

# Spreading Japan's National Image through China during the Era of Mass Tourism: The Japan National Tourism Organization's Use of Sina Weibo

Abigail Qian Zhou

**Abstract**—Since China has entered an era of mass tourism, there has been a fundamental change in the way Chinese people approach and perceive the image of other countries. With the advent of the new media era, social networking sites such as Sina Weibo have become a tool for many foreign governmental organizations to spread and promote their national image. Among them, the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) was one of the first foreign official tourism agencies to register with Sina Weibo and actively implement communication activities. Due to historical and political reasons, cognition of Japan's national image by the Chinese has always been complicated and contradictory. However, since 2015, China has become the largest source of tourists visiting Japan. This clearly indicates that the broadening of Japan's national image in China has been effective and has value worthy of reference in promoting a positive Chinese perception of Japan and encouraging Japanese tourism. Within this context and using the method of content analysis in media studies through content mining software, this study analyzed how JNTO's Sina Weibo accounts have constructed and spread Japan's national image. This study also summarized the characteristics of its content and form, and finally revealed the strategy of JNTO in building its international image. The findings of this study not only add a tourism-based perspective to traditional national image communications research, but also provide some reference for the effective international dissemination of national image in the future.

**Keywords**—National image, tourism, international communication, Japan, China.

## I. INTRODUCTION

WITH the development of society, the heat of China's tourism market continues to rise. The number of domestic tourists, travelling an average of four times per year, in China reached 5.5 billion in 2018, demonstrating that China has entered an era of mass tourism [1]. Tourism is not only an economic industry, but also an important channel for disseminating national image<sup>1</sup>. In this new era, the Chinese have changed significantly in terms of the perception of other countries through contact and image representation. Today, China is also in an era of new media; new media and tourism are becoming more closely linked and new media now provides important access to tourism information for the Chinese. Therefore, social networking sites such as Sina Weibo<sup>2</sup> have

become a tool for many foreign institutions to spread and promote the images of their countries, and thus, have become a platform for tourism marketing.

On July 22, 2010, the JNTO began posting blog articles on the microblogging website, Sina Weibo, becoming one of the first overseas tourism agencies to use Sina Weibo. So far, JNTO's Sina Weibo account, which includes texts, pictures, video information, and use of the Weibo marketing form, has fully displayed and advertised Japan's beautiful natural scenery, as well as its unique customs and practices, implicitly narrowing the psychological distance between Japan and China and attracting more Chinese travelers. Although the Chinese's cognition and perception of Japan's national image have always been complex and contradictory for historical and political reasons, China has been Japan's largest source of tourists since 2015. According to JNTO's data, not only is the number of Chinese tourists visiting Japan since 2015 the largest, but consumer spending by Chinese in Japan is the largest among foreign tourists [2]. This shows that, in this era of mass tourism, the promotion of Japan's national image by the new media is quite effective and worthy of reference for enhancing the Chinese perception of Japan, as well as promoting Japanese tourism.

Based on this background, the current study focuses on JNTO's Sina Weibo account in 2019 by adopting a content analysis methodology for media research, analyzing the construction and output of Japan's national image through content mining software, and revealing its characteristics in the dissemination of content and form. The author believes that results obtained through this analysis not only add a perspective for tourism research different from traditional national image dissemination research, but also have important significance for effective development of a plan for international dissemination of one's national image. In the meantime, this study can also offer some references for media related departments in the tourism industry.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. National Image Research

This study surveyed research on national image in China and the West and found that this research has mainly unfolded from three fields: international relations [3], economics [4], and

A.Q. Zhou is an associate professor with the Faculty of Media and Communication, Hokkaido University, Hokkaido, 060-0817 Japan (phone and fax: +81-11-706-6941; e-mail: zhou1qian4@gmail.com).

<sup>1</sup> Based on media research, this study defines *national image* as the image of a country in cross-border media flow.

<sup>2</sup> Sina Weibo is China's most influential social media platform, is a user relationship-based social networking platform of information sharing,

dissemination, and access. Users can access WEB, WAP, and other clients, update information with text up to 140 words on this platform, achieving instant sharing and social contact.

media research [5].

