

The Dissemination of Shanghai's International Image on New Media: A Corpus-Based Study

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE DETAILS
In the era of new media, the dissemination of a city's international image has become an important component of national soft power development and the construction of external discourse systems. This study employs a corpus-assisted discourse analysis approach, selecting news and online English language materials from parts of English Corpora from January 2020 to January 2024 as the research subjects. Using corpus analysis tools, it quantitatively analyzes the construction and dissemination characteristics of Shanghai's image on international new media platforms. The findings indicate that international media attention on Shanghai focuses primarily on areas such as economy, trade, and technological innovation, with an overall evaluation trend that is predominantly positive. Shanghai receives particularly positive recognition in aspects like economic and trade cooperation and international exchanges. However, global crises and situational changes have also triggered some negative reporting, mainly centered on public health and policy responses. Based on these findings, this paper proposes pathways to enhance the effectiveness and discursive power of Shanghai's international communication. These include adopting diversified narrative perspectives, improving the comprehensive multimedia communication matrix, and coordinating the construction of both city and national images. KEYWORDS: Shanghai's International Image; New Media Dissemination; Corpus Analysis; Discourse Analysis; Urban Image Construction.	Published On: 02 February 2026 Available on: https://irijsh.com/

1. INTRODUCTION

Shanghai stands as a city of significant political and economic stature within China, rich in historical and cultural significance, and serves as a pivotal city in China's modernisation process. While possessing the material attributes of an international metropolis, Shanghai has yet to attain the status of a truly global city in terms of its international reach and influence. [1] President Xi Jinping emphasised: 'Telling China's stories well, conveying China's voice effectively, and presenting a true, multi-dimensional and comprehensive image of China are vital tasks in strengthening our international communication capabilities.' As constituent units of the nation, cities are also key elements in shaping national image. The overseas communication of Chinese cities provides a window and vehicle for the world to understand Chinese culture and development. [2] Consequently, as a representative international metropolis, research into Shanghai's image construction holds significant implications for projecting a positive Chinese image. In recent years, by drawing upon China's outstanding traditional culture and exploring its domestic and international cultural dimensions, Shanghai has cultivated distinctive characteristics of internationalism and inclusivity. This has consolidated its position as a major hub for Chinese-style modernisation, serving as a vital nexus both nationally and globally. How to further elevate Shanghai's international image and enhance its global influence has attracted scholars from diverse disciplines to explore this topic

from multiple perspectives.

City image represents the specific perceptions, overall views, and comprehensive evaluations held by both internal and external publics regarding a region's intrinsic comprehensive strength, outwardly manifested vitality, and future prospects. The theory of 'city image' was first proposed by American scholar Kevin Lynch, who explained from an architectural perspective that observers form impressions of a city based on the information they acquire about it. [3] In today's new media landscape, characterised by the pervasive use of digital technologies such as mobile phones and internet platforms, diverse communication entities, content, and heightened transmission efficiency have amplified the influence of internet-based new media on audiences' perceptions of nations and cities. This impact extends to shaping the distribution of international discourse power. [4] In recent years, Shanghai has adopted strategies such as integrating 'official channels with self-media' and establishing overseas official media outlets to project its city image internationally, tailoring content according to audience demographics and cultural characteristics. [5] As a vital form of soft power, the transformation of a city's international image through the lens of new media similarly exerts significant influence on the development of its communicative power and discourse authority. [6] This soft power serves as a crucial foundation for expanding international exchanges and cooperation, attracting overseas investment and talent. Consequently, enhancing a city's international image represents both a national imperative and an essential requirement for urban development.

