

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Role of Social Media in Shaping Cultural Intelligence among Expatriates

Duan Yao<sup>1\*</sup>, Lily Suriani Mohd Arif<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup> Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, School of Human Resource Development and Psychology, Johor Bahru, 81310, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup> Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities, Johor Bahru, 81310, Malaysia

\* Corresponding author: Duan Yao, shamslovesun@outlook.com

## ABSTRACT

With global assignments emerging as a common aspect of the multinational enterprise, the capacity of the employees to adjust successfully to culturally diverse working environments has become all the more important. Cultural intelligence (CQ), which is a multidimensional ability that is defined as having metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions, is commonly known as a prime predictor of expatriate adjustment and performance. Although the previous studies have focused on the conventional antecedents of CQ, which include international experience, proficiency in language, and formal training, the importance of social media as a digital channel of cross-cultural learning is not intensively studied; in addition, it is important to consider platform-related aspects of this learning. The present research is a study that examines the connection between cultural intelligence utilizing four dimensions and social media use among the Korean expatriates working in Beijing, using WeChat as the center of study. The survey data were gathered with the help of a quantitative cross-sectional survey design of 124 expatriates working in the Korean-owned companies. Measures of cultural intelligence were done using the Short Form Cultural Intelligence Scale and meeting social media was operationalized in terms of informational and socializing WeChat activities. Regression analyses indicate that the effects are differentiated. The belief in the use of social media demonstrates that it has a significant positive correlation with cognitive CQ ( $b = 0.45, p < 0.001$ ) and motivational CQ ( $b = 0.414, p < 0.001$ ): the use of the platform facilitates the acquisition of cultural knowledge and the motivation to engage in intercultural interaction. Conversely, the use of social media is neither positively related to metacognitive CQ ( $b = [?]0.012, p < 0.05$ ) nor behavioral CQ ( $b = [?]0.053, p < 0.05$ ) thus, the implication is that it has little impact on reflective cultural strategy and adaptive behavioral enactment. These results reveal that social media is more of an informational and a confidence-building tool and not a complete process of building deeper levels of intercultural competence. The present research contributes to the current knowledge regarding the role of digital tools in selectively facilitating the development of expatriate capability and emphasizes the significance of balancing the learning process based on social media with the use of structured interaction, feedback, and reflective practices by placing the inquiry into the platform-specific China-based context of CQ analysis.

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**Keywords:** Cultural intelligence; social media use; expatriate adjustment; cross-cultural adaptation; WeChat; multinational organizations

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## 1. Introduction

International work is no longer something special but a normal process. Multinational corporations (MNCs) are increasingly relying on international assignments to incorporate operations, knowledge, and remain competitive in the international distributed markets. Meanwhile, the globalization has increased cultural diversity within companies, and there will be an incessant need to find employees to operate successfully at both sides of the cultural border. This is not being done on large scale and organizations have still been reporting challenges with recruiting, preparing and supporting individuals in cross-cultural jobs <sup>[1]</sup>.

Cultural intelligence (CQ), which is usually perceived as the ability of a person to adjust appropriately to new cultural settings, is one of the skills that have been repeatedly associated with success in culturally diverse situations. One of the most appealing points is that CQ is considered as developable by learning and experience as opposed to other personality traits which are more stable. Nevertheless, despite the possibility of the development of CQ, there is still an intractable practical issue: the organizations still require scalable and cost-effective means of facilitating cross-cultural learning in real-time, not only in pre-departure training courses. This is where the contemporary digital space is difficult to neglect <sup>[2]</sup>. The social media has altered the way individuals meet, perceive, and engage in the cultural living. Social media platforms are interactive systems as opposed to traditional media as the user is the content producer, they interact with others and build networks that may cut across cultural borders.

Theoretically, this would provide an unceasing micro-learned situation where expatriates would be able to view host-country norms, obtain local information, experiment with interpretations, and retain social support. Places may also offer snapshots of culture (what they are talking about, their response, which behavior they praise or criticize) and ambiguity can be minimized as they receive a practical set of instructions about how to live their day-to-day life <sup>[3]</sup>. This round-the-clock connectivity can be of particular importance to globally mobile employees, who may need it as much as formal training, once they are already in the country and the issues of adaptation become tangible. Nevertheless, there is no direct connection between social media and CQ, and the previous literature has significant gaps. To begin with, the bulk of the existing CQ literature has been devoted to the conventional predictors like international experience, language proficiency and formal cross-cultural training, whereas the evidence on digital pathways is relatively little.

Second, in reference to social media, a CQ is frequently viewed as one of the outcomes, despite the fact that CQ is a common theoretical construct that is multi-dimensional (metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioral). When these aspects have varied psychological processes, they cannot be anticipated to react in a similar manner to the exposure to social media. Third, the social media use context is significant. The digital ecosystem is country-specific, and China is a country offering a unique environment: <sup>[4]</sup> the world-facing platforms are less available, and the local super-app ecosystems prevail. Social media can then play a more of a local information infrastructure than a globally varied intercultural space of interaction.

The proposed paper will solve these problems by looking at the connection between social media usage and the four dimensions of cultural intelligence among Korean expats in Beijing, with WeChat as a key platform. WeChat is highly integrated as a part of Chinese daily life, as it provides messaging, group communication, information exchange, and functionality of services which expatriates might use to adapt to their work and personal life. The group of expatriates is also theoretically rich: expatriates frequently experience pressure to perform highly, pressure to adjust within a short time, and their access to social

networks in the host country is usually unequal. This is why it is conceivable that the use of social media may be a crucial asset, but it is also conceivable that social media may affirm co-national comfort zones, instead of increasing intercultural contact.

