



# A three-dimensional discourse analysis about the performance of Chinese language media's coverage of Malaysia Madani concepts: A case study of *Sin Chew Daily*

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## ABSTRACT

Malaysian MADANI is a governance philosophy that aligns with the mainstream values of the world and Asia. The Malaysian Chinese must fully understand and implement these concepts as an essential part of the Malaysian population. As an important pillar of the Malaysian Chinese community, the Chinese-language media is responsible for reporting on the MADANI concepts to the target audience. This study selected *Sin Chew Daily*, the most widely read Chinese-language media in Malaysia, as the research subject. A sample of 100 articles was selected using quota purposive sampling, based on ten news topics: politics, economy, culture, cases, education, social issues, health & wellness, entertainment, sports, and overseas. Through a three-dimensional discourse analysis, the researchers found that *Sin Chew Daily* was more prominent in reporting the concept of kindness and weaker in reporting the concept of trust and creativity. Netizens' feedback showed that netizens had the richest emotional feedback on social issues and sports news, while there was more criticism and sarcasm on politics and education. The study shows a positive correlation between the reading volume of news texts and the accompanying videos. In the future, Chinese-language media should highlight trust between races in their reporting guidelines, increase coverage of creative news, and reduce the use of conflict-inducing headlines, which inspire Chinese netizens to feel negatively about the country, society and other races. Regarding text production, Malaysian Chinese-language media should increase the proportion of high-quality videos and infographics to attract the Generation Z audience.

**Keywords:** *Three-dimensional analysis, Malaysia MADANI, Sin Chew Daily, Malaysian Chinese-language media*

## INTRODUCTION

On January 9, 2023, Malaysia's 10th Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, officially introduced the Malaysia MADANI (hereafter referred to as MADANI) framework—a policy and governance philosophy. MADANI serves as a crucial guiding principle for the nation's development vision, embodying the values of *kemanpanan* (sustainability), *kesejahteraan* (well-being), *daya cipta* (creativity), *hormat* (respect), *keyakinan* (trust), and *ihsan* (kindness) (Prime Minister's Office [PMO], 2023).

As a multi-ethnic nation, Malaysia's development vision hinges on the unity of its diverse ethnic groups. According to the data provided by OpenDOSM, the official demographic website of Malaysia, the Chinese community, with a population of 6.86 million as of 2024, has fallen to 20%, which suggests it is linked to a national identity crisis among the Chinese (Bing et al., 2021). Reshaping the Chinese national identity in Malaysia is one of the significant issues facing the Malaysian Chinese-language media.

Chinese-language media, Chinese organisations, Chinese business community, and Chinese education constitute the four pillars of the Chinese community in Malaysia (Kuik, 2024). Among these, Chinese-language media is irreplaceable in disseminating information, shaping public opinion, fostering social consensus, and conveying the Chinese perspective (Ng & Lee, 2018a).

Given that cross-platform communication has emerged as a crucial channel for traditional media to attract advertisements and users, this study integrates netizens' feedback from *Sin Chew Daily's* (hereafter referred to as SCD) Facebook account into the discourse analysis phase. This involves systematically collecting and analysing comments and reactions to news posts related to the MADANI concepts, thereby exploring the mindset of Malaysian Chinese netizens in engaging with news through the lens of discourse practices.

This study is based on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional discourse model: "text—discourse practice—social practice" (Norman, 2003a). Using a combination of content analysis, textual analysis, and discourse analysis, it explores the performance of SCD in reporting the MADANI concepts and the mechanism of discourse practice in the Chinese-language media.

In the three-dimensional discourse analysis model, textual analysis mainly refers to the specific characterisation of the text, such as vocabulary, grammar, and text structure (Teun, 2003). News text analysis based on the MADANI concepts can start with news headlines, the relevance of news themes to the MADANI concepts, news genres, embedded vocabulary, grammar, and semantics.

Text is the basis of discourse analysis and plays a role in discourse construction. Discourse practice focuses on text production, dissemination, and reception and bridges textual discourse and social practice analysis. It can analyse the dynamic process of producing and disseminating discourse meaning (Norman, 2003b).

