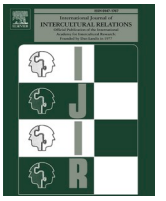
International Journal of Intercultural Relations 108 (2025) 102254



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

International Journal of Intercultural Relations

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ijintrel





News, networks, and nostalgia: Examining the role of Hong Kong media and diaspora communities in identity preservation and integration

Boris Lok-Fai Pun [a], Jeremy Ko [b], Anthony Y.H. Fung [c,d], Chun Kai Leung [e,f,g,*]

[a] Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong
[b] Center for Comparative and International Studies, ETH Zurich, Switzerland
[c] School of Journalism and Communication, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong
[d] Faculty of Social Science, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, Hong Kong
[e] Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong
[f] Global Society and Sustainability Lab, Faculty of Social Sciences, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong
[g] Master of Family Wealth Management Programme, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Cultural identity negotiation
Media consumption
Diaspora engagement
Acculturation and integration
Intercultural relations

ABSTRACT

This study examines how Hong Kong migrants in the United Kingdom negotiate cultural identity through media habits and diaspora networks. Drawing on a 2023 survey of 1237 respondents, the analysis shows that stronger Hong Kong identity predicts greater engagement with diaspora communities and higher consumption of Hong Kong news. These behaviors, in turn, are associated with lower adoption of British cultural identity. Regression and mediation models reveal two key mechanisms: first, ethnic news media reinforces cultural boundaries and limits acculturation; second, active and emotional ties to diaspora organizations deepen cultural maintenance while constraining host-society identification. Interestingly, entertainment media had no measurable effect. The total effect of Hong Kong identity on British identity is largely explained by these two mediating pathways rather than by direct association alone. These findings suggest that identity preservation and cultural integration are not opposing forces but linked through institutional and behavioral practices. The study contributes to the literature on intercultural relations by clarifying how media and networks jointly structure identity outcomes in migrant contexts.

Introduction

The recent surge in emigration from Hong Kong reflects more than just the movement of people; it signals a complex process of negotiating identity, belonging, and intercultural relations in response to changing political landscapes. Since 2019, political uncertainty and social unrest have pushed many Hongkongers to seek stability and autonomy abroad. In 2022, Hong Kong recorded a net outflow of 60,000 residents (Census and Statistics Department, 2023). Among these emigrants, the United Kingdom (UK) has become a popular destination, facilitated by the British National Overseas (BNO) visa scheme, which offers a pathway to permanent residency. Approximately 105,200 Hongkongers have already relocated to the UK under the BNO program, with projections estimating 300,000 arrivals within five years (Donaldson, 2021; Westbrook, 2023). While migration creates new opportunities, it also presents challenges

* Correspondence to: University of Hong Kong, Room 221, May Hall, Hong Kong.
E-mail address: ckleungz@hku.hk (C.K. Leung).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2025.102254
Received 21 October 2024; Received in revised form 10 June 2025; Accepted 16 July 2025
Available online 22 July 2025
0147-1767/© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

for migrants, who must reconcile their Hong Kong identity with the cultural expectations of the host society.

Migration involves more than physical relocation—it requires individuals to reconfigure their sense of identity and belonging within unfamiliar social and political environments. Migrants must find ways to maintain connections to their cultural roots while adapting to the norms of the host country. For Hong Kong migrants in the UK, media consumption and engagement with diaspora communities play crucial roles in navigating these cultural shifts. These practices are part of a broader process known as cultural conservation, in which migrants attempt to preserve their original cultural identities while navigating the pressures of acculturation (Koinova, 2016).

A historical perspective helps illustrate how Hongkongers have long faced identity challenges during migration. In the 1970s, migration from Mainland China and Vietnam introduced new cultural influences on Hong Kong, creating tensions and opportunities for cultural integration (Chun, 2019; Ma & Fung, 1999). In the 1990s, another wave of emigration coincided with the handover of Hong Kong's sovereignty to China, sparking emotional resistance among locals to efforts at re-sinicization (Ma & Fung, 2007). Identity struggles persisted after the 2008 Beijing Olympics, with many Hongkongers feeling caught between competing cultural narratives—one tied to their local identity and another tied to Chinese nationalism (Ma et al., 2009). These historical patterns highlight the ongoing relevance of cultural identity for migrants, as they strive to preserve their sense of self in foreign contexts.

Today's wave of migration raises similar questions about how Hongkongers maintain and reinforce their cultural identity in the UK. Their engagement with Hong Kong media becomes key strategies in this identity negotiation. However, as media theories (for instance, media selective exposure (Stroud, 2008) and Use and Gratification (Katz et al., 1973)) suggested, the preference of media consumption under the audience's limited time in daily life represents how and what consumed media contents weigh in their mind: consuming the ethnic media content represents their continuity of their cultural practices, to fulfil the emptiness of their social needs due to the lack of social bonding and support as the "beginners in a new place". Such cultural practice also reflects how immigrants define and construct their specific narrative in their multi-layered identity and sense of belonging (McAdams & McLean, 2013). For instance, while media consumption helps migrants stay connected to their origins, it can also reinforce cultural boundaries, limiting opportunities for meaningful intercultural engagement (Georgiou, 2006). The reliance on ethnic media, such as Hong Kong news platforms which have been justified its narrative influence on identification as Hongkongers (Chan, et al., 2022), may also strengthen a sense of community among migrants, and simultaneously the risks creating divisions between them and the host society. Similar rationale shall be also shown in the Hong Kong immigrant's engagement with the diasporic communities in UK.

Such discussion has been widely raised in the migration studies under the topic of diasporic media, referring to ethnocultural media produced by and for immigrants and refugees from the same ethnocultural origin (Ahmed & Veronis, 2020), in any form and by any (technological) means (Georgiou, 2005, 2013). While diasporic media serve as a double edge sword facilitating the articulation of identities and interests that contribute to diasporic formation, it also preserves cultural diversity, enhances immigrant's solidarity and visibility (Bailey et al., 2007; Georgiou, 2013) that suggest the essentialization of ethnic identities and cultural differences in public dialogue (Sreberny, 2005). Therefore, diasporic media always centers on the dialectical debate between inclusion and exclusion, and the discussion on Hong Kong immigrant shall provide a novel case study to the diasporic media study given to the specific societal conditional change in Hong Kong (i.e., Fong (2022).

While different scholars, for instance Lee and Tse (2024), have developed various theoretical implication about the interaction of Hong Kong youth with the diasporic information sources and domestic (Hong Kong news) information sources, this study shall supplement the academic notion and present how ethnocultural media narratives consumption could be also the core of the Hong Kong immigrants in their change of attitude, perception and identity. It is believed that this study shall contribute to the literature on intercultural relations and diasporic identity formation by examining how cultural preservation practices—particularly through media consumption and diaspora engagement—affect migrants' ability to adopt the cultural identity of the host society. While previous work has emphasized the role of ethnic media in maintaining cultural identity, less is known about how these same practices may hinder acculturation. Theoretically, this study refines the concept of cultural hybridity by tracing not just the blending of cultural elements, but the conditional resistance migrants exhibit toward host identity acquisition when cultural preservation mechanisms are strong. The study thus offers a model of identity negotiation that incorporates both agency (individual preferences and practices) and structure (diaspora networks, media ecosystems, and immigration regimes).

This study explores the interplay between cultural identity, media consumption, and diaspora engagement among Hong Kong migrants in the UK. Specifically, it examines two key elements: (1) the role of Hong Kong media consumption in sustaining cultural identity, and (2) the potential association of diaspora organizations in fostering belonging and community engagement. By analyzing these factors, the study sheds light on how migrants negotiate their identities within a foreign context—balancing the desire to preserve cultural heritage with the need to integrate into the host society. By engaging both psychological and sociological theories of identity, it extends beyond binary models of assimilation versus separation and provides a more relational understanding of how transnational migrants navigate dual cultural identities.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews relevant literature on cultural identity, media consumption, and diaspora engagement, drawing on key theories such as cultural hybridity, diasporic nationalism, and intercultural communication. Section 3 outlines the methodology, including survey design, sampling strategy, key variables, and analytical methods used to examine the association between cultural identity, media consumption, and acculturation among Hong Kong migrants. Section 4 presents the results of the study, highlighting both descriptive patterns in media consumption and regression analyses that explore the interplay between diaspora engagement, cultural preservation, and integration. Finally, Section 5 discusses the practical and theoretical implications of the findings, offering insights into how cultural identity shapes migrant experiences and outlining recommendations for policymakers and community organizations to foster more inclusive intercultural relations. The paper concludes by suggesting avenues for future research to further explore these dynamics across different migration contexts.

