IShowSpeed's Digital 'Diplomacy Experiment': Research on the Construction of China's Image through Live streaming Comment Discourse

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Abstract: Previous studies on the construction of national image mostly relied on news reports, this study's data was selected from the emerging live streaming industry. From the perspective of critical discourse analysis, it explored the construction of the Chinese national image in the live streaming comment section of IShowSpeed. The research employs AntConc 4.2.1 for contextual analysis and Weiciyun for sentiment analysis, focusing on the use of high-frequency keywords, collocation analysis, and sentiment analysis. The findings reveal that under the unfiltered live streaming, the discourse in the comment section focus on the following themes: City Impressions; Live Broadcast Interaction; Cross-Cultural Communication and Chinese People; Emotional Experience; Cultural Symbols and High-Technology; Feelings and Intentions Regarding the Trip. These themes collectively construct the following images of China: (1) A authentic China that breaks through the narrative framework of Western discourse; (2) A national image that combines openness, inclusiveness, and hospitality; (3) A national image that combines modernization of urban governance with strong developmental momentum; (4) A national image that integrates historical depth with technological innovation.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; China's image; IShowSpeed; corpus; comment; live streaming

1.Introduction

The national image is one of the important components of a country's soft power, which can reflect a country's comprehensive strength and influence.

Therefore, the shaping and dissemination of the national image are highly valued by governments around the world (Zhu & Zhang, 2022). With the continuous increase of China's

comprehensive national strength, the study of China's national image has become a focal point of attention in disciplines such as journalism, international relations, and linguistics (Ma & Crosthwaite, 2026). In recent years, media discourse has attracted the attention of an increasing number of researchers. It is not only a reflection of reality but also an important part of social practice. Although its characteristics are determined by the social structure, it in turn affects and even constructs social reality (Jin, 2025; Mei, 2025). In recent years, the live streaming industry has rapidly developed, with an increasing number of viewers. Therefore, it is of significant practical importance to deeply explore how live streaming comments construct the image of China (Peng et al., 2024).

American internet celebrity IShowSpeed, whose real name is Darren Watkins Jr., started out as a game streamer and later found that his fans loved to watch his crazy acts. For example, he would bark like a dog when he lost a game, and during a live-streamed sleep, fans would spend money to set off firecrackers to wake him up. These "crazy" behaviors made him extremely popular abroad, and he has 37 million followers on YouTube alone.

Because of his extraordinary excitement and his exaggerated and rich facial expressions and body language during live-streaming, Chinese netizens affectionately gave him the nickname "Brother Jiakang". On March 24, 2025, IShowSpeed started his trip to China, and he held live-streams in eight cities, namely：Shanghai, Beijing, Zhengzhou, Chengdu, Chongqing, Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Changsha. The average duration of each live-stream was six hours, and the total number of views of the eight live-streams on YouTube alone exceeded 60 million.

From the bright night view of the Bund in Shanghai, to doing somersaults on the Great Wall, then learning Kongfu and meeting a master at Shaolin Temple, experiencing Sichuan Opera face-changing and traditional Chinese medicine pulse-taking in Chengdu, witnessing the BYD (Yangwang U8) submerging in the water in Chongqing, and experiencing drone-delivered food and dancing with robots in Shenzhen, each of his live-streams has attracted the enthusiastic attention of netizens around the world. Following his camera, foreign netizens have marvelled at China's modern life, high-technology, and long-standing culture. Through the "unfiltered" live-streaming, they have seen a vivid and real China without any script, presented in a one-take-shot manner. On March 27, 2025, the Chinese Embassy in the United States stated in a post: The 20-year-old popular American YouTuber IShowSpeed has kicked off a journey in China that has already garnered massive global attention, which indicates a broader trend of digital influencers bridging cultural gaps and creating alternative channels for foreign audiences to understand a vibrant China (Xu & Schneider, 2025). On April 1st, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' regular press conference, spokesperson Guo Jiakun stated that China's official diplomatic activities have become increasingly frequent recently, while people-to-people exchanges continue to thrive with remarkable vibrancy.

Overseas content creators have sparked a renewed "China wave" across the internet by using uncut live streams to present an authentic, unedited, and filter-free panorama of China.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) holds that discourse not only reflects society but also has an impact on it, and it is committed to revealing the ideological meanings and power relations behind language (Ato, 2025). There are many methods of critical discourse analysis, such as Fairclough (2013)'s three-dimensional discourse analysis, Wodak (2004)'s discourse-historical approach, Van Dijk (1998)'s social cognitive analysis method, Chilton (2004)'s discourse space theory, and so on.

