

# The Function of Large-Scale International Expos in National Image Construction from the Perspective of Global Communication--Take China-South Asia Expo as an Example

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**Abstract:** *The 6th China-South Asia Expo that convened in Kunming in 2022 magnetizes the attention worldwide back to Yunnan again while a new opportunity and symbol for the world to take a brand new insight into Yunnan's development in the post-epidemic era. This study selects 10 international media covering the expo, including European and American media: Agence France-Presse, Business Wire, World Journal, London Chinese;Asian media: The Tribune, Kathmandu Post, Yahui, Vietnam News, Vientiane Times, Talk Vietnam and a Hong Kong media: China Review News. Based on the theory of agenda setting and international communication, the author makes a quantitative and qualitative study of the media reports on the Expo and finds that there were about 80% of the foreign media hold a positive or neutral attitudes towards the Expo, draw a positive image of China in science, sports, economy and diplomacy, which helps to promote our national spirit, eliminate misunderstanding and distortion, show our responsibility. We also can continue to broaden cooperation, public opinion guidance and multi-narrative strategies to help build China's national image.*

**Keywords:** *China-South Asia Expo, International image, International communication*

## 1. Introduction

National image is a kind of soft power based on the national hard power.<sup>[1]</sup> It plays an indispensable role in international relations. A good national image is beneficial to create a favorable external environment for development. On the contrary, it may bring difficulties to international communication and cooperation. We are now under the period of profound changes unseen in a century and epidemic, international opinion could become a main battlefield of national ideology and national interests during the epidemic. Public opinion is the mixture of beliefs, attitudes, opinions and emotional feelings expressed by the public about the real society, it has the features of relative consistency, intensity and continuity.<sup>[2]</sup> It does have an impact on the process of social development, events and issues. We are now at the time of the Internet, the network public opinion has gradually become a major part of modern public opinion field. For instance, China-South Asia Expo, a large international conference, plays a great role in building and publicizing national image: The China-South Asia Expo is a global media event which provides a precious opportunity for the construction and publicity of the national image where it is more easier to be conveyed and more acceptable. It also provides an extensive attention for the state, so that the national image can be transmitted to most part of the world more widely and swiftly. The differences of communication concepts and conflicts among countries will lead to negative interference to the encoding and decoding process to the kind of information. Thus, the study of overseas media reports and public opinion events during the expo will be conducive to the study of China's international image. Under the stage of globalization, how to improve and shape China's national image in the new era through the 6th China-South Asia Expo, making overseas people have a brand new recognition of China and enhance China's voice in international affairs is a topic worthy of study.

## 2. Data-research program reported at the China-South Asia Expo

The amount, tendency and trends of reports of China-South Asia Expo by foreign media has reflected the changes of attitudes of foreign media, government and journalists towards the Expo. Therefore, The study selects 10 international media covering the Expo, including European and American media: Agence France-Presse, Business Wire, World Journal, London Chinese;Asian media: The Tribune,

Kathmandu Post, Yuhui, Vietnam News, Vientiane Times, Talk Vietnam and a Hong Kong media: China Review News. As leaders of public opinion, these media play an elemental role as intermediaries. Moreover, due to the distinguishing countries they are standing for and the different positioning, the reports are differs which provides a multi-version material for the study of the attitude of foreign media to the expo.

The study mainly concentrates on the text analysis and the spreading of the report. Firstly, content analysis. In this method, the study analyzes and inspects the various situations, rhetorical strategies and communication effects of crisis communication during the expo and compares them with the previous conferences held in China. Secondly, the research method of network ethnography. The basic framework of it assists people with all aspects of human activities that hard to discover. In the field of international communication, it can get the deeper insight of the audience, cultural background, transmits content performance and other aspects. In each of them, people will operate within the social rule system purposely and make a difference to the surrounding world. Thirdly, text mining method. It is a type of analysis technology of Internet media platform. It runs as follows: encoding the unstructured data, links the isolated text, exact the key information, excavates the theme, draw the key data network of the summary text in videos collected in Tiktok in KHCoder, then analyzes the text that summarizes the short video.

On the official website of the 10 media mentioned before, the author searches the period starts from October 28,2022 when the 6th China-South Asia Expo held in Kunming from November 19 to 21 and ends at November 30,2022. Due to the various possible translation version that the foreign media may use, the author searched with the keyword of the 6th China-South Asia Expo, China South Asia Expo, Kunming Expo and Kunming Import and Export Fair, there were hundreds of relevant news items. Then exclude the weakly related news, the author got 93 qualified news eventually. In the eligible news, the author first studies the amounts and tendencies of the reports and start the content analysis, second explore the agenda setting, then the positive China image that shown in the foreign media as well as the function of national image construction and put feasible proposal.

