

From policy support to market success: Public engagement as a key mechanism in strengthening China's indigenous music industry



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 16 March 2026

Received in revised form

3 July 2026

Accepted 1 August 2026

Keywords:

Cultural policy

Indigenous music

Public engagement

Media coverage

Creative industries

ABSTRACT

This study examines the structural determinants of indigenous music success in China using a quantitative approach based on cultural policy and creative industries frameworks. Focusing on Yibin City, Sichuan Province, it investigates how Cultural Policy Strength, Public Funding, and Media Coverage are associated with the Success of Indigenous Music in the Industry, with Public Engagement serving as a mediating mechanism. Data were collected from 360 respondents through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results provide moderate support for the proposed relationships, showing that cultural policy, funding, and media coverage are positively associated with industry outcomes both directly and indirectly through public engagement. Among the variables examined, Public Engagement has the strongest association with industry success, highlighting the importance of audience participation and sustained interaction in improving market visibility and performance. The mediation results suggest that structural support mechanisms are more effective when they promote meaningful public engagement with indigenous music rather than relying only on top-down interventions. Overall, the findings suggest that policy, funding, and media strategies should adopt more engagement-oriented approaches to improve the long-term visibility and sustainability of indigenous music in China, while recognizing that additional social and contextual factors may also influence these relationships.

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1. Introduction

Indigenous music is a vital expression of cultural heritage, collective memory, and identity for ethnic minority communities, carrying intangible traditions transmitted across generations. In a rapidly globalizing and digital era, however, many indigenous musical forms confront significant challenges: marginalization, the risk of cultural dilution, insufficient institutional support, and limited access to broader audiences (Lewy and Brabec, 2023; Simatupang et al., 2025). In China, home to a wealth of ethnic diversity and musical traditions, government and cultural institutions have increasingly recognized the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH), issuing policies, allocating funding, and establishing

infrastructure to protect and promote traditional music (Boyu et al., 2015). Nevertheless, despite such efforts, the commercial viability and industry-level success of indigenous music remain inconsistent across ethnic groups and regions (Li, 2024).

Recent scholarship highlights that protecting traditional music requires more than symbolic heritage status: it demands an integrated ecosystem where policy, funding, media exposure, and public engagement converge to create sustainable pathways for heritage music to thrive (Grant, 2015). For example, the rise of the internet and digital platforms has expanded opportunities for traditional music to reach broader and younger audiences, offering new channels for cultural dissemination beyond local boundaries (Xie, 2024). At the same time, consistent and equitable public funding, institutional backing, and media visibility are critical for maintaining both the authenticity and viability of these musical traditions (Liang et al., 2024). Public engagement, measured by attendance at performances, digital interactions, and consumer behavior, emerges as a key mediator that translates structural support into real-world visibility and

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<https://doi.org/10.21833/ijaas.2026.07.023>

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success. However, empirical studies remain fragmented. Many focus narrowly on legal frameworks or heritage designation; others explore media representation or community-level transmission, but seldom integrate these dimensions into a unified, quantifiable model. There is a notable absence of research that structurally links cultural policy strength, public funding, media coverage, and public engagement to measurable industry-level outcomes for indigenous music. As such, the current literature lacks a comprehensive, evidence-based framework for understanding how these factors jointly influence the success of indigenous music in contemporary markets, particularly in China's rapidly evolving cultural and digital landscape (Lim and Zhang, 2023). This constitutes a significant research gap that limits policymakers' and cultural stakeholders' ability to design interventions that support sustainable heritage-based music industries. To address this gap, this study proposes and tests a structural equation model in which Cultural Policy Strength (CPS), Public Funding (PF), and Media Coverage (MC) serve as exogenous predictors, Public Engagement (PE) functions as a mediating variable, and Success of Indigenous Music in the Industry (SIMI) is the outcome construct. By employing a quantitative research design with a sample drawn from multiple, culturally distinct Chinese cities, the study aims to capture diversity in ethnic composition, policy environment, and market conditions, yielding empirical evidence on how structural supports and public dynamics combine to influence the success of indigenous music.

The objectives of this research are threefold: (1) to assess the effects of CPS, PF, and MC on public engagement with indigenous music; (2) to examine the direct and indirect (via PE) effects of these structural factors on SIMI; and (3) to validate a comprehensive measurement and structural model that integrates policy, funding, media, engagement, and industry-level performance of indigenous music in China. Achieving these objectives will contribute to the academic literature by offering a holistic, empirically validated framework, expanding beyond the fragmented perspectives prevalent in prior research, and by quantifying relationships that historically have been examined qualitatively or in isolation.

The contributions of this study are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it fills a notable gap by operationalizing and modeling the complex interplay between policy, funding, media exposure, public engagement, and market success within the context of cultural heritage music. It extends understanding of how intangible cultural heritage can transition into viable creative industries under supportive ecosystems. In practice, the findings can inform policymakers, cultural institutions, media stakeholders, and funding agencies about which levers, legal frameworks, resource allocation, media outreach, and public engagement strategies are most effective in promoting the sustainability and success of

indigenous music. This evidence-based insight can guide the design of culturally sensitive policies and funding programs, media strategies, and community-engagement initiatives to support heritage music in China. In sum, this study offers a comprehensive, data-driven investigation into the factors driving the success of indigenous music in contemporary China. By integrating multiple structural and social dimensions into a single model, it aims to produce findings that are both academically robust and practically relevant, potentially influencing cultural policy, heritage preservation, and the development of the creative industries for indigenous music traditions.

