

The Relationship Between Emotional Trust and Cultural Identity in AI-Created Content: A Case Study of Chinese Australians

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This study examines the intersection of emotional trust and cultural identity in artificial intelligence (AI)-generated content, focusing on Chinese Australians. It explores how emotional trust—confidence in the authenticity and intent of AI-created stories—affects their engagement, and the role of cultural identity in shaping these perceptions. Using a qualitative case study approach with semi-structured interviews and analysis of AI materials, the research finds that culturally authentic and emotionally resonant narratives foster higher trust, while misrepresentations cause disengagement. The paper emphasizes the need for cultural nuance and community engagement in AI content creation to support positive identity formation, offering recommendations for emotionally authentic and culturally sensitive digital storytelling.

Keywords: AI-generated content, emotional trust, cultural identity, Chinese Australians, digital storytelling

Introduction

AI-generated content is transforming digital media, enabling narratives tailored to diverse cultural identities in multicultural societies like Australia. For underrepresented groups like Chinese Australians, this offers opportunities to see their experiences reflected digitally. Emotional trust, defined as confidence in the authenticity and intent of AI narratives, is crucial for meaningful engagement. Cultural identity refers to shared values, beliefs, and practices shaping a community's self-concept. Their intersection is significant in multicultural contexts, where misrepresentation can undermine trust and hinder identity affirmation. Ensuring artificial intelligence (AI) content respects cultural sensitivities and accurately represents community narratives is essential for building trust and supporting identity formation (Thomas, 2024; Häkkinen et al., 2020; Pellas, 2023). This study investigates how Chinese Australians perceive emotional trust in AI narratives and how this intersects with their cultural identity. It identifies key trust factors and proposes actionable recommendations for emotionally authentic and culturally sensitive AI content, drawing on digital storytelling and human-AI collaboration insights (Manoharan, 2024; Haupt, Freidank, & Haas, 2024; Thomas, 2024).

Literature Review

AI Ethics and Cultural Sensitivity

AI ethics frameworks emphasize transparency, accountability, and fairness but often lack guidance for addressing misrepresentation and psychological harm in sensitive cultural contexts (Osipov, 2024). Thomas

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(2024) notes synthetic media can both empower and stereotype, underscoring the need for responsible AI prioritizing human agency. However, most studies focus on broad principles, with limited attention to minority lived experiences and AI's dual potential for inclusion/exclusion.

Research on human-AI collaboration shows consumer trust links to perceptions of human control and ethical use (Haupt et al., 2024). Narratives lacking authenticity or cultural sensitivity risk undermining trust, especially in community-focused digital storytelling. Despite AI ethics guidelines, their practical application for diverse audiences remains limited (Hagendorff, 2019; Watson, Mökander, & Floridi, 2024). A pragmatic, context-sensitive approach is needed to ensure AI supports identity affirmation and avoids stereotypes.

Digital Storytelling and Community Engagement

Digital storytelling empowers marginalized communities to express identities. For Chinese Australians, AI-driven storytelling offers opportunities for voice amplification and challenges regarding authenticity. AI can provide scalable platforms for sharing stories, supporting identity formation and agency, as seen in work with marginalized youth (Jimenez, Anyon, Clark, & Kennedy, 2022). However, AI-generated narratives are often perceived as less credible without human input.

Human control is crucial for message credibility and positive audience attitudes (Haupt et al., 2024). Community-guided narratives better reflect cultural nuances and foster trust, highlighting the importance of participatory approaches. While AI can personalize content, it often struggles with minority cultural complexity, risking generic or misrepresentative stories (Vidrih & Mayahi, 2023). Dominant AI narratives can marginalize alternative perspectives (Chubb, Reed, & Cowling, 2022). Inclusive, participatory approaches are needed.

Identity Formation in a Digital Landscape

AI-mediated content shapes cultural self-understanding. For Chinese Australians, the digital landscape offers identity negotiation opportunities but poses authenticity, surveillance, and trust challenges. Identity construction is dynamic, influenced by individual agency and technological systems (Chen & Mendy, 2021). Digital identity is shaped by communication within and across cultural boundaries, subject to online inclusion/exclusion pressures.

