities, a Wu Sheng actor often does not have as extensive training in singing. However, he sings with a genuine voice and has a good voice that is slightly hushed in pitch than Lao Sheng.

*Lao Sheng* actors bear the dignity of the middle-aged Mandarin official or scholar, and they may be a general or top officer of a more gentle and cultivated temperament than the painted face in combat works. Their clothing is therefore of good quality but not too grey in colour or design. According to his age, a *Lao Sheng* has a black or blank beard and wears a black hat with two ends on both sides, of which his civil status varies according to its shape. The outfit is quiet and more formal than the warriors in colourful situations when a military role is played. The voice of *Lao Sheng* is not so strong nor too loud but gentle and powerful, smoother and more fun to listen to. This role also includes minor officials or landowners with little accountability.

### *Dan*

The *Dan* or female role can be divided into six main parts which principally indicate character; *Qing Yi (Ch'ing I)*, modest and virtuous, *Hua dan (Hua tan)* flirtatious, *Gui Men Dan (Kuei Men Tan)*, a young, married girl, *Dao Ma Dan (Tao Ma Tan)*, a stronger, more forceful character, usually a woman general, *Wu Dan (Wu Tan)*, the female acrobat, and *Lao Dan (Lao Tan)*, an old woman.

A *Lao Dan* is an elderly lady, however this type of performer has to have exceptional talent. The actor from *Lao Dan* skilfully conveys her advancing years of character with her hunched back and shaky yet proper movements. The *Lao Dan* often wears no makeup, and its costume is more subdued in terms of colour and design than the parts played by the other ladies. Since the natural

voice is not used in other Dan jobs as often as the forced high pitch one, her voice tends to be a little quieter.

Playing the role of the female warrior is a Dao Ma Dan. She has received training mostly in singing and acting, and she exhibits numerous deft moves, particularly while using the pheasant feathers in her headdress and her military equipment. She still has a feminine appeal, though, and this part calls for a highly adaptable performer. A Dao Ma Dan well-known roles, including that of Mu Gui Ying, are those of historical Chinese women warrior queens. Dao Ma Dan wears the four pennants attached to her back, hence her attire can be rather ornate.

### *Jing*

To watch a *Jing* (*ching*) actor for the first time is an incredible experience for the audience. This part is more noted for courage and resourcefulness than for scholarly intelligence. Often playing the role of a high-ranking army general, the *Jing* actor with his painted face can also be seen as a warrior or official. His robust, gruff, bass voice and grotesquely painted face and his swaggering self-assertive manner make him the most forceful personality in most scenes in which he appears. *Jing* actors are usually, in fact, extroverts. The general rule for the basic colour is red for good, white for treachery, black for brusqueness, and blue for rowdiness i.e. a bandit, would have a blue face. All *Jing* actors wear a heavy, ornate costume and a headdress with a padded jacket underneath to enhance the effect. They can be divided into three main types: *Dong-Chui* (*T'ung Ch'uei*), better known as *Hei Tou* (black face), who is good at singing and usually a loyal general, *Jia Zi* (*Chia Tze*), who is good at acting, and generally a more

complicated character; and *Wu Jing*, who is mainly proficient in fighting and acrobatics and seldom plays a very prominent role.

### *Chou*

Lastly, the *Chou* or comedy actor generally plays a dim but likeable and amusing character with blinking eyes and appropriate gestures. Sometimes the *Chou* can be a rascal with a slightly evil nature. Alternatively, it also represents a scholar or prince, an eccentric or the sort of scholar or prince who would not command much respect. *Chou* parts can be divided into two types: *Wen Chou*, usually a civilian, such as a jailer, servant, merchant or scholar, and *Wu Chou*, who performs minor military roles as a soldier and must be skilled in acrobatics. His costume is either elaborate or fussy if of high social standing, but simple if of low status.



**Figure 2.9: Type of characters in Chinese Opera.**

Image courtesy <https://www.chinasimplified.com/2015/12/17/beijing-opera-unmasking-five-of-its-biggest-myths/>

#### 2.2.4 Musical Instruments

The same organising idea is used for the theatre orchestra (ch'ang-mien). It is composed of ten to twenty instruments made of wood, metal, or leather. The hu-ch'in, a two-stringed vertical violin believed to have been brought into China by the invading tribes from the north, serves as the main instrument in this section (c. 14th century). Between the strings, a horsehair bow is pulled over the upper side of one string and the lower side of the other. The hu-ch'in, which is distinguished by its shrill, high-pitched tones, is the main musical instrument used to accompany songs in Chinese opera. The erh-hu is a two-stringed bowed instrument that is related to the hu-ch'in, although it has a lower pitch and a gentler tone. The p'i-pa (Chinese flute), which was popular in China as early as the sixth century A.D., is commonly used to accompany lyrical tunes. The san-hsien ("three strings") and the yiieh-ch'in are additional string instruments ("moon guitar"). A five-holed flute (hsiao), a twenty-six-inch bamboo flute with eight or ten holes (ti-tzu), and the Sheng, a bowl-shaped reed organ made of between twelve and seventeen bamboo pipes, are among the wind instruments distinguished for their clear, pleasant tone. Percussion instruments are found in the orchestra's main section. They are used to regulate the timing and rhythm of the dancing and are composed of gongs, cymbals, and a drum. The orchestra's conductor plays a single-skin drum (tan-p'i-ku) with his right hand while accentuating the rhythmic patterns with his left hand while using a pair of hardwood clappers (Pan) (Hsu, 1964).

The huge and tiny gongs (ta-lo and hsiao-lo) beckon the audience to their seats before to the start of a performance with a loud, metallic pounding. In

military performances, these instruments are mostly used for rhythmic effects; they imply rage and the crash of weapons. The little gong is always connected to the appearance of the female lead when it is employed alone (tan). Before beginning a show, the audience was summoned to their seats by the metallic beat of the great and little gongs (ta-lo and hsiao-lo). These instruments are also mainly used for rhythmic effects expressing rage and the clash of arms in military combat. When employed alone, the little gong is usually associated with the presence of the female lead (Hua Dan). However, in Teochew Opera, the troupes utilise a few other musical instruments, such as "to xian," "erxian," "er hu," and "zhuxian," to produce their own songs.

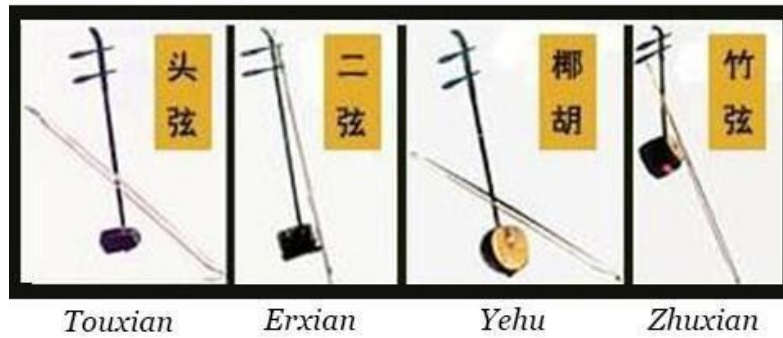


Source: Image courtesy of

<http://chinanews.bannedbook.org/201507/7-icons-of-traditional-Chinese-culture.html>

Figure 2.10 : Type of musical instruments used in Chinese Opera.





Source : Image courtesy of

<https://www.theteochewstore.org/blogs/latest/a-brief-introduction-to-tradition-teochew-music>

**Figure 2.11 : Additional musical instrument used in Teochew music**

### 2.3 The Identification of Chinese Opera in Malaysia as a Traditional Art

As there was not much choice of entertainment during the earlier time, Chinese Opera has served as one of the essential entertainments to the Chinese community. Over the decades, Chinese Opera has remained a popular art form that both the masses and the literati greatly appreciate. The intellectuals, businessmen and other lovers of art developed amateur music and drama. They believe that if they sponsor the troupes for performance, their business will run smoothly, and this will eventually help them to grow their business. Such amateur theatre groups with incredibly humble beginnings have recently become the leading force for the rebirth of traditional theatre. They also played a significant role in improving performance and in increasing appreciation of Chinese Opera. (Chua, 1989). Chinese Opera has also often been associated with street performances and activities performed during deities' birthday celebrations or hungry ghost festivals (Soon, 2002).

When Chinese Opera was brought into Malaysia, it was presented in a few dialects such as Hokkien, Teochew, Hakka, Cantonese and FuZhou. For example, the late Yeap Chor Ee, a famous Chinese philanthropist, educationist, and banker, sponsored some of the Chinese Opera show as a form of entertainment and offering to the deities in Penang (Chun Wai, 2013). Chinese Opera was brought into Malaya in the 1950s and the art has been spread throughout the country in the early years (Bong, 2012). Chinese Opera was a source of entertainment back then to the Chinese immigrants who spent their free time watching the performing art and participate in the temple helping out during the festive time.

Teochew opera has one of the largest performances in Malaysia, however Chinese Opera is performed in a variety of dialects in Chinese. It is well known throughout China and Malaysia. One of Teochew's most memorable performances is known as "Changing Faces" (变脸). Teochew Opera is more like a play than other Chinese opera forms, and the acting is highly polished, accompanied by musical instruments (Chinese Opera in General, n.d.). According to Teh (2015), "The oldest style of Chinese Opera is Teochew Opera where its history is more than 500 years. While Chinese Opera of different dialects have their own uniqueness, most of the fundamental values such as makeup, costumes and singing style are recognizable to the audiences.

As the Chinese immigrants moved south from Thailand to Malaya, they brought Teochew Opera (as a form of entertainment). Teochew opera is considered as one of the high-class acts. Teochew Opera has its uniqueness and

is easily recognisable through its dialect and some of its traditional musical instruments. The tone of Teochew opera has its unique style compared to other Chinese Opera. It differs from the falsetto of Beijing opera and Cantonese opera. Teochew Opera's melody combines certain scales, thus, producing its distinctive styles and unique melodies (Hui, 2011).

The great success of the Chinese Opera was clearly illustrated by the fact that more than 20 practitioners performed in different dialects in the 1950s (Chua, 1989). Soon (2002) explained that the Chinese Opera troupes are usually categorised into professional and amateur troupes. The professional troupes typically consist of middle-aged members who lack formal education, and often are non-mandarin speakers. Meanwhile, the amateur troupe comprises members who perform more in the public space such as tourist spots and shopping areas.

As time pass, there are now less than ten active troupes that still perform the traditional performance (Soon, 2000). As Chinese Opera loses its identity as a form of entertainment to the Chinese community as time grows, the performing troupes need to find ways to sustain their income. Chinese Opera's demands dropped significantly; the performing troupes started to perform in the temple during the festive season and funerals. Some troupes chose not to perform during these occasions. Nevertheless, they have begun to face financial issues. Eventually, many quit performing art. Only a handful of Chinese Opera troupes are still active and performing. The troupes that remain active are shown in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1: Professional Chinese Opera Troupes in Malaysia and Singapore**

<b>Name Of Troupe</b>	<b>Dialect</b>
Lao Sai Tao Yuan TeoChew Wayang	TeoChew
Jin Ying Chaojutuan	TeoChew
Zhi Yun Chaojutuan	TeoChew
Sin Sai Hong Hokkien Wayang	Hokkien
Si Ji Chun Minjutuan	Hokkien
Xin Bao Feng Gezaixi	Hokkien
Xin Yan Ling Gejutuan	Hokkien
Ya Sheng Mingjutuan	Hokkien
Kim Giak Low Choon	TeoChew
Yang Keng Benevolent Dramatic Association	Cantonese

A number of active associations and clubs promote Chinese Opera to the public and they use social media to promote traditional performing arts. The associations are ‘*Persatuan Peminat Opera & Muzikal Cina Totalmas Kuala Lumpur*’ and ‘*Persatuan dan Kebudayaan Opera Cina See Ngai Ipoh, Perak*’ (Raeih, 2012). However, these associations target the social media users who share the same interest in Chinese Opera and barely promote the performing art to the younger generation.

According to Chua (1984), four main attributes influence the success of a Chinese Opera troupe, which are: (1) easy accessibility to the performance venue, (2) competitive performance context, (3) proper performance

management such as the projection of Chinese script and English translation, and (4) the availability of good publicity in mass media (p. 82). Chua (1984) also argued that the Chinese Opera nowadays do not have these attributes that lead to the success of a Chinese Opera performance. The underlying reason is the way Chinese Opera is being identified. According to Tan (2000), “Traditional Chinese music troupe or also known as the *Huaye Tuan* (Chinese instrumental troupe) survived because it has adapted and transformed according to the local situation”. Some Chinese instrumental troupe perform musical score that is modern such as contemporary music and as such, the younger generation are able to relate to. The flexibility of *huaye tuan* to adapt into the modern setting attracts the younger generation’s attention. The main issue in Chinese community, particularly, the Chinese youth, is that they identify Chinese Opera as a religious and traditional performance.

## **2.4 Other Challenges that Contributed to the Decline of Chinese Opera in Malaysia**

### **2.4.1 Performance Space**

Cultural identity is a crucial point for people in gauging the events around their environment. It forms a significant basis for developing new things, new cultures and new ways of life (Holland et al., 2001:5). Over time, technology and entertainment have evolved, leading the traditional art into a gradual demise as it fails to capture the interest of the younger generation. In addition, there are only a few art spaces such as Kuala Lumpur Performing Art Centre (KLPAC), Damansara Performing Art Centre (DPAC) and Pulau Pinang Performing Art

Centre (PPAC) that host creative performances. However, creative productions related to the traditional Chinese performing arts is a rare occurrence.

Besides that, Tan (2000) noted that "according to the Chinese cultural groups, since the government does not recognize Chinese culture as part of the national culture (even when it is Malaysian in content) and does not offer any encouragement or financial support, it is up to the Chinese to take care of themselves and to promote their own culture". This adds to the challenges for the Chinese community in ensuring that the traditional performing arts remain alive since they cannot survive without strong guardianship and support.

Thus, it is crucial to understand the reasons that contribute to the consumption factors of the Chinese youth towards this performance. Cultural performances in Malaysia are usually performed in open spaces to attract audiences, and it has been of the Malaysia's government approaches to attract tourists. For this purpose, a unique auditorium should be built to stage our country's arts and culture. Rosnan, a famous *Mak Yong* performer, gave an example that the *Kecak Dance* has become the main attraction for visitors in Bali, Indonesia. They have a particular stage that helps promote the culture (The Malaysian National News Agency,[BERNAMA], 2016). In contrast, in Malaysia, there is no dedicated space for the Chinese Opera troupe to perform, thus, making it harder for the troupe members to perform. Most of the time, the performing troupe will only perform in the temple

### 2.4.2 Unpopular Storyline

A dedicated television channel in Taiwan showcased Chinese opera specifically in the Hokkien dialect because the demand was present. However, as time passes, it gradually became unpopular because of Western entertainment, Japanese pop culture, and Korean pop culture are more in demand (Dai, 2018). According to Tan (2000), several popular Chinese Opera stories that are still being actively performed include *'San Guo Yanyi'* ('The Romance of Three Kingdoms'), 'Madam White Snake' and 'Journey to The West'. There has been a significant decrease in mainstream movies featuring the Chinese Opera genre in recent years as the demand has dwindled as compared to contemporary films and dramas. This phenomenon results from younger audiences constantly seeking newer storylines to watch as the stories performed in the traditional performing troupe are viewed as monotonous, boring and old.

In modern times, the Chinese Opera has been adapted into the silver screen and soap drama forms with a better plot and played by well-known actors and actresses to draw the public's attention. One example is a movie titled *"Farewell My Concubine"* which was directed by Chen Kaige in 1993. It brought the Chinese Opera to the western world, highlighting the appeals of the traditional performance and its aesthetics. Other movies featuring Chinese Opera include *"Peking Opera Blues"* which debuted in 1986, *"Princess Chanping"* in 1976, and *"Hungry Ghost Festival"* in 2014. Even on the silver screen, Chinese Opera is often associated with horror movies to create eerie and creepy scenes due to its dramatic makeup and body movements. In 2019, a popular Chinese drama was aired in China titled *"Winter Begonia"*. The drama which was about

Chinese Opera troupes surviving in the war era has drawn a huge audience, including the Southeast Asian region. In early 2020, Singapore has released a new English drama that sparked the audiences' interest in understanding the life of the 'wayang' (show) stars. The story, "Ti Tou Dao" was based on a true-life story of a famous Chinese Opera star back in the 60's, Madam Oon Ah Chiam. It debuted in Singapore and was aired in the neighbouring country, including Malaysia (Seah, 2020). A few changes were observed in the storyline development performed by the traditional performing troupe as they usually follow the scripts passed by the older performers or troupes.



Source : Image courtesy of <http://www.buymoviesforless.com/madam-white-snake-1962-dvd-taiwan-version/>

Figure 2.12 : Famous story that has been played over time in Chinese Opera.

On the left "Madam White Snake". On the right "Justice Bao"





Figure 2.13 : “Journey to The West” Chinese Opera played on the street



Source : Image courtesy of

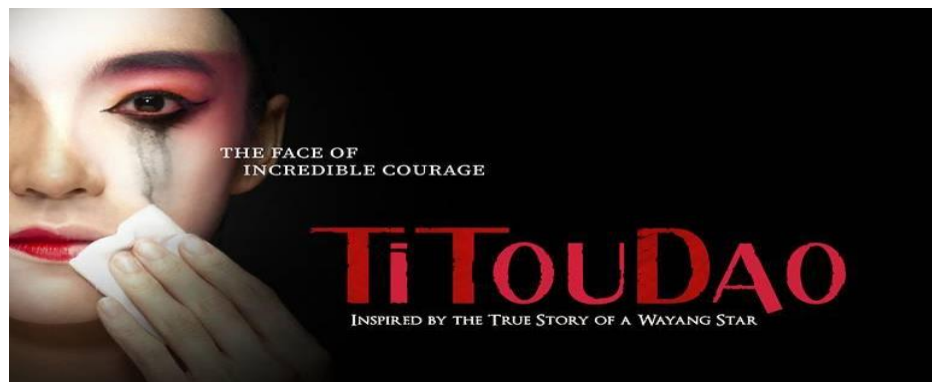
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0106332/mediaviewer/rm1867805440>

Figure 2.14 : “Farewell My Concubine” movie poster



Source : Image courtesy of [https://wiki.d-addicts.com/Winter\\_Begonia](https://wiki.d-addicts.com/Winter_Begonia)

Figure 2.15 : Poster of the popular drama “*Winter Begonia*” in China and South-East Asia.



Source : Image courtesy of <https://tv.mewatch.sg/en/channel5/shows/t/titoudao-inspired-by-the-true-story-of-a-wayang-star/info>

Figure 2.16 : “*Ti Tou Dao*” drama poster

### **2.4.3 Modern Entertainments**

Most of the Chinese immigrants who came to Malaya (Malaysia at the early time) and Southeast Asia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century worked as farmers or had small businesses for a better living. When the Chinese immigrants moved to the new place, they brought their culture and hoped to live in the new place. Some of the migrant workers also served as a performing troupe during that time. As time went by, some of the troupe members had turned their passion into a serious career as the demand for performing arts was high. Chinese Opera is usually performed during festive seasons, temple celebrations, weddings and even funerals. However, when television and radio were introduced and became popular, it affected the appeal for Chinese Opera as the Chinese audiences have more choices in choosing their source of entertainment. Slowly, Chinese Opera has lost its identity, where today, it is considered among the dying performing art forms (Teh, 2005). Chinese opera faces a great danger as it is regarded as one of the forgotten arts in Malaysia as well as in other parts of the world.

### **2.4.4 The Diminishing Chinese Dialects**

The diminishing Chinese dialects have caused a survival crisis in China's opera industry (Hai-ling, 2012). The seven Chinese dialects spoken here are Cantonese, Teochew, Hokkien, Hakka, Hainanese and Guangxi. These dialects originated from southern China where the ancestors of Malaysian Chinese mainly came from, as well as Sanjiang, which was the dialect spoken in Shanghai and its surrounding areas (Yip, 2018). These Chinese dialects are slowly disappearing as the younger generation speaks Mandarin as it has become the main Chinese lingua franca. Besides that, the Chinese vernacular school in

Malaysia also uses Mandarin as the primary medium to teach the students, and there are no classes that teach other dialects. The mother tongue comprising of the dialect is usually learnt in their household from their parents or the elderly. Hence this creates a slight chance for the younger generation to converse in the dialect they grew up with.

Over time, the younger members of the Chinese community face difficulty understanding other Chinese dialects as they start to converse lesser in their dialect, which eventually leads to certain practices of Chinese culture and tradition to be forgotten. When the dialects are rarely spoken in daily life, the traditional culture risks being overlooked. In Malaysia, Chinese vernacular school uses only Mandarin as the formal language of teaching and learning, forcing the students to learn their dialects spoken in their household informally (Wong & Xiao, 2010). The situation is alarming as not every Chinese home will converse in their dialects as some of their family members do not get the chance to speak in these dialects such as Hokkien, Hakka and Teochew.

Dialects have been forgotten to those who reside in the city as they find it hard to communicate in them in their daily lives compared to those who stay in the suburban and rural areas. The situation eventually creates a new generation of young Chinese citizens who cannot speak their dialects and cannot understand them. Traditional performances such as Chinese Opera, which is still performed in traditional dialects, will not attract the attention of the youth as they fail to understand and appreciate the content of the performance. Today, some of the dialects spoken by minority tribes had slowly disappeared due to the unfamiliarity of the younger generation to them, which is worrying.

Consequently, this will lead to the extinction of specific Chinese dialects. When the Chinese youth fails to understand Chinese dialects, they face problems understanding the content of the performance in Chinese opera, hence creating the gap between the community and traditional art.



www.shutterstock.com · 160374296

**Figure 2.17 : It is a very normal scene for a Chinese Opera to be staged in a Taoist temple during the festive in Southeast Asian countries**

A recent study by Siah, Ong, Tan and Sim (2015), showed the impact of different school systems in Malaysia on the experience of practising the Chinese language. Students studying at National Secondary School (NSS) have a lower chance of practising the Chinese language in the school compound and rarely read Chinese materials or watch Chinese television programs. Nonetheless, their experience of practising the Chinese language with their family members is similar to those from Chinese Independent School (CIS). Regarding using the Chinese language among friends, students at NSS practice Chinese dialects with their friends more frequently than those at CIS. The results show that the younger generation of Chinese ethnicity has lower chances to practice the

Chinese language in their daily activities. Hence, this might contribute to their lack of interest in Chinese cultural practices, especially those related to Chinese Opera which constantly uses traditional dialect as the primary language in the performance.

The Chinese education syllabus that has been implemented in the current education system employs Mandarin as the main language of teaching and learning. The younger generation do not get many chances to practice their mother tongues or dialects such as Hokkien, Teochew, Hakka and Cantonese. As most Chinese Opera is performed in these dialects, the younger generation has a limited understanding of the performance on stage. This contributed to the lack of appreciation even though they might be interested in the art. Moreover, in Malaysia, performing arts are not included in the mainstream education, so the exposure to cultural performances such as Chinese Opera is often non-formal. Chinese Opera is constantly being taught and inherited via non-formal education. The younger performers are either born into the performing family or help to run the business.

A study by Chong (2016) showed that the younger generation in Singapore could not speak dialects, and this is the cause of the demise of the Chinese Opera because they only understand Mandarin due to the Speak Mandarin campaign that the Singaporean government had actively promoted in the early 80's as a move to make Mandarin as the primary medium in teaching and learning. The same policy was implemented in Malaysia back in the 80's too. The Chinese vernacular school used Mandarin as the medium for teaching

and learning and did not promote syllabus with the mother tongue for school children. The order was followed by the Chinese community back then and it has created a barrier for them to learn their mother tongue. This eventually gave rise to a newer generation that does not converse in their mother tongue, indicating an increased assimilation by this third generation. Hence this creates the barriers to the younger generation of the communities to learn and speak in their respective dialects. For instance, the Baba and Nyonya, who spoke Malay more than the other Chinese, was the minority in Malaysia (Barbie, 1992). This creates the changes in the Chinese community back then in the way of them conversing in the mother tongue.

#### **2.4.5 Lack of New Young Talent**

According to Xinhua (2014), “Fewer than half of the young graduates from opera academies in China will stick to the profession as their salary as a performer is relatively low due to poor ticket sales”. In the modern world, where everyone is busy striving to earn a living, traditional performance is no longer on the top of the list of people’s interest. The decline in the Chinese Opera demand is so marked that it has become hard for the younger generation to understand the cultural performance. Ruxyn (2017), in an online article, listed Chinese Opera as one of the twelve dying trade and arts that may disappear forever in Malaysia in the future. This finding supports the relevance of this study to understand the acceptance of Malaysian Chinese youth on the integration of technology to the dying art. Chinese Opera troupes are shrinking because former performers have quit due to the low demand for performance, and they find it hard to recruit the new blood interested in the performing art.

Chinese Opera performances have dwindled as this dramatic art form continues to decline due to its poor demand. To stay relevant, rejuvenated Chinese Opera was introduced, renewed and modernized with contemporary content in China to ensure it is not forgotten (Lei, 2011). In Malaysia, however, the study on rejuvenated Chinese Opera that can spark the interest of Malaysian Chinese youth is lacking; so, a similar study should be done in Malaysia to understand the effectiveness of rejuvenated Chinese Opera to attract the youth. As Chinese Opera is often seen as a traditional performing art, will rejuvenated Chinese opera change the youth's perspective towards contemporary art once again?

Besides that, to support this argument, Malaysian youth who live in technologically less developed countries are extensively influenced by the electronically transmitted pop culture and become the consumer of Western culture (Chua, 1996). While according to Guo (2019),

“Younger audience gets influenced by the identity construction as idols and icons of west pop-culture. It expanded among the younger audience, and the mastery classical heroes of Chinese Opera become old-fashioned and irrelevant to the younger audience (p.253).”

Therefore, it is vital for measurements to be taken to protect this intangible cultural heritage. Over the first half of the twentieth century, Chinese Opera has enjoyed a golden age in Southeast Asia. However, since the 1970s, Chinese Opera has inevitably declined in Southeast Asia and around the world.



Besides that, in an interview with a veteran performer in Singapore, Soon (2000) discovered that most professional performers engaged various mainland China teachers in the 1950's to teach different aspects of Chinese Opera art. One trainer, for instance, was responsible for vocal training, while other taught dance, acrobatics and a music. For the entire training period, trainees remained in the 'xiguan' or troupe districts and eat together. The trainee practised different skills during the day, while the older performers practiced in the evenings. However, trainees could only go home on Chinese special festival days, and during the training period, they were entirely answerable to the troupe leader. The term 'dapigu' in the professional circle symbolises the strict and under the cane method, through which these artists are treated as children, and the workshops are primarily used among Chaozhou's operatic circles. As skilled performers and teachers who can share their knowledge with the young trainees declines, more challenges arise for the younger generation to take over the troupe. Moreover, the strict practices discourage the impatient younger generation to have a lasting interest in learning the Chinese Opera, as pointed out in an old Chinese saying, "one minute on the stage, ten years of work" (台下十年功, 台上一分钟). With the fast-moving lifestyle today, most young people demand quicker and immediate results, whereas to master Chinese Opera, they have to spend a long period of time in training. The lack of interest and willingness to commit to the training among the younger generation forms another reason for the decline of this art.

#### **2.4.6 Lack of Funding and Support**

According to Tan (1989), at a national congress in 1971, a cultural policy based on the following principles was formulated :

- 1) “the national culture of Malaysia must be based on the cultures of the people indigenous to the region;
- 2) elements from other cultures which are suitable and reasonable may be incorporated into the national culture; and
- 3) Islam will be an essential element in the national culture.”

All the factors derived from this new policy created an imbalance in the new generation of the Chinese community in practising their culture and understanding their roots. There are limitations occurred and some practices have to be shifted to suits the policy that create changes.

The outcome of the policy places a heavier burden on Chinese culture and performance in Malaysia. Most Chinese artists and performers had to actively seek sponsorship from businessmen and philanthropists to keep the art alive or they had to depend on the temple’s support in booking for shows. Hence, Chinese Opera faces the risk of losing its identity as the troupes struggle to get the opportunity to perform and to keep themselves afloat.

The Chinese opera in China faced more intense pressure and threats. Chinese Opera performance was once banned during the cultural revolution and this forced most opera troupes to disband, while the performers and scriptwriters were prosecuted in China. After the year 1976, the Beijing Chinese Opera and other forms of Chinese cultural performance were revived and placed within the

national repertoire (Idema, 2014). However, the authorized Chinese opera performed under government's restrictions, and it changed the nature of the play. This creates an update to the Chinese Opera that we still got to enjoy today due to the repertoire.

The cultural revolution also caused the Chinese Opera to face difficulties in expanding its growth. Although older performers who had survived the purge were allowed to pass on their knowledge to new students, there was a lapse in time and creating the gap of knowledge transfer. Simultaneously, some newer works were censored, and new composers were criticised as the political winds have shifted over the intervening decades. The cultural revolution contributes to a lot of performer quitting the performing troupes and have to seek for another job so that they can sustain their living at the time.



**Figure 2.18: It has become a normal scene nowadays that Chinese Opera is performed to the deities in the temple without much audience.**

As Chinese opera is usually performed in the Taoist temple in Malaysia, donations from devotees and philanthropists are the primary financial sustaining key to the temple and are the source of income to the performing troupes. In Malaysia today, professional Chinese opera troupes consist of profit-oriented, full-time, itinerant performers and musicians who perform in temple compounds or temporarily sanctified areas within housing estates, on the outskirts of the central business as well as shopping and tourist districts. The maintenance of a troupe depends exclusively on income earned through performance. Similarly, for most professional performers, performance earnings serve as their main source of income (Soon, 2000). The situation is very similar to what is happening in Malaysia. As the devotees will go to the temple to pray to the deities, some of the devotees will give donations to the temple and performing troupes after seeking advice from the '*shantangs*' or medium as a sign of gratitude for the blessing from the '*shantangs*' and the temple. The devotees usually will visit the temple and seek advice from the medium or sometimes called the '*shantang*'. According to Chee-Beng (2012), the '*shantang*' stress their benevolent heritage during the Chinese state's hostility to the Chinese faith. The charity aspect is also stressed by devotees who want to portray a cosmopolitan image of '*shantang*' instead of a supernatural one. At the same time, their durability and complex life are attributed to the religious essence of '*shantang*'. Hence, Chinese Opera has often been viewed as a religious performance related to the Hungry Ghost Festival that falls in the 7<sup>th</sup> month of the lunar calendar and during the Nine Emperor God festival in the 9<sup>th</sup> month of the lunar calendar.



**Figure 2.19: Chinese Opera during the Hungry Ghost Festival**



**Figure 2.20: The Nine Emperor God Festival in Ampang, Selangor.**

**It is one of the most celebrated festival in the Chinese lunar calendar in**

**Malaysia**



**Figure 2.21: The Nine Emperor God Festival has been associated with Chinese Opera. The temple community will hire the Chinese Opera troupe to perform to the deities as a form of entertainment.**

The discussion above points out that the lack of integration of technology and traditionalization is not the only factor that caused Chinese Opera to be unpopular. A further analysis is therefore vital to develop a more inclusive approach to rejuvenate Malaysia's current Chinese Opera. While the reason of opera's decline is due to the lack of appreciation towards the art form, a further study is needed to consider the factors that lead to Chinese Opera's downfall. According to Goh (2009), the influences of modern education and geographical environment have evolved their own unique and distinctive variation of Chinese customs. Festive celebrations, beliefs, practices and daily activities reveal the inheritance from their ancestors from China, in addition to the assimilation of the Malay sociocultural elements. This has resulted in a richer culture for the Chinese community in Malaysia; however, it also caused changes to the original

Chinese practices and arts. For example, Chinese Opera is performed in the Malay language and the English Opera style.