2. Literature review

Cultural and creative sectors, including indigenous music, operate at the nexus of culture, economy, and public policy, and have increasingly become focal points for research into how socio-cultural value is created, transmitted, and sustained (Belfiore, 2020). Cultural policy, broadly understood as the set of formal strategies and regulatory frameworks that shape cultural production, distribution, and consumption, has been shown to influence how creative sectors function and how cultural identities are recognized, contested, or reinterpreted (Wyatt and Trevena, 2021). In the context of indigenous music, which is both a cultural heritage and a creative industry, cultural policy plays an essential role in legitimizing artistic practice, protecting intangible heritage, and providing the institutional scaffolding that enables cultural expressions to persist and evolve (Li, 2024). Policies that offer legal protections, institutional support, and coordinated promotion can significantly influence the vitality of heritage arts. For example, national frameworks that recognize Indigenous cultural expressions as integral to national identity and allocate resources to their transmission have been documented as strengthening community resilience and cultural transmission (Cai, 2024; Chen et al., 2024). These initiatives not only preserve tradition but also embed cultural practice within broader socio-economic agendas, revealing the transformative potential of well-designed cultural policy on sectors such as music (Gwerevende and Mthombeni, 2023).

Complementing policy frameworks, public funding (PF) has been widely recognized as a critical structural determinant in the sustainability of non-commercial art forms, including Indigenous music (Chen and Harrison, 2024). Research on public funding mechanisms, especially in Canada, highlights how institutional grants, fellowships, and cultural councils help preserve Indigenous artistic traditions and ensure that cultural practitioners can sustain their work without undue reliance on market pressures (Doerer, 2018). These funding strategies are often accompanied by programs designed to enhance professional development, training, and

community-based cultural activities, suggesting that the adequacy, accessibility, and strategic allocation of resources are vital to enabling Indigenous music to thrive both culturally and economically (Chen and Harrison, 2024; Liang et al., 2024).

Media coverage (MC) has emerged as another key structural dimension shaping cultural visibility and public discourse (Zaklama, 2025). The cultural policy domain increasingly intersects with media policy as governments and cultural institutions recognize that broadcast and digital platforms, including television, radio, streaming platforms, and social media, play a significant role in how cultural productions are disseminated, contested, and consumed (Wright, 2022). Media coverage can amplify Indigenous voices, counter stereotypes, and provide platforms for broader public appreciation (Ross, 2025), while digital participation can facilitate cultural transmission and identity affirmation among diaspora communities (Wang, 2024). These insights align with broader cultural-economic research, which shows that media engagement significantly contributes to audience building and market reach for creative outputs (Snowball et al., 2022). Despite these structural enablers, public engagement (PE), understood as both participatory behavior and cultural consumption, is increasingly viewed as the proximate mechanism through which policy, funding, and media exposure translate into tangible cultural outcomes. Engagement encompasses event attendance, participation in educational or community programs, digital interactions, and purchasing behavior. High levels of engagement not only indicate public interest and support for cultural products but also signal cultural vitality, social cohesion, and economic participation (Snowball et al., 2022). Scholars argue that engagement reflects the realignment of cultural sectors with evolving audience practices; as participatory culture grows, audiences become co-creators, advocates, and consumers, blurring boundaries between production and consumption (Lin, 2025; Snowball et al., 2022).

Finally, success in the cultural industries (SIMI) has been conceptualized not only in economic terms, such as revenue generation, market share, and industry sustainability, but also as symbolic success, including public recognition, cultural prestige, and representation in mainstream cultural narratives (Sanjuán, 2025). The literature highlights that structural support and active public engagement are often associated with greater commercial viability and broader cultural recognition. Studies of creative sectors underscore that when heritage practices receive sustained policy backing, integrated funding, and enhanced media exposure, they are more likely to achieve broader audiences and economic returns, reinforcing the notion that cultural success is contingent on the synergy between structure and participation (He et al., 2022; Hurova et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, despite progress in understanding individual dimensions of cultural ecosystems, research remains fragmented. Very few studies have simultaneously examined the combined effects of

cultural policy strength, public funding, media visibility, and public engagement on measurable industry outcomes, particularly in non-Western cultural contexts (Anzel et al., 2023). This gap limits policymakers' and cultural stakeholders' ability to design holistic support systems that foster sustainable cultural and economic development for indigenous music traditions. Addressing this gap requires an integrated empirical model that assesses not only direct structural effects but also the mediated pathways through which these factors influence cultural success indicators. To advance this integrated understanding, the present study proposes a structural framework in which cultural policy strength, public funding, and media coverage serve as exogenous predictors; public engagement functions as a mediator; and indigenous music industry success is the endogenous outcome. Drawing from international research on cultural policy, creative industries, and audience engagement, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: Cultural Policy Strength positively influences Public Engagement.

H2: Cultural Policy Strength positively influences the Success of Indigenous Music in the Industry.

H3: Public Funding positively influences Public Engagement.

H4: Public Funding positively influences the Success of Indigenous Music in the Industry.

H5: Media Coverage positively influences Public Engagement.

H6: Media Coverage positively influences the Success of Indigenous Music in the Industry.

H7: Public Engagement positively influences the Success of Indigenous Music in the Industry.

H8: Cultural Policy Strength has an indirect effect on the success of Indigenous Music in the Industry via Public Engagement.

H9: Public Funding has an indirect effect on the success of Indigenous Music in the Industry via Public Engagement.