### **1.1. Research problem and research question**

The main issue that drives the study is the importance of social media usage in the process of cultivating cultural intelligence in the expatriate situations, and in the case, which aspects of CQ are influenced the most. Discussion There is a lack of clarity on whether the use of social media predicts (a) reflective cultural awareness and strategy (metacognitive CQ), (b) cultural knowledge (cognitive CQ), (c) drive and self-efficacy to engage in intercultural interaction (motivational CQ), and (d) enactment of culturally appropriate behavior (behavioral CQ) despite existing dialogues that propose that social media may enhance exposure to cultural information and create confidence to operate in a cross-cultural context. The difference is important: an employee can hear about the host culture (cognitive CQ) and feel an urge to act (motivational CQ) without acquiring proper cultural self-monitoring (metacognitive CQ) and acting according to the expectations of the host location (behavioral CQ).

Accordingly, this study asks:

*RQ: How much do social media use predict metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral cultural intelligence in expatriates?*

To respond to this question, the study will be testing a bunch of hypotheses connecting the use of social media to each of the dimensions of CQ. Although the elaborated theoretical development is expected to be presented in the literature review, the rationale behind it is simple: social media can offer (1) informational exposure, (2) the opportunity to engage in observational learning, and (3) social support and self-efficacy reinforcement, which should be linked to knowledge and motivation aspects of CQ most directly.

### **1.2. Significance of the study**

The study can have an impact on theory and practice.

Theoretically, it takes cross-cultural management and CQ research to the next level by explaining whether social media has a different or selective relationship with the dimensions of CQ. The multi-dimensional approach to CQ is not superficial, as it allows better understanding of how digital environments can be applied to assist people in certain aspects (e.g., learning norms) and not in others (e.g., modeling culturally appropriate behavior). It also adds to the field of social media scholarship by establishing social media as not a simple communication device, but a possible means of ability building in the global working environment.<sup>[5]</sup>

In practice, the expensive nature of expatriate assignments can be offset by direct financial loss coupled with indirect organizational expenses resulting in failure or inadequate adjustment. When some type(s) of social media-based activities reinforce certain dimensions of CQ, organization can establish expatriate support that is more focused: e.g., providing platform-based information channels to enhance cognitive readiness and combine them with structured host-national interaction to build behavioral competence. It particularly applies to China, where it is not a matter of choice but a structure to be used in many of the daily and work processes, which depend on WeChat.

### **1.3. Contributions**

This research has the following three contributions:

- **Facet-level clarity:** It does not consider CQ as a single undifferentiated outcome but checks the relations of social media use with the dimensions of CQ.
- **Context specificity:** It analyzes the CQ development within the platform-specific environment (WeChat in China) whereby the local platform ecology constitutes digital exposure and interaction opportunities.
- **Actionable implications:** It brings the empirical knowledge to the implication of the present study on the expatriate management practices, and describes how organizations may utilize social media in a strategic manner, without imposing the assumption that it replaces actual intercultural experience.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Cultural intelligence as a multidimensional capability

Cultural intelligence (CQ) was proposed to understand the reasons why certain people fit better in new cultural setting and do better in cross-cultural interactions. According to Earley and Ang, CQ is any given individual ability to effectively adapt to the changed cultural environment especially where such difficulties can be traced back to cultural situation. Majority of CQ research develops the construct around four dimensions that are all interconnected including metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ. [6]

Higher-order cultural awareness and strategy, i.e. monitoring assumptions and revising mental models at the encounter of an intercultural situation, is referred to as metacognitive CQ. Cognitive CQ reflects the knowledge of cultural systems, norms, practices and conventions acquired within the education and experience. Motivational CQ is interest, confidence, and enthusiasm that is focused on learning and operating across cultures. Behavioral CQ entails the ability to display befitting verbal and non-verbal actions in relating with individuals of diverse cultural orientations.

This multidimensional design is important in theory-building since the various aspects depend on various learning processes. Cognitive CQ is largely knowledge based [7], motivational CQ is self-efficacy goal commitment based, metacognitive CQ is reflective monitoring strategy based, behavioral CQ needs to be practiced, needs feedback, and find-grained calibration of interaction style. Thus, not all four dimensions should be presumed to be the same in response to any suggested driver of CQ, which in the present case is the use of social media.

### 2.2. Social-Media as an informational and interactional learning environment

A common definition of social media defines it as a set of internet-based applications which allow users to create and share content, communicate with others, and network. One of the main differences with traditional media is that users are no longer consumers but creators and distributors of content so that there can be continuous connectivity and relations building across geographic borders. In a real-life situation, people utilize social media as a way of information acquisition and as a means of relationships. [8]

In the cross-cultural capability perspective, social media may be considered a learning context with two broad purposes:

- **Informational exposure:** The users are able to get news, local norms, workplace cues, and practical advice which serve to mitigate uncertainty and speed up sense-making.

- **Interaction and feedback:** Social networking lets one see conversational norms, give questions and experience responses which can be used to support or correct understandings of culturally appropriate behavior.<sup>[9]</sup>

Framing like this puts social media not only as a communication factor, but as a possible means whereby people gain knowledge and confidence that facilitates cross-cultural adaptation.

