

The Impact of Chinese Series on Thai Undergraduate Students' Intention to Learn Chinese

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Abstract

This study examined Chinese television dramas influence Thai undergraduates' intention to learn Chinese, a topic that has received little attention despite the growing popularity of Chinese media in Southeast Asia. Guided by Uses and Gratifications theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior, a quantitative online survey was conducted with Thai undergraduate students who had watched Chinese dramas within the previous six months, during March to September 2025. Participants were recruited through convenience sampling via social media and LINE groups. An a priori power analysis using G*Power confirmed that the final sample of 167 students was sufficient to detect small-to-medium effects with adequate statistical tool. The questionnaire measured media exposure, attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and learning intention, and all scales showed acceptable reliability (Cronbach's alpha > .70). Regression analyses indicated that media exposure significantly predicts students' intention to learn Chinese ($R^2 = .257$, $\beta = .511$, $p < .001^{***}$) and positively influences their attitudes toward language study ($R^2 = .324$, $\beta = .569$, $p < .001^{***}$). In addition, attitudes ($R^2 = .356$, $\beta = .596$, $p < .001^{***}$), subjective norms ($R^2 = .348$, $\beta = .590$, $p < .001^{***}$), and perceived behavioral control ($R^2 = .662$, $\beta = .814$, $p < .001^{***}$) all significantly predict intention to learn Chinese, with perceived behavioral control being the strongest predictor. These findings showed that Chinese dramas can provide a supportive context for motivating Thai undergraduates to learn Chinese, while also emphasizing that students' confidence and access to learning resources play a key role in shaping their intentions.

Keywords: *Chinese Television Dramas, Thai Students, Chinese Language Learning, Theory of Planned Behavior*

1. Introduction

Language has long been understood as “a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates” (Bloch & Trager, 1942, as cited in Lyons, 2005). In line with this perspective, Kanoksilapatham (2011) emphasized that language functions as a fundamental tool of communication. Importantly, people learn languages not only for instrumental reasons but also for intrinsic motivations such as intellectual stimulation, cultural curiosity, or interest in foreign media products (Han et al., 2024).

In recent decades, the Chinese language has gained growing significance worldwide. With China's rising influence in the global economy, the demand for Chinese language education has surged, particularly in Southeast Asia (Zhao & Jantavongso, 2025). Thailand has become the country with the largest number of Chinese language learners among less developed nations, with estimates surpassing one million in 2021 and more than two million in 2022 (Xu et al., 2022). Despite this remarkable growth, foreign language learning in Thailand is still often regarded as a privilege, as most Thais remain monolingual, with Thai firmly established as the national language (Cao & Tananuraksakul, 2023). Within this setting, positive emotions such as foreign language enjoyment (FLE) play a pivotal role. FLE is described as a multifaceted emotion emerging from the balance between perceived challenges and personal ability, embodying the human drive to succeed in demanding tasks. Learners experience genuine enjoyment not only when they achieve their goals but also when they exceed them, accomplishing something unexpected or novel (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016).

Cultural and economic ties have further intensified the significance of Chinese language and media in Thailand. The country has grown into a prime destination for Chinese tourists, a trend accelerated by the blockbuster success of the low-budget film *Lost in Thailand*, which spotlighted destinations like Bangkok and Chiang Mai (Bloomberg, 2013; Tungkeunkunt, 2016). This wave of tourism has also prompted Chinese media companies such as WeTV and iQIYI to expand their presence in Thailand (Lin et al., 2022). Responding to this demand, local streaming platforms such as TrueID have introduced dedicated sections for Chinese dramas, signaling the increasing appetite of Thai audiences (Hit Chinese Shows, 2023).

The growing reach of Chinese media in Thailand naturally draws comparisons with the Korean Wave (Hallyu). For example, Youngsun et al. (2024) showed that the appeal of K-pop and related cultural products strongly motivates Indonesian Generation Z to learn Korean, demonstrating how cultural exports can shape educational aspirations and social dynamics in the age of globalization. Similarly, Punnahitanond et al. (2025) observed that exposure to media portraying Korean wave culture significantly influences Thai audiences' preferences across several cultural dimensions, including idols, music, films/series, food, language, and more. These insights raise the question of whether the increasing visibility of Chinese cultural products aired in Thailand also plays a role in motivating Thai undergraduate students to learn Chinese.