Discursive practice is a specific form of social practice, which may consist entirely of discursive practices or involve a mixture of discursive and non-discursive practices. The analysis of a particular discourse as a discursive practice focuses on the processes of textual production, distribution, and consumption, all of which are social and need to be related to the particular economic, political, and institutional contexts in which the discourse is produced (Meng, 2014).

The framing theory focuses on analyses of textual construction, interpretation, and discourse production. Both discourse and framing analyses emphasise a broader field of inquiry into news production, news reception, and their interrelationships. The “text—discourse practice—social practice” model is a complex web of relationships: text gives birth to discourse practice, discourse practice shapes social practice, and social practice is influenced by text and discourse practice in a continuous cycle (Ning & Chang, 2024). This study aims to analyse SCD’s coverage on the MADANI concepts and provide a deeper understanding of the content production mechanism in Malaysia’s Chinese-language media.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Malaysia MADANI*

MADANI underscores the profound respect for human rights in Malaysia, echoing universal principles cherished worldwide. Through its principles and practices, the Madani society is a beacon of ethical conduct and communal welfare. This influence is a testament to the rich moral fabric inherent in Islam when practised conscientiously. From an epistemological point of view, both commonalities and differences between the Madani society and civic society are the terms used in the discourse system of the Western world (Jaafar & Aziz, 2023). Madani and Madani society are deeply rooted in religious concepts, and Madani people refer to individuals who build, live, and fulfil their lives within Madani society, upholding spiritual and moral values. Further, the Madani society, with its democratic nature, means more humane, more tolerant, and more advocates for people to do good (Lubis et al., 2023).

### *Sin Chew Daily (SCD)*

For over a century, SCD has uniquely contributed to nurturing and evolving the Chinese culture in Malaysia. As Kuik (2024) highlighted, SCD is not merely a business entity but a crucial public instrument for the Chinese community.

This study delves into the historical journey of SCD, founded in Singapore in 1929 by Chinese philanthropist Aw Boon Haw. The newspaper’s establishment of an office in Kuala Lumpur in the early 1950s marked a significant chapter in the development of Chinese culture in Malaysia (Sin, 2013).

After 95 years of development in Malaysia, SCD has become the most influential Chinese-language media. The Malaysian media system is strictly regulated and vital to maintaining social stability and cohesion. The press also practices self-censorship as a necessary instrument in their editorial work (Dauda & Hasan, 2018).

### *Studies on Malaysian Chinese-language media, particularly Sin Chew Daily*

SCD is a pivotal entity in the realm of Malaysian Chinese-language media. In current studies of Malaysian Chinese-language media and SCD, scholars have predominantly employed content analysis, thematic analysis, and interviews (Jerome, 2024; Ng & Lee, 2018a; Othman et al., 2018). Ng and Lee’s research delved into the SCD’s role as a bridge between the Chinese community, other ethnic groups, and the Malaysian government. It explored how the newspaper articulated the cultural, educational, and

linguistic needs of Malaysian Chinese, thereby preventing their marginalisation. The study also scrutinised the delicate balance SCD maintains in its relationship with state power and opposition political power during general elections, where its impartial news coverage across the political spectrum reflects its cautious approach (Ng & Lee, 2018b; Su et al., 2020).

Ambikapathy and Zanuddin (2019) discovered through the content analysis approach that SCD, in its reporting on the terrorism crisis, predominantly presented negative news, focusing on the attribution of critical framework and issue-based reporting. When reporting on the Malaysian government's campaign to introduce Jawi calligraphy and khat in the Malay language curriculum in Chinese schools, SCD adhered to the law and fulfilled its role as a platform for public discussion. This approach, which allowed for disagreement and aimed to pacify the Chinese community's dissatisfaction with the Jawi calligraphy campaign, underscores the newspaper's commitment to ethical reporting (Lee & Wong, 2022).

However, Wen et al. (2020) found that the concentration of ownership in SCD is disturbing. Political considerations are central to SCD's news coverage, and issues are emotionally manipulated to attract readers' attention.