With the rapid development of the live streaming industry, the discourse features of the interaction between traditional media and emerging online influencers have emerged. The comment discourse is not only direct feedback on the shaping of China's image by others, but also a construction field of discourse shaped by others. As of April 12, 2025, the total number of views of the videos of IShowSpeed's trip to China has exceeded 650 million times. While watching the videos, the audience left comments and discussions below the videos, expressing their own opinions. Based on the above analysis, this study adopts Fairclough (2013)'s three-dimensional discourse analysis model to deeply explore the comment discourse of the live streaming videos of IShowSpeed's trip to China and the construction of China's image. This study takes the comments under the eight videos of IShowSpeed's trip to China as the corpus and uses a crawler software to capture the messages in the comment section for analysis and research. It summarizes how overseas audiences' comments construct China's image. Based on the above considerations, the research questions of this study are:

(1) What issues do the comments on IShowSpeed's live streaming to China focus on?

(2) What kind of image of China is constructed by the comments on IShowSpeed's live streaming to China?

2.Literature Review

The research achievements on China's image in academic circles mostly come from disciplines such as journalism, international relations, intercultural studies, and literature. Chen and Nizam (2025) analyzed how the White Paper "China and the World in a New Era" interprets China's relations with the world and shapes an appropriate national image from the perspective of pragmatic identity. Qiao (2025) emphasized the need to have a full understanding and psychological preparation for the "unexpectedness" of the international communication of China's national image. It is necessary to go beyond egocentric thinking, continuously enhance the understanding of the "other", change the tendency toward simplistic external communication of the national image, and construct a positive international image of China, presenting to the outside world a three-dimensional, real, diverse, and dynamic China. Hou (2023) took the reports of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge on People's Daily Online as the corpus, examined the manifestation of intertextuality as a

discursive strategy in the agenda of the mass media, and summarized the processes and principles suitable for the mass media to construct the national image. Fu (2024) applied the corpus-assisted three-dimensional discourse analysis method. Starting from the micro-discourse perspective, he empirically investigated the construction of China's national image in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in *China Daily* and The *New York Times* through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. He analyzed the specific construction results and deep-seated motivations of both sides and summarized the construction effects of the former, with the aim of contributing to the construction of China's national image during and after the pandemic.

Li (2021) Using a multivariate framework and the most recently available data that include numerous African countries, this investigation has produced the first extensive statistical evaluation of China's image in Africa based on China's various economic relations with Africa, including aid, trade, FDI, and contracts. They find that China's economic development assistance, contracts, and to some degree, trade with African countries contribute to a positive image of China in Africa. Hellmann and Oppermann (2022) explored the effectiveness of photographs as instruments of public diplomacy through an analysis of China's visual storytelling during the COVID-19 outbreak. Through a survey experiment among 1,000 US adults, they demonstrated that such photographs had a positive effect on China's international image, but that this effect was moderated by levels of political knowledge among the target audience. Yang et al. (2021) delineated a direct association between China's country image, destination image, and travel intention. The study further considers misleading media coverage as a moderating role in this relationship. Academic and practical implications are also discussed based on the proposed framework.

Chen and Jin (2022) guided by the theoretical perspective of the discursive construction of images, systematically examined the connotations, types, and discursive practice methods of image construction, with the aim of proposing an operable analytical framework for future image research. Wei (2022) combined the theory of systemic functional linguistics with the ecological philosophical concept of "diversity, harmony, and interactive symbiosis" to construct an ecological transitivity analysis framework for the Chinese image and compared the construction of the ecological Chinese image in Chinese and foreign media and its transitivity features.

Zhang et al. (2023) conducted an empirical comparative study on the discourse of the spokespersons at the press conferences of the Chinese and American diplomatic departments. The study found that there are significant differences between the classification systems and modal systems at the lexical level, as well as the content selection and intertextuality strategies at the discursive level of the Chinese and American spokespersons. They respectively constructed different images such as "a co-builder of the community with a shared future for

mankind" and "the most formidable competitor of the United States" in terms of China's performance in dimensions such as its fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, economy, politics, military, and diplomacy. Ameyaw‐Brobbey (2024) explored China's African public relations and image-building effort, examining the interaction of economic development assistance, media, and public relations. The study demonstrated that the Chinese image-building effort in Nigeria is likely to enhance by linking economic investments with public relations to make the investments more visible through effective media representation.