Language serves as a crucial medium for information dissemination on new media, and discourse analysis constitutes a distinctive perspective in internet research. [7] Corpus tools, meanwhile, provide an effective means for quantitative studies of new media language materials. [8] A corpus is a large collection of texts, and the dissemination methods of new media greatly facilitate the acquisition of language materials. Numerous existing large-scale online corpora further guide researchers in studying specific texts. By utilizing computer-based corpus tools, researchers can better analyze and comprehend textual materials and, with advancing technology, process large volumes of data more efficiently. When analyzing media discourse, corpus-based discourse analysis methods [9] help uncover the implied meanings and purposes behind the discourse through word frequency statistics and keyword analysis. [10] Guo Wenping (2020) notes that CADS analysis not only presents quantitative data but also delves into textual interpretation and theoretical analysis, while also validating researchers' subjective perceptions of the text. [11] Based on the above theories, this study aims to establish a corpus and employ CADS analysis to explore or validate the following questions: (1) Which aspects of Shanghai receive the most attention in international media? (2) Has Shanghai's image in international media generally leaned positive or negative in recent years? (3) Is Shanghai's overall image significantly influenced by issues such as geopolitical dynamics and public health?

2. CURRENT STATUS OF RESEARCH ON SHANGHAI'S INTERNATIONAL IMAGE

To understand the existing academic research progress, this study first used the core journals in the first and third series of the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database as data sources. Searches were conducted by entering "Shanghai image" and "international image" in the title field, resulting in a total of 849 papers retrieved up to January 8, 2024. These papers were organized and summarized from multiple perspectives including theme, keywords, abstract, subject discipline, author, publication date, source, institution, funding support, and citation count.

Overall, research in China on Shanghai's urban image and international image started relatively early. Analyses of Shanghai's image have primarily focused on its characteristics of "Shanghai-style culture," "Jiangnan culture," and "red culture." Most studies based on new media employ methods such as questionnaires and sampling surveys. In recent years, some research has begun to utilize corpus methods; however, perspectives on dissemination pathways remain relatively scattered, and the context is often limited to official media, lacking comprehensive studies on disseminating Shanghai's international image in the new media environment.

Early research on Shanghai's urban image focused on enhancing the city's image through urban modernization, aligning with the

content of Kevin Lynch's "Image of the City" theory. For example, Shen Fuxu (1994) proposed strategies such as protecting modern architecture to preserve features of "Shanghai-style culture," as well as transforming the urban landscape and shaping a unique, modern city identity. [12] Entering the 21st century, research perspectives became more diversified. Researchers examined the strengths and weaknesses of Shanghai's image by comparing it with other cities or focusing on perspectives such as major sporting events. The focus overall remained on urban planning, economic development, and cultural heritage protection. However, with the development of tourism and social media, an increasing number of studies have noted the role of media information in shaping Shanghai's image. For instance, Meng Yifang (2008) observed that tourism platforms played a positive role in shaping Shanghai's image and emphasized the proactive use of media platforms to promote it. [13] Research during this period mostly focused on optimizing mass media communication pathways and analyzing the impact of specific events on the city's image, with increasing disciplinary perspectives from tourism, journalism, and communication.

Subsequently, analyses of Shanghai's image on new media platforms gradually emerged. For example, in 2016, Li Xin employed data scraping and sampling analysis to study user sentiment tendencies related to several major Chinese cities, including Shanghai, on the foreign social platform Twitter (now "X"), analyzing the characteristics of China's city communication. This represented a methodological breakthrough. Since then, research on Shanghai's media image has shown a gradual growth trend but remains relatively scarce, often focusing on domestic mass media. Simultaneously, adding the keyword "corpus" to the search revealed only six entries. Among these, two focused on Chinese official media reports, three examined differences in Chinese and foreign news coverage on specific topics, and one focused on language construction in translation. All were distributed between 2019 and 2025. This indicates that in recent years, academia has gradually paid more attention to the use of corpus methods in related topics. However, based on the research content, it is evident that the corpora involved are still largely limited to news corpora, with less use of new media corpora in general or large foreign corpora. Consequently, there is a gap in quantitative research on the overall international perception of Shanghai's image.

