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A Study On Intercultural Contact Factors And Acculturation: A Survey Of African Merchants In Guangzhou

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ABSTRACT

This paper adopted a qualitative study of questionnaires to identity how selected intercultural contact factors are correlated with psychological and sociocultural adaptation. It is found that psychological and sociocultural adaptation situations of African merchants in Guangzhou are both moderately well;psychological adaptation of African merchants was proved to be correlated with 5 intercultural contact factors.; the sociocultural adaptation of African merchants was proved to be correlated with 5 intercultural contact factors;correlation analysis proved that outgroup social support has a stronger positive correlation with both psychological and sociocultural adaptation than ingroup social support, which is the main source of social support for African merchants;the overlapping and strength differences of correlations show that the two acculturation dimensions of African merchants are distinct and interrelated, thus verified the Colleen Ward's two-dimension acculturation model in the group of African merchants in Guangzhou.

Keywords: intercultural contact factors, two-dimension acculturation model, acculturation, African merchants

INTRODUCTION

Research Background

The history of exchanges between China and Africa can be traced back to ancient China. During the Tang dynasty, Africans were sold as slaves for wealthy families in China. Later during the Yuan dynasty, Africans got rid of their status as slaves and began to engage in the reselling business (Xu, 2013). After the reform and opening-up, China's rapid economic development, together with its large population, gave rise to the flourishing of the manufacturing industry which was labor-intensive. Thereby, goods manufactured in China have begun to be well-received around the globe because of attractive prices and quality. Naturally, Africa, in the era of scarcity, became an ideal reselling market for African merchants. However, it is until the 1990s when African merchants started to flood into China. In 1997, the Asian financial crisis broke out, the African merchants who were doing business in Southeast Asian countries suffered a lot from serious shrunk of assets due

to the devalue of southeast Asian currencies. At that time, the flourishing Guangzhou, with a highly developed trade system and relatively low cost of living, quickly became the premier place for doing business from the perspective of Africans.

Later, with China's entry into the WTO and the deepening of reform and opening up, the number of Africans visiting Guangzhou had increased by 30 to 40 percent every year since 2003, driven by a trade boom between China and Africa, according to Chinese officials (Chen, 2009). Guangzhou Municipal Public Security Bureau revealed that, up until 2018, at least 14,963 Africans with legal status are currently living or doing business in Guangzhou. According to the Guangzhou Development Research Institute (2014), Guangzhou has accommodated one of the largest African groups in Asia. The neighborhoods of Guangzhou Railway Station, SanYuanLi, North of Tianhe district and Xiaobei in Yuexiu District are the most concentrated area of African traders (Li, 2009). Guangzhou is also known as “Africa in Miniature” or “Chocolate City” and the Baohan Street in Guangzhou earned its most distinct name, the “African Street” (Li, 2009).

African merchants in Guangzhou are mainly engaged in import and export trade and they can be categorized into three types (Xu, 2013). Firstly, there are some African merchants who are company owners in the first place when they came to China. African merchants in this category often have rich trade skills and multinational trading experience. Most of them registered formal trading companies at the time when they came to Guangzhou or serving as permanent agents stationed in China of large African companies. Their main responsibility is to purchase all kinds of goods for African domestic companies. Normally, this kind of businessman has a high social status and has lived in China for years. Secondly, Most of the African merchants fall into the category of “Cross-national Profiteer” who import relatively cheap Chinese products and resell them to their home countries to get the price difference.

Profit from the price difference can be dozens of times of the average monthly salary of those African merchants back in Africa. With the in-depth development of Sino-Africa trade and cooperation, the era of profiting from the export of cheap goods is getting off the stage (Lin, 2019). More and more African merchants are upgrading their mode of business to business service-oriented and the scope of capital scale and absorption is also gradually increasing. A great number of Africans who were previously “Cross-national Profiteers” have transformed their business into multinational trading companies, logistics agents, or purchasing guiding agencies and settled down in their leased offices in the Xiaobei area. The third category of African merchants is known as “migratory businessman”. These are Africans who have formal jobs in Africa but will spend one to two months every year in Guangzhou to do business.

Migration has been described as both the root of the problem and an opportunity for individuals and society to upgrade (Baubock, Heller, & Zolberg, 1996), and the consequence of migration is that both groups and individuals must experience cultural adaptation (Sam & Berry, 2006). Conflicts due to cultural differences arise frequently between African merchants and local Chinese. Therefore, poor acculturation status of African merchants has not only negatively affected their own lives and business, but also the whole society. What’s more, with the increasing trend of African merchants settling down in Guangzhou, the number of their spouses or children are also climbing. Therefore, it is of great necessity to explore the relationship between acculturation status of African merchants and relevant influencing factors. This paper aims to explore the current acculturation status of

African merchants in Guangzhou and identity how intercultural contact factors are related to the psychological and sociocultural adaptation of African merchants in Guangzhou. The significance of this paper is elaborated both academically and empirically.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

Research Purpose

In order to explore correlations between the acculturation status of African merchants in Guangzhou and intercultural contact factors, this research was designed to obtain data on two aspects. Firstly, data on how well African merchants have acculturated in Guangzhou were collected. Secondly, the performances of the six intercultural contact factors were investigated. Then, the data collected was uploaded to SPSS 25.0 and be used for descriptive and correlation analysis.

Questionnaire Design

In the questionnaire, a wide range of variables related to acculturation status are assessed respectively. Measures were either taken directly or developed for the project or modified from existing scales. With the exception of demographics information, all items reported were answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Detailed information on the selected scales, number, and source of the items in the present study are reported in Table 2-1.

Psychological adaptation. This scale consists of two sub-scales, including life satisfaction and self-esteem. Life satisfaction is measured with a four-item scale, adapted from Bradley's (1994) Well-Being Questionnaire (W-BQ12), which assessed the overall degree of African businessman's satisfaction with their lives. A sample item is "I am pleased or satisfied with my personal life". Self-esteem was measured using three of the ten items in Rosenberg's (1965) Self-esteem Inventory. A sample item is "I feel I am a person of worth."

Table 1: Structure of the questionnaire

Scale	No. of Items	Source
Psychological adaptation	6	Bradley (1994) Rosenberg (1965)
Sociocultural adaptation	15	Ward & Kennedy (1999)
Ethnic identity	4	Phinney (1992))
Perceived discrimination	5	Williams et al. (1997)
Social support	6	McCubbin et al. (1996)
Social interaction	4	Tucker et al. (2004)
Language use and proficiency	5	Tucker et al. (2004)
Demographics Information	5	

Sociocultural adaptation. The sociocultural adaptation was measured by using fifteen items adapted from the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS) developed by Wards & Searle (1990). This scale generally assessed the ability to deal with difficulties that African merchants might encounter during acculturation, including communication, cultural knowledge, and daily interaction. A sample item of the scale is "I can see things from the local's world view".