Müller et al. (2024) investigated whether China's 'mask diplomacy' efforts influenced portrayals of the country in the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic. The study validated and applied a semi-supervised scaling method to 1.5 million English-language news articles mentioning China and Covid-19. Using multi-period difference-in-differences models, the study revealed that media tone improved significantly after mask diplomacy engagement. Lehman-Ludwig et al. (2023) analyzed several recent topics—the Belt and Road Initiative, climate change, the COVID-19 vaccine, the Beijing Olympics, and the conflict in Ukraine-on the r/Sino subreddit page of Reddit and compared them with two online news outlets, the South China Morning Post and China Daily. The study focused on how these media frame the narrative contest between a rising China and a declining West, thereby creating a discourse that competed with the negative portrayals of China in the international media. Ameyaw-Brobbey

(2023) looked at China's African public relations and the mechanism that shaped public perception of China. Employing a mixed research method and a range of datasets, he found that economic investment does not necessarily shaped positive public perception of China in Mali.

The introduction of the corpus method is of milestone significance for critical discourse analysis. It addressed the defect of over-reliance on intuition in discourse analysis, making the research more scientific. In order to provide a more solid foundation for critical discourse analysis, the integration of critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics is favored by many scholars, such as Liu et al. (2024), Fotiadou (2022) and Khan and Zaki (2022). Owing to modern computer technology, corpus linguistics adopts a data-driven, positivist approach to conduct multi-faceted and comprehensive research on the patterns of language behavior, language communication, and language learning. Therefore, using the method of corpus linguistics also makes it possible to effectively combine qualitative and quantitative analysis in critical discourse analysis.

In conclusion, the above scholars have employed research methods such as a multi-dimensional analysis framework, three-dimensional discourse analysis, ecological discourse analysis, transitivity analysis, intertextuality strategies, and the perspective of pragmatic identity, and so on, to explore the process of constructing China's image through different discourses and have put forward practical strategies on how to construct China's image. Existing

research focuses on the study of how other countries and groups shape China's image and also attaches importance to the examination of discourse based on corpora. Nevertheless, few scholars have taken live streaming video comments as the research object and studied what kind of China's image is constructed by live streaming video comments. Given that IShowSpeed has 37 million subscribers, most of whom are ordinary young people who are relatively insensitive to politics, this group is precisely the key audience that is difficult to reach through traditional external publicity work. Thus, through the influence of celebrity, it is possible to reach this group more accurately and convey the real image and voice of China. Accordingly, this study adopts Fairclough (2013)'s three-dimensional discourse analysis and corpus research methods to analyze the comment discourse of IShowSpeed's live streaming videos of his trip to China, explore the ways and results of constructing China's image, with the aim of enhancing China's image under the new narrative model and providing new methods and ideas for the research in critical discourse analysis, journalism and communication studies, and international relations studies.

3.Methodology

3.1 Corpus Introduction

The corpus used in this article is entirely sourced from the comments on eight live-streaming videos of IShowSpeed's trip to China on YouTube. The website is: https://www.youtube.com/@IShowSpeed/streams. The live-streaming locations include Shanghai, Beijing, Zhengzhou, Chengdu, Chongqing, Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and Changsha. The first live stream in Shanghai was held on March 24, 2024, and the last one in Changsha was on April 7, 2024.

In this study, a crawler tool was first used to randomly select comments under each video. After manual cleaning, filtering, and manual proofreading, 500 comments were selected from each video. A total of 4,000 comments were obtained from the eight videos, and the construction of the corpus of comment discourse for IShowSpeed's trip to China videos was completed. The number of tokens in this corpus is 94,680, and the number of types is 7,645.

3.2 Theoretical Basis

Among numerous critical discourse analysis methods, Fairclough (2013)'s three-dimensional discourse analysis is one of the most influential in critical discourse analysis. It consists of three steps: description, interpretation, and explanation. The first step is description, where linguistic analysis tools are used to analyze the linguistic forms of discourse and explore its deep-seated meanings. The second step is interpretation, which involves analyzing the production, distribution, and consumption of discourse. The third step is explanation, which starts with the social practice attributes of discourse and explains the analysis results of the previous two steps.

Nevertheless, critical discourse analysis is a qualitative analysis based on limited corpora. Without combining a large number of corpora for quantitative analysis, it is inevitable that the research results will be highly subjective due to

the insufficient representation of the corpora. Corpus linguistics, characterized by abundant, highly representative corpora, addresses this issue. Thus, with the assistance of corpus statistics and analysis tools, it can ensure the objectivity and reliability of research conclusions.