In summary, research related to Shanghai's urban and international image started relatively early (beginning sporadically in 1958), with researchers concentrated in Shanghai universities. Most adopt perspectives from journalism and communication studies, touching upon various fields such as economy, trade, politics, culture, arts, and tourism. The number of studies increased significantly after 1992, with two peaks occurring in 2010 and 2023 (likely related to the Shanghai World Expo and the COVID-19 pandemic, respectively), while the number of studies declined year by year between 2010 and 2016 (possibly due to homogenization of research content and limitations in research subjects). In terms of specific content, perspectives on communication pathways are relatively scattered, and the context is often limited to official media, lacking comprehensive research on disseminating Shanghai's international image in the new environment. Regarding research themes, current analyses of Shanghai's image are concentrated on its characteristics of "Shanghai-style culture," "Jiangnan culture," and "red culture," focusing on promoting Shanghai's culture through online media, exhibitions, events, etc. The data collected and communication methodologies proposed also serve to enhance cultural influence. However, there is a lack of a holistic perspective that considers the overall impression of Shanghai among overseas media users under the current international situation, the dissemination of elements beyond culture, and the enhancement of international influence. To present a comprehensive and modern image of Shanghai, it is necessary to incorporate external perspectives, understand the overall impression of Shanghai among overseas audiences, and integrate communication pathways covering multiple dimensions to optimize dissemination effectiveness.

In terms of methodological choices, existing research is mostly purely theoretical or based on studies of specific events. Data collection methods often rely on quota sampling statistics from questionnaires, lacking studies from a linguistic perspective or those employing corpus methods. Regarding the specific objects of study, news media and other new media platforms serve as crucial dissemination channels. The linguistic information within them can clearly reflect the attention, level of understanding, and

emotional attitudes of foreign governments and the public towards Shanghai, encompassing political, economic, cultural, and other aspects. This information holds significant referential value for "targeting the root cause" and constructing effective communication pathways. This study will also employ corpus tools and CADS analysis methods to analyze Shanghai's international image and attempt to propose suggestions for optimizing communication effectiveness.

3. RESEARCH CONTENT AND METHODOLOGY

(1) Corpus Collection and Corpus Construction

The corpus for this study was selected from the online database English Corpora (<https://www.english-corpora.org/>). Using "Shanghai" as the search keyword and setting the time range from January 20, 2020, to January 8, 2024, English news and online platform data were analyzed and compiled into a table using the News on the Web (NOW) and Global Web-Based English (GloWbE) sub-corpora. The table includes information on source, publication date, data type (official reports, news media reports, social media interactions), and the emotional attitude expressed in each piece of data (positive, negative, or neutral).

Based on existing large-scale corpus resources, this study first established retrieval criteria according to the research theme to extract relevant texts from the original corpus. Next, irrelevant information (such as supplementary notes, reporter bylines, etc.) was removed, and the text format was standardized to UTF-8. Finally, the texts were renamed and categorized according to source and date, thereby forming the specialized corpus used in this study. This process ensures the reliability of the corpus sources and enhances the relevance and reproducibility of the research findings.

(2) Corpus Processing and Analysis Methods

This study extracted the top 50 high-frequency content words occurring within a span of four words to the left and right of the core term "Shanghai" from the corpus. The texts were imported into commonly used corpus analysis software such as WordSmith and AntConc, and sorted primarily by frequency of occurrence and relevance. The analysis was aided by utilizing the software's frequency list, collocation, and keyword in context (KWIC) functions. Relevance is reflected by the Mutual Information (MI) value, which can be used to measure whether there is a significant collocational relationship between two co-occurring words. A higher MI value indicates a stronger association between the words. This study used the collocation statistics function of the analysis tools for this purpose. After preliminary screening, words that appeared frequently and had high relevance to Shanghai included: Wuhan, Guangzhou, Beijing, composite, resources, organization, commercial, cooperation, event, center, megacity, World Expo, co-organized, approved, municipal, worst, surge, summit, known. These will be given focused attention and analysis in subsequent research. There were 30 words with lower MI values; among these, words with low analytical value will undergo further screening. Function words and words without clear thematic relevance (such as "the," "by," "where") were excluded from the screening scope by applying a stop list and will not be analyzed.

