

Cultural Identity Reconstruction Through Taiwanese Period TV Dramas

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, Taiwanese period TV dramas have gained prominence from not only its entertainment value but also the transmission of history and cultural narratives. These dramas integrate rich narratives, visual authenticity, and historical contexts, providing young Taiwanese people an opportunity to engage with and reinterpret the complicated cultural identity. However, although prior studies have examined how media affect cultural understanding, there were limited focus on how these media actively assist the reconstruction of cultural identity, especially for digital-native audiences. This research addresses this gap by answering the question: *How do young Taiwanese people reconstruct cultural identity from the perspective of interpreting period dramas?*

Grounded in cultural memory theory and audience reception theory, this study conducted qualitative research and in-depth semi-structure interviews with 12 young Taiwanese who have watched at least two Taiwanese period TV dramas. Thematic analysis was applied in this research to interpret how period dramas influenced participants' understandings of Taiwanese history, values, and cultural identity.

The finding shows that Taiwanese period TV dramas can be a device of cultural memory to fill generation gap and be supplement of history education. Participants demonstrated that these dramas allow them to immerse in historical atmosphere, understand social transformation, emotionally connect to past eras. Key themes emerging from the data include the impact of narrative techniques and audio-visual immersion, emotional engagement through nostalgia and empathy, intergenerational reflection, and the active formation of collective memory and Taiwanese identity. Additionally, participants expressed critical consciousness to political and cultural biases in the dramas.

This study concludes that Taiwanese period TV dramas are not just entertainment but also an influential tool to reinforce young audiences' reinterpretation and reconstruction of cultural identity. Through the engagement of dramatized history, audiences are able to understand the evolution of Taiwan's culture and politics and negotiate their own identity in contemporary societal and historical framework. This research contributes to the broader academic discussions of media, cultural identity, and memory, offering lens of Taiwan to explore how media mediate the formation of identity in digitally connected society.

KEYWORDS: *period drama, cultural identity, cultural memory, Taiwanese drama, audience reception*

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1. Introduction

In the last ten years, the media industry in Taiwan started with a growing trend of producing period drama, which is a genre of drama that focuses on stories happened in certain historical contexts. Different from idol dramas, period dramas merge language, customs, rituals, and historical events, reflecting the cultural identity of Taiwan. By watching these period dramas, younger generations in Taiwan have the chance to access, understand, and experience cultural roots of Taiwan through the narratives and audio-visual elements in the dramas. Understanding and experiencing Taiwanese cultural roots is particularly important in an era when historical narratives are fragmented and contested because it strengthens one's sense of identity and cultural belonging.

However, what remains insufficient is how exactly media engagements construct and reconstruct young audiences' cultural identity. Understanding and experiencing are not just passive receptions but involve active meaning-making, re-evaluating, and identifying processes. As digital-native audiences increasingly rely on media to obtain cultural knowledge, period dramas become important for them to connect to past Taiwan and to accelerate cultural continuity.

Existing literature acknowledges the role of media engagement in activating cultural memory (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995, p. 127) and further transmits cultural heritage, historical knowledge, and collective memories to audiences who are unfamiliar with the presented historical period. According to audience reception theory, individual viewers interpret media based on their unique cultural backgrounds and societal experiences (Livingstone, 1998, p. 248). It means that the meaning-making processes are shaped by viewers' lived realities, values, and collective memories that can be diverse and dynamic. In the context of Taiwanese period TV dramas, this interpretive variability becomes especially significant by involving historical events, socio-political transitions, and cultural traditions.

Baker (2004) argued that media texts are the sites where constructing and contesting cultural elements, such as power, identity, discourse, representation, ideology, and politics (pp. 42-43). Taiwanese period TV dramas embody these components by depicting complex colonial past, evolving political identity, and cultural hybridity on the island. Instead of absorbing contents passively, when audiences engage with these dramas, they actively negotiate the meanings, relating themselves to the understanding of Taiwanese identity and history (Holliday, 2010, pp. 170-175).

Yet despite the flourishing media landscape in East Asian dramas, such as Chinese, Korean, and Japanese dramas, Taiwanese TV dramas remain underexplored. In addition,

while the prior research has examined how cultural identity differentiates the interpretation of media contents, less is known about how the diverse interpretations of media construct and reconstruct cultural identity.

This research addresses these gaps by applying audience reception theory, which emphasizes how viewers' interpretations are shaped by cultural and social contexts (Livingstone, 1998, p. 248), and cultural memory theory, which refers to the understanding of history and identity by exploring how societies remember and transmit the past collectively through shared symbolic practices (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995, pp. 126-131), to investigate how young Taiwanese people interpret period dramas and how these interpretations contribute to the reconstruction of cultural identity.

First of all, the research highlights the role of media in the sustainability and transformation of culture, especially in keeping historical narratives alive. It suggests that Taiwanese period TV dramas serve not only as entertainment but as contribution of preserving and transmitting Taiwanese cultural heritage to younger generations, especially in an era where traditional forms of cultural and historical education may no longer reach them effectively. Second, this research explores the ways media representations form young people's cultural identities rooted not in directed experiences but in mediated memories and imagined connections. Third, by analyzing the role of period dramas in shaping public discourse on history and identity, the research can offer perceptions of how media affects collective memory and public discourse. These findings have implications for media producers and policy-makers to further improve cultural policy, media production, and audience engagement in Taiwan and its media industry.

Furthermore, the research integrates and expands academic discussions on media reception theory, cultural memory theory, and cultural identity construction by suggesting Taiwanese perspectives through historical narratives in period dramas. To illustrate, this research incorporates cultural memory theory and reception theory to examine how young Taiwanese reconstruct cultural identity through media consumption. It provides an academic viewpoint that helps develop the combination of Taiwan studies, media studies, and Asian cultural studies by examining how digital-native audiences negotiate the past through screen culture. By doing so, the research offers a contemporary perspective on the relationship between media and identity in a Taiwanese context.

Grounded in cultural memory theory (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995, pp. 125-133) and audience reception theory (Livingstone, 1998, pp. 247-265; Thompson, 1993, pp. 248-272), this research aims to explore the ways young Taiwanese interpret period dramas and their

reconstruction of cultural identity after watching period dramas. The reconstruction of cultural identity is conceptualized as the process of reinterpreting, redefining, and reframing individuals' sense of the belongingness to particular historical and cultural narratives. So, it leads to the research question: *How do young Taiwanese people reconstruct cultural identity from the perspective of interpreting period dramas?*

2. Theoretical Framework

This section outlines the theoretical concepts that guide the present study on how young Taiwanese audiences reconstruct cultural identity through period TV dramas. From interdisciplinary perspectives, it introduces the genre and cultural meanings of Taiwanese period TV dramas, and discusses how media serves as a vehicle for cultural memory. The framework then examines audience reception theory to explain how meanings construct through media engagement, and concludes with the role that cultural memory plays in constructing and reconstructing cultural identity. These theoretical perceptions collectively build foundations for analyzing how mediated historical narratives promote the formation of contemporary Taiwanese cultural identity.

2.1 Period TV Drama and Its Importance to Taiwanese Culture

Period TV drama is a genre of drama characterized by narratives set in the past, constructing a sense of history through costumes and scenes. The story in a period TV drama is based on real historical background with some confabulations. Huang (2009) mentioned that most of the audiences of period TV dramas have high expectations that the dramas should provide historical and cultural meanings to the general public (p. 39).

In the recent twenty years, Taiwan has developed dramas that combine local elements and regional influences, highlighting the Taiwanese young generation's exploration of Taiwanese culture. Through TV dramas, young generations in Taiwan have begun to consider local culture values as meaningful and to further create cultural styles that represent Taiwanese uniqueness (Huang, 2009, pp. 122-126). Over the past ten years, there have been several premium period TV dramas emerged in the drama industry in Taiwan. This makes the topics of Taiwanese TV dramas start to transform from idol drama into issue-oriented drama, which include period drama. In Taiwanese period TV dramas, cultural elements such as language, customs, rituals, values, and historical events are contained to represent Taiwanese cultural value to broader audiences.

In the next section, the research will discuss how media contents, such as period TV dramas, serve as a medium for transmitting and reinforcing cultural memory.

2.2 Media as Cultural Memory

Memories of individuals are formed through the processes of communicating with others. This kind of communication happens in certain social frameworks, such as families, neighborhoods, or corporations that define the cultural uniqueness through their collective pictures of the past (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995, p. 127). It means that memories are created collectively. In this case, cultural memory can be seen as a formal and intergenerational cultural understanding that is constructed by the common experiences in the society, being transmitted and preserved through rituals, texts, symbols, and traditions that maintain historical narratives (Erll, 2011, p. 22).

The medium of cultural memory is communicated evolves over time and across cultures. In modern days, media has become the channel for understanding how societies remember and interpret the past (Erll, 2011, pp. 33-34). To clarify, different societies might construct their own self-images based on different ways. Specifically, societies exhibit themselves through cultural heritages that represent the pasts and values of itself, revealing the construction and trend of culture (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995, pp. 130-133).

The Taiwanese period TV drama, *Gold Leaf*, is a great example. The narrative reconstructs Taiwan's post-war economic and social changes, using period storyline to preserve Hakka heritage, which is one of Taiwan's key ethnic cultures. Through the heavy use of Hakka cultural heritages, such as rituals, stories, festivals, ceremonies, costumes, and aesthetics, the drama reinforces the cultural memory and construction of specific culture in the storyline.

However, media itself cannot shape identity automatically. Instead, the construction of identity relies on how audiences interpret and engage with media texts. So, in the next section, the study will discuss the relationship between audience reception and cultural identity in the media domain.

2.3 Audience Reception and Cultural Identity Construction Through Media

Contents

Rather than simply transmitting memory, the impact of media on cultural identity depends more on audience reception and interaction.

Culture has been defined as “a complete way of lifestyle” that includes daily life, collective experiences, and meaning making, while cultural identity is multi-layered and dynamic, influenced by historical, social, and personal contexts, including individuals' experiences, environments, and interactions (Barker, 2004, p. 30; Holliday, 2010, p. 175;

Schwartz et al., 2008, p. 637). To be more specific, the identification of culture varies according to factors such as region, religion, race, gender, social class, and community (Holliday, 2010, p. 170; Cohen, 1991, p. 442). Thus, Schwartz et al. (2008) declared that cultural identity focuses on cultural value and fulfillment, and how individuals consider the cultural group that they belong to (p. 636). All of these essential elements are increasingly mediated through contemporary media content.

Media meaning is not one-way but is formed by the interaction between audiences and texts (Cohen, 1991, pp. 442-443). It is important to understand that audiences nowadays have started to interpret media texts actively rather than absorbing meanings passively. Recently, people have multiple identities in the society that makes their interpretations of media contents become more complicated (Thompson, 1993, p. 248). In this regard, Livingstone (1998) further provided that audience reception is embedded in broader cultural networks, which are systems of shared meanings and practices that shape how individuals make sense of what they watch or read (p. 248). These networks reflect the audiences' positioning in society, making the interpretations become diverse. As a result, media interpretations are not fixed or single but are plural, reflecting that audiences engage with media contents through their diverse backgrounds and interpretive frameworks (Livingstone, 1998, pp. 247-265).

Audiences have different interpretations that based on their own cultural backgrounds, life experiences, and societal environments (Barker, 2004, p. 1; Thompson, 1993, p. 248). Therefore, the meanings derived from media contents are not merely shaped by producers but co-constructed by interpretatively engaging with audiences. The process of media interpretations becomes a dynamic site where cultural identity is continuously formed, negotiated, and ultimately reconstructed.