Many people regard Chinese Opera as a religious performance, and this caused people to shun it away (The Star Online, 2011). However, Chinese Opera is indeed a flexible performance art that anyone from any ethnicity can perform. “To love the art is to know the art”, a case of point Rozita, a 38 year old Muslim lady who joined a Chinese Opera troupe and gained the opportunity to perform on stage. She is also the secretary of Totalmas Chinese Opera and Musical Fans Association of Kuala Lumpur. But due to its strong image as religious performance, the understanding that Chinese Opera is a spiritual performance to the Chinese deities has remain ingrained in society’s psyche. In other words, values do not only refer to fundamental beliefs which are consistent with those traditionally held by most individuals in a particular society (Elasmar & Hunter, 1997), but they also refer to the ideas that influence and direct our choices or actions, for example, how we perceive situations and problems, how we make decisions and the kinds of decisions we make (Gini, 1998).

Chinese Opera and the Chinese orchestra have also been seen as potential cultural features that can contribute to the tourism field (Chiu, 2017). As the Malaysian government strives to promote the diversity of the country’s culture, performing art also holds a unique attraction to tourists from other countries. Hence, performing art has its value and relevance to be kept alive. Countries such as Taiwan, China and Hong Kong have shown that Chinese Opera still plays a vital role in contributing to their socio-tourism economy. In India, for

example, folk theatre combines music, dance, pantomime, versioning and recitation of epic and ballads, graphic and plastic arts, religious and peasant festivals. With its origins from indigenous culture, folk theatre is rooted in urban and social culture (Das, 2013). Hence, this proves that although time changes and the community evolves, traditional art's roots have always stayed in the heart of its community, furnishing a strong reason to keep the traditions alive. However, as discussed, to stay relevant, traditional art needs to follow the changes of the era.

## **2.5 Technology as a medium of rejuvenating**

Social constructivism emphasises the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding (Derry, 1999; McMahon, 1997). Authenticity is a constructive concept and the core principle for protecting cultural heritage. Still, it is also a debatable issue, along with its practice in different geographical and cultural contexts. The heritage management system and its authenticity principles are not indigenous but were developed in western societies and exported from western countries. As a result, conflicts arise with its implementation and therefore, often lead to counterintuitive behaviours.

Errera (n.d.) suggested:

Contemporary art means "art that has been and continues to be created during our lifetimes. Art that was created from the 1960's - 1970's up until now is considered contemporary art. This type of art is known to be much more socially conscious than any



previous era has been. While Contemporary Art means "art that has been and continues to be created during our lifetimes". Traditional art consisted of many art forms that were relevant to the past. Some of these art forms include paintings, sculptures, printmaking, mosaics and drawings. Traditional art was prominently created using cultural perspectives and ideas, and this means that different cultures used different materials and processes to display their cultural ideas.(para. 3)

In addition, Errera (n.d) explained that contemporary art commonly uses various materials and techniques, including new technologies such as computers and three-dimensional, live graphic elements and performances. In contrast to contemporary art, traditional performance usually combines acting, dancing, and music which plays a crucial role in culture and society (Performing Arts, n.d). Smith (2006, p.683) has defined, "contemporary art as to be modernized because being contemporary is more than mindless embrace of the present. Contemporary art means art that has been produced made now." While Stallabrass (2020, p.1) explained that the freedom zone for contemporary art was defined by its separation from the routine and practical aspects of daily life, as well as from norms and formalities. Hence, there is a clear difference between contemporary and traditional art practices. Based on the author's suggestion, the researcher categorised the features of contemporary and traditional performance as shown in Table 2.2 for easier reference.

**Table 2.2: Differences between Contemporary and Traditional  
Performing Art**

<b>Contemporary Art</b>	<b>Traditional Art</b>
New technologies	Classic
Three Dimension / Live Element	No new element
Modern Values	Traditional Values

A study done by McCarthy and Mason (2006) found that young people generally find that the traditional painting and art in an art gallery does not have a strong appeal to attract their attention. In Europe, some art galleries have tackled this issue by improving their educational provision for young people who are independent visitors by setting up specialized exhibitions and informal education programmes that tap into the interests and needs of this age group (Xanthoudaki, 1998). These initiatives indicate efforts to socially reconstruct the younger generation's interest in traditional art through rejuvenation, namely by assimilating modern features into the art.

The youths are always looking for entertainment that is contemporary and relevant to them. Traditional art was developed in the early years by the older generation; therefore, to ensure that youth could relate to it, traditional performance and the art need to grow and adapt over time to fit into the construction of social changes. Tradition is inevitably invented because it enters into the construction of social identity. Even for the rural folk, tradition is self-conscious and changing (Linnekin, 1983). To rejuvenate the identity of cultural

performance, it needs to be constantly revitalized to cope with the changing time. Otherwise, it will be slowly forgotten by the new generation whose nature is to constantly seek something that they can enjoy and consume. Consumers and culture evolve as their needs and demand change. Simultaneously, performers need to constantly find ways to create new experiences and new content to attract audiences. A recent study by Hong and Wu (2022) indicates that the use of Augmented Reality (AR) has helped to popularize and preserve traditional Chinese musical instruments as part of tourist attraction in Guizhou. Similarly, Marajaya (2023) in his study also by using sophisticated technology, Balinese shadow puppets shown to be able to be revived by staging the performance live and using the help of social media.

## **2.6 Cultural Adaptation and Cultural Appropriation as Key to Rejuvenation**

Cultural appropriation can be characterised into four categories: trade, domination, exploitation and transculturation, with reference to the use of objects, artefacts, styles, practices or technologies by members of another culture. While each one can be interpreted as appropriate for particular contexts or periods, transculturation calls into question the restricted and exclusive conception of culture found in other types of appropriation (Rogers, 2006). To stay appropriate to the community, a culture needs to be seen as a practice related to the practitioner or a community.

Young (2010) presents ethnic evidence from Africa and Aboriginal Australia in support of her arguments that (a) practices are altered, and (b)

ceremonies, rituals and practices are the bearers of skewed and violated meanings if spatial connections among the performers are updated. This is needed for the culture to be adapted to the time change so that it is effectively turned into a piece of tourist art that leaves a strong identity. To keep the art alive, the art has to be culturally adaptive. As time and era change, the demands for art and entertainment evolve to meet a new set of viewers. In the last ten years, the word appropriation has become omnipresent in various fields, albeit conceptually vague, although helpful in the academic case (Ashley & Plesch, 2002).

Cultural appropriation and adaptation are not novel practices as they have been practised for some time. Populist mode in music is easily linked to adaptation. The theatre, in the work of companies on the forefront of performative practice, showed a very committed art of adaptation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century version of the novel *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo. The books were recreated as a two-part theatre show and adapted for radio, whereas the first novel was adapted into as a CGI-heavy film that physically illustrates this narrative with stunning stage puppetry, dance and motion (Lindtner & Dourish, 2012). This argument shows the importance of how entertainment needs to be flexible to fit with the time to suit the needs and consumption of the generation. it should also be stressed that adaptation has a multidirectional flow such as adapting novels or other materials from one genre to another genre and media regularly. In the creative field today, we will often see novels being adapted into video games or films, and then readapted into movies or animation. This approach is motivating and nurturing to traditional works of art.

According to Li (2013), the theatre enthusiasts and acquaintances who have been able to view Shakespeare in their way were attracted to the performance of the adaptations of Shakespeare in Peking Opera. These shows have earned applause from Shakespeare's lovers who saw familiar Shakespeare stories being performed in the Peking Opera form which showcased the interweaving elements of the traditional Chinese Opera and Shakespearean narratives. This demonstrates the adaptability of Chinese Opera play in incorporating a different storyline. Such adaptation would shed a light on the acceptance of Malaysia Chinese youth towards a different or modern storyline performed in the traditional Chinese Opera. The synchronization in the final product of such contrasting elements found in Shakespeare and Chinese Opera indicates the transformative power of adaptation. In his study, Liu (2007) observed the same two conflicting methods were employed to incorporate and change Western theatre a century later in Japan and China. It appeared first in acculturated types, only to be replaced later by styles that emphasised extraneity in translation and production. To promote one culture, it needs to be adapted and fitted into other cultures. It seems to be a very successful in entertainment industry, particularly in theatre plays and films. Such practice will offer Chinese Opera a glimmer of hope to remain relevant to the changing time. Hence, as argued in social constructivism, it is the community who decides the cultural elements that are relevant to them.

In Malaysia, for example, the Malay traditional art like the '*Wayang Kulit*' faced the same dim situation as Chinese Opera. The younger Malay generation does not show interest in the art form, forcing most performers to

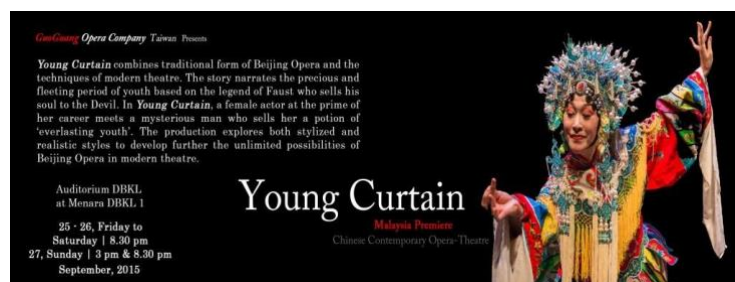
have problems in sustaining their survival. In light of the worrying situation, artists worked closely with a performing troupe in Kelantan to adapt *Wayang Kulit* into the modern world. The conventional characters used during the play have been adapted and upgraded to animated and famous characters that the younger generation is more familiar with. As a result of having this adaptation, the younger generation understood their cultural performance more and the awareness towards *Wayang Kulit* has increased. Chinese Opera in Malaysia could have used the same framework to adapt its traditional play into modern feels to attract the younger generation's interest. More importantly, when a culture is adapted with modern features, there should be an effective promotion to make sure that it can penetrate the community. Some Chinese adaptations to the international performance market are geared towards Western theatre, subsidized by foreign festivals. Throughout the intercultural cycle of adaptation and scenery and visualisation, world drama is absorbed through its global distribution and development (He, 2011). However, Malaysia is still considered slow in such productions.



Source : Image courtesy of

<https://m.facebook.com/thedpac/photos/a.1183659278399385/1212757805489532/?type=3>

Figure 2.22: A Chinese Opera show that has been adapted into English as the language of performance.



Source : Image courtesy of

<https://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/weekend-numbers-250915-270915>

Figure 2.23 : Beijing Opera and the combination of modern theatre that was staged on Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur in 2015.



Source : Image courtesy of

<https://www.facebook.com/peperanganbintang/photos/peperangan-bintang-preview-performance-at-balai-seni-visual-negara-natonal-art-g/720854294643350/>

**Figure 2.24 : A *Wayang Kulit* show that features the adaptation of Star Wars, a famous sci-fiction film series**

DuGay (2013) argued that to look at a cultural text and artefacts, we will need to look at the five aspects: identity, consumption, production, regulation and signification. Initially, the theory was devised to study the Sony Walkman cassette player culture. The present study employs the five aspects in the investigation of adaptive and culturally appropriate traditional art. As Chinese Opera was performed in the early years, it is crucial to understand how these aspects play a role in making it a relevant performing art today. Since the theory was widely used to study various cultural practices, it is appropriate to understand how these 5 aspects will affect Chinese Opera's balance.

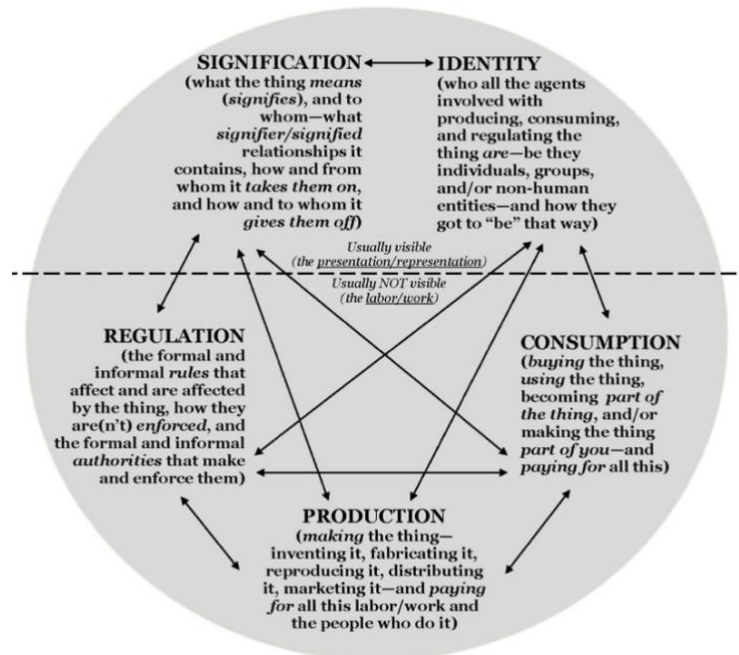


Culture is the core subject of any 'economic research' as noted by John (2003) and that it was difficult for the term "culture" to be defined in a single definition. In contrast, Raymond Williams identified it as "one of the two or three more complicated terms in the English language" (1976: 86) and described it as a 'multi discursive' definition, suggesting that its other meanings tend to coexist actively, not only in a different way, within various contexts. Culture can usually be understood as a "whole way of life" in two ways, firstly, "making and circulating a sense" (duGay et al., 2013).

As suggested by duGay (2013), in theory, the identity aspect is associated with the audience, who is involved in the performing art and how the audiences perceive it. In the consumption aspect, the researcher needs to understand that the messages that are being sent can be decoded by the audiences. duGay et al. (2013) observed that cultural studies seek to say something about the meaning or capture concrete social processes. The audiences need to understand the fundamental of what is happening in this phase. Meanwhile, in the production aspect, the creation of the performing arts take place. In this aspect, audience consumption towards Chinese Opera needs to be understood based on the factors contributing to the lack of appreciation for the art itself. However, with technology integration into Chinese Opera, the researcher could explore if the Chinese youth would enjoy and appreciate the art and view it as contemporary art again.

In the aspect of regulation, the researcher needs to understand how audiences from the formal and informal regulation affects the stabilization of

Chinese Opera. Chinese Opera in Malaysia are usually performed by troupes that are self-managed. Hence, there are no constant regulations from government organisations and Chinese associations. Constant regulation is needed to ensure that the Chinese Opera that has been staged can attract new audiences while maintaining old viewers. This is to ensure that the demand for watching the performance is always up to par. If there is no consistent regulation, it is hard to understand the factors contributing to Chinese opera's failure to attract the younger generation's interest. For the signification aspect, the researcher needs to understand Chinese Opera's significance for the younger generation. Chinese youth has been viewing Chinese Opera as traditional religious performance, and they felt that it is not significant to them. On the other hand, if Chinese Opera is integrated with technology and rejuvenated with contemporary performing strategies, the Chinese youth will be able to regard it as a significant performing art to them. To Chinese descendants, Chinese Opera has played an important role in reflecting their culture. Hence, Chinese Opera needs to be viewed as a significant art to the younger generation so it can be practised and performed for the future generation.



**Figure 2.25 : Cultural Circuit Theory by duGay(1997)**

**Image courtesy <https://en.ppt-online.org/352199>**

For example, a study by Chin, Jaganathan, Hasmiza and Wu (2012) found that Chinese women still practise the traditional confinement or the ‘*Zuo Yuezi*’. The study found that the Chinese community believes that traditional practice is still relevant and essential for women who had just given birth. This shows that certain practices are still being widely performed while some are slowly being forgotten due to the community’s perception. If the culture is seen as appropriate, it will be continued to be practised whereas when it is not, the practice will slowly be forgotten. Hence, Chinese Opera is slowly dying off as the younger generation nowadays is keener to enjoy modern performing arts and practices. Besides that, the younger generation has a more comprehensive selection of entertainment than the older times.

There is another example of forgotten Chinese practice that has generated some debate: the foot-binding practice or known as the lotus feet in the Chinese female. The modern Chinese community no longer follow the practice because it is viewed as a painful custom and was banned in the early 1900's (Fan & Wu, 2016). In the past, the Chinese believed that women should have small feet to make them look more beautiful. Besides that, married Chinese woman in the olden time is not allowed to leave the house or work; this is a way to show their loyalty to the spouse. Another forgotten cultural art in the Chinese community is paper cutting or '*jianzi*' art. The advent of the digital era and the emerging culture of instant rewards has led to its neglect and loss (Kris, 2018). The advancement of the printing industry as well as the lack of highly skilled artist to create a pieces that can resemble Chinese good wishes or some motives that represents luck in Chinese has led to the slow decline of this art. Papercutting art is usually done during the Chinese New Year, but it is no longer being practised by the younger generation.

Similarly, some customs in Malay cultures that have been deemed as taboo from the religious point of view were banned by the state and Federal governments. For example, '*Ulek Mayang*', '*Kuda Kepang*' and '*Mak Yong*' cultural performances have been viewed as '*syirik*' (*shirk*) in the view of the Islamic teaching and this has led to demise of the cultural performances. Due to their 'un-Islamic' elements, the traditional dances are prohibited in the PAS (Malaysian Islamic Party) governed state such as Kelantan (Cheng, 2006). This has caused the traditional performing arts to be slowly forgotten by the younger Malay generation. As a country with rich culture, performing arts need to have

a clear boundary from being associated with the religious view to keep the tradition alive.

Based on this theory's argument, the cycle of culture will become imbalanced if a specific category has no input, in this case, the consumption. If no one is practising a traditional art and custom, it will be forgotten. To support this argument, Star (2016) stated that audiences and performers are ageing. The younger generation does not give much attention to the Chinese Opera in China. This is a threat to the existence of the traditional art as it might cause it to face extinction. However, not all Chinese cultures and performances face the same situation as the Chinese Opera. For example, the Lion and Dragon Dance are still being widely practised and performed. The lion dance is mainly performed during the Chinese New Year and in opening ceremonies to symbolize good luck (Tan, 2007). This is a good example of a cultural practice that is viewed as relevant and appropriate to the Chinese community. As stated earlier, some Chinese customs are not being practised anymore due to the imbalance of the production of the culture. It fails to adapt to the time change where the new generation feels that is not relevant to them anymore.



**Source : Image courtesy of**

**<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2020/02/lasting-damage-foot-binding/606439/>**

**Figure 2.26: Foot binding culture that has been banned in the early 1990's**

Hence this theory supports the argument of this study that to ensure a cultural practice is relevant, it needs to be regulated so that the audience will be able to enjoy the art in the future. The production of traditional performance needs to be in line with the changing time and relevant and relatable to the current consumers so that its identity can be maintained. If the consumers find that the performing art is still significant to them, the cycle of this theory will not be affected, leading to the harmonization of the art and culture. When the culture is viewed as relevant to the community, practitioners will be able to educate the newer generation and keep the balance of the cultural practice.

According to Brown (2010), the study of material culture includes analysing artefacts, tools and technology, which leads to a society's ways of living and doing. It also includes studying the information and the interventions by which these forms and objects are realized. For this study, the artefact

identified as Chinese Opera needs to be integrated with technology to make it contemporary again. However, this does not change the fundamental element that form the identity of the Chinese Opera which needs to be made clear to the audience. In other words, identity is collectively constructed and connected to cultural repertoires of the people and the exposure to the institutional and cultural contexts that shape them (Lamont, 2000). Vaidya (2019) remarked that Star Wars, a popular sci-fiction movie has survived for so many years due to its ability to stay relevant and urge its fans to consume its concept. This shows the importance of any type of art, be it a film, animation, or other forms of creative entertainment, to stay significant to the consumers, the viewers. For a culture to adapt to the time, it has to go through five points that were featured by duGay (2013) in the Cultural Circuit Theory. In order to create the check and balance, the culture needs to stay relevant to the upcoming generation.

## **2.7 Turning Chinese Opera Contemporary Again**

Integrating new technology and multimedia into traditional performing arts is not a new phenomenon in the creative field. However, with the advancement of technology, there are limitations in the way that multimedia can help traditional performing arts achieve a higher level (Schultheis & Rizzo, 2001). In traditional performing art, all traditional aspects need to be carefully crafted to preserve its originaility. This is to ensure that the fundamental features in traditional performing art will not be affected even though it has been rejuvenated with modern values. For example, in recent years, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies have been widely developed and used in apps and games. VR helps the user experience a more realistic

environment in the virtual world, therefore increasing the interest and curiosity of the player (Sampaio, 2012). Artist and art creators can create a 3-Dimensional space with VR equipment to enhance the user experiences. AR technology has gradually been applied to various fields since 1990; it can be used to present additional information using physical operation as a medium so that users can visually see the integration of the real world and virtual images. A number of studies have found that AR offers visitors interesting, fun, and challenging experiences, as well as immersive sensations (Chang, Chang, Hou, Sung et al., 2014). Concerning its educational applications, it has been reported that both teachers and students feel that AR promotes participation and motivation and creates a realistic and novel learning environment via the combination of the real and the virtual (Chang et al., 2014).

Besides that, studies have also found that while AR with the characteristic of virtual and real coexistence appealed to users in viewing the additional information within a specific field of vision, it may also cause them to pay too much attention to the content (i.e. the virtual information) of the guide system and ignore the surrounding physical environment (Chang, et al, 2014). Some visitors even reported that the sense of presence shaped by the AR context had disappeared and became only transitory while leaving or moving between the visited locations. This supports the use of AR technology in creating a similar environment that can trigger the sensation of a person experiencing in the real world. This technology can help provide the younger generation who are unable see and feel the exact performance of a Chinese Opera performance an



opportunity to experience it virtually. Technology opens the possibility beyond the border for traditional performing art to regain its relevancy.

Chung, Lee, Kim and Koo (2017) studied the use of Augmented Reality (AR) technology to understand the user experience of the cultural heritage tourism in Korea and found that it affects the behavioural intentions toward the heritage site. Their study advocated that integrating new technology in formal or non-formal education increases the curiosity of its user and hence, helps to gain insights into the cultural practice. It was claimed that “Rejuvenation of folk art is achievable, and it can only happen if children are involved” (Rejuvenation of Folk Arts, n.d.). This argument supports the possibility of rejuvenating a traditional art form to be viewed as relevant to younger audiences. The use of latest technology is seen as the best way for younger viewers to appreciate traditional art because by including a high-tech and modern touch, the audience can appreciate the beauty of Chinese Opera (Gu, 2015).

New media is arguably the most accessed platform by the new generation, and at the same time, it can serve as an educational tool (Kalay, Kvan & Affleck, 2008). New media and technology will be able to close the gap between traditional art and the younger generation by rejuvenating its image and making sure that it can stay contemporary to the future generation. In line of this, Huang, Lee, Kim and Lee (2014) explained that “the virtual images on the stage do not only generate a good view but also make the audience experience the illusion of space in which the space is expanding and enhancing.” The increased understanding and affinity towards Chinese Opera helps to promote Chinese

Opera's value to the audience (Huang et al., 2014). In the study, technology is shown to increase awareness of the intimate but unfamiliar Chinese Opera to the Malaysian youth as they spend most of their time surfing the internet and social media (Balakrishnan & Raj, 2012), Therefore, this study would contribute to the understanding of their acceptance towards integrating technology into traditional performing arts.

The young population is in the most effective position to carry forward the cultural heritage in the long run. Technology, animation and game designs are explored as a contemporary paradigm (Kolay, 2016). Multimedia elements such as subtitles and interactive background plays an essential role as a medium of rejuvenation. As modern technology provides more insights to the performers and show, it can be helped to lift the viewer's experience in watching a live show. Besides that, a study by Tomblason and Wolf (2017) suggested that over a decade, social media platform have been used to reach foreign audiences and raise awareness about both the projects and causes of corporate and non-governmental organisations, indicating a wider penetration of various potential audience. In view of the pandemic in late 2019, some traditional Chinese Opera troupes have taken the initiative to teach and perform Chinese Opera via the online platform. The flexibility of having technology as a medium allowed the troupes to share their knowledge and performance with social media users. So, to look into a wider prospect, performers are able to share their content and performed in a wider context. This will be able to help some traditional performance to offer more exposure from the audiences all over the world.

Technology seems to hold the potential in closing the gap between the traditional performance and the younger generation. In early 2020, COVID-19 has become more severe and evolved into a global pandemic, hitting hard on the world's economy. The entertainment and art scene were not spared from this impact. "When we performed at temples, there were perhaps 10, or even five, people watching. With Facebook Live, at one time I could have about 200 viewers online; but maybe this is because everyone is just sitting at home and has nothing else to watch," Goh a Chinese Opera performer, said in one of her interviews with Tho (2020). This shows positive impact of the pandemic as it opened a new opportunity to the worldwide community in the new normal, which allowed performers to rely on technology to keep delivering their performance and sustaining their income.

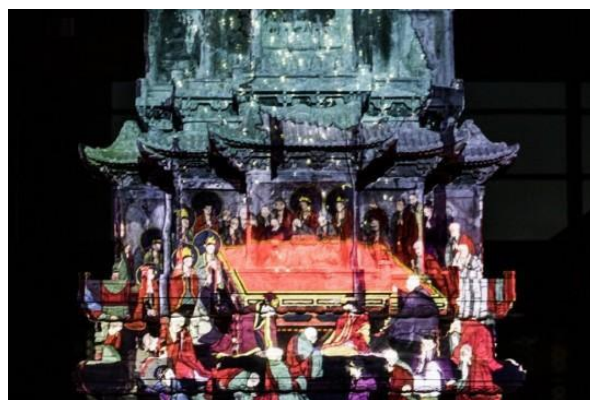


**Figure 2.27 : An example of Teochew Chinese Opera classes taught via an online platform during the COVID-19 pandemic, as social distancing was imposed**

Besides that, a study by Petresco in 2007, explained that for heritage managers, curators, restaurateurs, artists, artists, painters, and all other types of cultural heritage experts, GIS (Geographic Information System) technology has become a standard tool of rejuvenation medium. This study supports the argument that technology could play an essential role in the rejuvenation process. Social anthropology has already discovered a lot about human technological behaviour, particularly in the context of the recent, impressive developments in sociology where the anthropological findings are interpreted (Plaffenberfer, 1992). Turning traditional performance arts into Augmented Reality (AR) could give a new immersive experience to viewers in watching performances that are currently facing low demand. This provides the audience another way of enjoying the traditional performance arts. With the Augmented Reality (AR) technology, audiences can watch their favourite show and content using smartphone and interact with the performers, increasing the watching experience into something contemporary and immersive.

Technology serves as a critical tool in the daily life of humans today; hence, it is relevant to integrate technology into Chinese Opera to understand how it could help in reviving the status of the dying art. A study by Cunningham (2012), argued that creative industries provide more important contributions to digital products and other applications at the end of the value chain, similar to the prototypical services in sectors including telecommunications, health, education, and financial services. Results in a study conducted Hui-Ying (2009) indicate that a vital connection has been established between China's modern opera has and its audience through revolutionary perspectives systems using

digital media and technology in creative industries. In this regard, Chinese Opera in China today is going through an evolutionary cycle by which structures evolve has provided an added value as well as employment growth in the industry. As modernity changes the value of how the young generation perceives traditional art, technology shows the potential to rejuvenate and offer a contemporary identity to Chinese Opera, making it relevant again to the current audiences. For example, with the implementation of projection mapping technology, audience can experience ‘face changing’ or better known as the ‘*Pien Nien*’ art on their own faces. As ‘face-changing is considered one of the exclusive and secretive performing art in the Chinese Opera practice, this could let the viewers have a real-time face changing experience alongside the Chinese Opera characters.



**Figure 2.28: Examples of projected 3D Chinese Opera character’s face into a real-life person and building**

It is important to understand the acceptance of the Malaysian Chinese youth towards technology integration in Chinese Opera, a performing art derived from their cultural roots. As the future generation will be the community that continue to keep the performing art alive, awareness and interest need to be cultivated in them since young. The youth needs to be educated and exposed to Chinese Opera more often so that they understand the purpose and identity of the performing art. Technology is seen as an effective medium that helps in building the social identity among the young so that it can be practised and enjoyed by the future generation. As the traditional performing art that is slowly facing the threat of extinction day by day, it is important for the community to preserve and conserve it. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the discourse of whether technology would contribute to the traditional art's conservation and rejuvenation. Like an iconic signature written in time, cultural heritage was able to take the lead in the war against time, thanks to new technologies (China Daily, 2012). In order for traditional performing art to be rejuvenated, technology integration is the right medium in contemporizing the traditional culture.



Source : Image courtesy of

<https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d414d77597a4d32457a6333566d54/index.html>

**Figure 2.29: A Chinese Opera projected in Virtual Reality in China.**

As discussed in the earlier part of the literature review section of this thesis, various researchers have emphasized that modernization and rejuvenation is critical in sustaining the traditional performing art. Therefore, technology is seen in this study as an effective medium for youth to feel that traditional performing art is still relevant to them. This reinforces that cultural adaption and appropriation are the keys to rejuvenation. Research suggests that youths seek entertainment and performance that is contemporary and hype to them. Thus, this study adds into the examples already stated in the literature review on the

role of technology in enhancing traditional performing arts, whereby artists and performers are integrating technology into their performance and art piece to attract the younger audience. Bakar and Bidin (2014) observed that technology acceptance and mobile phone usage among the Malaysian youth is very promising. The study showed that a number of youth owned more than one smart device, such as the tablet that can operate like a laptop and smartphone. This study also indicated that the exposure of youth and technology devices is relatively high and this helps in promoting traditional performance via the modern device, leading to the rejuvenation of its identity. In line with the study, a report by BERNAMA (2018) which showcased the connection between technology use and youth reported that Malaysian youths are ranked as the most addicted to their digital devices where 69% of them would not stop using their mobile phones even for a day. This data indicate that the constant use of digital devices among the younger users shows the potential of greater exposure among this group to traditional performance through the integration of modern technology.



Source: Image courtesy of <https://www.hiverlab.com/stamford-arts-centre-reopening>

**Figure 2.30: Chinese Opera in Augmented Reality**





Source: Image courtesy

of <https://www.gq.com.au/entertainment/tech/chinas-first-augmented-reality-video-game-opera-is-coming-to-australia/news-story/4ea5362e9f796bf66e903822f7e12f17>

**Figure 2.31 : The integration of Augmented Reality in Chinese Opera performed in a theatre**

## **2.8 Conclusion**

In Malaysia, Chinese Opera has long thrived to survive after it was brought to China by Chinese immigrants. From a longstanding performing art, it has become the forgotten art and was seen as a religious presentation, mainly when it does not attract the young people's attention and interest. Performing art had faced a great challenge to maintain its most authentic form as the entertainment industry evolves over the years. From a performance art that has been presented exclusively to the Chinese Emperor, it has turned into a performance to deities and death. The exceptional moment when the Chinese community and youth enjoy the traditional art has ended due to its lack of

demand, and now it is perceived as a religious performance. Chinese opera's identity shift is deemed worrying as it has created a huge gap between the cultural performance and Malaysian Chinese youth.

