

The Impact of Red Story Online Videos on National Identity: An Empirical Study Based on Chinese University Students

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the influence of content characteristics of Red Story online videos on national identity among university students. Through the recruitment of university students as participants, a comprehensive dataset comprising 320 responses was garnered via a questionnaire survey, of which 295 responses were deemed valid for robust analysis. Employing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) and using Smart PLS 4.0 software, the study meticulously scrutinized the impact of various content attributes, including source expertise, source trustworthiness, visual aesthetics, narrative, and argument quality, on national identity. The findings reveal that while source trustworthiness, visual aesthetics, and argument quality have significant positive influence on national identity among university students, source expertise and narrative do not have significant influence. The findings of this study can contribute to the literature on national identity and provide new insights. Additionally, they can serve as a reference for the creation and dissemination of Red Story online videos.

Keywords: Red Story online videos, national identity, university students, structural equation modeling

1. Introduction

National identity, the sense of belonging individuals have towards their nation, reflects their positive evaluation and attachment to the national group, demonstrating a sense of pride in being part of the nation [1][2]. Previous research has found that media exposure is an important factor influencing public national identity [3]. Reading newspapers is a behavior that transcends local culture and aids individuals in forming national identity [4]. Newspapers can foster individuals' national community consciousness, embedding their national identity into daily life [5]. Scholars studying radio have found that radio programs, as representatives of the national voice, institutionalize individuals' national identity, reinforcing national identity within racial and class ideologies [6][7]. Researches on television have shown that television programs and schedules play a positive role in constructing individuals' shared national consciousness, making television an effective tool for disseminating national identity [8][9]. In the internet age, online platforms enable individuals to participate more equitably in social affairs [3], and website content contributes to building a cohesive national identity, effectively nurturing individuals' national identity [10]. As an emerging medium, online videos provide individuals with unique audiovisual experiences [11], particularly national-themed online videos, which can positively influence viewers' national identity [12].

The university stage is an important period influencing the formation of individuals' national identity [13]. Various countries actively conduct national identity communication and education activities targeting university students [14].

Utilizing media to influence university students' national identity is an important approach, such as through the consumption of news reports and television dramas, which can enhance their perception of national threats and thus influence their national identity [15]. Among various forms of media, online videos, as a widely popular medium among university students, can also influence their national identity.

Red Story typically refer to stories from the history of the Communist Party of China, often focusing on wars defending the nation and the establishment of revolutionary regimes, typically including hero stories of defending the homeland [16]. In the past, Red Story themed videos were usually created by state relevant departments or state-owned media. However, currently, many online video bloggers post their own created Red Story themed videos on social media. There is a lack of research attention on whether and how these Red Story videos created by online video bloggers affect university students' national identity. In light of this, this study poses the following research questions:

Question 1: Can Red Story videos created by online bloggers influence university students' national identity?

Question 2: What are the main factors in these videos that influence university students' national identity?

The contributions of this study mainly include the following aspects:

Contribution 1: Providing new insights into the influence of Red Story videos created by online bloggers on university students' national identity;

Contribution 2: Providing new research cases for the study of university students' national identity;

Contribution 3: Providing research guidance for creating and disseminating Red Story video content aimed at university students.

2. Research Model

2.1. Content Characteristics of Red Story Online Videos

As a medium of communication, the content characteristics of Red Story online videos play a decisive role in the reception and response of the audience. These characteristics include source expertise, source trustworthiness, visual aesthetics, narrative, and argument quality, collectively constituting the potential stimulating factors of the videos' influence on university students' national identity.

The information about the creators or publishers of online videos is an important component of video content and plays a crucial role in attracting viewers [17][18]. Studies have shown that source expertise and source trustworthiness are key features influencing viewers' viewing decisions [18]. Expertise reflects the level of knowledge and mastery of the source in relevant fields [19], while trustworthiness refers to the degree of trust the audience has in the information provided by the source, representing the extent to which information receivers perceive the information source as accurate, effective, and crucial [20][21][22].

Under the influence of visual aesthetics, the presentation style of video content can evoke a pleasurable experience for the audience [23]. Research indicates that certain general attributes in videos that align with audience visual aesthetics not only provide viewers with a positive aesthetic experience but also enhance the effectiveness of information dissemination [24][25]. This phenomenon is referred to as visual aesthetics.