3.3 Research Methods and Steps

This paper is based on Fairclough (2013)'s three-dimensional discourse analysis model and combines the corpus research method to analyze the comment discourse of IShowSpeed's live-streaming videos in three steps. Text Analysis Dimension: Use AntConc4.2.1 to extract the keywords from the self-built corpus, classify the keywords, and then examine the context before and after the keywords, as well as their collocation relationships, etc., so as to explore what aspects the audience focuses on regarding China. Discourse Practice Dimension: Through the study of the context of the keywords and the collocation-related vocabulary, explore the construction of China's image.

4.Research results

4.1 Keywords analysis

Hidalgo Tenorio (2011) believes that it is possible to conduct analysis from aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, coherence, and text structure, with the specific process involving content like classification; metaphor; transitivity; active and passive voices; modality; and cohesive devices. In contrast, Gries (2021) points out that in corpus linguistics, keywords are words whose frequency of occurrence is significantly higher than normal compared to a reference corpus. Keywords are not merely high-frequency words in the corpus, but rather words that recur at an extremely high rate relative to a reference corpus. The higher their topicality, the more effectively they can reflect the focal information of the corpus content. By analyzing keywords and related words, we can reveal discursive information such as semantic macro-structure, topic, and theme. Starting from this point, conducting critical discourse analysis on these discursive elements can uncover implicit special meanings, such as how the change of topics or themes is controlled and by whom. In the text dimension of this study, we first examine the keywords and collocations in the comments of live-streaming videos. We use AntConc 4.2.1 software to sort the keywords by topicality in descending order, select the top 100 keywords for classification, and create a classification table of focal information in the comments of IShowSpeed's trip to China videos.

Table 1. Categorization of top 100 high-frequency Keywords

No	Category	Keywords	Proportion
1	City Impressions	China, Chongqing, Hongkong, Country, city, Shenzhen, world, Shanghai, Changsha, hometown, Beijing, mainland, Chengdu, Xinjiang, propaganda, so	16%
2	Live Broadcast	Speed, stream, Bro, you, IShowSpeed, live,	19%

	Interaction	streamer, streaming, livestream, Dude, broadcast, your, team, bodyguards, Ronaldo, video, rude, fans, I'm,	
3	Cross-Cultural Communication and Chinese People	Chinese, uncle, translator, people, girl, guy, Liang, Dazhangwei, him, suit, guide, anime, everyone, person, green, translation	16%
4	Emotional Experience	best, beautiful, very, respect, crazy, like, amazing, thank, welcome, cute, friendly, saved, respectful, nice, truly, super, funny, humble, hospitality, wholesome, really, lol (laugh out loud), W (win), actually, irl (in real life)	25%
5	Cultural Symbols and High-Technology	Kongfu, Shaolin, martial, Master, drone, temple, culture, boat, song, media, goose, internet	12%
6	Feelings and Intentions Regarding trip	Visit, tour, trip, chat, journey, watching, see, whole, real, love, hope, travel	12%

As can be seen from Table 1, the focal information of the comments on IShowSpeed's trip to China videos can be divided into six categories: city impressions, live broadcast interaction, cross- cultural communication and Chinese people, emotional experience, cultural symbols and high- technology, and feelings and intentions regarding trip. Among them, emotional experience accounts for the largest proportion (25%). Words such as "respect", "amazing", "welcome", "cute", "nice", "funny", "humble", and "wholesome" reflect that the fans had rich emotional reactions after watching the live streaming. Most of these words carry a positive emotional tone, indicating that the audience showed recognition and affection for the Chinese culture and lifestyle demonstrated by IShowSpeed. For example, "beautiful" is used to describe China's natural scenery or urban landscapes, while "friendly",

"hospitality", and "respectful" reflect the audience's perception of the warm reception and friendly attitude of the Chinese people. The comment discourse mainly focuses on the audience's emotional experiences brought about by IShowSpeed's live-streaming trip in China and their sense of identity with Chinese culture.

Live broadcast interaction ranks second (19%). Keywords such as "Speed", "stream", "live", "streamer", "streaming", and "livestream" are directly related to live broadcast interaction, indicating that the audience cares a great deal about the presentation of live-streaming content and the interaction between the streamer and the audience. At the same time, keywords like "Bro", "Dude", "fans", and "I'm" reflect that the streamer is approachable and can interact well with fans. The comments focus on the interactive experience and the evaluation of the

streamer's team, highlighting the importance of engagement and rapport in live streaming.