Among them, scholars in the field of international relations focused on the influence of macro factors such as national strength, culture, and threats or opportunities for national image. However, their research lacks substantive analysis of the dissemination of national image from the practical and micro levels. Scholars in the field of economics, mostly from the perspective of marketing and brand research, mainly discussed the importance of national brand images in commercial competition, aiming to measure and construct national reputation. Unfortunately, economists failed to realize that the country, while it can be seen as a brand, is not directly sold as a commodity, and thus did not explore the mechanisms through which a national image can transform into a national brand. Media scholars mainly focused on describing the current situation of national image, discussing the relationship between national image dissemination and emergencies, and aspects such as media strategies for national image dissemination. Since their research objects were mostly traditional media, these studies lacked analysis of dissemination through the new media and also failed to reveal the changes new media brought to the production and dissemination of national image. In addition, this study noted that with the further development of mass tourism, the media has become an effective way to spread national image for tourism, yet current national image research lacks perspective from tourism research. Therefore, this study will add a tourism research perspective to the existing research on national image, creating an interdisciplinary argument.

#### *B. Study on Imaging the Tourist Destination*

The tourist destination image is an important concept in the field of tourism research. After taking a general survey into such studies, this study found that some tourist scholars defined the image of tourist destinations from a psychological perspective, emphasizing the perception, impression, or psychological representation of tourists as the subject and the tourist destination as the object [6]. Some tourism scholars focused more on practical research, such as image building and planning, arguing that the representation of a tourist destination should include tourist sites and tourists, or project images and acceptance images [7]. Although tourism scholars still do not agree on the concept of tourist destination image, most scholars divide the image of a tourist destination into three aspects for analysis: cognitive image<sup>3</sup>, emotional image<sup>4</sup>, and overall image [8]. Therefore, this study adopts the method of tourism destination image research and the analysis of the aspects of cognition, emotion, and overall understanding in order to fully explore the image of Japan as a country built and exported by JNTO's Sina Weibo account.

Today, in China, Sina Weibo is a medium of communication for tourism information and has the window function of displaying a destination's image; however, this study carried

out a title search in China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) using micro blog and tourism image as keywords, and found that there is currently little research on the tourist destination image. Moreover, the limited studies mostly focused on how to use micro blogs to disseminate an image of urban tourism [9]. As such, they lack related analysis and discussion on how micro blogging spreads national image. Therefore, this study hopes to fill the gap in such studies by analyzing Japan's national image as built and exported by JNTO's Sina Weibo account.

#### *C. Research on the Image of Japan in China*

In media research, national image often refers to how a country's general appearance (including the country's behavior, spiritual temperament, and objective status) is carried out through specific visual representation and discursive construction via the external other (including country, society, organization, and individual) based on certain cultural meanings using language, words, symbols, etc. This term also refers to comprehensive reflection on the impressions, opinions, attitudes, and evaluation of a country by the external other. In recent years, scholars from both China and Japan have conducted research on Japan's national image through the eyes of the Chinese, but most of these studies focused on analyzing the output of Japanese pop culture in China, such as anime and music [10], or image construction of Japan in traditional media like Chinese newspapers, films, and literary works (e.g. [11]). In contrast, this study found that, with the flurry of Chinese tourists traveling to Japan today, no scholar has explored the relationship between Japan's national image and tourism, nor analyzed the spread of Japan's image from the perspective of new media. Therefore, in the context of the current era, this study will try to fill the gaps in such studies by analyzing JNTO's Sina Weibo account to reveal a crucial element of the current state of the spread of Japan's national image through China.

### III. METHOD

This study used all texts (a total of 337 articles) posted on Weibo between January 1 – October 1, 2019 as analytical samples (including Chinese New Year, winter vacation, May Day, summer vacation, and national holidays). From November 25 to November 30, 2019, adopting JNTO's official Sina Weibo account as the research object, the study carried out a content analysis<sup>5</sup> on the content and form of JNTO's dissemination. At the same time, the study also used ROST CM 6.0 content mining software to carry out format finishing, word segmentation, and word frequency statistics, etc., of the selected JNTO Weibo text content, obtaining a list of high-frequency words in JNTO micro blog text describing Japan's national image and their frequencies (due to limited space, only the top 80 words are listed) (Table I).

<sup>3</sup> Cognitive image refers to a tourist's cognition of the various attributes of tourist destinations (natural environment, local culture, service facilities, social environment, residents' attitude, landscape attractions, traffic conditions, climate, etc.).