Narrative is also a feature of online video content, which constructs the story framework of the video by providing a complete narrative process with a clear beginning, development, and ending [26]. This narrative not only provides viewers with a pleasant viewing experience but also effectively

attracts their attention, stimulates emotional resonance, and promotes in-depth processing of information, thereby enhancing the persuasive effect of video content, and increasing the audience's positive acceptance attitude towards the information conveyed by the video [26][27]. More importantly, when the audience is immersed in the narrative context, their understanding and perception of self-identity also deepen, which helps to build and consolidate their national identity [28].

Argument quality refers to the persuasiveness and objectivity of the arguments in the information, which is an important indicator of the influence of video content on the audience [29][30]. High-quality arguments not only promote the audience's acceptance of information [31] but also establish a sense of trust in the information source, thereby stimulating their deeper participation and interaction [32]. It can be seen that the argument quality of the video is another important aspect influencing the dissemination effectiveness of the video to the audience.

Based on this, this study considers source expertise, source trustworthiness, visual aesthetics, narrative, and argument quality as stimulating factors.

2.2. National Identity

Individual national identity is not fixed but can be changed through the specific influence of external factors [13]. Research has shown that video, as a means of communication, can positively influence individuals' national identity [33]. This influence stems from the fact that video content enables individuals to have a deeper understanding and recognition of the social, cultural, and political environment of the nation [12]. Therefore, this study considers national identity as the response of the audience to the stimulation of Red Story online videos.

3. Research Model and Hypotheses

3.1. The Impact of Source Expertise on National Identity

Audiences evaluate source expertise based on the characteristics of the creators themselves [34]. Expertise, as a perceived attribute of the audience, when demonstrated at a high level by the source of the video, makes the conveyed information more likely to receive positive responses from the audience, thereby enhancing dissemination effectiveness [18]. National identity reflects an individual's identification with their national identity and is an attitude towards the nation [35]. Based on this, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Source expertise of Red Story online videos has a significant positive impact on university students' national identity.

3.2. The Impact of Source Trustworthiness on National Identity

The trustworthiness of online information sources is crucial. The personal information conveyed by video creators prompts the audience to assess their personality, authenticity, and lifestyle, which interaction helps the audience accept the viewpoints expressed in the video [36]. When the information source is perceived as highly credible, the information content is more persuasive to individuals [37]. National identity, as a concept [13], can be influenced by source trustworthiness. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: Source trustworthiness of Red Story online videos has a significant positive impact on university students' national identity.

3.3. The Impact of Visual Aesthetics on National Identity

Visual aesthetics, as an effective communication strategy, not only attracts the audience's attention but also effectively conveys the deeper meaning of the content [38]. Since visual stimuli are easy to leave impressions in human memory [39], and national identity, as a concept, can be influenced by external factors [13]. Therefore, excellent visual experiences can enhance individuals' positive emotions and cognitive evaluations of video content [40], thus potentially exerting a positive influence on individuals' national identity. Based on this, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Visual aesthetics of Red Story online videos has a significant positive impact on university students' national identity.

3.4. The Impact of Narrative on National Identity

Narrative is a powerful communication tool that can evoke profound emotional resonance in the audience [41]. People naturally tend to encode and memorize information through stories, and this tendency makes the narrative structure highly compatible with human memory patterns [42]. Information conveyed in the form of stories is easier to understand and absorb [43]. More importantly, the assimilation effect in the narrative process enables the audience to establish a psychological connection with the characters in the story, this psychological connection not only enriches the audience's self-awareness [28], and national identity is closely related to self-awareness [13]. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H4: Narrative of Red Story online videos has a significant positive impact on university students' national identity.

3.5. The Impact of Argument Quality on National Identity

Argument quality directly affects individuals' information reception experience [31]. High-quality arguments can reduce individuals' time and energy investment in processing information and enhance information impressions [44]. Argument quality is an important factor in individuals' judgment of whether to adopt information [31]. High-quality arguments can change individuals' views, and national identity is also a concept [35]. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H5: Argument quality of Red Story online videos has a significant positive impact on university students' national identity.

Based on the above discussion, the proposed model illustrated in Figure 1 is presented..