### **2.3. Hypothetical processes between social media use and CQ**

The current research incorporates cross-cultural training logic with the learning-based mechanisms in order to establish an analytically coherent connection between social media use and CQ. Earlier research has proposed that multi-faceted strategies are effective in developing cross-cultural competencies and it is argued that social media is also said to be integrative and multi-faceted in the sense of allowing instant access to information, peer networks and dynamic situations that are similar to interaction in the real world<sup>[10]</sup>.

There are two perspectives of learning of particular relevance. The logic of social learning and cross-cultural training. The social learning schools of thought focus on observation, interaction and reinforcement as methods of learning in a social setting. Under expatriate conditions, social media may offer a steady stream of modeled behavior and normative cues, which may augment or supplement formal training<sup>[11]</sup>. The theoretical orientation of the manuscript is in line with the previous application of cross-cultural training and social learning theories to conceptualize digital tools as training tools. Learning logic through experience. Experience The experiential theory of learning focuses on the cycles of experiencing, reflecting, conceptualizing and testing. Social media may provide approximations of this cycle by allowing one to immerse themselves in host-country dialogue, meditate by watching responses, develop concepts through exposure to explanations and arguments,<sup>[12]</sup> and experiment with the product at low cost through social interaction. This reasoning is congruent with the arguments that CQ plus experiential learning might be useful in responding to the cross-cultural complexity. Empirically, other earlier researches have also documented that the use of social media could enhance self-efficacy to foster the development of the CQ.

### **2.4. Why effects ought to vary across CQ dimensions in a platform specific situation**

Despite the fact that the social media might be a generalizing learning environment, the four aspects of CQ rely on various inputs. Based on this, anticipation of effects is separated.

- The cognitive CQ is supposed to be the most receptive to informational social media use, as cognitive CQ is inherently rooted in knowledge, which can be promoted by exposure to cultural norms, practices, and organisational attributes, conveyed via the internet.
- Motivational CQ ought to be reactive too, since informational availability and social support can decrease uncertainty and enhance self-efficacy, becoming more willing to interact across cultures.<sup>[13]</sup>
- Use intensity may be less directly effective in shaping metacognitive CQ since it needs reflective cultural strategy (monitoring assumptions, planning interpretation, modifying mental models), which may not be developed through consumption unless the user practices deliberate reflection and exposure to different cultural interaction.
- This behavioral CQ relies on practice and proper feedback when interacting with people of different cultures. In case interactions through social media are majorly co-national networks, where language is an issue or platform affords or comfort seeking, it may not calibrate its behavior to host country norms.<sup>[14]</sup>

This distinction comes into effect especially in China where expatriates might depend on WeChat as the platform of dominance and where global social media ecosystems access might be limited. Social media can become a locally oriented informational infrastructure in those environments rather than an open, globally diverse intercultural interaction space. This context is reflected in the measurement strategy of this study because it operationalizes the use of social media in this context using WeChat.

## 2.5. Hypotheses

Building upon the mechanisms present above, the proposed study purports to test the hypothesis that the use of the social media has a positive correlation with every CQ dimension. The hypotheses are formulated at the facet level so as to be conceptually precise.

H1: Metacognitive cultural intelligence has a positive relationship with the use of social media.

H2: Cognitive cultural intelligence is positively related to the use of social media.

H3: There is a positive relationship between the use of social media and motivational cultural intelligence.

H4: There exists a positive correlation between behavioral cultural intelligence and the use of social media.

This hypothesis is directly justified by disciplined testing and clean distinguish between (a) theory development (this part), (b) hypothesis testing (Results) and (c) interpretation and implications (Discussion and Managerial Implications) to overcome the criticism of the reviewer about the lack of clear differentiation between sections.

## 3. Methodology

This part expounds on the research design, sampling, measurement tools, data collection, and methodology of analyzing the data to test the hypotheses on the role of social media in influencing the four dimensions of cultural intelligence (CQ). The enlargement below enhances methodological clarity and structure in direct response to suggestions by reviewers of making it more transparent, organized, and visual.

### 3.1. Research design

The research design was a quantitative cross-sectional survey design which was suitable in the research because it was intended to determine the relationship between social media use and various psychological constructs among a given population of expatriates. The design allows to simultaneously evaluate the independent and dependent variables and test the hypothesis with the help of regression analysis.<sup>[15]</sup>

The lack of longitudinal research implications ensured that, the cross-sectional approach was selected due to the fact that cultural intelligence and patterns of social media use are measurable at a given point in time as opposed to the logistical and temporal constraints of longitudinal research.

### 3.2. Sampling and participants

#### Population and Sampling Frame.

The population of the study included the Korean expatriates who work in the Korean owned firms in Beijing, China. This group was chosen due to the following three reasons:

- They are a population that makes sense within the culture and reduces the variance that comes about by various nationalities.

- Their situation of work in Beijing exposes them to cultural norms of the Chinese, and they have to adjust interculturally on a daily basis.
- The similarities in CQ and social media usage trends are a subtle way of noting a difference in the geographical proximity and the similarities between Korea and China (Confucian heritage).<sup>[16]</sup>

## Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was sent out through the WeChat, which is the most popular multi-functional social media application in China.

A survey link was sent to the participants via professional expatriate WeChat groups and internal channels of the company. The attendance was voluntary and anonymous. The research objectives, confidentiality and academic purpose were expounded in a cover letter.

The response rate was approximate 49.6 because 124 of the possible 250 mailed out responded. There were no missing or invalid entries in the surveys. Table 1 presents the demographic composition of the participants and shows that they are mainly male and middle-aged expatriates of middle income with diverse Mandarin proficiency and length of stay in Beijing.