Literature review and hypotheses

Theoretical analysis

Cultural identity is not a static or innate attribute but a socially constructed and historically contingent process. Individuals form identities through symbolic affiliations, collective memories, and everyday practices, often negotiated in the context of competing cultural narratives (Hall, 1989; Giddens, 1991). For migrants, identity work becomes especially salient, as relocation severs or reconfigures the spatial and social coordinates that anchor cultural meaning. The question of "who I am" is reshaped by the question of "where I now live"—and under what conditions.

In contemporary migration contexts, cultural identity emerges not only from individual agency but also from structural embeddedness. Diasporic communities, media infrastructures, state policies, and social hierarchies all condition how migrants maintain or transform their affiliations. From this perspective, identity is a relational achievement—something negotiated through repeated interactions within and across cultural boundaries (Kim, 2007).

Transnationalism and digital connectivity have further complicated these dynamics. Migrants today can remain intimately connected to their place of origin through digital platforms, curated media environments, and online diaspora networks (Page, 2011; Straubhaar, 2008). These channels make it possible to sustain cultural identity across distance, but they also raise questions about selective exposure, echo chambers, and symbolic enclosure (Georgiou, 2006; Chan et al., 2022). The concept of diasporic identity captures these layered and dynamic affiliations. It refers to the condition of belonging that is both situated and dispersed—rooted in collective memory, oriented toward a homeland, but enacted in a new and often unfamiliar environment (Tsagarousianou & Retis, 2019; Cohen, 2019). Diasporic identity is not necessarily assimilative or oppositional—it can be hybrid, ambivalent, or situationally adaptive. Yet, in many cases, it is also structured by inequality. Critical scholars have emphasized how identity formation unfolds in contact zones— asymmetrical spaces where cultural negotiation is shaped by unequal power, language hierarchies, and public legitimacy (Pratt, 1991; Bhabha, 1994).

Media and diaspora networks operate as dual scaffolds for these identity processes. Media consumption is not merely informational—it carries symbolic significance. Ethnic media reinforces shared values, commemorates origin histories, and amplifies group narratives (Fong, 2010; Somani & Guo, 2018). In doing so, it both affirms cultural belonging and limits exposure to host-society frames. Similarly, diaspora networks serve as both support systems and symbolic communities. They offer social capital and emotional anchoring but also produce in-group boundaries that can disincentivize external engagement (Robinson, 2009; Kuo & Roysircar, 2004). This study situates itself within this broader literature on identity negotiation by asking how Hong Kong migrants in the UK manage competing cultural affiliations through engagement with two institutional forms: media and diaspora organizations. It builds on recent work on post-2019 Hong Kong migration, which suggests that political disillusionment, affective displacement, and media reorientation has intensified the urgency of cultural preservation (Chan et al., 2022; Lee, 2023a, 2023b). In this context, cultural identity is not just carried—it is actively performed, defended, and reproduced through selective engagement with cultural infrastructures.

Against this backdrop, this study tests a series of hypotheses about how identity associated with behavior, and how those behaviors in turn shape host-society integration. The analysis distinguishes between types of media (news vs. entertainment), dimensions of diaspora engagement (behavioral vs. emotional), and forms of influence (direct vs. mediated). This framework allows for a more granular assessment of identity dynamics, avoiding overly simplistic binaries of assimilation vs. resistance.

Cultural identity as a driver of cultural engagement

Cultural identity is not merely a self-classification; it is also a performative practice shaped by routine behaviors and symbolic actions. Migrants maintain a sense of belonging by engaging in culturally resonant activities—what they read, watch, participate in, or emotionally attach to. These practices make identity both socially legible and experientially meaningful (Butler, 1990; Jenkins, 2004). For those navigating unfamiliar host societies, the need to reaffirm origin identity often intensifies, transforming ordinary habits into deliberate acts of preservation and differentiation.

A key arena where performative identity is manifested is the realm of diaspora community participation. Engagement in advocacy groups, religious activities, cultural events, or informal support networks not only fosters solidarity but also marks symbolic distinctions between the origin and host cultures. These actions anchor continuity in times of dislocation and reflect a broader investment in communal memory and rituals (Brubaker, 2005; Jaeger and Mykletun, 2013).

- **H1a**: A stronger Hong Kong cultural identity is associated with higher levels of participation in diaspora activities.

  Beyond behavior, emotional alignment also plays a crucial role. Migrants may feel deeply connected to their ethnic communities even without active participation. This imagined solidarity signals an internalized sense of cultural belonging, anchored more in affect than behavior (Anderson, 1983; Tsagarousianou, 2004).
- **H1b**: A stronger Hong Kong cultural identity is associated with greater emotional closeness to diaspora communities.

  Selective media consumption is another domain where cultural identity is reinforced. Migrants with strong identification with Hong Kong are more likely to engage with homeland media, especially news, which can serve as a symbolic bridge to the past and a resistance to assimilation (Georgiou, 2006; Fong, 2010). News media can reinforce political and social narratives tied to the origin culture and inhibit the adoption of host-country identities.

- **H2a**: Greater consumption of Hong Kong news media is associated with a lower likelihood of adopting a British cultural identity.

  In contrast, entertainment content—such as movies and TV shows—tends to be more emotionally diffuse. While familiar in tone and aesthetic, it does not usually carry the same ideological or political salience as news. Consumption may serve nostalgic or comfort-seeking purposes rather than forming strong cultural boundaries (Naficy, 2001; Tsai, 2010).
- **H2c**: Greater consumption of Hong Kong entertainment content is associated with a lower likelihood of adopting a British cultural identity, though the magnitude of the effect is expected to be smaller than that of news consumption.

  Beyond media, participation in diaspora networks—both behavioral and affective—can shape how migrants interact with the host society. Co-ethnic networks may offer support but also insulate migrants from broader social integration by reinforcing parallel systems of belonging (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Waldinger, 2001).
- **H3a**: Greater actual diaspora engagement is associated with a lower likelihood of adopting a British cultural identity.
- **H3c:** Greater perceived diaspora affinity is associated with a lower likelihood of adopting a British cultural identity.

Drawing from theories of narrative identity and selective exposure, migrants' media preferences are not passive; they actively shape self-understanding and social boundaries. By dedicating time to homeland content, migrants reduce exposure to host-country media, which can limit cultural adaptation. Ethnocultural media—including local news, entertainment, and diasporic engagement—therefore serve as important mediators in the identity negotiation process.

- **H2b**: The negative association between Hong Kong cultural identity and British cultural identity is mediated by greater consumption of Hong Kong news.

- **H2d**: The negative association between Hong Kong cultural identity and British cultural identity is mediated by greater consumption of Hong Kong entertainment content.
- **H3b**: The negative association between Hong Kong cultural identity and British cultural identity is mediated by higher actual participation in diaspora activities.
- **H3d**: The negative association between Hong Kong cultural identity and British cultural identity is mediated by stronger perceived emotional affinity with the Hong Kong diaspora.