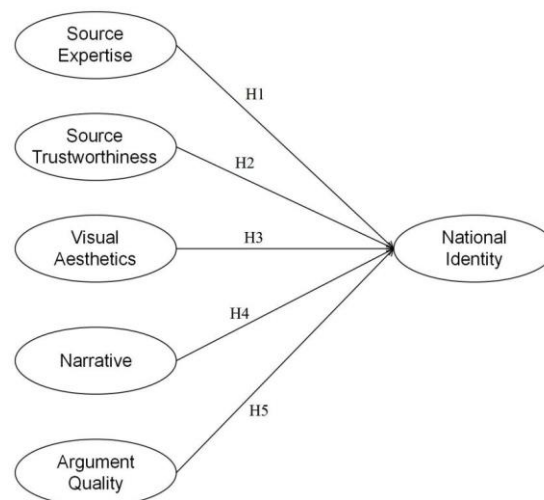


Figure 1: Proposed research model.

4. Methods

4.1. Measures

The survey utilized in this study comprised single and multiple constructs. The six main constructs of the study, namely Source Expertise, Source Trustworthiness, Visual Aesthetics, Narrative, Argument Quality, and National Identity were measured using multiple items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). The measurement of Source Expertise and Source Trustworthiness referenced scales used in Choi and Lee’s study [18]. Visual Aesthetics measurement referenced scales used in Phan et al.’s study [45]. Narrative measurement referenced scales used in Lien and Chen’s study [26]. Argument Quality measurement referenced scales used in Bao and Wang’s study [32]. National Identity measurement referenced scales used in Baydhowi et al.’s study [13], with items targeting working participants and those involving religion being removed to suit the student status of the participants and the context of China. Contexts of all scales were adapted to fit the context of Red Story online videos and Chinese university students. The questionnaire also included questions regarding gender, education level, and age.

The English version of the questionnaire was initially developed, followed by its independent translation into Chinese. Subsequently, experts reviewed the questionnaire, and it was tested on a sample of university students to ensure consistency between the Chinese and English versions.

4.2. Survey Design and Sample

The data for this study were collected through online surveys on the SOJUMP platform (<http://www.sojump.com/>) from February to March 2024. The data collection period lasted for one week (from February 25th to March 2nd).

Initially, students from Guangxi University were recruited through the student union. Subsequently, the registered students were organized in classrooms to collectively watch two highly-viewed Red Story online videos. After watching the videos, they filled out the scales for the six variables. Finally, they were required to answer three demographic questions. Each session had 40-50 students participating, and a total of 7 sessions were organized.

A total of 320 responses were collected. Subsequently, the answers were reviewed, and invalid responses, such as those with excessively short response times, were excluded. Ultimately, 295 valid responses were obtained, resulting in a response rate of approximately 92%. The demographic information of the participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic information of the participants.

Characteristic	Item	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	110	37.30%
	Female	185	62.70%
Level of education	University (college/undergraduate)	237	80.30%
	Graduate (Master/Doctor)	58	19.70%
Age	Below 18	5	1.7%
	18-24	273	92.5%
	25-30	16	5.4%
	Above 30	1	0.3%

4.3. Research Method

For two reasons, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed. First, this is an exploratory study, and PLS-SEM is suitable for exploratory research. Second, this is a small-sample study based on convenience sampling, and PLS-SEM is suitable for small samples [46]. The analysis and model validation were conducted using Smart PLS 4.0 software.

5. Results

5.1. Measurement Model

The reliability of the instrument was assessed initially. The internal consistency of the model can be evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. The relevant values are shown in Table 2. The Cronbach's alpha values for the six variables ranged from 0.754 to 0.966, all exceeding 0.7, which is considered acceptable [47][48]. All composite reliabilities also exceeded the suggested benchmark of 0.7. Therefore, the internal consistency of the model meets the standard. Additionally, the average variance extracted (AVE) of reflective constructs are higher than 0.50.

Table 2: Reliability and convergent validity of constructs.