<sup>4</sup> Emotional image refers to the emotional reaction of tourists to the various attributes of tourist destinations.

<sup>5</sup> Content analysis is a research technique that conducts objective, systematic, and quantitative examination of disseminated content of clear characteristics [12].

TABLE I  
HIGH-FREQUENCY WORD STATISTICS

| Order | Word             | Freq. | Order | Word                | Freq. |
|-------|------------------|-------|-------|---------------------|-------|
| 1     | Japan            | (638) | 41    | skiing              | (29)  |
| 2     | tour             | (427) | 42    | expectation         | (28)  |
| 3     | safety           | (240) | 43    | center              | (28)  |
| 4     | micro blog       | (231) | 44    | appreciation        | (28)  |
| 5     | website          | (141) | 45    | popularity          | (28)  |
| 6     | Tokyo            | (101) | 46    | ride                | (27)  |
| 7     | Hokkaido         | (95)  | 47    | convention          | (27)  |
| 8     | hot spring       | (80)  | 48    | local               | (27)  |
| 9     | time             | (73)  | 49    | site                | (27)  |
| 10    | experience       | (62)  | 50    | weather             | (26)  |
| 11    | daily            | (60)  | 51    | forest              | (26)  |
| 12    | fresh news       | (58)  | 52    | zoo                 | (26)  |
| 13    | sakura           | (57)  | 53    | northeast           | (26)  |
| 14    | Akita            | (53)  | 54    | annual              | (26)  |
| 15    | Kyoto            | (53)  | 55    | miss                | (26)  |
| 16    | food             | (51)  | 56    | fireworks           | (26)  |
| 17    | park             | (50)  | 57    | qualify             | (25)  |
| 18    | culture          | (48)  | 58    | torii               | (25)  |
| 19    | region           | (47)  | 59    | period              | (25)  |
| 20    | lucky draw       | (46)  | 60    | Yamagata Prefecture | (25)  |
| 21    | feelings         | (44)  | 61    | summer              | (25)  |
| 22    | Osaka            | (42)  | 62    | train               | (25)  |
| 23    | Kyushu           | (42)  | 63    | minute              | (24)  |
| 24    | attractions      | (42)  | 64    | beautiful           | (24)  |
| 25    | traffic          | (39)  | 65    | paradise            | (24)  |
| 26    | spring           | (37)  | 66    | nature              | (24)  |
| 27    | enjoy            | (37)  | 67    | tradition           | (24)  |
| 28    | romance          | (36)  | 68    | nation              | (24)  |
| 29    | splendid         | (36)  | 69    | charm               | (23)  |
| 30    | official         | (35)  | 70    | Sakuragari          | (23)  |
| 31    | art gallery      | (33)  | 71    | Fuji                | (23)  |
| 32    | new year         | (33)  | 72    | tourist             | (23)  |
| 33    | Akita Prefecture | (32)  | 73    | prize               | (23)  |
| 34    | Yen              | (32)  | 74    | present             | (23)  |
| 35    | history          | (32)  | 75    | airport             | (23)  |
| 36    | Hakone           | (31)  | 76    | manufacture         | (22)  |
| 37    | art              | (31)  | 77    | China               | (22)  |
| 38    | place            | (30)  | 78    | red leaf            | (22)  |
| 39    | parent-child     | (29)  | 79    | platform            | (22)  |
| 40    | spring scenery   | (29)  | 80    | pearl               | (21)  |

For further analysis of correlations regarding high-frequency feature words in JNTO micro blog texts, this study also carried out a co-word analysis by: 1) putting texts after word segmentation into the ROST CM 6.0 semantic network and social network generation tool; 2) launching the Netdraw tool in the ROST CM 6.0 software; and 3) generating a semantic network diagram (Fig. 1). As shown in Fig. 1, JNTO's micro blog texts use the key word Japan as the center of the distribution, demonstrating that JNTO's output comprises Japan's main national image. This is directly connected to Japan and represented attractions such as Hokkaido, Tokyo, and Kyoto, and the words history, tourism, food, transportation, and safety in Japan. The second most important keyword, tourism, is also surrounded by Tokyo, Hokkaido, and other keywords of represented attractions, as well as hot springs, enjoy,

experience, feelings, and other words related to tourism.