The thematic analysis of netizens' discussions on social media and its impact on the Malaysian national mindset is a study that provides crucial insights. Jerome et al. (2024) found that social media is a platform for Malaysians to participate in national discourse. Their research reveals that netizens' comments often reflect the persistence of racial/ethnic prejudice, stereotyping, and oppression in Malaysia. This underscores the pressing need for inclusive policies, respectful dialogue, and collective action to foster harmony and equity in the Malaysian Chinese society.

## METHODS

### *The conceptualisation of Malaysia MADANI concept and media performance*

The MADANI concepts are divided into six indicators: sustainability, modernity, creativity, respect, trust and kindness (PMO, 2023). To understand whether the media conveyed these concepts, the study examined if the news content met the following criteria:

1. Contributes valuable content for the sustainable development of Malaysian society;
2. Reflects the concept of modernity such as democracy, freedom, equality, rule of law and openness;
3. Reflects creativity in some aspect;
4. Expresses respect for people, races or nations;
5. Expresses trust in people, races or nations;
6. Expresses kindness towards people or the world.

Media performance is evaluated in five key areas: headline, relevance of the news topics and the MADANI concepts, netizens' feedback, as well as the application of comment filters and text genres. Building on previous studies, this study classified news headlines into six categories: constructive, action-oriented, comparative, introductory, opinionated, and contradictory (Ning & Chang, 2024).

1. Constructive headlines mean that the headlines are rhetorical from the point of view of being beneficial to the development of the country and society;

2. Action-oriented headlines refer to headlines that advocate or express a specific action;
3. Contrastive headlines refer to headlines that compare the characteristics of people or things;
4. Introductory headlines refer to headlines that objectively state a fact or phenomenon;
5. Opinionated headlines refer to headlines that include a judgemental sentence with a complete subject-verb-object component;
6. Contradictory headlines refer to news headlines containing elements that provoke debate among different groups.

Based on the three-dimensional discourse model, which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding communication dynamics, netizens' feedback is integral to media performance. This study categorised netizens' feedback into ten types based on the feedback information and expression sheets provided by SCD: read, like, happy, surprising, sympathetic, critical, ironic, angry, doubtful and sad.

The presence or absence of filtering of netizen comments is a significant indicator of media performance. Media performance also includes text genres: 1) straight news, 2) straight news and pictures, 3) straight news, pictures, and video, 4) feature and pictures, 5) feature, pictures, and video, 6) editorial, and 7) supplement.

### *Sample*

This study utilised purposive quota sampling (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024) to analyse 100 manually selected pieces of coverage from SCD between August 2023 and August 2024 as representative samples. From the extensive SCD coverage, 100 samples were chosen, encompassing a broad range of 10 topics, including politics, economy, culture, legal cases, social issues, education, health and wellness, entertainment, sports, and overseas news, following thorough and intensive reading, coupled with careful screening. The classification of news topics adheres to the printed version of SCD and the classification standards of the website. As a cross-cultural study, the limited sample size enables researchers to examine the samples' political, economic, and cultural contexts through the three dimensions of text, discourse practice, and social practice. Purposive quota sampling was conducted to analyse each topic with an equal number of samples, so that the research results on different types of news topics were more comparable.

### *Coding*

Regarding the scoring of the type of headlines, one point is awarded if the headline corresponds to one of the conceptual options. Still, it cannot be ruled out that some headlines do not correspond to any option, and some headlines correspond to more than one (divide the total score of 100 by 6; the mean of this item is 16.67%).

In regard to the relevance of news topics and MADANI concepts, the latter are significant as they provide a framework for evaluating the relevance of news topics. If the news is relevant to one of the MADANI concepts, it counts as 1 point, up to a maximum of 6 points (Divide the total score of 100 by 6; the mean of this item is 16.67%).

Netizens' feedback is divided into 10 indicators according to general behaviour. Read or like more than 10 K counts as 10 points; between 5 K and 10 K, the score is distributed between 5–9; for every increment of 1 K, the score is added to one on top of 5. Read and like between 100–5 K, less than 1 K counts as 1 point, and for every increase of 1 K, the score is added 1 on top of 1. The emotional bias of netizens' feedback is based

on the number of netizens clicking on the emoticon below SCD news and the emotional bias of the message, and each emotional bias is counted from 1–5 points according to the strength of the emotional bias. Finally, the value of each item must be divided by a maximum value of 500.