Construct	Item	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Source Expertise (SE)	SE1	0.774	0.807	0.865	0.562
	SE2	0.787			
	SE3	0.793			
	SE4	0.787			
	SE5	0.726			
Source Trustworthiness (ST)	ST1	0.755	0.867	0.904	0.654
	ST2	0.873			
	ST3	0.854			
	ST4	0.860			
	ST5	0.753			
Visual Aesthetics (VA)	VA1	0.860	0.821	0.893	0.736
	VA2	0.855			
	VA3	0.862			
Narrative (N)	N1	0.782	0.754	0.843	0.574
	N2	0.825			
	N3	0.770			
	N4	0.759			
Argument Quality (AQ)	AQ1	0.832	0.888	0.922	0.748
	AQ2	0.883			
	AQ3	0.902			
	AQ4	0.854			
National Identity (NI)	NI1	0.865	0.966	0.969	0.678
	NI2	0.874			
	NI3	0.898			
	NI4	0.880			
	NI5	0.917			
	NI6	0.815			

Table 2: (continued).

NI7	0.767
NI8	0.800
NI9	0.892
NI10	0.694
NI11	0.877
NI12	0.789
NI13	0.879
NI14	0.837
NI15	0.789

The convergent validity of the measurement model was assessed next. According to Table 2, all of the indicator loadings of the reflective constructs are above 0.5, indicating that convergent validity in the construct measurement was acceptable [49]. The discriminant validity of the measurement model was assessed using cross-loadings and the Fornell-Larcker criterion [50]. The loadings of each item on the assigned factor are greater than the cross loadings on other factors. The AVE values are shown in Table 3, with the square root of each AVE being greater than the respective correlation coefficients. Therefore, there is good discriminant validity among the latent variables.

Table 3: Correlation coefficients of variables.

	AQ	N	NI	SE	ST	VA
AQ	0.865					
N	0.554	0.758				
NI	0.501	0.389	0.823			
SE	0.447	0.351	0.260	0.750		
ST	0.594	0.421	0.404	0.570	0.809	
VA	0.632	0.427	0.506	0.467	0.489	0.858

Note: The diagonal elements are the square roots of the extracted average variances.

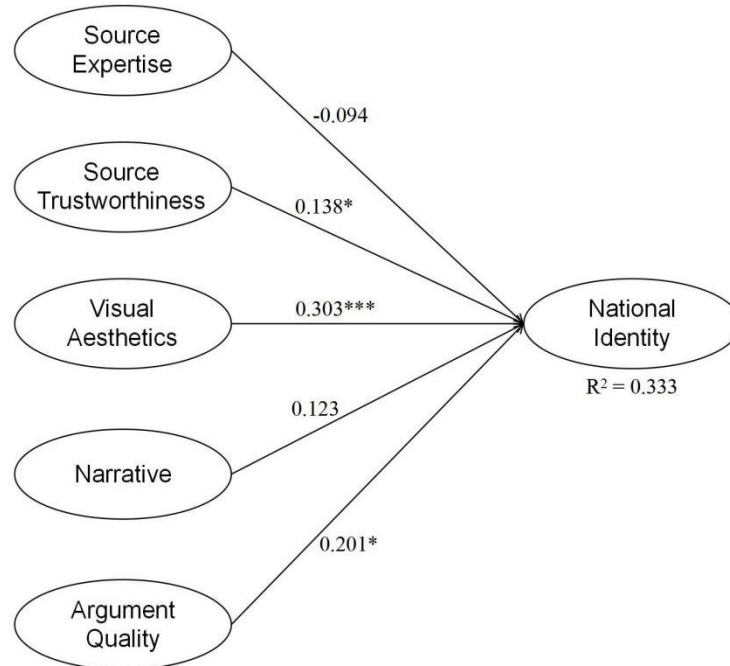
The testing for common method bias was also conducted. Due to the increasing controversy surrounding the Harman's single-factor test for assessing common method bias [51], two additional methods were employed. First, the construct correlation matrix calculated by PLS (see Table 3) can determine if any constructs have extremely high correlations (greater than 0.90) [52]. In the study, no constructs exhibit such high correlations, indicating that the issue of common method bias is not severe. Second, the common method factor proposed by Podsakoff et al. was employed [51]. The results show that the variance of each item is mainly explained by the theoretical structure rather than the method factor. Additionally, while most items exhibit significant substantive loadings on their corresponding theoretical constructs, the majority do not have significant method factor loadings. Therefore, common method bias in this study is not evident [53].