H10: Media Coverage has an indirect effect on the success of Indigenous Music in the Industry via Public Engagement.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional research design using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine the relationships among CPS, PF, MC, PE, and SIMI. This design is suited for predictive modeling and theory development in contexts with complex, multivariate interactions (Hair et al., 2016). PLS-SEM is particularly advantageous in social science research when the goal is to explain variance in key target constructs and when theoretical development is still in progress (Sarstedt et al., 2022). It accommodates both formative and reflective

measurement models. It does not impose normality assumptions, making it ideal for real-world data that may be skewed or ordinal, such as Likert-scale survey responses. Furthermore, it supports the simultaneous testing of multiple dependent relationships, allowing for the assessment of mediation effects and indirect paths among constructs. Given the exploratory nature of the study and the limited prior empirical models on indigenous music policy and market outcomes in China, PLS-SEM offers the flexibility and robustness needed to uncover nuanced relationships among the variables of interest.

3.2. Population and sampling

This study employs a multi-stage random sampling method to select participants from the target population in Yibin City, Sichuan Province, China. Yibin was purposively selected as the sole study area due to its rich indigenous music heritage and its strong association with Yi ethnic cultural traditions, which continue to play a significant role in local cultural life. The city provides a context in which traditional music practices coexist with evolving cultural policies and market influences, making it a suitable site for examining the structural factors shaping indigenous music development. Compared to larger metropolitan cities such as Chengdu or Chongqing, where cultural industries are more commercialized and increasingly shaped by global creative economy dynamics, Yibin retains stronger links to community-based cultural practices and indigenous musical traditions. At the same time, unlike more remote rural areas, which often face constraints on institutional capacity and cultural policy implementation, Yibin benefits from active local government engagement in cultural preservation and promotion. This dual positioning, between cultural authenticity and institutional support, makes Yibin an analytically valuable case for examining how policy, funding, media exposure, and public engagement interact to influence the success of indigenous music. To enhance representativeness, a multi-stage sampling strategy was implemented. In the first stage, sampling clusters were identified based on locations and settings where engagement with indigenous music is most prominent, including cultural institutions, community cultural centers, public festivals, performance venues, and music education facilities within Yibin. In the second stage, participants were randomly selected from these clusters to ensure a balanced and unbiased sample across different forms of cultural participation. The final sample comprised 360 respondents, exceeding the minimum sample size recommended for robust structural equation modeling (SEM). According to [Comrey and Lee \(1992\)](#), a sample size between 300 and 500 is considered “good” to “very good” for SEM applications, while [Hair et al. \(2016\)](#) suggested that samples above 200 provide sufficient statistical power for estimating complex multivariate

relationships. The sample size, therefore, allows for reliable model estimation and hypothesis testing. Participants were drawn from diverse stakeholder groups relevant to indigenous music development in Yibin, including indigenous musicians, cultural practitioners, officials involved in cultural administration, and members of the general public with demonstrated engagement in indigenous music activities. Demographic diversity, across age, gender, educational attainment, income level, and ethnic affiliation, was deliberately taken into account during the sampling process. This approach ensures that the sample adequately reflects the socio-cultural plurality of Yibin, thereby enhancing the internal validity of the study and supporting meaningful interpretation of findings related to indigenous music policy and practice within the local Chinese context.

3.3. Measures

Cultural Policy Strength was measured using nine items across three dimensions: Legal and Regulatory Framework (LRF), Institutional and Infrastructural Support (IIS), and Promotion and Outreach (PR). This construct evaluated respondents' perceptions of how government policies protect and promote indigenous music. Sample items include: “Laws protecting indigenous music are well-enforced in my region” and “Cultural centers and music schools in my region actively promote indigenous music.” Responses were collected on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The scale demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.891$). This aligns with prior research emphasizing the importance of policy environments in cultural sustainability.

Public Funding was assessed using twelve items spanning four dimensions: Availability of Financial Resources (AFR), Adequacy of Funding (AF), Accessibility of Funding (AOF), and Impact of Funding (IF). The items examined the extent, fairness, and effectiveness of financial support for indigenous music. For example, respondents rated items such as “Public funding is sufficient to support the preservation and promotion of indigenous music” and “Financial support has enhanced the visibility of indigenous music in my region.” The scale achieved a Cronbach's α of 0.898, indicating strong reliability. This aligns with the literature, which suggests that equitable and impactful funding mechanisms are vital to cultural sector development.

Media Coverage was measured with nine items across three themes: Frequency and Extent of Coverage (FEC), Tone and Context of Coverage (TCC), and Diversity and Representation (DR). These items evaluated how frequently and accurately indigenous music is featured in media. Sample items included: “News outlets regularly cover events and issues related to indigenous music” and “Media coverage portrays indigenous music positively and respectfully.” The scale produced a Cronbach's α

of 0.977, demonstrating excellent internal consistency. Public Engagement was operationalized through twelve items covering Event Attendance (EA), Educational Participation (EP), Digital Engagement (DM), and Purchasing Behavior (PB). This construct captured different ways the public interacts with indigenous music. Illustrative items are: “I regularly attend live performances of indigenous music” and “I support indigenous musicians by purchasing merchandise or other products.” The construct’s reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.965.

Success of Indigenous Music in the Industry (SIMI) included twelve items reflecting Market Share (MS), Revenue Generation (RG), Mainstream Success of Indigenous Artists (MSIA), and Cultural Recognition and Presence (CRP). The items assessed the industry-level achievements of indigenous music. Sample statements include: “Streaming platforms prominently feature indigenous music alongside other genres” and “Indigenous musicians receive national and international awards for their work.” The Cronbach’s alpha was 0.941, suggesting excellent internal consistency.