Cross-Cultural Communication and Chinese People rank third (16%). Words such as "Chinese", "people", "girl", "guy", "suit", "anime", and "friends" reveal the audience's perception of Chinese people and Chinese culture, as well as language communication and character images related to them. For instance, "translator" and "guide" are used to discuss language barriers and cultural misunderstandings that occur during live streams, as well as how to promote cross-cultural understanding through translation, communication, and other means. At the same time, attention is also paid to how the image of Chinese people is presented in the eyes of international audiences. For example, "Master" implies respect for inheritors of Chinese kung fu and culture. The comments focus on cross-cultural communication and the differences in language and culture, highlighting the importance of mutual understanding and respect.

City impressions share third place with Cross-Cultural Communication and Chinese People. From this category, it can be seen that many Chinese cities such as "Chongqing", "Hong Kong", "Shenzhen", "Shanghai", "Changsha", "Beijing", and "Chengdu" are frequently mentioned in the comments. This indicates that the audience is highly concerned about the urban landscapes and infrastructure construction in the places where IShowSpeed has been, as well as the integration of these aspects with modern technology and lifestyle. Through these words, the audience expresses their affirmation of China's

overall image and engages in discussions, showing a strong interest in China's urban features, cultural characteristics, and the integration with modern development.

Cultural symbols and high technology rank fifth (12%). The comments focus on traditional Chinese cultural symbols and elements. Words such as "Kongfu", "Shaolin", "martial", "Master", "temple", and "culture" reflect the audience's interest in traditional Chinese cultural symbols like "kung fu", "Shaolin", and "martial arts". Theme words such as "drones" and "cars" highlight the development of high technology, exemplified by drones for food delivery and underwater cars. Words like "lol" and "W", which are typical Internet buzzwords and emoticons, show that the audience incorporates elements of Internet culture into their comments and engages in interactions in a relaxed and humorous manner.

Feelings and intentions regarding trips rank tied for fifth place (12%), reflecting the audience's attention to what IShowSpeed saw, heard, felt, and thought during his trip. For example, theme words such as "journey", "whole", "visit", "tour", and "trip" reflect the audience's interest in travel destinations, routes, and other arrangements. Words like "watching", "see", and "real" indicate that the audience has seen the real China through the live stream, which is completely different from the image of China propagated in the West in the past. At the same time, words such as "love" and "hope" reflect the audience's anticipation and yearning to travel in China.

4.2 The Concordance line and Collocation Analysis of Keywords

Viewing words in isolation is inevitably one-sided. Context helps to clarify and specify word meanings, and only through contextual analysis can the meanings of words be fully understood (Norman et al., 2023). Corpus linguistics holds that the context of words plays a crucial role in shaping their pragmatic meanings.

In order to reveal the characteristics of China's image, this study necessitates an analysis of the collocational patterns of the term "China" within the corpus of comments. Such an analysis will facilitate the examination of the ideological orientations of the audience. Preliminary observations of the index term "China" reveal that it appears 1,516 times in the corpus. Among the words that immediately precede "China" the preposition "to" occurs most frequently, with a total of 459 instances. The verb "is" ranks second, appearing 402 times, while the preposition "in" is the third most frequent, with 397 occurrences. The preposition "to" typically signifies direction and destination. In the context of "to China," the most common left collocates include "come", "go", "love", "trip", "visit", "journal", "travel", "move", "go", and "dream". For example:

Example a. After watching this video, I realized how stupid my previous views on China were. I decided to plan a **trip to China** this year. I think if I don't **go to China**, I will regret it for the rest of my life.

Example b. I am Vietnamese. I have traveled to many countries, but China is really good. The people are gentle and there are many cameras. I will travel to China next month.

Example c. As a German I want to **move to China** because China is safer and cleaner and also the people are so nice. W China.

Example d. China is, without a doubt, the best country out there. These videos have completely flipped my perception of China on its head. Our French media had painted a wildly inaccurate picture of it. I'd absolutely love to **travel to China** with my friends sometime soon!

Example e. Speed, thanks for letting us want to **come to China** soon.

The audiences in the examples are from Vietnam (Example b), Germany (Example c), and France (Example d). By comparing their own countries with China, they highlight the uniqueness of China. The verbs preceding "to" indicate that China is perceived as a destination for exploration and research. Through the live streaming of IShowSpeed, these audiences are exposed to an authentic portrayal of China, which in turn expresses their desire to visit the country.