Previous studies on the Korean Wave have shown that K-dramas can positively influence language learning motivation (Onnom, 2018). For example, the series *Jewel in the Palace* significantly shaped Thai audiences' intention to learn Korean by fostering cultural interest and linguistic engagement (Tachasakulmas, 2011). While these findings highlight the importance of media in supporting language learning, there is still limited research on whether similar effects occur with Chinese television dramas.

Despite their rising popularity in Thailand, little is known about how such media portrayals affect Thai undergraduates' intention to learn Chinese. This gap points to the need for empirical research exploring the intersection of media exposure and language learning motivation. In addition, this study focuses on Thai undergraduates for three reasons. First, Thailand hosts one of the world's largest cohorts of Chinese language learners, estimates surpassed one million by 2021 which is signaling sustained growth

across education levels (Xu, Zhang, Sukjairungwattana, & Wang, 2022). Second, recent Chinese foreign language studies in Thailand routinely sample university students which highlight this group's centrality to the field (Cao & Tananuraksakul, 2023; Luo, 2023). Third, Chinese dramas resonate strongly with Thai youth such as "The Untamed", repeatedly topped Thailand's Twitter trends, making undergraduates a salient audience for the media variable examined here (Punnahitanond et al., 2025).

Accordingly, this study seeks to address the following research objective is to what extent do the exposure to Chinese series and attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control predict Thai undergraduates' intention to learn Chinese?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Media portrayal

According to Punnahitanond (2018), media portrayal refers to the way specific individuals, groups, communities, experiences, ideas, or topics are represented by mass media through ideological perspectives. Media portrayals convey various dimensions of an issue to their target audiences by employing narratives, arguments, allusions, and reports through diverse forms such as artistic performances, films, poetry, news, and debates.

Communication functions as a tool for creating and processing meaning, where meaning is defined as the connection between a message and its receiver. Understanding arises from how audiences interpret the signs and symbols they perceive through media, a process shaped by the shared cultural frameworks and interpretations that audiences bring to media portrayals (DeFleur & Plax, 1980, as cited in Punnahitanond, 2018). In the context, exposure to Chinese dramas should cultivate more positive attitudes toward the Chinese language and stronger normative beliefs that "Chinese matters," thereby setting the stage for motivation.

2.2 Uses and Gratification Theory

Uses and gratification theory refers to audiences as active media users who select content to satisfy needs or functions, such as cognitive/informational, affective/entertainment, social integration, tension release, and more. Foundational work showed people rank media by how well they meet these needs (Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973). Later research linked motivations to viewing patterns in terms of instrumental vs. ritualized use and downstream attitudes/behaviors (Rubin, 1983). Reviews argued that uses and gratification Theory remains vital in the digital era, integrating interactive platforms and new gratifications (Ruggiero, 2000; Sundar & Limperos, 2013).

Korean drama plays a vivid example, according to Ding and Wu (2023), the global diffusion of Hallyu reliably predicts international demand for Korean language learning. The intensity of K-drama exposure among youth is positively associated with heightened interest in learning Korean, often via entertainment, identification with characters, and community participation, classic uses and gratifications pathways (Dunan, Kuspiani, Mudjiyanto, & Waluyo, 2022). while qualitative and thesis work documents that K-dramas cultivate favorable attitudes toward Korea and serve as soft-power drivers of language learning in contexts such as Thailand (Lee, 2014; Onnom, 2018). Therefore, these findings

suggest that K-drama viewing can translate into stronger intentions to learn Korean by satisfying entertainment and social needs, building cultural affinity, and normalizing language study within fan communities.

2.3 The Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a well-established framework for explaining how individuals translate attitudes and perceptions into behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 1991). According to the theory, intention the immediate antecedent of behavior is shaped by three determinants: attitudes, the individual's evaluation of the behavior; subjective norms, the perceived social pressures to perform or not perform the behavior; and perceived behavioral control, which reflects the sense of capability and the perceived availability of resources or opportunities. Perceived behavioral control is particularly salient because it not only influences intention but can actually affect behavior where objective control is slight (Ajzen, 1991). It thus relates to individuals' perceived facilitators or barriers which can indirectly affect their ability for action (Ajzen, 1991, cited by Khongthaworn, 2019; Wang et al., 2023).