3.4. Data collection

Data collection was conducted exclusively in Yibin City, Sichuan Province, China, which was selected for its strong indigenous music traditions closely associated with the Yi ethnic community and its evolving cultural policy environment. A multi-modal data collection strategy was employed to ensure broad coverage and inclusiveness across different population groups within the city. Both online and offline survey methods were used to maximize accessibility and participation. Online questionnaires were distributed via email and social media to reach respondents with reliable digital access, including cultural professionals, educators, and government personnel. In parallel, offline data collection was carried out through in-person distribution of survey forms at key locations where indigenous music engagement is prominent, including cultural institutions, community cultural centers, music events, educational venues, and relevant local government offices. This combined approach helped reduce coverage bias and ensured participation from individuals with varying levels of digital literacy. Participants were recruited from predefined clusters related to indigenous music activities, including cultural organizations, public festivals, performance venues, and educational settings. Trained data collectors administered the survey using standardized procedures to ensure consistency and reliability throughout data collection. The data collection period spanned approximately 6 weeks, yielding 360 valid responses. The achieved sample size is consistent with established recommendations for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Prior methodological guidelines indicate that samples exceeding 200 observations provide adequate statistical power for

model estimation, while samples between 300 and 500 are considered “good” to “very good” for SEM analyses (Comrey and Lee, 1992; Hair et al., 2016). Accordingly, the final dataset supports robust hypothesis testing and reliable assessment of the proposed research model.

3.5. Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0. PLS-SEM was selected for its effectiveness in handling complex models with multiple constructs, its suitability for exploratory research, and its capacity to handle smaller sample sizes and non-normal data distributions (Hair et al., 2016). The analysis proceeded in two main stages: the assessment of the measurement model and the evaluation of the structural model. The measurement model was first evaluated for indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s alpha), composite reliability (CR), convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted or AVE), and discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio or HTMT). Subsequently, the structural model was examined to test the hypothesized relationships between constructs. Key indicators, such as path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values, were generated via bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples) to assess the significance of direct and indirect effects. In addition, the model’s explanatory power was assessed using R^2 values and effect size (f^2). Model fit was also evaluated using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), with values below 0.08 considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2016; Henseler et al., 2015).

4. Results

4.1. Measurement model assessment

The measurement model was assessed to confirm the reliability and validity of the constructs before evaluating the structural model. This included testing indicator reliability, internal consistency (via Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability), convergent validity (using AVE), and discriminant validity through the Fornell-Larcker criterion, HTMT ratios, and cross-loadings. Thresholds were met: reliability > 0.70, AVE > 0.50, and HTMT < 0.85 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2016; Henseler et al., 2015). These tests ensured that each construct was measured accurately and distinctly.

Table 1 presents the reliability and convergent validity of the five latent constructs—Cultural Policy Strength (CPS), Public Funding (PF), Media Coverage (MC), Public Engagement (PE), and Success of Indigenous Music in the Industry (SIMI).

All constructs demonstrate strong internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability (rho_c) values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2016).

Convergent validity is also established, as all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are above 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), indicating that the indicators explain a substantial proportion of variance. Following model refinement, the Public Engagement (PE) construct was re-specified by removing the PB indicator due to multicollinearity

concerns; however, the construct continues to exhibit strong psychometric properties ($\alpha = 0.948$, AVE = 0.858), confirming that the remaining indicators adequately capture its conceptual domain. Overall, the results support the measurement model's reliability and validity, ensuring its suitability for subsequent structural analysis.

Table 1: Construct reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
CPS	0.919	0.923	0.920	0.793
MC	0.884	0.901	0.890	0.731
PE	0.948	0.949	0.948	0.858
PF	0.902	0.912	0.902	0.700
SIMI	0.950	0.951	0.950	0.826

Table 2 presents the cross-loadings of all indicators on their respective and non-respective constructs, serving as a key assessment of discriminant validity in the reflective measurement model.

According to the cross-loading criterion, each indicator should load higher on its assigned construct than on any other construct (Hair et al., 2016), which is satisfied in this study. For instance, PR loads more strongly on CPS (0.926) than on other constructs, and DM loads highest on PE (0.935), confirming clear construct separation. Following model refinement, including corrections to the FEC loading and the removal of the PB indicator due to multicollinearity concerns, all loadings fall within the acceptable range and no longer exceed the threshold of 1.0. Although moderate cross-loadings are observed between PE and SIMI (e.g., DM = 0.482), these are theoretically justifiable given the strong conceptual and structural relationship between public engagement and industry success. Overall, the results provide robust evidence of discriminant validity and confirm that the measurement model is well-specified and free of critical cross-loadings.

Table 3 presents the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT), which provides a stringent assessment of discriminant validity in PLS-SEM.