The copula verb "is" is frequently employed for definition, description, and judgment, often reflecting subjective evaluations. In the context of "China is", the most common right collocates include "beautiful", "great", "magic", "best", "safe", "advanced", "clean", "impressive", "unique", and "amazing". For example:

Example a. I can't believe **China is** this **advanced**. I thought it would be something like North Korea or Eastern European countries. But I was mistaken. The Chinese are hardworking and kind people.

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Example b. **China is beautiful**, and people are too much kind, Love from Nepal. Please speed visit Nepal soon.

Example c. **China is** very **safe**, and its people are very friendly. The internet, supported by 5G technology, has extended its coverage to rural areas. You are welcome to travel to China.

Example d. Every city in **China is** extremely **clean** and full of technology. There is no doubt that China is leading the world. The next superpower.

In Example a, the denial of the presupposed stereotype through contrast highlights the fact that "China is advanced", thereby breaking the negative stereotypical collocations associated with backwardness. Above four examples, the collocational pattern of "China is" followed by adjectives constructs a positive, dynamic, and humanistic image of China, reflecting the audiences' cognitive frameworks and emotional inclinations towards the country.

The phrase "in China" underscores the agency of China, reflecting the uniqueness of its indigenous experiences. The common left collocates of "in China" include "living", "travel", and "stream". For example:

Example a. Americans aren't going to like seeing that China is better than their country in so many ways. I'm saying this as an American **living in China**. Don't be mad.

Example b. IShowSpeed's live streaming of **travel in China** has attracted widespread global attention.

Example c. It was a great tour. I never watch speeds livestreams but those live **stream in China** was so fun to watch. Thank you, speed.

In Examples b and c, the high-frequency collocation of "live streaming" with "in China" forms a new pattern of association within the context of technological dissemination, echoing the previously mentioned terms such as *technology* and *5G* in the corpus. The frequent pairing of "in" with "China" indicates that the content of the corpus predominantly focuses on real-life scenarios within China. This collocation constructs a perspective based on experiential engagement and conveys a sense of being present in the scene.

The analysis of collocations related to China reveals that "to China", "China is", and "in China" are the top three most frequent patterns, reflecting respectively the dimensions of direction, spatial context, and attribute definition. The collocates include positive evaluations such as "advanced", "safe", and "beautiful", highlighting China's image in areas such as social governance and technological development. Meanwhile, expressions like "different from media" indicate a debunking of stereotypes. Additionally, verbs such as "love", "go", and "move" in the collocations express the audience's desire to visit China.

4.3 Sentiment Analysis Analysis of the Comment Discourse in Live Streaming Videos

Weiciyun is a word cloud generator with two main functions: word cloud graph generation and word cloud analysis, including sentiment analysis. In Figure 1, the horizontal axis represents the quantity of text and is sorted by the number of texts, such as the 1st and 100th lines. The vertical axis represents the sentiment score value, with the upper part of the chart

indicating positive values, the middle indicating zero, and the lower part indicating negative values. The chart includes four different data indicators, represented by points of different colors, with a comprehensive score range from -1 to 1. The red points represent the score distribution of negative sentiment values, the orange points represent the score distribution of neutral sentiment values, the green points represent the score distribution of positive sentiment values (Figure 1), and the black points represent the comprehensive score of the text (Figure 2).

Figure 1. The distribution of positive, negative, and neutral sentiment inclinations in the comment texts of IShowSpeed's live-streamed videos of the trip to China

According to the statistics from Weiciyun, the number of positive sentences is 3,919 (45.69%), the number of neutral sentences is 3,218 (37.51%), and the number of negative sentences is 1,441 (16.8%). One comment may contain multiple sentences. The black points represent the final score value of each line of data and the overall sentiment score trend. Thus, the sentiment inclination of the comment texts on IShowSpeed's live-streamed videos of his trip to China is reflected in the distribution of the black points (Figure 2).