TPB is especially fitting for this research, because Chinese language learning within the Thai context requires both motivational commitment and perceived feasibilities. Attitudes can be shaped through Chinese drama serials conceptualizing the language as culturally worthwhile and desirable, and through subjective norms reflecting the social influence of one's peers, one's family members, and fan clubs toward normalizing language study. Perceived behavioral control remains the central focus, as students weigh their ability, time, and ease of accessibility of resources before committing the dedication toward studying. Following the rationale of Ajzen (1991), TPB excels where the behavior under examination isn't under complete volitional control, and thus excels especially for the examination of Chinese language learning within the Thai context where fees, institutional opportunities, and familial support can deter actual behavior. Focusing media exposure within such a paradigm allows the examination more clearly of the way through which entertainment programming shapes attitudes, norms, and control judgments, and through which aggregate these language learning intentions are shaped.

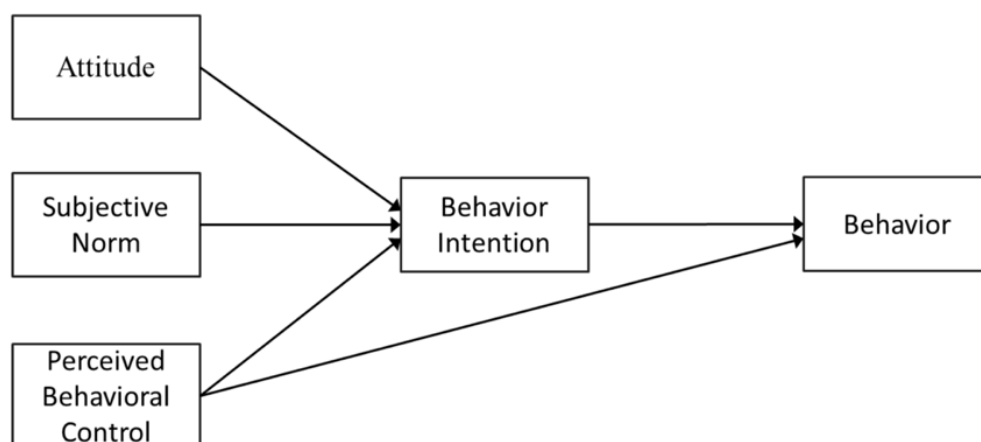


Figure 1: Model of Theory of Planned Behavior, TPB.
 Source : Wang, Li, Wu, and Zhou (2023)

2.4 Media Exposure and Language Learning Motivation

Gronemeyer and Chinokul (2024) showed that foreign films can enhance learners' motivation and autonomy in language learning. Building on this, numerous studies highlight how exposure to popular culture encourages language study. In Thailand, for example, *Jewel in the Palace* significantly influenced viewers' intentions to learn Korean by stimulating cultural interest and linguistic engagement (Tachasakulmas, 2011), while Onnom (2018) reported that K-pop and Korean dramas have driven the growth of Korean language learning nationwide. Similarly, Chinese audiovisual media can support sustained engagement with the language by shaping learners' attitudes and long-term commitment (Yaqoub, Matusitz, & Jingwu, 2023).

2.5 Chinese Dramas in Thailand

Today, Thai media across television, radio, and online platforms feature a strong and growing Chinese cultural presence, with content circulating in both Thai and Chinese (Skaggs et al., 2024). This visibility is reinforced by the Chinese film industry's increasing engagement with Thai cinema, which helps shape cultural identities and sustain relations between the two countries (Shang, 2015). The immense popularity of the drama *The Untamed* illustrates the depth of this influence, as it dominated Twitter trends in Thailand for three consecutive years during its broadcast (PR Newswire, 2019). Such influence has historical roots: Thai expatriates were already captivated by Hong Kong kung fu and wuxia films in the 1970s and 1980s (Lin et al., 2022), and Han (2021) argues that the enduring appeal of wuxia in Thailand stems from cultural similarities and shared values. In the contemporary streaming era, platforms such as WeTV and iQIYI have further increased the accessibility and visibility of Chinese dramas in Thailand, creating conditions for possible educational and linguistic impact (Lin et al., 2022). China's broader soft power strategy combines this media expansion with cultural diplomacy initiatives such as Confucius Institutes, and comparing these approaches can shed light on how different tactics resonate with Thai audiences across generations (Punnahitanond et al., 2025). However, existing scholarship on Chinese dramas in Thailand has primarily emphasized cultural reception, identity, and "Chineseness," rather than language outcomes. Consequently, systematic examination of media exposure as a predictor of Chinese language learning in Thailand remains limited.