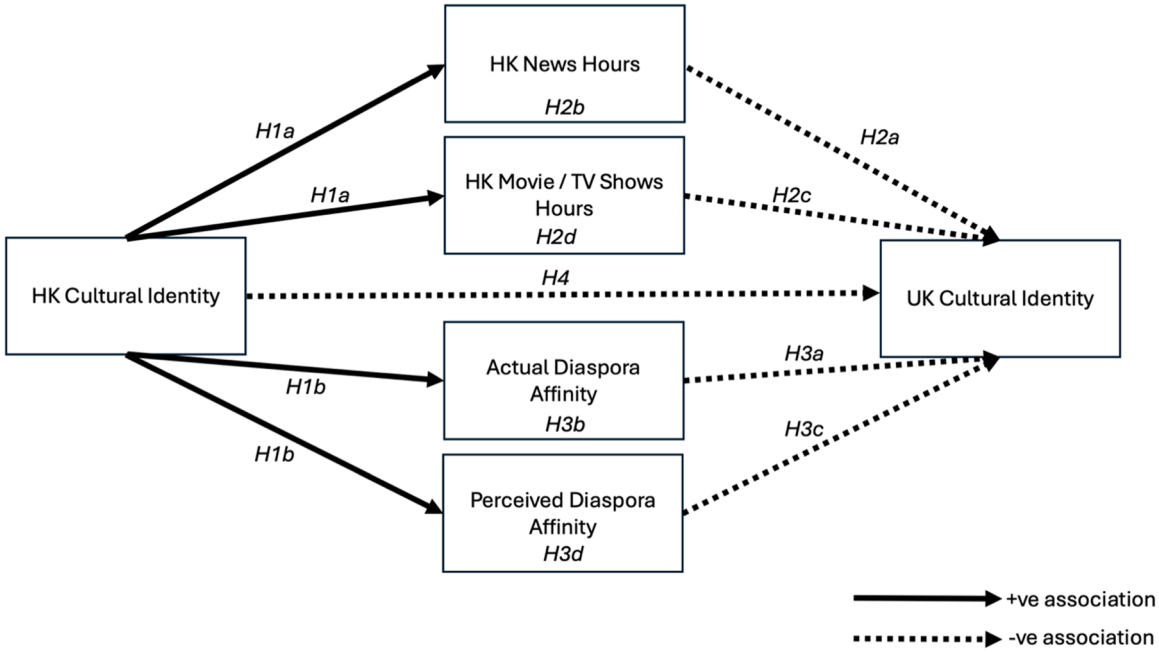


Fig. 1. Conceptual Model: The Association of Hong Kong Cultural Identity on Media Use and Diaspora Engagement, and Their Effects on British Cultural Identity. *Notes: This conceptual model proposes that Hong Kong cultural identity is positively associated with both media consumption (measured as HK News Hours and HK Movie/TV Shows Hours; H1a) and diaspora engagement (measured as Actual Diaspora Affinity and Perceived Diaspora Affinity; H1b). These four pathways are modeled as mediators of the association between Hong Kong and UK cultural identity. News and entertainment media are each hypothesized to be negatively associated with British cultural identity (H2a, H2c), and the mediation of these association is tested through HK News Hours (H2b) and HK Movie/TV Shows Hours (H2d). Similarly, both actual and perceived diaspora affinity are expected to be negatively associated with British cultural identity (H3a, H3c), and the mediation of these association is tested through Actual Diaspora Affinity (H3b) and Perceived Diaspora Affinity (H3d). The dashed line from Hong Kong to British cultural identity (H4) represents a potential residual direct association that may remain after accounting for mediation.*

Cultural identity may exert a direct influence on acculturation outcomes. Migrants who identify strongly as "Hongkonger" rather than "British-Hongkonger" may exhibit lower openness to bicultural integration. This oppositional identity can function as a psychological barrier to adopting host-country cultural norms (Zhang et al., 2018).

- **H4**: A stronger Hong Kong cultural identity is directly associated with lower levels of British cultural identity.

In addition to the direct and indirect effects described above, this study specifically tests the mediating roles of four key pathways—consumption of Hong Kong news, consumption of Hong Kong movie/TV shows, actual diaspora engagement, and perceived diaspora affinity—in the association between Hong Kong cultural identity in Hong Kong and British cultural identity in the UK. Fig. 1 visualizes these mediation hypotheses.

Methodology

Survey implementation

This study employed an online survey targeting UK-based Hong Kong migrants, conducted between August and November 2023. The survey included items capturing cultural identity, media consumption, diaspora engagement, and key demographic and socioeconomic indicators. Respondents answered a mix of single-choice, Likert-scale, and open-ended items. A full list of question wordings and answer options is provided in Appendix Table A1.

The survey yielded 1237 valid, anonymized responses, representing approximately 1 % of the Hong Kong diasporic population in the UK. The survey was distributed through diasporic community organizations, cultural events, and snowball sampling, which allowed participants to share the survey within their networks. Given the practical challenges of accessing minority communities through conventional sampling, snowball sampling effectively captured participants actively engaged in diaspora activities. However, this sampling method introduces potential biases by over-representing individuals with stronger connections to diaspora networks, thereby excluding more marginalized or less engaged migrants.

These limitations reflect the structural inequalities within diaspora communities, where not all members have equal access to resources or community support. To address this bias, the study employed regional fixed effects in the regression model to account for possible concentration of respondents in specific areas of the UK. These fixed effects help mitigate regional differences that could potentially be associated media consumption and engagement with diaspora activities, ensuring a more nuanced analysis of identity negotiation.

Key variables and analysis

The survey captured respondents' cultural identities in both Hong Kong and the UK using ordinal measures. For Hong Kong cultural identity, responses ranged from 1 (identifying as Chinese) to 5 (identifying as Hongkonger only), consistent with prior studies measuring local versus national identity (Ma & Fung, 2007; Wong et al., 2021). British cultural identity was similarly measured on a scale from 1 (Hongkonger or Chinese only) to 5 (British only), aligning with established frameworks for assessing host and ethnic identity (Drydakis, 2012; Zhang et al., 2018).

To assess media consumption habits, respondents reported the average number of hours per week spent watching Hong Kong news and films or TV shows. Media consumption serves not only as an indicator of cultural engagement but also as a potential barrier to integration, as reliance on ethnic media may limit interaction with the host society's cultural narratives. The study also included two variables measuring engagement with the Hong Kong diaspora.

1. *Actual Diaspora Affinity*: This variable, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.65, captures participation in diaspora activities, such as attending events or assisting diaspora organizations.
2. *Perceived Diaspora Affinity*: This six-item ordinal measure evaluates respondents' subjective sense of closeness to the diaspora, reflecting the emotional dimension of community belonging.

Given the potential disconnect between actual and perceived behaviors (Paulhus & Vazire, 2007), both measures were included to provide a comprehensive view of diaspora engagement.

Control variables

The analysis controlled for several variables that could be associated with identity formation, such as family income levels, employment status, and citizenship (Chen, 2009; Feuls et al., 2014). The model also accounted for migrants' perceptions of Hong Kong and the reasons behind their migration, as these factors shape cultural practices and identity negotiation (Gsir, 2017).

Additionally, the presence of family members in the host country, housing conditions, and the duration of stay in the UK were included, as longer residence often correlates with more acculturation (Grigoryev & van de Vijver, 2017).

The study also considered respondents' intentions to visit Hong Kong, as frequent visits can reinforce cultural identity and complicate the process of adopting a host society's cultural practices (Marschall, 2017). Regional fixed effects were applied to account for differences in local contexts that may be associated with identity formation, such as regional economic conditions or the presence of

other immigrant communities.

Analytical strategy

The investigation followed two stages: an initial descriptive scan and a subsequent series of fixed-effects regressions and mediation tests. During the descriptive scan, respondents reported which of 30 prominent Hong Kong news outlets they had followed in the previous 30 days (list current as of August 2023). These data clarified how migrants keep symbolic ties to Hong Kong and revealed the relative reach of individual platforms.

The second stage evaluated the full set of hypotheses (**H1–H4**). Each regression included the same covariates—income change, employment status, BNO visa route, household size, length of UK residence, perceptions of Hong Kong conditions, and regional fixed effects that capture variation in media infrastructure and diaspora density. Robust standard errors addressed heteroskedasticity. The following equations estimated whether stronger Hong Kong identity predicts deeper engagement with homeland culture:

$$HKNews_i = a_0 + a_1 HKIdent_i + a_2 X_i + r_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

$$HKMovie_i = a_0 + a_1 HKIdent_i + a_2 X_i + r_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (2)$$

$$HKActualDiaspora_i = a_0 + a_1 HKIdent_i + a_2 X_i + r_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (3)$$

$$HKPerceivedDiaspora_i = a_0 + a_1 HKIdent_i + a_2 X_i + r_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (4)$$

In the equations, the independent variables $HKIdent_i$ and X_i denotes the respondent's strength of Hong Kong cultural identity variable and the covariates, respectively, while r_i accounts for regional fixed effects, and ε_i is the error term. In Eqs. (1) and (2), the dependent variable $HKNews_i$ and $HKMovie_i$ denotes number of hours consuming Hong Kong-related news and Hong Kong-related movies or TV shows, respectively. Eq. (1) and Eq. (2) directly test **H1a**. In Eqs. (3) and (4) the dependent variable $HKActualDiaspora_i$ and $HKPerceivedDiaspora_i$ denote the respondents' actual and perceived Hong Kong diaspora affinity, respectively. Both will be regressed in separate models on Hong Kong cultural identity strength and other covariates to test **H1b**.