Ethnic identity. This scale is to measure the sense of belonging and pride of African merchants in Guangzhou to their ethnic group by referring to four items of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) (Phinney, 1992). A sample item is "I have a lot of pride belonging to my ethnic group".

Perceived discrimination. Perceived discrimination is measured using the Everyday Discrimination Scale (William, et al., 1997). Five items are selected and modified to assess the perceived frequency of unfair treatment or unacceptance because of ethnicity (e.g. "People act as if they are afraid of me").

Social support. This scale is designed to measure the status of social support for African merchants from sources including family, friends, media and the local community. Four items are selected and modified from the Social Support Index (SSI) (McCubbin, etal.,1996). A sample item is "I get the emotional help, support and love I need from my family". Another two items are developed in this research to measure outgroup social support from local media, and the local community. A sample item is "I think that the local media reports about African merchants accelerated mutual understanding between us and the local people".

Social interaction. By referring to and modifying the Social Interaction scale developed by Tucker et al. (2004), this four-item scale assessed the social interaction situation of African merchants with local Chinese. A sample of the item is "I frequently get together socially with Chinese".

Language use and proficiency. The scale for communication inquired about African businessman's Chinese language proficiency and communication skills. A sample item is "I can converse in Chinese in daily social situations".

Demographics Information. Length of stay, marital status, occupation, and intent of coming are included in this section of the questionnaire.

Research Subject

Focusing on the acculturation of African merchants in Guangzhou, the research chose Africans who are doing business in Guangzhou as participants. Additionally, in light of Kim and Gudykunst (1988), sojourners distinct themselves from tourists in that the former spend roughly six months to five years in the host society. Thus, the research subjects for this study are African merchants whose length of stay in Guangzhou falls into the range from six months to five years.

Data Collection

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 virus, data collection for the present paper was finished online. The author designed an e-questionnaire presented in English on WJX.cn and sent it to respondents either through email or WeChat (The e-questionnaire can be accessed through https://www.wjx.cn/jq/65746443.aspx).

As a result, a total of 105 questionnaires were collected. After receiving the questionnaires, the authors sorted out those that were filled with indiscretion. There are two standards in the process of selecting valid questionnaires. Firstly, it is suspicious to choose the same options in succession. Finally, 55 questionnaires were valid for the final analysis. Secondly, conflicting answers were given

to questions that are supposed to be consistent. Participation in the study was anonymous and voluntary and it took a one-and-half month to finish the whole process of data collection.

DATA ANALYSIS

Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

It is noted that this questionnaire assembles scales designed by prominent scholars and have been proved to be valid and reliable in many previous studies. In order to ensure the adapted or modified version of those scales are also valid, preliminary data analysis tested the internal reliability of each of the scales using Cronbach alpha. The results corroborated the validity and reliability of the questionnaire by showing highly satisfactory internal consistency estimates for the scales adopted in this paper as is summarized in Table 3-1.

Table 2: Validity and reliability of the questionnaire

Scale	Cronbach Alpha Coefficients
Psychological adaptation status	.69
Life satisfaction	.71
Self-esteem	.50
Sociocultural adaptation status	.93
Ethnic identity	.79
Perceived discrimination	.95
Social support	.72
Ingroup social support	.61
Outgroup social support	.89
Social interaction	.95
Language use and proficiency	.91

Descriptive Analysis of the Acculturation Status of African Merchants in Guangzhou

As above mentioned, the acculturation status of African merchants in Guangzhou is assessed with a seven-item scale for psychological adaptation and a fifteen-item scale for sociocultural adaptation. Measured with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (5) “strongly agree”, the acculturation status is better as the score goes higher.

Descriptive Analysis of the Psychological Adaptation Status

In assessing psychological adaptation status, three items concerning positive well-being, and three items for good self-esteem are included. The higher the score is on the 5-point Likert scale, the greater the sense of positive well-being and self-esteem.

As is shown in Table 3-2, the overall situation of the psychological adaptation of African merchants in Guangzhou is relatively good. The average of the whole scale is 3.31, which is between (3) “neutral” and (4) “agree” on the 5-point Likert scale. Among the six items, five are scored higher than (3) “neutral”. The lowest mean score 2.98, falling on the item “I have felt I could easily handle any serious problems or major changes in my life”, which is between (2) “disagree” and (3) “neutral”. The highest mean score 3.51, which is between (3) “neutral” and (4) “agree”, generated for the question “I feel that I’m a person of worth”. Even though African merchants do not show enough confidence in dealing with major challenges in Guangzhou, most of them still think well about themselves. Therefore, the status of psychological adaptation is relatively good on the whole.

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of psychological adaptation

Items	Sample (n=55)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation
(1) I feel energetic, active and vigorous	3.35	1.158
(2) I have been satisfied or pleased with my personal life	3.40	1.099
(3) I have felt I could easily handle any serious problems or major changes in my life	2.98	1.240
(4) I feel that I'm a person of worth	3.51	1.034
(5) I think I have enough respect for myself	3.24	1.276
(6) I take a positive attitude toward myself	3.36	1.109
Overall Performance	3.31	1.153

Descriptive Analysis of the Sociocultural Adaptation Status

In measuring the status of sociocultural adaptation, fifteen items were selected from the Socio-cultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS) and were answered on the 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree". The higher the score is, the better African merchants have adapted to Chinese society. The following Table 5-3 illustrated the performance for each item. Generally speaking, African merchants have relatively good sociocultural adaptation. However, they are still facing many problems in adapting to Chinese society. From the Table 3-3 below, it can be seen clearly that the overall performance of the sociocultural adaptation has a mean of 3.33, which is slightly higher than "neutral". For the item "I can understand Chinese jokes and humor", the score is 2.87 which is the lowest, within the range from (2) "disagree" to (3) "agree", followed by the mean 2.93 of item "I see things from the locals' world view". The best sociocultural adaptation can be seen from the item "I follow the rules and regulations of China", with a reported mean of 4.22 which is between (4) "agree" and (5) "strongly agree".