2.6 Significance of the Study

As noted above, the relationship between Chinese media exposure and Thai undergraduates' intention to learn Chinese remains largely unexplored. This study is significant in several ways. First, it demonstrates how Chinese television dramas can operate as more than cultural entertainment; they also act as informal learning environments that stimulate curiosity and normalize the idea of language study beyond the classroom. This sheds light on how entertainment-education functions in a cross-cultural context.

In addition, the study advances theoretical understanding by applying the Theory of Planned Behavior to a media setting. It shows how exposure to dramas shapes attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, which in turn predict learning

intention. In particular, the strong role of perceived behavioral control highlights that motivation is not simply about desire but about students' sense of feasibility and access to resources. Meanwhile, the findings bridge communication studies and applied linguistics by demonstrating how media consumption and language learning are closely intertwined. Finally, the study has practical value for educators, policymakers, and media producers by suggesting that popular media can be strategically integrated into language education and cultural exchange initiatives, especially in contexts where traditional instruction is limited.

3. Research Objectives and Hypotheses

This study aims to investigate the impact of exposure to Chinese television series influences Thai undergraduate students' intention to learn Chinese. Specifically, it pursues two objectives: 1) to examine the impact of exposure to Chinese series on Thai undergraduates' intention to learn Chinese, and 2) to examine the impact of the attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control on their intention to learn Chinese. Based on the conceptual framework shown in Figure 2, the following research hypotheses are proposed.

H1: Exposure to Chinese television dramas positively influences Thai undergraduates' intention toward learning Chinese.

H2: Attitude positively predicts Thai undergraduates's intention to learning chinese.

H3: Subjective norm positively predicts Thai undergraduates's intention to learning chinese.

H4: Perceived Behavioral control positively predicts Thai undergraduates's intention to learning chinese.

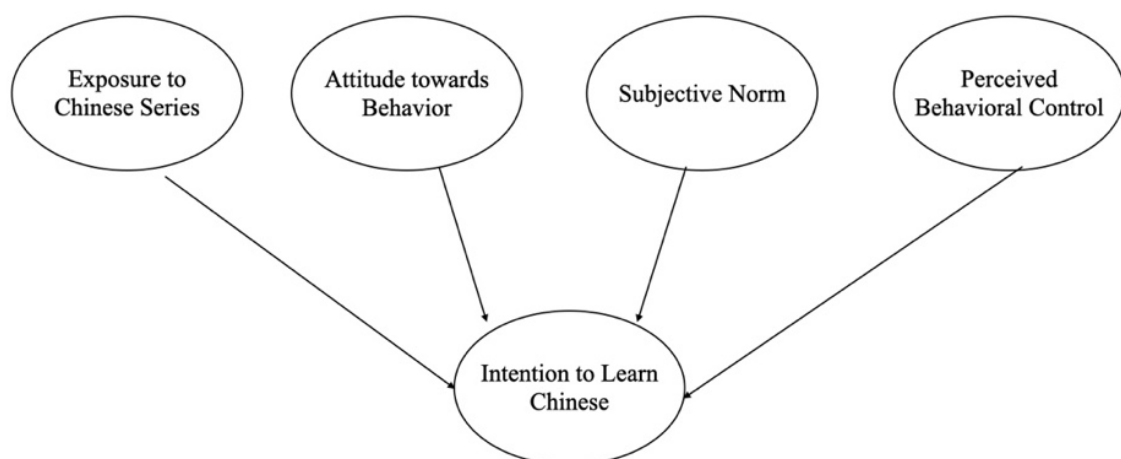


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

4. Methodology

4.1 Population and sampling

Applying a quantitative approach, the survey was administered online via social media and LINE groups, targeting Thai undergraduate students who had been exposed to Chinese television series within the past six months during the period from March to September 2025. The study employed convenience sampling, recruiting individuals who

were accessible and willing to participate during the data collection period. To determine the required sample size, an a priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power. The analysis was based on a linear multiple regression with a fixed model and a single regression coefficient, using a two-tailed test. Input parameters were set as follows: effect size $f^2 = 0.10$ (a small-to-medium effect according to Cohen, 1988), significance level $\alpha = .05$, desired power $(1-\beta) = .95$, and number of predictors = 2. The output indicated that a minimum total sample size of 132 participants would be needed to achieve adequate statistical power, with degrees of freedom (df) = 129, a critical t value of 1.9785, and an actual power of .9501. These results confirm that the study design has sufficient sensitivity to detect effects of small-to-medium magnitude, thereby reducing the risk of Type II error and ensuring reliable estimation of the hypothesized relationships.