On the basis of content analysis and word frequency statistics, this study extracted the theme and content of Japan's national image and analyzed the cognitive and emotional aspects of Japan's national image.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### A. Disseminated Content of the JNTO Micro Blog

The content of JNTO micro blogs can be divided into two categories: tourism and non-tourism information. Among them, tourism information is dominant and non-tourism information serves as auxiliary. In 337 micro blogs, 316 (94%) relate to tourism information, while only 21 (6%) are relegated to non-tourism information (Fig. 2).

The official Weibo account of JNTO conveys to Chinese internet-savvy citizens the cognitive image of Japan's beautiful natural landscapes and rich cultural heritage, including its leisure activities, convenient transportation and information services, safe social environment and warm atmosphere, regional food with special flavors, and modern cities, as well as the emotional image associated with a *romantic, splendid, beautiful, charm(ing), cute, and wonderful* Japan. Specific categories are as follows:

##### 1. Tourism Information

The dominant information posted to the official Weibo account of JNTO focuses on Japan's domestic tourism. The professionalism and practicality of this tourism micro blog is apparent. The 316 blogs offering tourism information can be divided into the following six categories (Fig. 3).

Among them, ranking first is micro blog content on recommended tourist attractions with a total of 110 micro blogs, accounting for 35.0%. Most of these are concentrated on regions in Japan such as Kanto, Hokkaido, Chubu, Kinki, and Kyushu (Fig. 4).

In second place is tourism-related interaction information, with a total of 87 micro blogs, accounting for 28.0%. This part of the content is the most interactive, primarily promoting exhibition information and interaction with net users. For example, beautiful Hokkaido, have a good time in the spring, any fan who forwards this video will have the opportunity to get a total of 12 prizes introduced in the video, including the peripheral gifts of Doraemon, the small eight-tone box, the Hi-Go travel gift box, etc., which will be randomly presented to 12 fans in a raffle, I hope this luck can give you a different romantic feeling! Forwarding activity reached 4,685 and there were 1,559 comments. In addition, JNTO occasionally publishes free ticket information for certain attractions and discounts on related products. Any type of tourism commodity fair, etc., not only can bring tangible benefits to Chinese net citizens preparing to travel to Japan, but can also effectively promote Japan's tourism information, thus achieving mutual benefit. It can be said, then, that actively launched micro blog marketing activities not only create topics, quickly attract fans, and improve brand awareness, but also stimulate favorability, attention, and attachment from Chinese net citizens reading

JNTO's official micro blog.