2.4 Contribution of Cultural Memory and Construction of Cultural Identity

Cultural memory plays an important role in shaping and constructing individual and collective identity. Erll (2011) suggested that the main characteristics of cultural memory are constructing identity, extending meanings, organizing, and reflecting (p. 29). These functions not only preserve the past but also actively contribute to the development of individual and group self-understanding. In media context, these characteristics become significant as the presentations of the past period in media contents can influence the way individuals and groups perceive their cultural heritages and identities.

Audiences engage with the texts that have resonance to their life experiences, values, and worldviews. During the process, they prefer to choose media contents that are related

to their own culture, letting these contents strengthen or challenge existing aspects of their identity. This selective engagement reflects how cultural memory becomes a repository of symbolic resources through media, operating through narratives, images, and discourses.

Cohen (1991) emphasized that audiences receive and interpret media contents selectively, merging these contents into the processes of identifying culture (p. 442). This interpretive selection makes media contents become a device for reconstructing cultural identity. For instance, viewers may feel resonant to a certain historical description or cultural ritual because they match viewers' personal memories, family narratives, or social experiences. In this sense, the reception of media is not a neutral act but a culturally embedded process that intertwines memory and identity.

Moreover, Cohen (1991) further pointed out that by critically examining and reflecting on media representations, audiences transform media contents into a space for forming identity (p. 452). Through this engagement, media becomes not merely a transmitter of cultural memory but also an active participant in the construction of cultural meaning-making. This process is particularly significant in societies experiencing political and cultural transition, where collective memory and identity are being redefined.

3. Methods

In this research, a qualitative approach was used to dive deeply into the topic. Because the goal of qualitative research is to understand the role of Taiwanese period TV drama in restructuring young Taiwanese's perspective of cultural identity, this approach is significantly suited to the goal of the research to gain Taiwanese young people's own experiences of immersing cultural identity through period TV dramas. By doing qualitative research, Cartwright (2020) noted that it can allow the research to include individuals' experiences (p. 3), which is extremely important in understanding and analyzing the purpose of this research topic.

3.1 Data Collection: Interview

The study used semi-structured, in-depth interviews to get information that helps broaden knowledge base and understand alternative points of view (B. S. Brennen, 2017, pp. 29-30). There is greater flexibility with semi-structured interviews that interviewers can ask follow-up questions to explore deeply into some of the topics or issues clarifying answers given by the respondents and to capture participants' own experiences and perspectives (B. S. Brennen, 2017, pp. 29-30).

3.2 Sampling Criteria

This study used a combination of convenience and purposive sampling to select informants. Convenience sampling allowed for the practical recruitment of participants across locations. Berndt (2020) suggested that “purposive sampling can help researchers justify selections based on analytical, logical, or theoretical grounds” (p. 226). In this study, purposive sampling was particularly useful for defining criteria for “good informants” who can share their first-hand experience, familiarity, and reflective capacity regarding the consumption of Taiwanese period TV dramas.

This sampling strategy was necessary as the research aimed to explore how cultural identity is reconstructed through the interpretation of historical narratives in Taiwanese period TV dramas. In this case, the interviews needed informants who have not only basic knowledge and experience of watching Taiwanese period TV dramas but also understand socio-cultural contexts to some extent.

Therefore, the main inclusion criteria were: (1) being a Taiwanese national; (2) aged between 20 and 30; and (3) having watched at least two Taiwanese period TV dramas in recent years. Young adults were targeted because people in this age group are digital-native media consumers whose cultural identity is still actively forming and constructing in both online and offline spaces. These individuals have not lived through the historical periods that encompassed distinct social norms, historical events, and cultural practices, which are key components for identity construction but largely inaccessible to young generations in modern society.

The final participants of the interview are 12 young Taiwanese individuals, aged between 20 and 30, who are familiar with Taiwanese period TV dramas. The participants were recruited from social media platforms and university networks in both the Netherlands and Taiwan. The interviews were conducted online using video conferencing platform, Teams, each lasting between 45 to 60 minutes.

To create a neutral and comfortable interview atmosphere, interviews were set online that they could engage with the interview from locations where they felt most convenient and relaxed, with minimal distractions and external pressure. Also, interviewer sent informed consent, a brief information of the study, purpose explanation, and topic outline of the interview to the participants before interviewing, ensuring informed participation and better alignment with the research goals.

3.3 Operationalization: Interview Guide

In this research, the interview guide served as the operationalization as it transforms key concepts and theories from the theoretical framework into measurable elemental themes. Cultural identity, media interpretation, and role of identity are the main concepts and they were divided into several themes. Each theme has several sample open-ended questions that ask participants about their own experiences and perspectives that participants can respond specifically with personal narratives. This procedure made sure that the data collection process was aligned with the research question by providing flexibility in qualitative research.

The interview guide follows the main concepts from theoretical framework in the previous section. All the theories and concepts were broken down into different themes to gain deeper opinions from participants' detailed responses. In addition, participants' unique perspectives that are not listed in this interview guide were also flexible to further be covered into new themes after interviewing.

3.4 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

For the data analysis method, the research will use thematic analysis as it can identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes of data (Cartwright, 2020, p. 3). Also, thematic analysis is flexible to examine broad research questions across diverse theoretical frameworks and make the perspectives of cultural identity that can be reconstructed by watching Taiwanese historical TV dramas within young Taiwanese community suitable for analyzing (Clarke & Braun, 2016, p. 297). Thus, by utilizing thematic analysis, this research can interpret the role of historical Taiwanese TV dramas for reconstructing young Taiwanese people's cultural identity.

3.4.1 Data preparation

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. As the interviews were conducted in Mandarin, the next step was to translate the transcripts into English. To protect participant anonymity, personal identifier, such as name, were removed. Mandarin transcripts were cross-checked with the recordings and the English versions were confirmed by cross-referencing with the Mandarin version to ensure accuracy.

3.4.2 Familiarization with the Data

To become familiar with the data, the researcher read and re-read the interview transcripts in both Mandarin and English. Also, researcher listen and re-listen to the interview recordings to check participants' tone to see which key point they emphasized

during answering. The potential patterns and noteworthy expressions were noted preliminarily.

3.4.3 Coding Process and Theme Construction

In the coding process, all data from the interviews were coded by both deductive and inductive coding. Based on the theoretical framework, categories were developed deductively from the research question. Also, codes and themes that were grown from the interview data were inductively coded to examine new ideas that were presented in the data but not in previous research.

Manually, researcher first coded the transcripts sentence by sentence, assigning descriptive labels to meaningful texts that the ideas have existed in the theoretical framework. Next, other sentences that are not directly related to previous literature but have connection to the research question were also coded into simple labels. Concisely, by capturing recurring ideas related to the reconstruction of cultural identity, researcher first generated initial codes, both deductive and inductive codes, by grouping sentences with similar topics, naming these groups with simple but recognizable short labels. Then, researcher categorized these groups of transcripts into themes by putting related labels together. These thematic clusters were based on identifying patterns across coded data. For example, researcher grouped transcripts that talk about casting, naming them as “importance of casting”. This topic was later categorized together with “production quality” and “plot design”, becoming the theme “the impact of narrative techniques”.

The emerging themes were then examined by the theoretical framework, how they aligned with the concepts of cultural memory, audience reception, and identity construction. In this way, the study ensured that the analysis remained grounded in theory and allow the emergence of new perspectives at the same time.

These themes were revised when the researcher revisited the transcripts after the coding process to ensure coherence and distinctiveness. Also, through the iterative review and comparison, the unnecessary quotes, such as the answers that are not related to Taiwanese period TV dramas, were eliminated and definitions of each code were clarified. During the process, researcher kept reflecting on the possibility of personal assumptions and potential bias, especially when assigning meaning of emotional statements, to practice reflexivity. This reflexive stance helped maintain transparency in the analysis.

4. Results

In this section, the study presents the main results from the interviews of young Taiwanese people's participation in Taiwanese period TV dramas and how these dramas affect on their cultural identity reconstruction. Through in-depth qualitative analysis, the research discovered several themes to explain how narrative techniques, audio-visual elements, and emotional resonance help audiences relate to Taiwan's cultural and historical heritages. Additionally, the study discovered that period dramas are alternative tools of historical education that promote intergenerational conversations and build collective memories. The results emphasize that Taiwanese period TV dramas can be both cultural texts and active medium of identity construction, critical reflection, and the reinterpretation of the meaning of Taiwanese identity in contemporary society.

Each of the following subchapters presents one core theme that emerged from data analysis, which are supported by participants' narratives and aligned with the theoretical framework.

4.1 The Impact of Narrative Techniques on Audience Engagement

To explore the elements that capture young Taiwanese people to watch Taiwanese period TV dramas, this section examines how narrative techniques and production quality take place in audience engagement. The interview data showed that narrative techniques such as plot design, emotional storytelling, and casting choices play a crucial role in shaping interest of audiences to watch period dramas. Rather than motivated purely by historical reality, participants emphasized how the integration of dramatized presentations of history increase accessibility.

4.1.1 The Importance of Plot Design

Firstly, participants frequently mentioned that dramas with genre blending allure them the most, such as incorporating romance, suspense, or family themes. These genre combinations function as narrative hooks that distinguish Taiwanese period TV dramas from traditional historical content.

“I actually like them (Taiwanese period TV dramas) quite a lot. Mostly because they incorporate elements I enjoy, like romance, friendship, family dynamics, or suspense. I rarely watch dramas that are purely historical.” (Interviewee 10)

A notable example cited by participants was *Light the Night*, which applied the integration of murder mystery into a historical background that stimulated viewers'

curiosity and engagement. Setting the story in a specific historical period enriched the unique atmosphere and provided familiar narrative components.

“Starting with *Light the Night*, what makes it different is that it combines elements Taiwanese audiences love, like murder mysteries... it uses a historical setting as a background for the murder mystery. That setting, though, makes it unique because we rarely see murder mysteries set in that era in Taiwan.” (Interviewee 1)

Furthermore, several participants indicated on the importance of dramatization, which was a way to make historical authenticity in period dramas more accessible for young people who are not interested in historical content.

“The dramatization makes it engaging, especially for people who wouldn’t otherwise care about history... But these dramas don’t just entertain—they help us ask who we are, where we come from...” (Interviewee 10)

4.1.2 Emotional Storytelling

Another recurrent technique was the use of emotional storytelling. Participants noted that emotional depth had significant positions in period drama storytelling technique to maintain their interests. Once the emotional connection of storylines became insufficient, audiences tended to lose interest and disengage with the dramas.

“If I finish watching it (one period drama), it’s usually because I found some emotional connection. That connection often comes from the director’s storytelling style—I feel like I got something meaningful out of it.” (Interviewee 6)

“It (*Gold Leaf*) didn’t move me emotionally. *A Touch of Green* was similar for me... the start didn’t grip me. I need strong stimulation.” (Interviewee 2)

Specifically, participants described how character complexity, moral ambiguity, and resonant plots made viewers involve in the story. These emotional arcs that portrayed inner conflicts and difficult life decisions helped viewers relate to the characters even through a historical distance.

“It mainly focused on depicting real struggles and was very fair to each character’s journey, showing that no one was simply good or bad—each was portrayed as complex and multi-dimensional.” (Interviewee 1)

4.1.3 Casting as a Motivation to Watch Dramas

Casting was an additional factor to maintain viewership of Taiwanese period TV dramas. Participants emphasized that one of the main reasons they began to watch a drama was casting choice. They frequently referred that actors they admired or recognized in a show influenced peer discussion before and during the drama aired.

“Casting is also important—if I know an actor is especially good at portraying complex characters, it makes the drama more appealing and make me want to watch more... Like I said, casting is often the first thing we talk about. If the cast includes familiar actors from our generation, or actors I like, it’ll generate more discussion and interaction among peers.”