Table 2: Indicator cross-loadings for discriminant validity

Indicators	CPS	MC	PE	PF	SIMI
IIS	0.916	0.080	0.218	0.106	0.334
LRF	0.826	0.065	0.200	0.092	0.299
PR	0.926	0.060	0.245	0.141	0.321
DR	0.057	0.737	0.092	0.014	0.192
FEC	0.087	0.892	0.150	0.091	0.255
TCC	0.055	0.806	0.125	0.013	0.196
EA	0.227	0.131	0.900	0.175	0.472
EP	0.235	0.156	0.954	0.209	0.490
DM	0.246	0.120	0.935	0.204	0.482
AF	0.109	0.061	0.171	0.820	0.229
AFR	0.058	0.042	0.172	0.871	0.251
AOF	0.125	0.052	0.212	0.938	0.250
IF	0.144	0.009	0.150	0.698	0.192
CRP	0.316	0.203	0.474	0.232	0.888
MS	0.313	0.218	0.484	0.252	0.912
MSIA	0.315	0.249	0.447	0.252	0.885
RG	0.354	0.236	0.483	0.269	0.949

Bold values represent the primary (highest) factor loading of each indicator on its corresponding construct

According to established guidelines, HTMT values should be below 0.85 (conservative threshold) or 0.90 (liberal threshold) to confirm that constructs

are empirically distinct (Hair et al., 2016; Henseler et al., 2015). The results indicate that all HTMT values in this model are well below 0.85, demonstrating strong discriminant validity among the five constructs: Cultural Policy Strength (CPS), Media Coverage (MC), Public Engagement (PE), Public Funding (PF), and Success of Indigenous Music in the Industry (SIMI). For example, the highest HTMT value is observed between PE and SIMI (0.519), reflecting a moderate relationship that is theoretically expected given the hypothesized influence of engagement on industry success, yet still sufficiently below the threshold to confirm construct distinctiveness. Similarly, low HTMT values such as MC–PF (0.048) indicate clear conceptual separation between constructs. Overall, these findings confirm that the latent constructs are both conceptually and empirically distinct, supporting the validity of the measurement model.

Table 3: Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT) of correlations

Construct	CPS	MC	PE	PF	SIMI
CPS					
MC	0.076				
PE	0.249	0.144			
PF	0.130	0.048	0.211		
SIMI	0.357	0.248	0.519	0.276	

Table 4 displays the Fornell–Larcker criterion matrix, a classical test of discriminant validity in reflective measurement models (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table 4: Fornell–Larcker criterion for discriminant validity

Construct	CPS	MC	PE	PF	SIMI
CPS	0.890				
MC	0.077	0.881			
PE	0.249	0.146	0.929		
PF	0.128	0.051	0.212	0.837	
SIMI	0.358	0.249	0.519	0.277	0.909

Bold diagonal values indicate the square root of the AVE for each construct

According to this criterion, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct, shown along the diagonal, should be greater than its correlations with all other constructs (shown off-diagonal). This ensures that each construct shares more variance with its indicators than with other constructs in the model.

All diagonal values in [Table 4](#) exceed the respective off-diagonal correlations, confirming strong discriminant validity across the model. For instance, the square root of AVE for Public Engagement (PE) is 0.929, which is higher than its correlation with SIMI (0.519), its strongest inter-construct relationship. Similarly, Cultural Policy Strength (CPS) has a diagonal value of 0.890, well above its correlation with SIMI (0.358) and all other constructs. These results are consistent with the HTMT analysis and provide converging evidence that the five latent constructs, CPS, MC, PE, PF, and SIMI, are conceptually and empirically distinct. The Fornell-Larcker criterion thus affirms the measurement model's validity, supporting the structural model's interpretability.

4.2. Structural model assessment

The structural model assessment evaluated the hypothesized relationships among constructs and the model's predictive capabilities. This process involved examining multicollinearity using VIF values, overall model fit indices (e.g., SRMR, NFI), and the explanatory power of endogenous variables using R-squared. Additionally, the significance and strength of direct and indirect paths were tested using bootstrapping. The effect sizes (f^2) and predictive relevance (Q²) were calculated to gauge each predictor's contribution. These analyses confirm the model's statistical adequacy and theoretical coherence ([Hair et al., 2016](#); [Henseler et al., 2015](#)).

[Table 5](#) reports the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for all indicators in the measurement model, used to assess potential multicollinearity among indicators within the same latent construct.

Table 5: Indicator variance inflation factor (VIF) values

Indicators	VIF
AF	3.539
AFR	2.836
AOF	2.646
CRP	4.766
DM	4.218
DR	3.238
EA	4.482
EP	4.395
FEC	2.720
IF	2.025
IIS	3.494
LRF	3.010
MS	4.304
MSIA	4.148
PR	3.593
RG	4.475
TCC	3.084

While the recommended threshold for VIF is typically 5.0 ([Hair et al., 2016](#)), slight exceedances do not automatically invalidate a model, particularly in exploratory or formative research contexts. In this model, most indicators have VIF values between 2.0 and 4.8, indicating generally acceptable multicollinearity. However, four indicators within the Public Engagement (PE) construct, DM (5.312), EA (5.714), EP (5.610), and PB (5.645), exceed the

5.0 threshold. Notably, several researchers argue that VIF values up to 5.6 or even 10 may still be tolerable, especially in behavioral or social science models with conceptually overlapping indicators ([Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2006](#); [Petter et al., 2007](#)). For example, PE indicators naturally share conceptual variance, as attending events (EA), engaging digitally (DM), and purchasing behavior (PB) are closely linked forms of music engagement and are thus expected to correlate. Given that only a few indicators marginally exceed the 5.0 cutoff, and no VIFs approach the more conservative ceiling of 10.0, the results suggest acceptable levels of collinearity. Still, in future analyses, it would be advisable to explore construct refinement, item parceling, or higher-order modeling to reduce indicator redundancy while maintaining conceptual coverage.