To evaluate whether cultural media practices are associated with British identity formation (H2), the analysis estimates the following models:

$$UKIdent_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \mathrm{HKNews}_i + \alpha_2 X_i + r_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (5)$$

$$UKIdent_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \mathrm{HKMovie}_i + \alpha_2 X_i + r_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (6)$$

Here, $UKIdent_i$ denotes the strength of UK cultural identity. Regressing this dependent variable on the hours spent consuming Hong Kong news (Eq. 5) and movies/TV shows (Eq. 6) tests hypotheses **H2a** and **H2c**, respectively.

The analysis then tests for mediation. To test **H2b**—whether Hong Kong news consumption mediates the relationship between Hong Kong cultural identity and UK cultural identity—a two-step model is estimated. First, the mediator (Hong Kong news hours) is regressed on Hong Kong cultural identity and covariates:

$$HKNews_i = a_0 + a_1 HKIdent_i + a_2 X_i \quad + \mathrm{r}_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (7)$$

Second, the outcome (UK cultural identity) is regressed on the mediator ($HKNews_i$), the independent variable ($HKIdent_i$), and the covariates (X_i):

$$UKIdent_i = a_0 + a_1 HKNews_i + a_2 HKIdent_i + a_3 X_i + r_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (8)$$

In this framework, the indirect effect of Hong Kong cultural identity on UK cultural identity is the product of the coefficient for $HKIdent_i$ in Eq. (7) and the coefficient for $HKNews_i$ in Eq. (8). A statistically significant indirect effect indicates that Hong Kong cultural identity's association with UK cultural identity occurs partly through its effect on Hong Kong news consumption.

A similar two-step model tests **H2d**, which posits that Hong Kong movie and TV show consumption mediates the same relationship:

$$HKMovie_i = a_0 + a_1 HKIdent_i + a_2 X_i \quad + \mathrm{r}_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (9)$$

$$UKIdent_i = a_0 + a_1 HKMovie_i + a_2 HKIdent_i + a_3 X_i + r_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (10)$$

The indirect effect is calculated as the product of the coefficient for $HKIdent_i$ in Eq. (9) and the coefficient for $HKMovie_i$in Eq. (10).

To evaluate whether affinity with the Hong Kong diasporic community is associated with British identity formation (**H3**), the following models are estimated:

$$UKIdent_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \mathrm{ActualDiaspora}_i + \alpha_2 X_i + r_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (11)$$

$$UKIdent_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \mathrm{PerceivedDiaspora}_i + \alpha_2 X_i + r_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (12)$$

In Eqs. (11) and (12), regressing UK cultural identity on the actual diaspora affinity ($ActualDiaspora_i$) and perceived diaspora affinity ($PerceivedDiaspora_i$) in separate models tests **H3a** and **H3c**, respectively.

The potential mediating roles of these diaspora affinities are also tested. For **H3b**, the following two equations examine the

mediating effect of actual diaspora affinity ($ActualDiaspora_i$):

$$ActualDiaspora_i = a_0 + a_1 HKIdent_i + a_2 X_i \quad + r_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{13}$$

$$UKIdent_i = a_0 + a_1 ActualDiaspora_i + a_2 HKIdent_i + a_3 X_i + r_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{14}$$

Likewise, for **H3d**, the subsequent equations test the mediating effect of perceived diaspora affinity ($PerceivedDiaspora_i$):

$$PerceivedDiaspora_i = a_0 + a_1 HKIdent_i + a_2 X_i \quad + r_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{15}$$

$$UKIdent_i = a_0 + a_1 PerceivedDiaspora_i + a_2 HKIdent_i + a_3 X_i + r_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{16}$$

For both pairs of models, the indirect effect is calculated by multiplying the coefficient for $HKIdent_i$.in the first step by the coefficient for the respective diaspora variable in the second step.

Finally, to test whether Hong Kong identity independently predicts a negative association with the adoption of a British identity, net of media engagement and diaspora networks (**H4**), the following direct regression is estimated:

$$UKIdent_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 HKIdent_i + \alpha_2 X_i + r_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{17}$$

This model captures any potential residual or unmediated association between Hong Kong identity and British identity (Table 1).

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of variables used in the study.

Variable	Description	Mean	SD.	Min *	Max *
HK Cultural Identity	Respondents rated their cultural identity related to Hong Kong while residing there. A higher score (maximum of 5) indicates a stronger Hong Kong cultural identity, while a lower score (minimum of 1) suggests a stronger identification as Chinese.	3.9216	1.2706	1	5
UK Cultural Identity	Respondents rated their cultural identity related to the UK while residing there. A higher score (maximum of 5) indicates a stronger UK cultural identity, while a lower score (minimum of 1) suggests a stronger identification as Chinese or Hongkonger.	1.6257	1.2630	1	5
HK News Hours	The number of hours per week respondents spend watching Hong Kong news outlets.	5.9662	3.2686	0	21
HK Movie / TV Shows Hours	The number of hours per week respondents spend watching Hong Kong-associated movies or TV shows.	2.7038	5.9058	0	21
Actual Diaspora Affinity	Sum of seven-item dummy variables (Yes = 1, No = 0) indicating whether respondents have participated in activities with the Hong Kong diaspora community in the UK. A higher score indicates more engagement.	2.6241	1.5647	0	7
Perceived Diaspora Affinity	A seven-item scale measuring agreement with statements about closeness to the Hong Kong diaspora, with scores ranging from 7 (least close) to 35 (most close). A higher score indicates a stronger perceived connection.	26.8367	3.6287	11	33
Income Change	Comparison of household income categories before and after moving to the UK, measured in 20,000 HKD intervals (e.g., 0–19,999 = 1, 20,000–39,999 = 2, up to 5 for ≥100,000).	−0.6467	0.8630	−3	2
Full-time Employment	Indicates whether the respondent is employed full-time in the UK or works more than 35 h per week.	0.5117	0.5001	0	1
HK Perception	A five-item scale assessing perceptions of various aspects of Hong Kong's situation (e.g., economic, educational), with scores ranging from 5 (least positive) to 25 (most positive). A higher score indicates a more positive perception.	9.8456	3.7649	5	20
BNO Route	Coded as 1 if the respondent migrated to the UK through the BNO route, and 0 otherwise.	0.8278	0.3777	0	1
No. People Household	The number of people in the respondent's household in the UK.	3.9313	1.7074	1	8
HK Push Factors	An eight-item scale measuring reasons for leaving Hong Kong, with scores ranging from 8 (least compelling) to 40 (most compelling)	35.1455	3.9526	11	40
UK Stay Duration	The number of months the respondent has resided in the UK since January 2019.	21.6815	9.9148	2	56
Will Enter HK	Coded as 1 if the respondent intends to visit Hong Kong after migrating to the UK, and 0 otherwise.	0.2118	0.4088	0	1

* The minimum and maximum values are determined by the lowest and highest scores among the 1237 respondents, rather than the theoretical minimum or maximum possible scores.

Results

Descriptive statistics

The descriptive analysis reveals marked heterogeneity in media consumption among Hong Kong migrants in the United Kingdom, providing insight into how cultural connections are sustained through selective engagement with homeland content. As shown in Table 2, over half of the respondents reported accessing four leading outlets—*HK01* (56.18 %), ViuTV (54.08 %), *SCMP* (53.35 %), and *Oriental Daily* (51.74 %)—within the previous 30 days. These sources collectively represent a "high frequency" tier of consumption and appear to function as core informational anchors within the migrant media repertoire.