(Interviewee 2)

Casting of familiar or well-known actors shaped viewing behavior. For example, participants declared that following a favored performer’s show was the main reason of watching *A Touch of Green* and *Gold Leaf*.

“Casting also matters to me. For example, I watched *A Touch of Green* and *Gold Leaf* largely because I really like the actress Yu-Han Lien.”

(Interviewee 7)

In summary, participants’ responses show that well-designed plots, moving storytelling, and good acting actors mutually achieve viewer engagement of Taiwanese period TV dramas. These narrative techniques capture attention and retain viewer involvement among young Taiwanese audiences.

4.2 Using Audio-visual Elements to Concretize Past Experiences

Participants repeated that production quality, particularly visual and audio elements such as scene settings, costumes, language, and music, was an important factor for period TV dramas to enhance authenticity and attraction. These components provided audiences an immersive way to understand the past era by imaging and relating to the social atmosphere and lifestyle depicted in the period dramas.

“I think for a period drama to feel real, the props, settings, and even background elements like news, music, and tools they use need to be really carefully chosen. That’s what makes it feel like you’ve been transported to that era.” (Interviewee 5)

“Honestly, it’s through the visuals and music of these dramas that I can really immerse myself in the atmosphere and situations of the time...” (Interviewee 8)

“Definitely the language, costumes, and architecture. They create a strong sense of the era. I wasn’t alive then, but those visuals and sounds help me feel like I’m not in the present. It’s like I’ve time-travel to the past.” (Interviewee 10)

4.2.1 Immersive Authenticity Through Visual Elements

Costumes, hairstyles, makeup, and props were frequently mentioned as critical visual elements in shaping historical authenticity in period dramas. Participants gave concrete examples of how these visual components made the past feel more realistic.

“In *Light the Night*, the costumes were memorable—the hostesses wore qipao at the Japanese bar, which I think is quite unique to Taiwanese-style Japanese bars. They also followed Japanese-style interaction patterns with customers.” (Interviewee 1)

“... in *A Touch of Green*, I liked how they recreated old military aircraft and the military village. As the air force wives came from educated backgrounds and their husbands had high income, they wore fashionable outfits like qipao and acted arrogant. Their hairstyles and clothing were really attractive to me.” (Interviewee 7)

Everyday objects from the past were also one of the key factors in period dramas to enhance the immersive feeling for audiences. Participants noticed small, time-specific items that were signals of certain periods, making the depicted era more recognizable authentic, and tangible.

“... in *In A Good Way*, there was a trend where they wore hair clips on their foreheads. They used pagers too—things I’d heard of but never really seen in use.” (Interviewee 12)

The portrayal of physical environments also built up realism of Taiwanese period TV dramas. In the interviews, participants described how the historical settings in certain period dramas contributed to the sense of place and time.

“... in *The Magician on the Skywalk*, the scenes about banned books were powerful. They showed the illegal print shops, secret book markets—very immersive.” (Interviewee7)

4.2.2 Evoking Historical Atmosphere Through Audio Design

Music was identified as a critical device for reinforcing historical atmosphere of period dramas. Participants highlighted that music made young Taiwanese audiences feel immersive to the presented past.

“... the music helps deepen that nostalgic feel, which helps immerse the viewer in that era and understand what people’s lives were like.”

(Interviewee 10)

Participants provided a specific example in a certain period drama of how music assisted Taiwanese period TV dramas to make young audiences feel engaged. Through the soundtrack, the drama enhanced the emotional and historical tone.

“When I watched *In A Good Way*, Wu Bai’s music really stirred up a lot of feelings for me—it made me feel like I was transported back to that era... I think music and scenery are very important.” (Interviewee 8)

In addition, the use of different local languages and dialects in Taiwanese period TV dramas, such as Hakka and Taiwanese Hokkien, was seen as essential for participants in representing historical environments and increasing cultural authenticity.

“... I appreciated that *Gold Leaf* used Hakka instead of just Mandarin. It preserved the authenticity of the story, which might’ve been lost if they’d used a different language.” (Interviewee 5)

“... in *Gold Leaf*, the mixing of Hakka and Taiwanese (Taiwanese Hokkien) languages felt very real. In real life, people switch between dialects based on who they’re talking to.” (Interviewee 7)

4.2.3 Visualizing Social Norms and Daily Lifestyle

Participants illustrated how visualized performances of everyday lifestyle in Taiwanese period TV dramas, such as historical lifestyles, fashion trends, and social norms, offered insights into the transformation of social values and communication practices over time. These visual representations of historical and cultural contexts helped them contrast the differences between past and present societal norms.

“Through the plot, you can get a sense of the customs and lifestyles of those times, and see how they differ from today.” (Interviewee 9)

“... in *In A Good Way*, there were some ways of being in a relationship that are seem old school now. This made me feel very interested. Also, there were some scenes showed the student activity that they shout on the top of a building. These experiences are not the way we live our student life in modern days.” (Interviewee 1)

Notably, fashion was particularly an effective way to express and represent Taiwanese culture. Participants noted that in Taiwanese period TV dramas, this performance of social trend in daily life served as a characteristic of different time periods.

“... in *In A Good Way*, the fashion—specifically, tucked-in shirts with belts—was trendy at the time. You get a sense that every period had its own fashion trends.” (Interviewee 6)

4.2.4 Affective Engagement Through the Representation of Historical Struggles

Participants emphasized that the depiction of historical struggles in Taiwanese period TV dramas helped them better understand the life in past era. These portrayals arouse audiences’ resonance with the characters’ situation.

Firstly, participants noted that gender roles shown in period dramas were noticeably different from those in the present days. These presentations provided a historical realism to period dramas, assisting participants to observe how certain social views were depicted in earlier periods.

“*The Magician on the Skywalk*, set around the end of martial law period, they showed banned books and how people viewed homosexuality or gender identity—very different from now.” (Interviewee 12)

Moreover, participants mentioned that the political events portrayed in period dramas gave them a sense of everyday life during historical period. The depictions of certain political situations were linked to daily experiences.

“... in *Island Nation*, the story reflects the White Terror period and political oppression—it shows how people’s daily lives and choices were affected.” (Interviewee 10)

Participants asserted how cultural hybridity in Taiwanese period TV dramas reflected Taiwan’s historical transformations. The portrayals included the influence of multiple colonization and overlapping cultural forces. These cultural influences illustrated the complexities of life in Taiwan that identified as part of the broader authentic depiction of societal conditional struggles.

“You could truly see the struggles of Taiwanese people after multiple waves of colonization, trying to find their place amid all the cultural influences.” (Interviewee 1)

Thus, across the interviews, participants consistently mentioned that audio-visual elements are pivotal in creating engagement and building historical understanding to young Taiwanese people. These features make the past time and place vivid, evoking emotional engagement and cultural reflection. Rather than abstract history, the tangible details allow young audiences to examine how daily life and societal dynamics are unfolded in different historical periods.

4.3 Historical Dramas as a Supplement and Deepening of History Education

Participants clarified that Taiwanese period TV dramas served as an alternative tool of historical and cultural education. Compare to traditional textbooks, participants viewed these dramas as an additional learning way. Period dramas included emotionally storytelling, vivid scene, and detailed portrayal of lifestyle that were not covered in textbooks made cultural contexts and historical events understandable.

4.3.1 Limitation of Textbooks in History Education

Many participants commented on the limitation of textbook education of learning history in Taiwan. They criticized that textbooks were overly simplistic and insufficient of the depth of Taiwan's complex socio-cultural past. The inadequacy of history learning made it difficult for audiences to understand historical experiences.

“Before watching these dramas, I'd already read books and historical texts, but written accounts can feel flat.” (Interviewee 7)

“Without them (period dramas), modern people wouldn't understand the past. If we only had textbooks, they'd be all text—hard to imagine or feel anything.” (Interviewee 4)

“Textbooks can feel bland, but these dramas make history more vivid and memorable.” (Interviewee 12)

Also, participants realized that historical events in textbooks were often brief and general that they could not explore certain historical backgrounds. Some important events were summarized in only a few lines, restricting understanding. In contrast, period dramas provided scenes that presented historical backgrounds and storylines specifically and expandable.

“A lot of historical events are only briefly covered in textbooks, maybe just one sentence. But in dramas, those short paragraphs can be expanded into ten episodes.” (Interviewee 10)

“Textbooks just list major events—they don't get into the details. But these dramas bring those small things to life.” (Interviewee 5)

4.3.2 Period Dramas as Culture and History Learning Tools

Participants indicated that Taiwanese period TV dramas had become alternative resources for history and culture learning. Many highlighted that the vivid and understandable narrative presentation of life experiences from the past in the dramas allowed audiences to access aspects of culture and history in greater detail than other sources.

“Visualizing those historical periods helps me understand them better than just reading about them in textbooks.” (Interviewee 12)

“These dramas give audiences a general sense of what happened in the past... it helps us understand that something like this might have happened 30–50 years ago.” (Interviewee 6)

“Without these dramas, we usually learn about that history from textbooks or newspapers, which don’t leave strong impressions or visuals. Through dramas, you can understand the context much more vividly.” (Interviewee 2)

Participants described the educational value of Taiwanese period TV dramas in various terms, viewing them as teachers, textbooks or tutors. These descriptions revealed the role of period dramas as supplementary learning tools for audiences to understand historical and cultural details.

“They (period dramas)’re like history teachers.” (Interviewee 4)

“They (period dramas)’re kind of like teaching assistants or tutors.” (Interviewee 6)

“I see period dramas as a kind of ‘entertaining documentary’—because storytelling is at the core of cultural transmission. Drama is a very suitable medium for that.” (Interviewee 1)

“They (period dramas)’re like a living cultural textbook... a drama lets you deeply explore the people, stories, and context of that time. You see different sides of Taiwanese culture... political, social, linguistic, and gender issues, even careers. All these elements layered together show how diverse Taiwan is...” (Interviewee 10)

Participants also referenced specific dramas that showed how Taiwanese period TV dramas served as one of the culture and history learning tools by helping them understand historical contexts, lifestyles, and cultural shifts. These examples that presented micro-level storylines often related to topics that participants were unfamiliar with before watching the shows.

“*A Touch of Green* helped me understand the first few years of R.O.C. (Republic of China) and Air Force life, which isn’t covered in detail in textbooks. It gave insight into the military villages and their challenges.” (Interviewee 11)

“*Gold Leaf* helped me understand how prominent Taiwan’s tea industry used to be. I always knew our tea was famous, but not to that extent, or that it was such a big business.” (Interviewee 5)

“For example, before I watched *Three Tears in Borneo*, I wasn’t very aware that during the Japanese occupation, many Taiwanese were conscripted to South Asia and the Philippines. I knew about Japanese colonialism, but I didn’t know so many Taiwanese were sent to fight abroad.” (Interviewee 8)

Also, participants pointed out that period dramas made abstract information from traditional textbooks more concrete through the representation of characters and storylines. The performances helped historical content become more relatable for young audiences by allowing viewers to observe the experiences in certain historical moments.

“In *Island Nation*, what stood out was seeing things I had only read about in textbooks acted out by real people. It made everything—emotions, decisions, social tension—feel much more concrete and understandable.” (Interviewee 2)

4.3.3 Dramas Serves as Stimulation for Historical Curiosity

Participants demonstrated that watching Taiwanese period TV dramas encouraged them to additionally explore Taiwan’s culture and history. After watching a period drama, they were motivated by the historical events or cultural elements in the drama to look up more information about the time periods, historical facts, or people featured in the shows.

