

# **Social Media's Role in Intercultural Adaptation of Students: A Bibliometric and Content Analysis Review**

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## **Abstract**

There is an increasing academic interest in investigating the connection among social media and intercultural adaptation. However, the utilization of VOS viewer software for bibliometric analysis in this area may still need some additional enhancements. The objective of this review is to critically evaluate the current frame of literature addressing the correlation between social media and intercultural adaptation throughout the last ten years. This investigation analyzed 9,513 papers published in English and available in the Web of Science database from 2014 to 2024. An analysis was carried out using bibliometric methods and the VOSviewer. In regard to publication output, the United States maintains the top spot, alongside China, UK, Australia, Netherlands, Germany and Spain lagging closely after. The past few years witnessed a growing concern through intercultural study on social media usage, acculturation, international students and internet addiction, as proven with six classified clusters.

**Keywords:** Literature review, Social Media, Overseas Scholar, Bibliometric Analysis, Intercultural adaptation

## **Introduction**

The trend of globalization has played a significant impact on the growing field of international educational institutions. The overall number of overseas students, relating to individuals who have relocated to different countries for the aim of pursuing their educational goals (Migration Data Portal, 2024), has witnessed a significant increase over the past ten years, rising from 4.3 million in 2014 to surpass 6 million in 2024 (Ivy Panda, 2024; OECD, 2024). Despite their desire to cultivate intercultural competence through foreign study, students confront many challenges that obstruct their ability to fully capitalize on their time abroad (Tang & Zhang, 2023). Examples of these challenges include social media usage (Frontiers, 2023), encounters making significant local connections (Chen & Gu, 2024), which can lead to acculturation stress, psychological impact, and cultural misunderstanding.

Intercultural adjustment and empirical investigations (for reviews, see Forbush & Foucault-Welles, 2016; Tang & Zhang, 2023) emphasize the decisive character of social media in a host society to attain accomplishment in both academic and social features of lifespan. An aggregate number of publications on the subject over the past ten years have replicated this growth (See Fig. 1). The utmost current reviews (Alamri, 2024; Jiang & Wang, 2024) list social media practice and intercultural adaption as amongst the most generally considered themes for intercontinental study. However, at present, there is a vacuum of research on the influence of numerous social media platforms and their own distinctive characteristics on the process of intercultural adaptability.

This gap is particularly significant in the context of recent research. All through the procedure of intercultural adaptation, public employ social networking sites (SNSs) used for various devotions, for instance (1) maintaining communication with family and friends in their native nations, (2) gaining social influence, and (3) facilitating social adjustment in educational environments (Alamri, 2018). The research highlights the problems experienced by international students in adjusting to new cultures, notably the challenges of forming significant connections with local individuals, which limit their integration into the host society (Chen & Gu, 2024). Thus, this research differs from previous studies by providing an extensive and detailed examination of previous studies on social media usage in student adaptation. We achieve this via operating bibliometric co-citation analysis and qualitative content analysis.

### **Research Questions:**

The writers' emphasis on numerous inquiries:

**RQ1.** What are the utmost prominent articles, & journals addressing the character of social media in cultural adaptation among students?

**RQ2.** What exactly is the main driving structure of the area's research?

**RQ3.** How do social media affect students' adaptability?

**RQ4.** What are the potential areas for future research?

## **Literature Review**

### **Social media's role in culture**

Based on previous studies, social media offers a crucial role in promoting cultural interaction and enabling the development of novel cultural identities (Rehman & Wu, 2020). The practice of social media has turned into an effective tool for cultural integration and conversion due to its ability to swiftly spread information and facilitate the sharing of personal and cultural narrative (Ogilvy, 2024). In addition, social media displays an impact on cultural norms by endorsing specific lifestyles, attitudes, and trends, resulting in both favorable and unfavorable effects within society (Vuorre & Przybylski, 2023; Ogilvy, 2024).

Scholars examine cultural overlap about students' adaptation, view cultural convergence, that is, the propensity of different cultures to become more alike due to communal media consumption (Barker & Jane, 2023). Another important term is "digital ethnography", a method of inquiry used to examine cultural norms through online interactions (Varis, 2023). The idea of "participatory culture" promotes the active engagement of social media users in the development and diffusion of content. The participatory aspect of this method enables students to define their cultural identities, actively participate in social engagement, and build communities based on common interests and opinions (Jenkins et al., 2023).

