

Original Paper

China's Images in Self-Media Videos after the Implementation of China's Visa-Free Policy: The First 2 Years

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Abstract

After the implementation of China's Visa-Free Policy in 2023, China's tourism industry has ushered in a new era of prosperity. At the same time, as social media continues to rise in popularity, many facets of China, including its cuisine and traditional culture, have been widely shared, prompting more and more international travelers to opt for China as their destination. This article studies 20 Self-Media Videos about travel to China following the announcement of China's Visa-Free Transit Policy, which were posted by self-media bloggers from ten various nations or regions. Based on the Positive Discourse Analysis theoretical framework, in light of Appraisal System Theory, by examining the keywords including high-frequency nouns, affective adjectives and verbs, this article seeks to investigate China's image through corpus analysis. This research indicates that after the implementation of the visa-free policy, more and more foreign tourists have come to China. They have discovered that China has acquired new images including cuisine, mobile payment and so on, and in their eyes, China's image is positive and favorable.

Keywords

China's image, China's Visa Free Policy, Self-Media Videos, Appraisal System Theory, Corpus Analysis

1. Introduction

The inbound tourism business has once again benefited tremendously from China's comprehensive relaxation and optimization of its visa-free transit policy. On December 17, 2024, the National Immigration Administration of China declared that it would further release and optimize the visa-free transit policy for foreigners. Foreigners can now stay in China for 240 hours (10 days) without a visa, up from the previous 72 and 144-hour duration. At the same time, 21 new ports have been introduced as entry and exit ports for visa-free transit personnel, and the areas where they are permitted to stay and travel around have been substantially expanded (Wang J., 2024). In this context, the number of

international travelers to China has grown substantially more. As one of the largest online video platforms in the world, YouTube has developed to be a crucial tool for international bloggers to record, share and discuss their travel experiences, perceptions and attitudes in China. An increasing number of videos on “China Travel” and “China Visa Free” subjects continues to rise on the YouTube platform (Hu & Liu, 2025).

To date, many academics have studied discourse analysis through the Appraisal System Theory and the Self-Media Videos have also been studied in other areas. For instance, with the goal to fully present a positive image of China under the initiative of “building a community with a shared future for mankind,” Luo et al. (2022) studied the Positive Discourse Analysis of Journalistic Discourses about Sino-Foreign Relations from the Attitude Perspective of Appraisal Theory. Their findings demonstrate that the journalistic discourse uses a large number of positive words and contexts to create a harmonious linguistic environment. Furthermore, Liu et al. (2025) conducted a cross-cultural communication study through the Self-Media Videos of bloggers visiting China from the perspective of Frame Theory. Their research results prove that the bloggers objectively evaluated the current situation of China, especially expressing amazement regarding the convenience of transportation and safety of living in China.

However, through the literature reviews, we find that no scholar has studied the texts transferred from the Self-Media Videos after the implementation of China’s Visa-Free Transit Policy by using the Appraisal System theory. In this article, based on the Positive Discourse Analysis theoretical framework, in light of Appraisal System Theory, we examine the keywords including high-frequency nouns, affective adjectives and verbs through the corpus analysis in order to identify the following questions: 1) What kinds of China’s images have been demonstrated by using the high-frequency nouns in keywords? 2) What kinds of China’s images have been demonstrated by using the attitudinal resources?

2. Research Method and Procedures

2.1 Data Collection

By searching for pertinent keywords on the YouTube video platform, we were able to find an extensive number of self-media bloggers pertaining to the topics of “China Travel” and “China Visa Free” for this post. We identified 20 relevant self-media videos based on the videos’ release dates, number of views and likes. The computation was based on the total number of likes divided by the number of chosen videos, and the average number of likes was approximately 15.4k (as of December 2024). The videos came from self-media bloggers in various nations or areas, as shown in Table 1: There are four videos from the USA and six from the UK. A pertinent video has been gathered for each of the following countries: South Africa, Ireland, Australia, Russia, South East Asia, and Spanish. Additionally, two pairs of videos from each Canada and Germany have been chosen.