“They serve as a trigger... it sparks curiosity: ‘Did that really happen? What was society like back then?’ It motivates me to look up what actually occurred.” (Interviewee 1)

“... these dramas turn those texts into vivid images... and might even spark curiosity to look up more about Taiwan’s history and culture. Every episode, I’d go online and look things up—whether the events really happened, if the characters were based on real people, stuff like that.” (Interviewee 4)

“These dramas prompt me to revisit and learn more about that period in Taiwan’s history.” (Interviewee 7)

To be more specific, some participants mentioned several specific Taiwanese period TV dramas that led them to conduct further research and seek additional sources. These

dramas triggered their interests to learn about the historical backgrounds that were shown in the storylines.

“*Detention* made me want to research what actually happened and appreciate our current freedom more.” (Interviewee 12)

“*Light the Night* made me look up interviews with real hostesses from that era because hostess club culture isn’t something we normally encounter.” (Interviewee 5)

Overall, grounded in the interviews, participants indicated that Taiwanese period TV dramas serve as a supplement of history education for young Taiwanese viewers. These dramas help clarify events that are not deeply include in formal textbooks and further motivate personal inquiry. To demonstrate, Taiwanese period TV dramas utilize historical storylines and character experiences to stimulate and reinforce audiences’ interest in Taiwanese history and culture beyond traditional education settings.

4.4 Evoking Emotional Connections and Empathy

Emotional connection played a crucial role in the engagement of young Taiwanese audiences with the representations of the past. Participants described that Taiwanese period TV dramas built a bridge for viewers to connect with cultural and historical experiences through nostalgia, empathy, and cultural immersion. Specifically, the elements from audiences’ childhoods evoked a strong emotional reaction that helped establish participants within Taiwan’s historical trajectory and supported an experiential understanding of past societies.

4.4.1 Nostalgic Trigger and Emotional Reaction

In the first place, participants noticed that specific objects or experiences depicted in Taiwanese period TV dramas reminded them of their own childhoods and further resonated emotional affection. The recollection of personal experiences achieved emotional engagement immediately. For instance, when participants saw elements that they had used in their childhood, the feeling became even stronger.

“... in *Light the Night*, they had cassette tapes, which I used when I was little. Seeing that made me feel like, ‘Wow! I used that too! That’s so cool!’” (Interviewee 3)

“As for *The Magician on the Skywalk*, I liked the novel, and since I visited Guanhua Market with my dad as a kid, I felt a personal connection. It was nostalgic...” (Interviewee 11)

However, some participants suggested that although emotional responses were powerful during viewing, the feeling and engagement did not last long. They admitted that after watching Taiwanese period TV dramas, the emotional reactions disappeared, even if they felt resonance with the plots of Taiwan's culture and history at the moment watching these dramas.

“Right after watching, I tend to look up that period of history. But after a while, the feeling fades.” (Interviewee 4)

“I empathize to a point, but then I detach—those are past events. I can't change them... once the show ends, so does that feeling.” (Interviewee 2)

4.4.2 Empathy and Understanding Through Characters Experiences

By watching period dramas, participants' empathy for the people who lived in earlier eras was developed. Seeing characters' struggles and identification confusions in the period dramas allowed young Taiwanese audiences to better understand societal situations in the past and further internalized historical experiences.

“The drama puts you in their shoes, so you understand their mindset...”
(Interviewee 4)

“The sets and buildings give off a particular vibe, often one of repression, which helps me empathize with the characters' confusion or struggles with identity.” (Interviewee 10)

Participant even reflected that period dramas perceived a sense of empathetic imagine that was not limited to historical understanding but extended to contemporary relevance.

“I imagine myself in that time period... Would I get criticized like the character?” (Interviewee 2)

Participants additionally stated that by comparing the characters' struggles to social experiences in modern Taiwan, period dramas made viewers easier to understand and relate to the society in the past.

“In *Three Tears in Borneo*, the scenes where Taiwanese people were on trial for helping the Japanese. These people saw themselves as Japanese, but the Japanese lawyer wanted to save only the 'true Japanese' and abandon the Taiwanese. It made me feel like, 'Wow, Taiwanese people are so pitiful.' And even today, we're still like that. Like we don't really have our own identity. That really resonated with me.” (Interviewee 4)

“These cultural and ideological clashes are something every generation experiences. Even we clash with our parents because we have access to

more resources and perspectives. That made it very relatable.”

(Interviewee 5)

4.4.3 Cultural Immersive Through Related Background

Recognizing elements that are related to one’s cultural background creates a sense of connection and immersion. Several participants explained that recognizing elements they identified as their culture in a period drama contributed to a stronger sense of connection with the dramas and the historical backgrounds it portrayed.

“Hearing so much Taiwanese in the drama made me feel a sense of familiarity. Even though I can’t really speak it, it still felt natural and intimate, because I grew up around it and can understand some of it.”

(Interviewee 1)

“Since some things shown in the dramas are things I actually used as a kid, I can really relate.” (Interviewee 3)

“... these dramas create space for us to share and recognize Taiwanese history. They make me feel like, ‘Yes, this is the real story of people on this island—people like me and those around me.’ Not just a history of elite political figures self-congratulating.” (Interviewee 7)

“It feels immersive. Especially when they reflect things I experienced as a child—like before smartphones or Wi-Fi. This kind of content make me feel relate to the history and culture.” (Interviewee 9)

Additionally, participants identified immersion through a shared cultural experience. They declared that the relevant details in a period drama evoked emotional engagement with the past era and further lead to personal connection. By imaging themselves living in the past, the participant bridged emotions to the time they had never lived through.

“... when I watched *In A Good Way*, I often thought, ‘How wonderful it would be if I had lived in that era,’ and wondered what kinds of things would have happened. I would imagine the beauty of Taiwan’s most prosperous period during the 1970s and 80s. So yes, it created a sense of connection for me.” (Interviewee 8)

Moreover, some participants expressed positive feelings when they see Taiwanese culture gains visibility both in Taiwan itself and global through the popularity of Taiwanese period TV dramas. They often perceived a sense of proud.

“(When I see parts of my own culture represented in period dramas, I feel) Proud and happy—especially when the drama becomes a popular topic or

goes viral online or overseas. It makes me feel like Taiwan's stories are interesting not only to us but also to international viewers.” (Interviewee 6)

According to participants, through the emotional reactions offered by Taiwanese period TV dramas, such as nostalgia, empathy, and recognition of cultural familiarity, young people engage with Taiwanese culture and history. These responses provide a linkage to lived experiences, character experiences, and cultural details depicted in the show. Although some participants revealed that the emotions faded after viewing, many still announced the realistic feelings represented in the period dramas serve as a meaningful aspect of their experiences.

4.5 Understanding Social Changes and Generational Differences

Participants responded how Taiwanese period TV dramas let them observe the differences between contemporary and past societies. By grasping the contrast through the portrayals of social norms, political restrictions, and family structures, the period dramas allowed audiences to reflect on generational shifts in values, behaviors, and freedoms, understanding the transformation of Taiwan's culture.

4.5.1 Everyday Life and Social Practices Across Generations

Participants declared how Taiwanese period TV dramas introduced daily routines and social practices from the past to them. They acknowledged that the daily life portrayed in these dramas was different from their experiences of current lifestyle. Understanding the differences offered young audiences insights into generational changes and allowed them to shape perceptions of generational divergence.

“They (the period dramas I watched) mostly depict stories from the 1980s and 1990s. Through the plot, you can get a sense of the customs and lifestyles of those times, and see how they differ from today.”

(Interviewee 9)

“I'm curious about life before I was born... I know what today's society looks like, I want to understand how it evolved into what we have now. I want to know what happened in the past that led to the present.”

(Interviewee 6)

To be more concise, participants pointed out how certain features in period dramas, such as social relationships, technology, and mobility, are significant in drawing attention on the connection between current lifestyle and cultural background. They

realized historical experiences they observed in period dramas are the foundation of current life.

“I feel like the dramas remind me that the things we are able to do today are based on the events that happened back then. So, everything about our current lives—our values and the things we engage in—is built upon that historical and cultural background.” (Interviewee 3)

“Taiwan’s current situation is a result of its historical experiences. I’m not saying it’s good or bad—it’s just how Taiwan came to be. I think it’s a good way to present it.” (Interviewee 8)

Precisely, some participants provided specific examples of Taiwanese period TV dramas that depicted lifestyles in earlier era that were distant to their everyday lives today. These depictions left participants great impression of the contrast of contemporary experiences and the life in the past.

“... in *The Magician on the Skywalk*, people lived in the same market area, and the neighbors were close-knit. Like, if you were hungry, you could go to your neighbors for food. That kind of community doesn’t really exist today...” (Interviewee 11)

“I remember *In A Good Way* the most because its plot isn’t too heavy. It depicts how people dated or made friends during our parents’ generation—using pagers, public phones, or calling from a dorm or store, since they didn’t have mobile phones at first. Then came flip phones and texting.” (Interviewee 6)

“Nowadays, adults going to nightclubs is no big deal. But back then, even just dancing at a private party had to be done secretly. Even the dancing party was neither violent nor sexual, it could still be seen as politically risky in the period of curfew.” (Interviewee 7)

4.5.2 Representing Transformation in Social Norms and Values

Participants emphasized that when watching Taiwanese period TV dramas, they perceived how historical shifts of social norms and values were portrayed in earlier periods. The portrayals of gender roles and social expectations stood in contrast to current situations.

“... *Light the Night* made all the female characters seem really tragic and overly dependent on men, which didn’t feel realistic. But maybe that reflects the era.” (Interviewee 11)

“In *A Touch of Green*... there’s a clear gender gap—men are out working as soldiers, while women are mostly their wives and stay at home. Their lives revolve around their husbands’ ranks and roles, which highlights how a woman’s value came from her husband, unlike now where women are more independent and valued for their careers or personalities.”

(Interviewee 6)

4.5.3 Understanding Historical Contexts of Freedom

Furthermore, several participants commented that in period dramas, there were a lot of scenes about political climate that showed historical contexts of freedom in earlier eras. Through the lens of the depictions of protest restrictions, censorship, or authoritarian rule, participants gained insights into the past.

“The drama also subtly includes political undertones, like student participation in protests or critiques of the system... it also reflects the cultural atmosphere of the era.” (Interviewee 10)

“... like with the 228 Incident and White Terror—where saying the wrong thing could get you arrested... It makes me reflect on how different things are now.” (Interviewee 3)

In fact, one participant gave a concrete example of how a specific period drama portrayed the era that witnessed the civic participation and freedom of expression in Taiwan. This participant mentioned scenes of student protest in this period drama, highlighting the emergence of student activism during a transition phase in Taiwan’s political history. The contrast of protest in present, which was a legally protected form of expression, and past, which is discouraged, demonstrated drama’s role in showing how social and political norms had shifted over time.

“Like in *In A Good Way*, there’s a scene where students protest unfair treatment from their school... Back then, you couldn’t do things like that, but now you can. The student protests in the show felt like a micro-version of what we see now with huge crowds.” (Interviewee 3)

Besides, participants reflected that they aware more of the development of freedoms, which they took for granted before watching period dramas, through the narratives that displayed the limitation on speech. They started to pay more attention on the freedom in Taiwan’s society and appreciate it.

“*In A Good Way* shows the post-martial-law freedom, and how people were breaking barriers—things we take for granted now. Our current

rights and freedoms were earned by those who came before us. Watching the drama made me realize that.” (Interviewee 5)

“... how people fought for freedom—through these dramas, I understand how people had to resist to gain the freedom we have today, like the ability to speak freely.” (Interviewee 3)

4.5.4 Intergenerational Reflection Through Family Narratives

Participants revealed that both during and after watching Taiwanese period TV dramas, they engaged in the discussion of the real-life conditions of the era shown in the dramas with their parents who have actually lived through that period. These intergenerational discussions were often prompted by specific objects, customs, or settings portrayals in period dramas.