### **Intercultural Adaptation**

In earlier studies, the term adaptation frequently occurs with adjustment, integration, assimilation and acculturation. Cultural adapting, as seen as an entity, pertains to the rate to which individuals merge into an unfamiliar environment of culture (Zhou, et al., 2023). Intercultural adaptation is the act of individual adapting to new cultural contexts. This approach is particularly appropriate for universal scholars, who frequently endure considerable cultural adjustments. Fresh research highlights the significance of cultural aptitude, distinct as the capability to comprehend and regulate to unfamiliar cultural atmospheres with helpfulness (Tang & Zhang, 2023).

Finally, readings have confirmed that social support linkages are indispensable for an encouraging intercultural adaptation. According to Xu et al. (2023), scholars who have contact to supportive associations with peers, supporters, and community followers are more skillful at managing the pressure and difficulties connected with transitioning to a first-hand culture. We will analyze the revision's outcomes on the use of social media in student adjustment, specifically focusing on these adaptation spheres.

### **Application of Theories to Social Media Use and Adaptation**

Theoretical applications of the current study demonstrate how social media plays a role in assisting global students to become inter-culturally adapted to their destination countries. Understanding students' emotional phases involves U-Curve and W-Curve Theories explain that social media maintains ties with their home culture during the initial excitement phase and offers emotional support during cultural shock, which facilitates recovery and adaptation (Lysgaard, 1955; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). Moreover, the Acculturation Theory proposes four types of strategies—assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization—enabled by social media. Some platforms like Instagram support integration, making it easier for students to adapt to their host culture, while also preserving their own cultural identities (Berry, 1997). Social Support Theory outlined the roles that online networks, like WeChat, play in alleviating a stressors and building connections (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

Uses and Gratifications Theory highlights students' proactive behavior in using social media to achieve their informational, social, and emotional needs, for instance, using Linked-in for career networking (Katz et al., 1973). Furthermore, Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory provides additional evidence of how social media facilitates bidirectional adaptation by increasing cultural competence through online experiences (Kim, 2001). Additionally, the case of platforms such as Zoom and WhatsApp, as highlighted by Media Richness Theory, is another exemplification of the way that rich, interactive channels of communication encircle the cultural and linguistic barriers (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Finally, Communication Accommodation Theory explains how the students adjusted their digital communication style to meet local expectations, contributing to the sense of belonging (Giles et al., 1991). These theories complement one another as together they reveal the means and mechanisms through which social media provides emotional support, cultural integration, and effective communication that smooths adjustment to host countries.

## **Methodology**

### **Bibliometric and Content Analysis Approaches**

Researchers employed a mixed-methods technique for analyzing the study on the application of social media among learner adjustment throughout 2014 to 2024. The statistical extraction skills, outlined in the section that followed, established that decision of this particular time period. We adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods for examining the study's questions (Bretas & Alon, 2021). The quantitative approaches used to conduct in this study involved of keyword co-occurrence analysis including overlay visualization of keywords.

Triangulation, employing a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, lends credibility to results by cross-verifying them. With methodological procedures and theoretical frameworks set clearly, the study gains a great deal of credibility and generalizability leading to the results being trustworthy and reliable. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative elements occurs via a mixed-methods strategy which allows for an in-depth investigation into the role in social media in the process of intercultural adaptation. The quantitative aspect is represented with bibliometric analysis, where VOSviewer is used to quantify patterns, relations, and trends found in data. This is the reason why different metrics such as keyword co-occurrence, citation analysis and collaboration networks, provide a more objective and replicable understanding of the research landscape from the field.

Quantitative results like these provide the foundation for qualitative content analysis, which explores the context and themes of the chosen studies in greater detail. Content analysis analyses the narratives, methods and theories in literature using data identified in a preliminary step through bibliometric analysis. For example, we qualitatively analyze clusters revealed in co-occurrence analysis to gain a deeper understanding of how specific themes (e.g. acculturation or mental health) are discussed in social media. This procedure is iterative; quantitative outcomes enlighten that qualitative review, although qualitative insights deliver context for the quantitative outlines. This combination of these approaches provides a breadth and depth in the study findings that allows for a more nuanced perspective on how social media influences intercultural adaptation.

### **Reliability and Validity**

The combined use of bibliometric and content analysis, thorough data choice and systematic methods constituting the original methodological framework ensures accurate and legitimate results. While bibliometric tools like VOSviewer

effectively quantify systematic patterns and relationships in the data and offer an objective and a replicable perspective on these topics, content analysis on the other hand enables to attach qualitative meaning to the data and to elaborate on themes. We identify literature of high quality by using the WoS database, which has a very robust peer review literature source. The restricted empirical focus—either at the stage of keyword searches or in the inclusion of articles only of an empirical nature—also tightened the set, making it more relevant. We utilize a semi-automated approach for data extraction. That means it cuts down on the bias and oversight.