4.2 Research Procedure, Validity, and Reliability

Before data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed for content validity using the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC). Three scholars in communication and linguistic studies evaluated the items. Their feedback was used to refine the wording and structure as well as the questions. A pre-test with 30 participants was then carried out to check reliability. After these adjustments, the final questionnaire was distributed online through social media and LINE groups to Thai undergraduate students who had experience watching Chinese television series in the recent six months during the period from March to September 2025, resulting in 167 valid responses.

Reliability was assessed with Cronbach's Alpha. All scales showed acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha $> .700$. The data were analyzed using a statistical tool. Descriptive statistics were used to profile the respondents and summarize the data, while inferential statistics were applied to test the four research hypotheses. Questionnaire items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree 3=Neither Disagree nor Agree 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree. The final data were analysed using a statistical tool, with both descriptive and inferential statistics, including regression analysis, to test the proposed hypotheses and examine the predictive relationships among variables, see table 1.

Table 1: Reliability Test of Each Variable

Variables	n	Mean	S.D.	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Media Exposure to Chinese Series	30	4.42	.72	4	.719
TPB (Attitude)	30	4.36	.83	5	.838
TPB (Subjective Norm)	30	4.44	.81	5	.811
TPB (Perceived Behavior Control)	30	4.24	.76	3	.769
Intention of Chinese Learning	30	4.20	.84	4	.846

5. Finding

The sample was predominantly female (74.25%), with male respondents comprising 9.58%; additional identities included not identified (7.19%), LGBTQA+ (4.79%), and prefer not to disclose (4.19%). Most participants were sophomores (Year 2; 75.45%), followed by seniors (Year 4; 23.35%), while freshmen (Year 1) and students in Year 5 or above each accounted for 0.60%, indicating that responses largely reflect mid-program undergraduates. Regarding Chinese proficiency, the distribution centered on

intermediate levels: HSK 3 (44.91%) and HSK 4 (33.53%). A smaller share had never taken the HSK (14.37%), and advanced proficiency was uncommon (HSK 5 = 5.39%; HSK 6 = 0.60%). Overall, the demographic profile is characterized by a female-majority, second-year cohort with moderate Chinese proficiency.

Table 2: Regression analysis: The impact of media exposure, attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavior control on intention of learning Chinese

Variable	B	S.E.	beta	t	R ²	p
Media Exposure	.422	.055	.511	7.643	.257	< .001***
TPB (Attitude)	.672	.070	.596	9.541	.356	< .001***
TPB (Subjective Norm)	.823	.088	.590	9.388	.348	< .001***
TPB (Perceived Behavior Control)	.831	.046	.814	17.978	.662	< .001***

Note. Significance level * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Hypothesis 1 proposed that exposure to Chinese television dramas positively influences Thai undergraduates' intention to learn Chinese. The regression results (Table 2) confirmed this relationship, showing a significant positive effect of media exposure on learning intention ($R^2 = .257$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .511$). This indicates that 25.7% of the variance in intention is explained by media exposure, suggesting that screen-based contact with Chinese culture functions as a meaningful motivational cue beyond mere entertainment. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that attitude toward learning Chinese positively influences learning intention. The results demonstrated a significant effect ($R^2 = .356$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .596$), meaning that 35.6% of the variance in intention is explained by attitude. In practical terms, students who evaluate Chinese learning as useful/enjoyable are substantially more likely to form the intention to study, supporting the attitudinal pathway anticipated by TPB. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Hypothesis 3 suggested that subjective norm positively influences intention to learn Chinese. Regression analysis showed a significant positive relationship ($R^2 = .348$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .590$), with subjective norm explaining 34.8% of the variance in intention. This implies that perceived expectations from peers, family, or online communities meaningfully legitimize and reinforce the decision to learn. Hence, Hypothesis 3 is supported.