“Watching dramas set in my parents’ era makes me want to ask them questions like, ‘Did you use pagers too?’, ‘Was your university life really like that?’, and ‘Did you go hiking and do key-drawing activities?’ It bridges the gap between my generation and theirs.” (Interviewee 1)

In some cases, young audiences emotionally connected to their parents’ generation and further bridged the generational gap by developing shared understanding through period dramas, even when participants had not personally experienced those eras.

“*The Magician on the Skywalk* is from my parents’ generation. So these dramas help me bridge their world and mine. They give me a fuller picture of what life looked like for the people close to me—their friends, their social environment... the drama gave me an emotional connection to that generation—a kind of upward connection to my parents’ time.”

(Interviewee 7)

4.5.5 Interpreting Generational Worldviews

Further, participants stated that period dramas provided a picture of the historical environment in which older generations formed their values, beliefs, and attitudes. By observing historical and cultural elements while watching Taiwanese period TV dramas, audiences had an opportunity to better gain understanding of how the perspectives of older generations were shaped.

“Seeing past events helps me understand why parents think the way they do...” (Interviewee 3)

“I feel more informed about why our society is the way it is. These dramas mostly depict periods before my childhood—so my parents relate more—

but they help me understand why my parents think the way they do, based on their generation's environment and education.” (Interviewee 5)

Participants specifically emphasized that the depiction of past social environments in period dramas clarified the reason older generations appeared more traditional in thought.

“These dramas also help me understand why our parents' generation may seem conservative—not because they lacked opinions, but because they grew up under certain pressures.” (Interviewee 10)

Therefore, participants' responses show that Taiwanese period TV dramas allow young audiences understand contextual background by showing past experiences such as family lives and shifting norms in plots, enabling viewers to interpret generational worldviews through exposure to earlier experiences and social norms. In this case, young audiences are capable to have critical reflection on intergenerational differences, expand appreciation for Taiwan's societal progress, and situate identities within the continuous historical contexts.

4.6 Promoting Discussion and the Construction of Collective Memory

Grounded in the interviews, participants described Taiwanese period TV dramas also as cultural devices to construct shared memories through dialogue and collective reflection. These dramas established discussable historical topics as an entry point of Taiwan's collective memory for young Taiwanese. By presenting historical scenes and cultural symbols that served as an engaging format to stimulate conversations that extend beyond individual viewership. Viewers became easier and more willing to discuss Taiwanese culture with peers, family, and the wider community. This theme explores how participants engaged in interpersonal and intergenerational conversations as audiences to construct a shared understanding of Taiwan's culture and history.

“Because dramas are a form of entertainment, and entertainment is so deeply embedded in our lives now, period dramas definitely help encourage discussions. People naturally start discussions like: ‘Do you like this drama?’, ‘Do you agree with it?’, or ‘Do you disagree?’” (Interviewee 1)

“They (period dramas) give me a fuller picture of what life looked like for the people close to me—their friends, their social environment—and allow me to carry that understanding forward, possibly passing it on to the

next generation. That's what these dramas offer: connection, memory, and cultural transmission." (Interviewee 7)

4.6.1 Dramas as Collective Memory Devices

Through the depiction of shared events and emotions in historical stories, Participants emphasized that Taiwanese period TV dramas played a role in constructing shared memories, especially for young generations who did not live through the past period or had limited background knowledge in Taiwanese history. They explained that period dramas were one of the devices that contribute to long-lasting cultural records as the visualized history was more tangible, helping them to understand Taiwan's historical background, preserve memories, and transmit culture.

"They (period dramas) help concretize and visualize Taiwanese culture for me. They have a significant influence on how I experience and identify with Taiwanese culture." (Interviewee 8)

"Once these stories are documented—through media, books, recordings—they can be passed on. That gives them long-term significance."
(Interviewee 7)

4.6.2 Online and Peer Discussion Foster Shared Memory

Moreover, period dramas provoked entertainment-based discussion with friends and online community, starting with casting or plot then deepening into societal conditions and cultural memory. Participants said that with period dramas, it became easier to raise discussions of topics related to cultural identity with others.

"Since today's youth are immersed in entertainment and social media, dramas become natural conversation starters. Especially because issues like Taiwanese identity and cultural pride are so trendy now—period dramas fit perfectly into that. They allow people to casually bring up serious topics with friends, and if you want to sound more intellectual, you can reference a drama you've seen." (Interviewee 1)

Participants highlighted initial peer discussions often began with familiar entertainment elements before exploring deeper into conversations about historical or cultural topics. For instance, popular casting choice and unexpected plot development sparked casual conversations with friends, which could further extend into discussions about historical setting in the dramas.

"Mostly the actors—how well they acted, and how we liked their performances. Also, the plot design." (Interviewee 11)

“With friends, we don’t always know each other’s historical knowledge, so we often start by discussing the cast. For example, *Light the Night* featured some veteran and unexpected actors, so we might say, ‘Hey, did you see who’s in that?’ Then we move on to plot and details.”

(Interviewee 2)

Some participants emphasized that period dramas with dramatic hooks or special storylines increased the likelihood for people in their age to actively discuss online. These features served as an effective way to generate and motivate viewers to participate in discussions. Once the dramas got viral online, it helped create shared viewing experiences, expanded the reach of period dramas, and further triggered broader cultural conversations among young people.

“I think the show needs a ‘hook’—some dramatic moment or hot topic—so that it spreads on social media. Nowadays, people mostly discuss things online, so a drama needs something worth posting about to go viral... like in *Light the Night*, where someone is murdered and people want to guess the killer.” (Interviewee 6)

4.6.3 Entry Points for Historical and Political Discussion

On the other hand, period dramas provided audiences an accessible prompt to discuss complex historical and political issues. The discussions included not only earlier days but also about how history events affect modern society in Taiwan. Participants reported that before watching period dramas, these topics were not in their everyday conversations. After viewing, they started to exchange different perspectives of historical and political understandings.

“It sparks conversations with parents or friends. Friends may not have lived through it, but watching together often leads to historical research, and people start expressing different views.” (Interviewee 10)

Watching period dramas with others let viewers desire to know more about the historical factors. Participants mentioned that they would want to verify events and explore differing opinions about Taiwan’s political past. These period dramas provided common reference points to enable participants to discuss contents related to political and historical issues under specific regimes.

“... when it comes to heavier topics like historical events, we’ll ask, ‘Did that really happen?’ or ‘How did people deal with it back then?’ and talk about how society or government were perceived.” (Interviewee 10)

4.6.4 Bridging Generational Memory Through Shared Media

Participants clarified that Taiwanese period TV dramas built a sense of collective memory by showing audiences pictures of the life in the past. In this case, young viewers gained a more concrete understanding of the social environments they had not been through, bridging intergenerational shared memories effortlessly.

“They (period dramas)’re not just cultural products—they’re bridges across generations. They help create understanding and dialogue between me, my parents, and even my grandparents.” (Interviewee 10)

Participants noticed that the topics such as the 228 Incident, the martial law era, and the early democratic movements were covered in Taiwanese period TV dramas. These contents often overlapped with older family members’ lived experiences. By watching these depictions and asking questions of the details in historical contexts, participants had the opportunities to learn about the events that their families had lived through.

“For *In A Good Way*, it touched on topics like the 228 Incident and the freedom movements—things that are close to us in time but still feel distant. I wanted to understand what our parents or grandparents experienced during those times and what they felt.” (Interviewee 3)

“... with my parents, who lived through the martial law era, watching *In A Good Way* helped me understand their past better.” (Interviewee 5)

Many participants shared that they had experiences of discussing plots and societal situations in period dramas with family members who are from the older generations. These discussions focused on verifying accuracy, clarifying historical practices, and learning about previous daily lives. By doing so, the intergenerational conversations brought to light shared memories between different age groups.

“I usually ask my mom things like, ‘Was it really like this when you were young?’ or ‘Was society really like what’s shown in the drama?’

Sometimes I ask for more details about what things were like when she was younger or during her time. It’s stuff we can’t really experience ourselves, but our parents or grandparents did.” (Interviewee 3)

“For example, *Gold Leaf* gave me something to talk about with my grandparents. They would say, ‘Yes, back then things were like that.’” (Interviewee 5)

“With family, like when watching *In A Good Way*, we’ll talk about whether life was really like that in their day because it’s the things I can’t

experience now—like using pagers instead of smartphones. It becomes a chance to ask questions and learn.” (Interviewee 9)

According to participants, by stimulating conversations across generations, Taiwanese period TV dramas foster discussion, transmit cultural knowledge, and reinforce shared memory. They provide various angles to understand Taiwan’s historical and cultural narratives. These shared reflections contribute to a broader sense of cultural continuity across generations. After all, the interaction of media, memory, and social communication serve as tools for social communication and cultural memory construction.

4.7 Reinforcing Taiwanese Identity Through Historical Reflection

Taiwanese period TV dramas were described by participants as historical narratives that had become the medium for young Taiwanese viewers to participate the reflection on political and cultural identity. Participants referred to some specific storylines that showed the pivotal historical events and cultural transformations as stimuli for developing their sense of the meaning about “being Taiwanese”. Through these depictions, audiences both reflected on Taiwan’s history and began to cultivate the cultural belongingness rooted in life experiences and collective memory.

“I think after watching, everyone tends to identify more strongly with Taiwan. That’s also why nowadays many young people strongly recognize Taiwanese values. I feel there is a certain consensus among the younger generation.”

(Interviewee 8)

4.7.1 From National Reflection to Cultural Ownership

Multiple participants reported that observing historical narratives in Taiwanese period TV dramas helped them realize the complicate evolution of political identity in Taiwan by showcasing some historical events and transitions in the plots, letting them rethink about what it means to be “Taiwanese”. These portrayals prompted audiences to reconsider the implications of national belonging in the context of democratization and social change.

“After watching these dramas, you realize that the label ‘Taiwanese’ didn’t come easy. It’s the result of many historical transitions. Nowadays, people take pride in being Taiwanese—and along with that comes a sense of responsibility. It’s like when something happens in society, people want to step up. It’s the same with national identity. People are proud of being Taiwanese and express that in different ways—like supporting democratic values.” (Interviewee 10)

By knowing the meaning of being a Taiwanese, participants began to heighten awareness of the values associated with democratic freedom and cultural independence, seeing Taiwan's cultural and societal values meaningful and informing attitudes and behaviors in everyday life.

“The idea of ‘being Taiwanese’ becomes more precious after you understand how complex that identity is. You appreciate it more and feel more responsible for it.” (Interviewee 10)

“... it (period drama) strengthened it (my perception of what it means to be Taiwanese). It also made me more protective of our freedom now.” (Interviewee 12)

4.7.2 Breaking Away from the ROC (Republic of China)-Centered Narratives

Some participants emphasized a distinction identification between “Taiwan” and the Republic of China (ROC) for young Taiwanese people. Though the localized storytelling and attention to Taiwan-specific experiences, period dramas helped young audiences in Taiwan grounded in the island's own trajectory rather than a continuation of ROC ideology.

“These dramas reinforced my belief that I'm Taiwanese—not just a citizen of the Republic of China. I don't think we should continue living under a name tied to a regime that caused so much harm. Of course, this is more of a personal inner belief.” (Interviewee 7)

For the participants who noticed the shift of cultural identity across generations, the differentiation was particularly significant. Some participants declared that they wanted to disassociate with the historical heritages related to ROC and emphasized the connections of Taiwan's unique cultural context.

“Although my grandfather was a provincialis, I no longer identify as ROC. I don't want to inherit that legacy. I'm two generations removed now. To me, the KMT (Kuomintang, a political party) and ROC were foreign impositions on this land. These dramas helped me understand Taiwan's history more deeply and recognize that I am part of a different collective identity—one rooted in the island's own cultural evolution.” (Interviewee 7)

4.7.3 Cultural Continuity and Identity Formation

In addition, participants described the role of Taiwanese period TV dramas in strengthening the awareness of cultural belonging. They supported that the

reinforcement of the cultural belonging was by experiencing shared emotional experiences, family histories, and social changes from the storylines in the period dramas.