After analyzing and categorizing the high-frequency, high-relevance words, this study ultimately selected 19 of the most representative words. Based on their characteristics, they can be summarized into the following categories: (1) Words related to other regions: Wuhan, Guangzhou, Beijing; (2) Words related to economic and trade development: composite, resources, organization, commercial, cooperation, event; (3) Words reflecting Shanghai's special status: center, megacity, World Expo; (4) Words related to emotional attitudes: those reflecting a positive attitude include co-organized, approved, municipal; those reflecting a negative image include worst; and neutral ones include surge, summit, known.

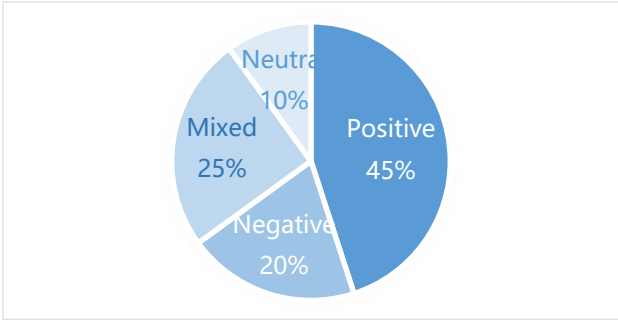
4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

(1) Source Analysis and Sentiment Orientation

The corpus collected for this study comprised 50 sources, with over 60% originating from media reports in Western countries.

Approximately 10% were reports from Middle Eastern nations, while the remainder came from media outlets in neighbouring English-speaking Asian countries and regions (Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore). This indicates that Western countries remain the primary source of information about Shanghai among English-speaking nations and regions in recent years, while neighbouring Asian countries also maintain a certain level of attention towards Shanghai.

Table 1: Sentiment Analysis of Shanghai-Related Content in English Online Media



The themes encompassing Shanghai's image within the corpus span a broad spectrum, with keywords including economy, trade, tourism, society, sports, culture, international relations, and politics. Economic and trade-related coverage constitutes the largest share at 30%, predominantly featuring positive or neutral/unbiased reporting. High-frequency terms under these topics include World Expo, import, and stock.

Overall, English-language media portrayals of Shanghai are predominantly positive. Outlets with multiple Shanghai-related reports (e.g., Nature, Economic Times, Inquirer) consistently highlight the city's robust economic strength and technological advancement, emphasising its collaborations with other nations and regions while offering favourable assessments. However, concerning political stances, these outlets exhibit markedly negative attitudes towards Chinese cities, including Shanghai. Websites such as Badcanto feature multiple posts questioning China's national integrity and international image, including claims that Shanghai residents engage in racial and gender discrimination, which have gained traction among some netizens.

As shown in Table 1, negative discussions about Shanghai account for approximately 3% of content, covering stock market volatility, policy impacts, public health, and legal disputes. On political and legal controversy topics, negative assessments significantly outweigh positive ones. Conversely, education, technology, the economy, and overall urban impressions predominantly garnered positive or neutral assessments, far outweighing negative sentiments. Regarding sports, culture, arts, and environmental themes, neutral evaluations predominated, followed by positive attitudes, with negative sentiment being exceptionally rare.