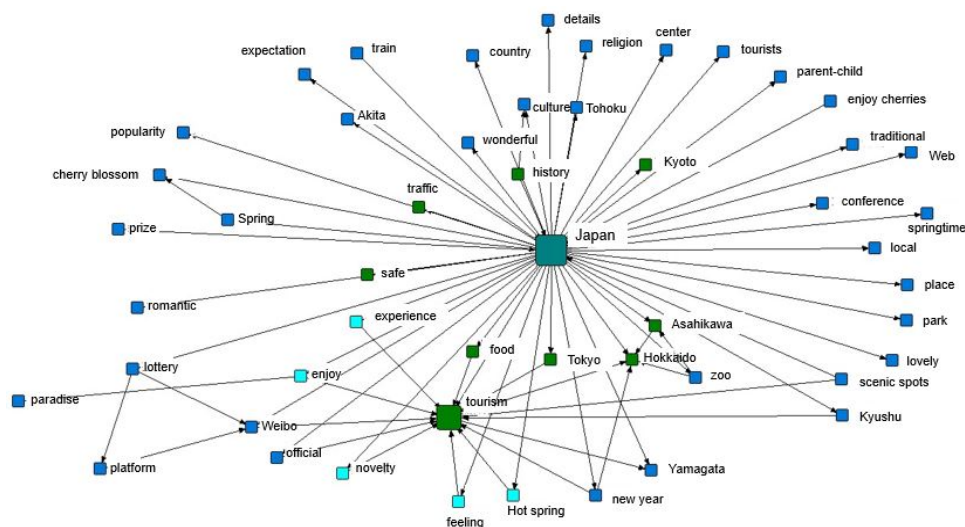


Fig. 1 Semantic network diagram of high-frequency words

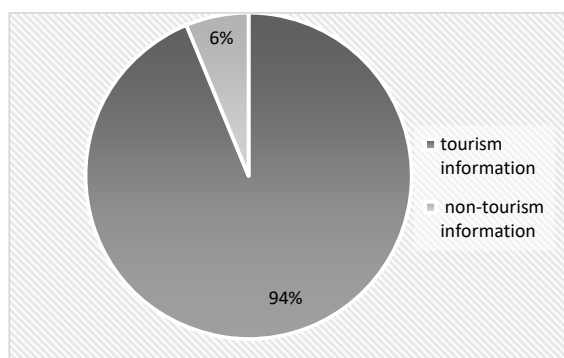


Fig. 2 Categories of JNTO micro blog content

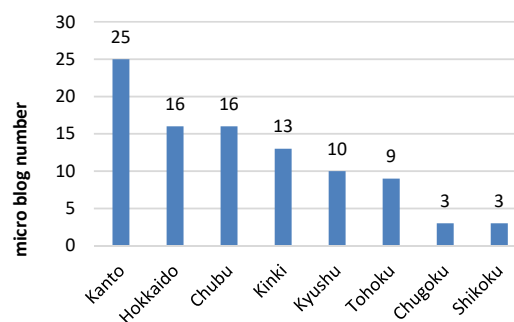


Fig. 4 Distribution of recommended tourist attractions by region

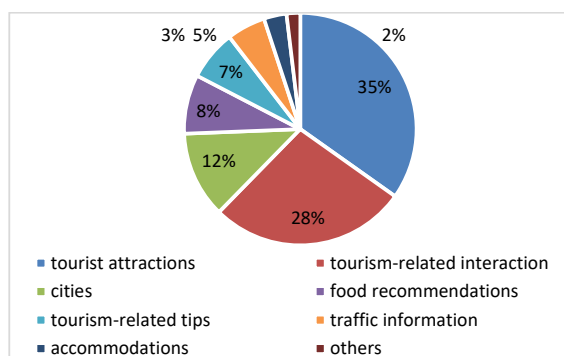


Fig. 3 Categories of tourism content

In third place is micro blog content on Japanese cities, with a total of 38 micro blogs, accounting for 12.0%, that recommended visiting key cities, including Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka, that are mainly distributed in the Kanto region, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and other places (Fig. 5).

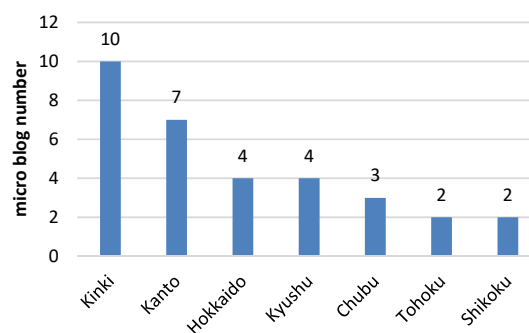


Fig. 5 Regional distribution of city information

In fourth place is micro blog content on food recommendations, with a total of 26 micro blogs, accounting for 8.0%. The top ten phrases used in these contents are Kobe beef, sushi, Okinawa Awamori, tea ceremony, Mie Prefecture cuisine, Hakodate's Lucky Pierrot, riverbed cuisine, Yubari Hami melon jelly, sea urchin over rice, and Asahikawa ramen. This food information received keen attention from Chinese net

citizens, having been forwarded and commented most frequently.

In fifth place are tourism-related tips, with 22 micro blogs, accounting for 7.0%. This aspect mainly includes weather forecasts, information on checking baggage, and other tourism-related topics.

In final place is micro blog text focusing on traffic information, accounting for 5.0%, with a total of 17 micro blogs, most of which discuss Japan's Kanto region traffic map and recommended routes (Fig. 6).

In JNTO's micro blog content, there is little information on accommodations, accounting for only 3.0% at ten articles. Most of this content includes hotel discounts and other promotional information, mainly offering benefits to Chinese tourists planning to visit Japan.