A second cluster of "moderately consumed" outlets include *The Epoch Times* (36.22 %), *Headline Daily* (34.03 %), and *Sing Tao* (33.95 %), indicating more occasional or selective engagement. By contrast, lower-engagement outlets such as *NowTV* (7.60 %), *RTHK* (6.79 %), and *Ming Pao* (6.14 %) suggest a relatively narrow cultural footprint within the migrant population. The low figures for Ming Pao and RTHK are notable given their historic prominence, hinting at generational or platform-related shifts in media loyalty and trust.

These patterns suggest a three-tiered structure of media preference: high-use, moderate-use, and low-use outlets, reflecting both personal affinity and digital accessibility. Importantly, respondents accessed content through a mix of traditional websites, mobile applications, and social media platforms, illustrating the convergent nature of digital media. This convergence mitigates the effects of geographic displacement by offering continuous symbolic access to origin-based narratives, enabling identity maintenance in a diasporic setting (Lee & Tse, 1994).

Table 3 offers a more granular look at the most frequently consumed sources. *HK01* (25.08 %) and *SCMP* (24.68 %) emerge as the most dominant platforms, each attracting roughly a quarter of the sample as their primary news source. These are followed by *Oriental Daily* (13.77 %), ViuTV (13.61 %), and *The Epoch Times* (11.64 %), reinforcing their role as top-tier sources of cultural information. In contrast, a smaller share of respondents reported frequent engagement with TVB (2.54 %), *Sing Tao Daily* (2.21 %), *HoyTV* (1.56 %), *AM730* (1.48 %), and *Headline Daily*

(1.15 %).

The concentration of attention among a few dominant platforms suggests that news consumption among the Hong Kong diaspora is not only transnational but also highly selective. These leading outlets likely exert outsized potential influence in shaping migrants' cultural references, political outlooks, and affective affiliations with Hong Kong—thereby playing a strategic role in the reproduction of diasporic identity.

The regression and mediation analyses systematically test the hypothesized association between cultural identity, engagement behaviors, and acculturation. The discussion below follows the logical structure of the hypotheses and integrates results from Tables 4–6.

Regression and mediation results

Regression estimates presented in Table 4 indicate that stronger identification with Hong Kong is consistently associated with more engagement across both media and diaspora domains. In particular, **Model 1** shows that a one-point increase in Hong Kong identity associated with an average increase of 0.6358 h per week in consumption of Hong Kong news, an association that is statistically significant at the 0.001 level. This finding supports H1c and underscores the role of informational content as a vehicle for cultural maintenance, particularly through politically and symbolically charged media. However, **Model 2** reveals that Hong Kong identity does not significantly predict time spent on entertainment content such as movies or TV shows (coefficient = 0.2589, not significant), suggesting that such forms of media may serve more diffuse, emotionally comforting functions and are less central to identity affirmation than news consumption.

Diaspora engagement, too, is shaped by cultural identity. **Model 3** demonstrates that stronger Hong Kong identity predicts greater actual participation in diaspora activities, with a coefficient of 0.3578 that is statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Similarly, **Model 4** shows that perceived emotional closeness to the Hong Kong diaspora is positively associated with identity strength ($\beta = 0.3461$, $p < 0.001$). These findings support **H1a** and **H1b**, and together the results confirm that cultural identity is a key predictor of

Table 2
Top 10 news programs viewed by respondents in the Past 30 days.

News Media	Watched (%)*	More often through mobile apps (%)*	More often through social media (%)*
HK01	695 (56.18 %)	339 (27.41 %)	355 (28.70 %)
ViuTV	669 (54.08 %)	325 (26.27 %)	343 (27.73 %)
SCMP	660 (53.35 %)	346 (27.97 %)	313 (25.30 %)
Oriental Daily	640 (51.74 %)	303 (24.49 %)	336 (27.16 %)
The Epoch Times	448 (36.22 %)	208 (16.81 %)	240 (19.40 %)
Headline Daily	421 (34.03 %)	208 (16.81 %)	213 (17.22 %)
Sing Tao	420 (33.95 %)	207 (16.73 %)	211 (17.13 %)
NowTV	94 (7.60 %)	44 (3.56 %)	49 (3.96 %)
RTHK	84 (6.79 %)	46 (3.72 %)	37 (2.99 %)
Ming Pao	76 (6.14 %)	36 (2.91 %)	39 (3.15 %)

* The percentage is calculated based on all respondents, with values rounded to two decimal places.

Table 3
Top 10 most frequently watched news outlets by respondents in the past 30 days.

News Media	No. of respondents	%*
HK01	306	25.08
SCMP	301	24.67
Oriental Daily	168	13.77
ViuTV	166	13.61
The Epoch Times	142	11.64
TVB	31	2.54
Sing Tao Daily	19	2.21
HoyTV	19	1.56
AM730	18	1.48
Headline Daily	14	1.15

* The percentage is calculated based on respondents who reported valid data for the most frequent Hong Kong news media consumption, with values rounded to two decimal places.

Table 4
Association of cultural identity on media consumption and connection to the Hong Kong Diaspora.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
DV:	HK News Hours	HK Movie / TV Shows Hours	Actual Diaspora Affinity	Perceived Diaspora Affinity
HK Cultural Identity	0.6358***	0.2589	0.3578***	0.3461***
	(0.0759)	(0.1914)	(0.0255)	(0.0748)
Income Change	−0.5159***	−0.0963	−0.0501	−0.2861***
	(0.0863)	(0.2177)	(0.0290)	(0.0851)
Full-time Employment	0.9607***	0.2070	0.7106***	1.3536***
	(0.1616)	(0.4077)	(0.0544)	(0.1593)
HK Perception	0.1120***	−0.0267	−0.0087	0.2588***
	(0.0326)	(0.0823)	(0.0110)	(0.0322)
BNO Route	−0.4760	−0.4357	−0.2150	−1.1203***
	(0.3969)	(1.0014)	(0.1336)	(0.3913)
No. People Household	0.5449***	−0.2671	0.1891***	0.6639***
	(0.0546)	(0.1376)	(0.0184)	(0.0538)
HK Push Factors	0.1606***	0.1497*	0.1379***	0.2854***
	(0.0275)	(0.0694)	(0.0093)	(0.0272)
UK Stay Duration	−0.0580***	0.0085	−0.0349	−0.0950***
	(0.0088)	(0.0222)	(0.0030)	(0.0087)
Will Enter HK	−1.0869**	−0.9663	0.5338***	−1.8309***
	(0.3684)	(0.9296)	(0.1240)	(0.3633)
Regional Fixed Effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-Square	0.5075	0.0394	0.7566	0.6072

$p < 0.001$***, $p < 0.01$**, $p < 0.05$*
The standard errors are in the parathesis.

selective cultural maintenance behaviors, though the strength of these associations varies depending on the specific form of engagement.

Turning to the association between media consumption and British cultural identity, **Model 5** in Table 5 shows that greater consumption of Hong Kong news is significantly and negatively associated with identification with British culture ($\beta = -0.0723$, $p < 0.001$), offering support for **H2a**. This suggests that consistent exposure to origin-oriented political and cultural content may reinforce symbolic boundaries and associated with lower openness to host-society integration. In contrast, **Model 6** finds no significant association between consumption of Hong Kong entertainment media and British identity ($\beta = -0.0027$, not significant), offering no support for **H2b**. This divergence reinforces the interpretation that news content plays a more active role in shaping civic and political alignment, whereas entertainment media appears to exert less meaningful association on identity trajectories.

The role of diaspora embeddedness in mediating British identity is further substantiated in **Models 7 and 8**. Actual participation in diaspora activities is negatively associated with British identity, with a coefficient of –0.2468 ($p < 0.001$), while perceived diaspora affinity is also negatively related, with a coefficient of –0.1013 ($p < 0.001$). These results confirm both **H3a** and **H3b** and suggest that behavioral and emotional embeddedness within diaspora networks may constrain the symbolic and psychological space for host-society identification. These two forms of engagement—organizational participation and affective belonging—appear to work in tandem to shape migrants' orientation toward British culture.

Lastly, **Model 9** estimates the direct association between Hong Kong and British identity, controlling for media and diaspora engagement. The association is statistically significant but modest in magnitude ($\beta = -0.0709$, $p < 0.05$), confirming **H4**. This indicates that even after accounting for behavioral and symbolic intermediaries, there remains a residual inverse association between origin and host identity. However, this direct pathway explains less variation in British identity than the combined mediating effects of news consumption and diaspora embeddedness, further reinforcing the centrality of structured engagement in shaping acculturation

Table 5
Association of various independent variables on cultural identity among respondents in the UK.