**Table 1.** Demographic Profile of Participants

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	99	79.8
	Female	25	20.2
Age Group	<30	3	2.6
	30–39	20	16.4
	40–49	78	62.7
	≥50	23	18.3
Language Proficiency (Mandarin)	Basic	33	26.5
	Intermediate	25	20.2
	Advanced	22	17.4
	Highly Advanced	25	20.3
Tenure in Beijing (years)	<1	7	5.6
	1–3	49	39.5
	4–6	43	34.6
	>6	25	20.3

*Source:* Survey dataset (N=124)

This population composition implies that the sample is mostly filled with middle-career workers with high rates of cross-cultural exposure, which can be compared to the stereotypes of expatriates.

## 3.3. Measures and Instrumentation

### 3.3.1. Cultural Intelligence (CQ)

The Short Form Cultural Intelligence Scale (SFCQ) created by Thomas et al. (2015) was used to measure cultural intelligence<sup>[17]</sup>. Morin et al. (2026) had chosen this scale instead of the previous 20-item Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) due to the fact that the SFCQ represents CQ as a system and not as an additive composite of subdimensions.<sup>[18]</sup>

The participants were asked to provide their responses to 10 items based on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The CQ dimension structure, example items, and reliability estimates are reported in **Table 2**. The objects were shared in the four CQ facets:

**Table 2.** The CQ dimension structure, example items, and reliability estimates

Dimension	Example Item	Scale Reliability ( $\alpha$ )
Metacognitive CQ	"I am aware of how my cultural background affects my interpretation of others' behavior."	0.82
Cognitive CQ	"I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures."	0.84
Motivational CQ	"I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures."	0.89
Behavioral CQ	"I change my verbal behavior when a cross-cultural interaction requires it."	0.88

The alpha values of all CQ dimensions were above 0.80, which means that there was a high level of internal consistency.

### 3.3.2. Social Media Use

The use of social media has been operationalized by six items <sup>[19]</sup>, with WeChat as the platform under consideration as the primary place of digital interaction. The items measured two latent constructs, namely:

- Informational Use - collecting and sharing information, and
- Socializing Use - continuing and developing social relationships.

Each item was rated by the respondents using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Table 3 shows the item statements and loadings of the factors and the overall social media use construct had a composite reliability of 0.91, which is excellent.

**Table 3.** The WeChat social media use scale items and their factor loadings

Dimension	Item Statement	Factor Loading
Informational	I use WeChat to find and share professional information.	0.79
Informational	I use WeChat to stay informed about Chinese current events.	0.83
Informational	WeChat is my main source for understanding local culture.	0.81
Socializing	I use WeChat to communicate regularly with friends.	0.86
Socializing	WeChat helps me maintain relationships with colleagues.	0.84
Socializing	I use WeChat because my peers also use it.	0.88

The overall composite reliability for social media usage = 0.91, indicating excellent scale reliability.

### 3.4. Control variables

In order to confine the impact of using social media, the variables listed below were taken as controls according to the evidence of previous studies:

- **Age** (continuous) – older expatriates may have lower social media engagement.
- **Gender** (dummy: 1 = male, 0 = female).
- **Tenure in China** – representing experience-based adaptation.
- **Language Proficiency (Mandarin)** – self-rated on a four-point scale (1 = basic to 4 = highly advanced).

These controls align with the expatriation studies with demographic and language factor contributions to cross-cultural adjustment.<sup>[20]</sup>

### 3.5. Data quality and bias control

Since all the variables were self-reported, common method bias (CMB) was well controlled using various procedural and statistical measures.:.

#### Procedural remedies:

- Neutral phrasing of items and avoidance of evaluative wording.
- Clear separation of predictor (social media use) and outcome (CQ) sections in the questionnaire.
- Anonymity assurance and voluntary participation to minimize social desirability bias.
- Forward-back translation to ensure conceptual equivalence of items between English and Korean/Chinese.

#### Statistical validation:

- **Harman's single-factor test** revealed no dominant factor explaining more than 30% of the variance.
- **Variance inflation factors (VIFs)** for all regression predictors remained below 2.0, ruling out multicollinearity.

### 3.6. Data analysis procedures

Analyses were performed using **SPSS 26.0**. The following sequential steps were conducted:

#### Exploratory Calculation Analysis (EFA):

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and varimax rotation were used to determine the structures of factors and maintain construct validity. Measure of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) = 0.871; the test of sphericity  $p = .001$ , ensured a satisfactory sampling.<sup>[21]</sup>

#### Reliability Assessment:

All scales had a cronbachs alpha that was above 0.70 (range = 0.7178-0.9309) which indicated internal consistency.

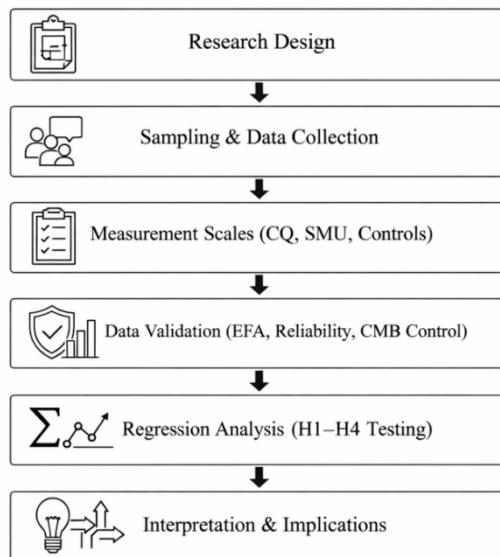
#### Descriptive Statistics:

Means, standard deviation and correlation coefficient of variables were calculated to analyze the relationships and the possibility of multicollinearity.<sup>[22]</sup>

#### Hypothesis Testing:

Four **multiple regression models** were estimated with each CQ dimension as a dependent variable and social media use (informational and socializing) as predictors, controlling for demographics. Statistical significance was assessed at  $\alpha = 0.05$ , and standardized beta coefficients ( $\beta$ ) were reported.