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of sociocultural adaptation

Items	Sample (n=55)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation
(1) I can understand Chinese jokes and humor	2.87	1.479
(2) I have a couple of Chinese friends	3.05	1.161
(3) I can make myself understood when interacting with Chinese	3.17	1.133
(4) I can use the transport system in Guangzhou without help	3.82	1.090
(5) I'm getting used to the Chinese pace of life	3.31	1.245
(6) I often go to social events/gathering/functions	3.22	1.166
(7) I worship in my usual way	3.58	1.066
(8) I'm getting used to the local food	3.53	1.086
(9) I follow the rules and regulations of China	4.22	.854
(10) I'm adapted to the local accommodation	3.33	.963
(11) I can deal with the people staring at me	2.96	1.414
(12) I can deal with people of high status	2.98	.913
(13) I accept/understand the local political system	3.13	.982

(14) I see things from the locals' world view	2.93	1.260
(15) I can deal with the climate	3.85	.848
Overall Performance	3.33	1.111

Thus, from the descriptive analysis of sociocultural adaptation status, it is clear that African merchants in Guangzhou are currently experiencing some prominent problems in adapting to Chinese society. Most African merchants surveyed for this paper reported their obedience in the Chinese laws and regulations, but there are some outstanding challenges when it comes to interaction with Chinese. From items (1), (11), (12), and (14), it can be found that African merchants generally have problems to understand and involve in Chinese culture.

Descriptive Analysis of the Performance of Intercultural Contact Factors

Descriptive Analysis of Factors Influencing Psychological Adaptation

Descriptive analyses on ethnic identity, perceived discrimination, and social support as selected intercultural contact factors for psychological adaptation are presented in this section.

Ethnic Identity. Measured on the 5-point Likert scale, the ethnic identity of African merchants is stronger with a higher score generated. As is shown in Table 5-4, the overall performance of this factor is 4.67 on average which falls into the range of "agree" and "strongly agree". The highest score was produced on the item "I have a lot of pride belonging to my own ethnic group". Therefore, it can be concluded that most of the African merchants strongly agree that they have an extremely strong sense of pride and attachment to their own ethnic group.

Perceived Discrimination. The scale of perceived discrimination produced an average mean of 4.17 on the 5-point Likert scale. As 4.17 falls between (4) "agree" to (5) "strongly agree", the result implies that African merchants generally think that they have been treated unfairly. Besides, the item "I am treated differently in social situations (metro; bus; taxi, they tend to keep a distance from me)" and "People have negative stereotypes about my ethnic culture and people" are scored 4.54 and 4.61, which are very close to "strongly agree". This indicates that deliberate distancing and negative stereotypes play a big role in perceived discrimination for African merchants in Guangzhou.

Table 5: Mean and standard deviation of factors influencing psychological adaptation

Scales	Items	Sample (n=55)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation
Ethnic Identity	(1) I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me	4.63	.216
	(2) I am active in organizations or social groups that include most members of my own ethnic group	4.29	.434
	(3) I have a lot of pride belonging to my own ethnic group	4.89	.466
	(4) I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group	4.86	.603
	Overall Performance	4.67	.429
Perceived Discrimination	(1) I am treated with less respect than other people.	3.85	.398
	(2) People act as if they are afraid of me.	4.28	.451
	(3) People act as if they think I am dishonest.	3.57	.387
	(4) People have negative stereotypes about my ethnic culture and people	4.54	.616
	(5) I am treated differently in social situations (metro; bus; taxi, they tend to keep a distance from me)	4.61	.197
	Overall Performance	4.17	.41
Social Support	(1) Chinese local community provides us opportunities to get connected with Chinese and make Chinese friends	2.31	1.275
	(2) I think that the local media reports about African merchants accelerated mutual understanding between us and the local people	2.24	1.232
	(3) I have Chinese friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows	2.95	1.224
	Outgroup Social Support	2.50	1.244
	(4) I get the emotional help, support and love I need from my family	3.60	1.082
	(5) I have friends from my own ethnic group to count on when I need help	3.56	.977
	(6) I got more social support from my own ethnic group	3.71	1.031
	Ingroup Social Support	3.62	1.030
	Overall Performance	3.06	1.137

Social Support. On the whole, the performance of social support has an average of 3.06, which ranges from (3) "neutral" to (4) "agree" on the 5-point Likert scale. This means that overall social support did play a positive, even though an obvious, role in facilitating psychological adaptation. However, when seen the social support from two perspectives, namely outgroup and ingroup social support, divided in the previous chapter, ingroup social support outplays the outgroup social support a lot. Performance of the social support that African merchants think that they have gained from their own ethnic group and family is rather good, with an average of 3.62, very close to (4) "agree". By contrast, in view of the outgroup social support, the mean score is 2.50 which ranges from "disagree" to "neutral". This means that African merchants do not think that they have got enough support from the host society, either Chinese friends, media or community. Specifically, scores are rather low on items "I think that the local media reports about African merchants accelerated

mutual understanding between us and the local people" and "Chinese local community provides us opportunities to get connected with Chinese and make Chinese friends".

Descriptive Analysis of Factors Influencing Sociocultural Adaptation

Descriptive analyses on factors, including social interaction, language use and proficiency and length of stay, are presented in this section. Means and standard deviations for each item are presented.

Social interaction. Measured on the 5-point-Likert scale, the overall performance of social interaction produced a mean score of 2.52, falling in the range between (2) "disagree" and (3) "neutral". Specifically, the item "I spend most of my free time with Chinese as opposed to those from my own country" scored the lowest, and " I have made friends with Chinese and spend time with them" scored the highest. Generally speaking, the situation of social interaction with Chinese people is unwell and this analysis also shows that African merchants in Guangzhou prefer to spend time with friends from their own ethnic group than with Chinese.

Table 6: Mean and standard deviation of factors influencing sociocultural adaptation

Scales	Items	Sample (n=55)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Interaction	(1) I frequently get together socially with Chinese	2.47	.951
	(2) I spend most of my free time with Chinese as opposed to those from my own country	2.33	1.155
	(3) I don't feel socially isolated among Chinese	2.56	1.397
	(4) I have made friends with Chinese and spend time with them	2.71	1.134
	Overall Performance	2.52	1.159
Language Use and Proficiency	(1) I can communicate my needs in an emergency by using Chinese	2.91	1.143
	(2) I understand and use the nonverbal cues of Chinese culture when I communicate with Chinese people	2.65	1.040
	(3) I can converse in Chinese in daily social situations (e.g. small chat)	3.29	.956
	(4) I can communicate in Chinese in practical, everyday situations (for example, price negotiation, banking, package delivering, etc.)	3.47	1.016
	(5) I understand most of what is said on Chinese television broadcasts	2.80	.970
	Overall Performance	3.02	1.025

Language Use and Proficiency. The overall performance of language use and proficiency generated a mean of 3.02, slightly higher than (3) "neutral". Generally speaking, African merchants have difficulties in understanding, using non-verbal clues, making clear of their needs in handling emergent situations or accessing local news in the host society. The biggest difficulty lies in the item "I understand and use the nonverbal cues of Chinese culture when I communicate with Chinese people", scored 2.65, and it is the least difficult for African merchants to communicate about

practical issues, such as price negotiation, banking, package delivering. Apparently, African merchants in Guangzhou, though acquire no or little Chinese, most of them can make themselves understood in exercising their business activities. This may correlate with their motivations to come to Guangzhou.