The filtering of netizen comments is a means of controlling and guiding public opinion in the media. In this study, we set up a question, “whether to filter comments” (Yes=1, No=0) to understand how public opinion is managed in the coverage we analysed. With respect to text genres, one point for each news item corresponds to only one of the seven text genres mentioned in the conceptualisation process.

### *Inter-coder reliability*

The news and netizens' feedback on SCD between August 2023 and August 2024 were meticulously reviewed by one of the critical observers (one researcher of this study). All the filtered news samples and netizens' comments were recorded, identified, and analysed. The preliminary analysis of five indicators, such as the type of news headline, the news' relevance to the MADANI concepts, the statistics of netizens' feedback, whether the comments were filtered or not, and the text genres were assigned with utmost care and attention to detail.

To ensure objectivity and minimal bias, a second Chinese observer (unrelated to the first observer) was provided with the same coding form and instructions. This observer was asked to recode 10% of the total sample. The collaboration between the two observers and the assessment of intra-coder reliability underscores this study's rigorous and impartial nature. The formula for inter- and intra-coder reliability was as follows (Fong & Zolkepli, 2019; Zuppa et al., 2003).

$$\frac{\text{Number of Agreements} \times 100\%}{\text{Number of Agreements} + \text{Number of Disagreements}}$$

Inter-coder reliability was found to be 90 %, and intra-coder reliability was 95%.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Types of headlines*

According to Teun (1988), a headline is not just a summary of a news text, but a crucial tool used by journalists to present the most essential information. Thus, the headlines in SCD not only reflect critical news information but also imply the newsroom's ideological orientation.

Table 1 reveals that SCD prefers to use opinionated headlines, especially in health and wellness, economy, culture and education, where the newspaper aims to provide opinions directly to netizens, acknowledging their role in shaping public discourse. The results show a moderate proportion of introductory and contradictory headlines, with entertainment news mainly using introductory headlines while education and entertainment news preferring contradictory headlines to induce netizens to express their views on the education system and celebrity anecdotes. In addition, there needs to be more action-oriented headlines focusing on politics and cases. SCD used constructive and comparative headlines the least.

**Table 1.** Distribution of types of SCD news headlines

Types of headlines	Proportion of types corresponding to each type of headline (%)					
	Constructive	Action-oriented	Comparative	Introductory	Opinionated	Contradictory
Politics	10	20	0	10	30	30
Economy	20	0	30	20	60	20
Culture	0	30	0	10	60	20
Cases	0	40	0	30	30	30
Social issues	10	0	0	30	40	10
Education	10	0	0	0	50	40
Health & wellness	0	0	0	30	70	0
Entertainment	0	0	10	80	10	40
Sports	10	10	40	40	40	20
Overseas	20	30	10	30	20	30
Average (%)	8	13	6	22	41	20

***Relevance between SCD’s coverage and MADANI concepts***

Table 2 reveals a significant correlation between SCD’s coverage and MADANI concepts. Notably, kindness scored the highest (24%). While scoring the lowest (8%), trust still contributed to the overall average of 18.19%. Among the 10 news topics, politics, sports, education, and culture coverage strongly correlated with MADANI concepts. Health and wellness coverage reflects modernity and friendliness and contributes to this optimistic outlook. In contrast, entertainment news had the lowest relevance with MADANI concepts.

Regarding sustainability, SCD’s economic reports reflect a more constructive approach, with more in-depth coverage of Malaysian technology, semiconductors, oil palm, and tourism. This comprehensive coverage is conducive to promoting the optimisation and diversification of Malaysia’s economic structure. However, it is essential to note that these reports have a lower reading volume, indicating a potential for improvement in reaching a wider audience. It demonstrates Malaysia’s proactive attitude towards building long-lasting cooperative relationships with other countries regarding overseas news. Other types of coverage allow much room for improvement in covering sustainability.