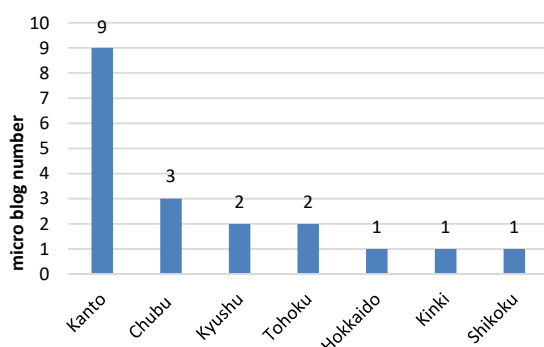


Fig. 6 Regional distribution of traffic information

In general, tourism information is the focus of content released by JNTO, including three major topics on Japan: recommended attractions, information on cities, and ideas for dining out. Travel tips and traffic information compose practical advice provided to Chinese tourists planning to visit Japan and, to a certain extent, also receive the most attention from Chinese net citizens. This reflects the efficiency of new media dissemination for all kinds of interactive information. It can be said that JNTO fully understands the needs of Chinese net citizens, mobilizes their enthusiasm to participate by organizing raffles, quizzes, and online voting, JNTO's interactive approach has undoubtedly gathered popularity and attracted more attention in this era of traffic-winning dissemination.

## 2. Non-Tourism Information

Non-tourism information and tourism promotion are not directly related, but their interaction can affect the effectiveness of micro blog dissemination and, thus, is indispensable for increasing fan loyalty. Of the 21 non-tourism content posts, 16 are introductions to Japanese folk culture, accounting for 76.0%, one includes celebrity information, accounting for 5.0%, and four discuss other information, accounting for 19.0% (Fig. 7).

Among them, information on folk culture is highly represented and has great influence on enhancing the Chinese net citizen's cognition of Japanese culture. Celebrity

information includes text on the Chinese writer Lu Xun and Japan, and, as such, helps to narrow the psychological distance between China's net citizens and Japan, by magnifying the celebrity effect to turn a favorable impression of the celebrity into a favorable impression of Japan as a country.

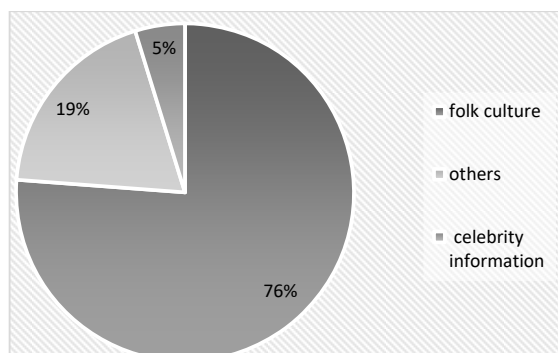


Fig. 7 Content distribution of non-tourism information

## 3. Cognitive Image

According to the high-frequency feature word list (Table I), this study found that JNTO's official micro blog created six themes for Japan's national image in order of word frequency:

- (1) Its beautiful natural landscape and rich cultural heritage. For example, *Hokkaido* (95 times) and *Mount Fuji* (19 times) are representative of Japan's natural landscapes. As Japan's national flower, *sakura* (57 times) adds layers and connotations to the image of a natural landscape as containing mountains and lakes. *Art gallery* (33 times), *zoo* (26 times), *paradise* (24 times), and more specific themes offer visitors with more choices, thereby expanding the audience.
- (2) The variety of recreational activities. For example, *hot springs* (80 times), *skiing* (29 times), *Fireworks Conference* (20 times), and so on, reflect the rich variety of leisure activities in Japan, and through these recommendations, visitors are more exposed to Japanese customs.
- (3) A safe social environment and a warm atmosphere. For example, high-frequency words such as *safety* (240 times), *culture* (48 times), *art* (31 times), and *tradition* (24 times) reflect that Japan is a country of social safety, cultural and artistic prosperity, and a combination of tradition and modernity. In addition, *little partner* (17 times), *friends* (16 times), and other high-frequency words are used to show Chinese net citizens Japan's warm and friendly image.
- (4) Convenient transportation and information services. For example, high-frequency words such as *traffic* (39 times), *airport* (23 times), and *subway* (9 times) reflect Japan's convenient transportation networks. Along with micro blog content introducing restaurants and attractions, addresses, corresponding subway lines, exits, and other details are generally given. At the same time, the micro blog also provides a lot of information services regarding airport announcements, tax rebates, and visa-free entry for tourists.

- (5) Japanese food with special flavors. For example, *food* (51 times), *cuisine* (15 times), *ramen* (13 times), and *seafood* (10 times).
- (6) Modern cities. For example, *Tokyo* (101 times), *Osaka* (42 times), etc.