	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
DV:	UK Cultural Identity	UK Cultural Identity	UK Cultural Identity	UK Cultural Identity	UK Cultural Identity
HK Cultural Identity HK News	−0.0723***	−0.0027			−0.0709* (0.0326)
Hours	(0.0118)				
HK Movie / TV Shows					
Hours		(0.0049)	−0.2468***		
Actual Diaspora					
Affinity			(0.0332)	−0.1013***	
Perceived Diaspora					
Affinity	0.1080**	0.1482***	0.1300***	(0.0120)	0.1436***
Income Change				0.1171**	
	(0.0371)	(0.0370)	(0.0363)	(0.0362)	(0.0370)
Full-time Employment	−0.1885**	0.2815***	−0.0602	−0.1267	−0.2448***
HK Perception	(0.0681)	(0.0674)	(0.0723)	(0.0680)	(0.0694)
	−0.0938***	−0.0950***	−0.1105***	−0.0740***	−0.1057***
	(0.0129)	(0.0131)	(0.0130)	(0.0130)	(0.0140)
BNO Route	0.1670	0.1953	0.1531	0.0868	0.2042
No. People Household	(0.1681)	(0.1707)	(0.1671)	(0.1664)	(0.1704)
	−0.1308***	−0.1715***	−0.1229***	−0.1031***	−0.1698***
	(0.0240)	(0.0235)	(0.0238)	(0.0242)	(0.0234)
HK Push Factors	0.0254*	0.0119	0.0499***	0.0421***	0.0150
	(0.0117)	(0.0118)	(0.0126)	(0.0120)	(0.0118)
UK Stay Duration	0.0130***	0.0183***	0.0076	0.0079*	0.0166***
	(0.0038)	(0.0037)	(0.0039)	(0.0038)	(0.0038)
Will Enter HK	0.2128	0.3023	0.1474	0.1091	0.2842
Regional Fixed Effect	(0.1565)	(0.1583)	(0.1562)	(0.1556)	(0.1582)
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-Square	0.4040	0.3858	0.4123	0.4194	0.3881

$p < 0.001$***, $p < 0.01$**, $p < 0.05$*
The standard errors are in the parathesis.

Table 6
Mediation analysis: indirect and direct effects of Hong Kong cultural identity on british cultural identity via media use and diaspora engagement.

Pathway	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
HK Cultural Identity → HK News Hours (H1c)	−0.0263	−0.0445***	−0.0709*
→ British Cultural Identity (H2a)	(0.0331)	(0.0094)	(0.0344)
HK Cultural Identity → HK Movie/TV Hours	−0.0703*	−0.0005	−0.0709*
(H1c) → British Cultural Identity (H2b)	(0.0326)	(0.0013)	(0.0326)
HK Cultural Identity → Actual Diaspora Affinity	0.0203	−0.0911***	−0.0709*
(H1a) → British Cultural Identity (H3a)	(0.0344)	(0.0144)	(0.0373)
HK Cultural Identity → Perceived Diaspora	−0.0263	−0.0445***	−0.0709*
Affinity (H1b) → British Cultural Identity (H3b)	(0.0331)	(0.0094)	(0.0344)

$p < 0.001$***, $p < 0.01$**, $p < 0.05$*
The standard errors are in the parathesis.

outcomes.

Mediation analysis: indirect vs. direct effects

The mediation analysis presented in Table 6 disaggregates the total effect of Hong Kong cultural identity on British cultural identity into its direct and indirect components, thereby elucidating the mechanisms through which cultural identity is associated with acculturation outcomes. Four mediating pathways are examined: through Hong Kong news consumption, Hong Kong entertainment media, actual diaspora engagement, and perceived diaspora affinity. The indirect effect via Hong Kong news consumption is statistically significant and negative (indirect effect = –0.0445, $p < 0.001$), indicating that increased engagement with origin-based informational media *is associated with* reduced identification with the host society. By contrast, the entertainment media pathway yields a negligible and statistically non-significant effect (indirect effect = –0.0005), suggesting limited association of leisure-oriented content on host identity formation. The most substantial mediating effect emerges from actual diaspora engagement (indirect effect = –0.0911, $p < 0.001$), highlighting the powerful role of behavioral embeddedness in shaping cultural orientation. Perceived diaspora affinity also exerts a significant negative effect (indirect effect = –0.0445, $p < 0.001$), underscoring the role of affective solidarity in reinforcing origin identity.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that the indirect effects—particularly those associated with news consumption and diaspora engagement—account for a larger proportion of the total effect than the direct pathway from Hong Kong to British identity.

The total effect remains consistent across models (–0.0709), but the decomposition reveals that identity negotiation is primarily mediated through structured and socially embedded practices. This pattern reinforces the theoretical proposition that cultural identity operates not merely as an internal disposition but as a function of observable behaviors and affiliative infrastructures that shape the contours of belonging in transnational contexts.

Discussion and conclusion

This study examined how Hong Kong migrants in the United Kingdom navigate dual cultural identities through patterns of media consumption and engagement with diaspora networks.

Drawing on a structured set of hypotheses and mediation analysis, the findings contribute to broader debates in migration, media, and identity studies by showing that cultural identity is not merely an internal orientation—it is behaviorally enacted, structurally embedded, and selectively maintained through symbolic practices.

Discussion of hypotheses and theoretical connections

H1a predicted that stronger Hong Kong identity would lead to greater consumption of homeland media. This hypothesis was partially supported: respondents with stronger Hong Kong identity were more likely to consume Hong Kong news, but this association did not extend to entertainment content. This distinction reinforces theories of symbolic boundary maintenance (Georgiou, 2006; Fong, 2010), where news plays a more ideologically charged and culturally affirming role than general entertainment, which may offer emotional comfort without shaping civic or political orientation.

H1b proposed that a stronger Hong Kong cultural identity would be associated with both greater actual participation in diaspora activities and stronger emotional closeness to the diaspora (H1b). Both hypotheses were supported. These findings affirm the view that cultural identity is reaffirmed through both community participation and affective solidarity. As Hall (1996) argues, identity is performative, sustained through positioning within meaningful collective practices. The results also align with research on diaspora networks as spaces of symbolic anchoring and sociopolitical cohesion (Jaeger and Mykletun, 2013; Koinova, 2016), where identity is not only expressed but socially reproduced.

H2a hypothesized that news consumption would negatively predict British cultural identity, and the findings confirmed this association. This supports theories of mediated nationalism (Anderson, 1983; Skey, 2010), where media is not just a reflection of identity but an instrument of national consciousness formation. The regular consumption of origin-oriented news frames may sustain political allegiance to the homeland and dampen openness to host-society narratives.

H2c, in contrast, was not supported. Consumption of Hong Kong entertainment content showed no significant association with British identity. This null result highlights the importance of content type in identity formation, supporting arguments that entertainment has weaker boundary-marking effects than informational media (Tsagarousianou & Retis, 2019). While aesthetic familiarity may offer comfort, it does not appear to structure identity in the same politically consequential ways as news content.

H3a and H3c predicted that diaspora embeddedness—through both actual participation and perceived affinity—is associated with reduced identification with British culture. These hypotheses were strongly supported. Consistent with enclave and social boundary theories (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Noble, 2005), the findings suggest that diaspora networks serve as symbolic and emotional anchors that insulate migrants from broader civic incorporation. The fact that both behavioral engagement and affective closeness had significant effects indicates that structural and emotional embeddedness work in tandem to shape cultural orientation.

H4 proposed a residual, direct effect of Hong Kong identity on British identity, independent of behavioral mediators. This was also confirmed, albeit with a smaller coefficient. The finding supports identity exclusivity theories (Zhang et al., 2018), suggesting that strong identification with a politically charged origin identity may inhibit the psychological space needed for host affiliation—even when controlling for media and diaspora engagement. Mediation analysis further revealed that indirect effects via diaspora and media were more substantial, suggesting that the direct identity conflict is magnified by participation in reinforcing structures.