Figure 1 summarizes the general approach of the methodology, consisting of research design, data collection, measurement, validation, hypothesis manipulation, and interpretation.



**Figure 1.** Methodological pipeline of the study

### 3.7. Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the **School of Human Resource Development and Psychology, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia**. Respondents were informed that participation was voluntary, data would be treated confidentially, and results would be used solely for academic purposes. No personal identifiers were collected.<sup>[23]</sup>

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Descriptive overview of participants

A total of 124 Korean expatriates employed in Beijing participated in the study. All questionnaires were complete and valid. As shown in Table 4, the sample is largely male (79.8%) and concentrated in the 40–49-year age band (62.7%), reflecting the mid-career expatriate demographic typical of Korean multinational assignments. Smaller proportions were aged 30–39 years (16.4%), 50 years and above (18.3%), and under 30 years (2.6%).

Language proficiency in Mandarin was evenly distributed, with 20.3 % rating themselves as highly advanced and roughly equal representation across basic, intermediate, and advanced categories.

**Table 4** provides the full demographic distribution used for control analysis.

**Table 4.** Table 1. Participant Profile (N = 124)

Variable	Category	%
Gender	Male	79.8
	Female	20.2
Age	< 30	2.6
	30–39	16.4
	40–49	62.7
	≥ 50	18.3
Language proficiency (Mandarin)	Highly advanced	20.3

Variable	Category	%
	Advanced	17.4
	Intermediate	20.2
	Basic	26.5

**Table 4.** (Continued)

*Source:* Author's field survey data (2025).

## 4.2. Measurement reliability and validity

Internal consistency and construct validity were examined through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal component extraction with varimax rotation. Sampling adequacy was confirmed ( $KMO = 0.871$ ; Bartlett's  $p < .001$ ).

All measurement scales demonstrated strong internal reliability, with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  ranging from 0.7178 to 0.9309, which exceeds the recommended 0.70 threshold for social-science instruments. The EFA revealed clean factor loadings aligned with theoretical expectations for both the Short-Form Cultural Intelligence Scale (SFCQ) and the WeChat Usage Scale, supporting discriminant and convergent validity. Measurement Diagnostics are shown in Table 5.

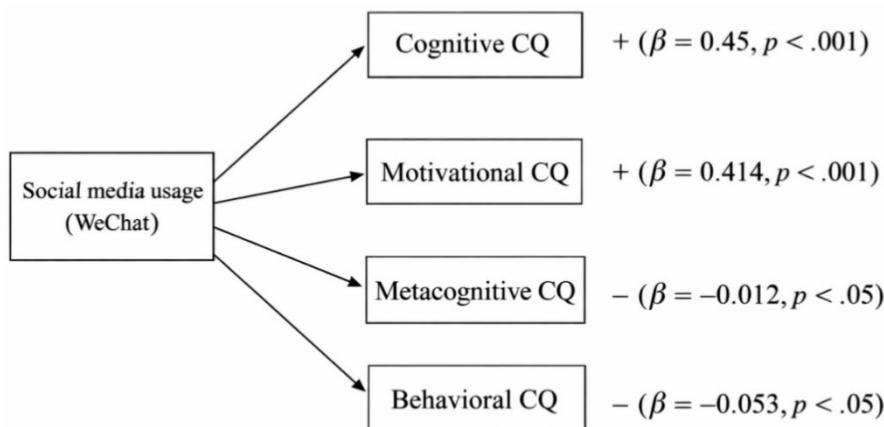
**Table 5.** Measurement Diagnostics

Diagnostic Criterion	Observed Outcome
Factor Extraction	Principal component analysis + varimax rotation
KMO	0.871
Bartlett's Test	$\chi^2 = 615.23, p < .001$
Cronbach's $\alpha$	0.7178 – 0.9309
Validity	Convergent + discriminant validity supported

*Source:* EFA and reliability analysis results derived from survey dataset.

## 4.3. Hypothesis testing

The conceptual model helped to test the direct relationship between social media use (operated through WeChat) and four CQ dimensions. Figure 1 (conceptual model) represents the hypothesized paths visually providing abstractly a guide in the structural interpretation of the reported coefficients.