#### **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Articles**

For inclusion, the period was limited between 2014 and 2024 to emphasize on the latest trends and the latest evolution in the domain. To avoid any barriers to access and consistency, only English language articles were included. One key factor was the relevance of the review focus, which led to prioritization of studies that examined international students' experiences of social media use in relation to intercultural adaptation. Articles were retrieved from Web of Science (WoS) data base, which contains a citation database covering several disciplines of peer-reviewed literature. In an effort to balance between broad and targeted coverage, the search strategy included words such as international student, social media, adaptation, integration, and identity. Moreover, since the aim of this review was to maintain methodological rigor, only studies using an empirical research approach (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods) were eligible.

However, the study remained focused through the implementation of several exclusion criteria. Articles such as book chapters, reviews, and editorials were not included to focus on original research. Excluded were studies focusing on international students' experiences outside of higher education or in their host countries. This meant excluding research on refugees and expatriate professionals. Papers were excluded if they referred to adaptation, integration, or identity but not in an intercultural context. Redundant articles were excluded; such as duplicates or papers with datasets overlapping with others found. In addition, anecdotal narratives or philosophical essays that did not present an explicit methodology or research design were excluded. Finally, work that examined non-international students, including partners or families of international students, or larger groups of migrants were excluded from the review.

#### **Data Extraction**

The bibliographic information was obtained through Clarivate Analytics's WoS database, that consist of more than 16,000 academic publications as of Mid-July 2024. The data extraction method that we implemented applied a two-stage methodology, as described by Alon et al. (2018) and Bretas and Alon (2021).

Table 1 gives an in-depth review of the methods utilized for conducting the information search and extraction.

Initially, in April 2024, the authors employed carefully particular keywords to comprehensively address the subject of our research. The authors conducted searches using various groupings of positions: (a) “international student\*” OR “foreign student\*” OR “overseas student\*” OR “study abroad\*” OR “international education\*”-to encompass overseas learners by way of a distinct cluster of temporary residents; (b) “media\*” and “social networking sites\*”-to encompass studies on social media; and (c) “adapt\*” OR “adjust\*” OR “integrat\*” OR “acculturate\*”-to encompass the process of worldwide learners adapting to their new environment. Given that a person’s physical ability, mental happiness, and the formation of a racial uniqueness manifest cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2001), the researchers built-in two extra words in our search: “identit\*” OR “satisfy\*” to encompass the previous studies on learners’ identity concerns and contentment in the nations where they live. The researchers added “culture\*” shock” to step 3 after doing a frequency analysis of the statistics from step 2 to include important research on culture shock as an important part of cross-culture adaptability (Gudykunst, 2005; Pettigrew, 2008; Ward et al., 2001).

This way, the researchers found 99 relevant articles. The investigators gathered the titles of the published papers, author(s), journal name, volume, affiliations, number, publication date, cited references, page range and abstract of the research paper regarding bibliometric analysis.

**Table 1. Keyword search in WoS**

Step	Keyword search	Articles
1	<b>Advanced via: Language (English), and Text Forms: (Article)</b> “international student*” or “foreign student*” or “overseas student*” or “study abroad*” or “international education*”	501
2	<b>Advanced via: Language (English), and Text Forms: (Article)</b> “international student*” or “foreign student*” or “overseas student*” or “study abroad*” or “international education*” or “media*” or “social networking sites*”	892
3	<b>Advanced via: Language (English), and Text Forms: (Article)</b> “international student*” or “foreign student*” or “overseas student*” or “study abroad*” or “international education*” or “media*” or “social networking sites*” or “adaptation,” or “integration,” or “identity” “identit*” or “satisfy*” or	901

	“cultur*” shock”	
4	<p><b>Advanced via: Language (English), and Text Forms: (Article)</b></p> <p>Authors conducted an extensive examination of the entire 851 inputs to enhance the extraction procedure. We also neglected articles that (a) looked into students’ opinion unrelated to their academic; (b) centered on teaching portfolios, the writers’ reflective queries, or speculative studies without a method section; (c) revolved around learners’ experiences beyond the nation of origin or involving third parties (that is, students’ couples or travelers’ experts); or (d) recruited “identity”, “integration” or “adaptation” within another setting.</p>	99

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

This research investigation analyzed a sample 4,646 articles authored by 10,820 individuals from 115 countries and 200 organizations. These articles were sourced from 1,562 journals and referenced a total of 28, 590 citations from 23, 391 periodicals in the quoted literature (referring to Table 2).