Technology and smart devices are the most significant inventions of our time. The time spent browsing the virtual world on smart devices could be the turning point in effectively raising the interest among Chinese youth towards Chinese Opera. This will rejuvenate it into a more contemporary performing art that they can relate to. Hence, cultural adaptation and appropriation show that technology can make Chinese opera more adaptive and appropriate to the Chinese youth. Technology offers Malaysian Chinese youth the access and the chance to understand the forgotten performing arts. So, with a little hope, technology will rejuvenate traditional performing arts and give a new meaning to its identity (Krauss, 1999). However, it is clear that technology serves as a rejuvenation tool and that more successful and effective promotion is required to help the rejuvenation phase successful. Hence, it is vital for all parties from the performer troupes and government to play an active role to ensure that the beautiful art is well preserved, but it undeniably needs rejuvenation through technology integration to attract the younger generation (Wang & Feng, 2021).

Chinese Opera performers and the Chinese community need to work closely to ensure that their performing arts can preserve their identity while shifting along with the changing demand and time. Past studies and other related statistics showed that technology would rejuvenate traditional performing arts into more modern production and provide the younger generation with fresher

and more relatable art. The next chapter discusses the methods for obtaining participants' input to allow the researcher to address the research questions presented in this report. This research seeks to obtain a deeper understanding of how the traditional art of Chinese Opera can be preserved and rejuvenated by its adaptation to modernity, in other words, making the traditional performing art modern and contemporary by its adaptation to the changing time and accommodation to the new generation.



**Figure 2.32: Passer-by taking photos of a Chinese Opera troupe performing at the train station. It's a normal scene nowadays where audiences will take photos with their smart devices.**

As discussed earlier in this chapter, there are several factors identified that have contributed to the rapid decrease in the appreciation of Malaysian Chinese Opera. All these factors played a significant role in causing the Chinese Opera to fade away and be forgotten by the Chinese community in Malaysia from all walks of life and ages. Technological integration seems to be a new method to help revive the interest in the younger generation. As time goes, the needs and demand in entertainment changes, hence for Chinese Opera to be seen as contemporary art, modern values and technological integration can help to

grow the interest among the Chinese youth. Non technological integration is equivalent important to helps Chinese Opera to be seen as performing art that is relevant.

Hence, a more concrete and inclusive measurement is needed from all parties in order to keep the art alive for our future generation. The effort need to come from all parties to keep the traditional performing art alive so that the beauty of Chinese Opera can be enjoyed by the future generation.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

Chinese Opera is constantly viewed as a traditional and religious performance by the Malaysian Chinese youth. According to (The Malaysian National News Agency [BERNAMA], 2016), the Chinese Opera is now considered an ancient performing art by the younger generation as they show low to no interest in watching the art and learning about it.

Hence, this research aims to discover Malaysian Chinese youth's perspective about Chinese Opera and their interpretation of technology integration into the performing art to make it contemporary again. Interpretation is a subjective matter and depends on how an individual attaches meaning to their social world (Noon, 2018). In interpretivism perspective, researchers tend to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and its complexity in its unique context instead of trying to generalise the base of understanding for the whole population (Creswell, 2007). In the same way, Hammersley (2013) emphasised that since multiple interpretation is developed among humans' relationship, interpretivist researchers should try to understand "the diverse ways of seeing and experiencing the world through different contexts and cultures" and try to avoid the bias in studying the events and people with their own interpretations. Hence, the researcher is keen to understand the interpretation of Malaysian Chinese youth in rejuvenating Chinese Opera as a contemporary performance.

To find out the Chinese youth interpretations of Chinese Opera, this research adopts the qualitative research approach. The comments and feedbacks from participants would strengthen the quantitative findings from both of the phases of the study by further exploring factors they believed to have caused the loss of interest in Chinese Opera and their view on rejuvenated Chinese Opera with technology. The quantitative approach is not suitable for the nature of the study because the researcher is seeking in-depth views rather than those that cannot be obtained via surveys. Specifically, focus group discussions are used to understand the factors related to participants' thoughts and behaviour (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Moreover, unlike personal interviews, in focus group discussions, participants can think aloud and feel free to say what they think, discuss with others through counterarguments, and change their opinions as the discussion proceeds as in a real life informal conversation setting (Lauri, 2019). The information obtained from focus group discussions is more in-depth than face-to-face interviews because of the social interaction among the participants (Thomas, MacMillan, McRoll, Hale & Bond, 1995). Hence, with all these considerations, focus group discussion method was selected for this study. The research questions and objectives have been posed in Chapter 1 of this study (p. 12-13).

### **3.1 A Qualitative Approach**

This study employed the qualitative approach to investigate and understand the factors contributing to the lack of appreciation towards Chinese Opera in Malaysia among the Malaysian Chinese youth and technology as a potential rejuvenation medium. Constructivist researchers focus on

understanding and reconstructing the meanings people (including the researcher) hold about the phenomenon being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). Constructivists create knowledge through interaction between the researcher and participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1994) using dialogue and reasoning as the primary methods of investigation. Finally, constructivist researchers return frequently to the data sources, asking what they meant to the participant and integrating those with their meaning to the researcher (Rudestam & Newton, 1992). Thus, in-depth focus group discussions were conducted involving forty-two Malaysian Chinese youth from different backgrounds and demographics for this study. Data was continually scrutinised to understand the meaning and ways the Chinese youth interpret Chinese Opera as a traditional art and their views on technology integration until data saturation was achieved. Using the grounded theory approach, the were data collected to support the conceptual framework proposed by the researcher in this study. As cited in Charmaz and Thornberg (2021), Glaser and Strauss (1967) mentioned that grounded theory is a methodology that builds theory from data collected in a study. As suggested by the researcher earlier, Chinese Opera needs to be rejuvenated in order to be viewed as a contemporary performing art or else it will be continue traditionalized and fails to attract younger generation. Hence, from this study, from the data collected will be able to help the researcher to ground the findings and to understand the aim posed by this research.

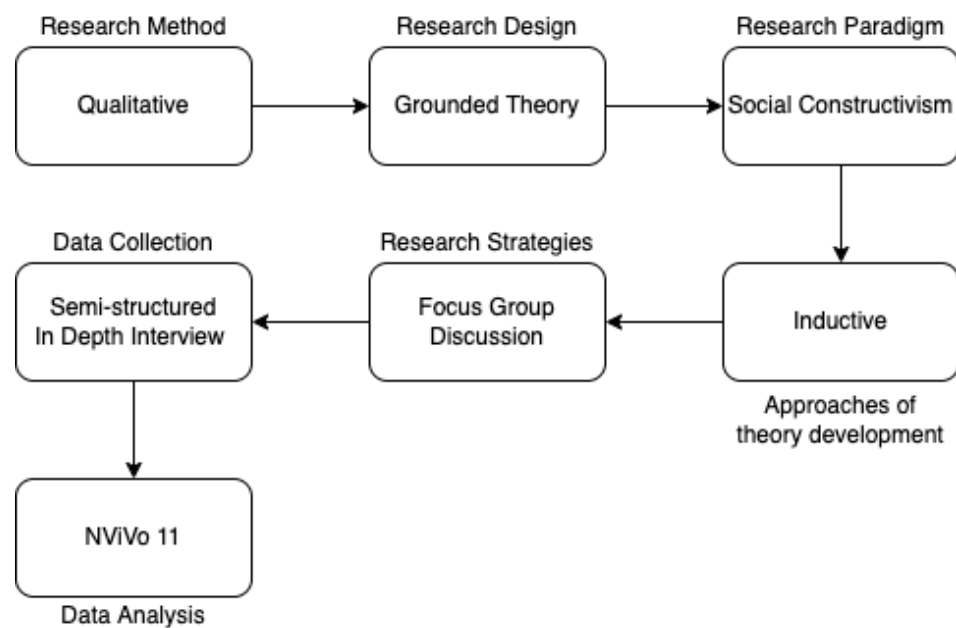
### **3.2 Research Flow**

In brief, there were two phases involved in this study. The first phase was carried out to understand the perception of Chinese youth about Chinese Opera

and the acceptance of integrating technology into Chinese Opera among the Malaysian Chinese youth aged fifteen to thirty years using the focus group discussion method.

As for the second phase of this study, the researcher conducted video discussions with the same focus group discussion participants to understand their acceptance after watching Chinese Opera that has been rejuvenated with modern values. However, only three groups each from different state were invited for phase two of this study due to the availability of the participants. All the data collected will be then be transcribed and analysed into themes.

Two pilot studies were carried out to ensure that the discussion questions have no errors and that the participants would be able to understand and discuss the points raised by the researcher in order to answer the research questions posed in this study.



**Figure 3.1: Research Methodology of this Study**



### **3.3 Focus Group Discussion**

To obtain perspectives and insights from the participants, the researcher selected the focus group discussion because it suits the research objectives of this study. A focus group discussion was deemed an acceptable approach to this research as this research requires group dynamism that can spell out various issues from multiple angles in a relatively more carefree and in-depth manner. Comparatively, the numbers and statistical findings in the quantitative approach may not be able to provide the in-depth interpretations and opinions needed in this research.

According to Hennink (2013, p. 145), “Focus group discussion involves focusing on specific issues, with a predetermined group of people, participating in an interactive discussion”. As a mean of qualitative data collection, focus group discussion gained popularity even though analysing qualitative data poses a challenge to most researchers (Rabiee, 2004). Hence, the method chosen for this study was found to be suitable to gain the perspective of the Malaysian Chinese youth on the issues of Chinese Opera. Furthermore, according to Hutter, Hennink, and Bailey (2011, p.136), the focus group discussion aims to achieve a wide range of views on a research topic and create an environment where the participants feel comfortable expressing their thoughts over a sixty to ninety minutes time period.

The researcher conducted nine focus group discussions in total with a minimum of 5 persons in a focus group discussion. The participants were selected from 3 states (3 groups from each state) of the Peninsular of Malaysia,

which are Johor, Pulau Pinang and Selangor, which have the highest number of the Chinese community (“Population & Demography”, 2018). This study engaged working and studying Chinese youth from the urban areas in Pulau Pinang, Johor and Selangor. Currently, there are 31.7 million Malaysians of Chinese ethnic, making up 23.4% of the Malaysian population (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023). The states with the highest percentages of Chinese population are Johor (30.2%), Selangor (25.5%) and Pulau Pinang (41.5%) in the peninsular Malaysia (“Unjuran Populasi Penduduk”, 2015).

Based on the youth policy in Malaysia, a person falls under the youth category when he or she is aged from 15 to 30 years old (Youth Policy, 2014). However, as the researcher of this study sought to understand the views of more mature youths, particularly among those who just enter university to working adults, the youngest participants recruited for the focus group discussion were 21 years old. Starting from 2018, the definition of youth implemented by the government is individual ranging from 15 to 30 years old (Akta Belia, 2021).

The participants for this study were composed of the Chinese Malaysian from the states of Pulau Pinang, Selangor, and Johor. The researcher recruited participants with the help of friends and those who signed up on voluntary basis. All participants were briefed by the researcher about the study and had given consent to participate in the study.

Besides that, video and audio recorders were employed as instruments to capture the participant’s thoughts and their needs to understand their acceptance

of integrating technology in the Chinese Opera. The captured information and data were then be transcribed into themes using the grounded theory approach.

Each of the focus group discussion session took at least sixty to ninety minutes, as proposed, for the researcher to gather sufficient information and feedbacks needed from the participants. The discussion session have taken longer if the participants had more to share about their perception and recommendation towards the Chinese Opera in Malaysia.

### **3.4 Criteria Sampling – Purposive Sampling for Focus Group**

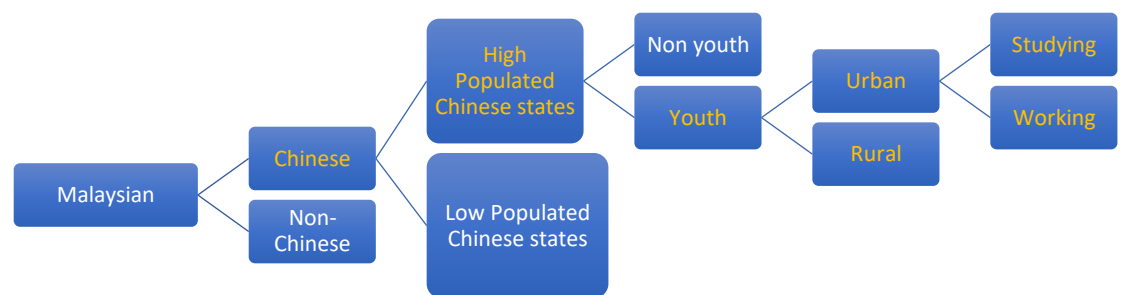
#### **Discussion**

According to Marshall (1996), “Studying a purposive sample provides the best opportunity to generalise results to the population but is not the most effective way of developing an understanding of complex issues relating to human behaviour.” Thus, purposive sampling was chosen for this study as it was found to be suitable for this research’s non-complex issues. In this research, the researcher was keen to understand Chinese opera’s perception in Malaysia and the acceptance of integrating technology into traditional performance art, specifically Chinese Opera, among the Chinese youth. Tansey (2007) argued that purposive sampling is favoured by researchers who want to monitor the process by interviewing a predefined and recognizable number of elites selected based on specific criteria, as emphasised in Mikecz (2012). Hence, purposive sampling was chosen by the researcher to narrow down the criteria of participants who are deem suitable for this study.

This study aims to understand the acceptance of technology integration in Malaysia's Chinese Opera scene, particularly in Pulau Pinang, Johor and Selangor, where the Chinese ethnic population is the highest. The researcher sought to understand how the use of technology can help to regain the interest among Chinese young people in Malaysia to traditional art. For each state, participants that have formed the focus group discussion consisted of a minimum of four to a maximum of six persons. According to Boddy (2016), "Sample sizes as low as one can be justified and in qualitative design, determination of sample size is contextual and partially dependent." Furthermore, once the data have been collected, the researcher must request a qualitative expert to examine the themes of the study to verify the strength of the data. The validity and reliability of the data collected are carried out in the analysis phases, from the data collection to the reporting of the results for the study (Elo, Kaariainen, Polkki, Utraainen & Kyngas, 2014).

The Malaysian Youth and Sports Ministry's definition recommended that the participants must be ethnically Malaysian Chinese and aged between 15 to 30 years old. The targeted participants for scope for this research varied from university students to working youth. The study participants were proposed to be collected from Chinese NGO bodies in the target states concerned. The purposive sampling approach in qualitative research works well in terms of consistency as all the individuals studied should represent people who have experienced the phenomenon (Cresswell & Poth, 2016). Therefore, for this study, the researcher did not generalise the ethnic of the Chinese population. To study the participants feedbacks and multiple comparisons made by the groups were

used until the data collected were saturated. The groups were chosen based on the purposive criteria and relevance (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As discussed previously, participants from the state of Pulau Pinang, Selangor and Johor were brought together for this study under three focus groups, each comprising four to six people from every state. For this study, a total of nine focus group discussions were formed. The sampling for this study is summarized in Figure 3.2.



**Figure 3.2: Criteria Sampling- Purposive Sampling Utilized in the Research**

According to the statistics published in 2015, the Chinese youth made up 68.35% of the entire Chinese population in Malaysia, while the elderly aged 65 and above made up 4.84%; children below 14 years old formed the remaining 26.81% of the population.

### **3.4.1 Number of Focus Group Discussion and Participants**

A total of nine focus groups consisting of four to six people contributed in the Phase 1 of the data collection process through in-depth discussions (refer to Appendix D, p. 241). The data collected were transcribed using the grounded approach. All other participants of this study fulfilled the criteria that the

researcher has set for this research. As the participants of this study were Malaysian Chinese youth, the participants were recruited by the researcher from a numbers of Chinese associations and through the recommendations of friends who were interested in participating in this study. In Phase 2, the researcher showed the participants a set of traditional and technology integrated Chinese Opera videos. The questions asked in the focus group discussion were open-ended to understand the lack of interest in Chinese Opera and their acceptance of technology integrated into Chinese Opera as well as those with non-technological ones . A sizable demographic segment of the Malaysian Chinese population is made up of young people. They are essential in conserving and developing traditional art forms like Chinese opera since they are the guardians of cultural heritage. Their participation in the focus group would guarantee that the research is current and represents their opinions.

### **3.4.2 Why is Malaysian Chinese Youth chosen?**

The Malaysian Chinese youth was chosen for this study because Chinese Opera represents culture for the Chinese ethnicity (Lee, 2009). Thus, it is appropriate to select the Chinese ethnic group for this study. Moreover, to justify the reason, most Chinese youths show lesser interest in Chinese opera than the elderly, who sometimes watch the traditional performance in the temples and performing centres where the art was usually performed (Jiang, 2017). Besides that, studies have shown that smartphone users are higher among the youth than in other age groups (Razak, Malik, Rentah & Mazlan, 2021). Since Chinese Opera is a Chinese culture-related performance, understanding the thoughts of Chinese youth will help rejuvenate the performing art now and in the future.

### 3.4.2.1 Background of Participants

Three pilot studies and nine actual studies were conducted and provided the data for this study. Details are shown in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1 : Details of Participants for Focus Group Discussion(FGD)**

<b>Focus Group</b>	<b>Number of Male</b>	<b>Number of Female</b>	<b>Date of FGD</b>	
<b>1</b>	1	3	<b>25/02/2019</b>	<b>Preliminary Interview</b>
<b>2</b>	2	2	<b>25/02/2019</b>	
<b>3</b>	3	3	<b>08/05/2019</b>	<b>Actual Study</b>
<b>4</b>	2	3	<b>06/06/2019</b>	
<b>5</b>	3	2	<b>19/07/2019</b>	
<b>6</b>	0	5	<b>13/08/2019</b>	
<b>7</b>	2	3	<b>27/12/2019</b>	
<b>8</b>	2	3	<b>27/01/2020</b>	
<b>9</b>	2	3	<b>03/02/2020</b>	
<b>10</b>	3	2	<b>13/03/2020</b>	
<b>11</b>	2	3	<b>23/04/2020</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>54</b>	

The study consisted of 22 male and 32 female participants including the preliminary study. The total participants for actual study consist of 19 male and 27 females which made up the total of 46 participants. All of the participants

were between 15 and 30 years old, which fulfilled the identified criteria of young Chinese Malaysians for this research. Participants came from diverse backgrounds, of which 12 were still university students, while the remaining 30 were working young adults. These participants' fields of study/work were also varied, covering from manufacturing, art, education to finance. In addition, the type of the participants' school education also differed, where some of them graduated from the national schools and others from Chinese schools. There is a Chinese convert and Chinese Muslim that participated in this focus group discussion. However, all these factors did not influence and affects the findings of this study as they all are fit to be categorized in the youth category and meet the requirements. All of the participants understand that their name will be used for data reporting and have signed the consent form.

### **3.5 Role of the Researcher**

The researcher is a critical tool of study in qualitative studies. The investigators should be aware of their own biases about what they bring to the inquiry in terms of their context and personality (Maxwell, 2008). Given that qualitative research is an interpretive investigation, data analysis may include investigators' prejudices, beliefs and assumptions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A social researcher should strive to neutralize or reverse their biases by means of full disclosure (Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Locke, Spirduso & Silverman, 1987). The researcher of this study recognized that his experience in his person and work could affect the interpretation of the study's results. During and after the discussions, participants' perceptions and recommendations were used to mitigate personal bias to the results of this study to maximise the legitimacy,



validity and transferability of the results of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher also restated and summarized data during each discussion and asked participants about how reliable the information was.

The researcher required each participant to review the quality of the transcript after the recorded interviews have been transcribed. In addition, during the production of this report, the researcher consulted the faculty council to ensure the reliability of the discussion instruments and applied for the ethical research clearance before conducting the focus group discussion (refer to Appendix E, p. 242). A qualitative expert guided the researcher in concentrating on the specific information provided by the participants and led the researcher to create subjects from the data. Finally, a wide variety of specific quotations from participants were included in the analysis to validate the study's results (Maxwell, 2008). The researcher has to ensure that the questions asked to the participants and the nodes that derived from the data are aligned with the findings and the data has been cross check with a qualitative expert from a local university in Malaysia.

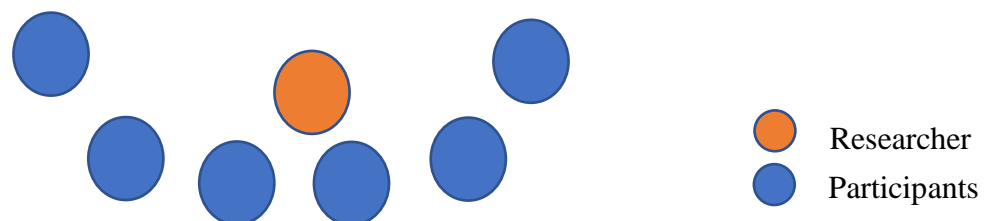
### **3.6 Preliminary Interview**

Yin (2009) recommended the use of a preliminary interview as a way of "developing relevant question lines" before carrying out the actual study and assisting with the process of refining data collection plans and procedures (p. 119). Besides that, preliminary interview will also show if the question asked during the focus group discussion are able to generate in-depth feedbacks. This research study aimed to understand the perception of the Malaysian Chinese

youth towards Chinese Opera and their acceptance of technology integration with the performing art. Three preliminary interviews were performed before the actual research interviews were conducted. This flexibility supported the semi-structured, qualitative methods of interviewing chosen for data collection for this study.

### 3.6.1 Focus Group Discussion – Phase 1

In Phase 1 of this study, the discussion with the participants was carried out to answer Research Question 1 and 2 identified in Chapter 1. The concepts from Cultural Circuit Theory were used to guide the construction of the discussion questions. These questions were designed to understand the youth's acceptance of technology integration into Chinese Opera and its impact. The integration of technology is also crucial to the finding of this study as it shows the youth's readiness to accept traditional performing art to be rejuvenated. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the focus group discussion took about sixty to ninety minutes per session. Once the data were collected from the participants, the researcher transcribed the conversation into verbatim and used an open coding method to identify the keywords to match the questions asked. All of the themes derived from Phase 1 of this study are discussed further in Chapter 4 and 5 of this research. The discussion questions employed by the researcher is provided in Appendix B (p. 242).



**Figure 3.3: Focus Group Discussion Setting**

This research intends to find out the youth acceptance of technology integration. For this phase, the researcher worked closely with a Chinese Opera troupe who participated in this study to provide a snippet of performance of a famous Chinese opera story. This phase provided the data for the third research question of this research. Table 3.2 shows the pre-and post-test video discussions carried out in Phase 2 of the study.

**Table 3.2: Video Discussion**



<b>Traditional Opera</b>	<b>Rejuvenated</b>
Original Chinese Opera	Rejuvenated Chinese Opera
No technology integration	With technology integration
No subtitles	With subtitles
No Modern feature	With Modern features




### **3.6.2 Phase 2 – Rejuvenated Chinese Opera**




The researcher gathered three focus group discussion participants from the states during the first phase of the discussion. The researcher shared a series of Chinese Opera videos (traditional and rejuvenated versions) to the participants, and a focus group discussions were conducted to gather the participants' thoughts and experience of watching the traditional and rejuvenated versions of the Chinese Opera based on feedback from Phase 1 of the study. The discussion took place via Google Meet and Zoom, and the discussion was recorded with voice notes and field notes taken by the researcher. The participants were shown a list of videos by the researcher during the discussion.



The focus group discussions for Phase 2 for this study is significantly longer than Phase 1 since some videos were lengthy. Still, the researcher ensured that the participants understood the basics and definitions of the video before the discussion took place. The list of videos shown to the participants are as provided in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3: List of Traditional and Modern Chinese Opera Video shown to the Participants**

No	Title of the Video	Link	Description of the video	Screenshot of the video
V1	Chinese Opera Star Zhang Jun Re-imagines Shakespeare's Hamlet	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8EhZxUHBn4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8EhZxUHBn4</a>	This video shows an adopted traditional Chinese Opera show being played in the Shakespeare's popular play, Hamlet.  There is also a mixture of language used for this play with English and Chinese language used	
V2	Inside the Guilin Opera — 360 Video	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2gD_n-Pvc8w">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2gD_n-Pvc8w</a>	This video enables the participants to move around in the 360' feature to have a better look of the environment with information about the Chinese Opera play. The video is shot in the traditional 'tea house' setting with subtitle displayed	

V3	Spring Festival Gala 2019: Chinese traditional operas	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76Ojw_xVRLw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76Ojw_xVRLw</a>	This video shows the Chinese Opera performed on an interactive and modern stage with modern lighting and projection. The video is shot during the Spring Festival Gala	
V4	Peking Opera / Beijing Opera performance in Golden hall, Vienna	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uc3-LNpVx1A">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uc3-LNpVx1A</a>	This video shows Chinese Opera performed with the western musical instrument and in a grand stage with proper seating in the hall. However, the Chinese Opera is still been performed in traditional Chinese dialect.	
V5	Unique Yue Opera staged after integrating with holographic technology	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOHJtdVsdAw&amp;t=106s&amp;ab_channel=ThePaper%E6%BE%8E%E6%B9%83%E6%96%B0%E9%97%BB">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOHJtdVsdAw&amp;t=106s&amp;ab_channel=ThePaper%E6%BE%8E%E6%B9%83%E6%96%B0%E9%97%BB</a>	This video shows a Chinese Opera character that is inspired by a famous video game and its being performed in the hologram technology. The character can change its form by the control of the user	

V6	XIQU Chinese Opera Centre	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpVzfW743Z4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpVzfW743Z4</a>	This is a conceptual video showing a designated performing centre for Chinese Opera to be staged with a modern touch and in a spacious building	
V7	Sha Jia Bang 沙家浜 Modern Revolutionary Peking Opera 革命现 样板戏 2	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71NhYWE0IwE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71NhYWE0IwE</a>	This is a show of Chinese Opera been performed in modern way where heavy makeups and costumes is not in place. It gives the audience of soap drama feeling. However, the performers sings in traditional dialect and tunes that reflects Chinese Opera.	
V8	Namewee 黄明志 【Invasion In The North 攻向北方】 - 真三国•霸王之业手游主题曲 ft. Ling Goh 吳慧玲	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZvAmADnSWI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZvAmADnSWI</a>	This is a fusion between modern song with Chinese opera included. The video shows traditional Chinese Opera performer in costume and singing style with modern style singer.	

V9	Chinese Opera Show (四季春歌仔戏团) @ Hougang Tou Mu Temple (4K UHD)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tb-hD1ZMaB4&amp;t=6s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tb-hD1ZMaB4&amp;t=6s</a>	Traditional Chinese Opera in a temple setting where it's a normal scene in Malaysia's Chinese Opera scene.	
V10	Chinese Opera Teochew (CSTV 潮音潮韵)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVoOzsJyX3I">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVoOzsJyX3I</a>	Traditional TeoChew Chinese Opera performed in the traditional stage and old way style of singing.	



### **3.7 Establishing Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability**

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods, techniques and data sources, as it tries to overcome the flaws of an investigation or method. For some researchers, this strategy leads to a more consistent and objective picture of reality. According to Gaskell and Bauer (2010), the strategy of triangulation is an institutionalization method of theoretical perspectives and methods, aiming to reduce the inconsistencies and contradictions of research. It contributes to validity and reliability, by providing a more trustworthy picture of the phenomenon through convergence (Patton, 2014). Likewise, Jick (1979) stated that triangulation is a research strategy of convergent validation, both of multiple methods and of multi-approach to data. Using mixed methods studies is beneficial for three main reasons: (i) illustration; (ii) convergent validation; and (iii) analytic density (or "richness"). Graphic demonstrates how to show the validity of study. Interviews can assist comprehend or interpret cold statistical data, giving the figures more life. While this is going on, convergent validation happens when several data collecting and processing techniques yield results that are comparable. Last but not least, analytical density materialises through the employment of mixed methodologies research, which gives the specific topic of study additional breadth and depth. (Fielding et al., 2012).

The qualitative method research is appropriate, especially for the investigation of complex phenomena either because of the complexity of the field of study or the problem to be solved, or because of the need for multiple levels of perception (Flick et al., 2012). An interesting practical guidance for

triangulation says that if the sources are systematically biased in the same direction, the “winner takes it all” strategy is the most appropriate one to be utilized. In short, the choice for triangulation strategies depends on the number of sources, their reliability and on one’s level of independence “(Leuffen et al., 2013, p. 49). Kern (2016) presented practical guidance on how to apply the strategy of triangulation using three different types of sources for convergence and divergence of light sources. Similar to quantitative theories, and with the intention of contributing to rigor, scale, variety and depth in research, Guba (1981) proposed four criteria to be considered by qualitative researchers to produce reliable studies: (i) credibility corresponding to internal validity in quantitative research; (ii) the possibility of transferability in spite of external validity or generalization; (iii) confirmability in spite of objectivity; and (iv) reliability, also approached in positivist research. These elements are detailed in the next sections.

### **3.8 Credibility in Qualitative Research: Parallel Aspect To Internal Validity**

Credibility is considered a central concept for methodologies in Social Sciences. In quantitative research, this is established by the numerical representation of the samples under examination, and by internal consistency tests applied to data, so that scientific production would already be recognized and legitimized. However, in qualitative research, all the data are represented in the form of text. Hence, the text gained from the group discussion needs to be seen as credible.

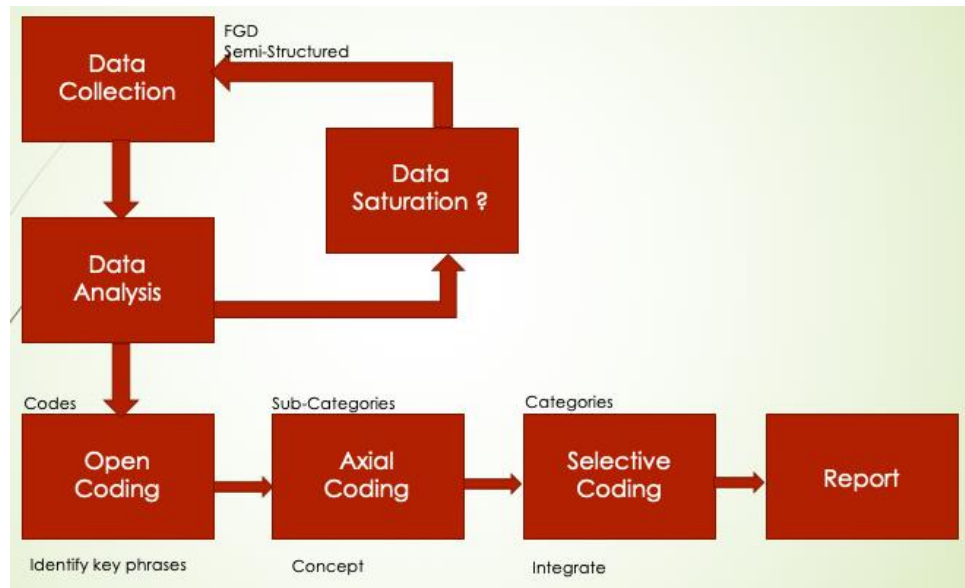
Reliability is an area for which qualitative research is sometimes criticised. In general terms, reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated. Denscombe (2002) emphasised that in social research, two main questions need to be addressed when determining reliability: (a) “Are the data valid?”, and (b) “Are the methods reliable?”. To increase the trustworthiness of the study’s findings, the researcher employed strategies suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The researcher decreased threats to credibility (quantitative researchers would use the term internal validity) by triangulating the data. To increase dependability (called reliability in quantitative research), the researcher provided an audit trail by describing how the data was collected, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry (Merriam, 1998).