Regarding when the videos have been released, the 20 self-media videos that we gathered predominantly span the years 2023-2025. Only one video, produced by Josie from Australia, was released on October 1st, 2023. There were sixteen videos in 2024: only one video per month in January, February, March,

October, November, and December; two videos per month in May, August, and September; and the remaining four videos were mostly released in June. The videos that were made public in 2025 concentrated largely on January and February. It is evident from the date of release that the research materials collected in this study date back to the first 2 years of China's policy of granting visa-free travel to its territory. The primary focus of the video research is on self-media videos that were uploaded to YouTube following the implementation of China's original policy, which waived visas for foreigners traveling through the country for up to 144 hours.

Table 1. Classification(Nations/Areas)

Nations/Areas			Self-Media Bloggers				Sum
UK	Joel and Emilia	Hutchinsons	Jay and Karolina	Harry Jaggard	Sarah and Callum	Nahana	6
USA	Sammy and Tommy	Doug Barnard	Chris Rodriguez		Emma and Ofer		4
Australia			Josie				1
South Africa			Lizzy				1
Ireland			Luck and Naomi				1
Russia			Margarita				1
German	Deana and Phil				Claudia and Thomas		2
South East Asia			Viyom				1
Canada	Jenn and Leon				Shae and David		2
Spanish			Oliver Dadema				1

2.2 Transcription

After collecting these 20 Self-Media videos, we first converted the original 20 video resources into corresponding 20 text resources through the Simple Listen and Write app (Appendix 1). However, through manual comparison, we found that the accuracy rate of the text conversion was only 89%. Therefore, we employed the Dual Review and Discussion Method: we assigned the 20 computer-converted texts to two groups of English major scholars, asking them to independently read and proofread the accuracy of the texts. Each group marked the errors or inaccuracies in the texts based on their own understanding and standards. Then, we compared and analyzed the text markings and annotations from the two groups. Based on the discussion results, we corrected the texts to ensure their accuracy. Through this series of operations, we obtained the final 20 target texts for the research. These 20 target texts

averaged 2,355 tokens, among which the text converted from Hutchinsons' video reached 5,815 tokens, the largest among the 20 texts.

2.3 Corpus Analysis

When put all final 20 target texts together, we formed the target corpus. The target corpus for this article is COCVFV (Corpus Of China Visa Free Vlogs), which we generated by converting 20 videos from different self-media platforms into 20 texts. In total, there are 4,133 types, 47,109 tokens, and 20 files in the target corpus. At the same time, in order to eliminate some function terms that had a high frequency of occurrence but no useful meaning in the target corpus which can better highlight the distinctive linguistic characteristics of this corpus, we performed a comparative analysis after implementing a second reference corpus, AmE06_A_Press_Reportage Corpus (Potts, A. & Baker, P., 2012), by using the corpus analysis program AntConc (Anthony, 2019). Under this method, the keywords we obtain are more accurate and suitable for our research.

2.4 Analytical Framework

In the late 1990s, British academic Martin proposed the traditional idea of positive discourse analysis (Martin, 2004) at the International Symposium on Critical Discourse Analysis. This idea is related to the analysis of critical discourse. Given the limitations of critical discourse analysis, we propose the idea of positive discourse analysis, which aims to create an ideal human society through positive discourse by approaching and resolving societal conflicts and inequities with a constructive and upbeat mindset. Meanwhile, the Appraisal System states that attitude is made up of three components: affect, judgment, and appreciation. Emotional reactions to things, including joy, sadness, hatred, etc., are referred to as affect. Unhappiness, insecurity, and dissatisfaction make up affect. Positive or negative evaluations, such as praising, condemning, blaming, or admiring, are related to this judgment. Normalcy, capability, tenacity, honesty, and propriety are the five components of judgment. Appreciation is the evaluation of aesthetically pleasing natural events. Reaction, composition, and appraisal are the three categories of appreciation (Martin & White, 2005). This article based on the Positive Discourse Analysis theoretical framework, we examine the keywords including high-frequency nouns, affective adjectives and verbs, seeking to demonstrate the China images through corpus analysis and Appraisal System.