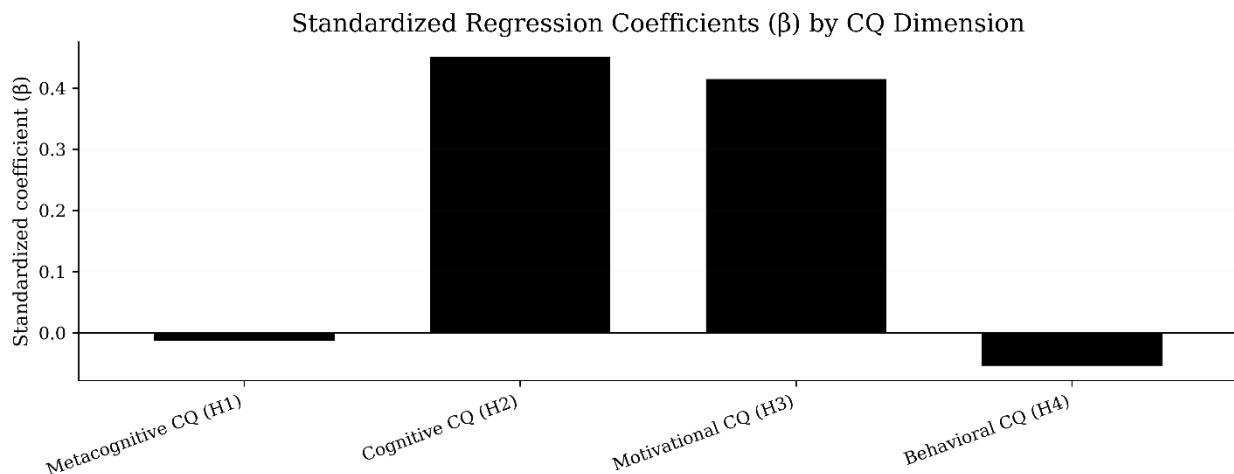
**Figure 2.** Conceptual model: Social media usage predicting CQ dimensions

The standardized coefficients ( $\beta$ ) along with the level of statistical significance were used to test the hypotheses and are displayed in the hypothesis testing section of the manuscript. Table 6 summarises results and Figure 2 illustrates them.

**Table 6.** Regression Results for Hypotheses H1–H4

Hypothesis	Path Tested	$\beta$	p-value	Supported?
<b>H1</b>	Social media → Metacognitive CQ	−0.012	< 0.05	No
<b>H2</b>	Social media → Cognitive CQ	0.450	< 0.001	Yes
<b>H3</b>	Social media → Motivational CQ	0.414	< 0.001	Yes
<b>H4</b>	Social media → Behavioral CQ	−0.053	< 0.05	No

*Source:* Multiple-regression estimates derived from the WeChat expatriate dataset (2025).



**Figure 3.** Estimated effects of social media usage on CQ dimensions ( $\beta$  values)

#### 4.3.1. Metacognitive CQ (H1)

H1 predicted that social-media usage would positively influence metacognitive CQ. The analysis returned a small negative but statistically significant coefficient ( $\beta = -0.012$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), indicating **no support** for the hypothesis.

#### 4.3.2. Cognitive CQ (H2)

H2 expected a positive association between social-media use and cognitive CQ. The effect was strongly positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H2.

#### 4.3.3. Motivational CQ (H3)

H3 posited that social-media use enhances motivational CQ. Results confirmed a significant positive relationship ( $\beta = 0.414$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H3.

#### 4.3.4. Behavioral CQ (H4)

H4 proposed a positive relationship between social-media use and behavioral CQ. Contrary to expectation, the coefficient was negative and significant ( $\beta = -0.053$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), providing **no support** for H4.

#### 4.5. Summary of empirical results

Reliability and validity checks confirm robust measurement quality (Cronbach's  $\alpha > 0.70$ ; KMO = 0.871; Bartlett's  $p < .001$ ). Two hypotheses—**H2 (Cognitive CQ)** and **H3 (Motivational CQ)**—were supported, showing that **social-media use contributes meaningfully to expatriates' knowledge acquisition and intercultural motivation**.

Conversely, **H1 (Metacognitive CQ)** and **H4 (Behavioral CQ)** were not supported, suggesting that **WeChat usage did not enhance higher-order cultural reflection or adaptive behavioral capability**.

### 5. Discussion

This paper has investigated the possibility of social media use (wechat as predictor variable) reflecting the four dimensions of cultural intelligence (CQ) of the Korean expatriates in Beijing. The findings indicate that there is a selective pattern: social media usage is positively related to cognitive CQ and motivational CQ, but not with metacognitive CQ and behavioral CQ. As an alternative to upholding a general statement about the role of social media as enhancing CQ, the results indicate that social media can play a role in CQ by specific mechanisms consistent with access to information and motivational resources, with evidence less strongly favoring reflective cultural strategy and adaptive behavioral enactment.

#### 5.1. Interpretation of the relationships in favor: the cognitive CQ and motivational CQ

The most supported correlation is between cognitive CQ and social media use ( $\beta = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This is in line with the functional usage of WeChat as a daily information infrastructure in China. Through the platform, expatriates can have access to culturally embedded information that includes local news discourse, service routines, workplace norms, and unwritten rules of governing day-to-day interactions. Stated differently, cognitive CQ is the CQ aspect that is most likely to be reinforced by regular exposure to culturally contextualized material since it focuses on normative, value, practice, and system knowledge as opposed to behavior real time execution.

The identified effect thus proves the point that social media may serve to create the form of an ongoing, unstructured learning space that complements the formal process of cross-cultural training in the context of exposure to more information about the local culture.<sup>[24]</sup>

In the same way, the use of social media demonstrates a very high positive correlation with motivational CQ ( $\beta = 0.414$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Motivational CQ indicates interest, confidence and sustained energy needed to interact cross-culturally. One factor, which is in line with the previous framing of the manuscript, is that social media lessens uncertainty and increases self-efficacy by providing quick access to practical guidance and peer knowledge that can make cross-cultural settings seem more manageable.