(2) Topic Analysis

Among the co-occurring terms, the names of other cities such as Beijing and Hong Kong first drew our attention. In co-occurring sentences, these cities are predominantly mentioned in parallel relation to Shanghai, with a minority forming contrastive relationships. Drawing upon Fillmore's (1982) frame theory, it can be posited that these cities constitute a semantic knowledge frame with Shanghai. This mechanism activates readers' existing frames of reference by invoking shared concepts, thereby facilitating comprehension of the intended meaning. Within this study's context, readers' perceptions of these other cities also influence their image of Shanghai. Consequently, this paper seeks to understand Shanghai's image in international media by analysing the characteristics of frequently co-occurring cities. Depending on their focus, these media outlets primarily discussed: (1) internationalisation levels, such as Shanghai and Beijing both hosting international events as emerging global players; (2) economic strength, such as Shanghai and Hong Kong possessing robust trade capabilities; (3) political standing, such as Shanghai and Shenzhen both hosting sub-centres of the China International Economic and Trade Arbitration Commission; (4) cultural tourism, highlighting dialect preservation efforts in Shanghai, Beijing and other regions, alongside the broader appeal of Chinese cities.

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Whilst most coverage focused on these themes with positive undertones, a minority of outlets presented Shanghai in comparative negative terms. These included perspectives portraying cities like Shanghai as envious of Hong Kong's developmental achievements, and suggesting this envy had led to significant immigration.

Other high-frequency co-occurring terms further reveal international media's particular emphasis on Shanghai's economic standing and developmental role, accounting for approximately 27% of the corpus. Thematic analysis indicates that recent international coverage primarily centres on economic affairs, technology, public health, and urban diplomacy. This paper compiles keyword proportions across these topics within the corpus (Table 2), alongside key terms and attitudinal leanings in reports from various nations (Table 3), facilitating comprehensive analysis.

Table 2: Proportion of Topics Described by High-Frequency Co-occurring Words

Category	Approx. Proportion	Description
Economy & Trade	27%	Financial markets, corporate investment, energy trading, economic cooperation
Technology & Innovation	22%	Autonomous driving, research collaboration, innovative enterprises
Pandemic & Public Health	17%	COVID-19 cases, school closures, medicine shortages, empty streets
City Diplomacy & Int'l Exchange	16%	Sister-city cooperation, aid, cultural/educational exchanges
Social Life & Politics	6%	Protests, social discontent, post-lockdown impacts
Others	12%	Sports events, individual descriptions, etc.

Table 3: Topic and Sentiment Analysis

Country/Region	Media Outlets	Keywords	Theme	Sentiment
Singapore	TechNode, BusinessTimes, AsiaOne, DealstreetAsia	"Huawei Inside" autonomous driving data license, "real estate project", "digital RMB", "research center"	Technology innovation, investment, industrial development	Positive
USA	Phys.org , NYTimes, InsideHigherEd	Forbes, "Shanghai Jiao Tong University research cooperation", "stock market connectivity", "Tesla factory", "NYU Shanghai"	Academic cooperation, industrial layout	Positive
Kenya	kbc.co.ke	"Shanghai school closures, online classes"	Pandemic prevention and control	Negative
South Africa	Businesslive, CNBC Africa, Bizxcommunity	"Shanghai World Expo", "subway masks", "stock market decline"	Pandemic and financial markets	Positive
Hong Kong	The Standard	"residents rushing to buy medicine"	Pandemic and people's livelihood	Negative
Philippines	Inquirer, Philstar	"Asian markets", "Shanghai protests", "Shanghai Composite Index decline"	Social movements, financial markets	Mixed
Malaysia	The Edge Markets	"Shanghai Futures Exchange pricing"	Energy and trade	Neutral
Pakistan	Nation.com.pk	"Shanghai-Karachi become sister cities", "Shanghai donation funds", "post-disaster assistance"	Diplomatic cooperation, city-to-city aid	Positive