Regarding the coverage of modernity, SCD excels in politics, health and wellness topics. In terms of political issues, SCD has paid more attention to anti-corruption, democratic elections, and countering extremist rhetoric to strengthen the Malaysian political system and promote transparency in elections and decision-making. This focus directly responds to the audience’s interest and engagement in political issues. In terms of health and wellness, SCD has launched the ‘Medical Knowledge’ section in response to the ageing population in Malaysia, providing scientific treatment and healthcare measures for common diseases in Malaysia, as well as recommending authoritative medical organisations and medicines, reflecting the modernisation of Malaysia’s medical standards. In contrast, netizens are likelier to read about and participate in political issues and are less likely to pay attention to health and wellness issues.

Regarding the coverage of creativity, the correlation between the selected samples and creative themes is lower than the mean value, with the main topics distributed in economy, culture and sports. The correlation was determined using a quantitative

analysis of the frequency and context of creative themes in the selected samples. Policies or measures such as Malaysia's focus on the development of the semiconductor industry, the diversification of the oil palm industry, and MM2H reflect more obvious creativity. In the Chinese culture, Malaysian Chinese novels, films, the art of papier-mâché, and calligraphy embody the concepts of compassion, freedom, caring, equality, and inheritance, demonstrating the vitality and creativity of the Chinese culture. However, most netizens lack cultural and artistic knowledge, and thus, the reading volume of such topics is relatively low. In the area of sports, the article titled *Chinese Primary School Borrowed Troops from National Primary School to Fight in the Basketball Tournament of the School League and Surprisingly Won Champion and Runner-up* became an overnight sensation (Chan, 2024), with netizens showing extraordinary enthusiasm, believing that the story embodied national unity and that it was a very creative initiative.

The political, cultural and sports coverage in SCD is more prominent in reflecting respect, with a 19% correlation between the sample and respect. Political news expressed values such as patriotism, support for the constitutional monarchy, respect for the head of state and the prime minister, respect for the law and institutions, and the importance of unity. For example, one of the discourses of SCD expressed respect for the new film classification system, Lembaga Penapis Filem, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the police. On the cultural front, relevant coverage showed respect for Chinese writers, directors, folk artists, cultural activities, literary works, and urban culture. In sports, the coverage displayed appreciation for national athletes, sports fans, and multiculturalism. However, in sports coverage, public opinion was oriented towards "opposing the quota system", a stance that challenges the fairness and inclusivity of the sports system.

The relevance between the coverage and trust in the sample is only 8%, focusing mainly on culture, education and sports. In culture and education, there are more activities planned by the media with the participation of commercial organisations and netizens, as well as social cohesion activities with high reading volume, likes, comments, and retweets if they can attract the involvement of students. For example, campaigns such as *I Am a Storyteller of Liushudi* (A famous novel about the Chinese community in Malaysia written by Malaysian Chinese writer Li Zishu) and *I Love the Chinese Language, I Test the Chinese Language* have attracted the participation of secondary school students. The forwarding rate and favourable comment rate increased significantly.

The relevance between the coverage and kindness is 24%. The coverage of health and wellness, education, and social issues was significantly relevant to kindness. The health and wellness category focused on the well-being of Malaysian citizens and collaborated with medical organisations or pharmaceutical companies. The media coverage in this category provided information and promoted kindness by encouraging empathy and understanding towards those in need. The education category mainly focused on the development and construction of Chinese primary schools, which, at the discourse level, reflects the concept of inclusiveness and kindness in Chinese primary schools. In addition, the sample focused more on students' mental health and academic development, campus welfare and fairness in higher education. In social issues, it can be seen that the high rate of car accidents in Malaysia, the frequent occurrence of disasters due to poor infrastructure or production facilities, and the high frequency of car accidents or difficulties in life for nationals who commute to Singapore for work via the Johor-Singapore Causeway, all trigger the attention and sympathy of netizens.

The theme of kindness is more prominent than the themes of trust and creativity, mainly because of the Buddhist belief and the effects of the Confucian and Islamic culture amongst the Malaysian Chinese community, and reports that arouse emotion can easily attract audience engagement. On the other hand, Malaysian Chinese’s reflection of historical events and attachment to immediate interests influence their attention to trust and creativity.