5.2. Structural Model Analysis

Based on Figure 2 and Table 4, source expertise does not have a significant effect on national identity ($\beta = -0.094$, $t = 1.504$, $p > .05$), thus H1 is not supported. Source trustworthiness has a significant positive effect on national identity ($\beta = 0.138$, $t = 2.130$, $p < .05$), so H2 is not supported. Visual aesthetics has a significant positive effect on national identity ($\beta = 0.303$, $t = 4.022$, $p < .05$), thus H3 is supported. Narrative has no significant effect on national identity ($\beta = 0.123$, $t = 1.731$, $p > .05$), so

H4 is not supported. Argument quality has a significant positive effect on national identity ($\beta = 0.201$, $t = 2.576$, $p < .05$), thus H5 is supported.

Moreover, the R² value for national identity is 0.333. This further indicates that the overall validity of the research model is acceptable.



Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Figure 2: Test results of the study.

Table 4: Results of hypothesis testing.

Hypotheses	Path	Path coefficients	Standard deviation	t-value	95% CI	Test result
H1	Source Expertise → National Identity	-0.094	0.062	1.504	[-0.205, 0.039]	Not supported
H2	Source Trustworthiness → National Identity	0.138*	0.065	2.130	[0.011, 0.267]	Supported
H3	Visual Aesthetics → National Identity	0.303***	0.075	4.022	[0.145, 0.436]	Supported
H4	Narrative → National Identity	0.123	0.071	1.731	[-0.008, 0.269]	Not supported
H5	Argument Quality → National Identity	0.201*	0.078	2.576	[0.039, 0.344]	Supported

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

6. Discussion

6.1. Key Findings

The influence of source expertise, source trustworthiness, visual aesthetics, narrative and argument quality of Red Story online videos on university students' national identity was investigated, yielding the following valuable findings:

First, the study revealed that source trustworthiness has a significant positive impact on national identity. The higher the trustworthiness of the source, the more likely audiences are to accept the information content [2]. In this study, the higher the trustworthiness of Red Story online videos, the more university students can accept the content closely related to the country in the videos, thereby generating national identity. Therefore, this finding is consistent with previous studies [18].

Second, the study revealed that visual aesthetics has a significant positive impact on national identity. Previous research has shown that visual aesthetics can provide a better experience for viewers [23]. Furthermore, visual aesthetics can not only evoke emotional responses from viewers but also guide their cognitive judgments [54], thereby promoting the formation of national identity. Thus, this study is consistent with previous research [40].

Third, the study revealed that argument quality has a significant positive impact on national identity. High-quality arguments can enhance the audience's trust in video information and stimulate their willingness to participate [32]. Moreover, persuasive argument content can effectively influence the audience's acceptance of information [44]. In the context of Red Story online videos, videos with high argument quality can make the audience more convinced of the stories told in the videos, engage in thinking about the video content, and be more willing to accept and adopt the country-related information conveyed in the videos, thereby promoting the formation of national identity. Therefore, this study is consistent with previous research [32].

Fourth, the study revealed that source expertise does not significantly affect national identity. Previous research has also shown that due to the characteristics of online platforms, audiences often find it difficult to evaluate the expertise of information sources, thereby affecting the role of source expertise in dissemination effectiveness [31]. In the context of this study, online video platforms may not provide enough information to demonstrate the expertise of creators or publishers, making it difficult for audiences to accurately judge the expertise of video sources. Therefore, the sense of national identity of the audience is unlikely to change solely because of the expertise of the video source. Thus, this finding differs from previous research [18].

Fifth, the study revealed that narrative does not significantly affect national identity. This finding may stem from China's unique cultural background, where university students have been widely exposed to red stories during their upbringing, making them familiar with the repetitive content in the videos. In addition, existing research suggests that information based on statistics and factual evidence may be more effective in changing personal beliefs than mere narratives [55]. Therefore, this result differs from previous research [26].

6.2. Research Implications

First, this study provides new insights into the influence of Red Story created by online bloggers on the national identity of university students. As one of the earliest relevant studies, this research reveals the potential of Red Story videos created by online bloggers in shaping the national identity of university students. Specifically, the study found that source trustworthiness, visual aesthetics and argument quality are key factors influencing national identity. Additionally, it deepens the current understanding of national identity formation.

Second, this study provides new cases for the study of national identity among university students. By exploring the impact of Red Story online videos on the national identity of university students, this study provides concrete and vivid verification of the role of new media in shaping national identity in the digital age, laying an empirical foundation for subsequent research and providing useful references for the expansion of relevant theories.