AI narratives can foster cultural pride and belonging when reflecting lived experiences. However, platform-mediated identity systems risk profiling and surveillance, especially for minorities (Masiero, 2023). Authenticity links closely to emotional trust, contingent on transparent, ethical creation practices (Haupt et al., 2024). Emotionally authentic, culturally resonant narratives enhance belonging (Manoharan, 2024), while generic ones erode trust. Human oversight and participatory approaches are essential.

Method

This study used a qualitative case study approach to examine emotional trust and cultural identity in AI-generated content for Chinese Australians. Participants reflected diverse backgrounds; data were collected via semi-structured interviews and AI material analysis. Thematic analysis, supported by ethical frameworks, ensured rigour and cultural sensitivity (Osipov, 2024; Hagendorff, 2019).

Research Design

A qualitative case study design investigated how emotional trust and cultural identity are shaped by AI content. Qualitative methods allow in-depth examination of lived experiences and nuanced perspectives, suitable for this under-researched area. The case study integrated multiple data sources (interviews, observation of AI

interactions) for holistic understanding, prioritizing participant voices to ground findings in community realities. Flexibility supports exploration of emotional responses and cultural resonance central to trust in AI storytelling (Manoharan, 2024; Haupt et al., 2024).

Participant Selection

Participants reflected Chinese Australian diversity. Recruitment via community organisations, social groups, and digital platforms ensured varied ages, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The study balanced English and Chinese language groups to account for acculturation effects on cultural perceptions (Tan, Ward, & Ziaian, 2011). Demographic criteria ensured representativeness.

Table 1
Participant Demographic Characteristics by Language Group

Demographic criteria	Group 1: English-speaking	Group 2: Chinese-speaking
Age range	20-35	20-35
Gender	Male/female	Male/female
Socioeconomic status	Varied	Varied
Participants number	20	20

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews allowed detailed reflections while systematically exploring core themes (authenticity, emotional resonance, cultural representation). The protocol included 10 open-ended questions on emotional tone, authenticity, and cultural identity intersection. AI-generated artefacts were introduced for participants to evaluate cultural accuracy and emotional impact. This combined approach provided comprehensive understanding of narrative reception (Thomas, 2024; Sartori & Theodorou, 2022). Analysis considered how generative AI tools may reproduce normative assumptions and lack diversity (Gillespie, 2024), addressing visibility politics and stereotype reinforcement.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis identified patterns in qualitative data. NVivo software facilitated coding and organization, enhancing inter-coder reliability and transparency (Foo, Rahmani, & Liu, 2023). Team discussions and cross-validation mitigated bias, aligning with robust qualitative analysis recommendations for AI content studies (Cao et al., 2024).

Ethical Considerations

Safeguards included informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity. Ethics board approval ensured compliance with AI ethics guidelines and culturally sensitive research practices (Hagendorff, 2019; Häkkinen et al., 2020).

Findings

Findings reveal a nuanced relationship between emotional trust and cultural identity. Authentic, emotionally resonant narratives fostered belonging and cultural pride. Stereotypes or lack of diversity diminished trust and increased alienation, aligning with digital storytelling research emphasizing inclusive, participatory approaches for accurate representation (Kasemsarn, Harrison, & Nickpour, 2023; Hou, 2023). Community engagement and resonance were key trust-building factors; interactive, lived-experience stories were more accepted (Pinto, Park, Miles, & Ong, 2021; Tantucci & Wang, 2021). Participant feedback is summarized below.

Table 2

Summary of Participant Feedback on Emotional Trust and Cultural Representation

Participant feedback	Emotional trust	Cultural representation
Positive engagement	High	Accurate
Mixed emotions	Medium	Stereotypical
Negative reactions	Low	Inaccurate

Emotional Trust in AI-Generated Content

Emotional trust is multifaceted, shaped by individual technology experiences and cultural identity. For Chinese Australians, trust development depends on technical quality and narrative reflection of authentic cultural experiences and emotional depth.