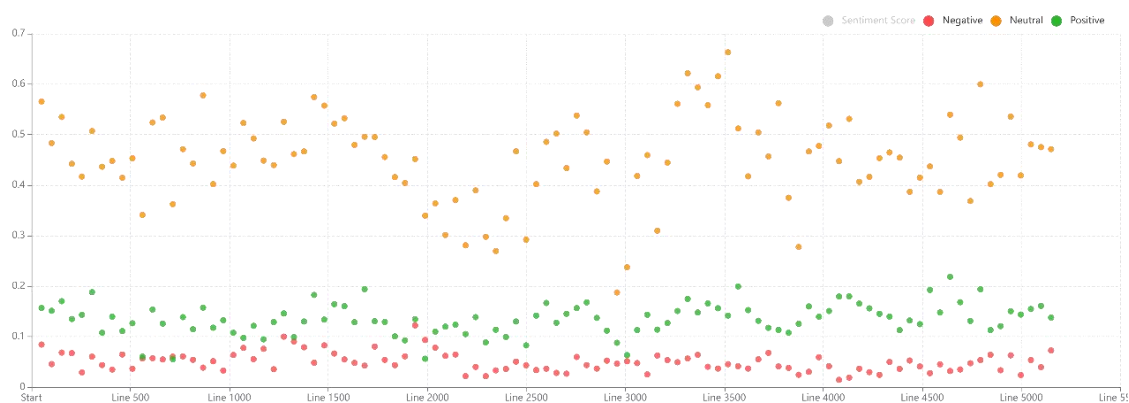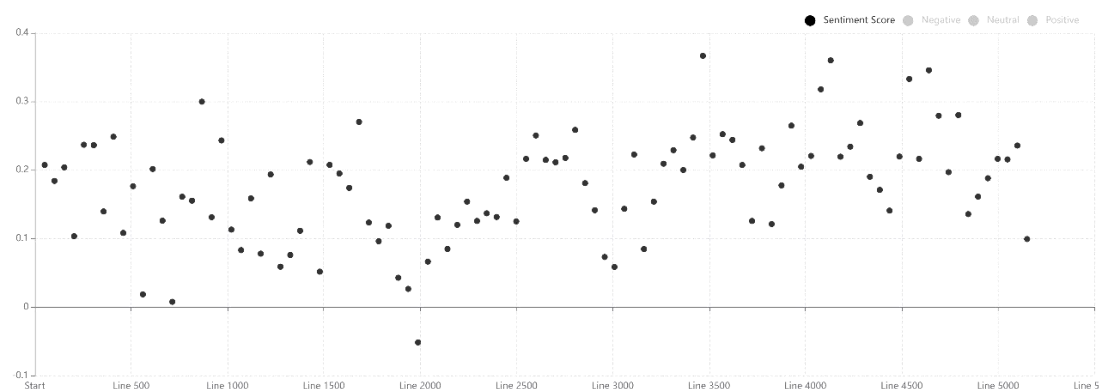**Figure 2.** The distribution of the sentiment inclinations of the comment texts of IShowSpeed's live-streamed videos of his trip to China

By observing the distribution of different colors in the figure, one can identify the changing trends of sentiment scores across different segments of text. This helps to gain an in-depth understanding of the expressions and

intensities of emotions in different parts of the text. The minimum value is -0.0513, while the maximum value is 0.36647. From the figure, it can be seen that the overall sentiment trends with values greater than 0 account for the majority, while only a very small number of sentiment trends are less than 0.

Figure 3. Table of Extracted Sentiment Words from the Comments on IShowSpeed's Live-streamed Videos of His Trip to China (*Green represents positive words, and red represents negative words)

As can be seen from Figures 2 and 3, comments with a positive sentiment tendency in the live-streamed videos of IShowSpeed's trip to China hold an absolute advantage. Through IShowSpeed's video shots, the audience has seen the real China and commented on urban impressions, the image of the people, traditional culture, and emerging technologies. Thus, they construct a real, brand-new image of China that differs from previous perceptions.

Example 1: Now Americans know how far we are behind undefined in technology. We still think we have the best cars, best phones, and the best AI...They just showed you BYD cars, HUAWEI phones, and Deepseek AI...Their drones are better, robots also...Now you know why our government wants to ban HUAWEI, Deepseek, TikTok, and Chinese cars. Do you still think that the US is the greatest country? Go abroad and see the world! 90% of Americans have not even traveled overseas and just believe that the US is the greatest. I'm so thankful that SPEED showed us the real China. Friendly, peaceful, advanced, safe, joyful... 0% like what is on American media or as our government described.

This comment is selected from IShowSpeed's live-stream video in Shanghai. There are 14 sentiment words in this comment, namely "good", "good", "good", "well", "ban", "great", "great", "so thankful", "friendly", "peaceful", "advanced", "safe", "joyful", and "like". The positive score of this comment is 0.48. This comment is relatively lengthy. From the perspective of an American viewer, IShowSpeed's video subverts

his previous imagination and cognition of China, making him realize the gap between the United States and China.