**Table 2.** Relevance values between SCD’s coverage and MADANI concepts

Types of headlines	Relevance between SCD’s coverage and MADANI concepts (%)					
	Sustainability	Modernity	Creativity	Respect	Trust	Kindness
Politics	30	60	0	40	10	10
Economy	70	20	30	0	0	10
Culture	30	20	50	30	20	20
Cases	30	30	0	10	0	0
Social issues	0	30	0	10	10	40
Education	10	20	0	40	20	50
Health & wellness	0	50	30	0	0	100
Entertainment	0	0	20	10	0	0
Sports	10	10	10	30	20	20
Overseas	20	0	0	20	10	0
Average (%)	20	23	14	19	8	23

Regarding reading volume, social news and sports issues were the most attractive news genres to netizens, in other words, active internet users. Politics, entertainment, international news, education, and economic news were of average interest, in contrast to news topics such as cases, culture, and health and wellness which were of low interest among netizens.

From the emotional values of the netizens’ feedback, the researchers believe that netizens develop a habitual liking behaviour. In the sample, even for tragedies or adverse events, the number of netizens’ likes was still high, which can be inferred that the netizens’ liking behaviour may be a habit, as in the like button ranks first among all emotions. In addition, criticism was the second most popular feedback emotion for netizens after watching the news. After sports, netizens’ comments showed strong criticism (15.2%) towards politics, economy, society and entertainment news, plus satire accounts (6.8%), and more than one-fifth of netizens expressed negative emotions after the news; the most favourite comment shared was the sarcastic comment “This is a magical country”.

One of the most striking findings is the significant emotional response elicited by sports news. This type stands out in its ability to stimulate positive and negative emotions, making it a powerful tool for engaging netizens. Another observation is that the emotional feedback of netizens shows that when it comes to conflict issues with other countries, the patriotic feelings of Malaysian Chinese are pronounced, but the motivation to improve national competitiveness in economy and sports is insufficient.

**Table 3.** Netizens' feedback on different news types in SCD

Types of headlines	Netizens' feedback value on different news types in SCD									
	R	L	H	S <sub>1</sub>	S <sub>2</sub>	C	I	A	D	S
Politics	44	18	0	0	2	26	14	8	2	0
Economy	32	16	8	4	8	20	0	2	0	0
Culture	28	28	2	2	0	10	8	2	4	0
Cases	24	20	8	4	4	20	10	4	2	0
Social issues	54	35	16	8	10	4	6	4	6	6
Education	34	28	2	0	0	10	2	2	2	0
Health & wellness	20	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Entertainment	42	40	8	6	2	16	4	4	6	0
Sports	90	88	34	14	2	34	10	0	0	18
Overseas	38	16	10	6	6	12	14	2	8	4
Average (%)	46	38.4	8.8	4.4	3.4	15.2	6.8	2.8	3	2.8

Note: (R = read, L = like, H = happy, S<sub>1</sub> = surprising, S<sub>2</sub> = sympathetic, C = critical, I = ironic, A = angry, D = doubtful, S = sad)

The study results show that 66% of the coverage in the sample had comments actively filtered by editors. International, political and entertainment news had the most filtered comments. The researchers found that the main reasons for filtering netizen comments were to avoid problems with authorities or the party being criticised, to avoid international disputes, to avoid excessively amplified negative emotions, and due to certain celebrity public relations practices. On the other hand, culture, health and wellness news hardly had filtered comments because such news triggered very few netizen comments, and there was no need for filtering. Editors also did not filter comments if the news was particularly sensational and did not attract negative comments.

### *Text genres*

The findings on the distribution of text genres in SCD are significant. Straight news accounted for 4%, straight news and pictures for 67%, straight news and pictures and videos for 7%, feature and pictures for 13%, feature and pictures and videos for 6%, editorial for 2%, and supplement for 1%. While influenced by the researcher's sampling method, this distribution also indicates that traditional news production habits persist in the digital age, with news shared on social media often linked to static content on the newspaper's website.