### 3. Sample analysis

#### 3.1. Quantity of foreign media reports on the China-South Asia Expo

The amounts of reports can show the attention the media pay to a news event. It can be seen through the sample analysis(Figure 1). The frequency of the news report on the expo keeps low with the number of less then 10 passages until November 17,2022. Then with the coming expo, it drew more media's attention and the amounts became increasing. On November 21, it reached the top of 23 news. It's often the perfect time for China to take a further step to its foreign publicity.

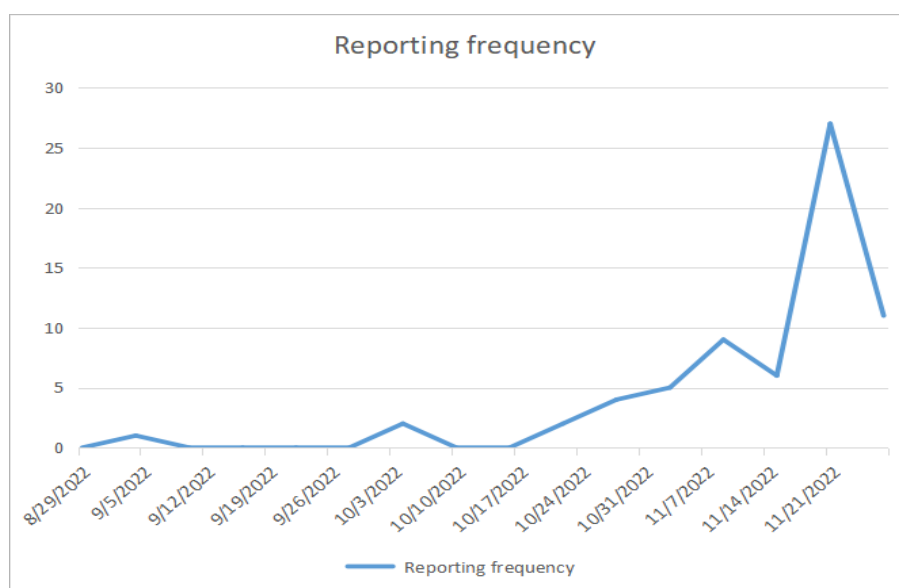


Figure 1: Number of reports

### 3.2. The tendency of foreign media's reports on China-South Asia Expo

In the process of selecting materials, writing and transmission, most news will be influenced by certain factors such as political position, values and class levels, therefore, the report will definitely more or less have tendencies. Based on the requires, the author uses software and text closing reading to divide the 93 reports samples into 3 parts: negative, neutral and positive. The specific distribution of reporting tendency is as follows:

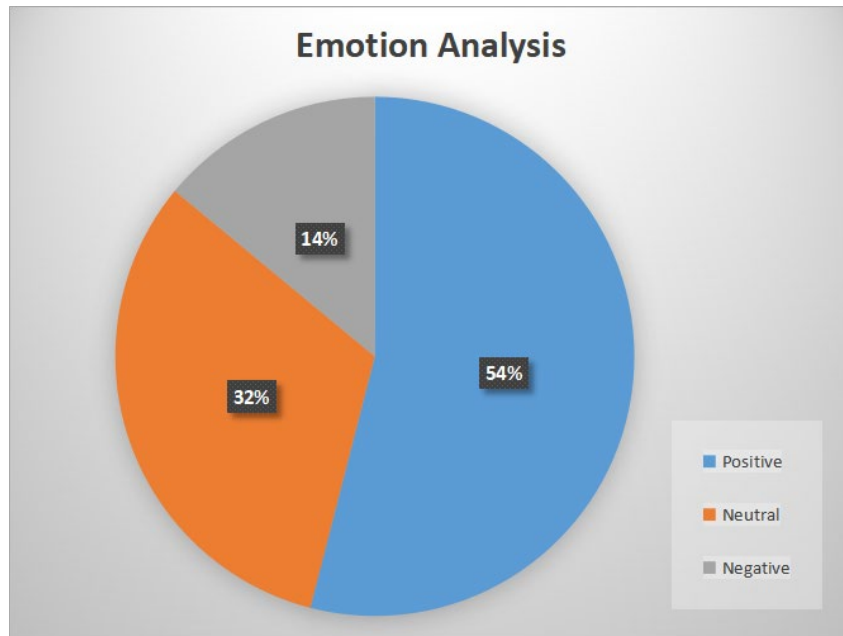


Figure 2: Emotional analysis in the report

As can be seen from Figure 2, among the 93 reports published by 10 media from September 2022 to November 30, 2022, the positive reports ranked the top, accounting for 54%, the neutral ranked second, accounting for 32%, and the negative accounted for the least, 14%. According to the statistical data, 10 media reports on the expo tend to be more positive and objective with the total proportion of 86%. It shows the fact that China has made great achievements in the external publicity. Nowadays, under the information globalization, the media takes more and more important responsibility of the guidance to public opinion, which is a vital means to enhance China's international influence.