Length of Stay. To further visualize the feature of the length of stay, a histogram was presented. According to the descriptive analysis, most respondents have stayed in Guangzhou for either "6 months to 1 year" (41.8 %) or "More than 3 years" (34.5%). Surveyed African merchants who have stayed in Guangzhou for "1 to 3years" is the least (23.6%).

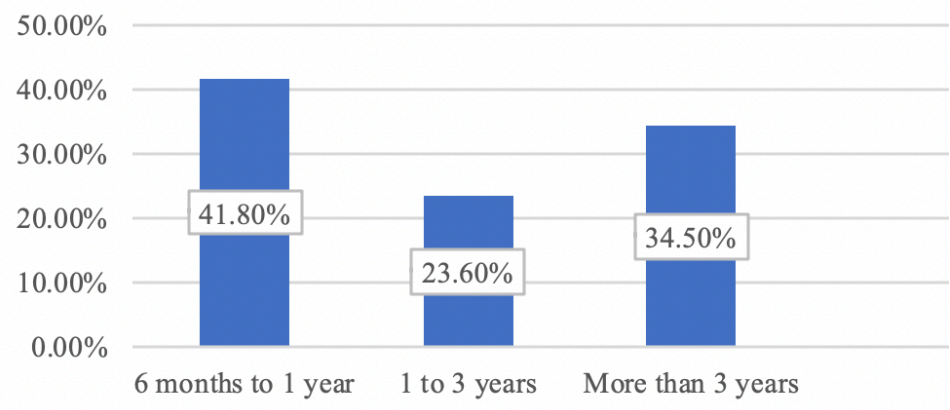

Figure 1: Distribution of length of stay

Descriptive Analysis of Demographic Characteristics

Four demographic variables, including marital status, location of spouse or partner, occupation and intent of coming to Guangzhou, are also selected to explore whether these variables influence acculturation status. In this section, this paper presented the distribution of each demographic variable and their mean differences in psychological and sociocultural adaptation.

Marital Status and Acculturation Status

Marital status. From Figure 5-2, it is known that respondents of the questionnaire are roughly half married and half not. Dominant groups of the respondents are African merchants who have married with Africans or those who have love relationships with people from their own country. Specifically, among the 49.1% married African merchants, 1 is married to Chinese. Among 41.8% African merchants with boy or girlfriend, 7.3% of African merchants reported having love relationships with Chinese. There are 5 out of 55 respondents are single.

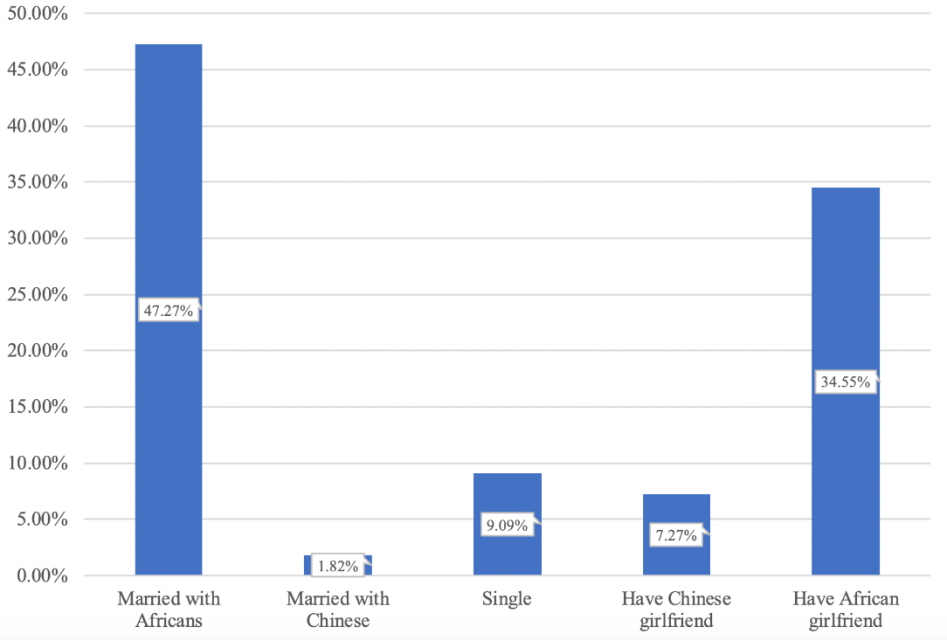

Figure 2: Distribution of marital status

Table 7: Mean and standard deviation of acculturation status by marital status

Marital status	Psychological adaptation		Sociocultural adaptation	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Married with Africans	3.244	1.052	3.295	.665
Married with Chinese	4	/	3.967	/
Single	3.3	1.309	3.647	.173
Have Chinese girlfriend	3.583	.957	3.867	.478
Have African girlfriend	3.439	.865	3.084	.820

The mean difference of acculturation status for African merchants with different marital status can be seen from Table 5-6. Marital or relationship status plays a role in acculturation status. Interrelations between African merchants and Chinese, either through marriage or a love relationship, tend to have better psychological and sociocultural adaptation than their contrasting groups. The highest mean scores for both the psychological adaptation (4) and sociocultural adaptation (3.967) come from the group that married with Chinese. On the 5-point Likert scale, these scores indicate that they have adapted well into Chinese society. The second highest mean scores were generated in the category of African merchants who have loving relationships with Chinese. Except for the good sociocultural adaptation (3.647) of those single African merchants, the acculturation situations psychologically and socioculturally for the other categories do not have more prominent differences.

Location of Spouse or Partner and Acculturation Status

Location of spouse or partner. According to Figure 5-3, it can be seen that the dominant group occupies 69.09% are African merchants whose loved ones are away in Africa, and 21.82% of respondents have their loved ones together with them in Guangzhou. Of the 55 respondents, 1 is married with Chinese and 11 have Chinese boy or girlfriend.