Initially, We embark on seeking to find the nouns that appear unexpectedly frequently. We define the keywords as "a word form or cluster of words that are statistically more frequent in a corpus than expected" (Hyland & Jiang, 2020, p. 8) in addition to raw frequency counts. The concept and primary material of the text can be effectively reflected by these keywords and their collocates. These high-frequency nouns among the keywords can accurately represent the primary concern of international visitors to China so as to demonstrate what kind of China image is in the Self-Media videos.

Furthermore, out of interest, we wish to reveal their individual attitudes when they travel China so as to demonstrate what kind of China image is in the eyes of foreign travelers. As a result, we concentrate on the affective verbs and adjectives in keywords. By using the Appraisal System Theory that we mentioned

above to discuss the affective verbs and adjectives we collected, we are able to recognize and classify the attitudes of the travelers and the China image in their eyes.

Summarizing that what we have discussed above, through the concerns and attitude of international visitors, we can distinctly discuss the China's images in the Self-Media videos after the implementation of China's Visa-Free Transit Policy in the first 2 years.

3. High-Frequency Nouns Analysis

We started out identified the top 100 high-frequency words in the target corpus and compared them with the reference corpus AmE06_A_Press_Reportage Corpus in order to figure out the primary concerns that foreign friends focus on during their visit China. At the same time, we were able to uncover additional particular uses through recurrent lexical linkages by looking at these items in relation to the words they most frequently co-occurred with as well as their immediate left or right collocates (Lai, 2019; Potts et al., 2015). Next, we especially examined the keywords' keyness (Likelihood). The term's keyness for the text: a high keyness means that the word performs a major role in the text's discourse. Inside AntConc, a Log-Likelihood (4-term) statistical analysis is used to calculate it. A term that is characteristically missing from the text is indicated by a negative keyness (Gabrielatos, 2018). High-frequency nouns that can represent the main points of foreign friends are displayed in Table 2 (some extraneous words are omitted).

Table 2. High-Frequency Nouns and Keyness (Likelihood)

Number	Type	Keyness (Likelihood)	Number	Type	Keyness (Likelihood)
9	China	574.595	76	Hotel	61.964
23	Chinese	184.956	77	Alipay	61.669
31	Food	136.823	82	Cities	59.934
60	Metro	83.253	95	App	46.781
74	Train	65.528	99	Wechat	44.654

Table 2 illustrates the evidence that the word "China" is a very high-frequency noun, appearing far more frequently than other items. The following could be the causes of this phenomenon: (1) The theme of "China Travel" is present in all of the texts we examined; (2) Collocation analysis of China (Table 3) reveals that words like "impressions" and "about" indicate that foreigners' primary interest in Chinese tourism is based on their perceptions of China and associated elements of the country in general.

Table 3. Collocates of China

Collocate	Rank	Freq(Scaled)	FreqLR	FreqL	FreqR	Range	Likelihood	Effect
in	1	7260	148	121	27	20	129.326	1.564
first	2	960	28	23	5	9	38.618	2.08
about	3	1520	35	27	8	14	35.945	1.739
to	4	10740	119	86	33	17	23.81	0.684
month	5	70	6	4	2	3	19.665	3.636
impressions	6	150	8	8	0	3	19.143	2.951
of	7	7460	85	68	17	15	18.755	0.724

The items “Chinese” and “Food” are both high-frequency nouns with keyness scores in excess of 100. To discuss these two words, we use the AntConc and find out the collocate of the word “Food”. Surprisingly, we can find that the two terms have a strong association, because the Likelihood between “Food” and “Chinese” is up to 30.079. Therefore, it is apparently that when foreigners travel China, they usually concentrate on Chinese cuisine. They believe that Chinese food, particularly “pot”, is cheap and excellent, and that it also embodies “culture”.