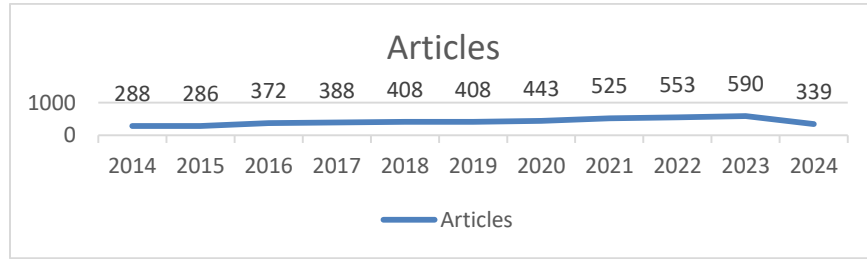
**Table 2. The database’s descriptive details (Source: HistCite).**

Criteria	Quantity
Publications	4646
Authors	10820
Countries	115
Organizations	200
Journals	1562
Cited reference	155909
Sources of periodicals in the cited works	25391

### Research Development

Figure 1 represents the research progress on social media and intercultural adaptation from 2014 to 2023, displaying an apparent rise in publications in this field of study. The overall amount of publications began at 288 in 2014, endured a small decrease to 286 in 2015, and then gradually rose to 372 in 2016 and 388

in 2018. The trend continued with 408 publications in both 2018 and 2019, increasing to 443 in 2020 and further growing to 525 in 2021. The highest point was reached in 2023 with a total of 590 publications, and then followed by a little decrease to 339 in 2024.



**Figure 1. Periods of Research Development (Source: HistCite).**

### Top 10 Countries in the Area

Table 2 displays the position rankings of the top 10 nations in this particular domain. The United States leads social media and intercultural adaptation research with 1047 articles, 1708 TLCS, and 17366 TGCS. This reflects the US's prolific research and worldwide importance. China has 934 research publications with TLCS (1336) and TGCS (9739) are slightly lower than the US, reflecting a considerable but smaller influential impact. UK and Australia achieve 567 and 634 publications. Australian articles are more numerous, whereas the UK's TLCS of 1313 and TGCS of 10733 have a larger reach worldwide (TGCS 9749).

Canada's 267 publications and South Korea's 173 make significant contributions with TLC score of 456 and 313 and TGC score of 5119 and 2642 respectively. The TLCS of 149 and TGCS of 2112 for Germany's 148 articles indicate considerable but limited influence. With 95 and 140 articles, respectively, Spain and the Netherlands participate in an academic debate with lower citation scores. Spain has 37 TLCS and 163 TGCS, meanwhile the Netherlands has 122 and 1710. Sweden, with 40 articles, a TLCS of 65, and a TGCS of 1520, makes the top 10 with a lower but still significant research output (see Table 3).

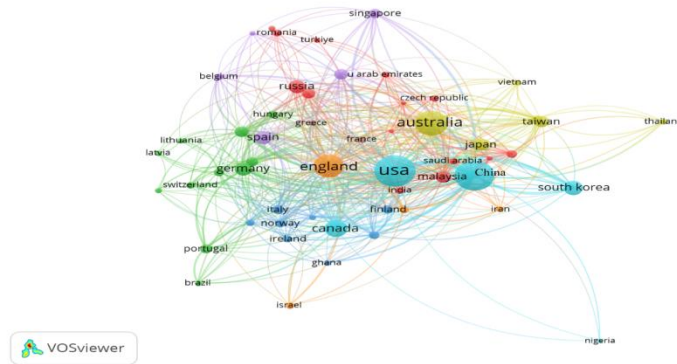
**Table 3. Top 10 nations in the relevant field (Source: HistCite).**

Countries	Publications	TLCS	TGCS
USA	1048	1709	17367
UK	568	1314	10734
Australia	634	1304	9750
China	935	1337	9740

Canada	268	457	5120
South Korea	174	314	2643
Germany	149	150	2113
Netherlands	96	123	1711
Spain	141	38	1643
Sweden	41	66	1521

**Note.** This ranking is based on Total Global Citation Score (TGCS), and TLCS stands for Total Local Citation Score.

Figure 2 displays a map that visually shows the collaboration across countries on the basis of co-authorship. This analysis is built on a whole of 1057 published articles. By removing a lowest limit of 10 papers per nation, only 56 out of 118 countries passed this requirement. The group encompassing the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK) China, Germany and Australia seems especially noteworthy, since it covers for 79.5% of all publications. The US has 49 links with a link strength of 441, the UK encounters 48 links with a link strength of 326, China has 46 links alongside a link strength of 465, Australia has 41 links about a link strength of 465, Australia has 41 links via a link strength of 262, and Germany possess 37 links to a link strength of 136.