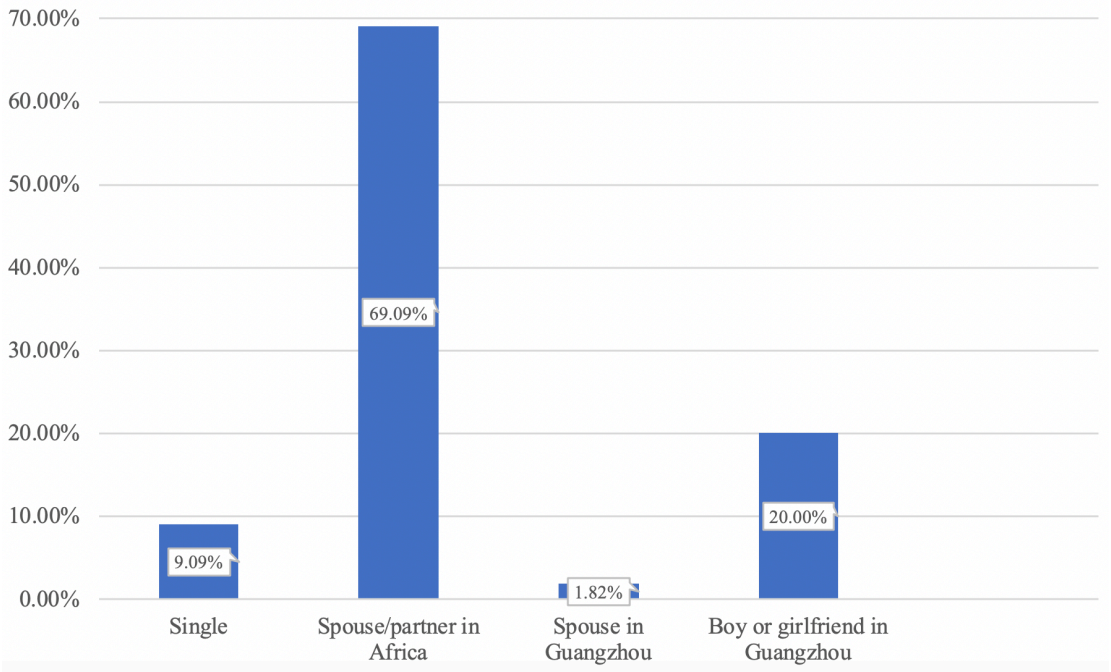

Figure 3: Distribution of spouse or partner's location

When seen from Table 5-7, it is clear that mean scores for both psychological and sociocultural adaptation status of African merchants with spouse or partner in Guangzhou are slightly higher than those with spouse or partner in Africa. However, the differences are too negligible to support that there are relationships between this factor and acculturation status.

Table 8: Mean and standard deviation of acculturation status by the location of spouse or partner

Spouse/Partner's location	Psychological adaptation		Sociocultural adaptation	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Africa	3.320	.985	3.209	.745
Guangzhou	3.486	.895	3.406	.643

Occupation and Acculturation Status

Occupation. The occupation of African merchants was divided into three categories, namely, business owners, contractors, and traveling merchants. As is seen in Figure 5-4, most respondents are traveling business people in Guangzhou and they occupied 67.27% of the total respondents. 20% of respondents are working under indefinite contracts, followed by 12.73% company owners.

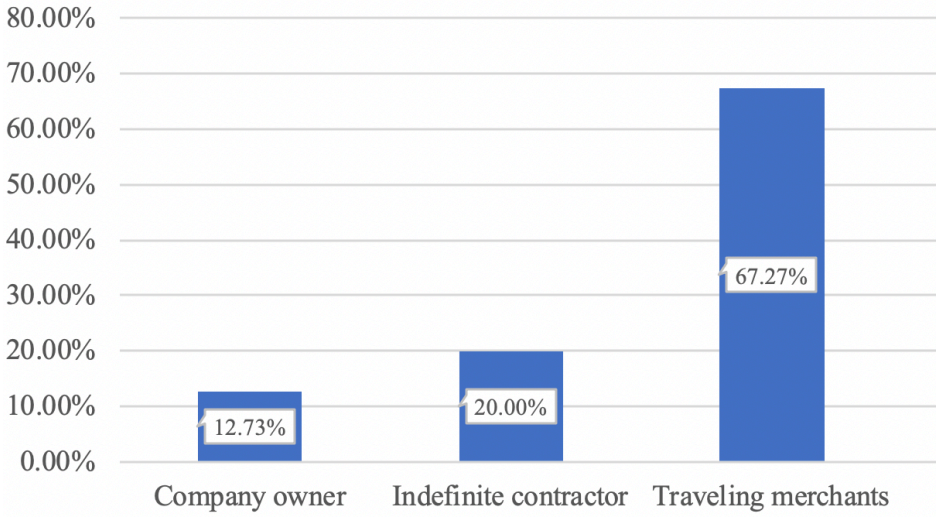

Figure 4: Distribution of occupation

From Table 5-8, it can be seen that the psychological adaptation status of company owners has the highest mean score, 3.762, which is close to (4) "agree". Apart from this mean that stood out, mean scores for psychological adaptation of indefinite contractors and traveling business people do not show significant differences, so are the mean scores for sociocultural adaptation for all other categories of African merchants.

Table 9: Mean and standard deviation of acculturation status by occupation

Occupation	Psychological adaptation		Sociocultural adaptation	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Company owner	3.762	.584	3.452	.471
Indefinite contractor	3.209	1.068	3.461	.749
Traveling businessman	3.356	1.031	3.332	.744

Intent of Coming to Guangzhou and Acculturation Status

Intent of coming. It is rather clear the majority of the African merchants coming to Guangzhou are business-oriented, making up 56.36% of the respondents. For the other three categories, either having an interest in Chinese culture, aiming to accumulate cross-cultural experience, or aiming to settle down in Guangzhou, they occupy the same 14.55% of the respondents.

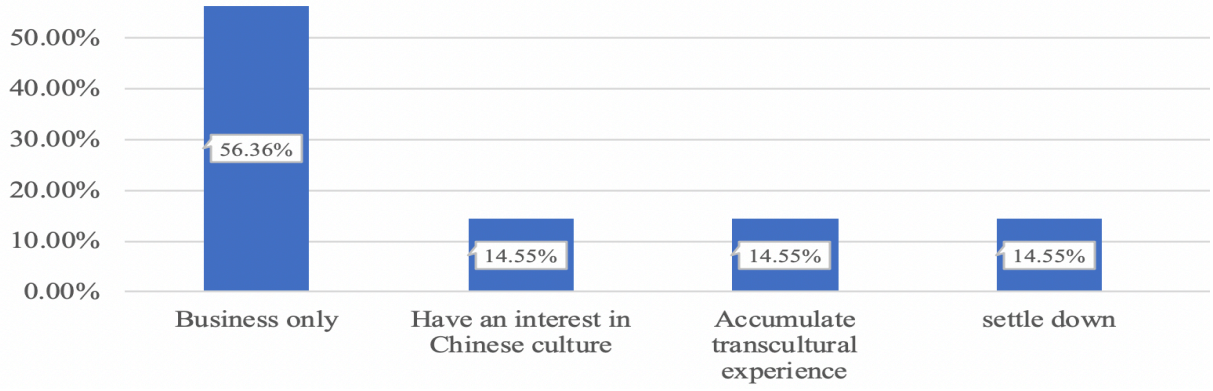

Figure 5: Distribution of intent of coming to Guangzhou

From Table 5-9, it can be seen that African merchants who reported their reasons for coming to Guangzhou because of their interest in Chinese culture tend to have the best psychological and sociocultural adaptation situation compared with the African merchants from the other three categories. The lowest mean scores of both psychological and sociocultural adaptations are all generated from the category of African merchants who have come to Guangzhou only driven by business activities. In addition, there is no significant difference in psychological and sociocultural adaptation situation concerning those who want to accumulate overseas working experience and those who aim to settle down.