Table 4 shows that for SCD, the correlation value between text reading volume and accompanied video is 0.269, indicating a significant positive correlation. The correlation value between text reading volume with no accompanying video is -0.218, a non-significant negative correlation. This suggests that the importance of news topics, controversy, and relevance to Chinese life and entertainment primarily influenced the reading volume. Furthermore, our findings indicate that improving matched video quality can increase reading volume.

**Table 4.** Correlation between reading volume and news with video as well as news without video

		<b>Correlations</b>					
		read			add video		
		read	add video		read	no video	
Reading volume	Pearson Correlation	1	.269**	Reading volume	Pearson Correlation	1	-.218*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.007		Sig. (2-tailed)		.029
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	545.000	21.100		Sum of Squares and Cross-products	545.000	-17.100
	Covariance	5.505	.213		Covariance	5.505	-.173
	N	100	100		N	100	100
Add video	Pearson Correlation			No video	Pearson Correlation	-.218*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)				Sig. (2-tailed)	.029	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products				Sum of Squares and Cross-products	-17.100	11.310
	Covariance				Covariance	-.173	.114
	N				N	100	100

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## CONCLUSION

### *Room for improvement*

When covering MADANI concepts, Malaysian Chinese-language media should focus more on its positive impact on society and highlight the topics contributing to political fairness, economic development, cultural openness, technological prowess, and educational modernisation. This approach will help to balance the public space, steering away from excessive social news and domestic trivia. In terms of headline production, while clickbait has its rationale, constructive, comparative and action-oriented headlines imply the media’s philosophy of serving the country’s development, a complete understanding of the context of the news, and a responsible attitude.

SCD is very prominent in reporting on kindness. With its roots in Malaysia for nearly a century, the Malaysian Chinese-language media has not only inherited the concept of “benevolence” from the Confucian culture (Thock, 2024) but has also been influenced by “kindnesses” from the Islamic culture. In addition, SCD, which espouses “justice above all, love on earth”, continues to present elements of kindness in its coverage on politics, economy, culture, sports, social news and welfare. Netizens are happy to express their goodwill through comments on news about weddings and funerals, implied accidents and personal struggles. In addition, the health and wellness coverage in SCD is also written with quality, incorporating interviews with senior professionals, tips on prevention and treatment for the ageing population and common diseases in Malaysia,

as well as recommendations on authoritative research, treatment institutes and reliable medicines. However, the full-page feature stories require high literacy and patience. Thus, it is recommended that the reading volume be increased in the future through lightweight, video-based and mobile-based bite-sized information.

While the role of Malaysian Chinese-language media in covering MADANI is significant, it is limited. The Madani society can only progress by building institutions and endogenous dynamics for its development. This includes granting equal political, economic, cultural, and educational rights to different races and stimulating each citizen's enthusiasm to contribute to the country.

### ***Responsibility to foster a healthy netizen mindset***

Social media serves as a vital platform for SCD to attract attention; however, filtering comments is necessary for managing its social media presence. This study reveals that 66% of the stories featured filtered comments. The comments reflect the media's intended attitudes, while those that may incite international disputes, foster negative sentiments, or excessively criticise the government and political figures are subject to filtration. In contrast, entertainment news that utilises celebrities to promote Malaysia's tourism typically does not have filtered comments and is frequently amplified by the algorithm. Comments that are overly critical of celebrities are generally filtered out.

Netizens' feedback significantly reflects and influences public opinion, with their comments gauging the news' appeal. While metrics such as reads and likes are unaltered by media intervention, netizens' comments can be strategically influenced; those that align with the media's stance are retained, whereas excessively aggressive or adverse comments are often filtered out. Thus, the comments that remain also reflect the media's positioning. However, netizens' comments are frequently characterised by arbitrariness, colloquialism, vagueness, trend-following, and a rebellious spirit. For instance, although netizens commonly express dissatisfaction with adjustments to national policies or regulations in Malaysia, few provide constructive suggestions regarding the issues presented in the news. This critical perspective is further intensified by SCD's tendency not to filter comments on topics related to opposition to the quota system and criticisms of previous political figures.