**Figure 2. The geographical version of collaborative authorship based upon countries**

**Top 10 organizations in this Field**

The Table 4 shows academic work from organizations in different countries. Deakin University along with Melbourne University both have 59 suggestions, 1.3% of the whole. Deakin University holds a TLCS of 218 & TGCS of 1068, whereas Melbourne University gets 175 and 773. Through 146 TLCS and 1148

TGCS, the University of Queensland within Australia has the most referrals with 72 (1.5%). Changchun University of Science & Technology, China has 15 recommendations (0.3%) and a TLCS of 148 having TGCS of 291. Monash University in Australia receives 65 recommends (1.4%) with TLCS 143 and TGCS 858. Using 24 ratings (0.5%), Nanyang Technology University in Singapore has a TGCS of 585 along with TLCS of 110. With just 10 suggestions (0.2%), Vrije University of Brussel in Belgium has a TGCS of 211 with TLCS of 110. The University of Missouri offers 22 ratings (0.5%) with TGCS 366 and TLCS of 107. Having 15 endorsers (0.3%), Tsinghua University based in China has a TLCS of 102 and TGCS of 347. Lastly, Beijing Normal University gets 38 suggestions (0.8%) that include 450 TGCS and 101 TLCS.

**Table 4. The top ten institutions in the field of study**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Recs</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>TLCS</b>	<b>TGCS</b>
Deakin University	59	1.3	218	1068
University of Melbourne	59	1.3	175	773
Changchun University of Science & Technology	15	0.3	148	291
University of Queensland	72	1.5	146	1148
Monash University	65	1.4	143	858
Nanyang Technology University	24	0.5	110	585
Vrije University of Brussel	10	0.2	110	211
University of Missouri	22	0.5	107	366
Tsinghua University	15	0.3	102	347
Beijing Normal University	38	0.8	101	450

**Note.** Ranking is based on Total Local Citation Score (TLCS), TGCS stands for Total Global Citation Score (Source: HistCite).

#### **The top 10 Authors in the Field**

Several scholars have contributed to social media and intercultural adaptation. LT Tran gets 20 referrals, 70.7 TGCS/t and a 527 total global citation score (TGCS). Tran examines how social media helps international students adapt to new cultures. Meng Q having 15 recommendations, looks at the psychological effects of social media on cultural adaptation through a TGCS/t of 59.78 and a TGCS of 291. Following 14 suggestions, Cao C has a TGCS/t of 56.03 and a TGCS of 278, proving the long-term benefits of social media for cultural integration. TT Heng, having 8 recommendations and a TGCS of 293, explore the various impacts of social media on psychological and sociocultural versatility with a TGCS/t of 44.93 (referring to Table 5).

**Table 5 Authors ranked within the top in the area (Source: HistCite).**

Author	Re cs	TL CS	TL CS/t	TL CSx	TGCS	TGCS/t	TLCR	TLC Sb	TLCSe
Tran, L.T	20	15 2	19.4 7	115	527	70.7	68	29	76
Meng, Q	15	14 8	31.7 8	101	291	59.78	146	20	31
Cao, C	14	14 0	29.3 6	94	278	56.03	139	20	32
Heng, T. T	8	12 8	19.3 2	113	293	44.93	53	29	78
Wei, M. F	14	91	10.5 6	73	261	31.86	26	16	29
Hu, D	4	86	12.9 5	83	212	31.77	7	11	65
Rientie s, B	11	86	9.19	67	338	44.91	34	23	23
Wen, W	3	86	12.9 5	83	210	31.27	6	11	66
Margin son S	1	82	7.45	82	251	22.82	0	7	44
Zhu, C	5	82	13.6 6	54	148	24.71	34	10	26

**Top 10 articles in the Area**

The top 10 articles having the highest number of Total Global Citations in the Web of Science. It provides a concise overview regarding 10 most often referenced article worldwide, lasting from 2014 to 2024. The research papers specifically examine the effect of social media on the act of intercultural adaptation among students. Consult Table 6 for extra information.