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Country/Region	Media Outlets	Keywords	Theme	Sentiment
Sri Lanka	DailyMirror	"Shanghai exports fabrics to Colombo"	Trade cooperation	Positive
India	Times of India, Indian Express, Economic Times, India Today, BloombergQuint	"Shanghai pandemic lockdown", "school online classes", "lockdown memories", "Shanghai Pudong Airport", "stock market fluctuations"	Pandemic, economy, industry	Neutral
New Zealand	NZ Herald, Interest.co.nz	"Shanghai stock market decline", "empty streets", "protest demonstrations", "retail decline"	Pandemic, financial markets, society	Mixed
Australia	AFR, 9news, Yahoo News	"Shanghai trade fair", "Australia-China relations", "Shanghai stock market fall"	Diplomacy, markets, pandemic	Mixed
Ireland	Irish Examiner	"Shanghai automobile production capacity reduced"	Industry and supply chain	Negative
UK	The Guardian, Mirror, Yahoo Finance, Zawya	"Shanghai lockdown", "empty streets", "medicine shortages", "stock market decline"	Pandemic, society, economy	Negative
Canada	Globe & Mail, Yahoo Finance	"Shanghai stock market decline", "pandemic impact"	Financial markets, pandemic	Negative

Among the countries and regions covered in this statistical analysis, the majority hold a favourable view of Shanghai, particularly offering positive assessments of its economic standing and affirming its pivotal role within China's economy. For instance, the Philippine Daily Inquirer describes Shanghai as 'the country's richest city,' while also commending its vibrant financial markets. The publication highlights how Shanghai's Free Trade Zone attracts international capital to enhance its entrepreneurial environment, and notes the significant global role played by Shanghai's gold market. Concerns over Shanghai's stock market volatility, though occasionally framed negatively, indirectly underscore the city's significance within global financial markets. Its flourishing tourism, cultural, and technological sectors also garnered favourable coverage. For instance, the US travel website TravelDailyNews commended 'the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture and Tourism for organising a dynamic array of activities,' reflecting international media appreciation for Shanghai's exhibition events and diverse cultural presentations. Malaysian coverage noted that 'By successfully hosting the Beijing Olympic Games and the Shanghai World Expo, it displayed to the world the charm of a prosperous modern China,' further underscoring Shanghai's pivotal role in international exchanges, cultural tourism, and trade activities, as well as its representative function in shaping the image of a vibrant modern China. South African media outlet Bizxcommunity highlighted the Shanghai World Expo's role in enhancing mutual image and expanding markets, citing corporate statements expressing willingness for further collaboration with local enterprises. Major events such as the Shanghai International Film Festival and Shanghai Fashion Week have frequently garnered positive coverage. A South African website's report on the Shanghai Film Festival noted that 'the use of blue light and glass in the scene in a Shanghai skyscraper is cinematic painting at its best,' illustrating how artistic works like films help convey Shanghai's character and shape a positive image of the modern metropolis.

Negative commentary in recent years has centred on the pandemic and its associated socio-economic disruptions, featuring keywords such as lockdown, protests, deserted, and fear. Negative news themes included 'school closures,' 'protests,' 'medicine hoarding,' 'stock market declines,' and 'pandemic impacts,' though some reports offered positive assessments of donated supplies and social reconstruction efforts. Media outlets from the UK, South Africa, Canada, and Hong Kong have published a higher proportion of negative coverage. Their narratives include portrayals of pandemic lockdown measures as instilling fear and restricting freedoms; characterisations of Shanghai's economic setbacks during the outbreak as 'standing as a warning against experimentation in Covid policy,' reflecting scepticism towards government policies and ideological conflicts; and even Philippine media fabricating

images of social discord in Shanghai through false information, citing days of protests and government abandonment of some residents. India's Scroll website further condemned the international repercussions of Shanghai's policies, asserting that 'lockdowns disrupted global supply chains' and positioning Shanghai as a negative case study in international comparisons.