Table 10: Mean and standard deviation of acculturation status by intent

Intent of coming	Psychological adaptation		Sociocultural adaptation	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Business only	3.258	1.061	3.075	.767
Have interest in Chinese culture	3.688	.857	3.842	.332
Accumulate trans-cultural experience	3.333	.787	3.383	.544
Settle down	3.417	1.027	3.283	.801

Correlation Analysis between Acculturation Status and Intercultural Contact Factors

In this section, correlations between the six selected intercultural contact factors and the two dimensions acculturation were presented. To identify the relationship between acculturation status and intercultural contact factors, correlations were conducted between each dimension and its designated factors. In addition, to explore the interrelation and distinction of the two dimensions, correlations between each dimension and the other three factors were also analyzed.

The correlation analyses were conducted through SPSS 25.0. There are two things to clarify concerning the correlation results. Firstly, when the significance level is lower than .01, variables have a statistically significant relationship. Secondly, ranging from -1 to +1, the higher the absolute value of the Pearson coefficient is, the stronger correlation variables have with each other. Specifically, the magnitude over .7 and .9 indicates that variables are highly correlated; the magnitude between .3 and .7 indicates that variables are correlated; a magnitude less than .3 indicates that variables have little if any (linear) correlation. If the coefficient is negative, the variables are negatively correlated and if the coefficient is positive, the variables are positively correlated.

Correlation Analysis between Psychological Adaptation and Intercultural Contact Factors

In this section, correlations between psychological adaptation and six intercultural contact factors are presented, as is shown in Table 5-7.

Firstly, the correlations between psychological adaptation and its influencing factors, including ethnic identity, perceived discrimination and social support, were analyzed. Secondly, the correlations between psychological adaptation and social interaction, language use and proficiency, and length of stay were also given.

With a coefficient of .452 and a significance level of .001, the correlation between psychological adaptation and ethnic identity of African merchants in Guangzhou is statistically significant at the

significance level of .01 and they have a positive correlation. This indicates that African merchants tend to have better psychological adaptation when the sense of ethnic identity is stronger.

Table 3-10 Correlations between psychological adaptation and intercultural contact factors

Intercultural contact factor		Psychological adaptation	
		Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Ethnic identity		.452**	.001
Perceived discrimination		-.672**	.000
Social support		.439**	.001
	Ingroup social support	.350**	.003
	Outgroup social support	.390**	.009
Social interaction		.444**	.001
Language use and proficiency		.416**	.002
Length of stay		.081	.558

Note: n=55; Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

For the correlation relationship between perceived discrimination and psychological adaptation, the Pearson coefficient is negative with the largest absolute value of .672 among the three intercultural contact factors. Coupled with a significance level of .000, perceived discrimination is proved to be a statistically significant and negative predictor for psychological adaptation at the significance level of 0.01. To be specific, perceived discrimination has the strongest correlation with psychological adaptation and the correlation is negative. The more discrimination African merchants in Guangzhou perceived to have, the worse their psychological adaptation will be.

To figure out how social support contributed to psychological adaptation, this factor was further classified into two categories. That is to say, except for the overall social support, ingroup social support and outgroup social support were also analyzed separately. On the whole, social support has a statistically significant positive relationship with psychological adaptation with its Pearson coefficient of .439. When seen in a more micro perspective, outgroup social support (with a Pearson coefficient of .390) has a stronger correlation than ingroup social support (with a Pearson coefficient of .350) with psychological adaptation.

Additionally, the correlations between psychological adaptation and the other three variables are provided. At the significance level of 0.01, social interaction, language use and proficiency have a statistically significant relationship with psychological adaptation, while the length of stay is not. With a Pearson coefficient of .444, social interaction is positively correlated with psychological adaptation, even stronger than social support. This implies that when African merchants have more interaction with the local society, they will have better psychological adaptation.

Likewise, language use and proficiency are also proved to have a positive correlation with psychological adaptation as indicated by the Pearson coefficient of .416. This indicates that a better grasp of Chinese language and communication skills helps psychological adaptation.

By contrast, the length of stay is not correlated with the status of psychological adaptation, as is demonstrated by a coefficient of .081 and a significance level greater than 0.01.

Correlation Analysis between Sociocultural Adaptation and Intercultural Contact Factors

In this part, the Pearson correlation coefficients between sociocultural adaptation and intercultural contact factors are presented, as is shown in Table 5-8. Firstly, correlations between sociocultural adaptation and its influencing factors, including social interaction, language use and proficiency, and length of stay were analyzed. Secondly, to examine whether the sociocultural adaptation of African merchants is also correlated with the other three variables, the correlation coefficients were also provided.

Correlation analysis conducted between social interaction and sociocultural adaptation shows a coefficient of .486 and a significance level of .000. This means that social interaction and sociocultural adaptation enjoy a statistically significant and positive relationship at the significance level of .01. This means that the more African merchants interact with Chinese, the better they acculturate socioculturally.

Table 11: Correlations between sociocultural adaptation and intercultural contact factors

Intercultural contact factor		Sociocultural adaptation	
		Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Social interaction		.486**	.000
Language use and proficiency		.741**	.000
Length of stay		.406	.000
Ethnic identity		.022	.875
Perceived discrimination		-.495**	.000
Social support		.436**	.003
	Ingroup social support	.374**	.005
	Outgroup social support	.405**	.001

Note: n = 55; Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Language use and proficiency proves to be highly correlated with sociocultural adaptation at the significance level of .01. The coefficient of .741 and the significance level of .000 mean that language use and proficiency has a strong and positive influence on sociocultural adaptation. That is to say, good Chinese language ability is conducive to the sociocultural adaptation of African merchants in Guangzhou.

Length of stay in Guangzhou has a positive correlation with sociocultural adaptation at the significance level of .01 with a coefficient of .406 and a significance level of .000. This means that the longer African merchants stay in Guangzhou, the better they can acculturate in the socio-cultural aspect.