Example 2: The sarcasm of the guy in red is so micro-aggressive he was getting on my nerves. Couldn't stand him.

This comment is selected from IShowSpeed's live-streamed video in Beijing. This comment contains three sentiment words: "sarcas", "so micro-aggressive", and "nerve". The negative score of this comment is -0.24.

Example 3: Speed do a night stream at Chongqing China, bro, it feels Cyberpunk.

This comment is selected from IShowSpeed's live-streamed video in Chongqing. This comment contains no sentiment words, and its neutral score is 0. Although the comment does not display any sentiment tendency on the surface, it still reflects that Chongqing is a city full of technological and futuristic appeal.

5.Conclusion

The national image is a combination of self-cognition and others' cognition, and it is the result of a series of information inputs and outputs (Liu & Zheng, 2023). Live streaming is an important channel for audiences to obtain information in the Internet era and serves as a crucial supplement to traditional external publicity efforts in constructing the national image. This study employs both corpus analysis and critical discourse analysis methods. Through the analysis of the comment discourse in IShowSpeed's live streaming videos of his trip to China, including keywords, concordance line and collocation analysis of keywords,

and sentiment analysis, it explores the construction of China's image. The main conclusions are as follows:

1) The authentic China that breaks through the narrative framework of Western discourse is revealed. This is mainly reflected in the high-frequency words that focus on "reality", presenting a real China that is completely different from the distorted propaganda in the West. IShowSpeed used his camera to objectively and comprehensively show the unique charm of China. This effectively refutes the false prejudices from the outside world and presents a real image that is starkly different from Western stereotypes. It transcends the cognitive paradigms preset by the West and constructs a national image of an authentic China from multiple objective dimensions.

2) A national image that combines openness, inclusiveness, and hospitality. This is mainly demonstrated by high-frequency words such as "hospitable". It showcases that the Chinese people are kind, simple, and warm-hearted. This warm and friendly atmosphere enables visitors to feel intimacy and warmth, as if they were at home. Thanks to the improvement of the legal system and the enhancement of grassroots governance effectiveness, China presents a safe and stable social environment. With an open, inclusive, enthusiastic, and friendly attitude, the Chinese people display the spiritual character of the Chinese nation, injecting a warm and vivid humanistic hue into the national image.

3) Modernization of urban governance and strong development momentum are evident. This is primarily reflected in the remarkable

achievements of China's urban construction. Rational urban planning and comprehensive facilities showcase the vigorous development vitality of Chinese cities. Both the perfection of infrastructure and the diversified expansion of urban functions highlight the vigorous vitality and development resilience of Chinese cities in the global competitive landscape.

4) A national image that combines historical depth and technological innovation. This is primarily reflected in high-frequency words such as "kung fu" and "drone". China not only possesses a profound historical and cultural heritage but also actively embraces the development of high technology. Empowered by both cultural inheritance and scientific and technological innovation, China demonstrates a unique contemporary outlook, inheriting ancient wisdom while leading the trend of cutting-edge innovation.

6.Discussions

Using the corpus-based CDA, examines the construction of China's image in comments of live-stream of IShowSpeed's trip of China. It is found that the image of China in IShowSpeed's live-stream of China is characteristic of (1) It breaks through the narrative framework of Western discourse; (2)It embodies openness, inclusiveness, and hospitality; (3) It integrates modern urban governance with strong developmental momentum; (4) It combines profound historical depth with technological innovation.

The previous studies have mostly based on news reports (e.g., (Müller et al., 2024)), whereas this study focuses on interactive live-stream comments.

The immediacy of this scenario and the influence of internet celebrities may lead audiences to be more inclined to express their direct perceptions of a "real China", thereby creating differences from previous research. This study expands the analysis of national image construction from "professional media dominance" to "user interaction scenarios", providing empirical support for understanding how the dynamics of comment discourse (such as real-time responses and group resonance) influence national image. It enriches the theoretical dimensions of national image discourse research in the digital age. The limitations of this study mainly lie in the size of the corpus and the relatively limited range of linguistic features examined. Future research on national image construction could collect corpus from live streams of streamers in different fields (e.g., technology, rural life), with different influence levels (top-tier/mid-tier), and with different interaction styles, while investigating more linguistic features.

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