Along with the above listed terms, in the Table 2 “Metro, Train, Hotel, Alipay, Cities, APP, Wechat” also show up a lot within the top 100 high-frequency words. Just like the reaserch done by Liu et al (2025), it show that the convenience of transportation in China really attracts foreign travelers. Besides, with the development of high technology and wide spread of mobile payments, more foreign visitors show great interest and passion for apps like Alipay and Wechat. At the same time, we can find that accommodations and China’s modern infrastructure development in cities are also the concerns of them.

Table 4. Collocates of Food

Collocate	Rank	Freq(Scaled)	FreqLR	FreqL	FreqR	Range	Likelihood	Effect
Chinese	1	1090	14	12	2	6	30.079	2.765
eating	2	170	6	4	2	5	24.001	4.224
food	3	890	10	5	5	4	19.178	2.572
cheap	4	160	5	4	1	3	18.827	4.048
good	5	1350	12	7	5	7	18.436	2.234
pot	6	90	4	1	3	1	17.787	4.556
some	7	1210	11	10	1	6	17.285	2.267
culture	8	140	4	4	0	3	14.375	3.919

Overall, based on all the data we have studied and the results drawn from the analysis, we can find that when foreign tourists travel to China, they first focus on the country itself and what kind of impression

it leaves on them. Secondly, Chinese cuisine has become a new China image after porcelain. Almost all foreign tourists are very concerned about Chinese cuisine, and characteristic Chinese foods such as hot pot have become new images for China. At the same time, with the continuous innovation and development of technology, mobile payment and convenient transportation have also become new China images, too. Furthermore, during their travels, foreign tourists are amazed by the convenience brought by mobile payment and diverse transportation.

4. Attitude Analysis in Terms of Appraisal System

As along with discussing a few common nouns, we also concentrate affective adjectives and verbs, which are included into the top 100 most common keywords. In spite of focusing on the main concerns of foreign travelers, we also need to be aware of and comprehend the attitudes of the foreign people who are traveling. Thus, using the Appraisal System (Martin & White, 2005), we investigate how foreign visitors feel about visiting China based on the theoretical framework of Positive Discourse Analysis. After that, it can also demonstrate what kinds of China images in the eyes of foreign travelers.

Table 5. Keywords Of Emotional Adjectives and Verbs

<i>Number</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Keyness (Likelihood)</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Keyness (Likelihood)</i>
6	Like	993.663	57	Cool	84.839
25	Nice	171.8	62	Amazing	81.806
47	Good	97.297	68	Beautiful	72.358
49	Super	91.448	86	Excited	56.538

Table 5 makes it abundantly evident that the affective verb “Like” occurs frequently, with a keyness (likelihood) of 993.663. A common expression of emotional appraisal, “like” immediately reflects the speaker’s subjective emotional response when it is used to convey a person’s preference for something or an affirmative emotional propensity. Thus, it demonstrates the international visitors’ positive attitude towards this country and love of Chinese cuisine and journey to China (1 and 2):

(1) we just saw a guy with these noodles and we are like, yeah. (Emma and Ofer)

(2) Life is going on here. The life. I love it. (Margarita)

Among the remaining frequently used affective adjectives, those like “nice, beautiful, amazing, cool, super” all fall under the category of “Appreciation”: “nice” directly reflects a positive evaluation of something and belongs to valuation in the context of appreciation (3): this foreign travelers appreciate the accommodation as nice; “Beautiful” describes the aesthetic appeal of something and belongs to reaction in appreciation, emphasizing the sensory or emotional response triggered by the thing (4): they thinks the urban greening like flowers in cities are beautiful; “Amazing” and “Cool” express the

astonishing or attractive qualities of something, belonging to Reaction (5 and 6): the scenery spot as well as skylines of city is amazing and cool in their eyes ; “Super” is used to emphasize the excellence of something and belongs to Valuation (7): The infrastructures in China is super modern. These words all carry positive meanings and appreciations. Therefore, from all the affective adjectives above, it can be concluded that foreign tourists view Chinese things in an appreciative manner, which also confirms a positive attitude.