Concerning the relationships between sociocultural adaptation and the other three intercultural contact factors, correlation analyses demonstrated that at the significance level of .01, perceived discrimination has a statistically significant and negative relationship with psychological adaptation. Meanwhile, ethnic identity and social support do not have obvious correlations with this sociocultural adaptation.

For ethnic identity, the Pearson correlation coefficient is .022, far less than .3 and it has a significance level greater than .01. Therefore, ethnic identity is not correlated with sociocultural adaptation.

Perceived discrimination has a negative relationship with sociocultural adaptation. With the absolute value .495 of the Pearson coefficient, it has an even stronger correlation with sociocultural adaptation than the length of stay. Clearly, it implies that African merchants in Guangzhou who think that they have been more discriminated against by the Chinese society will have worse sociocultural adaptation than those who perceived that they have been less discriminated against.

The correlation coefficient of social support and sociocultural adaption is .436, with a significance level less than .01. This means that sociocultural adaptation is positively correlated with social support. In addition, the correlation coefficient for outgroup social support is .450, which is larger than that of ingroup social support. This indicates that outgroup social support is more strongly correlated with sociocultural adaptation than ingroup social support.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Overall Acculturation Status of African Merchants in Guangzhou

Psychological Adaptation Status of African Merchants in Guangzhou

Findings on the psychological adaptation of African merchants in Guangzhou are consistent with previous studies. The dimension, psychological adaptation, was measured by life satisfaction and self-esteem. With a mean score of 3.31 on the 5-point Likert scale, the psychological adaptation status of African merchants in Guangzhou was examined to be relatively well. Nonetheless, feelings of incapability and lack of respect are obvious obstacles for better psychological adaptation.

On the whole, African merchants are satisfied with their lives in Guangzhou and have confidence in their careers. However, they do not show enough confidence in dealing with big changes and think that they have not been treated with due respect in Guangzhou.

Sociocultural Adaptation Status of African Merchants in Guangzhou

The sociocultural dimension of acculturation was measure by 15 items adapted from the sociocultural adaptation scale developed by Ward and Kennedy (1999). With a mean score of 3.33 on the 5-point Likert scale, the respondents of African merchants in Guangzhou demonstrated a relatively good status of sociocultural adaptation. Nonetheless,it can be seen that African merchants have adapted to Chinese society well in some respects while encountered many obvious problems in others. In detail, the results showed that African merchants have adapted well to the laws and regulations, transportation and climate in Guangzhou. By contrast, they experience challenges in aspects that involve interaction with Chinese.

Correlations between Acculturation Status and Intercultural Contact Factors

Correlations between Psychological Adaptation and Intercultural Contact Factors

With respect to the correlations between intercultural contact factors and psychological adaptation, four factors were found to be correlated. Findings in this paper are consistent with the findings of Ward (1996). Particularly, ethnic identity, perceived discrimination and social support are strongly correlated with the status of psychological adaptation. This study of African merchants in Guangzhou also proved that social interaction and language use and proficiency also have

significant positive correlations with psychological adaptation. Details of the correlation results are summarized in Table 4-1.

Ethnic identity was found to have correlations different from Ward and Berry's findings which imply that ethnic identity contributes to poor psychological adaptation (Berry et al., 2006; Phinney et al., 2001). In this paper, ethnic identity was proved to be positively and significantly related to psychological adaptation. No doubt, this positive correlation has allies in other previous studies. For instance, Liebkind (2001) found that immigrants' pride in their ethnic-cultural group and solidarity can be a way of dealing with negative attitudes. A more suitable explanation for this positive correlation may derive from the statement that a strong sense of ethnic identity generates security and availability of support which is conducive to a healthy psychological adaptation (Liebkind, 2001; Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Kohatsu, 1997).

Table 12: Correlation summary for psychological adaptation and intercultural contact factors

PA	Ranking of correlation strength					
	Perceived discrimination	Ethnic identity	Social interaction	Social support	Language use and proficiency	Length of stay
	-.672	.452	.444	.439	.416	/

Note: / = no correlation; + = positive correlation; - = negative correlation

A consistent finding is that perceived discrimination negatively and significantly related to psychological adaptation (Berry et al., 2006; Ataca & Berry, 2002; Ward, 1996; Vedder et al., 2006). In this paper, perceived discrimination stood out as the factor that has the strongest correlation with psychological adaptation. This result suggests that the more discrimination African merchants perceived that they have received, the less likely they have good psychological adaptation.

In line with that of Ward (1999), social support was proved to be a conducive factor to psychological adaptation with a coefficient of .439. What worth mentioning is that the present paper divided this factor into two aspects, namely, ingroup social support (support that comes from their own ethnic group) and outgroup support (support comes from Chinese society). As is in Table 5-7. Ingroup and social support both have statistically significant and positive relationships with psychological adaptation. What's more, outgroup social support was proved to have a stronger correlation with psychological adaptation than ingroup social support. On balance, the more social support resources African merchants have, the better they adapt on the psychological level. However, from the descriptive analysis presented in Table 5-4, this paper found that African merchants do not think that they have enough outgroup social support from Chinese society. Therefore, to promote better psychological adaptation, it is critical that local government, community, media and local Chinese need to offer more support.

Consistent with previous studies, social interaction has a positive influence on psychological adaptation. Though social interaction is a factor classified by Ward to influence sociocultural adaptation, Zlobina et al. (2006) found that closer supportive relationships with members of the receiving society lessened the amount of difficulty in the receiving culture. By contrast, withdrawal from active contact with the host society will lead to increased self-denial and avoidance (Stevens et al., 2007). Therefore, this positive correlation is sound and valid.

Language use and proficiency was discovered to have a positive relationship with psychological adaptation. Though this factor also falls into the category influencing sociocultural adaptation (Ward, 1996), it is not surprising at all to have this finding. For instance, studies showed that a better understanding of the host language facilitates contact with natives, so as to expand social networks and resources (e.g. Choi and Thomas, 2009; Padilla and Perez, 2003; Remennick, 2003). The Chinese language ability of African merchants in Guangzhou can help them to introduce more social support resources and increase social interaction with Chinese. Thus, it is reasonable that language ability leads to better psychological adaptation.

Additionally, it is found that the length of stay is not related to the status of psychological adaptation.

Correlations between Sociocultural Adaptation and Intercultural Contact Factors

The correlation analysis done on intercultural contact factors and sociocultural adaptation found that five factors are significantly correlated with sociocultural adaptation. Results are consistent with Ward's (1996) findings. Social interaction, language use and proficiency, and length of stay are proved to be significantly related to sociocultural adaptation. In addition, perceived discrimination and ingroup social support also correlate significantly with sociocultural adaptation. To be specific, the present study found that correlation strength of sociocultural adaptation and intercultural contact factors can be ranked as is shown in Table 6-2.