This explanation aligns with the previous research that has been mentioned in the manuscript that social media consumption may lead to the enhancement of self-efficacy and consequently, CQ development.<sup>[25]</sup>

The motivational effect can be essential especially in expatriate environments where the requirements of adaptation are ongoing: confidence and the readiness to experience intercultural dimensions is usually the "gatekeepers" that define whether people pursue intercultural experiences that eventually lead to increased competence.

These findings in combination indicate that social media can most effectively be used as a sense-making and confidence-building tool and reinforce knowledge structures (cognitive CQ) and engagement motivation (motivational CQ). This is further in line with the other points of the manuscript that suggests that people

tend to utilize social media to gather information as well as establishing relationships, and it is probable that the informational use is more likely to lead to cultural learning outcomes.

## 5.2. Interpreting unsubstantiated relations: metacognitive CQ, behavioral CQ

Conversely, no metacognitive CQ ( $\beta = -0.012$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) or behavioral CQ ( $\beta = -0.053$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) was supported by the usage of social media. These findings are theoretically relevant in the sense that they indicate that the increased number of social media does not necessarily imply the more profound types of intercultural capability that are concerned with reflective monitoring and correct behavioral performance.

Metacognitive CQ entails being conscious of culture, tactical thinking, and tracking of assumptions in intercultural contact. The exposure of social media might not be enough since metacognitive development usually entails reflexive consideration and experiences that are rich in feedback and challenge interpretive patterns. Practically, users are able to use massive amounts of culturally contextual material without necessarily being forced to make critical reflections on the way in which they make meaning of behavior or how their own cultural schemas influence their judgment. Consequently, although social media might raise cultural knowledge, it might not always raise the reflective layer of strategy needed in metacognitive CQ.<sup>[26]</sup>

Behavioral CQ is again more directly reliant on practice and calibration. It entails not only being aware of the cultural norms, but also a performance of culturally suitable oral and non-oral conduct. One of the most tangible reasons that are put forward in the manuscript is that language restrictions might limit the use of the social media among expatriates: people with insufficiently developed Chinese skills might therefore focus on communities of the Korean language in order to be less exposed to the host-national contact and have fewer chances to rehearse culturally appropriate practices.

Social media in such case helps and informs in co-national networks but does not generate the interaction conditions that help behavioral adaptation to the host culture. This description meshes with the argument presented in the manuscript that expatriates remain able to take advantage of useful information and yet they are socially incorporated into the communities in Korea which promotes cognitive but not always behavioral change. A second situation that has been highlighted in the manuscript is the platform environment in China. Chinese social media ecosystems are not similar to most Western ones where various international platforms provide a wider intercultural touch. The article proposes that access to international networks via global platforms can be constrained due to the local nature of platforms (e.g. WeChat), which will minimize the variety of intercultural social interactions accessible on-line.

When the use of social media happens in limited networks, it is possible that the role of socializing is not the opportunity to practice intercultural interactions that would be sufficiently powerful to affect metacognitive or behavioral CQ. This serves to understand why the results might not be consistent with the research held in situations in which social media usage is more often associated with diverse cross-cultural interaction. Notably, the coefficient values of negative metacognitive and behavioral CQ are rather small and must be viewed with caution; this represents the absence of support and not the presence of the anticipated negative relationship between social media and CQ. The more plausible explanation is that here the use of social media as operationalized is not an effective mechanism of creating reflective cultural strategy or behaviorally adaptive competence.

## 5.3. Theoretical contributions

Such findings contribute to the three theoretical contributions to cross-cultural management and social media research. To start with, the CQ development through the social media seems facet-specific. These findings support the importance of considering CQ as (multiple dimensional) as opposed to being a single

index. The use of social media correlates positively with those facets that are most related to informational learning and motivational resources (cognitive, motivational) and not those that involve reflective monitoring and behavioral enactment (metacognitive, behavioral). This helps in CQ theory by explaining that which elements are more likely to be influenced by digitally mediated learning settings.<sup>[27]</sup>

Second, the findings indicate a difference in mechanism: information scaffolding and interaction calibration. Social media, especially WeChat in China can serve as the main information and self-efficacy scaffold and allow expatriates to make sense of the surrounding world and stay motivated. Nonetheless, both behavioral calibration and metacognitive strategy demand more elaborate feedback loops and more varied experience of interaction than the language barriers and co-national clustering online networks may offer in general when using the platform.

Third, platform ecology and cultural context are also highlighted in the study. The research proves that the impact of social media is not platform-neutral by concentrating on WeChat and expatriates in Beijing. The identical theoretical argument (social media enhances intercultural competence) can be performed in a different manner based on whether the platform environment leads to the situation of the high frequency of host-national contact and the variety of cultural exposure. The discussion section of the manuscript clearly mentions that social media environment in China is different than in the West and must be taken into consideration when analyzing the results and projecting findings.

#### **5.4. Placing the results in the context of the research of expatriate adaptation**

The paper frames the study into the expatriate management issues and adds that expatriate failure might be very costly to the organizations in the process of internationalization and that enhancing adaptation is still a frontline issue.