(3) A private room, so that’s nice. This is the bathroom. (Luck and Naomi)

(4) Let’s go. Looks so beautiful, and let’s say hi to my followers. (Margarita)

(5) the skylines of every single city were absolutely amazing. (Hutchinsons)

(6) This is cool Oh, it’s cool. (Josie)

(7) And yeah, just like super modern, super advanced, super clean. (Harry Jaggard)

“Excited” is a word that expresses enthusiasm and belongs within the emotional system’s happiness category. “Excited” and “nervous” are typically used together in this article’s corpus, while “positively” usually appears before these terms by visitors from different nations. They arrive in China that they have never visited before, so they are both anxious and excited. Nevertheless, with the “positively” before these two items, it is an active feeling regardless of whether it is “nervous” or “excited” (9):

(9) I’m like very positively excited and positively nervous. (Luck and Naomi)

Last but not least, there are two distinct meanings for “good”. It falls under the valuation of appreciation when it is used to describe things rather than people’s moral behavior (10): Chinese people are friendly; it falls under the judgment of social esteem, which emphasizes ability or moral standards, when it is used to assess people’s behavior (11): Chinese cuisine is really tasty. Although this target corpus covers both scenarios, it can be inferred that international visitors’ perceptions of both Chinese cuisine and people are generally favorable.

(10) The food was really good (Hutchinsons)

(11) Chinese is very good. (Josie)

Based on the results we have discussed above, high-frequency affective adjectives and verbs such as “Like, Nice, beautiful, Amazing, Cool, Super, Cool, Amazing, Beautiful and Excited” all demonstrate the foreign tourists’ fondness and positive attitude towards traveling in China. From this, we can also prove that after the implementation of China’s Visa-Free Transit Policy, China’s image has become more positive and favorable. More and more foreigners have come to know and like this country through their personal experiences.

5. Conclusion

We have examined the items in a 47109-token corpus based on collocations of 20 self-media videos from ten various countries or regions in order to comprehend the primary concerns that foreign visitors have when traveling China as well as their attitudes toward the country so that we can investigate the China images behind them.

In order to address the aforementioned research questions, we used AntConc to find the top 100 most common keywords including high-frequency nouns, affective adjectives and verbs. Based on the high frequency of nouns like China, Chinese, Food, Metro, Train, Hotel, Alipay, Cities, APP, and Wechat, we can find that, when foreign tourists embark on journeys to China, their initial curiosity centers on the nation as a whole and the impressions it cultivates in their minds. Following closely behind, Chinese cuisine has emerged as a new China image like the porcelain. The vast majority of international visitors harbor a keen interest in the culinary offerings of China, with distinctive dishes like hot pot now serving as novel representations of the country. Additionally, the ongoing advancements and evolution of technology have propelled mobile payment systems and efficient transportation networks into the spotlight, showing as the China's images, too.

At the same time, based on the Positive Discourse Analysis theoretical framework, we categorized the affective adjectives and verbs in the keyword collection, including Like, Nice, Good, Super, Cool, Amazing, Beautiful, and Excited, in order to better understand the foreign travelers' attitudes towards traveling to China. We discuss the results using the Appraisal System Theory and consistently concluded that international visitors had a positive and optimistic viewpoint regarding China Travel. In their point of view, China's image is positive and favorable.

Based on the topics we discussed above, China has been a popular travel destination since China's Visa-Free Transit Policy Policy was put into effect. In general, foreign visitors tend to see Chinese tourism favorably. When they travel, they concentrate on the nation itself, as well as on food, lodging, modes of transportation, and payment options. China has to do better in these areas which concern international travelers so that China's tourism industry will undoubtedly flourish in the future.

The article at present only focuses on the substance of 20 videos of foreign visitors that were published during the first 2 years after the implementation of China's Visa-Free Transit Policy. China's Visa-Free Transit Policy Policy has advanced significantly to date, giving an increasing number of international visitors the chance to visit China for an extended period of time and experience this stunning nation. More texts and corpus on this issue can be included in future research on this topic. We anticipate additional findings from everyone's research on this topic.