“... they (Taiwanese period TV dramas) strengthened my identity as a Taiwanese person... It’s about facing our collective joy and sorrow, acknowledging painful memories, and realizing we are a multi-ethnic society with a complex, shared history.” (Interviewee 7)

“Even though half of my ancestors might have immigrated from China, I was born and raised in Taiwan. I truly feel I am Taiwanese. These dramas reinforce that recognition.” (Interviewee 8)

Audiences’ viewing habits were also influenced by emotional rewards related to local history. Some participants demonstrated that they had ongoing interest in new period dramas as a way to reconnect to cultural values and to deepen emotional resonance.

“Whenever a new period drama comes out, I want to watch it. Every time I watch one, I feel an even stronger recognition of my emotional ties and values related to Taiwan.” (Interviewee 8)

Participants noted that young generations in Taiwan started to appreciate Taiwanese culture more after watching Taiwanese period TV dramas. Period dramas not only helped them appreciate contemporary Taiwan but also sparked their interest in imaging the life in earlier eras. These feelings expressed through admiration for past lifestyles or nostalgia toward imaged experiences. For example, some participants indicated that they like the culture and society in the modern days, others said that they are willing to experience lives in the past.

“I like it (Taiwanese culture) more. It’s like seeing how Taiwan has progressed, especially in technology. I feel a bit more connected, but it’s not a huge impact.” (Interviewee 9)

“For example, when I watched *In A Good Way*, I often thought, ‘How wonderful it would be if I had lived in that era’... So yes, it created a sense of connection for me.” (Interviewee 8)

In summary, period dramas contribute to identity formation by enabling viewers to link to Taiwanese history and culture from inherited state narratives. Participants revisited the past of Taiwan through period dramas and moved beyond ROC-centered ideologies, starting to form personal and collective Taiwanese identity. This perception of Taiwanese identity is constructed by emotional responses, historical depictions, and unique cultural

trajectory. Hence, for participants, period dramas have become a catalyst for cultural continuity that are meaningful and actively maintained.

4.8 The Subtlety of Cultural Representation and the Diversity of Identity

Taiwanese period TV dramas played an important role in helping young audiences to understand the plurality of Taiwanese identity. Through the rich storylines, multilingual dialogues, and deliberate depiction of different historical backgrounds, these dramas presented the complexity of cultural formation, inspiring the participants to reflect on the complexity of this formation critically. Participants pointed out that Taiwanese identity is not monolithic but composed by different voices, ethnics, and historical experiences. They demonstrated that the presentation deepened their understanding to the notion of identity as multiple and evolving, shaped by both indigenous and imported influences.

Everyone in Taiwan has their own interpretation of Taiwanese culture. (Interviewee 1)

These dramas help complete the mosaic of Taiwan's historical memory.

(Interviewee 7)

4.8.1 Recognizing the Multiplicity of Taiwanese Cultural Identity

Participants claimed that they received varied representations of Taiwanese culture in characters, settings, and historical references from the Taiwanese period TV dramas they watched. These portrayals exposed the differences of regions, ethnic groups, and generations, such as Hakka, Hokkien, Indigenous groups, and migrant histories.

Participants noted that the presentation of multiplicity was helpful in visualizing the contribution of Taiwanese societal cultural development from different groups.

“These dramas remind us that multiple narratives have coexisted in Taiwan's history—it's not just one version. In the past 100 years, many groups have experienced very different realities on this island. These dramas help complete the mosaic of Taiwan's historical memory.”

(Interviewee 7)

“Taiwan is very diverse and inclusive precisely because, over the past two or three hundred years, so many different groups have lived here. I feel an even stronger identification with Taiwanese culture.” (Interviewee 8)

Moreover, participants started to understand that the complexity of Taiwan's historical background, from colonization to democratization, had constructed Taiwan's identity in present days. They described the complexity of Taiwan's past as a foundation of modern cultural autonomy.

“Taiwan is a complex mix—we were ruled by different countries in the past. Now we’re finally telling our own cultural stories.” (Interviewee 5)

4.8.2 Critical Awareness of Bias in Period Dramas

In Taiwanese period TV dramas, although participants agreed with most of the cultural and historical representations, they showed critical awareness of this situation in certain portrayals. The portrayals included dramatization for entertainment purposes, selective storytelling, and occasional misinterpretation of marginalized voices.

“Some say the drama glorified things or was politically biased... But I think it’s kind of necessary for drama—it provides a starting point for discussion.” (Interviewee 10)

Precisely, participants pointed out problematic depictions of some minority groups in Taiwan. They considered the depiction of Indigenous people and female were not authentic. These minority people were portrayed stereotypically to transmit a negative image or powerless that downplayed these communities and were controversial.

“I can imagine some groups, like Indigenous communities, might not be happy with how they’re portrayed.” (Interviewee 2)

“It kind of portrayed the woman as... kind of useless? That’s kind of a gender stereotype.” (Interviewee 4)

Participants also noticed a lack of political plurality in Taiwanese period TV dramas. They identified that some period dramas solely focused on single perspective, neglecting dissenting political position and concerned about the affect of political bias to public perception both implicit and explicit, especially among young audiences.

“Taiwan is a diverse, pluralistic society, so it’s easy to overlook some voices... In political dramas like *Island Nation*, you might feel one party is portrayed more prominently or sympathetically. While they try to stay objective, you can tell which side gets more focus.” (Interviewee 2)

Participants further mentioned that historical figures could be distorted in dramatization. They provided an example of how a historical character was depicted in an inappropriate way that could lead audiences who lack prior historical knowledge to misunderstand the real person on history.

“I read that the character was based on a real person, but that person wasn’t like that at all. It felt like they smeared his reputation. Even though the drama producer said the character wasn’t based on him, it clearly was. So they kind of made him into a villain.” (Interviewee 4)

To address these concerns and avoid bias when transmitting Taiwan's culture and history in Taiwanese period TV dramas, participants suggested more inclusive production approaches. They proposed that the production teams should do more research and adopt diverse opinions from different positions when constructing stories, ensuring the narratives of historical events and cultural contexts approach objectivity.

“... when collecting material, they shouldn't rely on just one or two sources. They should interview at least a dozen people because everyone has different perspectives. A drama should aim to be comprehensive—not just show the positive or negative side, or just one viewpoint. I hope they include many angles to reflect more reality.” (Interviewee 3)

4.8.3 Multilingualism and Cultural Authenticity

Another recurring topic was the use of multilingual dialogue in Taiwanese period TV dramas to reflect Taiwan's historical and cultural authenticity. Through this realistic portrayal in the dramas, participants perceived the diversity of Taiwanese culture. Participants demonstrated that the incorporation of different languages, such as Mandarin, Taiwanese Hokkien, Hakka, or Indigenous languages, made the dramas more credible and engaging.

“You see different sides of Taiwanese culture—not just Han culture or folk beliefs, but also political, social, linguistic, and gender issues, even careers. All these elements layered together show how diverse Taiwan is and make me appreciate its freedom and pluralism more.” (Interviewee 10)

In particular, some certain productions were commended by participants that the deliberate inclusion of different regional languages that were used in the historical contexts was regarded a sign of respecting linguistic diversity and an effective way of preserving culture.

“*Gold Leaf* did a great job by not just using Mandarin—it highlighted Taiwan's multiculturalism.” (Interviewee 5)

“*Seqalu Formosa 1867*... it used a lot of different languages: Hakka, Mandarin spoken by Han settlers, and Taiwanese Hokkien... the use of different languages in *Seqalu: Formosa 1867* left a strong impression on me.” (Interviewee 8)

4.8.4 Desire of Reconstruction to Taiwanese Narrative

The final consistently mentioned pattern was participants' desire to move beyond political dominance to reconstruct a shared Taiwanese narrative that was more localized, representative, and could be emotionally reconnected to young generations' lived experiences.

“... now, more people are caring about what happened in recent Taiwan and more shows are using a localized Taiwanese viewpoint.” (Interviewee 7)

For some participants, this reconstruction involved reclaiming historical agency from the younger people's perspective that shaped new stories of incorporation memories while making space for contemporary concerns.

“I prefer to shape a new, shared Taiwanese narrative. That doesn't mean completely cutting off ties with the past—more like saying, ‘Yes, I'm a descendant of those people, but I also want to remember what happened and build a new narrative that's not just from the perspective of the KMT or provincialism—but a collective Taiwanese viewpoint.’ That's the kind of awakening these dramas and literary works offer to our generation.”
(Interviewee 7)

By engaging with multiple viewpoints, recognizing potential biases, and valuing linguistic and historical diversity, young audiences explore the diverse layer of Taiwanese identity. Taiwanese period TV dramas enhance critical awareness and stimulate a generational reconstruction of a localized, inclusive narrative. For many participants, these dramas serve as dynamic tools for activating cultural consciousness across generations.

5. Discussion

Grounded in the results of this research, this section connects theoretical knowledge, which are cultural memory theory (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995, pp. 126-131) and audience reception theory (Livingstone, 1998, pp. 247-265), to the findings, examining how young Taiwanese people reconstruct their cultural identity through the interpretation of Taiwanese period TV dramas. The discussion is organized into three main topics: interpreting process of cultural identity reconstruction, the role of period dramas as devices of cultural memory, and audience's reception and engagement of dramas' narratives. Taiwanese period TV dramas are not just a form of entertainment, they are cultural texts that transmitting history, evoking emotional connections, triggering critical considerations, promoting intergenerational and social conversations.

By unpacking these layers, the following contents explore how these dramas strengthen Taiwanese identity, collective memory, and cultural understand of young Taiwanese audiences.

The research acknowledges that research's own positionality as a young Taiwanese individual who is familiar with Taiwan's culture and have academic background of media and culture studies. This situation may shape how researcher interpreted and organized the data. This background likely sensitized researcher to themes of cultural pride, identity formation, and collective memory. While the goal of this research was to remain faithful to participants' perspectives, the interpretations were inevitably influenced by the researcher's cultural position and expectations.

5.1 Reconstructing Cultural Identity Through the Interpretation of Taiwanese Period TV Dramas

The interpretation of Taiwanese period TV dramas plays a vital role on how young audiences reconstruct their cultural identity. These dramas are not only entertainment but also serve, in this analysis, as cultural texts for viewers to understand Taiwan's complexity of historical and societal features. As the result of the research, participants view period dramas as a powerful medium for cultural transmission, identity formation, and history reflection. The following discussion elaborate on how these dramas satisfy the expectation of cultural and historical meanings from audiences, and strengthen s sense of identification with Taiwan.

5.1.1 Expectation of Dramas to Contain Historical and Cultural Meanings

From the findings of this research, Taiwanese period TV dramas are important for young Taiwanese generations to learn Taiwanese culture and history, filling the blank of the understanding of cultural identity and historical background. In Huang's (2009) statement, audiences have high expectations of period TV dramas to provide historical and cultural meanings to the general public (p. 39). Supportively, Taiwanese period TV dramas are seen as supplements of historical education, history teachers, and living cultural textbooks as they make culture and history understandable through emotionally resonant storytelling techniques, vivid scene settings, and detailed depictions of lifestyle. The detailed portrayal of lifestyle fills the gap of the insufficient of history textbooks. By expanding some historical events into several episodes, period dramas make historical backgrounds and storylines memorable.

Moreover, period dramas can not only passively transmit knowledge but also spark curiosity of audiences, encouraging them to explore deeper. Many participants

demonstrated that they tend to check historical events or cultural elements after watching a period drama. They want to research what actually happened in the era. This phenomenon aligns with the idea that media meaning is not one-way but is actively formed by audiences' interpretations and the interaction between audiences and texts (Cohen, 1991, pp. 442-443).