The researcher used rich, thick descriptions (Merriam, 1998), thus enabling other researchers to make transferability decisions (external validity or generalizability in quantitative research). To increase conformability (known as objectivity in quantitative studies), the researcher attempted to control the bias by constantly comparing data, searching the literature for examples of the phenomenon, obtaining multiple viewpoints (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), searching for negative instances of the phenomenon and checking and rechecking the data (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). In order to enable the data collected are transferable into different nodes and main ideation, hence, focus group discussion was chosen as the main method of the data collection.

Triangulation of data is of critical importance to the trustworthiness of qualitative studies. As the study unfolded and particular pieces of information became known, steps were taken to validate each information item against at least one other source (e.g., a second focus group discussion) and/or a second method (e.g., an observation, in addition to an interview) (Denzin, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Using a second source or a second method can produce more accurate, comprehensive, and objective findings (Silverman, 2006). For this study, focus group discussion, field notes and pre/post discussion were compared to ensure trustworthiness.

### **3.9 Data Analysis**

After all the data was collected, the researcher then analyzed the data using a grounded theory analysis approach, alongside the field notes. The researcher used NVivo 11 as the qualitative software to analyse the data collected. The data collected and the codes were then verified with qualitative experts to ensure that the coding categorised are trustworthy and vigorous. The proposed questions from this study were developed from the grounded theory based on the conceptual framework of this study. As the researcher proposed in the earlier chapter in the research framework, to make the traditional performance to be seen as a contemporary performing art again, there is a need for modern features to be integrated, or else Chinese Opera will be traditionalized on its own as there is no new and modern value blanketing the existing situation. Thus, the study instruments were derived from the conceptual framework to answer the research questions posed in this study.



**Figure 3.4: Data Analysis Using Coding**

The researcher collected the data from the focus group discussion participants and coded it. Then, the researcher grouped the data into a smaller categories with keywords to enable the researcher to conduct inter-code reliability test. Data were coded according to the following stages in this research: open, axial and selective coding. In open coding, the researcher identified possible themes and elicit themes from the data collected. For axial coding, the researcher searched for concepts from the data, and in the final stage, selective coding, the researcher identified the key concepts from the data. This research emphasised an inductive method to link the interpretation of focus group discussion of Chinese Opera and the Malaysian Chinese youth in integrating technology, hence, the method chosen to code the data collected from this study. Examples are shown in Table 3.4.

**Table 3.4: Concept of Data Coding**

<b>Open Coding (Code)</b>	<b>Axial Coding (Sub-Categories)</b>	<b>Selective Coding (Categories)</b>
<b>To identify the key phrases</b>	<b>To identify the Concept</b>	<b>Integrate</b>
<b>(Example) Discussion Question</b> Feeling that Chinese Opera is a left out compared to the latest entertainment	<b>(Example)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeking excitement</li> <li>• Seeking credentials</li> </ul>	<b>(Example)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanting a new and hype entertainment</li> </ul>

Table 3.4 shows the open, axial and selective coding that the researcher used to break down the feedback into keywords to ensure that it fits into the categories of findings. After the data were coded, the researcher consulted a qualitative expert to check on the themes' reliability, as mentioned earlier.

The researcher needed to ensure that the data collected from the participants reached saturation points. Saturation should be operationalized to be consistent with the research question(s) and the adopted theoretical position and analytic framework. The questions were asked to answer the research questions for this study (refer to p.12). In brief, the data collected in this study were analysed to form the grounded theory, as shown in Table 3.5.

**Table 3.5: Concept of Data Analysis**

<p><b>Problem Statement</b></p>	<p>Chinese Opera requires a rejuvenation through technology integration for its identity to be reconstructed so that the Malaysian Chinese youth could perceive it as a contemporary performance.</p>	
<p><b>RQ1</b> How do Malaysian Chinese youth perceive Chinese Opera?</p>	<p><b>RO1</b> To explore the Malaysian Chinese youth's perception of Chinese Opera.</p>	<p>To understand the perception of the Malaysian Chinese youth about the identity of Chinese Opera. Is it seen as traditional art of contemporary to them? (Seen as traditional) (Seen as contemporary) What are the other factors that contribute to the lack of appreciation towards the art?</p>
<p><b>RQ2</b> What sort of technological integration that would be suitable for Chinese opera?</p>	<p><b>RO2</b> To explore the type of technology integration that can be integrated into Chinese Opera.</p>	<p>To understand whether technology plays a role as a contemporary medium when integrated into Chinese Opera (How can technology help?) (Will the youth accept technology integration?)</p>

<b>RQ3</b>	<b>RO3</b>	
Would integration of technology turn Chinese Opera to be seen as contemporary again?	To review the acceptance of technology integration in Chinese Opera among the Malaysian Chinese youth.	To review the potential of technology integration as a medium of rejuvenation to make Chinese Opera contemporary again. (Does it help after the technology integration?) (What type of technology elements the youth looking for?)

### 3.9.1 Pilot Study

The researcher has gathered the data for pilot study through 2 focus group discussions involving a total of 8 participants. All of the participants met the study requirement and were asked to sign a letter of consent before the researcher began the discussion. The data collection participants consisted of Chinese youths aged between 15 years and 30 years old. Researcher then analyses data from the discussions using NVivo 11. 5 factors emerged from the pilot study data which are identity, awareness, challenges, readiness of technology integration and promotion.

From the pilot study, the researcher found that the questions asked to the participants were fairly answerable and easily understood by them. Most of the interview questions were asked exactly as they were constructed by the researcher. However, the researcher followed up the semi-structured questions with open-ended questions like, “Why?” and “Do you mind sharing or elaborate



more about it?”. This was a way for the researcher to gain a deeper meaning and richer understanding of the participant’s thoughts and experiences. Overall, the pilot study of this research went smoothly, and no changes were made to the questions asked in the pilot study’s focus group discussion.

### **3.10 Limitations and Delimitations**

Two limitations of this study were identified, namely related to the sampling. Firstly, the data was limited to those collected only from 3 states in Malaysia and specifically only in the Peninsular even though the Chinese population is also high in Eastern Malaysia, especially in Sarawak. Results collected might be richer if the researcher was able to gather the data from Sabah and Sarawak. Secondly, this research was also limited to the Malaysian Chinese youth’s perspective, and there was no comparison made with other age groups. Data collected might show different acceptance and readiness of Chinese opera technology integration if this study included an older age group.

This research study also yielded two delimitations that describe how the study was narrowed in scope (Creswell, 2003). The primary delimitations of this study include: (a) the sample consisted of forty-six Chinese participants who volunteered to participate in the study; and (b) qualitative data collection techniques included focus group discussion and field notes.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

This chapter described the methods and procedures used to investigate the perception of Malaysian Chinese youth about Chinese Opera. The focus

group discussion and the processes used in this research method implied for this study could be helpful for similar research in the future. As focus group discussion allowed this research to gain a free flow of insights and information from the participants, it was helpful to understand the perspective of participants in a more significant manner. Focus group discussion allowed the participants to be comfortable in sharing their thoughts and expressing their views in rejuvenating Chinese Opera in Malaysia.

As updated by the researcher in this chapter, there is slight changes in phase two of the study due to the COVID-19 (Corona Virus Disease) pandemic in November 2019. As the pandemic created new rules in social distancing in human interaction, the researcher had chosen to conduct the focus group discussions via an online platform due to the standard operation procedure suggested by the World Health Organisations (WHO). However, the latest update in this research showed no significant changes to this research process and findings. The online discussions also allowed the researcher to record the discussion and all steps had been taken to warm up the focus group discussions to ensure that it would be more or less similar to face-to-face discussion. Overall, the research method used in this study were found appropriate to answer the research questions posed for this research.

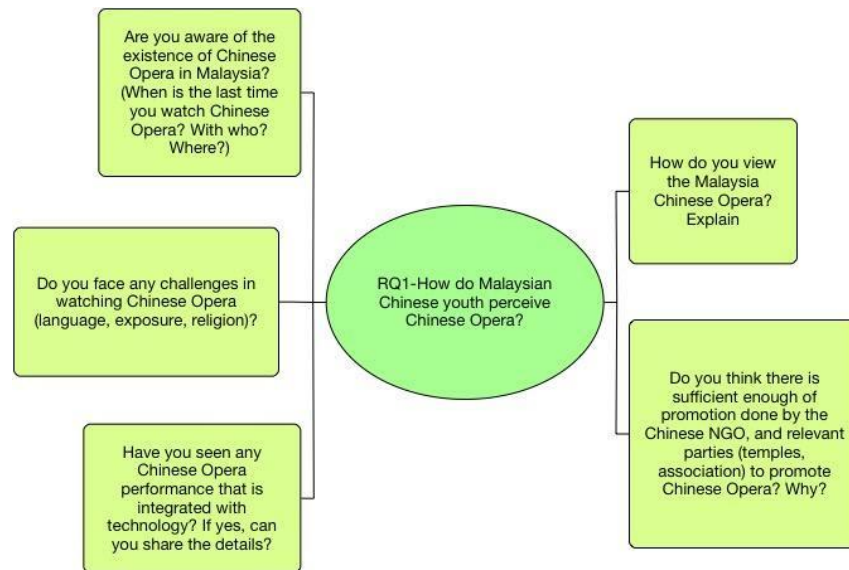
**CHAPTER 4**

**MALAYSIAN CHINESE YOUTH'S PERCEPTION ON CHINESE  
OPERA: TRADITIONALIZATION**

**4.0 Introduction**

It is crucial to find out how the Chinese youth in Malaysia perceives Chinese Opera. Their perception and acceptance determines the continuity of Chinese Opera. As mentioned in earlier chapters, Chinese Opera is seen as traditional and along with such slow developments, Chinese Opera is slowly becoming a dying art. Thus, it is utmost important to understand how the Chinese youth perceives Chinese Opera. As argued earlier in this study, cultural identity is important as it shapes the perception of the community towards the culture itself. Chinese Opera in Malaysia has turned into a religious performance from the early years when it was brought by the Chinese immigrants, as perceived by the younger generation. The concept of culture is defined by the community who is practicing it, as to stay relevant and beneficial to them; once a practice or culture is seen as traditional, this will lead to the traditionalization of a culture. Hence, the perception of the Malaysian Chinese youth is considered important as it affects the Chinese Opera's future in Malaysia. As the participants for this study are made up of Malaysian Chinese youth, the verbatim presented in the findings might include the local accent that been used by the local such as 'lor' and 'lah' as recorded during the focus group discussions.

## 4.1 Findings



**Figure 4.1 : Coding in NVivo 11 to answer Research Question 1**

Five discussion questions were posed in order to answer the first research question of this study. These five questions were asked and discussed in focus group discussion in order to understand the perception of Chinese Opera's identity among the Malaysian Chinese youth and the factors that contribute to the lack of appreciation towards the art. The findings are discussed as the following.

### **4.1.1 The Identity of Traditionalization – Chinese Opera: A Traditional Performing and Religious Performance**

The Chinese Opera in Malaysia is viewed as an ancient traditional and religious performance by the participants. The Chinese youth develops the belief that the Chinese Opera is a performance about death and dedicated to the deities as Chinese Opera is usually performed during the Hungry Ghost Festival, causing the ideas and identities of the Chinese Opera to be under threat. For

example, Amanda shared with a slow tone, “Yeah. Uh... my parents wouldn't bring us go to watch the Chinese Opera because Chinese Opera is for the those ‘*orang mati*’ (deceased) to “*tengok punya*” (watched), I don’t know it's my perception. I not really, know”. Meanwhile, Xin Tong from Selangor shared, “I think I watched it during Hungry Ghost month”. Shih Lin shared the same thoughts too by expressing “It happened during Hungry Ghost Festival...”. The idea and perception of the young people who ‘traditionalized’ the Chinese Opera indicate a more alarming situation. The participants revealed the perception that Chinese Opera is a source of entertainment for the afterlife. Chinese Opera was also constantly viewed as a religious performance by the focus group discussion participants. This is supported by the findings that Chinese Opera is viewed only as a performing art that is staged only during the festive season, associated with religious performance and played on the television. Besides the Taoist temple, Chinese Opera is also constantly associated as an art for the deceased. In the earlier days, Chinese Opera was performed during the wake for the deceased as the last entertainment for the dead. According to Amelia, “To be honest, I will prefer more up-to-date entertainment such as K-Pop and Hollywood movies because it is more interesting. Chinese Opera to me is boring because the storyline and dialect used in the performance.” These findings show that the participants prefer entertainment that is current, trendy and also has modern values.

However, not all the performers of the Chinese Opera would perform at funerals since only a few troupes were left with no option but to keep their troupes active to sustain their income during the period when the Chinese Opera

is faced with modern entertainment. The constant and stable traditionalized identity of Chinese Opera's is perceived within the Chinese community itself, especially the youth, whereby the image of Chinese Opera performance is often associated with traditional makeup and costumes. Hence, the identity of Chinese Opera in Malaysia is associated with performance that is outdated and old. Chinese Opera is facing a hard time to be relevant to their younger generation because traditional Chinese Opera is performed using the traditional Chinese musical instrument and the performers usually consist of elderly people, as explained and argued in the literature review. Li Woon shared confidently, "I would think it is traditional because as of now, I think there is still Chinese opera. However, I think it is more. Uh.... it's difficult for like some people to watch sometimes cause you have to go to particular place to go and view it. But I think the young generation nowadays don't really, you know, appreciate it." This contributes to the fall of the Chinese Opera identity in the Malaysian Chinese youth because the art itself is not relevant to them, leading it to be slowly forgotten by the younger generation. Chinese Opera is viewed as a traditional performance art compared to the entertainment that is offered to the audiences today. Cindy from Selangor expressed that, "I think no because, because when seeing this we already boring. We watch the normal drama compare to the Chinese opera". Shu Shen from Johor added to the discussion, "I think it's traditional thing ah but I don't really have interest to watch."

The participants wanted new and contemporary entertainment. Besides that, Chinese Opera carries a strong identity associating it to elderly performance and entertainment for older people. As shown in the verbatim, Chinese Opera is

also viewed as an entertainment and offering to the death which only takes place in the Chinese temple. Even the Chinese youth agrees that Chinese Opera is not enjoyed by the younger generation nowadays as they prefer to watch what they consider as normal (modern) and mainstream dramas that is shown on television. In short, based on the findings above, Chinese Opera is viewed as:

1. Traditional Performance
2. Religious Performance to deities
3. Performance for the dead
4. A performance that is no longer relevant

#### **4.2 Competition from Newer Forms of Entertainment**

Some of the focus group participants viewed Chinese Opera as a performance that will normally take place during the Hungry Ghost Festival. The identity of Chinese Opera has shifted from a cultural-based performance into a religious performance over time. To make things more competitive, majority of the Taoist temples will choose to stage “*Ge-Tai*” (stage karaoke) that are more entertaining and ear catching to the worshippers compared to Chinese Opera. In Malaysia, the Chinese Taoist temples are typically funded by public donations; most temples stage “*Ge-Tai*” during “*Shen-Dan*” (Deities Birthday celebration) during the festive season to attract a larger audience. The identification of Chinese Opera as a religious performance is strong as it establishes the shared connection between these two entities, as if Chinese Opera requires the deities of a temple to hold a play where it can be a standalone form of entertainment.

The participants agreed that they prefer contemporary entertainment such as K-Pop music and reality programme shows with famous idol stars. According to Katharine from Johor, “I prefer K-pop rather than Chinese Opera at any time...”. Most of the participants prefer modern and more trendy entertainment that can grab their attention. Since they feel that they can relate more to pop art, contemporary entertainment is better accepted than traditional entertainment. K-Pop (Korean Pop) music and Hollywood movies that usually hit the box office and song charts have catchy tunes and incredible scenes that can easily capture the youth’s attention. Moreover, the youth prefer movies that have computer generated images (CGI) and effects that can capture their attention. Eugene from Selangor shared that, “Chinese Opera is boring compared to the Hollywood movie...”. Besides that, the youth also prefer to watch western movies and Korean dramas as they claim that these dramas have better storylines and cinematography. This indicates that Chinese Opera is barely surviving in the Malaysia Chinese cultural art scene due to the choices of entertainment that are offered in various platforms. From online subscription to paid satellite entertainment, the youth are flooded by the choices they are offered compared to the previous time. Amelia expressed that, “I think I will choose more modern entertainment...”. Hence, Chinese Opera has failed to leave an impact on the participants even though they have watched it before compared to modern entertainment. The situation seems worrying to the researcher as the youth did not show any positive sign in enjoying the dying art, not to mention in preserving the art itself. The main reason is that the youth finds that Chinese Opera is not their main choice of entertainment. Competition from modern entertainment has sunken traditional performance in terms of popularity.



### **4.2.1 Preference to Contemporary Entertainment**

It is understood from the findings that the youth would prefer entertainment that is current as compared to Chinese Opera. This is because Chinese Opera was not viewed as an appropriate entertainment for their age. As modern or contemporary entertainment is being played on various platforms these days, the younger generation are offered with much wider choices compared to those in the early days. Paid satellite TV and cloud entertainment have offered them a variety of shows with exciting contents. Hence, Chinese Opera faces competition from all these services offered. In short, the following factors contribute to the demise of Chinese Opera due to the competing newer and more modern forms of entertainment:

1. Prefer up-to-date entertainment (e.g., K-Drama, K-pop)
2. No modern features in traditional Chinese Opera (e.g., CGI and video effects)
3. Chinese Opera is not performed constantly

### **4.3 Dissociation**

Besides that, the majority of the participants shared the belief that Chinese Opera has often been associated with heavy makeup and contains dramatic heavy acting with movement. The dissociation among the Chinese youth towards Chinese Opera happened as they failed to understand, appreciate and relate to the performing art coming from their own cultural roots. As mentioned earlier, Chinese Opera is typically performed with a group of elderly actors and actresses who wear heavy makeup on, whereas usually on the screen, most of the entertainment is not presented in the same way. Eugene expressed

his view in a serious tone, “Actually, nowadays the actor is Chinese opera. They also quite old right...”. Kyleen shared that, “I think Chinese opera is like heavy makeup and then maybe they want to singing to attract their story...”. This, therefore, forms a gap in comprehension and inability to relate to the Chinese Opera to the Chinese cultural practice. Yee Yin from Johor expressed the same thoughts too, “I thought, uh... Chinese opera is a performance with the heavy makeup and yeah performance like I didn’t understand at all”. The Malaysian Chinese youth find that they do not connect with the traditional performing art.

As Chinese Opera needs performers to dress up in traditional costumes with glamorous heavy headgears, the sight of performers with heavy makeup remained etched in the memory of the participants. Even though some of the participants had watched Chinese Opera some time ago, the unique heavy make-up and colourful costumes left a vivid image in their mind. Zhen Hao from Selangor shared with exciting tone that, “Their costume very fancy. So many colours, so many heavy things”. However, all of this past memory is not sufficient in promoting the beautiful art to the younger generation. To the youth, it is just an aesthetic art, and they do not understand the story and moral values that are presented in the show. In the discussion, Caroline said that, “For me, when you talk about of Chinese opera, the first thing I thought of is those people who wear very beautiful traditional clothes, as well as those very, um, wearing nice makeup la like they do perform on the stage or that is a very nice.” Hence, the representation of a Chinese Opera is usually associated with the heavy makeup, beautiful and colourful costumes with headgears and dramatic acting. Two participants even shared that the makeup and costume used in Chinese

Opera appear to be scary to them. The following verbatim reveals this finding, Li Woon shares her thoughts with fear in her expression “It’s kind of creepy”. Koli Ch’ng has also express her feeling “A bit scary”. With the thick makeups and eye catching colours used, the younger generation don’t sees the connection and they feel it somehow reflects to the paper effigy used in Taoism prayers.

#### **4.3.1 Not Able to Relate to Chinese Opera**

The Chinese youth view the identity of Chinese Opera only as having heavy makeup and traditional costumes. The Chinese youth are not able to relate the traditional costumes and headgears to the current styles and settings. For example, a normal person will not wear heavy makeup as a Chinese Opera performer does. This creates the disassociation of the generation towards the performing art. While the makeup in Chinese Opera has its own definition and meaning, the youth do not view it as relevant as it is just makeup worn for the performance, and it is not something normally done in real life. In relation to these findings, factors identified with dissociation of Chinese Opera among the Chinese youth are:

1. Traditional makeup
2. The use of classical tones and dialect during performance
3. Headgears and props use in performance does not exist anymore in the daily modern wear

#### **4.4 Classical Storyline**

The Chinese Opera is often seen by some of the participants as a dull and dramatic performance due to the old storyline in the performance. The youth

mostly wanted something trendier and more understandable; hence, they view it as boring and unexciting. Hui Shing from Pulau Pinang mentioned it as “too old school”. With the theatrical movement and tunes sung in dialects, the participants failed to understand the content of Chinese Opera, which led to the feeling of boredom among them as it failed to inspire or capture their attention. Hui Shing also shared that, “I don’t understand what are they talked so I feel boring”. Shu Hui also shared the same thought, “I think it's boring”. Participants recommended a fresher storyline with well-known actors and actresses performing the Chinese Opera to attract younger audience. Classical stories such as Journey to the West, Madam White Snake, General of 6 States and Mulan have been performed and shown in movies and have lost their originality in storytelling, causing the newer generation to find it uninteresting. Ying Ying expressed in a serious tone that, “Chinese for me but not entertainment because this Chinese opera does not entertain me”. Lee Daniel supported the notion, “For me, it's boring. I'm not interested in the storyline. I feel like it's locked. All those traditional kinds of stuff. So not really to my interests”. 32 of the participants shared that they find the storyline and content performed by the Chinese Opera troupe old and boring. Stories such as Journey to the West still make some impression to the participants while other stories create more confusion to them. Zhi Xuan shared that, “the major problem is a storyline; I also don’t get what the of them singing performing during the Chinese opera”. Jia Pei from Penang added to the discussion “For me I think, for Chinese opera is so boring...”.

The environmental factor was also shared by two of the participants, as they mentioned that most of the time, Chinese Opera is performed in the temple.

During the festive season, temples are usually crowded with devotees, hence, making it very uncomfortable to them. Katharine from Johor explained, “We just look for a while and then we just left. Yeah. So that's the Chinese opera”. Alice shared the same thought during the discussion, “I got saw this, in temple”. To support the findings, Xiao Jia from Selangor shared happily “I got saw this, in temple too”. Besides that, the participants claimed that it is hard for them to enjoy the performance as the performance are done outdoors in the humid weather. Lily shared that, “Because normally no aircon and normally it’s outdoor and hot...”. Ying Ying shared the same thought by adding to the discussion, “and too crowded”.

#### **4.4.1 Uninspiring Classical Storyline**

The focus group discussions revealed that the traditional and classical stories performed by the Chinese Opera troupe do not offer new and fresh narratives that the younger viewers would find exciting. They have problems understanding the traditional storyline and there is nothing new in the performance. Patrick from Selangor voiced his concern, “I don’t understand what are they talked so I feel boring”. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the viewers expect stories that can be relatable to them with modern scriptwriting. However, Chinese Opera has been performed so far using the classical scripts. This is because the performing troupes do not experiment in creating new scripts for the performance and the players are more comfortable performing stories that they are familiar with. Sujaa from Penang shared that, “I just feel like it's really kind of boring cause I don't like the traditional way”. The classical instruments used to accompany the traditional performance is another element that the Chinese

youth feels disconnected with other than the story performed. Besides that, Chinese Opera performance are usually performed by unpopular and elder performers. To summarize, the factors that lead the Chinese Opera to be seen as a traditional performance are:

1. The classical story
2. Unknown (unpopular) performers
3. Aged performers

#### **4.5 Entertainment for Family Bonding**

From the findings, the Chinese Opera is also known as an emotional and family-oriented art. Since Chinese Opera is often being played in Taoist temples during the festive months or “*Shen Dan*” (celebration of local deities’ birthday), most of the participants shared that they would visit the temples with their family members, especially their grandparents. Hence, when the researcher discussed about “when is the last time you watched a Chinese Opera play?”, the participants revealed that they went with their family either when they were younger or a while ago. In a discussion, Patrick revealed that, “I have watch it before in my hometown Hulu Langat which is I think few years ago it's very long time ago yeah and I feel that people don't really appreciate of this, because what I saw last time is most of the performers very kind of old people already. They don't have more youngest inside”. One of the participants shared that Chinese Opera reminds her of her late grandmother because she used to accompany her late grandmother to watch the Chinese Opera whenever they have it in the temple in her hometown when she was younger. Shin Ying shared her experience, “Actually, my grandma, uh... used to like a Chinese opera a lot.

So, I am a Hainanese. So, the opera that she brings me to me got to is actually, they sang in Hainanese version. Uh...my grandmother is so excited that. She brings me along, and with the camera I managed to capture quite a lot picture la, uh...". Hannah from Selangor shared, "My last time watch Chinese opera is when I was 12 years old, 13 years back and with my father and because my mom is Christian so she didn't join, so I just watched with my father." While Katharine from Johor said, "Yes, with my family". This also contributes to the identity of Chinese Opera that is constantly viewed as a performance for the elder people and also a bonding entertainment between the young and the old.

#### **4.5.1 Chinese Opera as the Bonding Factor with the Elderly**

Chinese Opera serves as a bridge to the young and elderly as the elder family member will still choose to watch the performance. The reason that the elder generation still prefers to watch Chinese Opera is due to the reason that most probably they grew up watching the performance as a source of entertainment in their early days. In the past, the choices of entertainment offered to the public was not as much as compared to today; the Chinese children would have to follow their parents to watch Chinese Opera that was being performed at that time. As this also serves as bonding time with the elderly in the modern world today, this creates the opportunity for the younger generation to get exposed to performing art. Factors that Chinese Opera is considered as a family bonding entertainment:

1. Chinese Opera for the elderly in the household
2. Reminds the participants their younger days of accompanying their family members especially the elderly



Figure 4.2 : Word Cloud for Identity code

The identity of Chinese Opera has shifted from being seen as cultural performance to a religious performance as time passed. It is mostly associated as a performance to the deceased, to the Chinese deities and considered as a traditional heritage art. Even though it is seen as a traditional art to the Chinese community, the image and identity of Chinese Opera has been traditionalized by the younger Chinese generation. Even though the focus group participants agreed that Chinese Opera is important to Chinese culture, they do not seem to have interest towards the art itself. It is crucial for Chinese Opera to be able to rejuvenate its identity once again as an important and cultural root to the Chinese younger generation as they are the one who will be ensuring the art’s future.

#### 4.6 Low Awareness

From the data collected, the researcher found that the awareness towards the existence of Chinese Opera in Malaysia is relatively low. This code answers Research Question 1 posed in this study, namely on their awareness level towards the existence of Chinese Opera in Malaysia. Most of the participants



shared that they have not much memory and experience in watching Chinese Opera. Yoke Xiang shared that, “Yeah, agree. It seems like lots of importance for the younger generation as we are modern life, but we don't much follow the tradition thing nowadays”. Cindy, on the other hand, shared that, “I didn't know that Malaysia actually has the Chinese Opera kind of community”. In fact, they would only pass by the temples during the festive season. Some of the participants shared that they might have some exposure to Chinese Opera during their younger age, but they hardly get to watch it nowadays. Katharine shared, “Uh... Actually, actually, we also don't know what is that la, but after I search online, I realized that mostly they happen in temple ah”. Besides that, the researcher also found out that geographical factors play a part in the awareness category. Participants from a smaller town or rural areas might have a higher chance to watch the Chinese Opera, while those who stay in a bigger city like in Selangor are most likely to have a lower chance to watch it. Celeste in a discussion shared that, “I think we are just not raised to know how to appreciate it. We only listen to mainstream music”. Six of the participants shared that they have no physical experience with Chinese Opera; however, they had watched it on the internet through YouTube. Twelve of the participants shared that they actually never watched Chinese Opera before as they are never exposed to the art form. One of the participants revealed that during his childhood time, he have seen Chinese Opera in popular dramas from Hong Kong and Taiwan, but he was never aware that Chinese Opera existed in Malaysia. Lin Ching shared that, “Oh no, I'm not aware, but I have watched a Chinese opera through TV programs last month I think on Malaysia TV channel”. Meanwhile, Shin Ying expressed that, “Yeah, I just know a bit from television only, but I think that one from

China”. Yun Joe from Johor shared that “No. I have no experience and I never watched it before.” Yoke Xiang shares “I remember when I was 8. I see my grandmother watching the Chinese opera movie in Astro and I still that is quite interested because the way it performing is quite different to the normal drama and also the slang...”. The participants might have get some exposure during the early age however, as they grow, the exposure decreases too.

#### **4.6.1 Low Awareness about the Existence of Chinese Opera**

The awareness of the existence of Chinese Opera among the Malaysian Chinese youth is found to be very low or with a little knowledge. This is due to the factor that the Chinese youth were not exposed much to the performing art. Hence, they are not able to make up their mind as much as they do when it comes to modern entertainment and artists. Some of the participants claimed that they thought that Chinese Opera is only performed in the Chinese temple. Besides that, as Chinese Opera is usually performed during the Chinese Deities’ Celebration, the performance is infrequent and has been turned into a yearly event. This has also made Chinese Opera turned into an exclusive performance that only happens for a certain time in a year. This has created a bigger gap to the Chinese youth who are not practicing Taoism in their household as they do not get many opportunities to watch it. To sum up, factors that lead to the low awareness of the existence of Chinese Opera are:

1. The low exposure to Chinese Opera performance since young
2. Geographical settings - Participants from smaller villages might have a higher chance to watch Chinese Opera while those from bigger city that has lower chances



**Figure 4.3 : Awareness of the Existence of Chinese Opera in Malaysia**

Overall, for the awareness theme, data shows that the awareness level of the existence of Chinese Opera in Malaysia is significantly low. The data revealed that some of the Chinese youth have not watched Chinese Opera performance before. Even though they are Chinese in ethnic, the younger generation choose to consume entertainment that they deemed as relevant and relatable to them. As time passed, the traditional entertainment needs to grow into something that is relatable to the community; or else it will be easily forgotten. Since nowadays, Chinese Opera has become such an exclusive performance, the awareness of the younger generation to the beauty of the art eventually declines. To increase the awareness of the existence of Chinese Opera in Malaysia, more aggressive and effective promotion need to be carried out so that the performing art is able to be cultivated in the Chinese community.

#### **4.7 Other Hindrances**

The researcher found that the majority of the participants revealed that the main challenges for them to enjoy Chinese Opera is due to the constraint of

understanding the language/dialect used in the performance. As Chinese Opera in Malaysia is mostly performed in traditional dialects such as Teochew, Hokkien and Cantonese, the participants claimed that they found it hard to understand what is being performed. Katharine explained that, “I think it’s the languages. Because I really do not understand what they are talking about”. Amelia resonated the same notion, “I don't learn Chinese since primary school, so I'm not familiar with those Chinese opera Hokkien or Teochew language that their speaking. So, I think the main problem that I face is that I don't understand what are they saying in the Chinese opera”. As mentioned earlier, this is the main cause of dissociation among the Chinese youth towards the art. Amanda confidently shared that, “But for me not that like to watch. because I don’t know what’s the meaning of the opera...”. With traditional phrases and tunes being performed in the show, the younger generation find that it is a challenge for them to appreciate the art. Some of the participants shared that they do not speak dialects in their home as they only converse in Mandarin most of the time. Xin Tung expressed, “When they present story. But, uh... I don't know that story and the languages.”