Regarding the mediating association examined in H2b, H2d, H3b and H3d, data suggests the consistent mediation of news consumption, diasporic engagement and emotional affinity in the association between Hong Kong cultural identity influence and UK Cultural identity. Such finding supports the theoretical interpretation of selective media exposure and narrative identity (McAdams & McLean, 2013), and the continuous media consumption in ethnocultural media allow the immigrant to establish emotional linkage with their homeland, narrating their Hong Kong identity within a closed (diasporic) community, similar to the condition of Hong Kong localism in 2010s (Chen, et al., 2022). Interestingly, the Hong Kong local entertainment carries null result to the association of IV and DV, indicating that the consumption of Hong Kong entertainment carries insignificant influence in this association. This could be attributed to the change of cultural practice of Hong Kongers consuming Hong Kong related entertainment; such behavior is minimizing due to fact that the emergence of streaming service and digitalized media content from global entertainment industry allows Hong Kong local audience bypass traditional distribution methods and access the dominated and popular global genre entertainment easily (Jin, 2023).

Theoretical implications

This study advances theoretical debates across three domains. First, it refines acculturation theory by shifting the focus from temporal or attitudinal determinants of integration to practice- based mechanisms. Rather than viewing identity as a stable trait or linear outcome, the findings emphasize the pathway-dependent nature of cultural affiliation—shaped through repeated engagements

with origin-focused media and networks.

Second, it sharpens the conceptual tools of diasporic media studies by disaggregating media content types. The evidence that news—but not entertainment—predicts host-identity suppression introduces analytical clarity to debates on how migrants curate informational environments. It supports the view that symbolic density and political charge matter in determining media's association on identity (Georgiou, 2006; Anderson, 1983).

Third, it contributes to critical identity theory by affirming that identity is not just individually negotiated but institutionally reinforced through embedded practices. Migrants engage with identity infrastructures—media, networks, discourses—that position them in relation to both home and host. This relational positioning complicates hybridization in politically fraught contexts, as seen in the Hong Kong case, where cultural preservation also signals political dissent or resistance.

Practical implications

The study offers several implications for integration policy, civil society programming, and diaspora governance. First, integration efforts must move beyond language and time-based metrics. Structural mechanisms—especially news media and diaspora networks—actively shape the symbolic boundaries that is associated with identity orientation. Policymakers and funders should support bridging infrastructures such as bilingual civic media, intercultural forums, and collaborative community programming that facilitate contact without demanding cultural disavowal.

Second, diaspora organizations should recognize their dual role as support systems and boundary-makers. By fostering opportunities for intercultural engagement, such as joint advocacy or community storytelling projects, they can help facilitate dual identification while maintaining internal solidarity. Third, integration policies should avoid framing cultural preservation as oppositional. For politically displaced groups like Hongkongers, retaining cultural identity is often an ethical and historical imperative. Host societies should provide space for multi-sited identification that includes both remembrance and civic belonging, especially when migrants are navigating displacement rather than economic migration alone.

Limitations and future research directions

This study is based on cross-sectional data, limiting claims about causality. Although the mediation framework offers insight into potential pathways, longitudinal designs are needed to trace identity shifts over time. The use of self-reported measures may introduce bias, though the survey employed validated items and fixed-effects adjustments. The sample is likely skewed toward more networked or culturally engaged migrants, given the recruitment methods. As such, findings may underrepresent more assimilated or socially marginalized Hongkongers in the UK. Additionally, the specific political context of Hong Kong migration—especially the BNO scheme—may limit generalizability to other diasporas.

Future studies should explore identity formation over time using longitudinal panel data, particularly during critical junctures such as political unrest or legal status transitions.

Comparative studies across host countries—such as Canada, Australia, or Taiwan—could reveal how different policy regimes shape cultural negotiation differently within the same diaspora.

As digital ecosystems evolve, researchers should examine how platform-specific algorithms, social media influencers, and curated news feeds affect diasporic identity, especially among younger migrants. These dynamics are central to how cultural attachment and political consciousness are shaped across borders. Finally, further research could assess the collective outcomes of diasporic identity consolidation—such as political mobilization, advocacy networks, or transnational activism. Understanding how identity translates into civic action will be vital for mapping the long-term impacts of migration on both origin and host societies.

Funding

The work is partially supported by the Hong Kong Government Research Grant Committee's Research Fellow Scheme (RFS2021-7H04).

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Jeremy Ko: Methodology, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Investigation. **Anthony Y.H. Fung:** Supervision, Methodology, Project administration, Conceptualization. **Boris Lok-Fai Pun:** Writing – original draft, Data curation, Formal analysis, Conceptualization, Investigation. **Chun Kai Leung:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Validation, Project administration, Investigation.

Appendix

Table A1
Options for Each Specific Variable

Variables	Question Wording	Response Options
HK Cultural Identity	Please choose the description that best describes you before residing in the UK:	1. I am Chinese 2. I am Chinese, but also a Hongkonger 3. I am a global citizen 4. I am a Hongkonger but also Chinese 5. I am a Hongkonger
UK Cultural Identity	Please choose the description that best describes you after residing in the UK:	1. I am Hongkonger / Chinese 2. I am Hongkonger / Chinese in the UK 3. I am a global citizen 4. I am Hongkonger / Chinese, but also British 5. I am British
HK News Hours	When you are in the UK, on average, how many hours per week do you spend watching/browsing (online) Hong Kong-based news or press channels?	Fill in the blank:
HK Movie/TV Shows Hours	When you are in the UK, on average, how many hours per week do you watch Hong Kong movies, TV dramas, or variety shows?	Fill in the blank:
Actual Diaspora Affinity	How do you engage with Hong Kong diasporic communities in the UK (Choose all that apply)	1. Participating in their arranged activities 2. Organizing/assisting activities 3. Receiving/searching for help (e.g. job opportunity, funding) 4. Offering/supporting help (e.g. job opportunity, funding) 5. Receiving the information about Hong Kong groups / diasporic communities 6. Producing or distributing the information about Hong Kong groups / diasporic communities 7. Being the committee member of the Hong Kong groups / diasporic communities
Perceived Diaspora Affinity	To what extent do you agree with the following? (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)	1. I prefer to socialize with Hong Kong people in the UK 2. I often socialize with Hong Kong people in the UK. 3. I have a strong bonding with the Hong Kong diasporic community in the UK 4. I often participate in the live events or activities hosted by Hong Kong groups in the UK 5. I often participate in the online forums/groups that are related to Hongkongers in the UK 6. Most of my contacts in the UK are Hongkongers 7. I am often involved with the Hong Kong diasporic community.
Income Change	The latest monthly pre-tax household income (including salary, rental income, profits from stock markets, etc.) in Hong Kong (before you migrate to the UK).	1. 0–19,999HKD 2. 20,000–39,999HKD 3. 40,000–59,999HKD 4. 60,000–79,999HKD 5. 80,000–99,999HKD 6. $\geq$ 100,000HKD
	The current monthly pre-tax household income (including salary, rental income, profits from stock markets, etc.) in the UK. Note: In this calculation, we convert 1GDP = 10HKD. To calculate the income, change score, we subtract the respondent's pre-tax household income category in Hong Kong from their pre-tax household income category in the UK.	1. 0–1,999GBP (yearly 0–24,000 GBP) 2. 2000–3,999GBP (yearly 24,000–48,000 GBP) 3. 4000–5,999GBP (yearly 48,000–72,000 GBP) 4. 6,000–7,999GBP (yearly 72,000–96000 GBP) 5. 8000–9,999GBP (yearly 96,000–120,000 GBP) 6. $\geq$ 10,000 GBP (yearly more than 120,000 GBP)
Full-time employment:	The current occupational situation in the UK.	1. Full-time employment 2. Part-time employment / Not employed/ retired / student
HK Perception:	On a scale of 1 (worst) to 5 (best), how will you evaluate the following current condition in Hong Kong?	1. Environmental situation 2. Educational condition 3. Living condition 4. Economic condition 5. Social welfare condition
BNO Route:	Do you intend to acquire British citizenship through the BNO route?	1. Yes 2. No / I am already a British citizen
UK Stay Duration:	How long (in months) in total have you stayed in the UK?	Fill in the Blank ____.
Will Enter HK:	Do you intend to enter Hong Kong at any time in the future?	1. Yes 2. No / Not Sure

Data availability statement

Data will remain strictly confidential to protect respondents' privacy. Sincere gratitude is extended to UKHK and the two anonymous event organizers at the relevant Hong Kong cultural festivals for their assistance in disseminating the survey.