Furthermore, period dramas help young generations reinforce their Taiwanese identity. Through these dramas, young people in Taiwan consider that the identity of "being Taiwanese" is a complicated evolution, which make them be more appreciated and protective to this identity and the freedom in contemporary society. Also, period dramas let some audiences to eliminate ROC-centered narratives and reverse to accept a collective identity that rooted in local Taiwan, strengthening Taiwanese identity through shared emotions and memories. Thompson (1993) supported this idea that the complexity of cultural identity can lead to diverse interpretations (p. 248). The coexistence of ROC-centered narratives and the local Taiwan perspectives, as revealed in this research, prompts young audiences to engage in critical reflection and personalized interpretations of Taiwanese culture and identity. These interpretations are influenced by their own cultural background, life experience, and exposure to different historical representations in the dramas, resulting in a more nuanced and plural understanding of Taiwanese identity.

These results from the interviews suggest the importance of the engagement of historical storytelling. Through being alternative tool of cultural and historical learning, triggering curiosity, and strengthening cultural identity, Taiwanese period TV dramas satisfy the desire of viewers to grasp meaningful cultural and historical understandings.

5.1.2 Representing Taiwanese Cultural Values Through Multi-layered Cultural Elements

Lastly, Taiwanese period TV dramas represent Taiwanese cultural value to broader audiences through the depiction of cultural elements such as language, customs, rituals, values, and historical events (Huang, 2009, pp. 122-126). For instance, many participants indicated that merging different languages that were used in different historical contexts creates authenticity and highlights cultural diversity in Taiwan.

Notably, participants particularly mentioned that characters with multi-dimension value in certain historical events are significantly important. They remind young Taiwanese people that there are multiple narratives in Taiwan's history by showing various approaches of culture, such as politics, society conditions, gender issues, and

careers, displaying diversity and inclusiveness of Taiwanese culture. This result associates with Holliday's (2010) study that cultural identity construction is complex and dynamic that coverage around the multi-layered trajectory of individuals' lives (pp. 170-171).

Generally speaking, the representation of Taiwanese cultural values in multi-layered elements are crucial to Taiwanese culture as they reflect, preserve, and transmit the richness and complexity of Taiwanese identity to a wider audience.

5.2 Taiwanese Period TV Dramas as Cultural Memory Devices

Taiwanese period TV dramas are powerful tools of cultural memory as their immersive plots and visualized presentations let young audiences engage with historical narratives of Taiwan. Instead of just portraying the past, these dramas reconstruct cultural memory through emotional resonance, authenticity, and intergenerational reflection. As shown in the results, period dramas not only preserve and transmit cultural heritage but also serve as a medium constructing, negotiating, and communicating collective memories and identity. In this part, the research examines how Taiwanese period TV dramas embody cultural experiences, promote intergenerational continuity, and stimulate shared reflections and conversations, which are helpful in reconstructing Taiwanese cultural identity.

5.2.1 Embody Cultural Experience and Construct Societal Imagery

Media has become one of the channels to understand how societies remember and interpret the past (Erll, 2011, pp. 33-34). Concretizing audio-visual elements from the past is necessary to letting audiences immerse in the previous periods. Participants highlighted that in Taiwanese period TV dramas, prop setting, costumes, music, and language are some element to make viewers understand, recall, and further experience the societal atmosphere and life conditions in the past.

On the other hand, representing historical environment and cultural heritage in Taiwanese period TV dramas significantly enhance the environment and authenticity of the period. For example, participants noticed that the pagers in *In A Good Way* and the old military aircraft and the military village in *A Touch of Green* make them feel time-travel to the period. The immersive cultural representations of past experiences contribute to the transmission and preservation of cultural heritage in Taiwan. This idea and the example supported Assmann & Czaplicka's (1995) opinion that the exhibition of society is by the cultural heritages that represent the pasts and values, revealing the construction and trend of culture (pp. 130-133).

Additionally, visualizing daily life and social norms is another way to embody historical images. Taiwanese period TV dramas resonate young audiences by presenting historical lifestyles, fashion trends, and social norms. To be more specific, the contrast between the past and the present, the clothing style of certain period, and the community relation allow viewers to perceive the collective imagery of everyday life across different eras.

Through the careful reproduction of cultural and social practices of Taiwanese period TV dramas, powerful visual narratives serve as collective memory for young viewers. Young Taiwanese are encouraged to reflect on how these societal understandings and cultural experiences shape their cultural identity. Thus, period dramas have become a pivotal medium for cultural remembrance and identity reconstruction as they are capable of bridging personal and collective memory through tangible representations of Taiwan's society.

5.2.2 Intergenerational Continuity of Memory and Identity

Erl (2011) stated that cultural memory can be seen as a formal and intergenerational cultural understanding that is constructed by the common experiences in the society, being transmitted and preserved through the maintenance of historical narratives (p. 22). Period dramas enable audiences to understand social transitions and generational differences. The portrayal of daily life, social values, and political contexts help young audiences grasp the contrast across generations, further understanding the changes of cultural norms and identity. When viewers realize that the things they can do today are based on the events that happened back then, it helps them to get a sense that present is the consequence of the historical experiences of the past.

Also, intergenerational reflection also plays an important role in bridging the generational gap of cultural memory by allowing young audiences to open a conversation, asking parents and grandparents of their experiences. This moment represents how Taiwanese period TV dramas become a device of cultural memory. These dramas rebuild collective past period, connect young and old generations emotionally, and assist individuals to locate themselves within a broader cultural narrative.

Taiwanese period TV dramas shape collective memory, allowing young audiences to engage with the historical transformations. By immersing audiences to reflect on the evolution of values and identity, these dramas foster the continuity intergenerationally.

In this way, they construct cultural memory, allowing young Taiwanese audiences to reconstruct cultural identity with greater contextual understanding.

5.2.3 Collective Memory and Identity Through Social Discussion

Participants shared that after watching Taiwanese period TV dramas, they tend to discuss the historical and cultural contents with friends, classmates, and family. Mostly, the entry points are light topics such as casting or storyline, and further explore into deeper discussion of political history, generational values, or societal transformations in Taiwan. Period dramas raise conversations with parents and friends that people start to express diverse opinions. This supports Assmann & Czaplicka (1995) that memories are formed in social context and communication is helpful to define how cultural meanings are perceived and transmitted (p. 127).

Furthermore, Taiwanese period TV dramas are the cultural medium of reconstructing cultural identity. As participants highlighted, the promoted discussions of period dramas that are motivated by shared cultural memory and collective reflection serve as opportunities for young Taiwanese people to explore conversations about cultural meanings and belonging, and establish the construction of a shared Taiwanese identity. The point that identity reconstruction through discussion associates with Erll (2011), cultural memory provides cultural identity through historical narratives (pp. 33-34).

Besides, social media environment further expands the process of constructing collective memories. As dramas go viral, young audiences bring their reflections online, where collective interpretations and meaning making occur on a larger scale. The discussions let viewers negotiate and reconstruct their understanding of Taiwan's past and present.

In summary, these findings confirm that Taiwanese period TV dramas support the societal construction of collective memory by creating understandable, relatable, and emotionally resonant past description. Through the continuity of conversations, they help audiences internalize, reinterpret, and transmit Taiwan's cultural identity. As Assmann & Czaplicka (1995) emphasized, memory is not formed in isolation; it is mediated through shared experience and narrative (pp. 130-133). Under this perspective, period dramas are not only entertainment but also living cultural texts that participate in the co-creation of Taiwanese historical consciousness.

5.3 Audience Reception and Cultural Identity Reconstruction

Audience reception is important in the reconstruction of cultural identity, especially when engaging with media rich in historical and cultural narratives like Taiwanese period TV

dramas. Young Taiwanese audiences are not passive receiver, they actively interact with the emotions, narratives, and ideological elements in these dramas. This study revealed that viewers not only experience emotional resonance and cultural pride but demonstrate critical awareness, personal reflections, and multiple interpretations at the same time. This section explores how emotional connection, active participation, and diverse interpretation contribute to the dynamic engaging process of cultural identity reconstruction by watching Taiwanese period TV dramas.

5.3.1 Emotional Bridges to Taiwanese Cultural Identity Reconstruction

Period dramas provide a bridge to connect cultural and historical experiences through nostalgia, empathy, and cultural immersion. Taiwanese period TV dramas are skilled of evoking resonance by depicting historical struggles. They help young audiences to locate themselves in Taiwan's historical path, reflecting on how personal and collective identity are shaped by history. When viewers observe elements that are related to their own culture, connection and immersion were evoked. In other words, the scenes that portray political repression, gender roles, and cultural hybridity trigger audiences' empathy toward characters' circumstances, rethinking the cultural transformation of Taiwan. This situation make audiences feel that their own stories are related to the history that period dramas depict, strengthening young people's cultural identity through collective emotions and cultural memory.

The idea aligns with the statement of Cohen (1991) that audiences will choose the media contents that they feel more relevant to their own experiences and values, reinforcing or reconstructing their cultural identity (p. 442). Besides, Schwartz et al. (2008) stated that cultural identity focuses on how individuals consider the cultural group that they belong to (p. 636). Young Taiwanese get proud and delighted to see Taiwanese culture be presented in period dramas and further be a rage both domestically and internationally. Being proud of Taiwanese culture strengthen their sense of identity with their cultural groups. Such emotional resonance is one of the key components in constructing and reconstructing cultural identity.

5.3.2 Active Audiences and Critical Cultural Engagement

Cohen (1991) emphasized that media meaning is not one-way but is formed by the interaction between audiences and texts (pp. 442-443). By actively interacting with texts, young audiences connect to cultural and historical experiences. By analyzing the data, the research finds out that the emotional reactions that are stimulated by seeing childhood-related elements are the evidences that media meaning is a consequence of

the interaction between texts and individual life experiences. Also, empathy to characters' struggles and confusion let participants understand social conditions in the past, linking the hardness to modern Taiwan's situation. This linkage asserts that audiences actively engage in comparing and interpreting plots in period dramas to contemporary society to build meaningful connection between history and modern day.

Thompson's (1993) research supported that instead of absorbing media texts passively, audiences now interpret meanings actively (p. 248). In the interview data, participants are aware of the potential bias and dramatized contents. Specifically, participants noticed that the depictions of minority groups, such as Indigenous people or female, are unlikely accurate that the dramas might transmit negative images or gender stereotypes. Moreover, young audiences are able to distinguish that some Taiwanese period TV dramas might overly accentuate on a single political stance and neglect plurality of voices. These approaches of self-initiated reflection and critical inquiry contribute to the suggestions that the production teams should research deeply and include various point of view to ensure objectivity of historical narratives and cultural backgrounds. These findings demonstrate that audiences do not passively obtain contents from dramas but actively participate in interpreting and criticizing (Thompson, 1993, p.248).

Participants reconstruct their cultural identity and generate identification to cultural and societal value through Taiwanese period TV dramas. They start to like Taiwanese culture more and seek to recreate a new, shared Taiwanese narrative that use a localized viewpoint to represent the culture and resonate emotional connection of young people. They wish that this narrative will be a collective Taiwanese perspective instead of the angle of certain groups. The combination of local elements and regional influences emphasize young Taiwanese people's exploration of their own culture, confirming that young generations in Taiwan started to consider local culture value important through TV dramas, wishing to create a unique cultural style to represent Taiwan (Huang, 2009, pp. 122-126). This ambition to reconstruct Taiwanese narratives indicates that audiences are not just the receiver of media meanings but can also become active reconstructors and co-constructors.