#### 4. Emotional Image

According to the semantic network diagram (Fig. 1), this study found that emotional words and their frequencies in JNTO's micro blogs, respectively, include romance (36 times), splendid (36 times), beautiful (24 times), charm (23 times), cute (21 times), wonderful (17 times), ease (17 times), fantasy (16 times), and convenience (13 times), etc. Among them, romance, feelings, and similar words are often used together; the word splendid often appears in promotional articles with tour experience routes for parent-child tours; cute mostly appears in blog articles about Japanese theme parks, such as Hello Kitty Park and Kokuei Hitachi Seaside Park.

Judging from the frequency of emotional words appearing in micro blogs, the word frequency for emotional image is lower than that for cognitive image, which shows that the JNTO micro blog transmitted more cognitive images than emotional connections. Nevertheless, JNTO exported to Chinese net citizens the Japanese emotional image associated with words like romance, splendid, beautiful, charm, cute, and wonderful. Overall, JNTO's micro blog contents contain positive emotions.

#### 5. Overall Image

To sum up, JNTO's official Weibo account providing Chinese net citizens with practical information on Japan and timely tourism information is an important channel for Chinese net citizens to understand Japan while also serving as a window to showcase Japan's national image. The constructed and exported cognitive image of Japan by JNTO's Weibo account can be summarized into six main themes: beautiful natural landscape and rich cultural heritage, variety of recreational activities, positive social environment and warm atmosphere, convenient transportation and information services, Japanese cuisine, and modern cities. While building an attractive cognitive image of Japan, JNTO's micro blog also builds an emotional image through words such as romance (36 times), splendid (36 times), beautiful (24 times), charm (23 times), cute (21 times), wonderful (17 times), ease (17 times), fantasy (16 times), convenience (13 times), and so on. These words of emotional complement Japan's beautiful national image and are conducive to stimulating more Chinese travel to Japan.

#### B. The form of Dissemination of JNTO's Micro Blog

##### 1. Manifestation of Multimedia

JNTO's official Weibo account integrates images, short links, videos, and other multimedia elements into micro blogs for comprehensive and efficient dissemination of Japan's national image (Fig. 8).

Among those surveyed, 286 micro blogs included photographs, accounting for 85%. This shows that JNTO's official micro blog relegates high attention to the use of images, makes full use of the visual appeal of pictures, and knows how

to use visual language to achieve better dissemination results. In terms of accompanying links, 121 micro blogs, accounting for 36%, include links. This is due to Weibo's 140-word limit; when the intended content is not fully described, links or longer micro blogs can be used to expand on given information. In addition, 32 micro blogs have attached videos. This suggests that JNTO's official micro blog does not pay as much attention to videos as to pictures and links.

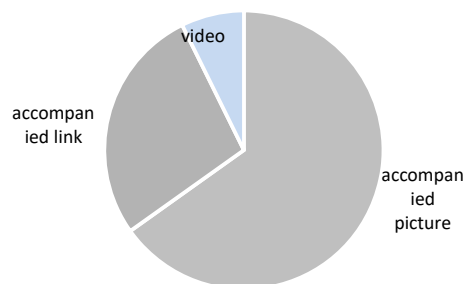


Fig. 8 Media types

#### 2. Multiple Forms of Interaction

A variety of interactions have been adopted by the JNTO official micro blog, mainly reflected in the following three aspects:

- (1) Active participation in micro-topics. There are 211 micro blogs containing micro-topics, accounting for 62.7%. A micro-topic is a topic word-related page supplemented, modified, and edited by the topic host and based on the micro blog hot spots, personal interests, net citizens discussions, and content of other channels. When posting a micro blog, the topic word is posted as a keyword inside a double pound sign. Weibo users can visit the topic page and post a micro blog for public discussion. The topic page will automatically include relevant micro blogs containing the topic word. The micro-topic mode is a sharp weapon for interaction and enhancing affinity. Micro-topics in JNTO official micro blogs have directly participated in micro-topics launched by other verified micro blogs, as well as actively launching new micro-topics. This demonstrates the efforts of JNTO to actively participate in interactions with Chinese net citizens through its official micro blog.
- (2) Use @ function to achieve point-to-point dissemination. There are 28 micro blogs containing the @ function, accounting for 8.3%. In the vast network of information, getting necessary information in a timely manner is difficult. The @ function is a personalized recommending tool, mainly used by adding a user name after @ to directly push the information to the designated Weibo user, achieving point-to-point dissemination so as to improve the efficiency of information transmission. Use of the @ function in JNTO official micro blog has a double effect: The first is improving the efficiency of dissemination from point to point, while recommending information to a specific group of Weibo users. The second is promoting other Japanese Weibo accounts to achieve the combined

promotion of related accounts, enhancing the effect and improving efficiency by using the authority of the official micro blog and the @ function to relate to other accounts similar to JNTO.