Data shows that participants who study in the national school have difficulties in understanding Chinese language as they do not converse in their mother tongue as much as those who study in the national Chinese school. Even though there might be a subtitled LCD screen being placed at the side of the stage, those who cannot read Chinese words will totally miss out on the experience. The language and dialects contribute significantly to the findings on the reason the youth are not interested in the traditional performance art as they

are not able to enjoy and understand what is being performed. Li Woon shared that “Besides that, the subtitle in Chinese, maybe they can include in other languages as well, such as English or Malay or even Tamil, so that other races can actually watch and understand the opera”. A designated place for Chinese Opera should also be created by NGO bodies and the government. Some participants voiced their concern about feeling uncomfortable due to their religious beliefs even though they interested in watching Chinese Opera. This poses could lead the performing art into a darker future. Katharine expressed that, “We won't even purchase the ticket if you know it's in different dialects that we couldn't even understand”. At the same time, the participant shared her view once again after a pause, “I know the young, youngster, they don't like hot, hot places, right? It supposed to be aircond shelter”. Shin Ying from Johor shares the same concern, “the one that I went, it's really hot, we bathe its more than a half hour there. After that we don't know... A proper aircond place”. Hence, a special, more comfortable hall or space should be created in order to let the performing troupes play their act and let the general public who is interested in the art enjoy it. Shin Ying shared her concern in the discussion, “I think can change the location perform by Chinese opera, like now. Because it like now, we easily perform Chinese opera in temple. It like we actually change the place like the normal hall maybe their other religion can join like change their mind like Chinese opera is not necessary must be if you watch it, you are like contradict with your religion like that”.

#### **4.7.1 Inability to understand the content and context**

The dialect used in the performance served as the biggest constraint for the Chinese youth to enjoy and appreciate the art. The majority of the Chinese youth are unable to understand the tone and dialect used in the Chinese Opera performances. Besides that, the classical singing styles make it harder for Chinese youth to enjoy and understand the performances. This is especially true for some participants who were enrolled in the national school, as they did not get the same exposure as those who studied in the Chinese vernacular schools in Malaysia, especially in relation to Chinese language exposure. Hence, this leads them to have more issues in understanding Chinese dialects. In short, the factors that contribute to the difficulty in understanding Chinese Opera's content are:

1. The dialect used in the performance
2. The singing tone that is classical and hard to understand
3. Classical text that used in the performance

#### **4.8 Poor Setting of Performance Space**

The atmosphere of the Chinese Opera performance plays an important role in influencing participants to enjoy the performance. Since most of the time, Chinese Opera is performed only in old Chinese temples, the stage and setting do not make the audience feel comfortable. The seats are normally plastic chairs for the audiences to sit on. Cindy from Selangor shared an experience of watching a Chinese Opera, "The biggest challenge for me is the place is always too crowded when there is a Chinese opera. And of course, I'm too short so I can't watch it, I need to tip my toes during the whole performance". The Chinese Opera stage is normally elevated to a higher level, especially whenever the

Chinese temples are built nearby the river. This is to avoid the river to overflow if floods occur. During the rainy season, the temple committee will typically build an aluminium roof as an extension canopy when there is a temple festival or “*Shen Dan*” (神诞) to shelter the worshippers from rain. However, this could produce humid air flow if a large number of worshipers are in the temple, and this eventually would produce hot and uncomfortable environment. Yi Feng shared her concern, “I think it’s the environment. Because normally no aircond and normally it’s outdoor and not comfortable.” This supports the finding of the study that audience’s experience in watching a performance show is relatively important.

#### **4.8.1 Environment of the Performance Space**

Environment plays an important role in creating a good user experience for the audience when enjoying Chinese Opera. The performance space, namely of the temple grounds creates an uneasy and uncomfortable environment for the audience. This factor has not been the main focus of the reason that contributes to the lack of appreciation among the Chinese youth in Chinese Opera. However, it was found that the environment of the performance plays an important role in discouraging the Chinese youth to enjoy the performances. Most of the time when the temple holds a festival, the devotees of the temple would crowd the place in the hope of getting the blessings of the deities and this creates an uncomfortable situation to some. To sum up, factors that lead to discomfort in enjoying Chinese Opera are:

1. Participants felt that they are uncomfortable, hence, making them to be uninterested





promoting way need to be increased like because like newspaper we rarely see this kind of advertisement in newspaper and oh yeah Facebook page also can be used and Google or anything about social media”. The participants expressed that they feel that performing art and creative performance are usually side-lined in the country as they are viewed as unimportant. Ying Ying shared her thoughts on this, “Yeah, they didn’t really like push. Yeah. Like doing those, I mean like Japanese star or American star don’t do that Chinese star. Now they rather choose that one”. Katharine echoed this notion, “Yeah. Because if they did enough to promote this. I have more chance to watch it until now I didn't watch so much, so many times. Yeah”. Most of the participants agreed that the lack of promotion by the NGOs and government body add to the reason why Chinese Opera is rapidly being forgotten by the younger generation.

#### **4.9.1 Lack of Support from the Government and NGOs**

Participants expressed their frustration and disappointment towards the lack of commitment from the government and NGOs in promoting and keeping the Chinese Opera alive. Katharine revealed her disappointment by sharing, “Not enough. Definitely not enough”. Another participant shared that since the Chinese ethnic does not make up the majority of the population in this country, the government would not pay much attention to the community’s emerging problems. Shin Ying shared, “I think it’s not enough, I say it’s not enough because I think that if the government this thing, it's not getting any benefit for anyone, like it’s not getting any money or like fulfils someone interest. Because this thing ah rarely like being interested by someone. So, they rarely put effort in promoting the Chinese opera”. Besides that, Chinese Opera is also not being

taught in the Chinese vernacular schools as compared to the Chinese music instruments, making it harder for the younger generation to learn the performing art. As only those who are really interested will only find a way to learn from the performing troupe, this reduces the exposure to Chinese Opera for a wider Chinese community. Not only that, compared to other Chinese practices such as lion dance, Chinese Opera is not seen as a performing art that the younger generation should learn. Hence, the participants suggested introducing Chinese Opera as part of the school curriculum so that the younger generation can learn more about the art. More activities need to be introduced in the effort to promote Chinese Opera so that the art can be continued in the future. 39 participants expressed the hope that the schools can introduce Chinese Opera as a subject in the curriculum so that the Chinese student can get an exposure in their early age. Olivia expressed her concern, “Not enough. But they can introduce some curriculum course to school to teach the young students”. Hui Shing shared the same thought too, “Some art performing, Chinese arts performing. And government can combine all kind of Chinese performing together and present the show”. Exposure is important to promote art. One of the participants shared that he feels Malaysia is an Islamic country and ruled by the majority Malay, hence he believes that the preservation of Chinese culture will not be in the main agenda of the country. Patrick from Johor echoed this concern, “I don't, I don't think so enough la because, uh... Because majority of Malaysia government are Malay, so they don't think our cultural very important”.



**Figure 4.5 : Promotion of the Government and NGO Bodies**

#### **4.10 Chinese Opera’s Identity and Traditionalization**

From the findings of this chapter, Chinese Opera in Malaysia have not been able to adapt to changes as it is performed by the performance troupes in the traditional form and there is not much adaptation that h. This leads to traditionalization of the performing art and is constantly viewed as culturally inappropriate to the Chinese youth. As stated in Chapter 2 of this study, various scholars have argued that a culture and practice need to constantly be flexible to the changes in time. DuGay (2013) mentioned that identity to a cultural practice is important as it sets the main perception to those who are practicing the culture and to the audiences who are going to accept and practice the culture. Chinese Opera’s identity has already been perceived in a wrong perspective in recent years among the Chinese youth, and this has led to its traditionalization. Since it is perceived as a religious and traditional performance, there is a lack of appreciation among the youth towards the art. Besides that, as Chinese in Malaysia is consider the minority, there are more challenges in order to sustain the performance in Malaysia. While the data revealed the factors contributing to the dying of the performance art, this study has been able to identify the reasons of why Chinese youth do not show their interest in Chinese Opera.

#### **4.11 Summary**

The identity and challenges that derived from the data collected clearly showed that the Malaysian Chinese youth are not able to understand and appreciate traditional performance. When they fail to understand the context and content of the performance, the whole experience in watching the performance will decrease and lead to the lack of interest. The youth today prefer to watch a movie in an air-conditioned hall rather than attend a crowded open space of a temple engulfed with the smell of joss sticks; this creates the barrier for the youth to even have a spark of interest in knowing about the art. Malaysian Chinese Opera is still mostly performed in traditional dialects which create another huge disadvantage to the youth who do not converse in other dialects. Storylines of the plays are usually clichéd and old, as the performing troupes did not update their scripts and content. Stories like the “Journey to the West” and “Justice Bao” have been overtaken over the time by movies and shows from various channels that are available via satellite television nowadays. Hence, to survive the generation, Chinese Opera’s storylines need to be updated too. Trendy story or experimental storyline should be created in order to attract the interest of the Chinese youth.

In order to keep it relevant to new audiences and younger generations, rejuvenation is required in order to change the attitude of the younger generation towards Chinese Opera. The Chinese Opera needs to be seen as an art form that can survive with time change and adapt to current demands. As traditionalization of the art is mostly formed by the Chinese youth’s viewpoints and its performance style, it is important for Malaysian Chinese Opera to adapt

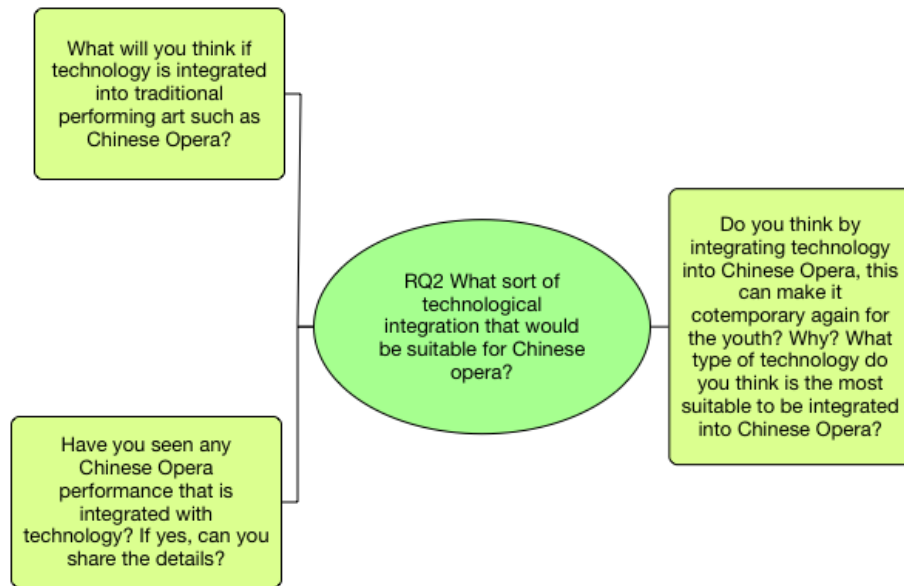
to modern values in order to be rejuvenated and be seen as a contemporary art once again. For the future generation to be able to enjoy and understand this dying performing art, effective and aggressive actions are needed, and it has to begin with the Malaysian Chinese youth who will ensure that Chinese Opera can be seen as a contemporary performing art again.

## CHAPTER 5

### TECHNOLOGICAL INTEGRATION

#### 5.0 Introduction

As discussed in the earlier chapters, Chinese Opera has failed to adapt to the changing time and is viewed as an irrelevant performing art by the Chinese youth. Due to its association to traditional and religious identity, Chinese Opera has failed to spark the interest among Malaysian Chinese youth. However, research findings by scholars such as Huang et al. (2014) showed that technology integration might help to rejuvenate Chinese Opera into a contemporary performance again. However, Huang's study primarily focused on China's population as they are predominantly Chinese by ethnic and maintaining Chinese Opera will be relatively more achievable as their awareness and exposure is higher compared to Malaysians. Some level of technology integration will assist in creating interest among the Chinese youth; however, in Malaysia, technology integration may not work fully. The question remains on whether the insertion of technology will be able to rejuvenate Chinese Opera in Malaysia, and to what extent it will help. The forms of technology integration need to be explored further with the type of technology integration that the Chinese youth hope to see. This is important to understand the participant's thoughts on the potential technological integration that can help to rejuvenate the traditional Chinese Opera. Three main questions were asked in the focus group discussions in this context (refer to Figure 5.1).



**Figure 5.1 : Coding in NVivo to answer Research Question 2**

## **5.1 Importance of Technology Integration and the Readiness of Acceptance**

When the researcher discussed with the focus group participants on the concept to technology integration in Chinese Opera without affecting its performance aesthetics, 40 participants across the different states showed high interest. In comparison, the remaining six participants were unsure about technology integration but shared that they are willing to experience it if they had the chance. According to Amelia from Selangor, “Yea, I’m not sure about this but I’m willing to try and watch if there is modern element”, while Yun Joe from Johor shared similar willingness to try watching Chinese Opera that is performed in contemporary way. In the discussion, Yun Joe stated that, “I think I might try to watch it if there is a new way of performed in Chinese Opera”.

All of the participants in this study showed that they are willing to accept Chinese Opera that is rejuvenated with technology. The discussions sparked

interest among them, showing the motivation to accept that technology can play an essential role to help Chinese Opera regain its fame once again. This supports the findings that Malaysian Chinese youth did not wish that Chinese Opera to be forgotten. To support the finding, Eugene from Selangor expressed his view by explaining, “For me it’s quite interesting. I want to know, um, like the story of it, what they’re going to act. So, yes!”. Amanda from Johor expressed the same view too, “I also can accept it”. The hope expressed among the participants indicated that they are keen to see Chinese Opera to be passed down to the future generation as it serves as an important cultural heritage of the Chinese community. Celeste Lim from Johor expressed her view:

“I think, can help to spread to more people because the artist bring the traditional thing out the gate so that more people would heard and watch it....”

The participants hoped that by integrating technology into traditional Chinese Opera, it could provide Chinese Opera a facelift so that it can be promoted to primarily the Chinese community once again regardless of the members’ age and also to other races so that they can understand the beauty of the Chinese culture. According to Zac Wong from Selangor, “Yes, I think it’s a good approach so that other will understand about our cultural performance too”.

Participants are looking forward to the possibility of technology integrated Chinese Opera as they claimed that it will be more exciting and acceptable to the younger generation. Besides that, as shared during the focus



group discussion, they are willing to learn and watch Chinese Opera if there is such integration that they feel will enable Chinese Opera to be elevated into a newer and more exciting performing art. The participants expressed that the immersive experience the technology integration will offer them the opportunity to enjoy Chinese Opera and this will create a newer experience for them. Li Woon from Selangor shared that, “I think technology as a big part of the world now. So, I think if is integrated in this kind of thing, teenagers, people nowadays will appreciate more...”. The participants hoped to look into a fresher Chinese Opera that has been rejuvenated with modern values in it. The Chinese Opera that is presented via the social media platform creates a wider audience penetration as people can watch it in their own time and space. Yoke Xiang shared his thoughts on this matter, “I think there’s great way to approach this technology ah we can a little bit, we can apply it fast so that others easy to understand the traditional and younger generation maybe can enjoy it more.”. The curiosity and readiness implied that the positive acceptance of technology integration. Hence, technology integration will be a great medium to rejuvenate Chinese Opera into a performance that can be seen as appropriate, relevant and trendy to the Chinese youth. In short, the readiness in accepting technology integration in Chinese Opera can be summarized as below:

1. The youths are ready in accepting the rejuvenated Chinese Opera with technology
2. Create more exciting content with modern touch
3. The youths are seeking for entertainment that is up to date and seen as trendy



**Figure 5.2: Technology integration into Chinese Opera**

## 5.2 Type of Technological Integration

Majority of the participants shared the same thoughts on the subtitle features needed to be enhanced in the show. As we live in the era of technology, the participants agreed that technology could attract the younger generation to be more interested in traditional performance. According to Yun Joe from Johor, “I think, maybe yes. Because now is technology era”. The participants hope that subtitles can be integrated so that they can understand the content of the performance. Yee Yin from Johor shared the same thoughts too, “I would say, um, like what? Kathrine share just now, yeah. Firstly, everyone is on phone right now even computers. So, the fastest way is through the internet. Oh. Then we can sit comfortably in our house and even they can provide some, like those”. Even though the researcher has explained to the participants that Chinese Opera performing troupes have been using LED panels to display the subtitles during their performance, most of them did not realize this current practice of the performance. Besides that, they also hoped that Chinese Opera can be integrated into game platforms and animation because both creative industries are relatively booming. According to Bottle from Selangor, “I think that we can pull

the trends Chinese opera inside the like game because nowadays youngster, young generation and also old generation like to play game”. Meanwhile, Amanda also expressed in excitement, “I think virtual reality is quite interesting because it puts you in the setting where you are. You feel that you are actually there. I think there is, there’s quite interesting because like for a person like me ah I does not really understand Chinese opera, but if I were to put into a virtual reality setting and being able to experience it in that way, I think it’s quite cool. Yeah”. Positive feedbacks are seen from all the focus group discussion on integrating technology into Chinese Opera as they feels that it creates the excitement again to enjoy the traditional art in a fresher manner.

When discussed on what kind of technology the participants wish to see to be integrated with Chinese Opera, the participants suggested various new media technology. The participants wished that Chinese Opera can be integrated with virtual reality, augmented reality, animation and games. Besides that, they also shared that having subtitles are crucial as it will help them understand the performance’s content. Even though there is usually an LCD subtitle placed at the side of the stage, it displayed Chinese words, and this will be a disadvantage to the viewers who cannot read Chinese. Hence, multilingual subtitles should be shown to the audience to attract a wider interest; however, this might affect the viewing experience as the audience will need to read and understand the scripts when they are watching the live show. Nevertheless, this will still help the audience to understand the content performed rather than totally missing out of the whole performance.

### **5.2.1 Types of Technological Integration Suggested**

As discussed in Chapter 2 (p.24) of this study, technology integration into traditional art has been claimed to help attract the younger generation's attention. Participants expressed their hopes for Chinese Opera to be introduced on various modern platforms such as camera filters, games and animation. They believed this will attract the interest of the Chinese youth in knowing and understanding the dying art. The participants wanted more interactive and current entertainment to establish a sense of belonging to the culture. Smart devices and technology are like bread and butter to the younger generation. Living in technological era, it is easier for them to stay connected with the faster internet connection and limitless access to information, bringing everything to their fingertips. The participants are willing to experience and watch Chinese Opera that are turned into animation and their favourite video games. Traditional Chinese Opera usually has a still backdrop and performed by the elder generation. So, the idea of looking at new characters performing in interactive background and stage excites them.

The participants are ready to accept technology integration into Chinese Opera in Malaysia. The subtitle features in the current performance need to be revised as most participants are not aware of its application in recent Chinese Opera shows. Specifically, the placement of the subtitles panel need to be improved as it is usually placed in a less strategic position. Moreover, not all of the Chinese Opera troupes own a portable LCD screen. The performing troupes might have to loan it from another event company, making the process tedious. Some participants wished that Chinese Opera can be integrated with hologram

technology. This will make the Chinese Opera more immersive as the characters and costumes can be changed with ease using computer's coding. When Chinese Opera is projected on a hologram screen, the audience are able to enjoy an immersive show experience. However, the cost of setting up a huge hologram screen is significantly high. Due to this reason, there is a limitation to the performing troupe and artists to use this platform. The suggested modern technology features that could be integrated in Chinese Opera are:

1. Animation

“Maybe the younger generation will know about it and appreciate the tradition of this. Can do it into animation”. (Zhi Da)

2. Video Games

“I think that we can pull the trends Chinese opera inside the like game because nowadays youngster, young generation and also old generation like to play game”. (Bottle Tan)

3. Virtual Reality

“I think virtual reality is quite interesting because it puts you in the setting where you are. You feel that you are actually there. I think there is, there's quite interesting because like for a person like me ah I does not really understand Chinese opera, but if I were to put into a virtual reality setting and being able to experience it in that way, I think it's quite cool”. (Katharine)

4. Social media filters

“I think can attract the younger generation, but then it still depends on the content or whether can really like attract them to, to watch or not”. (Li Woon)

“I actually watch this, uh...opera musical on Facebook because I never watch opera musical show before. So actually, watch this because they have a whole, uh.... opera movie. So, the opera in Facebook, and I actually managed to work it all and I feel it’s really interesting. So maybe, maybe on the social media platform at least youngsters might accidentally click on it and they feel like, Oh, this is actually quite interesting”. (Shin Ying)

#### 5. Hologram

“Interesting. It’s very interesting. And then it’s kind of innovative”.  
(Eugene)

“It's quite interesting. You can look around and see how that's a thing”.  
(Kyleen)

### **5.3 Technology and Adaptation**

Technology helps the adaptation of Chinese Opera to be seen as a contemporary performing art again. According to Schaniel (1988), new technology helps facilitate cultural change in traditional societies. Bigai and Gisman (2023) has also argued that in their research that technology has help cultural transformation to encourage social participation. Technology that has been adapted leads to cultural change and the changes that occur will be adapted to the society and slowly get accepted by the society.

The adaptation of technology implies the importance of traditional culture to be flexible in creating a new rejuvenated version of itself that can survive through the next generation. According to Amelia, “I think yes, because

no matter how much you change something or make it more modern, either way, they will still adapt from the original thing of how Chinese opera is. So, I think the element has to be there. Otherwise. They will not dare to call themselves Chinese opera". As argued by He (2011), adaptation creates more absorbance of intercultural practices which can create a more global distribution to its development. This will help traditional performance such as the Chinese Opera to be seen as a contemporary art to the younger generation. In order to be seen as contemporary performance, Chinese Opera needs to adapt to modern elements.

#### **5.4 Summary**

Technology convergence is seen as one of the most effective medium in rejuvenating the traditional art form to be deemed acceptable to the younger generation. The Chinese youth wanted entertainment that is up-to-date and tailored to their aesthetics needs. Thus, introducing technology into traditional performing arts such as the Chinese Opera could breathe a new life to their identity which had often been seen as obsolete and ancient. Integration of technology might give Chinese Opera the hope of reconstructing its identity back to its former glory. While technological integrations can rejuvenate Chinese Opera, it is in the interest of young people to learn about the art. Technology is a potential tool for rejuvenating the dying art, but it takes new blood to understand and keep it alive. When Chinese opera is integrated with technology, it creates the environment for the performing art to be adapted to the younger generation's culture. When Chinese Opera gains back its Chinese culture, the Chinese community will consider it to be appropriate once again, leading to cultural appropriation.

Overall, the focus group discussion participants agreed that the promotion and preservation efforts made by the Malaysia's government and the NGO bodies to keep the practice alive is very poor and almost to non-existence. Malaysia's government needs to be more sensitive and fairer to all cultures regardless of race and belief as a multi-racial nation. This is indeed a wakeup call for every parties, as if this trend continues without any further actions, Chinese Opera and other traditional performing art will be easily forgotten in the matter of blink of an eye. Art and culture are some of the main source of the promotion of Malaysia's identity to the world. In fact, art and culture has also been one of the main factor that contributes to Malaysia's economy. There is also a need for successful marketing to demonstrate an opportunity to stage Chinese Opera plays and its knowledge sharing to the world. The syllabus involving the education of Chinese Opera needs to be developed as a curricular subject in schools or universities and widely shared to spread the awareness about it among the youth. This is to ensure that knowledge transfer can be effectively inculcate to our younger generation to ensure that Chinese Opera would be able to be performed.



**CHAPTER 6**  
**REACTIONS TO TECHNOLOGICAL INTEGRATION:**  
**REJUVENATION**

**6.0 Introduction**

Technology has changed society's practices and culture into contemporary forms. It changes the way humans live and the way we perceive what is culturally appropriate and what is not. Schaniel (1988) and Tiwari (2022), claimed that new technologies have changed traditional practices and societies for economic gains. Adapted technology will lead to cultural change, along with any new development that will emerge in time. This argument leads to the third research question posed for this study, "Would integration of technology turn Chinese Opera to be seen as contemporary again?". However, the factors related to non-technology integration are equally important findings in this chapter. In order to make Chinese Opera contemporary again, all these factors play an important role to shaped Chinese Opera's identity. The degree to which participants view traditional arts such as Chinese Opera is demonstrated by the participants' willingness to accept fresher presentation without affecting the performance's fundamental values. The makeup, singing style and body gestures that were previously presented in Chapter 2 are recognised as significant features that define the identity of Chinese Opera.

**Table 6.1 : Video Discussion**

<b>Traditional Chinese Opera</b>	<b>Rejuvenated Chinese Opera</b>
How do you feel after watching the short story of this traditional Chinese Opera? Share your thoughts.	How do you feel after watching the short story of this technology integrated Chinese Opera? Share your thoughts.
Do you understand the story and the content of the performance?	After integrated with technology, do you understand the story and content of the performance?

Questions were asked to the focus group participants is as shown in Table 6.1. These questions were put forth after showing the focus group participants a set of selected videos that consisted of traditional and rejuvenated Chinese Opera. The questions were discussed in order to gain participants’ insights on their perspectives towards both traditional and rejuvenated version of the performing art.

**Table 6.2 : Traditional vs. Rejuvenated Chinese Opera**

<b>Chinese Opera</b>	<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Rejuvenated</b>
Character with make-up and costume	Heavy makeup with costumes that usually come with props (refer to V9 and V10)	Performed without the heavy make-up however the body language performed and tone in singing is traditional (refer to V7)

Stage	<p>Hand painted backdrop on fabric</p> <p>Props are usually arranged by stage helpers</p> <p>Normal studio lighting (refer to V9 &amp; V10)</p>	<p>Huge LCD screen that can change the graphics and elements controlled by a technician</p> <p>Advanced lighting (refer to V6)</p>
Music performed	<p>Played by a group of musicians using traditional Chinese instruments such as flute, drums, cymbal and electronic organ piano</p>	<p>With new tunes and melody</p> <p>Can be integrated with other genre of music such as rap and performed in other language other than Chinese</p>
Character with technological element	<p>Performed by the same performer</p>	<p>A piece of hologram projection device is needed. Characters can be change by the technician (refer V5)</p>
Storyline performed	<p>Followed the old scripts that has been inherited by the previous performer or troupes</p>	<p>Can be adapted to be played into a newer and current storyline such as superhero themed play or more current storyline (refer V1)</p>

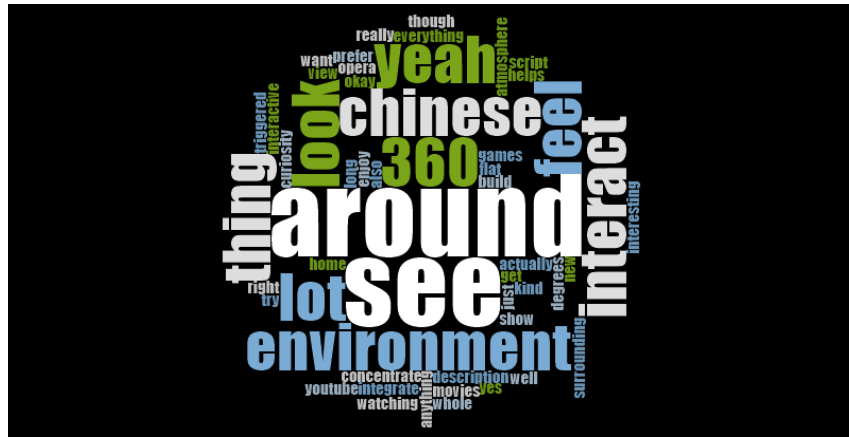
Modern Technology Example: 360's feature/Hologram	Not available at the moment as there are limitation towards the resources in traditional performing troupe	Performance can be shot with the 360 camera and uploaded to various platform to be enjoyed in the 360 view to create a more immersive experience (refer V2)
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Even though the rejuvenated Chinese Opera offered a newer experience to the participants, its core elements and structure were maintained. The performer's action, body language, makeup, hand gestures and tunes were still preserved in most of the rejuvenated Chinese Opera. As shown in Table 6.2, the researcher has distinguished the elements of traditional and rejuvenated Chinese Opera performances. It was observed that technology serves just as a medium to rejuvenate and create a fresher look for the performing art without affecting its core features. Modern technological elements such as Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) were also able to breathe out a new way of enjoying the Chinese Opera without needing them to physically attend the show. Viewers were able to choose to watch it at their convenience and comfort without affecting the viewing experience. Subtitles using the led screen also helped the audience to get a clearer idea on what they performers are singing and understand the storyline.

## **6.1 Research Result – Findings**

### **6.1.1 Acceptance of Modern Technology integrated into Traditional Chinese Opera**

Focus group discussions participants were exposed to a set of Chinese Opera videos that have been added new elements. Based on the findings, technology integration was found to be important but there are also non-technological integration that must be changed too in order to keep Chinese Opera appropriate again. Participants were able to relate to the anime like characters and feel excited. The modern features enabled the focus group discussion participants to have an interactive moment when viewing the traditional Chinese Opera performance. This also created a more immersive experience to them as they were able to watch and understand the Chinese Opera with subtitles provided in the 360-degree video. This created an opportunity for the participants to watch Chinese Opera in their ease of time and space too. Besides that, in the hologram Chinese Opera, the characters changed their costumes in a blink of an eye, which then created a more exciting experience for the participants. They claimed that the hologram Chinese Opera gave the traditional performance another level of perspective.



**Figure 6.1 : Chinese Opera Presented in Hologram and 360-Degree Video Technology**

## **6.2 Hologram and 360-Degree Video Technology Used in Traditional Chinese Opera**

Participants were shown a Chinese opera video with hologram technology projecting popular game characters on a 360-degree video that enabled the participants to navigate around the performance space. The participants displayed a high degree of interest and also shared their enthusiasm about the video being played. Eugene shared his thought with excitement, “I think it's catches the eyes lorh. And get some attention”. With the conventional way of singing and using sounds that resemble real life actors, the participants clarified that it was easier for them to understand, since there is also a subtitle projected to the hologram. Zhi Da showed excitement during the discussion and expressed, “I think it's better because it's pretty visually appealing with the character design is pretty eye verbing as well for the stage design with the hologram”. Xin Thung agreed with Zhi Da by sharing, “The character is more anime a bit la”. The researcher explained that the person behind the machine can alter the character with only a few clicks. Yi Feng shared, “It still shows the

original old style, but in a way, we think like new technology. Yeah. I'm more attracted to what it because we more familiar to this kind of thing". The participants became more enthusiastic and expressed their hope that this technology would draw the attention of the younger generation as they would be able to connect more to the art. Amanda shared, "Yeah. It more interesting than the traditional one. Because I think it was graphic, graphic is more beautiful and more woah I think". While navigating through the 360-degree video, the participants explained that they were very interested in understanding the surrounding of the performers. Amelia shared "Yes, 360 so you can, you can integrate with that environment. It's not that you're watching from YouTube or anything, just flat, and then this can interact with the environment. Everything. I do feel that the whole Chinese atmosphere a Chinese Opera". While Olivia shared the same thoughts too, "I prefer this, its view the 360 degrees because I can get a lot around there and then see". As a first timer in watching the rejuvenated video, Zhen Hao expressed, "It's quite interesting. You can look around and see how that's a thing". Adding to this finding, Bottle shared, "Oh, this kind from games, and then people will like la but for the old style, everyone is just like too old. Then not interesting for us la". As the video was taken in the traditional tea house setting, it enabled the participants to view the Chinese Opera performance in the original setting while enabling them to navigate it through their computers and their phones. Celeste shared her excitement, "Somehow, I think right, if they bringing Chinese opera to another level". Li Woon added to the discussion, "Yeah, I think more interest one ah. It just kept our eyes lorh. And have content".