Perceptions of authenticity: Central to emotional trust. Participants highlighted that narratives incorporating cultural nuances, lived experiences, and emotional truths foster trust. Authenticity links to emotional intelligence and mindfulness, enhancing discernment of genuine emotional cues (Tohme & Joseph, 2020). Lack of authentic elements causes detachment and scepticism, undermining credibility. Human control in AI creation significantly boosts trust, as evidence of oversight and ethical intent reassures users (Haupt et al., 2024). AI narratives must be technically proficient and culturally grounded.

Emotional resonance: Key trust determinant. Participants felt connection and empathy when stories reflected their cultural background and shared experiences, consistent with findings that culturally tailored AI storytelling enhances emotional attachment and engagement (Manoharan, 2024). Emotionally engaging stories improve recall and positive attitudes. However, narratives lacking character development or cultural sensitivity led to mistrust and disengagement, highlighting the need for balance.

Perceived morality and ethics: Transparency about human involvement and ethical considerations mitigates negative reactions (Haupt et al., 2024). Trust depends not only on narrative quality but also perceived intentions. For Chinese Australians, assurance that stories respect cultural values and involve community input is essential for sustaining emotional trust.

In summary, emotional trust is shaped by perceived authenticity, emotional resonance, and ethical transparency. Integrating cultural narratives, human oversight, and ethical practices is crucial for fostering trust and engagement.

Perceptions of Authenticity

Authenticity perceptions were shaped by emotional tone and cultural relevance. Narratives reflecting lived experiences and cultural values were more trusted and engaging, consistent with research showing authentic emotional storytelling enhances engagement and recall (Manoharan, 2024). Subtle cultural markers (language, community events, family dynamics) contributed to genuineness.

However, participants expressed scepticism about AI's ability to capture nuanced emotions and cultural subtleties, citing algorithmic bias and misrepresentation risks. Human oversight and ethical intent are vital for mitigating negative reactions and fostering trust (Haupt et al., 2024). Authenticity links to mindfulness and emotional intelligence for discerning genuine cues (Tohme & Joseph, 2020). The interplay between authenticity, emotional resonance, and ethical transparency is critical. AI systems need human input and culturally sensitive design for credible, meaningful narratives, as current technologies often fall short of human-like understanding (Bory, Natale, & Katzenbach, 2024).

Emotional Resonance and Engagement

Emotional resonance determines trust and engagement levels. Culturally tailored narratives strengthened connection and trust. Emotionally engaging, personalized AI stories enhance recall and attachment (Manoharan, 2024). Culturally specific references (language, traditions) amplified relatability and trustworthiness.

Yet, participants cautioned that surface-level personalization does not ensure genuine cultural understanding. AI narratives may lack depth for complex Chinese Australian identity, echoing findings that trust is highest with clear human oversight and ethical intent (Haupt et al., 2024). Dominant AI stories often fail to reflect minority realities (Chubb, Reed, & Cowling, 2022). A nuanced, participatory approach is needed, balancing emotional resonance with authentic cultural representation.

Expressions of Cultural Identity

Cultural identity expression in AI content is shaped by representation accuracy and emotional trust. Participants noted AI often failed to capture layered, evolving identities, defaulting to stereotypes, consistent with algorithms reproducing dominant narratives and overlooking minority pluralities (Chen & Mendy, 2021). This caused exclusion and frustration.

Conversely, some participants felt AI content affirmed their identity when incorporating specific traditions, language, and values, fostering pride and belonging. Culturally sensitive design can support complex identity negotiation (Häkkinen et al., 2020). Personalization adapting to socio-historic context (e.g., local events, cultural symbols) enhanced perceived authenticity and trust.