The netizen comments confirm that there are many *sourpusses* in Malaysia. So-called *sourpusses* are netizens who like to make snarky comments on things without caring whether their comments are right or wrong. Part of the reason for being a *sourpuss* could be that Malaysian Chinese have not been treated fairly as citizens in all aspects of life and have slowly developed a mentality of distrust towards the system, policies, politicians and successful people.

### ***Study implications***

This study enhances our understanding of the Malaysian Chinese-language media, especially how SCD covers MADANI concepts. The MADANI concepts, which promote moderation, inclusivity, and balance, are key principles in the Malaysian society. The study also analyses feedback from netizens to infer the mindset of Malaysian Chinese netizens and suggests ways for Chinese media to convey the MADANI concepts better.

While this study found areas where SCD could improve in conveying the concepts of trust and creativity, it also revealed that the newspaper functioned beyond the

expected means in communicating the concepts of sustainability, modernity, respect, and kindness. In addition, this study suggests significant potential for improvement in the coverage of MADANI concepts. The Malaysian Chinese-language media should cover more multi-ethnic issues to improve the exchanges and dialogues between the Chinese and other ethnic groups. In terms of news operation practices, the Malaysian Chinese-language media should strengthen the proportion of constructive, action-oriented, and comparative headlines, use more diversified perspectives and sources, and control the proportion of opinionated headlines to ensure the objectivity and fairness of the news.

Consistent with the conclusions of Wen et al. (2020), this study also found SCD's practice of using emotional reporting techniques to capture readers' attention. However, sensationalised reporting is not conducive to readers' understanding of in-depth information and truth and does not help solve the problem, so SCD should reduce its coverage of sensational issues and focus more on a framework that promotes problem-solving. This shift in focus refers to not just a change in content, but a strategic move towards promoting the building of a MADANI society in Malaysia, a role in which the media plays a significant part.

This study explored the social mindset of Malaysian Chinese netizens through their feedback. Among the netizens' emotions counted, the top two are likes and criticisms. Through the discourse analysis, it is found that there is a group of sourpusses who tend to make critical and sarcastic comments after a news is posted. These individuals reflect distortions in the Malaysian Chinese mindset who did not receive equal national treatment. This phenomenon should be taken seriously by those in power in Malaysia as the media's opinionated and contradictory headlines tend to reinforce the sourpusses' mindset.

This study also discusses the delicate balance that needs to be struck in media filtering. While moderate filtering can improve the efficiency of news reading, filtering comments in accordance with the media's political stance and interests can negatively affect the credibility of the media and the freedom of expression of netizens. It is a complex issue requiring a balanced approach to maintain the credibility and freedom of expression.

The study of text genres indicates that enhancing content stickiness in the new media era requires a synthesis of the in-depth characteristic of traditional media and the lightness and mobility of new media. Findings reveal that video and live streaming significantly improve reading volume. However, this is not an absolute framework; Malaysian Chinese-language media outlets should prioritise the news topic's appeal, the content's depth, and the effectiveness of lightweight, visual communication.

### *Limitations and future research*

This study meticulously analysed the performance of the Malaysian Chinese-language media, SCD in conveying the MADANI concepts over one year. Despite limitations in time, sample size, and media selection, the findings of this study are significant. A longer time and larger sample size could have led to more precise conclusions. A cross-cultural comparison between other media such as *Nanyang Siang Pau*, *China Press*, *The Star*, and *Malaysia Nanban* would have enriched the findings further.

Moreover, while this study is limited by its methodology, it focuses on news headlines, news topics, netizens' feedback and text genres. Thus, introducing big data and

artificial intelligence into the study could potentially lead to more comprehensive and convincing conclusions, offering a promising direction for future research.

Finally, this study is geographically confined to Malaysia, which has a unique political and cultural context. Future comparative studies of Malaysian media coverage with media coverage in similar countries could support and validate the findings further and contribute to a richer and more complex understanding of the propaganda role of mainstream media globally.

In conclusion, while this study has provided a preliminary exploration of how the Malaysian Chinese-language media covers MADANI concepts, future comparative studies and big data analyses are needed to comprehensively understand how the media in multiracial countries can report on the country's mainstream values as well as promote social cohesion and development.

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