Results for language use and proficiency concord to Ward & Kennedy's (1999) discovery which reported that the better use of host language, the easier the sociocultural adaptation process will be. In this paper, language use and proficiency is proved to have the strongest positive correlation with sociocultural adaptation. Language use and proficiency is closely related to social interaction efficiency, cultural learning ability, social network expansion and resources exploration (Choi and Thomas 2009; Padilla and Perez 2003; Remennick 2003), proficiency in the host-language is a tool that facilitates interpersonal relations and positively related to sociocultural adaptation (Masgoret & Ward. 2006). Therefore, it is an important tool for African merchants to explore more extensively into the Chinese culture, communicate with Chinese efficiently and accurately, reduce mutual misunderstandings, and achieve a better sociocultural adaptation in Guangzhou.

Table 13: Correlation summary for sociocultural adaptation and intercultural contact factors

SCA	Ranking of correlation strength					
	Language use and proficiency	Perceived discrimination	Social interaction	Length of stay	Social support	Ethnic identity
	.741	-.495	.486	.406	.374	/

Note: / = no correlation; + = positive correlation; - = negative correlation

Congruent with the previous literature, social interaction is an important predictor of sociocultural adaptation. This indicates that the more African merchants interact with Chinese society, the better they adapt t the sociocultural aspect. This result is also Ataca & Berry (2002) reported that outgroup interaction offers opportunities for cultural learning and culture-specific skills acquisition, and an increase in host cultural knowledge can lessen the difficulties in adapting to the receiving country culture (Ward & Searle, 1991; Stevens et al., 2007).

Regarding the length of stay in Guangzhou of African merchants, the correlation results confirmed that sociocultural adapting difficulty decreases over time. The results show consistency with the research on social skill acquisition (Ward et al., 2001; Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

Consistent with previous studies, perceived discrimination was found to have a significantly negative correlation with sociocultural adaptation. Ward (1996) categorized perceived discrimination as one of the most significant predictors for psychological adaptation, its negative influence on sociocultural adaptation has been examined and proved in many previous studies. For example, Phnney et al. (2006) concluded that, under the pressure from perceived discrimination, individuals are less likely to have close involvement with the receiving society and are more inclined to choose exclusion and marginalization. In addition, when taking the influence of perceived discrimination on psychological and sociocultural adaptation together, it is easy to show that perceived discrimination may directly impact psychological adaptation and thus caused poor sociocultural adaptation (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2003; Liebkind et al., 2004; Vedder et al., 2006; Ataca & Berry, 2002). Therefore, this negative correlation is valid and persuasive.

Correlation results showed that social support is positively correlated with sociocultural adaptation. This can be supported by previous studies that found that social support provides emotional and physical support for immigrants in coping with external challenges (Wierzbicki, 2004; Wong & Mock, 1997). Besides, outgroup social support was found to have a stronger influence than ingroup social support on the sociocultural adaptation of African merchants. According to the descriptive analysis presented in Table 5-4, outgroup social support for African merchants in Guangzhou is lacking. Since outgroup social support comes from local government, media and local people of the host society, this finding suggests that the role of local government, media and local people of the host society should be given full play in order to help African merchants adapt socioculturally to the Chinese society.

In addition, ethnic identity and outgroup social support do not show clear relationships with sociocultural adaptation.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

Part I Demographics

1. Length of stay in Guangzhou

a) 6 months to 1 year b) 1-3years c) More than 3 years

2. Marital Status

a) Married with Africans b) Married with Chinese c) Single d) Have Chinese girlfriend e) Have African girlfriend

3. With Spouse/girlfriend in Guangzhou or Africa?

a) Guangzhou b) Africa

4. Occupation

a) Company owner b) Workers c) Traveling businessman

5. Intent of coming to Guangzhou

a) Business only b) Settle down c) Accumulating trans-cultural experience

Part II Acculturation Assessment

Please use the number below to indicate your extent of agreement or disagreement with the following statement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Section A: Psychological Adaptation

(1) I don't often feel downhearted and blue
(2) I have been satisfied or pleased with my personal life
(3) I have felt I could easily handle or cope with any serious problems or major change in my life
(4) I feel that I'm a person of worth
(5) I wish I had more respect for myself
(6) I take a positive attitude toward myself

Section B: Sociocultural Adaptation

(1) I can understand Chinese jokes and humor
(2) I have couple of Chinese friends
(3) I can make myself understood when interacting with Chinese
(4) I can use the transport system in Guangzhou without help
(5) I'm getting used to the Chinese pace of life
(6) I often go to social events/gathering/functions
(7) I worship in my usual way
(8) I'm getting used to the local food
(9) I follow the rules and regulations of China
(10) I'm adapted to the local accommodation
(11) I can deal with the people staring at me
(12) I can deal with people of high status
(13) I accept/understand the local political system
(14) I see things from the locals' world view
(15) I can deal with the climate

Part III Performance on Intercultural Contact Factors

Section A: Ethnic Identity

(1) I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.
(2) I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.
(3) I have a lot of pride belonging to my own ethnic group.
(4) I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.

Section B: Perceived Discrimination

(1) I am treated with less respect than other people.
(2) People act as if they are afraid of me.
(3) People act as if they think I am dishonest.

(4) People have negative stereotypes about my ethnic culture and people
(5) I am treated differently in social situations (metro; bus; taxi, they tend to keep distance from me)

Section C: Social Support Scale

(1) Chinese local community provides us opportunities to get connected with Chinese and make Chinese friends.
(2) I think that the local media reports about African businessmen accelerated mutual understanding between us and the local people.
(3) I have Chinese friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.
(4) I got most social support from my own ethnic group
(5) I get the emotional help, support and love I need from my family.
(6) I have friends from my own ethnic group to count on when I need help.

Section D: Social Interaction Scale

(1) I frequently get together socially with Chinese.
(2) I spend most of my free time with Chinese as opposed to those from my own country.
(3) I don't feel socially isolated among Chinese.
(4) I have made friends with Chinese and spend time with them.

Section E: Communication Scale

(1) I can communicate my needs in an emergency situation by using Chinese.
(2) I understand and use the nonverbal cues of Chinese culture when I communicate with Chinese/African people.
(3) I can converse in Chinese in daily social situations (e.g. small chat).
(4) I can communicate in Chinese in practical, everyday situations (for example, shopping, banking, the post office, etc.).
(5) I understand most of what is said on Chinese television broadcasts.