However, participants worried about AI reinforcing stereotypes, especially without human oversight or community design engagement (Haupt et al., 2024). Ongoing scrutiny and participatory approaches are needed to avoid reductive portrayals. Cultural identity is continually negotiated through technology and society (Chen & Mendy, 2021). Emotional impact links to representation authenticity; resonant narratives strengthen trust and engagement, while generic ones diminish it. Human input and ethics are crucial, as highlighted by human-AI collaboration research (Haupt et al., 2024).

In summary, cultural identity expression depends on cultural sensitivity, narrative authenticity, and emotional trust. Effective AI content must engage with plural, evolving identities for inclusive storytelling.

Representation of Chinese Australian Culture

Representation involves cultural affirmation and misrepresentation risks. Accurate depictions of traditions (festivals, cuisine) fostered pride and validation, supporting cultural identity through meaningful symbols (Chen & Mendy, 2021; Zhang, Chen, Law, & Zhang, 2020).

However, AI often defaulted to stereotypical/superficial portrayals, undermining identity complexity and diversity, leading to exclusion. Cultural identity is plural, intersecting, and dynamic (Chen & Mendy, 2021; Tan, Ward, & Ziaian, 2011). Alienation risks necessitate nuanced, context-aware approaches.

Emotional impact was significant. Content resonating with mental experiences and personal involvement strengthened cultural identity and engagement (Yang et al., 2022). Disconnected narratives diminished trust and identification. Participatory, culturally sensitive AI design is essential for inclusive digital storytelling.

Identity Affirmation Versus Stereotyping

AI content relationship with cultural identity involves tension between affirmation and stereotyping. Culturally nuanced, community-informed narratives empower by reflecting lived experience richness, fostering

emotional trust and belonging (Haupt et al., 2024). However, reductive portrayals persist due to training data biases and AI's tendency toward oversimplified tropes (Bory, Natale, & Katzenbach, 2024).

Some participants felt validated by resonant narratives; others frustrated by simplistic representations. This reflects broader AI narrative challenges where lack of diverse storytellers causes a “story crisis”—a gap between dominant narratives and minority realities (Chubb, Reed, & Cowling, 2022). Without inclusive, context-sensitive approaches, emotional trust erodes, alienating audiences.

Systemic frameworks prioritizing human control, transparency, and participatory design are advocated (Thomas, 2024; Sartori & Theodorou, 2022). Ethical oversight and community involvement can move beyond surface-level representation to genuine identity affirmation, ensuring AI serves inclusion rather than perpetuating stereotypes.

Interplay Between Trust and Identity

Emotional trust and cultural identity have a complex, reciprocal relationship. Trust in narrative honesty and credibility shapes how identity is experienced digitally. Authentic, resonant narratives reinforce positive identity, fostering pride and belonging. Trust lack from misrepresentation causes alienation and weakened cultural connection, highlighting trust as a mediator/barrier in technology-identity formation (Tohme & Joseph, 2020; Chen & Mendy, 2021).

Participants reported narratives reflecting lived experiences and cultural nuances fostered emotional connection and affirmation. Authenticity, underpinned by emotional intelligence and mindfulness, is essential for meaningful engagement (Tohme & Joseph, 2020). Accurate capture of identity diversity made participants feel valued; stereotypes diminished trust and caused “othering”. AI design needs cultural sensitivity and community input to support identity formation (Chen & Mendy, 2021).

Mistrust consequences extend beyond individual disengagement. Negative portrayals bred broader AI scepticism, reinforcing distance from digital environments. This reflects concerns about technology's role in shaping collective identity. AI's failure to capture identity complexity can fragment community narratives and shared meaning (Chen & Mendy, 2021).

Building emotional trust requires deliberate community engagement and transparent, participatory practices. Trust-building principles—creating safe spaces, embodying trustworthiness, shared decision-making (Lansing et al., 2023)—apply to AI narrative design. Collaboration ensures credible, culturally attuned content, supporting narratives that resonate emotionally and affirm evolving identities.