### **6.3 Acceptance of Using Interactive Background**

Participants were excited as the Chinese Opera has a more modern and colourful background which can be changed easily. The participants were particularly excited to watch the Chinese Opera with the interactive background as they claimed that it is more modern and less frightening than the traditional hand drawn canvas background. Amelia shared, “It should be in a modern way. Yeah. Because I think the decoration of the stage is quite creepy for me at the temple”. Celeste from Johor shared, “Even though its modern but still remain the traditional background and all”. The identity of the Chinese Opera performance was still well preserved when technology is incorporated. Katharine shared, “Well this much more interesting at least this one I will actually watch it compared with the previous one that you show me it seems that this much more interesting a stage design character story”. Zac Wong added to the discussion by sharing, “It attract people more ah, like their really in that scene what they doing if the background is still the same all the time”. The interactive background provides more possibility for the audience of the Chinese Opera performance to interact with the performers, at the same time creating a more immersive experience to the audience. Kyleen shared, “It attract people more ah, like they’re really in that scene what they doing if the background is still the same all the time”.





**Figure 6.2 : Modern Background**

The data showed that the participants agreed that having a multimedia background attracts them to watch the Chinese Opera more. The participants shared that the lighting use and the background is much more appealing to them compared to the traditional Chinese Opera stage which is often still. Zhi Da excitedly shared, “This is usually what we see on Chinese New Year TV show, this kind of thing, because it's more interesting for wide audience. Yeah. So, we need like this kind of image”. Sometimes, during a traditional Chinese Opera show, helpers will be required to carry the props used in and out of the stage and this will affect the watching experience of the viewers. With the modern multimedia background, most of the graphics can be changed and controlled accordingly by a group of technician. Not only that, the motives and graphic used can be digitally created and enhance the modern values in the performance.

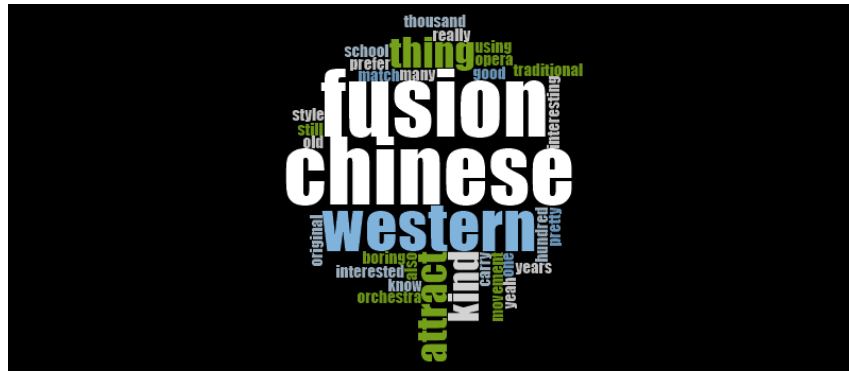
## **6.4 Reaction to Modern Integration**

### **6.4.1 Music Fusion**

The participants felt that the fusion between the Chinese Opera and the use of modern musical instruments could attract the attention of the younger generation. When the participants viewed the video shared, they showed excitement in their emotion. Eugene from Selangor shared, “Now you see like aaa... orchestra I don't know how many thousand hundred years, people are still

interested in this because that's like a movement to carry on this traditional Chinese opera should have this kind of thing to, uh...like bring forward the traditional way". Zhi Da added to the discussion "Yeah. I'm, I totally agree with Eugene. What you say, like fusion with the Western, so is, uh..., it's very attract, attract, uh..., Western people also". Some of the participants were also amazed with the fusion of the Chinese Opera music with western music. They gave the participants a fresher feel when they watched the video although they believed that the core identity of Chinese Opera has been maintained. Katharine expressed, "Somehow I think right, If they bringing Chinese opera to the another level". This indicates that the music fusion between Chinese Opera and another music genre has proven to be a success in elevating the traditional art to be view as contemporary again.

Participants agreed that the fusion of modern music in Chinese Opera can be achieved without affecting its original identity. The participants showed excitement during the focus group discussion in this phase where they all felt that there is a tremendous possibility for Chinese Opera to be rejuvenated. The fusion of modern music turns traditional Chinese Opera into a more acceptable entertainment. For example, previously, Chinese Opera performance was supposed to be performed using the traditional Chinese musical instrument; but, the use of western musical instrument creates a new outlook for Chinese Opera. The reason for this could be that the participants are more exposed to the western musical instruments compared to the Chinese ones, hence, creating a more familiar sentiment to them.



**Figure 6.3 : Music Fusion**

### **6.5 Modern Storyline**

From the data gathered, participants shared that they feel that they find Chinese Opera with a modern storyline more interesting and in line with their preference. In one example, the researcher showed to the participants a Chinese Opera performance inspired by the “Madam White Snake” that was played in English with a modern touch in the story. The participants wanted something more modern and contemporary. However, performances such as “Journey to The West” and “*Zu Ying Tai*” (“Butterfly Lovers”) have been viewed as clichéd plays. Majority of the participants wanted a story that is fresh, interesting and relatable to them. Li Woon shared, “It has a more modern tune. So, the tone is pleasing to the ears, so it's not so noisy.” However, another participant felt that the combination of both music genres does not fit well as it reduces the Chinese Opera’s original identity. Yoke Xiang shared his thought, “Yeah I think it interesting also. But I prefer the previous (traditional version) though”. When Chinese Opera performance is adapted into English language, the participants were able to understand it easily. Xin Tung’s input supports this finding, “To me, it attracts me because I understand the language”. The contemporary presentation and story are performed better compared to the traditional Chinese



Opera has its own unique melody which is mostly viewed as traditional, the participants could not relate to its rhythm and melody. Eugene expressed his view in a very exciting manner, “Surprise me. This is a really surprising”. Katharine shared the same feeling, “Yeah, that's a good way quite fresh to me. I mean the fusion then, I don't know how to say it. I like it. Haha I like it. It mix with those raps, and those song and then they went yeah. It's rap. Its more modern”. As long as the Chinese Opera is still performed in its original tune regardless of the fusion of modern touch and beats, it created a new experience to the participants as they found it to be more relevant. Shin Ying said that, “Uh.. just now I want to say the lyric quite played important role because see the lyrics just now quite related to ourselves then it will be more interesting la. And they still, I think still considered under the Chinese opera traditional one”. This finding shows that a barrier exists between the traditional Chinese Opera performance to the younger audience when they failed to understand the content of the performance. The usage of modern lyrics and tone make it easier for them to relate and understand the content hence its viewed as relevant and contemporary to them.

### **6.6.1 Acceptance to the Use of Modern Music in Traditional Chinese Opera**

Modern genre of music is accepted when it is fused with the traditional Chinese Opera singing tune and melody. The participants showed excitement when the researcher shared the video containing this fusion with them. For the participants, with the use of modern lyrics and singing style, Chinese Opera turned into a more relevant kind of performance. The participants also felt that



signature point, that kind of opera, I think the makeups still do need to continue”. Hence, they agreed that this is an authentic form of Chinese Opera even though some participants might find it eerie to them. Amelia on the other hand shared, “And for me it’s like an old people drama art”. Even without the heavy makeup and costume, modern Chinese Opera was still viewed as entertainment to the elderly due to way its performed especially the singing and the movement of hands and body. However, there were some mixed opinions after they had watched this video. Some participants felt that the performance was just a normal Chinese drama and not Chinese Opera but most of them think that it can be still considered as Chinese Opera due to the way the actors performed and sang. Shin Ying said, “Uhh..., it is still the Chinese opera because Chinese opera is like a character can in sing out their dialogue. I think just rather ah the more important is the we can see the dialogue is not missing that the stage or the makeup or the makeup is not important as we can see the dialogue”. Katharine added to the discussion, “I think yes, because no matter how much you change something or make it more modern, either way, they will still adapt from the original thing of how Chinese opera is. So, I think the element has to be there”. These data show that Chinese Opera’s identity is strongly influenced by the way it is performed by the performer. The performer’s body language, gestures and tone used in the singing formed the main identity of Chinese Opera.

### **6.7.1 Acceptance of Modern Play in Traditional Chinese Opera**

Even though the traditional Chinese Opera is performed through the modern way of singing and performing, the identity of Chinese Opera as an art for old people is still very strong. The perception of Chinese Opera in the

traditional image is significantly strong when the performers sing in their usual tunes. Hence, this makes the Chinese Opera's identity to be recognizable even though it is being performed in a more modern manner with lesser makeup used and non-classical costume. This is because Chinese Opera performance includes certain hand gestures and facial movement that are usually used by the performer.



**Figure 6.6 : Modern Way of Performing Traditional Chinese Opera**

### **6.8 Modern Stage for Performance of Chinese Opera**

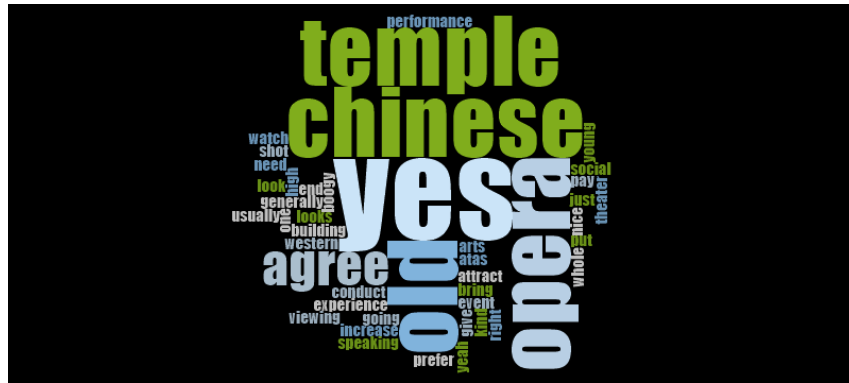
The participants were shown a video of a modern performance of Chinese Opera in an indoor hall equipped with proper seats, beautiful lightings and modern settings. The participants shared that they will be happy and willing purchase the ticket to watch Chinese Opera if it is staged in the hall. Zhi Da expressed, “Somehow I think right If they bring bringing Chinese opera to the another level”. This shows that environment plays a crucial factors to attract younger audience. When there is a designated space for the Chinese Opera to be performed, its identity that has been closely attached to the religious performance will change. Shin Ying shared “...it's like only like Chinese New Year. When we go to pray, the temple is only popping, so we were like gods or



like spiritual things too. Like Chinese opera, so it doesn't truly bring up the meaning of Chinese opera. Is still is for people to really enjoy it rather than just like to pray or some entertainment for people". As most of the Chinese Opera show nowadays are still being performed in the Chinese temple, shifting the setting to a more comfortable one is a good way to change the youth's perception about Chinese Opera's identity. Bottle from Selangor shared, "Look at the hall and the seats, easier to look at things". This support the argument that user experience while watching a production is equally important. As the younger audiences are constantly looking for comfort and better viewing experience, having a proper space for performance is one of the factors that needs to be considered. Katharine shared, "The building looks very bougie, 'atas'(high class), high end like that. so, I think I will give it a shot. Like quite nice la".

### **6.8.1 The Perception of Modern Performing Space**

Participants agreed that a designated space and with a proper seating plays an important role for them to enjoy and watch the show. However, there are also participants that felt that it does not really change the performance watching experience, except to add a more festive feeling to it. While the most common sight of Chinese Opera performance is in Chinese temple setting, there is also Chinese Opera that is performed in proper performance space; however, this is very rarely seen. The importance to have a designated space for Chinese Opera to be performed so that it can be disassociated from a religious performance is crucial.



**Figure 6.7 : Modern Setting with a Proper Hall and Environment**

### **6.9 Hopes and Thoughts**

This factor was derived from Phase 2 of this study. The researcher asked the participants to share their hopes and thoughts on helping Chinese Opera in Malaysia to be enjoyed by the future generation. Most of the participants shared that they hope Chinese Opera can be introduced as a co-curricular subject in schools. Zhi Da shared, “Maybe some exposure of classes. They can go to schools, Uni to introduce this as a show la, yeah”. Zhen Hao agreed to this notion, “...contest in society in the university or any, any school like a to corporate with the form the art”. They hope that the interest can be cultivated to the younger students so that they will be able to learn and perform the art. Li Woon shared, “They also can have a workshop or collaborate it's some school or company and make the promotion the events before the events really start most of the time we saw the events after the events which poster on the news”. Besides that, the participants agreed that Chinese Opera needs to be promoted through social media and also printed media such as the newspaper so that it can reach a wider audience. Amelia, in a serious tone shared, “I think you will lose your audience or you lose the amount of people that is watching traditional

Chinese opera because you have never, you never innovated into this growing world of technology. Oh yeah. You will definitely lose your viewers, cause you need to keep it upcoming”. The participants agreed that without a proper management and promotion, Chinese Opera will be forgotten easily. Amanda in her discussion said, “I agree with Joe, because at least I think traditional opera is like quite bold and modern Chinese opera more interested because more people can attract, more young generation going watch it. All the thing maybe the youth more money or more people to watch the show, I think. The important thing is we need to move forward la. The modern one is better”.

### **6.9.1 The Future of Chinese Opera in Malaysia**

More active and effective actions need to be taken by every party in order to keep the tradition of Chinese Opera alive. Some participants revealed that if they are interested to learn about Chinese Opera, they do not know where to seek for information. Participants expressed hope for more effective and proactive actions from the Government and NGO bodies to keep Chinese Opera alive.

The issue of the lack of information and that only certain groups of people share information among themselves points that there is a challenge in penetrating the general Chinese community. However, the participants hope that Chinese Opera can be treated as a serious and respected field of profession. In order to make Chinese Opera popular among the youth again, technology integration will need to play a big role.

Besides that, one of the participant also shared the hopes that Chinese community will hold competition for the Chinese Opera troupes to compete with each other to regain their status again. The researcher views this thought as a good move; however, there are still constraints that for Chinese Opera troupes in Malaysia to secure a designated space for them to perform. Moreover, not many Chinese Opera troupes are still actively performing. In comparison, country like China and Taiwan might have more chances to create such reality show to ensure that Chinese Opera have the screen time to promote it to the younger generation.



**Figure 6.8 : Hope and Thoughts of the Participants**

### **6.10 Retaining the Authenticity of Chinese Opera**

The participants expressed that the Chinese Opera should maintain the elements of heavy makeup, dramatic performances, singing tone as well as the hand painted backdrop on a large piece of fabric. But one participant shared that the hand painted graphic used in the show reminded him of some designs that are normally used in the Taoist funeral. Yi Feng shared, “Because it's like, the people that to use like to pray the person who died already”. Most of the motives

of the hand painted background are inspired by the elements of the olden days such as the palace setting. Participants expressed, described and validated what they saw at the temple as the traditional Chinese Opera. As Chinese Opera is a unique performing art with its own identity traits, it is almost impossible that the art is not easily recognizable when it is being performed. Li Woon said, “It's very still. It's very blend”.

The participants showed little or no interest in the traditional Chinese Opera videos as they claimed that the performing art is hard to understand and it is very boring. For example, when the researcher shared a video of traditional Chinese Opera performed in the temple, a participant shared that the stage of the traditional Chinese Opera is set too high. This is due to the geographical location of some Taoist Chinese temple which is usually built nearby the river or bay, according to the Chinese Feng Shui practice. Amelia expressed her concern, “And also the stage, or you think, or you think about it. If the old people they need to look up and then the chair at the bottom, the stage is a bit difficult la quite strange to the neck. Even for a young person, I think is really quite tough. So, for all these old people that want to appreciate Chinese opera, you will be more “*san fu*” (hard in Cantonese) and difficult for them”. To avoid the high tide and its consequent damage, the stages and temples are usually built slightly higher. Besides that, she also shared that the plastic chairs that are usually prepared by the temple community is not comfortable when sitting for too long. Amelia said, “No, because plastic chair won't be comfortable ah to be honest”. The setting and environment of the Chinese Opera play a crucial role for the viewers as when the audience do not feel comfortable, it affects their watching

experience. Since Chinese Opera are performed mostly at the Taoist temple, the smell of joss sticks and the noisy sound of audiences talking might affect the total experience in enjoying the show. Hence, due to this surrounding environment, the participants expressed that they would feel uncomfortable watching Chinese Opera in its traditional form.

### 6.10.1 Video of Traditional Chinese Opera Performed in a Chinese Temple

The identity of the traditional Chinese Opera was viewed as boring and uninteresting by most of the participants. As it was performed on a high stage, this lowers down the audience experience, making the art unpopular among the participants. The participants viewed Chinese Opera as an entertainment offered for the dead. The traditional Chinese Opera's video showed triggered the participants' memory of watching it during their younger age in the temple with family members. With the classical story and traditional way of performance, there is no modern features that can be seen throughout the video.



Figure 6.9 : Video of Traditional Chinese Opera



## 6.12 Research Result - Discussion

Six distinct themes emerged from the research data. The themes derived from the pilot study and the actual study are the same. However, there is another theme that emerged from the findings, which is ‘hope and thoughts’, adding one additional theme to the original themes. The major themes identified from the results of this study as shown in Table 6.3.

**Table 6.3 : Code and Categories of Chinese Opera in Malaysia**

<b>(Open) Theme</b>	<b>(Axial) Category</b>	<b>(Selective) Sub-Categories</b>
Chinese Opera in Malaysia	<b>1. Identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional Performance</li> <li>• Not Relevant</li> <li>• Festive season</li> <li>• Old/Out of date</li> </ul>
	<b>2. Awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• Low</li> </ul>
	<b>3. Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language/Dialect</li> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Story/Content</li> <li>• Make Up/Character</li> </ul>
	<b>4. Technology integration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subtitles</li> <li>• Game</li> <li>• Animation</li> <li>• Multimedia Background</li> <li>• VR (Virtual Reality)</li> <li>• AR (Augmented Reality)</li> </ul>



	<b>5. Promotion and Preservation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not Sufficient</li> <li>• Need more effort from the Government and NGO to promote</li> </ul>
	<b>6. Hope and thought</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce as a curricular subject to school</li> <li>• Designated space for Chinese Opera</li> <li>• Chinese Opera needs to update to be considered as modern performing art</li> </ul>

Theme 1 and 2 address the first research question posed: ‘How do Malaysian Chinese youth perceive Chinese Opera?’, whereas Theme 3 and 4 answered the second research question: ‘What sort of technological integration that would be suitable for Chinese opera?’. Theme 4 and 5 answered the third research question: ‘Would integration of technology turn Chinese Opera to be seen as contemporary again?’. In Phase 2 of this study, the data collected answered the third research question posed in this study.

The findings of this study indicated that the data has reached saturation. Majority of the participants shared the same thoughts, and the researcher gathered the data and grouped the acronym using grounded theory. The data collected for this study were able to answer all of the research question posed for this study. For Research Question 1: ‘How do Malaysian Chinese youth perceive Chinese Opera?’, the researcher aimed to identify the perception of the

Chinese youth towards Chinese Opera. The identity of Chinese Opera as perceived by the youth builds up the main concept of this study. While in the second research question: ‘What sort of technological integration that would be suitable for Chinese opera?’, the researcher sought to understand the types of technological integration that seem suitable for Chinese Opera and if integration of technology would allow Chinese Opera to be seen as a contemporary art again?. The objective for this research question is to understand if technology integration will be able to rejuvenate Chinese Opera into a contemporary performing art again.

These breakdowns are important in order for the researcher to understand better about the data that has been collected. From all the themes derived from the results, it can be concluded that the research questions of this study have been answered and the themes established have been testified as free from researcher’s bias by the qualitative experts consulted in this study.

**Table 6.4 : Code, Categories, and Subcategories**

<b>Open Coding (Code)</b>	<b>Axial Coding (Subcategories)</b>	<b>Selective Coding (Categories)</b>
<b>Identify the key phrases</b>	<b>To identify the Concept</b>	<b>Integrate</b>
Are you aware of the existence of Chinese Opera in Malaysia? (When is the last time you watch Chinese Opera? With who? Where?)	<b>- Identity and Existence</b>	Chinese Opera as a religious performance
How do you view the Malaysia Chinese Opera? Explain	<b>- Perspective</b>	Chinese Opera as a traditional art
Do you face any challenges in watching Chinese Opera (language, exposure, religion)?	<b>- Challenges</b>	Challenges that faced by the participants to enjoy Chinese Opera
As a Chinese, do you think Chinese Opera is important to you? Why?	<b>- Importance</b>	Importance of Chinese Opera to the Chinese ethnicity people

<p>What will you think if technology is integrated into traditional performing art such as Chinese Opera?</p>	<p><b>- Technology Integration</b></p>	<p>Hope to get a contemporary Chinese Opera form</p>
<p>Do you think by integrating technology into Chinese Opera, this can make it cotemporary again for the youth? Why? What type of technology do you think is the most suitable to be integrated into Chinese Opera?</p>	<p><b>- Technology Integration</b></p>	<p>- Seeking more up to date entertainment</p> <p>- Seeking for relevant art performance</p>
<p>Have you seen any Chinese Opera performance that is integrated with technology? If yes, can you share the details?</p>	<p><b>- Exposure</b></p>	<p>Exposure towards contemporary Chinese Opera</p>

<p>Do you think there is sufficient of promotion done by the Chinese NGO, and relevant parties (temples, association) to promote Chinese Opera? Why?</p>	<p><b>- Limitation</b></p>	<p>- Seeking for more effort from the government and NGO body to play an active role to promote Chinese Opera</p>
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### 6.13 Conclusion

This chapter presented the results from three focus group discussions involving 18 participants in Phase two. The findings of these chapters answered the second and third research questions for this study. Findings were presented in sections that corresponded with the primary themes that emerged from the results. Categories within each theme helped to support and provide insights into the themes. The identity of Chinese Opera as perceived by the Malaysian Chinese youth was identified. Chinese Opera has often been viewed as a traditional and religious performing art to the youth. They felt that it is not relevant to them even though as a Chinese ethnic person, they viewed Chinese Opera as equivalent important to them.

The awareness about the existence of Chinese Opera is relatively low among the Chinese youth. Even some of them who had visited temples and experienced Chinese Opera were not interested to know more about the play due to they do not have a vivid memory about it. In terms of the technology types and integration, participants showed high interest in sharing their ideas about the

types of technology that they hope could be integrated into Chinese Opera. The participants are able to suggest on some modern technology that they hope to see that Chinese Opera can be integrated with. Besides that, all of the participants agreed that there is a lack of promotion by the Malaysian government and NGO bodies in promoting the dying art. Aggressive and effective promotions are needed in order to restore the Malaysian Chinese Opera's identity to where it was again. Hence, the researcher explored on their hopes on what can be done and found that effective actions that can be taken by the community include spreading the knowledge of the art to the future generation.

The results also showed that the participants showed positive feedback on the acceptance and readiness to enjoy rejuvenated Chinese Opera. The participants were impressed and excited to watch rejuvenated Chinese Opera that has modern features in it as they felt that it has turned the art into a more contemporary one, out of its traditional cocoon. This is a significant finding as it shows that the Malaysian Chinese youth can accept the traditional art that has been given a breath of fresh air in its performance. When Chinese Opera is presented in a more immersive manner, it created a new experience for the young participants, and they were able to enjoy it more as compared to the traditional version. With technology and smart devices, the art can be enjoyed in a more ubiquitous setting as they do not need to wait for it to be performed only during the festive season or only in temples. This will help Chinese Opera in Malaysia to gain more exposure and be a part of important cultural heritage, as claimed before.

Overall, the majority of the participants believed and agreed that Chinese Opera in Malaysia needs to be rejuvenated and integrated with technology. Implications and the acceptance of technology were also presented. However, a larger effort has to be made to ensure that Chinese Opera is able to adapt to changes and also grow as time passes. Not only that, non-technology factors are equivalent important to help Chinese Opera to be seen as contemporary again. Chinese Opera needs to be flexible in adapting to the current entertainment needs and trends while not just focusing on technology integration itself. It is a collective effort and needed a detail planning in order to make Chinese Opera to be seen as contemporary again.

In order for this to happen, all parties need to play an active and serious role. In conclusion, the Malaysian Chinese youth is seen to be ready and eager to see the integration technology into traditional Chinese Opera performance. Chapter 7 presents a discussion of the results and offers recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **7.0 Conclusion**

Chinese Opera, in its present form, is a culmination of the impact of traditionalization to the extent that it is not seen as relevant anymore. Hence, it raises the question if technological integration could revive this art and make it to be seen as contemporary and relevant again. This research set out to explore this possibility.

As described in the earlier chapters and as has been shown in this research thus far, Chinese Opera has been seen as a traditional religious performing art by the Chinese youth in Malaysia. The Malaysian Chinese youth has shown low to no interest in the traditional Chinese Opera. Facing the competition of modern entertainment, Chinese Opera performance has significantly decreased in demand. Constantly viewed as a religious performance, Chinese Opera has then been continuously associated with the performance for the dead and the deities.

Rejuvenation with technology shows good prospect on increasing younger generation towards traditional art as study by Sugita, Setini and Anshori (2021) on the ability of digital media in reviving the Drama Gong in Indonesia. In order to revive its identity, technology integration was suggested to rejuvenate its identity into a contemporary performing art for the younger generation. Following this, the types of technology integration to help rejuvenate Malaysian



Chinese Opera were then suggested by the focus group participants. They viewed Chinese Opera as a traditional and religious performing art that was eventually traditionalized due to the way it was performed. As suggested by the researcher in the conceptual framework theory, in order to make Chinese Opera to be seen as contemporary and relevant to the Chinese youth, rejuvenation with technology and changes in other factors are strongly needed.

Chinese Opera forms an integral part of the Chinese identity. But the findings from this study indicate that it is seen as old-fashioned and irrelevant to the younger generation. Hence, this conclusion chapter provides a review of the effects and consequences of the incorporation of technology into the Chinese Opera in Malaysia to rejuvenate the art. This chapter concludes with suggestions for future study in the field of Chinese Opera rejuvenation in Malaysia. In order to keep Chinese Opera relevant, it must be rejuvenated and seen as a contemporary performing art, so as not to further traditionalize it. Modern technology needs to be integrated with traditional Chinese Opera, so that the Malaysian Chinese youth can relate and perceive Chinese Opera as a kind of a contemporary art, in hope that the identity of Chinese Opera can be rejuvenated. Chinese Opera also needs to adapt to the changing time, and necessary actions needs to be swiftly taken by all parties so that it can make a successful come back.

## **7.1 The Need for Chinese Opera in Malaysia to Rejuvenate**

Chinese Opera requires rejuvenation as it is not adapting to the current changes and needs in the entertainment industry. In other words, Chinese Opera

is seen as inappropriate and traditional because it fails to catch up with the current trends. To answer the first research question posed in this study, it was found that the identity of Chinese Opera is viewed as traditional and as a religious-related performance. With outdated storylines staged, the younger generation today fails to understand and appreciate what the performance tried to deliver to its audience as they cannot relate them to the current issues. Hence, this study found that by using technological element allows Chinese Opera to be viewed by the Chinese youth as a contemporary performing art again. A study conducted in Macau by Io and Chong (2022) showed that the acceptance towards traditional performing art such as Chinese Opera was greater among its participants aged 50 years and above, while participants below 50 showed significantly lesser interest towards the performing art. Clearly, the perception towards Chinese Opera as a traditional performing art is not just observed in Malaysia. New ideas and storylines being inculcated into the traditional Chinese Opera helps to revive its identity into a contemporary performing art. Chinese Opera that has been integrated with modern performing art features, namely through songs and movies have also brought about positive feedbacks from the audience. This supports the argument that Chinese Opera needs to adapt with the changes in current time and needs, or else it will be drowned by modernity and remain traditional.

### **7.1.1 Technology Maladaptation and Cultural Inappropriateness**

Traditional Chinese Opera has not been adaptive towards time and fulfilled the taste of the younger generation for entertainment. The inability to adapt to time has thus led to its traditionalization. Besides that, this inability has

also caused Chinese Opera to face technology maladaptation. As traditional identity is associated so strongly with Chinese Opera, it is then seen as culturally inappropriate to the Malaysian Chinese youth. Liu (2020) in his study showed that traditional performance art that are unable to adapt to modernity will lose its identity. This trend is worrying as it indicates that if traditional performance art fails to keep up with the current trends, it will be soon forgotten. This will then cause the younger generation to fail to recognize the traditional performance art. Technology helps traditional culture such as play performance and musical to regain a more contemporary identity. For example, the integration of Chinese Opera singing tunes with modern songs and tunes create a up to date feel to the younger generation, as suggested by the participants of this study.

Hence, rejuvenation through technology is indeed crucial and helpful to shift the identity and perception towards Chinese Opera to a contemporary performing art.

## **7.2 Technology as a Medium of Rejuvenation for Chinese Opera**

As discussed in Chapter 5 (p.150) of this study, technology has shown to be a potential medium for rejuvenating Chinese Opera in Malaysia. Countries such as China, Hong Kong (China) and Taiwan had been actively exploring new technologies to keep Chinese Opera relevant and these efforts have shown positive results. Hence, this study is significant in order to understand technology integration as a medium of rejuvenation for the local Chinese Opera scene. As the Chinese made up the second largest ethnic in Malaysia, it is time for everyone in the community to play an active role in keeping the tradition

alive. Even though the thoughts to incorporate technology into the conventional play may not be well received and be overwhelming to the senior performers, little do they realise they have been using technology themselves in their performance. For examples of this include the use of portable LCD screen to show the subtitles of the play to the audience as well as the use of modern lightings. As discussed in Chapter 4 of this study, such technology addition in traditional Chinese Opera performances helps the younger audience to understand the story and the dialects showcased in the performances better. As suggested by the focus group discussion participants, the use of technology devices will help them to understand and enjoy the traditional Chinese Opera performance. Chinese Opera needs a rejuvenation to give the show a contemporary identity. In order to rejuvenate a traditional performing art, performers need to be ready in order to accept the integration of technology as a medium to elevate traditional performing art to give it a new face lift so that the future generation will be able to view it as a contemporary art again.

Technology had shown positive potential to be an effective medium in helping rejuvenate Chinese Opera in Malaysia. As there are many mediums that can be used to integrate performing arts, artists and technologists need to work together to create a new experience for audiences. However, in order to preserve its identity, the fundamental elements of the Chinese Opera must be maintained to preserve its originality. Finding a new way to watch Chinese Opera does not mean that it has to be completely altered; its core features also need to be preserved so that the identity of the original performing art is upheld. From the earlier chapters, the results showed that Malaysian Chinese youths are eager to

watch and experience the rejuvenated Chinese Opera with technology. From animation to virtual reality, the Chinese youth expressed their excitement in having Chinese Opera to be integrated in these platforms. Besides that, undoubtedly, Chinese Opera performers will also need to keep up with new developments in the performing art scene. Chinese Opera performers need to consider the needs of the audience and the changes in their appreciation of performing arts. Hence, the performers will need to find various new ways to perform traditional art scene with modern values integrated in it in order to keep the traditional art relevant once again to the newer generation. Besides that, effective promotion initiatives need to be aggressively carried out to educate the community so that a positive image of traditional arts can be successfully implanted to the younger generation. As argued by Kalay et.al (2008), the use of technology and new media has received positive feedbacks in closing the gap in between traditional performing arts and the younger generation. Technology will be more accessible as time comes and this creates the exposure of the younger generation.

Hence, the integration of technology creates the opportunity for traditional arts to have the wider exposure to the younger Chinese generation in order to help them to understand and appreciate the it. Kolay (2016) has also shown in his study that technology has shown the potential of rejuvenate cultural heritage and also help to creates a new paradigm of rejuvenating Indian cultural heritage.