- (3) Increase the frequency of interaction with net citizens and create a populist effect. There are 39 micro blogs with interactive words or prolific forwarding, accounting for 11.6%. The interaction here involves two aspects: one is interactive words, such as *come quickly, I hope this luck can bring you a different romantic feeling*, and so on. The second includes modes of physical participation by net users, such as calling friends to forward the micro blog in attempts to win tickets and gifts, etc. It is clear that JNTO's official micro blog focuses on interaction and communication with Chinese net citizens. On one hand, it answers questions and responds to fan comments in a timely manner, ensuring the activeness and value of the micro blog. On the other hand, it actively organizes and plans interactive topics, uses interactive words, fully mobilizes the enthusiasm of net citizens to participate, and expands their influence and popularity.

#### V.CONCLUSION

In summary, in the content distribution of JNTO's official micro blog, tourism information is dominant. Through the release of information such as attraction recommendations, city introductions, food recommendations, and so on, JNTO offered Chinese net citizens a cognitive image of Japan as having beautiful natural landscapes and rich cultural heritage, rich and colorful leisure activities, a safe social environment and warm atmosphere, convenient transportation and information services, special flavors of Japanese cuisine, and modern cities, as well as an emotional image of Japan as *romantic, splendid, beautiful, charming, cute, and wonderful*. At the same time, through the introduction of exciting activities and increasing their exposure, JNTO's official micro blog created a mode of both online and offline interaction with Chinese net citizens as it detailed domestic tour accommodations, transportation routes, convenience tips, and other information on Japan, providing conveniences in accommodations, tours, shopping, entertainment, and other aspects of travel for Chinese net citizens to visit Japan. Although compared to tourism information, non-tourism information in JNTO's official micro blog accounted for a small proportion, this non-tourism information played an inestimable role in Japan's national image publicity and promotion, not only strengthening the compatibility of the platform, but also stimulating desire of Chinese net citizens to participate. The effect was to create a unique charm for Japan and help increase the favorable opinion of Japan among Chinese net citizens. In addition, JNTO's official micro blog integrated multi-channel resources, multimedia tools, and diverse interaction modes in its chosen dissemination forms and techniques to enhance the effectiveness of spreading Japan's national image.

In a word, this study has made up for the shortcomings of related research on national image, tourist destination image, and the image of Japan in China, etc., by analyzing JNTO's

official micro blog and detailing how it both built and advertised Japan's national image. The results of this study not only add a different perspective from that of tourism propaganda to traditional national image dissemination research, but also provide an important reference for effective international dissemination of national image in the future. However, there are some limitations and shortcomings to this study that require further study. First, this study only includes content from a defined period of time from JNTO's official micro blog in its sample, and the number of samples selected is insufficient for a comprehensive exploration of the spread of Japan's national image in China. Secondly, because a micro blog contains texts, pictures, videos, music, emoticons, links, related comments, and other types of information, and since this study only focuses on text in the blog, future research needs to integrate various types of media resources, such as related websites, blogs, WeChat, newspapers, magazines, brochures, etc., and carry out comparative research to further develop understanding of the spread of Japan's national image in China. Third, this study notes that the formation process of national image is affected by the individual audience, so image research based on micro blog content analysis needs to be combined with audience research in the future. As such, it will be necessary to add interview methods, questionnaires, and other qualitative analytical methods to future studies. Direct surveys of Chinese net citizens and Chinese tourists visiting Japan should be conducted, as well, to assess overall perception of the cognitive and emotional images of Japan as a nation.

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**Abigail Qian Zhou** is an associate professor at the Graduate School of International Media, Communication, and Tourism Studies at Hokkaido University in Japan. Her main research areas are media studies, social stratum research, consumption studies, and comparative Asian sociology.