Social and political issues also drew some negative commentary, with keywords indicating foreign netizens primarily focused on rising property prices and social stratification. Some commentators deemed living costs in Shanghai and Hong Kong 'quite exigent'; Certain media outlets criticised the policies, such as the Council on Foreign Relations' commentary that 'the fact that the PRC government is buying shares in the Shanghai market is the Chinese version of dropping money from helicopters' – implying that the Chinese government's purchase of Shanghai stocks was a short-sighted 'money-dropping' exercise.

In summary, Shanghai's portrayal in international new media content primarily highlights its robust economic strength, technological innovation capabilities, and image as a globalised city. Most media outlets, particularly those from countries participating in China's Free Trade Zone cooperation and along the Belt and Road routes, have constructed a positive image of Shanghai. This indirectly reflects the remarkable effectiveness of Shanghai's policies in developing its Free Trade Zone and encouraging technological innovation. However, in recent years, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting global circumstances, [14] both China's and Shanghai's international image have suffered negative repercussions. Certain media outlets have raised questions about Shanghai's political and social landscape, thereby hindering the construction of a positive and comprehensive image of the city on the global stage.

5. DISCUSSION& REFLECTION

(1) Insights Based on Corpus Analysis

Shanghai needs to introduce diversified content and media in the international dissemination of its image. Statistical results indicate that the international perception of Shanghai's image remains largely confined to its economic level and related industrial development. This impression was explicitly mentioned as early as 1999 in the *Shanghai City Master Plan (1999–2020)* ("basically establishing Shanghai's status as an international economic center"). Therefore, in the context of a new era, it is necessary to focus on other aspects to comprehensively construct a richer image of Shanghai. The *Shanghai City Master Plan (2017–2035)* proposes to "strive to build Shanghai into an innovative city, a city of humanity, an ecological city, an excellent global city, and a modern socialist international metropolis." Statistical results show that in recent corpus data, there remain doubts regarding Shanghai's environmental quality and external inclusiveness, some of which stem from Western stereotypes and biases. Therefore, in external publicity, it is essential to highlight Shanghai's achievements in environmental optimization and its inclusive cultural atmosphere, while improving the government's image to mitigate the impact of misconceptions in foreign political propaganda. Additionally, statistics reveal that the international audience's primary impression of Shanghai is concentrated at the societal level, often perceiving Shanghai's economy and culture from the perspective of international exchanges, with insufficient understanding of personal-level etiquette, customs, etc. This can easily alienate audiences from different cultural backgrounds. Hence, external publicity can more frequently adopt the perspectives of Shanghai's local residents or newcomers, the elderly, middle-aged, or young people, to narrate the living style of Shanghai. This approach helps evoke resonance, enhance credibility, and bridge the distance with international audiences.

Perfecting the media matrix is equally crucial in international image building. By employing omnimedia, multi-channel, and multi-angle publicity coverage, the promotion of Shanghai's image can be made more efficient. The omnimedia strategy aims to combine various media forms such as online platforms, television, and print media to expand audience reach and improve communication efficiency. Against the backdrop of the explosive growth of self-media on social platforms, fully utilizing various online platforms is of great significance. By integrating multiple forms such as videos, images, and text, and combining official guidance with citizen

perspectives, it is possible to adapt to audiences across various platforms and meet the needs of viewers from different countries, thereby achieving comprehensive and high-efficiency dissemination.

Furthermore, Shanghai's image is inseparable from China's international image. The construction of Shanghai's image must also align with the direction of shaping China's international image to jointly break down barriers of prejudice. As seen from statistical results, under the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, some Western media deliberately guided and disseminated false information, negatively affecting the international image of Shanghai and even China. Most negative evaluations on online platforms are related to the COVID-19 pandemic and government policies. For a long time, there has been a historical disconnect between the discourse system dominated by Western countries and China's rapid development. Constructing a discourse system that belongs to China itself to "self-shape" an international image with "Chinese characteristics," firmly grasping the initiative in image-building and the moral high ground, is an inevitable requirement for development. [15] Shanghai's image-building must also break free from the mindset of the Western discourse system, integrate the spirit of the times in China into external publicity content, and adopt communication forms that are easily accepted by the audience based on data surveys. This will subtly influence one-sided stereotypes, thereby creating a more authentic, multi-dimensional, and influential image of Shanghai.