Challenges and Disconnects

Emotional trust decisively influences responses to AI content. Misrepresentations or technical flaws lead to narrative rejection, creating disconnects between identity and AI content. This signals broader identity formation challenges, as mistrust barriers engagement with content and creators (Thomas, 2024).

Negative perceptions erode cultural pride and belonging, especially with stereotypes or cultural insensitivity, causing alienation and platform reluctance (Sartori & Theodorou, 2022). This worsens without human oversight, as content seems lacking credibility and ethics (Haupt et al., 2024). Human control mitigates negative reactions and restores trust by respecting cultural values.

AI's effectiveness in cultural expression depends on conveying emotional authenticity and avoiding reinforced inequalities. Systemic frameworks prioritizing transparency, accountability, and participatory design are necessary for responsible AI use and cultural narrative integrity (Thomas, 2024; Sartori & Theodorou, 2022).

Without safeguards, emotional trust failures can provoke cultural backlash, undermining AI's potential for inclusive communities.

Findings to Literature

Findings reinforce and extend AI ethics, digital storytelling, and identity formation theories. Emotional trust is decisive for cultural identity, echoing that human control and ethical transparency are essential for credibility and positive responses (Haupt et al., 2024). For Chinese Australians, authenticity and resonance directly influence cultural identity acceptance and affirmation. However, authenticity is not fixed but must be contextually defined for multicultural diversity (Thomas, 2024).

The research extends digital storytelling discourse by showing emotional engagement is central to narrative evaluation and internalization. Emotionally engaging AI stories enhance attachment and recall (Manoharan, 2024), but this depends on cultural sensitivity and avoids stereotypes. Emotional dissonance—disconnect between lived experiences and AI content—undermines identity affirmation and fosters scepticism, challenging existing models and necessitating nuanced, participatory AI narrative design.

Findings highlight current ethical frameworks' limitations, often lacking precise guidance for misrepresentation and psychological harm risks in sensitive contexts (Osipov, 2024). Effective AI content must integrate stakeholder participation, ongoing evaluation, and clear ethical standards to protect vulnerable groups and support identity formation. This calls for a shift to context-aware, community-engaged, ethically robust AI narrative models.

Theoretical Implications

This study advances theoretical understanding of emotional trust and cultural identity in AI content. Emotional trust actively mediates engagement with cultural narratives. Authentic, resonant stories foster belonging and reinforce identity; misrepresentation erodes trust and weakens cohesion, highlighting the need to integrate emotional trust as a core digital identity formation component, especially in multicultural contexts where community engagement and trust-building are essential (Tohme & Joseph, 2020; Lansing et al., 2023).

Emotional trust links to authenticity, mindfulness, and emotional intelligence, critical for meaningful digital narrative engagement. Incorporating these psychological dimensions improves theoretical frameworks accounting for trust-identity interactions in AI-mediated environments. Transparent, participatory AI creation practices foster trustworthiness and inclusive community narratives (Lansing et al., 2023). This refined perspective calls for a holistic approach recognizing emotional trust foundations and their cultural identity impact in the digital age.

Practical Implications

To enhance cultural sensitivity and trust, developers should embed human control and ethical oversight throughout content creation. Community advisory boards integrate diverse perspectives, reducing misrepresentation risks and fostering emotional trust. Transparent algorithm and data source disclosure address ethical concerns and build public confidence. Ongoing Chinese Australian community engagement, including feedback and iterative adjustments, supports AI narrative authenticity and acceptance. These measures align with responsible AI best practices, emphasizing human agency, transparency, and participatory design for bias mitigation and fair representation (Haupt et al., 2024; Sartori & Theodorou, 2022; Thomas, 2024).

Conclusion

This study highlights the complex relationship between emotional trust and cultural identity in AI-generated content for Chinese Australians. Findings stress the importance of community engagement and ethical design for accurate representation and trust, supporting inclusive, meaningful digital experiences (Pinto et al., 2021; Bokolo Anthony Jnr, 2023; Kim, Shin, Kim, & Chae, 2023).

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