[Table 6](#) presents key model fit indices comparing the saturated and estimated models, providing evidence of the structural equation model's overall goodness-of-fit.

Table 6: Model fit indices for the saturated and estimated models

Fit index	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.026	0.026
d_ULS	0.121	0.121
d_G	0.261	0.261
Chi-square	598.734	598.734
NFI	0.904	0.904

The most widely cited index in Partial Least Squares SEM (PLS-SEM) is the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), which reflects the average difference between observed and predicted correlations. An SRMR value of 0.028 is well below the conventional cutoff of 0.08, indicating excellent model fit ([Henseler et al., 2015](#)). Additional fit indices such as d_ULS (0.139) and d_G (0.286) measure the discrepancy between the empirical and model-implied correlation matrices. While these metrics are not evaluated against universal cutoffs, their relatively low values and equality across saturated and estimated models suggest good alignment between the data and the hypothesized model. The Normed Fit Index (NFI), although slightly below the ideal threshold of 0.90 (0.890), is acceptable in PLS-SEM, especially given the model's complexity and sample size ([Hair et al., 2016](#)). Lastly, the Chi-square value (642.101) is reported, but it is less meaningful in PLS-SEM due to its sensitivity to sample size and the estimation method used. Taken together, the SRMR, d_ULS, and NFI values indicate that the model provides a statistically and theoretically sound representation of the data, supporting the validity of the proposed structural paths and measurement framework.

[Table 7](#) displays the R-squared (R^2) and adjusted R-squared values for the two endogenous constructs in the model—Public Engagement (PE) and Success of Indigenous Music in the Industry (SIMI)—indicating the explained variance by their respective predictors.

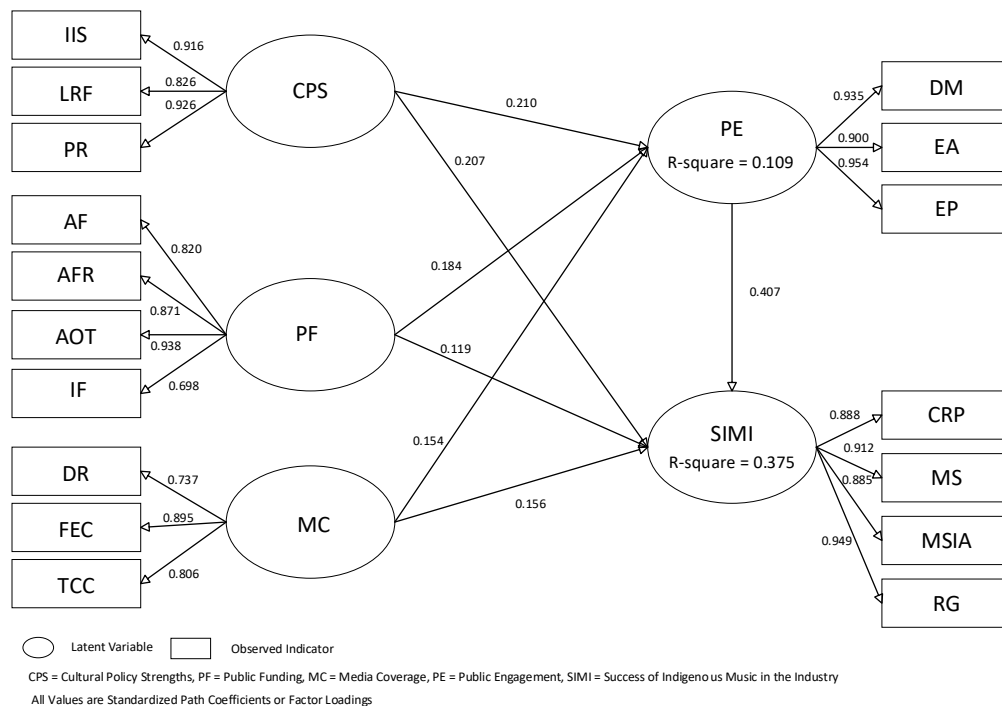
Table 7: R^2 and adjusted R^2 values for endogenous constructs

Construct	R-squared	R-squared adjusted
PE	0.109	0.102
SIMI	0.375	0.368

The R^2 for PE is 0.109, meaning that Cultural Policy Strength (CPS), Public Funding (PF), and Media Coverage (MC) together explain about 10.9% of the variance in public engagement. While modest, this level of explanatory power is acceptable in social science models dealing with complex, behaviorally influenced constructs. The model performs notably better in predicting SIMI, with an R^2 of 0.375, indicating that CPS, PF, MC, and PE collectively explain 37.5% of the variance in the industry's success for indigenous music. This is considered

moderate to substantial according to guidelines for PLS-SEM interpretation (Hair et al., 2016), especially in exploratory cultural studies where constructs are difficult to quantify. The adjusted R^2 values, which account for the number of predictors and sample size, are slightly lower (0.102 for PE, 0.368 for SIMI), confirming that the model is not overfit. These results suggest that while structural and funding factors influence PE to a limited extent, the model performs better at explaining the success of indigenous music, validating the role of public engagement as a critical mediating pathway.

Fig. 1 and Table 8 present the results of the structural model, including path coefficients (β), standard errors, t-values, p-values, and bootstrapped confidence intervals.