### **7.3 Other Changes Required to make Chinese Opera Culturally**

#### **Appropriate and Contemporary Again**

The researcher strongly suggests that the identity and perception of the Chinese Opera to be rejuvenated in order to bring its fame and success back on track again. Even though technology plays an important role in helping identity rejuvenation, other aspects also help to rejuvenate Chinese Opera. Malaysian Chinese Opera needs to be seen as an emblem and cultural representation of the Chinese cultural root. As shown in Liu's (2020) research, technology has proven to be a positive tool to help traditional heritage to gain a new perception of the audience. Besides, technology offers a more engaging experience for Chinese Opera audiences. The results of the study done by Hong and Wu (2021) highlighted the importance of using latest technology such as Augmented Reality to help promote and preserve Chinese instrumental performance to the natives as technology enhances in the interest of the individuals who are exposed to the medium of technology used. It also helps to improve the perception towards traditional performing art.

The current perception by the Chinese youth associating Chinese Opera as a religious practice and entertainment would only undermine the identity of the performing art. Hence, a drastic change in this perspective is much needed. Every party needs to play an active role in nurturing awareness of this and it should start from an early age. The Malaysian government and NGO bodies need to look at a Chinese Opera's broader identity as the potential attribute to draw visitors from other countries to appreciate the Chinese culture in Malaysia. Chinese Opera needs to be taken seriously as the symbol of Malaysian Chinese

culture to draw the attention of art lovers and also tourists who will be interested in understanding the performing art. In addition, the Chinese temples' caretaker and communities need to create active campaigns for the worshippers so that the Chinese cultural show can be reintroduced to them, beside playing an active role in promoting Chinese Opera so that young and old can enjoy and appreciate the performance. The identity of Chinese Opera needs to be moved away from the religious paradigm.

Advocation and awareness are required from an early age in order for the Chinese community to see the importance of their own culture as they first need to understand it. The understanding and importance of preserving Chinese Opera needs to be nurtured from a younger age so that they are able to understand about their cultural roots. Even though the younger generation has a lot more flexibility in selecting their entertainment, one's root must not be forgotten. Chinese Opera has been performed and practiced from generation to generation and needed to be enjoyed by the future generation as well. As traditional performing arts have been seen as old, traditional and archaic, by giving them a new breath and a new outlook through technology integration, they would be rejuvenated and thus, remain important to the younger generation. That being said, traditional performing arts need to sustain its fundamental image in spite of the changes made to the way they are performed. This is to ensure that the fundamental identity of the traditional performing arts can be still preserved in a manner that would not totally change its original form.

### **7.3.1 Designated Space for Chinese Opera Performing**

A designated space needs to be established in each state of Malaysia for the Chinese Opera troupes to gather and perform to the public. Chinese Opera should not be an exclusive performing art that is only be performed during the festive season or the Hungry Ghost festival. A designated space needs to be taken into account in creating a new experience in watching Chinese Opera. The comfort of audiences while watching the Chinese Opera is also crucial and the location must be easily accessed by the general public. Not only that, having a specific space for the performance creates an opportunity for the performers to take on apprentices who are interested in learning the performing art. Hence the cycle of the performing art will not be imbalanced, as discussed in the Circuit of Culture Theory. The Malaysian government should put aside the racial card when it comes to helping and promoting ethnic traditional arts. As a multiracial country, traditional and heritage performing arts are considered as a great way to boost the country's economy as it can attracts visitors from all over the world. Besides that, NGO bodies such as the local Chinese associations need to source donations to help build designated spaces for the Chinese Opera community. Providing a designated spaces for Chinese Opera's performers to perform and meet up will help them to have a higher chance to carry out performances other than in temples during the festive season. The researcher hopes that by doing this, the image of Chinese Opera will be enhanced again and its identity will be revived as an important performing art.



### **7.3.2 Affective and Effective Promotion**

Affective and effective promotion is needed to help restore Chinese Opera's identity. The Chinese community need to understand that this approach can help to spread the awareness to every Chinese, whether or not they are interested in the art. More effective and aggressive promotion is needed in order to keep the dying alive. The government should put more efforts in persevering traditional performing arts, regardless the of the ethnicity and cultural identity in order to make the Malaysia Chinese Opera one of its kind and to promote it to the world as part of a tourism sector's initiatives. Allocations should be put aside for the arts and heritage industry in order to help performers keep the dying art alive. In order to make sure that the promotion of Malaysian Chinese Opera is able to penetrate through the markets, various platforms should be targeted, from the printed to digital platforms to ensure that the information could be delivered to the public. School should consider turning Chinese Opera into a form of co-curricular activity or performance subject so that it can be taught to the younger generation to cultivate their interest from the early age. The online platform could serve as an effective promotion channel to promote Chinese Opera to a wider audience. With modern and interesting content, Chinese Opera will be able to attract new audiences once again. Using technology, this will provide a wider attraction to the younger audiences in understanding and appreciating the performing art once again.

### **7.4 Future of Chinese Opera in Malaysia**

Looking and understanding at the current trend and development in the Chinese Opera scene in Malaysia, a proper plan and affective initiative is indeed

needed as a wakeup call for everyone. As discussed in the previous chapters, the current performers of Chinese Opera are not performing full-time. The majority of the performers are performing out of their passion and there is lack of a proper education for those who are interested to learn the art. Hence, getting a good mentor to teach Chinese Opera is also difficult as there are not many senior performers who are willing to share their experience and accept new apprentice. Hence, by looking into a wider prospect, technology is able to play an important role in rejuvenating Chinese Opera to the youth. However, the main issue in reviving the art is first to change the perspective of the Chinese audience about Chinese Opera. The identity of the dying art as a religious performance needs to be changed. Chinese Opera is a form of art and performance that is important to the Chinese culture with its own uniqueness and it represents Chinese-ness.

The Chinese community in Malaysia need to work along with the active performing troupes and support their shows so that it can be always seen as important and relevant to them. Chinese Opera is not a performance that is just performed during the Hungry Ghost festival month and it is not a show just for supernatural beings. In order to keep the art alive, all of the parties need to play an active role in their community. Chinese schools in Malaysia should offer Chinese Opera as an co-curricular subject to be taken by the students, so that they can have an early exposure about the art form. Technology needs to be well utilized by the industry player in order to create newer and up-to-date contents to the younger generation. More Chinese Opera shows need to be played by the Chinese Opera troupes within designated spaces for the artists and performers to gather and exchange their knowledge. In order for this dying art to be revived

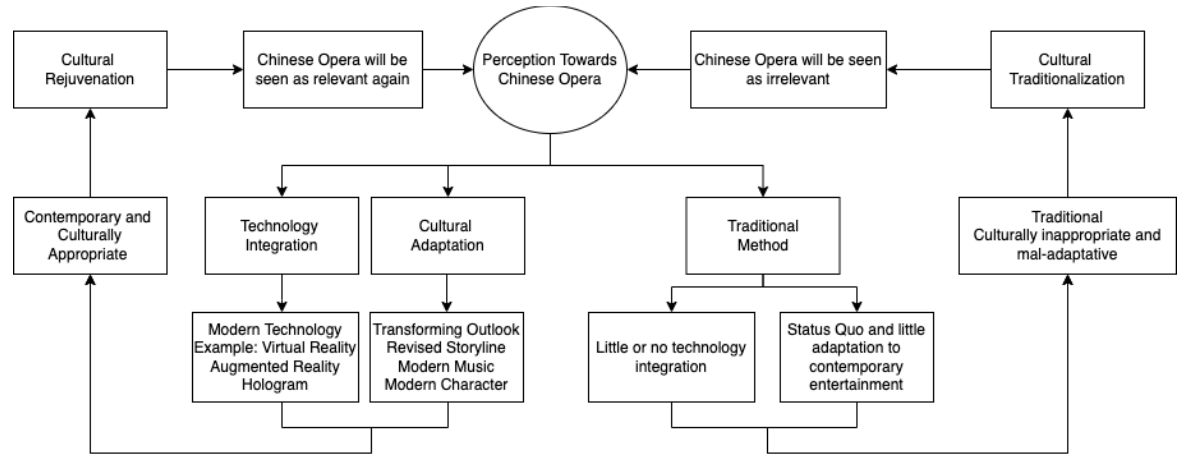
and rejuvenated again, everyone needs to play their part; if not, indeed, the future of Chinese Opera will continue to be dim and insecure.

## **7.5 Research Contribution**

Due to cultural globalization, most societies of the world are faced with a common dilemma, which is how to conserve the unique traditional cultural heritage of their ethnics and countries. This research has enabled the researcher to understand the acceptance of the Malaysian Chinese towards Chinese Opera youth via technology integration and their readiness in accepting traditional performance that has been rejuvenated. Not only that, but this study has also revealed the identity perceived by the Malaysian Chinese youth about Chinese Opera. Even though Chinese Opera is strongly viewed as a religious and traditional performance, it is indeed associated with the strong Chinese identity in the participants' mindset and viewed as a cultural practice dear to them.

As a matter of fact, Chinese Opera is indeed the symbol of Chinese culture, and it will be seen that way even in the future. However, it should not have been sidelined as just an image to the Chinese community; in fact, Chinese Opera needs to be taken seriously as a contemporary performance art. Numerous steps have been taken by UNESCO, countries and organizations as well as local government bodies to protect the intangible cultural heritage. However, no significant published work investigating the dialogues between intangible cultural, Malaysian Chinese youth and technology in Malaysia has been found by the researcher. In addition, this research explored the capability of technology

as an important medium for rejuvenating the intangible cultural heritage from the perspective of Chinese youth in Malaysia.



**Figure 7.1: Perception Towards Chinese Opera in Malaysia:  
Traditional vs. Rejuvenation Framework**

As shown in Figure 7.1, this research contributes through its findings to clarify that traditional performance such as Chinese Opera needs to be rejuvenated with technology integration to stay relevant and contemporary to the young and future generation. Technology such as virtual reality, augmented reality and hologram help to boost the interest among the Chinese youth towards the art. With this technology, the identity of Chinese Opera can be disassociated from its identity as a traditional performing art into a modern entertainment. This is important as the identity perceived by the Malaysian Chinese youth on Chinese Opera needs to be shifted from a traditional performing art to a contemporary entertainment.

The future generations will live with advanced technology and for them, information will be at their fingertips and can be searched easily. Hence, technology plays a crucial role in helping to rejuvenate traditional performing arts. Chinese Opera, being one, needs to constantly adapt to time to be view as contemporary and culturally appropriate to the younger generation. This research contributes to the knowledge of the existing theoretical framework. To keep a culture relevant, there must be a check and balance of the identity of culture, the consumption of the culture, production and regulation to keep a cultural practice significant to the ecosystem. In the case of Chinese Opera, the issue becomes graver when Chinese Opera is still performed using traditional methods, causing it to be seen as culturally inappropriate and maladaptive towards the modern world. Hence, every of this aspect will need to be constantly checked and balanced because when any of this aspect is not fulfilled, the ecosystem of a traditional performance art such as the Chinese Opera will be affected and traditionalization will happen.

## **7.6 Future Research**

Accomplishing the rejuvenation of Chinese Opera to restore its reputation as a medium of entertainment is not a simple task that can be achieved overnight. As a matter of fact, almost every conventional rejuvenation step of traditional performing arts requires meticulous and thoughtful preparation. Every party have a significant role to play, from the Chinese Opera troupes to the viewers and government bodies. More research on the Chinese Opera in Malaysia are needed to understand the gap that stops the Chinese youth from understanding and appreciating Chinese Opera. This study looks at the identity

of the Chinese Opera as perceived by young Chinese Malaysians and their acceptance of the rejuvenation of Chinese performing arts with technology and it has received positive feedbacks.

Future studies should examine in more nuanced ways the relationship between Malaysian Chinese youth to the use of technology devices in the learning of Chinese Opera. A more rigorous study can be carried out in order to make their production more engaging and interesting from the viewpoint of Chinese Opera performers and their acceptance of technology integration.

Participants in this research were gathered from three different states in Malaysia that has the highest Chinese population. Hence, for future studies, the researcher recommends gaining a greater understanding among participants from other states for richer results. More in-depth studies need to be carried out in order to understand the plan of the Malaysian government and the NGO bodies to retain Chinese Opera in Malaysia.

In addition, for the future research, an awareness from the older generation who are still watching Chinese Opera as entertainment needs to be examined in terms of their acceptance of the Chinese Opera's integration with technology. Acceptance by the elder audiences will contribute to the analysis to see if the rejuvenated Chinese Opera is suitable to them compared to the younger generation. Opinions from the performers, artist and scholars should also be encouraged to get a richer insight of the acceptance of rejuvenated Chinese Opera.

## **7.7 Conclusion of the Research**

In conclusion, all of the three research questions posed by the researcher for this study have been answered and the three objectives had been achieved. The data shown from this study supported the conceptual framework and the theory proposed in this study, namely that rejuvenation is needed for Chinese Opera in order to keep it relevant and that it will be viewed as a contemporary art. If Chinese Opera were performed in the traditional way, traditionalization will happen and this will cause the art to fall into the traditional realm and be forgotten by the Chinese youth. The art of Chinese Opera is viewed as a very dearly performance art to the researcher as it holds a strong identity to the Chinese descendant.

This chapter began with a discussion of the results of the analysis, and then outlined the consequences for different audiences, performing troupes etc.. As suggested earlier in this study, the social construction of a heritage depends on how the society constructs its identity. If the heritage continues to have the conventional means of maintaining it, and if it is preserved in a traditional manner, it can contribute to cultural traditionalization. As it does not adapt to the demand change, the legacy of culture will slowly be forgotten. On the other hand, a heritage that has been combined with technology will be enhanced and given importance through modern values. In this way, the traditional heritage is seen as something relatable and trendy to the youth.

In order to remain important and significant in this period and in the future, Chinese Opera requires audiences, customers and practitioners to work

closely together to keep it alive in order to be seen as a relevant performing art. In this era, technology will certainly be able to serve as a medium of rejuvenation in order to make the traditional art contemporary again. In this chapter, the researcher had also made some suggestions for future research on the rejuvenation and preparation for the acceptance of the Chinese Opera and further insights to be explored about this issue.

These investigations will be key to the promotion and improvement of the integration of technology in Chinese Opera. Newer technologies should have an important part to play in order to be experimental. Traditional art forms should be revived in order to keep the old ones relevant and give the future generation a chance to enjoy them. Learning about other cultures will raise people's awareness to preserve their own culture and value others. A more inclusive plan involving technology and non-technology to rejuvenate Chinese Opera in Malaysia is needed. In this respect, Malaysia as a multi-cultural country has to develop a more effective framework to promote and preserve the traditional and cultural heritage of all the ethnics of its people. For the future, more studies on how to properly revive and safeguard intangible traditional culture are needed to ensure that our future generation is able to experience their cultural heritage that is in need of revitalization. It is our duty to safeguard the beautiful cultural root so that the next generation will still be able to witness the performing art in a live form.

In conclusion, various factors lead to the lack of appreciation of Chinese Opera among the Malaysian Chinese youth which include: 1) Dialect used, 2)



Old performing style, 3) Stagnant/Classical storylines, 4) Environment of the surrounding performance space/No proper performance space, 5) Old and unknown/unpopular performers, 6) Heavy makeup, 7) Lack of exposure to the performing art as there is no regulation to promote the art, and 8) Religious performance as it is usually performed in temple. All of these factors contribute to the decline of the Chinese Opera today as it is viewed as irrelevant and outdated. By identifying all these factors, this research hopes to better understand the predicament facing the Chinese Opera in Malaysia to understand better on how to tackle the current situation faced by the dying art.

As discussed in the previous chapters, Chinese Opera needs to be adapted into a new performing platform because this is what the current society is using nowadays. The inability to adapt causes Chinese Opera to be displaced and no longer viewed as a form of entertainment, causing its traditionalized and seen only as a religious performance. As Chinese Opera possessed the flexibility to be integrated with technology, this research shows that it indeed helps to promote Chinese Opera to the younger generation when it is fused with modern and contemporary features. The Chinese youth are able to relate to the performing art and view it as a contemporary art and trendy entertainment.

Technology has been proven to play an important role to bridge the gap between the traditional performing art and to the Chinese youth so it can be seen as a contemporary performing art once again and slowly regain its identity as a once highly looked upon Chinese cultural performing art. Besides relying solely onto technology as a medium of rejuvenation in this case, government and NGO

bodies also need to play an active role in order to promote and keep the tradition alive.

All of these parties need to work closely to understand what is needed to help the performing troupes to promote the dying art while engaging technology as a way to promote it to a wider audience. Chinese Opera needs an urgent revamp with a proper planning so that it can stay relevant to the younger generation. Promotion initiatives and knowledge transfer are needed in order to expose the traditional art to the Chinese youth so that they understand what Chinese Opera represents for the Chinese culture. From the results obtained and shown in this research, it supports that technology integration is able to help elevate Chinese Opera to be seen as a contemporary performing art.

In order to keep Chinese Opera to be viewed as a relevant and contemporary performing art again, it will need adapt with the changes of time so that it will not be forgotten by the younger generation. A formal education of Chinese Opera performance needs to be planned and implemented so that the knowledge transfer can flows smoothly to the younger generation. Official syllabus can be introduced to schools and university to attracts more younger talent to learn and practice Chinese Opera. To ensure the future Chinese generation in Malaysia gets to enjoy this beautiful performing art once again, rejuvenation with technology integration is indeed needed. Chinese Opera needs to constantly stay relevant and be seen as a contemporary performing art to the Chinese youth and community so that it can have the chance to be viewed as a cultural identity that represents the Chinese ethnic once again.

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## APPENDIX A

# REJUVENATING CHINESE OPERA THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON MALAYSIAN CHINESE YOUTH ACCEPTANCE

### Project Information Statement/Letter of Invitation

To Whom It May Concern,

Dear Sir/Madam/Mr/Miss,

#### **Invitation for participation in study**

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. If you choose to participate, please follow the instructions given to you. If you decide not to participate in this survey, you may withdraw at any time and you will not be penalized. The objective of this study is to understand the acceptance of Malaysian Chinese youth of integrating technology into Chinese Opera.

With your permission parts of the study will be audio-visual recorded to facilitate the collection of information for analysis.

All information you provide is considered completely for research purpose only. Your name will not appear in any publication or report resulting from this study. However,

with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Only researchers associated with this project will have access.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact us through email or phone as indicated below.

Thank you.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in light grey ink, appearing to read 'Ang Kok Yew'.

Ang Kok Yew

PhD Candidate

Faculty of Arts and Social Science

**011-1619 0384**

angky@utar.edu.my

## **CONSENT FORM**

By signing this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the researcher(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

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I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by

Ang Kok Yew, of the Faculty of Arts and Social Science at the Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Kampar, Selangor. This study is under the supervision of Assoc. Prof Dr Cheah Paik Kin and Assoc. Prof Dr Chin Yee Mun.

I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my participation to be audiovisual recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses and actions.

I am also aware that excerpts from the study may be included in the publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researchers.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

YES       NO

I agree to have my interview audio-visual recorded.

YES       NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

YES       NO

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print)

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print)

Witness Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Phase 1 – Focus Group Discussion – Semi-Structured Questions**

#### **Topic 1 Identity of Chinese Opera**

1. Are you aware of the existence of Chinese Opera in Malaysia? (When is the last time you watch Chinese Opera? With who? Where?)
2. How do you view the Malaysia Chinese Opera? Explain
3. Do you face any challenges in watching Chinese Opera (language, exposure, religion)?

(Aligned to answer RQ 1)

#### **Topic 2 Significances of Chinese Opera**

4. As a Chinese, do you think Chinese Opera is important to you? Why?
5. Are you aware of the existence of Chinese Opera in Malaysia?

(Aligned to answer RQ 2)

#### **Topic 3 Production of Chinese Opera**

6. What will you think if technology is integrated into traditional performing art such as Chinese Opera?
7. Do you think by integrating technology into Chinese Opera, this can make it cotemporary again for the youth? Why?
8. Have you seen any Chinese Opera performance that is integrated with technology? If yes, can you share the details?

(Aligned to answer RQ 3)



#### **Topic 4 Regulation of Chinese Opera**

9. Do you think there is sufficient enough of promotion done by the Chinese NGO, and relevant parties (temples, association) to promote Chinese Opera? Why?

(Aligned to answer RQ 1)

#### **Topic 5 Consumption of Chinese Opera**

10. How often do you get to watch Chinese Opera? If yes, when is the last time you watch Chinese Opera?

(Aligned to answer RQ 1)

## APPENDIX C

### Phase 2 – Discussion Questions

Discussion Question	
How do you feel after watching the short story of this traditional Chinese Opera? Share your thoughts.	How do you feel after watching the short story of this technology integrated Chinese Opera? Share your thoughts.
Do you understand the story and the content of the performance?	After integrated with technology, do you understand the story and content of the performance?

I have checked the validity and verified that the research instruments and findings are in-line with the research objectives and are significant in answering all the research questions.



DR. KWOK WAI JING (JOYCE)  
Assistant Professor  
Advertising Program  
Xiamen University Malaysia

(Dr. Kwok Wai Jing)  
Assistant Professor  
Advertising Department  
Xiamen University of Malaysia

## APPENDIX D

### Participant's Detail

No	Name	Age	Sex	Occupation	Remarks
R1	Amelia Quah	22	F	Pre-school teacher	
R2	Ee Shih Lin	23	F	Pre-School teacher	
R3	Yi Foong	22	F	Pre-school teacher	Chinese Convert
R4	Wen Kay	22	F	Pre-school teacher	
R5	Kyleen	22	F	Pre-school teacher	
R6	Yun Joe	26	M	Banker	
R7	Yoke Xiang	25	M	Property agent	
R8	Celeste Lim	26	F	Designer	
R9	Amanda	24	F	University student	
R10	Katharine Ting Zhen Ling	30	F	Lecturer	
R11	Wong Zhi Da	24	M	3D Modeler	
R12	Eugene Ch'ng	23	M	3D Modeler	
R13	Li Woon	23	F	Fresh graduate	

R14	Zhen Hao	23	M	Clerk	
R15	Xin Tong	23	F	Designer	
R16	Bottle Tan	23	M	Management	
R17	Lee Daniel	27	M	Banker	
R18	Tan Hui Shing	29	F	Property agent	
R19	Mok Zhi Xuan	30	M	Engineer	
R20	Teng Jia Pei	29	F	Teacher	
R21	Ku Zheng Ling	30	M	Teacher	
R22	Olivia Ting	34	F	Designer	
R23	Shu Hui	25	F	Beautician	
R24	Sujaa	30	M	Engineer	
R25	Hannah	22	F	University student	
R26	Muhammad Alias bin Muhammad Elias Leong	23	M	University student	Chinese Muslim
R27	Ooi Yoke Xiang	23	M	University student	
R28	Koh Wan Yee	23	F	University student	
R29	Sok Yan Ying	22	F	University student	
R30	Koli Ching	23	F	University student	

<b>R31</b>	<b>Cindy Tan</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>University student</b>	
<b>R32</b>	<b>Ong Shin Ying</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Designer</b>	
<b>R33</b>	<b>Lim Yee Yin</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Human Resource</b>	
<b>R34</b>	<b>Chin Jing Ni</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>University student</b>	
<b>R35</b>	<b>Lim Siau Tong</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>University student</b>	
<b>R36</b>	<b>Ku Ying Ying</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>University student</b>	
<b>R37</b>	<b>Patrick Tan</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Engineer</b>	
<b>R38</b>	<b>Caroline</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Fresh graduate</b>	
<b>R39</b>	<b>Lee Ke Xin</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Engineer</b>	
<b>R40</b>	<b>Chong Zu Lin</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>University student</b>	
<b>R41</b>	<b>Hoh Jee Fung</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Management</b>	
<b>R42</b>	<b>Tung Chin Hao</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Production</b>	
<b>R43</b>	<b>Janet Leong</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Management</b>	
<b>R44</b>	<b>Kevin Chan</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Lecturer</b>	
<b>R45</b>	<b>Jason Mah</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Fresh Graduate</b>	
<b>R46</b>	<b>Rayner Chu</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Finance</b>	

## APPENDIX E

### Ethical Clearance Form



**UNIVERSITI TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN**

Wholly Owned by UTAR Education Foundation (Company No. 578227-M)

Re: U/SERC/139/2020

23 September 2020

Dr Chin Yee Mun  
Department of General Studies  
Faculty of Creative Industries  
Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman  
Jalan Sungai Long  
Bandar Sungai Long  
43000 Kajang, Selangor

Dear Dr Chin,

#### Ethical Approval For Research Project/Protocol

We refer to your application for ethical approval for your research project (PhD student's project) and are pleased to inform you that your application has been approved under expedited review.

The details of your research project are as follows:

<b>Research Title</b>	Rejuvenating Chinese Opera Through the Integration of Technology: A Qualitative Study on Malaysian Chinese Youth
<b>Investigator(s)</b>	Dr Chin Yee Mun Ang Kok Yew (UTAR Postgraduate Student)
<b>Research Area</b>	Social Sciences
<b>Research Location</b>	Pulau Pinang; Johor; Selangor
<b>No of Participants</b>	Minimum 45 participants (Age: 18 - 40)
<b>Research Costs</b>	Self-funded
<b>Approval Validity</b>	23 September 2020 - 22 September 2021

The conduct of this research is subject to the following:

- (1) The participants' informed consent be obtained prior to the commencement of the research;
- (2) Confidentiality of participants' personal data must be maintained; and
- (3) Compliance with procedures set out in related policies of UTAR such as the UTAR Research Ethics and Code of Conduct, Code of Practice for Research Involving Humans and other related policies/guidelines.

**Kampar Campus** : Jalan Universiti, Bandar Barat, 31900 Kampar, Perak Darul Ridzuan, Malaysia  
Tel: (605) 468 8888 Fax: (605) 466 1313  
**Sungai Long Campus** : Jalan Sungai Long, Bandar Sungai Long, Cheras, 43000 Kajang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia  
Tel: (603) 9086 0288 Fax: (603) 9019 8868  
Website: www.utar.edu.my



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Please be informed that in accordance with Personal Data Protection Act 2010 ("PDPA")  
, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman ("UTAR") is hereby

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## APPENDIX F

### Example Interview Verbatim

#### Focus Group Discussion 2

Researcher: Okay so this is focus group 2 for my research. Alright I ask them to introduce themselves.

Chong Zu Lin : Hello my name is Chong Zu Lin

Ku Ying Ying : Hello my name is Ku Ying Ying

Patrick: I'm Patrick

Caroline: And Caroline

Ke Xin : And I'm Ke Xin

Researcher: Alright, so hi guys thank you so much for participating in This research focus group interview. So I just now have actually brief you earlier on my research on Chinese opera integration with technology. Okay so without further do, I will ask you the first question first. Now, are you aware of the existence of Chinese opera in Malaysia and if you aware of, when the last time you watch Chinese opera?

Caroline : For me, when you talk about of Chinese opera, the first thing I thought of is those people who wear very beautiful traditional clothes, as well as those very, um, wearing nice makeup la like they do perform on the stage or that is a very nice

Researcher: No? Not aware?



Patrick : No..

Researcher: Okay. How about you?

Ke Xin : Yes

Researcher: Yes?

Kexin : Yes: This Chinese new year

Researcher: Oh, you watch this with anyone?

Ke Xin : With my family

Researcher: Your family. Where is it?

Ke Xin : Muar

Researcher: In Muar? So it's a small village is it?

Ke Xin : Yes

Ying Ying : Never

Researcher: Never?

Zhu Lin : Yes

Researcher: When?

Zhu Lin : Few years ago

Researcher: Do you remember you watch with who?

Zhu Lin : Family

Researcher: Your family too

Researcher: Okay, now, So you do, some of you do realise existence Chinese Opera in Malaysia. So how do you feel the existence of it? What do you think about current Chinese operas trends in Malaysia? Is it okay to you or totally know nothing about it?

Ying Ying : I totally not know about..

Researcher: Not know about?

Zhu Lin : A little bit..

Researcher: Like what?

Zhu Lin : Like what they must do before, they stage, how they run the Character and after the stage they should do what.

Researcher: Wow, where did you get the information from?

Zhu Lin : Umm, my lecturer. outside my training troops, and my family and my dad tells me.

Researcher: Oh okay from your parents la. Okay how about others?

Ke Xin: Actually not but I always hear my grandmother always said this is very nice, this drama very nice.

Researcher: Okay

Patrick : No. Actually I didn't know there is such thing in Malaysia I though it just in China

Researcher: Okay. So okay for those who have watch Chinese opera before. What is the main challenges that you faces like languages that you don't understand or is it not enough exposure you get before. languages, is it the one of the factors of that some of you says too hard to understand.

Ying Ying: I think it's the languages. Because I really do not understand what they are talking about.

Researcher: Okay

Patrick : I think the design the stage too costly

Researcher: Costly. Okay

Caroline : For me i think, for Chinese opera is so boring

Researcher: Too boring?

Caroline : Too hot

Researcher: Too hot?

Caroline : And too crowded

Researcher: And You don't like audiences

Caroline : Yes

Zhu Lin : I don't understand what are they talked so I feel boring

Researcher: So, Most of you actually have the language problem because they are singing right?

All : Yes

Researcher: So as a Chinese person here. Do you think that Chinese opera is very important to us as Chinese people as traditional arts and roots?

Patrick : Yes, because it's an identity of Chinese people.

Researcher : Okay

Ying Ying : Yes

Researcher: Yes?

Zhu Lin : Yes

Caroline : Yes

Ke Xin : Yes

Researcher: Okay, thank you. Now, move to the question that I brief you earlier. That I did tell you some of my ideas in integrating the technology into Chinese opera without changing the aesthetics of the traditional arts itself. Do you think it will make the Chinese opera more relevant and more interesting to watch?

Ke Xin: Yes. I think is very attractive for younger generation

Researcher: Okay. How about others?

Ying Ying : I think, maybe yes. Because is, now is technology era

Researcher: Okay so you think it is playable?

Zhu Lin : Yeah

Researcher: Okay. How about you?

Patrick : Yes

Researcher: Yes too. Now, aside of what I suggested do you think any technology that you feel like can bring in into the technology.. the integration Chinese opera that you feel like, “Okay, maybe if I put this into Chinese opera it will make more interesting for the Chinese youth to watch”.

Ke Xin : No idea

Researcher: No idea

Patrick : They can put a HD screen behind the stage so when they move the screen also change the background.

Researcher: Okay, so interactivity la that you want. How about others?

Ying Ying : Yes

Zhu Lin : For the person more, don't understand the title, the languages and can put the subtitles in video and people can know about it.

Researcher: Oh okay

Caroline : No idea

Patrick : I think you can put the subtitles if you put too much of technology  
I think it will changes the traditional

Researcher: Alright. So not too much but is just nice

Ke Xin : Yes

Researcher: Alright so personally have you watch Chinese opera that hav  
been integrated with technology before?

Ying Ying : No

Researcher: So everyone says no here and now this is also one of the very  
important part that do you think the government, the NGO is  
doing enough to preserve this art, you know.. even from the truth  
is it enough to promotion to promote Chinese opera to ask young  
people to know that there is a existence of this. Do you think is  
enough?

Patrick : I don't think so. I think they already forgetting so hard.

Researcher: Okay

Caroline : I think they don't provide much more of info and they don't too  
much focus on the Chinese celebrations.