Finally, Hypothesis 4 proposed that perceived behavioural control positively influences intention to learn Chinese. The findings revealed the strongest effect among all predictors ($R^2 = .662$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .814$), indicating that 66.2% of the variance in intention is explained by perceived behavioural control. This underscores feasibility beliefs time, access, costs, self-efficacy as the decisive hinge converting interest into intention. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is supported.

Taken together, the pattern of effects suggests a layered process: media exposure provides an initial motivational spark; attitude and social expectations consolidate that motivation; and perceived behavioural control ultimately determines its strength. While these single-predictor models clarify each pathway's contribution, the relative dominance of perceived behavioural control highlights the importance of structural supports and learners' efficacy beliefs in translating media-driven interest into concrete learning plans.

6. Discussion

The results of this study suggest that Chinese television dramas are doing more than just entertaining Thai undergraduates they are shaping how students think and feel about learning Chinese. All four hypotheses were supported, showing that media exposure, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control all matter for students' intention towards learning Chinese.

One of the interesting findings is that media exposure not only has a direct impact on intention but also shapes students' attitudes toward learning Chinese ($R^2 = .324$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .569$). This means that the more students watch Chinese dramas, the more positively they feel about learning the language itself. In practice, dramas make Chinese appear less intimidating and more relevant to students' everyday lives, whether through cultural storylines, relatable characters, or even hearing the language in a natural setting. This shift in attitude then strengthens their motivation to actually pursue language study.

At the same time, the analysis shows that perceived behavioral control is the strongest predictor of intention. In other words, even if students are interested and have positive attitudes, what really matters is whether they believe they can manage the learning process. If they feel they have enough resources, time, and ability, their intention becomes much stronger. This reflects a real-world situation: while Chinese courses are increasingly available in Thailand, access to quality programs is still uneven. Without enough structural support, interest generated by dramas may not fully translate into action.

Attitudes and subjective norms also deserve attention. Positive attitudes clearly raise motivation, showing that dramas can change how students see Chinese from a "difficult foreign language" to something exciting and valuable. Subjective norms show the role of peers, family, and even online communities in reinforcing this decision. Watching the same dramas creates a shared cultural experience, which makes learning Chinese feel socially meaningful and less like an individual struggle.

At the end, the findings paint a layered picture. Chinese dramas do spark interest, but their influence works mainly by improving attitudes and by embedding Chinese language learning into social and cultural contexts. However, the strongest driver is still whether students feel capable of actually learning the language. For educators and policymakers, this means that while media exposure is a powerful entry point, it needs to be supported by accessible courses and practical opportunities. If those conditions are in place, the cultural pull of Chinese dramas can become a real catalyst for language learning.

7. Conclusion

This study sheds light on where media influence on language learning is most effective and where it requires support. Chinese television dramas clearly stimulate intention, yet the decisive factor is perceived behavioral control: students act when learning feels feasible when time, cost, access, and self-efficacy align. Exposure also strengthens more favorable attitudes, showing that dramas do more than capture attention; they reframe Chinese as enjoyable and relevant, creating conditions under which intention can take root.

The contribution is twofold. Substantively, the findings move the debate beyond “media matters” to explaining how it matters: entertainment cues shape attitudes and social norms, while perceptions of feasibility transform interest into concrete intention. Theoretically, integrating Uses and Gratifications Theory with the Theory of Planned Behavior offers a parsimonious pathway from exposure to attitudes and norms to intention, moderated by perceived behavioral control, an approach that can be extended to other languages and cultural contexts.

The results also clarify the boundary conditions. Media alone rarely carries learners across the threshold; the most powerful lever remains structural. Entry points, teacher quality, flexible timetables, scholarships, and credible micro-credentials reduce perceived costs and risks, making actual learning decisions possible.

Looking forward, the most meaningful gains will come from aligning popular culture with concrete opportunities: course designs that draw on drama content for comprehensible input and speaking practice; partnerships that convert fandom into low-friction enrollment; and supports that raise self-efficacy at the fragile middle stages of proficiency. When these elements are in place, the cultural pull of Chinese dramas can evolve from a passing spark into a sustained engine for language learning.

Suggestions

The findings suggest several practical recommendations that could enhance the role of Chinese dramas as a motivational tool for language learning. Universities and language centers could integrate popular Chinese dramas into entry-level courses, making use of dialogues, storylines, and character interactions as authentic materials for listening, speaking, and cultural analysis. By embedding familiar media content, educators may lower psychological barriers such as anxiety or fear of difficulty, allowing learners to engage with Chinese in a more accessible and enjoyable way. This approach also supports Foreign Language Enjoyment (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016), which is crucial for sustaining long-term motivation.