**Table 6. The ten most referenced publications presently issued (source: HistCite)**

No.	Title	Journal	Year	TGC
1	Different is not deficient: contradicting stereotypes of Chinese international students in US higher education	Studies in Higher Education	2018	147
2	Comparative effects of belongingness of the academic success and cross-cultural interactions of domestic and international students	International Journal of Intercultural Relations	2014	143
3	Collateral benefits of internet use: Explaining the diverse outcomes of engaging with the internet	New Media & Society	2018	115

4	Facebook or Renren? A comparative study of social networking site use and social capital among Chinese international students in the United States	Computers in Human Behavior	2014	92
5	Culture shock and reverse culture shock: The moderating role of cultural intelligence in international students' adaptation	International Journal of Intercultural Relations	2016	92
6	WhatsApp use and student's psychological well-being: Role of social capital and social integration	Children and Youth Services Review	2020	90
7	Excluded and Avoided: Racial Micro aggressions Targeting Asian International Students in Canada	Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology	2014	89
8	Understanding friendship and learning networks of international and host students using longitudinal social network analysis	International Journal of Intercultural Relations	2015	88
9	Social media use and adaptation among Chinese students beginning to study in the United States	International Journal of Intercultural Relations	2016	86
10	Social network sites and international students' cross-cultural adaptation	Computers in Human Behavior	2015	53

#### **Top 10 Journals in the arena of study**

The International Journal of Intercultural Relations becomes the top competitor in all criteria, with a TLCS/t rating of 98.56, a TGCS/t rank of 309.93, and a TLCR value of 470. The Journal of Studies in International Education possesses a TLCS/t score of 66.13, which is 2<sup>nd</sup> highest across all journals. It likewise has a high TGCS/t value of 324.3. Further, it has a TLCR score of 257. Computers in Human Behavior has somewhat low TLCS/t of 15.08, showing a smaller average number of citations per paper. Still, it has a high TGCS/t of 225.07, indicating a higher number of Total Global Citation Score per article, and it has TLCR of 15, showing that the entire amount of quotes is nearly equivalent to the number of The Journal of Multicultural and Multicultural Development holds a

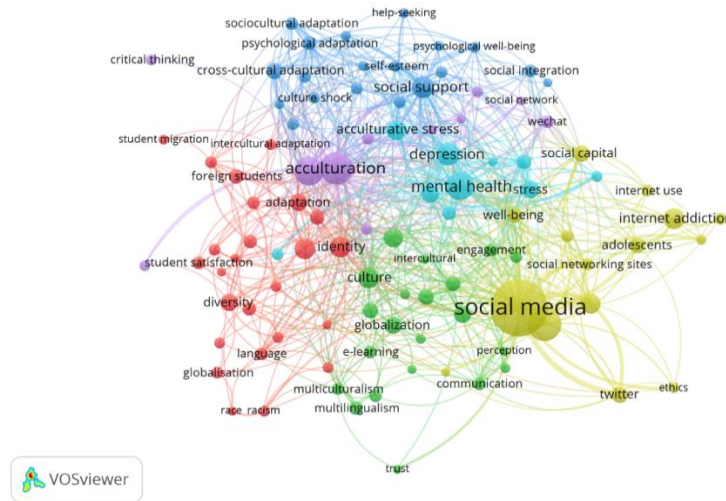
Total Local Citation Score per year (TLCS/t) of 19.44, and a TLCR of 116 (see Table 7).

**Table 7. List of the top 10 journals in the area (source: HistCite)**

Journal	TLCS/t	TGCS/t	TLCR
International Journal of Intercultural Relations	98.56	309.93	470
Journal of Studies in International Education	66.13	324.3	257
Computers in Human Behavior	15.08	225.07	15
Journal of Multicultural and Multicultural Development	19.44	97.04	116
Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies	29.62	123.4	95
Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology	10.11	55.25	46
Language, Culture and Curriculum	18.32	64.97	38
International Migration	10.25	36.07	40
Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development	7.07	25.51	10
Language and Intercultural Communication	7.39	34.65	50