(2) Limitations of This Study and Suggestions for Future Research

This study conducted a detailed analysis of entries from the News on the Web (NOW) and Global Web-Based English (GloWbE) sub-corpora within the English Corpora online database (<https://www.english-corpora.org/>), covering the period from January 20, 2020, to January 8, 2024. The collected corpus consists partly of reports from foreign news media and partly of comments from English-language online platforms (including posts, comments, etc.) related to the keyword "Shanghai." This effectively reflects the impressions of overseas official and non-official sources, as well as group and individual users, toward Shanghai. Notwithstanding, the study is subject to limitations imposed by the corpus's own data volume constraints, including a limited coverage of countries, regions, and websites. The selected time frame was significantly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted the selection of topic keywords and made it more challenging to reflect changes in image over time.

Future research could focus on the changing trends of Shanghai's international image over a broader temporal scope and its influencing factors. For instance, exploring whether a variable correlation exists between the global economic situation and Shanghai's image, or whether positive/negative tendencies in Shanghai's image during specific periods are influenced by domestic and international communication methods or policies. Adopting a macro, historical perspective to summarize developmental patterns, combined with more theories from communication and psychology to analyze impact pathways, would better contribute to constructing a discourse system that mitigates negative impacts and enhances Chinese narratives. Collecting more comprehensive and higher-relevance corpora could also provide reliable references for analyzing and exploring the development trends of Shanghai's international image, enhancing Shanghai's global influence, and constructing a comprehensive and effective external communication discourse system.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has employed a corpus-assisted discourse analysis approach to systematically examine the construction and dissemination of Shanghai's international image on new media platforms from 2020 to 2024. The findings reveal a multifaceted portrayal, characterized by a dominant and positive narrative surrounding Shanghai's economic prowess, technological innovation, and role in international cooperation, intertwined with significant negative discourses primarily linked to global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The analysis confirms that international media attention remains heavily concentrated on Shanghai's function as an economic and financial hub, with its achievements in trade, investment, and high-tech sectors receiving widespread recognition. This aligns with

the city's long-standing strategic goals and underscores its perceived success in these domains. Simultaneously, the research highlights the vulnerability of a city's international image to external shocks. The pandemic period triggered a surge in negative reporting focused on public health management and social policies, demonstrating how global events can be filtered through specific media lenses and geopolitical perspectives, thereby impacting perceptual landscapes.

Beyond diagnosing the current state, this study contributes to the field by proposing actionable pathways for enhancing Shanghai's international communication efficacy. It argues for a strategic shift from a predominantly economic narrative to a more diversified and holistic portrayal that encompasses the city's ecological progress, cultural vibrancy, and social efficiency as outlined in its development blueprints. The imperative to build a sophisticated, multi-channel media matrix that leverages both official and grassroots perspectives is emphasized as key to reaching diverse global audiences. Crucially, the research reinforces the intrinsic link between the image of Shanghai and that of China, advocating for an integrated communication strategy that actively shapes discourse to counter biases and present a more authentic, multidimensional narrative.

While constrained by the temporal scope and corpus limitations, this research validates the utility of corpus-based methods for quantifying and qualifying urban image projection in the digital age. It provides a data-informed foundation for understanding how Shanghai is perceived internationally and charts a course for more nuanced and resilient image-building practices. Future research expanding the temporal and linguistic scope of analysis will be invaluable in tracking the evolution of Shanghai's global image and refining strategies for strengthening China's international narrative power through its leading metropolises. Ultimately, effectively communicating Shanghai's story is not merely about promoting a city but about facilitating a more accurate and comprehensive global understanding of China's development and its contributions to the world.

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