5.3.3 Diverse Reception and Plural Interpretations on Taiwanese Culture

Participants pointed out that they learn the diversity of Taiwanese identity through Taiwanese period TV dramas. This understanding lead to confirm that the reception of audiences can be diverse because they live in different cultural networks (Livingstone,

1998, p. 248). It means that audiences' interpretations of period dramas are established through the complex and diverse cultural cognition of Taiwan. To demonstrate, audiences' cultural backgrounds, life experiences, and societal environments shape their different interpretations (Barker, 2004, p. 1; Thompson, 1993, p. 248). Period dramas remind viewers that multiple narratives co-exist in Taiwan's history that the inclusivity is based on the different groups who lived in Taiwan in the past hundred years. So, in the interviews, participants' opinions are diverse or even conflicting at some point. To explain, although some participants agreed with the presentation of Taiwanese culture in Taiwanese period TV dramas, others thought it is somewhat controversial. This variation of reception highlights how distinct cultural contexts shape audiences' interpretations that lead to the diverse understandings of the same historical representations.

This variation of reception highlights how young audiences reconstruct their cultural identities shaped by the interpretations of cultural contexts. The diversity of interpretations not only reflect cultural plurality but also becomes an active process through which young audiences build, question, and reshape their sense of identity.

6. Conclusion

The goal of this research is to explore the relation between the ways young Taiwanese interpret period dramas and their reconstruction of cultural identity after watching period dramas. Through in-depth qualitative research: interviews and thematic analysis, the findings answered the research question: How do young Taiwanese people reconstruct cultural identity from the perspective of interpreting period dramas?

Young Taiwanese people effectively reconstruct cultural identity through active audience reception, interpretation process, and the dynamic medium of cultural memory. This reconstructing process is multi-dimensional and meaningful. To begin with, Taiwanese young audiences view Taiwanese period TV dramas as a cultural and historical activator and learning tool. Namely, young generations expect period dramas to be supplements of historical textbooks and view them as history teachers. By depicting emotional narratives, vivid scenes, and detail lifestyles, these dramas make the past events unforgettable. Also, these dramas evoke viewers' curiosity, leading them research on historical events or cultural elements in the plots actively and further deepen their understanding of Taiwanese historical culture.

Equally important, through multi-layered cultural elements, Taiwanese period TV dramas concretized cultural experiences and construct collective imageries. Indeed,

period dramas immerse audiences into past era through audio-visual elements such as costumes, props, music, the depictions of daily life, understanding and experiencing social atmosphere and lifestyle. The integration of different languages also enhances authenticity and highlights the plurality and inclusiveness of Taiwanese culture. Simultaneously, the portrayals of gender roles, political repression, and cultural hybridity on history evoke empathy, making audiences to reflect social transformation and cultural revolution in Taiwan. These cultural representations are helpful in the preservation and transmission of Taiwanese culture.

In addition, period dramas build on the intergenerational memories and the continuity of identity by offering an entry point to discuss Taiwanese culture and history. These dramas assist young audiences to understand generational differences, especially by showcasing distant social value and political background across generations. After understand the transformation of cultural norms and identity, young people realize that life in modern days is established by the past. Collective memories across generations are coupled with intergenerational discussion triggered by period dramas. By asking parents about their life experiences, the generational gap of cultural memory is filled and the shared understanding is built.

Moreover, Taiwanese period TV dramas strengthen cultural identity of being Taiwanese. To clarify, seeing historical events and cultural evolutions presented in these dramas, young viewers deepen the understanding of what it means to be Taiwanese and the complicate transformation of Taiwanese identity, further generating appreciation and preserving consciousness for Taiwan's freedom and democracy. Some audiences can even detach ROC-centered narrative and accept localized collective identity more, strengthening Taiwanese identity through shared emotions and memories.

Last but not least, audiences have become active interpreter and critical participants in period drama watching process. To demonstrate, young audiences actively engage with the emotions, narratives, and ideologies in the dramas instead of passively receive media contents. they have clear recognitions of potential bias and dramatized plots. This critical insight motivates them to suggest production teams to do in-depth research and include multiple perspectives, ensuring objectivity of historical narratives and cultural backgrounds. Identically, young audiences reconstruct cultural identity through Taiwanese period TV dramas and develop a sense of identification of Taiwanese cultural and social values, wishing to recreate a new, shared Taiwanese narrative presented with local angles.

Hence, Taiwanese period TV dramas is not solely a form of entertainment, they are pivotal cultural texts and memory devices that transmit history, evoke emotional connections, motivate discussion across generations, and stimulate critical thinking. They efficiently reconstruct young Taiwanese people's cultural identity through attractive storylines and vivid audio-visual presentations. These dramas are not only mirrors of history, they are dynamic platforms for connecting past and present, transporting culture, and construct future Taiwanese identity, confirming the key function of media in cultural sustainability.

6.1 Limitation

This research acknowledges several limitations that may affect the interpretation of the findings. These limitations relate to the variability of participants' individual experiences, potential interviewer intervention, and the socio-political context during the data collection period.

In the first place, a significant limitation of this research is the heterogeneity of participants' viewing experiences. All participants had engaged with different Taiwanese period TV dramas, so their reflections and answers are based on certain dramas rather than the genre as a whole. As every period drama tends to emphasize distinct topics, from political discourse to local cultural development or broader social phenomenon, it is inevitable that participants' perspectives of the linkage between period dramas and cultural identity reconstruction are partial. This fragmented exposure might limit the generalizability of the findings to Taiwanese period TV dramas as a collective cultural form.

Secondly, During the interviews, interviewer provided additional explanations or examples to facilitate understanding when participants required clarification regarding the meaning of certain questions. While this process intended to enhance the clarity of the research, it could affect participants' interpretations and responses inadvertently. In this case, some responses might reflect a degree of interviewer's influence, potentially distracting the authenticity of participants' original views.

Lastly, participants' response could be influenced by contemporaneous socio-political developments in Taiwan. The interviews were conducted between late March and mid-April 2025, which is a period marked by heightened political discourse in local media and society. This temporal context might have lead some participants to highlight political dimension in their interpretation of both interview questions and period dramas, thereby introducing a bias from a certain temporal context into their responses.

6.2 Future Research Suggestions

Building upon the limitation exposed in the research, several directions for future studies may strengthen the depth and generality of research result. These suggestions aim to address methodological constraints, expand thematic scope, and explore other analytical angles to better understand to relationship between drama narratives and cultural identity reconstruction.

First, given that participants in this study watched different period dramas, future research can focus on a selected set of representative dramas or choose a single drama as case study. In this way, it would be more controllable to analyze how certain narrative elements influence audiences' perspectives of the reconstruction of cultural identity. Researchers may also consider not confine to period dramas but comprise contemporary TV dramas that also have diverse thematic focuses, such as political, local culture, or social transmission, to examine how each issue contribute differently to identity formation.

Then, to minimize the potential intervention of interviewer clarification during data collection, future studies are encouraged to conduct pilot testing of interview questions in advance. This pretesting can help identify unclear phrasing in the interview protocol and ensure that participants fully understand the questions without requiring further explanation during the interview process. By doing so, researchers can reduce the influence from interviewer and maintain consistency across interviews, thereby improve the reliability and validity of the qualitative data.

In addition to refining methodological clarity, future research can benefit from conducting longitudinal studies or conduct follow-up interviews across different political or media climates. This would help researchers to distinguish which perceptions are temporal and which stably reflect the perspectives on cultural identity. For example, identity interpretations may change based on significant political development, media narratives, or the release of new period dramas that depict history in different ways. Thus, longitudinal or repeated-interview design can capture the evolving nature of cultural identity and provide richer insights to understand how media consuming interact with socio-political environment over time.

Overall, these directions provide potential pathway to understand how media representations advance the evolutionary construction of Taiwanese cultural identity meticulously and rigorously.

In conclusion, Taiwanese period TV dramas are crucial in carrying historical memory and reconstructing cultural identity. Through interpretations of historical and cultural elements, Taiwanese period TV dramas bridge a link between past and present, individual and collective culture for young Taiwanese people who are digital-natives. These dramas contribute to the re-understanding, reconstructing, and deepening the cultural identity of being Taiwanese, accomplishing cultural sustainability and social conversation in drama narratives.

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Appendix

a. Interview Guide

Question Topics	Interview Questions
Background Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can you tell me about yourself and your background? (Age, gender, occupation, language, living country/city) ● How often do you watch Taiwanese period TV dramas? ● What are some Taiwanese period TV dramas you have watched? ● Can you give a short summary of these Taiwanese period TV dramas? ● What are your thoughts on these dramas? (e.g. plots, historical backgrounds, characters, or cultural elements) ● (Possible following question: What aspects of these dramas do you find most engaging or meaningful?) ● What are your motivations to watch period dramas? (historical interest, entertainment, cultural connection)
Interpretation of Period TV Dramas and Cultural Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are your impressions of the historical and cultural elements that are shown in Taiwanese period dramas? (e.g. traditional costumes, food, ethnic interactions, language, historical events) ● How do these dramas present historical realities? (e.g. fact-based events, social and cultural conditions, perspectives and interpretations) ● What impressions do these realities leave you with? ● What cultural aspects do you notice in these dramas? (e.g. language, customs, traditions, history, food, social norms, or pop culture) ● How do these aspects contribute to your understanding of Taiwanese culture? ● Do you think Taiwanese period TV dramas play a role in preserving and transmitting the collective experiences, traditions, or historical events to your generation? Why or why not?

<p>Audience Reception and Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● When discussing period dramas with friends, family, or online communities, what topics usually come up? ● Do you find yourself agree or disagree with how Taiwanese culture is portrayed in these dramas? Can you give an example? ● How do you engage with the cultural elements shown in these dramas? (For example, what kinds of emotional feelings, such as nostalgia, curiosity, do they evoke you?) ● In your opinion, what role do these dramas play in shaping how you think about Taiwanese culture? ● Can you recall a specific moment when you learned something new about Taiwanese history or culture from a period drama?
<p>Cultural Identity Reconstruction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do you feel when you see your own culture represented in these dramas? (e.g. Do they stronger connect to your roots or challenge your understanding of it) ● How do you relate to Taiwanese culture after watching a Taiwanese period drama? ● In what ways do these dramas influence your sense of connection to Taiwanese cultural traditions, values, or history? ● In your opinion, do you think period dramas shape your perception of what it means to be Taiwanese? If so, how? ● How do you think your relationship to Taiwanese culture (e.g. traditions, values, language) after watching Taiwanese period dramas? ● How do period dramas contribute to discussions about Taiwanese identity among young people like yourself? ● (Optional: Have you ever watched a period drama that did not make you feel connected to Taiwanese culture? If so, why?)
<p>Conclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What suggestions do you have for future period dramas to better represent Taiwanese culture? ● Is there anything else you want to share about how period dramas have influenced your cultural identity?

b. Themes from Coding

Themes	Subthemes
Narrative Techniques	Plot Design Emotional Storytelling Casting
Audio-visual Elements	Visual Element Audio Element Visualize Daily Life Historical Struggles
Historical Education	Textbook Limitation History Learning Tool Stimulate Historical Curiosity
Emotional Connection	Nostalgic Trigger Empathy to Character Experience Immerse Through Related Background
Social Changes and Generational Differences	Life and Social Practices Transformation of Social Norms and Values Freedom in History Intergenerational Family Narratives Generational Worldviews
Promote Discussion and Collective Memory	Collective Memory Devices Online and Peer Discussion Discussion Entry Point Bridge Generational Shared Memory
Strengthen Identity	National Reflection and Cultural Ownership Break Away From ROC Narratives Identity Formation
Diversity of Cultural Identity	Multiplicity of Taiwanese Cultural Identity Critical Awareness of Bias Multilingualism Desire of Taiwanese Culture Reconstruction