#### **A Review of Keyword Co-Occurrence Analysis in the Research Domain**

Amongst the 570 keywords, barely 101 satisfies the criteria of occurring jointly at least 5 times. We have grouped 101 terms into 6 clusters, which are displayed in Figure 3. The researchers have notably highlighted the initial five clusters. Cluster 1 contains 25 items, adaptation mainly (with 36 occurrences and an overall link strength of 30) and 'adjustment' (with 24 occurrences and a link strength of 21). Cluster 2, which equally has 21 items, comprises terms such as 'communication' (with 20 occurrences and a relational strength of 28) and 'culture diversity' (with 20 occurrences and a connection strength of 11). Cluster 3 contains of 19 items, notably 'cross-cultural adaptation' (with 31 occurrences and an association strength of 34) and 'social support' (with 57 occurrences and an affiliation strength of 80). Cluster 4 includes 15 items, namely 'social media' (403 occurrences, 227 link strength) and 'internet addiction' (50 occurrences, 20 link strength). Cluster 5, which comprises of 11 keywords, emphasizes terms such as 'acculturation' (using 127 occurrences and a connection value of 124) and 'international students' (along with 102 occurrences and a link strength of 104). Cluster 6, which contains 10 items, 'acculturation stress' (with 46 occurrences and a link connection strength of 52) and 'depression' (with 61 occurrences and total link strength of 84).



**Figure 3. The network of keyword co-occurrence analysis**

A keyword co-occurrence analysis indicated 5 popular themes. Those included social media’s influence on intercultural communication studies, internet addiction, social media in intercultural in intercultural adaptation, anxiety and self-efficacy in cross-cultural communication, mental health in cross-cultural contexts, and the procedure of acculturation for overseas students. Table 8 presents the five utmost commonly used keywords from each group, reflecting how well-liked these phrases are in the fields of social media and intercultural adaptation work.

**Table 8. Top 6 keywords graded in each clusters**

Clusters No.	Cluster Color	Top 6 Keywords
1	Yellow	Social media, internet addiction, digital divide, adolescents, social capital, well-being
2	Red	Diversity, intercultural interaction, globalization, adaptation, integration, intercultural competence
3	Green	Multiculturalism, culture, e-learning, cultural diversity, motivation, satisfaction
4	Blue	Social support, cross-cultural adaptation, sociocultural, and psychological adaptation, social integration, culture shock



(Ryan et al., 2017; Pang, 2020). Evidence indicates that WeChat has an important impact on the professed communal relationships and psychological fitness of Chinese scholars in Germany, illustrating the channel's ability to overcome cultural differences (Pang, 2020).

Research studies suggest that how often and in what manner someone use social media has an important impact on their ability to modify to different situation. Greater engagement on social media is positively associated with enhanced socio-cultural and academic adjusting, according to finding Sandel (2014) and Lin et al. (2018). Nevertheless, excessive use of technology may sometimes result in adverse outcomes, including greater acculturative stress and lessened in-person contact, both of which are necessary for achieving a deeper cultural assimilation (Kumar & Gupta, 2019; Vuorre&Przybylski, 2023). The very existence of this contradiction emphasizes the significance of preserving a balanced approach to utilizing social media for the purpose to achieve the most effective adaptation.

WeChat provides a robust ecosystem that promotes communication, information exchange, and social interaction. This makes it particular helpful for Chinese students (Pang, 2020). On the other hand, students from different backgrounds of culture tend to utilize media such as Instagram and Facebook (Meta) more frequently, thereby allowing for wider interactions among cultures. However, these social media sites may not provide the equivalent amount of comprehensive assistance as specific area platforms do (Johnson & Lee, 2022; Zhang & Zhou, 2023). Female scholars and those from economically underprivileged credentials could face dissimilar obstacles and welfares in their usage of social media, that might influence their coping procedures in various conducts (Jiang & Wang, 2024; Zhang & Zhou, 2023). These discoveries highlight the necessity for advance study that takes into explanation such overlying identities in order to launch modified systems of sustenance.

Social media has the capability to offer emotional support and alleviate moods of loneliness. However, if overworked without attention, this can poorer mental health anxieties (Smith &Khawaja, 2021; Vuorre & Przybylski, 2023). Suggestion has demonstrated that the utilization of social media is connected with favorable mental health consequences, but too much use can contribute to elevated heights of depression and anxiety (Kumar & Gupta, 2019). These understandings underscore the serious importance of encouraging international students to begin good social media performances. Approaches that include numerical ethnography and bibliometric analysis are attracting more recognized as useful means to look into the elaborate experiences of global students (Varis, 2023; Tang & Zhang, 2023). However, there leftovers a requirement to conduct

additional longitudinal research that will documents the lasting apparatuses of adaptation (Chen &Gu, 2024).

#### **Avenues for future research**

The current section provides an overview of key topics for future research, considering existing literature and outlining areas that require additional academic attention.