Finally, this study provides research insights for the creation and dissemination of Red Story video content targeting university students. The findings suggest that creators and disseminators should focus on ensuring that videos provide rich, helpful, valuable, and persuasive information to attract

college student audiences. Additionally, creators should use visuals that match the video style to enhance the artistic and viewing appeal of the video. Disseminators should also select videos with high visual aesthetics for distribution. Furthermore, creators and disseminators need to establish and maintain a reliable image to make the audience feel sincere. By comprehensively applying these strategies, the dissemination of Red Story videos among university students can be effectively promoted, and national identity can be strengthened.

6.3. Limitations and Future Directions

First, the questionnaire survey method employed in this study is susceptible to individual factors and may be influenced by inherent subjective biases. Future research can comprehensively use other research methods, such as experimental research, in-depth interviews, and field observations, to obtain more comprehensive and accurate data.

Second, convenience sampling was utilized, and the results of the data analysis may lack universal significance. In future research, random sampling methods can be used to improve the representativeness of the sample, thereby making the research results more generalizable and universal.

Finally, this study is a cross-sectional study, and the cross-sectional nature of the data limits the ability to establish causal relationships and assess changes over time. Future research can use longitudinal designs to collect data over a period of time to understand the causal relationships between environmental factors and individuals' responses to media stimuli.

7. Conclusion

This study delved into the influence of Red Story online videos on the national identity of Chinese university students. Source trustworthiness, visual aesthetics, and argument quality are priorities, all of which have a positive impact on national identity. This study not only enriches the literature on national identity cultivation but also provides practical guidance for video creators to enhance video dissemination effectiveness.

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Appendix

Links to Red Story online videos:

https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV13v411u7F6/?spm_id_from=333.999.0.0&vd_source=95f391a22ddb9a8ad2949a500263cf96

https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1kY411u7EP/?spm_id_from=333.999.0.0&vd_source=fd8338f60f20868a164b3a43a35b9f12

Table: Measurement scales.

Construct	Item
Source Expertise	SE1: Bloggers of this type of video know about posting videos very well.
	SE2: It is an undeniable fact that bloggers of this type of video are experts on posting videos.
	SE3: Bloggers of this type of video have a lot of experience in telling red stories.
	SE4: Bloggers of this type of video are likely to see a lot of material related to what he is posting.
	SE5: Bloggers of this type of video will give viewers summarized information about the content of his video.

Table: (continued)

Source	ST1: Bloggers of this type of video would be sincere every time.
Trustworthiness	ST2: Bloggers of this type of video would not either exaggerate or lie. ST3: Bloggers of this type of video would not pretend to know about what she does not know well. ST4: Bloggers of this type of video would not talk without grounds. ST5: Bloggers of this type of video would frankly present her position, thoughts and opinions.
Visual Aesthetics	VA1: I enjoy this type of video's graphics. VA2: I think the graphics of this type of video fit the mood or style of this type of video. VA3: I think this type of video is visually appealing.
Narrative	N1: This type of video told a story. N2: This type of video had a beginning, middle, and end. N3: This type of video showed the personal evolution of one or more characters. N4: The story of this type of video had chronological order.
Argument Quality	AQ1: The information provided by this type of video is informative. AQ2: The information provided by this type of video is helpful. AQ3: The information provided by this type of video is valuable. AQ4: The information provided by this type of video is persuasive.
National Identity	NI1: Chinese culture makes me proud. NI2: I am proud to be an Chinese citizen. NI3: I feel that it is too important to be part of the Chinese nation. NI4: Listening to March of the Volunteers, a sense of pride would well up. NI5: The social and cultural conditions in China make me proud of this nation. NI6: I am willing to set aside money to fellow Chinese when the country is facing difficulties. NI7: I will accept any conditions happening in China and still be proud of it. NI8: China has an amazing/great history. NI9: I feel belongingness that stems from profound love to China makes one not want to change one's nationality. NI10: I am participating in daily volunteer activities and at the same time preserving the spirit of volunteerism. NI11: Core socialist values are a unique and amazing national guideline. NI12: I prioritize the interests of the nation over personal interests. NI13: Children need to be educated to love the Unitary State of the People's Republic of China (PRC). NI14: I am also responsible for the sustainability of the country and the unity of the nation. NI15: I am ready to volunteer to defend my country.