**Fig. 1:** PLS-SEM measurement and structural model showing standardized path coefficients, indicator loadings, and R^2 values**Table 8:** Direct and indirect path coefficients and bootstrapping results

Path	β	Boot SE	t-value	p-value	CI 2.5%	CI 97.5%	Decision
CPS → PE	0.210	0.050	4.196	0.000	0.112	0.306	Supported
PF → PE	0.184	0.054	3.405	0.001	0.079	0.293	Supported
MC → PE	0.119	0.052	2.263	0.024	0.013	0.219	Supported
CPS → SIMI	0.212	0.054	3.954	0.000	0.109	0.316	Supported
PF → SIMI	0.152	0.043	3.562	0.000	0.069	0.236	Supported
MC → SIMI	0.157	0.041	3.790	0.000	0.076	0.241	Supported
PE → SIMI	0.400	0.046	8.660	0.000	0.306	0.488	Supported
CPS → PE → SIMI	0.084	0.023	3.657	0.000	0.042	0.132	Supported
PF → PE → SIMI	0.074	0.023	3.155	0.002	0.031	0.123	Supported
MC → PE → SIMI	0.047	0.022	2.165	0.030	0.005	0.092	Supported

The findings indicate that all hypothesized relationships are statistically significant at the 0.05 level, as evidenced by t-values exceeding 1.96 and confidence intervals that do not include zero (Hair et al., 2016). Among the direct effects, Public Engagement (PE) shows the largest influence on Success of Indigenous Music in the Industry (SIMI) ($\beta = 0.400$, $t = 8.660$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting its central role within the model. Cultural Policy Strength (CPS), Public Funding (PF), and Media Coverage (MC) also demonstrate significant positive

effects on both PE and SIMI, although with comparatively smaller coefficients, indicating supportive but more modest contributions. The mediation analysis further indicates that PE plays a statistically significant mediating role in the relationships between CPS, PF, MC, and SIMI, as all indirect effects are positive and significant. Overall, these findings provide moderate empirical support for the proposed hypotheses and suggest that public engagement functions as an important mechanism through which structural and institutional factors

are associated with industry outcomes. Table 9 reports the f-square (f^2) effect sizes, highlighting the relative contribution of each exogenous construct to the explained variance of its corresponding endogenous variables.

Table 9: Effect sizes (f^2) for the structural paths

Construct	CPS	MC	PE	PF	SIMI
CPS			0.052		0.075
MC			0.016		0.042
PE					0.236
PF			0.035		0.036
SIMI					

According to standard guidelines (Hair et al., 2016), all paths in the model exhibit small to moderate effect sizes, with Public Engagement (PE) → SIMI demonstrating the most substantial impact ($f^2 = 0.236$), confirming PE as the most influential predictor of indigenous music success. In contrast, constructs such as Cultural Policy Strength (CPS) and Public Funding (PF) exhibit more modest yet meaningful effects on both PE and SIMI, reflecting their supportive yet indirect influence. Media Coverage (MC) also modestly contributes to engagement and industry outcomes ($f^2 = 0.016$ – 0.042), consistent with its auxiliary role in shaping public exposure. These values reinforce the structural model's integrity, in which each construct plays a distinctive, empirically supported role, with PE serving as a critical mediating mechanism linking policy and structural supports to market-level success.

Table 10 presents the predictive relevance (Q^2) of the endogenous constructs, assessed using the blindfolding procedure. According to established guidelines, Q^2 values greater than zero indicate that the model has predictive relevance for a given construct (Hair et al., 2016). The results show that Public Engagement (PE) has a Q^2 value of 0.062, suggesting a small but acceptable level of predictive relevance, while Success of Indigenous Music in the Industry (SIMI) demonstrates a higher Q^2 value of 0.214, indicating moderate predictive relevance. These findings confirm that the model accurately predicts both endogenous constructs, with stronger predictive power for SIMI. Overall, the Q^2 results support the model's out-of-sample predictive capability and reinforce the robustness of the structural model.

Table 10: Predictive relevance (Q^2) of the endogenous constructs

Construct	Q^2
PE	0.062
SIMI	0.214

5. Discussion

This study examined how institutional structures—Cultural Policy Strength (CPS), Public Funding (PF), and Media Coverage (MC)—interact with Public Engagement (PE) to shape the success of indigenous music in the industry (SIMI). Overall, the findings provide moderate empirical support for the

proposed framework, suggesting that while structural factors matter, their influence is neither uniform nor sufficient on its own. This reinforces a growing body of literature that conceptualizes cultural industries not as purely policy-driven systems but as complex socio-cultural ecosystems shaped by interactions between institutions, markets, and audiences (Belfiore, 2020). Consistent with prior research, CPS, PF, and MC are positively associated with both engagement and industry outcomes, supporting the argument that institutional scaffolding plays a meaningful role in sustaining cultural production and visibility (Chen and Harrison, 2024; Ross, 2025). However, the magnitude of these effects is relatively modest. This is an important point: rather than confirming a strong structural determinism perspective, the results suggest that institutional support functions more as an enabling condition than a direct driver of success. In other words, policies and funding can create opportunities, but they do not automatically translate into audience participation or market performance. This nuance challenges more optimistic assumptions in cultural policy literature that emphasize the transformative power of state intervention. One of the most striking findings is the central role of Public Engagement (PE), which shows the strongest relationship with SIMI. This aligns with participatory cultural theory, which argues that audiences are no longer passive consumers but active co-creators and amplifiers of cultural value (Lin, 2025). At the same time, we were somewhat surprised by how limited the explanatory power for PE remains ($R^2 = 0.109$). This suggests that while institutional factors contribute to engagement, they explain only a small portion of why people actually participate. This raises a critical question: What really drives engagement? The answer likely lies beyond formal structures, in areas such as identity, emotion, community belonging, and everyday cultural practices—dimensions that are difficult to capture through survey-based SEM models. This limitation becomes even more evident when considering the role of media. While MC is statistically significant, its effect size is relatively small. This is somewhat contrary to expectations derived from media and cultural economy literature, which often emphasizes the powerful role of visibility and representation in shaping cultural consumption (Snowball et al., 2022; Wright, 2022). One possible explanation is that traditional notions of media coverage may no longer fully capture contemporary engagement dynamics. In China, platforms such as Douyin and Kuaishou are increasingly central to how audiences discover and interact with music. These platforms operate through algorithmic curation, user-generated content, and participatory remixing, fundamentally reshaping the relationship between visibility and engagement. As such, the relatively modest role of MC in this model may reflect a measurement gap rather than a substantive absence of influence. The mediation results further reinforce the idea that