In addition, peer-based activities could be developed around drama content. Drama discussion groups, fan-inspired study circles, or viewing clubs can help learners share insights and practice conversational Chinese in a collaborative environment. These activities reinforce positive subjective norms by creating a social context where language learning is not only encouraged but also celebrated, making it less of an isolated academic task and more of a shared cultural experience.

Collaboration between media platforms and educational institutions also presents an opportunity. Streaming services such as WeTV or iQIYI could partner with universities to design short modules, online quizzes, or promotional learning campaigns tied to popular series. Such initiatives would bridge entertainment with structured education, helping students to see continuity between their leisure activities and academic goals.

Finally, targeted support for learners at the intermediate level, where the majority of participants in this study were situated which could help prevent stagnation. Tailored courses that focus on bridging the gap from intermediate to advanced proficiency, such as conversational workshops, subtitling exercises, or drama-based role-play, may sustain

learners' interest while pushing them toward higher levels of achievement. By aligning curriculum design with students' media consumption patterns, educators can transform cultural enthusiasm into concrete linguistic progress.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, we used convenience sampling and focused on Thai undergraduates who had watched Chinese dramas in the past six months, which limits how far the findings can be generalized to other age groups or the wider population. Second, all measures were self-reported, so social desirability and recall bias may have affected how students described their media exposure and learning intentions. Third, the cross-sectional design captures associations at a single point in time and does not support causal claims. Finally, we examined intention rather than behavior. Future work should track learners over time and include behavioral indicators such as actual course enrollment or proficiency gains to test the predictive value of media exposure and motivational factors.

Implications

Theoretically, this study reinforces the value of integrating the Uses and Gratifications framework with the Theory of Planned Behavior. Media exposure not only fulfills entertainment needs but also provides cognitive and affective gratifications that influence attitudes, foster positive social norms, and interact with perceived behavioral control to shape intention. This combined perspective illustrates how entertainment media can operate as both a source of pleasure and a catalyst for educational motivation. The strong effect of perceived behavioral control further underscores that motivation cannot be separated from feasibility; learners must believe that they have the resources, skills, and opportunities to realistically achieve their goals if media-inspired interest is to translate into action. This insight adds to TPB scholarship by showing how control beliefs act as a decisive hinge in contexts where structural factors, such as course availability, costs, and institutional support which play a significant role.

From a policy perspective, the findings emphasize that cultural products like television dramas can successfully spark initial curiosity, but their influence will remain limited without accessible, affordable, and high-quality language programs to sustain interest. Integrating drama-inspired learning pathways into curricula, offering scholarships, and expanding Chinese language centers could transform media-driven motivation into long-term outcomes. At the broader level of cultural diplomacy, Chinese dramas function as instruments of soft power in Thailand, shaping cultural perceptions and creating informal gateways to language learning. However, their long-term impact will depend on how effectively cultural industries, educators, and policymakers coordinate media visibility with tangible educational opportunities, ensuring that cultural appeal is matched by institutional capacity to support language learners.

Future Research

Although this study highlights the influence of Chinese television dramas on Thai undergraduates' intention to learn Chinese, several areas remain open for further exploration. One important direction is to look beyond intention and examine actual learning behaviors. Future studies could track course enrollment, HSK participation, or

language performance to see how far media-driven motivation translates into real educational outcomes.

Another priority is to strengthen causal and structural understanding. Because this research relied on a cross-sectional survey and simple regression, it can only demonstrate associations at a single point in time. Longitudinal designs that follow students over several semesters, or quasi-experiments comparing drama-based learning with conventional teaching, would help clarify whether media exposure has a lasting or direct effect. In addition, future studies could employ more advanced analytical techniques, such as multiple regression or Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), to test the full TPB structure and the mediating or moderating roles of media exposure more rigorously.

Finally, more attention should be given to the dramas themselves. Not all series are equally effective in motivating language learning. Content analyses of popular dramas, together with studies of fan communities and online interactions, could identify which storylines, characters, or cultural themes most strongly inspire learners. In short, future research should move from documenting intention to observing real behavior, while also unpacking the narrative and cultural elements that make media an educational force.

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