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Appendix 1

Name and Address of Transcription Tool:

Simple Listen and Write app <https://tingji.baidu.com/embed/listennote>

Appendix 2

List of Vlogs:

Bloggers & Nations/Areas & Publish Time & Videos' Address

- (1) Chris Rodriguez USA 2024.11.8 <https://youtu.be/3qHP9Kbyumw?si=vnDbLyEw-SG2v6qX>
- (2) Claudia and Thomas German 2024.12.9 <https://youtu.be/MkBY-an11Hs?si=6iOPjNXHV3aG-EcB>
- (3) Deana and Phil German 2024.10.26 <https://youtu.be/P6xIBmjOO9g?si=9dWUUny7uuOew4Vz4> 2958
- (4) Doug Barnard US 2024.3.19 https://youtu.be/M_lwC5zPkkyo?si=oUDnIrvo0YVDOUGO
- (5) Emma and Ofer USA 2024.2.16 <https://youtu.be/rz7mIarbxNY?si=krM2RSOdRXwP5GQm>
- (6) Harry Jaggard UK 2024.1.27 <https://youtu.be/K3X46veg64I?si=hKq8AKPGnAK75DpD> 924
- (7) Hutchinsons UK 2024.8.18 <https://youtu.be/6ttRK5OMxf4?si=CXWHg2Rtu2RsSJWc>
- (8) Jay and Karolina UK 2024.9.17 <https://youtu.be/JZbcqi7lCIA?si=3y78IOSYOG4miF-r>
- (9) Jenn and Leon Canada 2024.5.20 https://youtu.be/xQZbha1aJs4?si=gOhHP_mN_BKZRFzS
- (10) Joel and Emilia UK 2024.6.23 <https://youtu.be/9bqFjcDeVIg?si=mVlX11Cjsf9Z66lo>
- (11) Josie Australia 2023.10.1 <https://youtu.be/b5FtjD2I8es?si=QeTPGVVrxF0pse17>
- (12) Lizzy South Africa 2024.9.14 <https://youtu.be/SBQoUPblK7c?si=vKlNoW8wz1YbBTyQ>
- (13) Luck and Naomi Ireland 2024.5.9 https://youtu.be/BXk6mgHQ-N8?si=oV4EkK6y_EtkH1B

- (14) Margarita Russia 2024.8.8 https://youtu.be/CWVTZsu4eIU?si=f64x1vD4nAcBc_dJ
- (15) Nahana UK 2025.2.2 <https://youtu.be/70EdSbkqAWc?si=1HCSlZBqhMbjwmys>
- (16) Oliver Dadema Spanish 2024.6.30 https://youtu.be/U3iK5EMB4SU?si=b8jK_2w-56XWLpCw
- (17) Sammy and Tommy America 2024.6.2
<https://youtu.be/UL5e6qk3sLE?si=mY7qz8nEHIUGzMNQ>
- (18) Sarah and Callum UK 2025.1.17
<https://youtu.be/TMbBmuw89w8?si=sLIMEAZMIVpxmQPp>
- (19) Shae and David Canada 2024.6.9 <https://youtu.be/F1hjZE66GD4?si=Ag7xavzSFmNwMhyc>
- (20) Viyom South East Asia 2025.1.19
https://youtu.be/uwXeNMAM_iA?si=Vj6_exeDp6pR5o5i'

Appendix 3

Table. Length of the Final 20 Texts

<i>Bloggers</i>	<i>Tokens of Texts</i>	<i>Bloggers</i>	<i>Tokens of Texts</i>
Chris Rodriguez	1570	Josie	4420
Claudia and Thomas	1369	Lizzy	2296
Deana and Phil	2958	Luck and Naomi	3106
Doug Barnard	2130	Margarita	1715
Emma and Ofer	2666	Nahana	851
Harry Jaggard	924	Oliver Dadema	2059
Hutchinsons	5815	Sammy and Tommy	2207
Jay and Karolina	602	Sarah and Callum	2921
Jenn and Leon	1346	Shae and David	1088
Joel and Emilia	2872	Viyom	2151