References

Ahmed, R., & Veronis, L. (2020). Creating in-between spaces through diasporic and mainstream media consumption: A comparison of four ethnocultural and immigrant communities in Ottawa, Canada. *International Communication Gazette, 82*(3), 289–315. https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048519828594

Census and Statistics Department. (2023, February 16). *Year-end Population for 2022*. Press releases detail. ⟨https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/press_release_detail.html?id=5199⟩.

Chan, C. K., Tang, G., & Lee, F. L. F. (2022). Transformation of Media, Social Values, and Hong Kong Identification. *Hong Kong Media. Hong Kong Studies Reader Series*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-1820-9_5

Chen, J.-L. (2009). Household Income, maternal acculturation, maternal education level and health behaviors of Chinese-American Children and Mothers. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, 11*(3), 198–204. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-008-9124-8

Chun, A. (2019). Post)Colonial governance in Hong Kong and Macau: A tale of two cities and regimes. *Taylor Francis*. ⟨https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13688790.2019.1696025⟩.

Cohen, R. (2019). Diasporas. *The Handbook of Diasporas, Media, and Culture* (pp. 21–30). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119236771.ch2

Donaldson, K. (2021, January 29). U.K. Expects 300,000 People to Leave Hong Kong, Move to Britain. Bloomberg.com. ⟨https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-29/u-k- expects-300-000-people-to-leave-hong-kong-move-to-britain⟩.

Drydakis, N. (2012). Ethnic identity and immigrants' wages in Greece. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 36*(3), 389–402. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2011.09.002

Feuls, M., Fieseler, C., & Suphan, A. (2014). A social net? Internet and social media use during unemployment. *Work, Employment and Society, 28*(4), 551–570. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017013519846

Fong, E. T. Y. (2010). Changing intergroup relations with Mainland Chinese: An analysis of changes in Hong Kong movies as a popular cultural discourse. *Multilingua, 29*(1), 29–53. https://doi.org/10.1515/mult.2010.002

Fong, B. C. H. (2022). Diaspora formation and mobilisation: The emerging Hong Kong diaspora in the anti-extradition bill movement. *Nations and Nationalism, 28*(3), 1061–1079. https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12804

Georgiou, M. (2005). Diasporic media across Europe: Multicultural societies and the universalism-particularism continuum. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 31*(3), 481–498. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830500058794

Georgiou, M. (2006). *Diaspora, identity and the media: Diasporic transnationalism and mediated spatialities*. Hampton Press.

Georgiou, M. (2013). Diaspora in the digital era: Minorities and media representation. *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe, 12*(4), 80–99.

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford University Press.

Grigoryev, D., & van de Vijver, F. (2017). Acculturation profiles of Russian-speaking immigrants in Belgium and their socio-economic adaptation. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 38*(9), 797–814. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2016.1268145

Gsir, S. (2017). Do Countries of Origin Contribute to Socio-cultural Integration of Migrants Abroad? In A. Weinar, A. Unterreiner, & P. Fargues (Eds.), *Migrant Integration Between Homeland and Host Society Volume 1: Where does the country of origin fit?* (pp. 149–172). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-56176-9_7.

Hall, S. (1989). Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation. *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media, 36*, 68–81.

Jaeger, K., & Mykletun, R. J. (2013). Festivals, Identities, and Belonging. *Event Management, 17*(3), 213–226. https://doi.org/10.3727/152599513X13708863377791

Jin, D. Y. (2023). Netflix's effects on the Korean Wave: Power relations between local cultural industries and global OTT platforms. *Asian Journal of Communication, 33*(5), 452–469. https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2023.2232368

Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and gratifications research. *The Public Opinion Quarterly, 37*(4), 509–523.

Kim, Y. Y. (2007). Ideology, identity, and intercultural communication: An analysis of differing academic conceptions of cultural identity. *Taylor Francis*. https://doi.org/10.1080/17475750701737181

Koinova, M. (2016). Sustained vs episodic mobilization among conflict-generated diasporas. *International Political Science Review, 37*(4), 500–516. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512115591641

Kuo, B. C. H., & Roysircar, G. (2004). Predictors of acculturation for chinese adolescents in Canada: Age of arrival, length of stay, social class, and english reading ability. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 32*(3), 143–154. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1912.2004.tb00367.x

Lee, F. L. F. (2023a). Hong Kong Society under Autocratization. *State of Hong Kong Studies— A Workshop*. Vancouver: The University of British Columbia. ⟨https://hksi.ubc.ca/workshop2023/⟩. Retrieved January 14, 2024.

Lee, F. L. F. (2023b). Proactive internationalization and diaspora mobilization in a networked movement: The case of Hong Kong's Anti-Extradition Bill protests. *Social Movement Studies, 22*(2), 232–249. https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2022.2031957

Lee, W.-N., & Tse, D. K. (1994). Changing media consumption in a new home: acculturation patterns among Hong Kong Immigrants to Canada. *Journal of Advertising, 23*(1), 57–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1994.10673431

Lee, F. L. F., & Tse, C. H. (2024). The critical online diasporic infosphere and counter-public sustenance in an autocratizing society. *Information, Communication Society*, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2024.2430627

Ma, E., & Fung, A. (1999). Re-sinicization, Nationalism and the Hong Kong Identity. In C. So, & J. Chan (Eds.), *Press and Politics in Hong Kong: Case Studies from 1967 to 1997* (pp. 497–528). Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

Ma, E. K. W., & Fung, A. (2007). Negotiating Local and National Identifications: Hong Kong Identity Surveys 1996–2006. *Asian Journal of Communication, 17*(2), 172–185. https://doi.org/10.1080/01292980701306555

Marschall, S. (2017). Transnational migrant home visits as identity practice: The case of African migrants in South Africa. *Annals of Tourism Research, 63*, 140–150. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2017.01.011

McAdams, D. P., & McLean, K. C. (2013). Narrative Identity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 22*(3), 233–238. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721413475622

Page, R. E. (2011). *Stories and Social Media: Identities and Interaction*. Taylor & Francis Group.

Paulhus, D. L., & Vazire, S. (2007). The self-report method. *Handbook of Research Methods in Personality Psychology* (pp. 224–239). The Guilford Press.

Robinson, L. (2009). Cultural identity and acculturation preferences among south asian adolescents in Britain: An exploratory study. *Children Society, 23*(6), 442–454. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1099-0860.2008.00179.x

Bailey, O. G., Georgiou, M., & Harindranath, R. (Eds.). (2007). *Transnational lives and the media*. Palgrave.

Somani, I. S., & Guo, J. (2018). Seeing Indian, Being Indian: Diaspora, Identity, and Ethnic Media. *Howard Journal of Communications, 29*(1), 63–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2017.1327376

Sreberny, A. (2005). 'Not only, but also': Mixedness and media. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 31*(3), 443–459. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830500058828

Straubhaar, J. (2008). *Global, Hybrid or Multiple? Cultural Identities in the Age of Satellite TV and the Internet, 29*.

Stroud, N. J. (2008). Media use and political predispositions: Revisiting the concept of selective exposure. *Political Behavior, 30*(3), 341–366. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-007-9050-9

Tsagarousianou, R., & Retis, J. (2019). Diasporas, Media, and Culture. *The Handbook of Diasporas, Media, and Culture* (pp. 1–20). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119236771.ch1

Westbrook, L. (2023, February 24). 105,000 Hongkongers Start New Lives in UK since bn(o) Visa Scheme Began in 2021. South China Morning Post. ⟨https://www.scmp.com/news/hong- kong/society/article/3211282/more-105000-hongkongers-start-new-lives-uk-bno-scheme- began-2-years-ago⟩.

Wong, K. T.-W., Zheng, V., & Wan, P.-S. (2021). Local versus national identity in Hong Kong, 1998–2017. *Journal of Contemporary Asia, 51*(5), 803–827. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2020.1799235

Zhang, S., Verkuyten, M., & Weesie, J. (2018). Dual identity and psychological adjustment: A study among immigrant-origin members. *Journal of Research in Personality, 74*, 66–77. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2018.02.008