The current evidence indicates that social media can be indirectly involved in adaptation of the expatriates by enhancing knowledge and motivation (cognitive and motivational CQ) that are often prerequisites of effective interaction in the host environment. Meanwhile, the lack of evidence regarding the effectiveness of metacognitive and behavioral CQ suggests that social media usage should not be taken to displace an intercultural experience with high levels of contact or an organized behavioral training in organizations.<sup>[28]</sup>

This difference is important since expatriate adjustment is influenced by not only the knowledge of what is considered to be normal in the new culture. Effective adaptation tends to be a matter of expatriates being able to make sense of ambiguous interactions (metacognitive CQ) and acting in ways which are culturally appropriate when faced with real world pressures (behavioral CQ). The facilitation of the initial stage of adaptation, the process of orientation, by social media through the provision of information and confidence may be necessary, which is followed by other stages where embodied practice and feedback in actual intercultural contexts are required.

#### **5.5. Implication to the structure of the rest of the paper**

The above discussion explains why informational and motivational pathways as compared to reflective-strategic and behavioral pathways are stronger in the Results.

The following part on managerial implications ought then to revolve around how the organizations can utilize social media as an organized informational tool coupled with the establishment of metacognitive and behavioral CQ via complementary interventions (e.g., mentoring, coaching, engagement with hosts), as opposed to a reiteration of the results narrative. This division is a direct response to the fact that hypothesis

testing, managerial implications, and conclusions were not adequately separated in the initial manuscript as the reviewer is worried.

### 5.6. Managerial implications

This can be achieved by managers making social media, particularly WeChat in China a planned expatriate support tool rather than an informal practice which could or could not be effective. Practically, this will be the creation of an organised WeChat knowledge base where expatriates could view filtered local cultural advice and operational necessities such as workplace etiquette, bureaucracy, communication protocols, and practical anticipations including meeting etiquette, indirect interaction, hierarchy cues, or response time. All that is needed to build a bare-bones first-30-days digital orientation pathway would be to checklist and weekly theme-assessments into the same channel to ensure that new assignees are aware of what they are expected to learn and when, and that organizations would do well to normalize question-asking by appointing trained cultural buddies or HR liaisons to answer within the group, which diminishes uncertainty and builds confidence to engage.

Meanwhile, companies must not consider intense use of social media as indicative of actual intercultural competence since it is behavior that the host-country coworkers are experiencing, and individuals can be aware of the rules and yet break them in the tone, directness, timing, or nonverbal matters. To build behavioral capacity, companies ought to include practice-based interventions once a person has joined like coaching role-plays involving real-world work encounters, host-national mentoring where feedback on style of interaction is given, and regular behavioral check-ins where concrete incidences are analyzed and what can be done differently next-time along with building low-stakes intercultural interaction opportunities in the form of mixed-team projects, bilingual social groups, rotating meeting facilitation, and cross-functional buddy systems. To reflective cultural strategy <sup>[29]</sup>, companies need to enhance metacognitive cultural intelligence by increasing guided reflection over passive scrolling by establishing short weekly reflection guidelines in which expatriates are expected to recognize an unexpected cross-cultural experience, uncover the assumption they made, consider other possible interpretations within the local logic, and strategize what they will investigate next time; after-action reviews must treat cultural misunderstanding as a troublesome operational problem and not a personal character issue and supervisors be trained to ask diagnostic questions about cues and cultural logic instead of giving vague advice.

Since language constraints tend to confine expatriates into co-national online social networks, companies can influence platform utilization to expand exposure through formation of bilingual onboarding teams that comprise host-national members and moderators, make available micro-resources to Mandarin pragmatics at the workplace, and promote engagement in one or more mixed-nationality professional organizations that are related to the job of the assignee. Lastly, in selection and evaluation, the cultural intelligence should be assessed at the dimension level and there should be no shortcut measure of social media activity in predicting the capabilities of the candidates regarding being prepared to handle culturally ambiguous scenarios, which will be better conducted through scenario-based simulation in high-stakes assignments. In general, the best architecture would entail having social media as scalable scaffolding of information access and confidence building and developing deeper reflective and behavioral competence via systematized practice, feedback-rich host-national contact and disciplined reflection practices.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper analysed the connection between social media use and four dimensions of cultural intelligence of Korean expatriates in the city of Beijing. These results show that the use of social media is

positively correlated with cognitive CQ and motivational CQ, but not with metacognitive CQ and behavioral CQ. These findings indicate that social media is best suited as a source of information and confidence and less as a multi-faceted system of building reflective cultural strategy or behaviorally adaptive competence in expatriate environments.

### 6.1. Limitations

There are a number of constraints to be taken into account. First, the research is based on self-report which can provide single-source bias and socially desirable response.

The next researches must include multi-source (e.g., supervisor/peer ratings) or observational indices of culturally adaptive behavior. Second, the sample is limited to Korean expatriates in Beijing that enhances the control but restricts the generalizability to other nationalities and host situations.

Third, the study operationalizes social media use in terms of WeChat in a contextually suitable manner but platform-specific affordances can influence the patterns of interaction in a different manner than the global platforms which restricts cross-context comparisons.

### 6.2. Future research directions

Future research may confirm that the same trend is present in other host nations and digital ecosystems, and may dissociate more clearly between informational and socializing types of usage as independent variables. Further studies might also be done on mediators like self-efficacy, host-national contact intensity and language proficiency to detail how social media can lead to some but not all aspects of CQ.

### 6.3. Final takeaway

The research contributes to the existing knowledge regarding the development of digital mediated cross-cultural ability by demonstrating that the role of social media in the formation of cultural intelligence is not universal but selective. The practical implication as it applies to organizations is that social media can be utilized as an effective expatriate learning and support tool that is scalable, although it needs to be combined with formatted interaction and reflective practice to produce the more developed capabilities needed to perform effectively in cross-cultural situations.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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