Researcher: Other celebrations one? So not the Chinese celebrations?

Zhu Lin : Yes

Researcher: How about others? Not enough?

Patrick : No

Researcher: What would you like to see from the government and the NGO to put more into this to promote the Chinese opera what kind of idea that you have if you are able to suggest to any? What do you think they can do?

Ke Xin : Maybe organize the society in during the secondary school.

Researcher: Oh okay, so you mean start from school itself

Ke Xin : Yes

Researcher: Okay, how about others?

Ying Ying : Some art performing, Chinese arts performing. And government can combine all kind of Chinese performing together and present the show

Researcher: Okay. How about others? What do you think?

Caroline : No idea..

Researcher: No idea?

Ke Xin : Maybe during Chinese new year, let says gathered all before Chinese New Year to perform the Chinese traditions.

Researcher: So, to have some more exposure to the Chinese community that this are still existing in Malaysia right?

Ke Xin : Yes

Researcher: Okay, so do you want add anything for this interview or do you have any questions?

All : No

Researcher: Thank you so much for participating for this interview.



## Focus Group 5

Researcher: Hi, this is focus group 5. Okay so I will ask them, to introduce themselves.

Shi Lin : My name is Shi Lin

Kyleen : My name is Kyleen

Amelia Quah : My name is Amelia Quah

Yi Foong: My name is Yi Foong

Wen Kay : And my name is Wen Kay

Researcher: So okay thank you for today for the participation for this focus group. So earlier that, before this interview I already start to brief you a bit of my research about the Chinese opera identity for my PHD. So without further due I will ask you some of the interview question that I want to know from you guys. So everyone kind of you participate and top at the same time

Amelia : Okay

Yi Foong : Okay

Researcher: So the first thing first, is are you aware of the existent of Chinese Opera in Malaysia and if you aware, when the last time that you watch and where?

Amelia : So I know about Chinese opera and the last time I watch in Astro with my family around like 4 years ago

Researcher: Okay. So any recent experience With the Chinese opera? No?

Amelia : No.

Researcher: How about others?

Yi Foong: I think I also know what is Chinese opera But I think last time I watch Chinese opera since I was still young maybe around secondary school or primary School. I forgot already

Researcher: Okay How about others?

Wen Kay : I think I know the existence of it but I don't recall any memory of watching it before. But I got to the TV

Researcher: Okay.

Shi Lin : Only know it through TV I never go...

Researcher: Experience it?

Kyleen : Yeah

Researcher: The real one?

Kyleen : Yeah

Kyleen : Yeah, I also I never Experience but, pass my... the Chinese opera

Researcher: Performance?

Kyleen : Yeah performance.

Researcher: In temple?

Kyleen : In temple yeah

Researcher: Okay. So if you been given a chance to watch the whole performance Chinese opera

Amelia : I might be would try to experience it because I never... Before that I never know is the content of the Chinese opera maybe I can go to experience and try to understand what is the content that their try to perform. But... I think I will choose more modern entertainment

Researcher: Okay, How about others?

Shi Lin: For me I don't think I want to go because I feel like the storyline I don't understand and quiet boring for me la.

Researcher: Okay

Yi Foong: I don't think I will go because I have no interests in Chinese Opera.

Researcher: Okay

Wen Kay : I think I will go. Since I didn't see in the real life for like for a like face to face,

Researcher: Alright

Wen Kay : So I think I will go take a look and..... seen it

Yi Foong : Yeah I think I will also try one time but if it doesn't suit my liking then I don't know. Maybe not go there after that la. But I think first time

Researcher: Okay so, move on to the next question, How do you view the Chinese Malaysian opera Is it a form of entertainment or just a form of traditional Chinese arts to you.

Amelia : I think it's a traditional arts for me because they think perform like to frequently to us so maybe younger generation not so...  
“To be honest, I will prefer more up-to-date entertainment such as K-Pop and Hollywood movies because it is more interesting. Chinese Opera to me is boring because the storyline and dialect used in the performance.”

Shi Lin : Yeah yeah

Researcher: How about others?

Yi Foong : I think, I think, I think both la, I think It can be tradition But it also can be put into a very nice entertainment that people nowadays can understand what and appreciate.

Researcher: Ok do you want to add anything? No? Alright, so actually what is the main Challenges that you face during the last time when you see the Chinese opera? What are the main challenges to you? Like language...

Yi Foong : Language...

Researcher: Language? Others? Other than that?

Amelia : I don't understand the content.

Researcher: You don't understand the content?

Amelia : It was like when they just like “Hiyaaaaaa”, sing, I don't really understand what they talking about.

Yi Foong : For me about the Characters I don't know what they are acting as a what?

Researcher: Okay

Wen Kay : I think for me it's like I really didn't travel to certain place to watch this kind of thing because it's not as frequent and convenience everyday mostly like in more popular place to perform.

Researcher: Alright so, because all of us is Chinese Here, so do you think that as a Chinese Opera is important to youth?

All : Yeah, Important.

Researcher: Why?

Amelia : Because I think this can be assume and as assume to be as our traditional culture. So if this this culture is suddenly disappear then might be the next generation, might be don't know how what is this and they will ask a lot also we also don't know how to explain to our... generation.

Researcher: Okay, How about others?

Wen Kay : We think also, I think also important we need to secure it for the younger generation

Researcher: Amelia what is your thought?

Shih Lin : Yeah, I think, I think it's important, cause like, a... This thing has been brought down by... Of course like from the China and then it brings until here, so if you don't preserve traditions in the future No more know about this kind thing exist, because there's no one that want to share with this kind of thing in future.

Researcher: Okay, So as I mentioned earlier to you is my research is actually looking on integrating technology into Chinese opera forms without actually spoiling the aesthetic of original performance so do you think that this can make the Chinese opera contemporary again ?

Amelia : I think technology as a big part of the world now so I think if is integrated in this kind of thing, teenagers, people nowadays will appreciate more because everyone I mostly on their phone and the Internet is completely involved in our.. And so I think like, to my generation I think some of the thing that we can do is like a technology now this have is this like VR thing and so many tools kind of Place where people can Actually submerge themselves in a feel like Living inside That kind of traditional Chinese Opera thing. I think people would love and understand the arts

Researcher: How about others?

Kyleen : Yeah, right, I said just now I think we are can integrate with the Chinese opera so that younger generation can know, understand better and a play

Researcher: Relate? Relate to them self.

Kyleen : Yes, relate to themselves but into characters.. Of the thing

Researcher: Okay how about others? What else you want to see in the contemporary Chinese opera

Yi Foong : There will be good to in subtitle because since we don't understand and the language if there are subtitle yeah so we can understand more and appreciate more.

Researcher: Okay. Will you like to see in a form of game yeah... so that you can yeah....

Yi Foong: Yeah yeah games yeah

Researcher: Okay so telling per say about that. Have you any experience are about Chinese opera that is have you watch or experience of Chinese opera that have been integrated with technology before?

Amelia : No

Kyleen : No

Researcher: No? Not in Malaysia?

Kyleen : No

Researcher: Alright okay thank you so moving on to the next question do you think that sufficient enough promo done by the Chinese NGO or government to promote Chinese opera in Malaysia? What do you think?

Amelia : I think no

Researcher: Why?

Wen Kay : Because I didn't see so much about it before yeah so I think they still need to put more this thing in this area, promoting to....

Researcher: So you think it's important?

Shih Lin : Yeah I think it's important

Researcher: How about others?

Amelia : Yeah I don't think there's enough advertising so cause it's like I don't think you would know nothing unless your friend or your party circle group is interested in Chinese opera then you might be able to hear it yeah thats what I think

Kyleen : No I don't really heard or see the advertisement about the Chinese opera

Researcher: So you, all of you agree that there's not enough marketing and promotion done

All : Yeah

Researcher: What would you suggest to the NGO Chinese and government to do to promote more?

Amelia : Maybe they can do some advertisement about the Chinese opera or like, you know through news or maybe your internet everyone like surfing the Internet right now



Researcher: Okay, how about others thoughts?

Wen Kay : Perhaps they can ask those Chinese opera people go to school to perform or introduce them so that like interest can be train from young so that if the children interested they will learn so it won't be lost

Researcher: Alright okay so thank you so much do you want to add anything? Or do you want to ask anything about this research?

Amelia : I think this research is quiet good topic as like a people rarely touch incorporating technology very good idea.

Researcher: Okay not so much right? Okay thank you so much.

### **Focus Group 3**

Researcher: Alright so this is focus group 3. Okay, so can you please introduce yourself first?

Yoke Xiang : Hello, my name is Yoke Xiang

Elias : My name is Elias

Cindy : My name is Cindy

Yan Ying : My name is Yan Ying

Researcher: Yoke Xiang, alright. So, okay, I think, just now earlier I have already inform you about this research and without any further due, I would ask you the first question, so any both of you are actually aware of the existence of Chinese Opera in Malaysia and if you aware when is your last time that you watch Chinese opera and with who?

Yoke Xiang : I aware it since my grandma generation, with when I was alert, I remember when I was 8, 4. I see my grandmother watching the Chinese opera movie in Astro and I still that is quite interested because the way it performing is quite different to the normal drama and also the slang is bit during the performance is also different but after that my last aware about the Chinese opera is about 2012 in a movie but I, I already forgot the name beside that there was slightly go through about an introduce the Chinese opera.

Researcher: Okay, so have you actually watch any live Chinese opera show before?

Yan Ying: Not really

Researcher: Not really? So it's all in TV

Yan Ying: Yeah

Researcher: How about you Cindy ?

Cindy : Yes, when my..

Researcher: What?

..... ( line break)

Researcher: So, you watch it during ghost festival. Do you actually finish watching it?

Cindy : Just passed by

Researcher: So just passed by, and you aware of the existence la.

Cindy : I didn't know that Malaysia actually has the Chinese Opera kind of community

Researcher: So do you mean to share where mostly you watch it which state Selangor or other state or in your hometown?

Yan Ying : I only watch it in Penang.

Researcher: Penang

Yan Ying: I return home from UTAR, I on the way going back home, I on the hungry ghost festival. I saw the Chinese Opera before.

Researcher: But, it's also out of Selangor... Okay So, would you actually like to watch Chinese opera if given chances?

Cindy : I think no because for, because when seeing this we already as.. we watch the normal drama compare to the Chinese opera and the Chinese opera is hidden and not planted in our memory since our childhood

Researcher: So you don't have the very clear idea about it, okay. Elias how about you?

Elias : No, because we already exposed to like a Hollywood movie, and this... a bit old fashioned

Researcher: Old fashioned to you. Okay so how do you actually feel the Malaysian Chinese opera seen now? Do you know anyone, your

friends is performing or you know?

Yoke Xiang: I don't think so

Researcher: Totally no

All : Yeah, totally no

Researcher: So, I would like to ask you. Do you considered Chinese opera as a form of entertainment or is just a forms of a traditional Chinese arts?

Yan Ying : I think both, both also... I also agree that, because I seeing the drama for the... before that, the before Chinese drama they already got the... mentioned and also interview that Chinese opera is their... basically is their elderly entertainment, from the ancient-ish

Yoke Xiang : Earlier.. forms traditional Chinese for me but not entertainment because this Chinese opera does not entertain me.

Researcher: Okay. Alright, it does not entertain you. So, would you mind to share with me that actually well if you watch any last time or pass by and you tell me where you watch with your grandma. The main challenges that you face is watching Chinese opera is you don't understand the languages, you don't like the music or anything that will feel like doesn't attract you, so do you mind to share?

Elias : The major problem is a storyline, I also don't get what the of them singing performing during the Chinese opera.

Researcher: So this is the main problem. Other than that?

Cindy : Other than that, I think the background story also don't say because their background story is I think is quite old and...

Researcher: Okay, do you like the costume, the make up?

Yan Ying : I think it's quite interesting of their costume because from now they..only in that Chinese opera and unique costume.

Researcher: Okay, so Yoke Xiang?

Yoke Xiang : I don't like the make up because the make-up is too thick and also the way they speaking the tunes is very different from what....

Researcher: So you don't understand?

Yoke Xiang : Umm, yeah

Researcher: Alright, okay. Then moving to our next questions is as the Chinese person do you think that Chinese opera is important for the Chinese community, Chinese roots?

Cindy : I think it's important because since the trends of nowadays.. got like past through one generation to one generation and until now they still, they still performing I think there is some, something connection between the traditional too and also Chinese opera.. and could be link to each other.

Researcher: Okay, Alright. Elias?

Elias : In my opinion is no, because youngster nowadays they talk about this Chinese opera in whatever place, whatever they are...

Researcher: I mean, wait ,you usually talk about this right? And you talk about more on Hollywood, sing.. alright, okay.. more modern arts la? Okay.

Elias : Yeah modern art, yeah.

Researcher: Now, then comes to the earlier thing that I brief you that for my research is to integrated the technology into the Chinese opera, So, would you think that this can make it more contemporary gain and then if you given choice for what type of technology do you think is the most suitable, technology to be integrated into Chinese opera? What do you want to see?

Yoke Xiang : From my opinion, I think that we can pull the trends Chinese opera inside the like game because nowadays youngster, young generation and also old generation like to play game, I think we can use a game feature and combine with the technology... and combine with Chinese opera and like make something that have Chinese opera elements inside it or like maybe you can.. like pull some character that have the background of the Chinese opera la.

With these has interest about that, and will really read through about their background story.

Researcher: Okay. So, Cindy what do you think?

Cindy : Hmm, same to Elias..

Researcher: Same?

Cindy : Yeah.

Researcher: So, okay let say if I going to integrates some VR and AR features to Chinese Opera. Do you think it will make you feel interested to watch it? Or just to at least learn about that arts? VR and AR

Yoke Xiang : I think in VR important, because that you know when the VR... do you can make some game and something like you can follow the story and when you are the Chinese opera character... like that and you can scroll them you can make the Chinese opera more easily to understand compare to the old, old generation, it just performing in the stage like that.

Researcher: Alright, and how?

Elias : You can create the, this Chinese opera into the VR and AR game into the genre of the music game, like the music game, because quite lots, a large number of player playing the music game.

Researcher: Okay,

Cindy : I think there might be interest in this.

Researcher: Hmm, so do you think that Idea of actually integrating Chinese opera will going to help to make Chinese opera be well known again and to, at least being penetrate to the youth are Chinese markets in Malaysia? do you think you can actually interested again?

Yan Ying : I don't think so, because nowadays all the youngster they also like something that some unique or something new but after... then they will lose their interest but then.. follow back other new...

- Researcher: Trends?
- Yan Ying : Trends yeah.
- Researcher: Okay, so, if the Chinese opera follow new trends like we change the story to something more in-trends, will think you will watch it?
- Cindy : If you have many pattern. Many pattern of youth can being to do
- Researcher: Okay, Alright, So, then comes to this question is do you think is it sufficient, is there enough sufficient, sorry I mean, enough promotion done by government by Malaysia and also NGO in Malaysia to promote this dying culture to the community and eventually to the world. What do you think?
- Elias : First I see, our Malaysia is like more as many, many tourism and so many the tourist... I don't think that government sufficient like except to help to, because they also need to help other Malays, and Indian and other people...
- Researcher: So you don't think they are not doing.. not enough?
- Yoke Xiang : Not enough, since our country got multi-races not Malay, Chinese, Indian and other more so, not enough.
- Researcher: So, then thought about the Chinese NGO do you think they do enough like those association of Teochew, association of Hokkien.... Do you think they doing enough promotion to promote Chinese opera?
- Yan Ying : I don't think so because if they do enough more then, and then we should have some like knowledge about Chinese opera and also information about them.
- Researcher: Okay, alright, okay la.
- Researcher: Actually have you personally watch any Chinese opera that is has integrated with technology before?
- Cindy : No

Elias :            So far have play the game called Wang Ser Lao...

Researcher: .....

Elias :            They like crossover with their character... to crossover with Chinese opera character and make some new skin and also the background music, the background story inside that.

Researcher:      So do you think it actually interest you on this method?

Elias :            Yeah. Then I will spend my time to watch about their background story

Researcher:      Okay

Elias :            And some synopsis of their character.

Researcher:      Alright. So, now just now going back to the question that I say if we going to do it in AR and VR you think is going to help for promote this Chinese opera to our youth? Yes?

Yoke Xiang :     Yes. But I don't think is a long terms.

Researcher:      Just for a while la.

Yoke Xiang:      Yeah

Researcher:      But at least it's going to penetrate through their...

Yoke Xiang :     Yeah

Researcher:      Okay, so any question you want to ask me about this research or anything you want to add on?

Researcher:      No?

Researcher:      No, okay thank you.



## APPENDIX G

### Pre and Post Test Transcribe

#### Pre and post-test 1

Researcher: Okay. Thank you guys for joining for the second part of the discussion. Right.  
So, uh, the first phase, I already did it with you guys so today I'm going to show you, uh, that some modern and traditional Chinese opera, and I need your thought by this time around we won't having, who wants to go first or whatever. If you have a thought you can first just directly tell me, okay? I need to tell my... tell your name also. For this time around, so maybe you can start from Kyleen first.

Kyleen: Okay, hi, I'm Kyleen.

Amelia: Hi, my name is Amelia.

Yi Foong: Hi my name is Yi Foong

Wen Kay: Hi, I'm Wen Kay

Shilin : Hi, I'm Shilin.

Researcher: Okay. Thank you guys for joining. So, uh, I don't want to waste any more time, uh, uh, as I will show you the traditional one first, and then you can share with me your thought la ah. You'll be able to see the screen. Right.

Amelia: Yes.

Researcher: Okay. So I'm pretty sure if we watch Chinese opera, this is those that, I'm pretty sure you be able to see in temple and as, as can see the settings in the temple. Right? So then we have other type of traditional, which is like that. So he punched you. Okay. This is the old traditional, traditional Chinese opera that you see. Is this Chinese opera to you?

Amelia: Yes

Kyleen: Yes, it is.

Researcher: So this is the normal one that we watch. Right. And after you watch it. Uh, is it the still the same, uh, sharing that you shared with me that you don't understand what they are singing? You

don't know what their performing. And you don't know what's their content about.

Yi Foong: The second one I can understand with the subtitle.

Researcher: Yeah because that one they have been pre edited it. So if you watch live without the subtitles, but what I show you just now the original.

Kyleen: The first one?

Researcher: Yeah. This is the scenario that we always face. We will be able to watch the Chinese opera.

Amelia: No

Kyleen: Yeah, not really.

Researcher: Okay. And then I would like to understand also, are you interested in those like backgrounds. Does it interest you?

Amelia: Yes, I think it's quite colorful.

Researcher: Colourful la

Yi Foong: To me it's not

Researcher: Why ah?

Yi Foong: Because it's like, the people that to use like to pray the person who died already.

Researcher: Okay. Understand. So that's the thing with the old Chinese opera and what else do you think that if you are at this type of settings ah, you'd be comfortable?

Amelia: No

Kyleen: No.

Researcher: Amelia?

Amelia: No, because plastic chair won't be comfortable ah to be honest

Researcher: Plastic chair won't be comfortable ah. One more.

Amelia: And also the stage, or you think, or you think about it. If the old people they need to look up and then the chair at the bottom, the stage is a bit difficult la quite strange to the neck. Even for a

young person, I think is really quite tough. So for all these old people that want to appreciate Chinese opera, you will be more 'san fu(hard)' and difficult for them.

Researcher: Wen Kay you want to share something with us?

Wen Kay: Maybe it will be hot ah.

Researcher: Hot ah. Well, so because most of their roof is those, uh, iron roof. So if it's not raining, then it's very hot. And if it's raining, it's all wet.

Wen Kay: And then somehow if it raining, it got the most people.

Researcher: So you guys don't like this type la?

Wen Kay: Yeah.

Researcher: All right. So I think, um, when you watch this original Chinese opera, you would just maybe take a photo and then just leave.

Yi Foong: Won't even take a photo.

Researcher: Wont' even take the photo. Okay then, I want to show you some of the more contemporary and modern Chinese opera. The first one I'm going to share is, uh, has the technology of hologram and then the character also, they change it because if you can compare to the old, character like this. you don't know who is she also right? So now if we have this type style of new characters and hologram technology, so I can show you. Alright. So this is the new technology, the hologram technology. Are you more interested to what she's like? And then do you think the character is more modern to you?

Amelia: The character is more anime a bit la.

Researcher: So you prefer this type la.

Amelia: I think it's catches the eyes lorh. And get some attention.

Researcher: So this is actually a hologram, which means this is the projected 3D object, right? So this is the modern technology that also, you guys prefer the type, right?

Amelia: Yeah

Yi Fong: Yeah

Kyleen: Yeah

Researcher: Now, then just now we compared to the old, we don't understand what they singing, So then now we have integrated orchestra and also Chinese opera. Okay. So you see the difference between this type and the traditional type is we don't have all the traditional instrument. Do you think it's better? Okay. You get to enjoy this type of a show more?

Amelia: For me, I think with musical instrument is better

Researcher: You don't like the ching chong ching chong ching chong..

Amelia: For musical instrument. It has a more. So the tone is pleasing to the ears, so it's not so noisy.

Researcher: And, uh, can you guys imagine that if we actually watched this type of show right, then you'd be in the designated hall la. So it won't be at the temple will be more correctable.

Kyleen: True.

Researcher: True ah. So I want to ask you. Is this the Chinese opera to you?

Amelia: Yes.

Yi Foong: Because of the costume.

Wen Kay: Hmm, because of the costume.

Researcher: the way that she's sing?

Amelia: Yeah, yup also

Kyleen: Yeah

Yi Foong: In the traditional way.

Researcher: Okay. Right. Okay. Then maybe we can move on. This type the modern Chinese, they don't have the heavy make up. Alright, but they have the way of their performing. I want to show you first. We go to the singing. Okay, is this still Chinese opera to you?

Yi Foong: No, it is not.

Researcher: Why Yi Fong?

Yi Foong: Because the costume don't look like traditional one like colourful and then grand. This one is more like normal people would wear.

Researcher: Okay, how about others?

Shilin : And for me its like a old people drama art

Researcher: Its drama art for Shilin. Okay, how about others?

Kyleen: Same thought with Shiling ah, because its more to drama rather than Chinese opera and then I also agree with Yi Fong that without the costume, for me, it doesn't look like Chinese opera.

Researcher: Okay, points taken. Okay we move on to the next video. Okay now. We always talk about, we don't understand the content. Okay. We don't know what they playing about. So, if Chinese opera actually inspired by the Shakespeares, the hamlets. Okay. So I want you to see first. Hamlets ah. I show you a more bit fun. Okay so this is actually Chinese opera, but the story, the change to Hamlet, a very famous piece from Shakespeare, right? If you watch this stuff more, not so conventional story. You been more enjoying this part of Chinese opera to you.

Amelia: Of course, I would personally like a Shakespeare. So I think it's quite, I mean, I think it's interesting that they, you know, take in a Western sort of perspective and put a Chinese perspective on it. Because I think for me, if I say it's always Chinese opera is based on a traditional Chinese stuff, I don't think, if you keep on repeating it, I think it would be quite boring. But if, let's say this one, Shakespeare's Hamlet, which I know I heard of, I think it quite interesting.

Researcher: Okay. How about Kyleen?

Kyleen: for myself. I would prefer traditional Chinese story la.

Researcher: Like, can you name me one that you really liked?

Kyleen: Like a journey to the west, those kind.

Researcher: They still play like Yam Sam Poi . Do you will like it?

Kyleen: Yeah yeah.

Researcher: Or like, Madam white snake, Pai Se Zuan

Kyleen: Pai Se Zuan yeah, I'm fine with that.

Researcher: Okay, how about others? Do you like to watch traditional story or you still want to have a hybrid between new storyline and thought

Wen Kay: I think hybrid will be okay la because not that boring

Researcher: I move on the next one. Okay. Then we have these, I'm not sure I show you before but I want to let you experience the virtual of Chinese opera. Okay, so this actually a 360 degree features that can look around and then they have subtitle. And also information of their playing. And then have a chance to look around. Now if I let you enjoy this type of 360 degrees features. Do you enjoy it more? At home.

Kyleen: Not really though. Like you have to concentrate on the show or you want to look around surrounding.

Researcher: But you don't have to move to moving mah. Maybe just wants to see enough,

Kyleen: Maybe will la because this is how last time people watch Chinese opera I will enjoy la.

Researcher: This is called the tea house.

Kyleen: Yeah, I would. I think I will enjoy this kind of thing la, but at home I'm not sure.

Researcher: But I want to focus more on its like this kind of stuff that you'd be more interested.

Kyleen: It's quite interesting. You can look around and see how that's a thing. Your phone, what do you think.

Amelia: It just a little bit attracted me more than the traditional ones.

Researcher: Shilin, what is your thoughts?

Shilin: Uh, so my thought is, uh, if I will. In this setting, I will not focus more la but look around.

Researcher: So its actually triggered your curiosity

Shilin: Yeah yeah

Researcher: Right. Then I move on to the next one. Okay so this is a form type of more modern Chinese opera we have not like the one that's going to be, see, this is all hand painted like Yi Fong shared just now its like offspring for the dead like the paper. Now have more modern setting which has 3D background. You

can see the background is changing. Okay having this type of interactive background will it make it better compared to the traditional one

Kyleen: Yup, it's very interesting.

Wen Kay: It looks grand

Researcher: It looks grand ah? see the settings

Kyleen: It attract people more ah, like their really in that scene what they doing if the background is still the same all the time, even when they change the storyline it also you wouldn't feel it that much la. I don't know how to explain it. Yeah.

Researcher: Okay, Amelia you want to add anything yeah.

Amelia: I think same as Kyleen see. Doesn't look like so no base like this is like a bigger stage. Not like just doesn't focus on the people acting only. It's like a whole backdrop that you can see.

Researcher: Okay. Now I want to share this. Um, you know, Madame white snake like Shilin share, which is very popular in the Chinese folklore. So this piece is, has been inspired by it. By then they named me as mama White snake and that the in the English but is still traditional Chinese opera to me, but I can look to see, and then we can see the setting that they perform it in a bigger more bigger hall and sure they have aircond inside. Let me show you. okay Will this style Chinese opera attract you?

Amelia: To me, it attract me because I understand the language.

Researcher: So when you start to understand the language and there's no barrier anymore to you.

Amelia: Correct. Then I don't, at least my focus can be on them because I can just listen to them talk rather than if I have to read or you know, ask someone what they saying, it's easier for me to understand.

Researcher: I see how about others? What's your thoughts?

Yi Foong: It attract me more than the most the traditional one but it, but this one I won't interested as much as the previous one as much as we can see in terms of what.

Researcher: Okay, Kyleen?

Kyleen: It attract me ah but a I still prefer the one that with changing background this one...

Researcher: this one didn't move la

Kyleen: Yeah yeah

Researcher: Okay. Now then we come into this, uh designate the place, right. To watch Chinese opera. So if we have a place that is specific to watch Chinese opera like this one, this, this just conceptual idea la. They want to build in form. So yeah. So its a space to watch Chinese opera it's much more bigger, more spacious, with modern charge but of course I think aesthetic... and it's more convenient to enter of course with aircon. Will you go and watch?

Amelia: Yes

Kyleen: Yeah

Researcher: Why?

Amelia: the building looks very bougie, atas, high end like that. so I think I will give it a shot. Like quite nice la.

Researcher: So Amelia you compared this one and this type.

Amelia: hmmm, the more modern one.

Kyleen: Yeah agree with Amelia. The modern one.

Researcher: Shinlin?

Shinlin: Yeah yeah, I prefer this

Amelia: look at the hall and the seats, easier to look at things.

Researcher: Okay. Just now I share with you guys, so many of these stuff more, modern Chinese opera right with technology, songs changers, with language hybrid with technology background. Do you think the authenticity of Chinese opera is still in there?

Amelia: I think yes, because no matter how much you change something or make it more modern, either way, they will still adapt from the original thing of how Chinese opera is. So I think the element has to be there. Otherwise. They will not dare to call themselves Chinese opera.

Researcher: Okay, Amelia have a very good point here, what type of element is been there for you to identify it as the Chinese opera



Amelia: To me. I think it's, uh, the singing. Because Chinese opera has a rare unique singing. And another thing is, uh. Different sort of like graphics, like, I mean you can tell what kind of graphics is Chinese opera and then you look at how the way they portray their face, it's like a heavy makeup face is very different from Western Broadways. Whereas western broadways that people actually look quite normal. But for Chinese opera you can see that they are really trying to put on a show the ethically, because their face is really covered with makeup. Yeah. To me its like that.

Researcher: Those headgears look prettiest ah?

Amelia: I think it's prettier, but I don't think I'm wearing it

Researcher: Okay, do you think is Chinese opera. All those is Chinese opera to you? The modern one?

Wen Kay: Yeah, I think is still the same.

Researcher: the same. So. Um, I think for the younger generation, like you, you prefer something that I showed you earlier just now, the modern one. Yeah. Can you guys agree on that? Anyone has different thought?

Kyleen: No, I prefer that one.

Researcher: So if you go back and watch your site. What do you feel if we keep on still do this?

Amelia: I think you will lose your audience or you lose the amount of people that is watching Chinese opera because you have never, you never innovated into this growing world of technology. Oh yeah. You will definitely lose your viewers, cause you need to keep it upcoming. Interesting. So that people will, you know, want to know and learn more. If you put new ideas in that, Oh, okay, okay. Yeah.

Researcher: Kyleen?

Kyleen: Hmm, like Amelia said you will lose your audience or that and once you know that that's an effective place to enjoy opera, you will really want to go back. Well, younger generation really want to go back to location like this. Yeah.

Researcher: Wen Kay?

Wen Kay: Yeah. Uh, I think. Yeah. And lose interests for most of people because now got a lot of alternative activities. Not only watching this mah can watch videos with MV videos or playing

games, why the young people will use their time to watch this since it's very boring and not fun at all.

Researcher: So you guys prefer the modern one that I showed to you la. Okay. Then the last part I want to show you like when Wen Kay shared about songs, right? So it has a hybrid between Chinese opera and modern song like this small people that know you. So you guys prefer this type I mean do you guys accept Chinese opera being hybridized with the modern touch of songs?

Amelia: Yeah

Kyleen: Yeah

Researcher: Can ah, so you like it with wow,. But is this still Chinese opera to you the way she sing just now?

Amelia: Yes

Wen Kay: Yes

Kyleen: Yes the way she sing yes.

Researcher: Yi Fong, do you want to add anything?

Yi Foong: Uh just now I want to say the lyric quite played important role because see the lyrics just now quite related to ourselves then it will be more interesting la. And they still, I think still considered under the Chinese opera traditional one.

Researcher: Okay so but with the modern touch la you guys like this la. Okay thank you so much guys I think we have a really very good sharing.

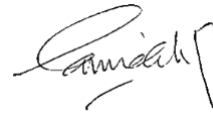
## APPENDIX H

### Proofreading Verification

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This is to verify that the following document has been proofread for English language, grammar, punctuation, spelling and overall style to meet the required standards of academic writing.

Document Type	<b>Thesis</b>
Level	<b>Postgraduate/ PhD</b>
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Author	<b>Ts. Simon Ang</b> <b>Faculty of Arts &amp; Social Science - Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman</b>
Date	<b>6 April 2022</b>
Proofreader	<b>Asst. Prof. Dr. Hamidah Mohamad</b> <b>(PhD in Education, MA (English Language Studies)</b> <b>School of Education &amp; Humanities,</b> <b>UNIRAZAK</b>



THANK YOU

**APPENDIX I**  
**PUBLICATION LIST**