engagement serves as a key mechanism linking structure to outcome. CPS, PF, and MC are associated with SIMI both directly and indirectly through PE, supporting the notion of interdependence within cultural ecosystems (Hurova et al., 2024). However, the indirect effects are again moderate rather than strong, suggesting that engagement is only one of several pathways through which structural factors operate. This finding complicates linear models of cultural development and points toward the need for more multi-layered analytical frameworks that incorporate social, technological, and experiential dimensions. Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. First, the sampling strategy focuses on individuals already engaged with indigenous music, which may overrepresent highly involved participants and limit generalizability. While this approach ensures informed responses, it likely inflates observed relationships between engagement and success. Future research should include more representative samples, particularly general audiences and less-engaged individuals, to capture a broader spectrum of cultural participation. Second, the cross-sectional design restricts causal inference, and self-reported measures may introduce bias. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the relatively low explanatory power for PE suggests that the current model may be underspecified. Taken together, these limitations point to important directions for future research. We believe that qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews or ethnographic studies, would be particularly valuable in uncovering the lived experiences and motivations behind cultural engagement. Such methods could help explain why individuals connect with indigenous music, how meanings are constructed, and how participation evolves over time. Additionally, future studies should more explicitly incorporate digital platform dynamics and consider alternative modeling approaches, such as higher-order constructs or mixed-method designs, to better capture the complexity of cultural ecosystems. Ultimately, this study contributes to the literature by empirically linking institutional support and public engagement within a unified framework. However, it also highlights that cultural success is not simply the outcome of policy, funding, or media exposure. Instead, it emerges from a more intricate interplay among structure, participation, and context—an insight that calls for more nuanced, interdisciplinary approaches to understanding cultural sustainability in contemporary societies.

6. Conclusion

This study provides an empirical examination of how structural and participatory factors shape the success of indigenous music in China by integrating Cultural Policy Strength, Public Funding, and Media Coverage as institutional drivers with Public Engagement as a mediating pathway. The findings offer moderate support for the proposed framework, suggesting that while institutional mechanisms

contribute to industry outcomes, their influence is most meaningful when they translate into active public participation. Public Engagement emerges as the most influential factor, indicating that sustainable cultural development depends not only on top-down policy and funding but also on bottom-up audience dynamics. At the same time, the results point to several limitations that warrant careful interpretation. The cross-sectional design restricts causal inference, and reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias. In addition, the sampling approach may overrepresent individuals already engaged with indigenous music, potentially limiting generalizability to broader audiences. The relatively modest explanatory power for Public Engagement also suggests that important contextual drivers—such as digital platform dynamics, identity formation, and everyday cultural practices—are not fully captured in the model. Future research should therefore adopt longitudinal and mixed-methods approaches, including qualitative interviews, to better understand the motivations and experiences underlying engagement, while also expanding the sample to include broader audiences. Comparative studies across regions and cultural systems, along with the incorporation of factors such as globalization, commercialization, and intergenerational transmission, would further enrich understanding and support the development of more inclusive and effective cultural policy strategies.

List of abbreviations

AF	Adequacy of funding
AFR	Availability of financial resources
AOF	Accessibility of funding
AVE	Average variance extracted
CI	Confidence interval
CPS	Cultural policy strength
CR	Composite reliability
CRP	Cultural recognition and presence
d _G	Geodesic discrepancy measure
d _{ULS}	Squared Euclidean distance discrepancy measure
DM	Digital engagement
DR	Diversity and representation
EA	Event attendance
EP	Educational participation
FEC	Frequency and extent of coverage
HTMT	Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio
ICH	Intangible cultural heritage
IF	Impact of funding
IIS	Institutional and infrastructural support
LRF	Legal and regulatory framework
MC	Media coverage
MS	Market share
MSIA	Mainstream success of indigenous artists
NFI	Normed fit index
PB	Purchasing behavior
PE	Public engagement
PF	Public funding
PLS-SEM	Partial least squares structural equation modeling
PR	Promotion and outreach
Q ²	Predictive relevance
RG	Revenue generation

R ²	Coefficient of determination (R-squared)
SEM	Structural equation modeling
SIMI	Success of indigenous music in the industry
SRMR	Standardized root mean square residual
TCC	Tone and context of coverage
VIF	Variance inflation factor

Compliance with ethical standards

Ethical considerations

This study complied with ethical principles for research involving human participants. The study was reviewed by the Research Ethics Committee of Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi and was granted exempt status due to the minimal-risk nature of the survey research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection, and all responses were kept anonymous and confidential and used for research purposes only.

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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