- **Cultural Diversification and Social Media Utilization**

Though current study primarily examines the experiences of international students in Western nations (Forbush& Foucault-Welles, 2016; Ryan et al., 2017; Yu & Wright, 2019), it is essential to look into the encouragement of social media on scholars in non-Western values. A review of how social media supports adjustment period for overseas students in Asia, South America and Africa might provide a more thorough understanding of its function in different cultural settings (Tang & Zhang, 2023).

- **Longitudinal Research regarding the effect of Social Media**

Contemporary studies typically depend on cross-sectional findings, as evidenced by investigations conducted by Sandel (2014) and Choi & Park (2017). Longitudinal research has been shown to provide useful data on the intercultural adaptation. Such types of research may monitor changes in students' social networks, psychological well-being and cultural integration from the time they leave their native nations until the end of their academics' duration abroad. Chen and Gu (2024) and Alamri (2024) have carried out studies in this domain.

- **Particular Social Media platforms and the procedure of Adaptation**

The present research has not effectively distinguished between the impacts of social media websites. Channels such as Facebook, WeChat, and Instagram might have various effects on the process of adaptation based on their unique features and audience demographics (Pang, 2020; Johnson & Lee, 2022). An analysis of how different mediums promote or hinder intercultural adaptation might offer particular approaches for efficiently exploiting social media.

- **Intersectionality and Social Media use**

Previous studies lack a sufficient number of intersectional viewpoints that consider into account race, gender, and socio-economic status. An analysis of the relationship between these factors and social media consumption can uncover different challenges and advantages for particular groups of learners (Jiang & Wang, 2024; Zhang & Zhou, 2023). Using this approach can facilitate the creation of specialized support systems that identify and tackle the various requirements of students.

- **Mental Health and Psychological implications**

Whereas there have been a few studies that briefly discuss the psychological components of using social media (Kumar & Gupta, 2019; Vuorre & Przybylski, 2023), there remains a requirement for a deeper research into its effects on mental health, depression, anxiety, and specifically in relation to acculturative stress. A review of the mechanisms that explain how social media either minimizes or intensifies these issues can provide insights for initiatives designed for improving mental well-being of international students (Smith & Khawaja, 2021).

- **Methodological Innovations**

Future research ought to include methodological advancements particularly digital ethnography and mixed-methods techniques, to effectively capture all the complex experiences of overseas students (Varis, 2023). By deploying modern bibliometric approaches and social network analysis, may further develop comprehension of the influence of information dissemination and social media connections on intercultural adaptation (Tang & Zhang, 2023; Bretas&Alon, 2021).

Researchers in the future can gain deeper understandings and practical consequences for assisting international students in adjusting to their journeys by examining different cultural environment, adopting longitudinal and multimodal views, and employing creative approaches.

## **Conclusion**

Considering the domains of social media and intercultural adaptation, this review offers a thorough summary of the most recent developments, important topics, and main research routes. Our review study provides a bibliometric analysis of social media and intercultural adaptation investigations from 2014 to 2024 utilizing VOSviewer. The researchers identified research factors, the top 10 authors, nations, papers, organizations and journals among 851 articles that we gathered from WOS. The authors examined the interaction of co-occurring keywords associated with social intercultural adjustment and social media.

A particularly important contribution that we present is the combination of the findings of the bibliometric analysis and the content review being linked to a research coherent narrative that act as the response to our systematic review research question. For example, we highlight the significance of social media platforms such as WeChat and Instagram in facilitating acculturation and integration for international students. In line with our analysis of the role of localized social media in adaptation, Pang (2020) emphasized how WeChat was critical in bridging the cultural gaps of Chinese students in Germany. Similarly,

Lin et al., (2018) added the focus of their research showing that social media engagement positively affects sociocultural adaptation to the revised conclusion, which is now better reflect that. These improvements help balance the conclusion through the study's contributions and focus.

In terms of relating theory to observed results, we have added more text to each of the discussion sections directly linking our results to theory. Indeed, the results reflect the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973), demonstrating how students use LinkedIn and Instagram to fulfil their informational and emotional needs. We used Berry (1997) Acculturation Theory to understand how social media facilitates this integration into the stage of the host culture as well as retaining cultural identity We observe also the Social Support Theory (Cohen and Wills, 1985) at play, where online networks such as WeChat buffer acculturative stress. Additionally, the use of interactive, bidirectional cultural exchanges on programs such as Zoom lends support to Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory (Kim, 2001). Each of these contributions offer a unified narrative, indicating how observed results aligned with and enhance designated theoretical frameworks.

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