### 3.3. Media agenda-setting based on semantic network analysis

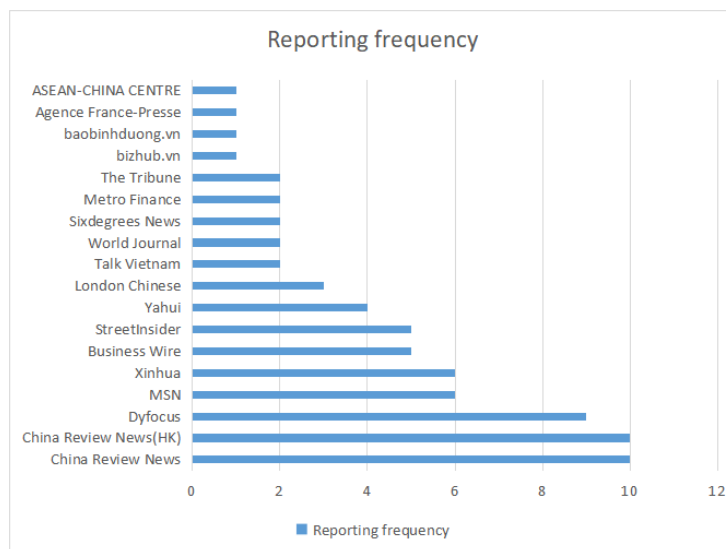


Figure 3: Media coverage frequency

In this study, 93 news report was translated by Google and the text were analyzed by Nvivo. First, use word frequency analysis to generate a table, delete some unrelated or ambiguous words such as region, point out, emphasize and form the chart according to the frequency of words from high to low. Through sampling and content cluster analysis, we can know that the focus of public opinion is mainly about China-South Asia Expo becomes China's multilateral diplomacy in South Asia and Southeast Asian countries, and the proportion of relevant public opinion is 25%. Then the topic of Further introduction of the results of the South China Expo by the spokesman and Arrangement of business visits for exhibitors and participants, which both accounted for 25%.

Through the statistical analysis(Figure 3), the amount of public opinion about China - South Asia Expo is mainly from China Review News (HK),(a total of 10, accounting for 10.6%). Followed by the China Review News (CN) , (a total of 10, accounting for 10.6%) and Dyfocus,(a total of 9, accounting for 9.6%)

#### **4. China's national image in foreign media reports**

##### ***4.1. The major country's image with specialization and digitalization***

On November 22, 2022, Business Wire reported the opening of the China-South Asia Expo, and comment that the expo is a grand event with New Opportunity and New Development which gathers high-tech.<sup>[3]</sup> The investment signed on Sunday focus on 12 major industries in Yunnan, Southwest China, including green energy, modern agriculture, advanced manufacturing, new materials and biomedicine, reported the World Journal on November 21,2022. It is worth expecting. On November 22, 2022,Vientiane Times reported: Prajon Prachsakul, Governor of Chiang Mai, Thailand, hoped that all parties will work together to carry out cooperation in industrial and supply chains, digital economy, trade facilitation, and regional economic integration.The two-day meeting approved in principle draft amendments to the decree on the Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion Fund. The amendments redefined the scope of micro, small and medium-sized businesses.Authorities in charge were told to take action to plug loopholes to prevent revenue leaks and do more to fulfil the government's national austerity policy in accordance with the relevant decrees.<sup>[3]</sup>The cabinet also resolved to escalate efforts to reform state enterprises in accordance with the plan.Participants agreed on the need to address unemployment and to improve the skills of the Lao workforce in order to meet the demand for goods, both in-country and for export.

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##### ***4.2. Linkage with world cooperation, leading the opening and development***

On November 22, 2022, Talking Vietnam reported: This year, the event was held both online and offline due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to strengthen economic and trade cooperation between South Asian countries and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Thông tấn xã Việt Nam said: Vietnam is one of the exhibitors at the 6th China-South Asia Expo and the 26th China Kunming Import and Export Fair, which were held in Kunming, Yunnan Province, China, from November 19 to 22. The Vietnamese Embassy in China coordinated with the Vietnamese Consulate General in Kunming to support 12 provinces and cities to send hundreds of samples of typical products and more than 2000 documents to the Import Expo to popularize their investment, tourism and trade promotion.On November

19, 2022. The Strategic Studies Center said: Thailand is willing to take the CSA Expo as a platform to build consensus, unite and cooperate, and seek common development. We will create new growth points in sustained cooperation, promote the high-quality development of the Belt and Road and the Belt and Road initiatives, and promote the implementation of the Global Development Initiative. To create a more prosperous and better future. -- Chaisit Tantaykul

In foreign media's reports, China have shown her diplomatic image of full of confidence, which will also become an important opportunity to promote national development and inspire national spirit.

#### ***4.3. Innovate to the traditional culture, protection of intangible culture***

On November 21, 2022, Agence France-Presse reprinted the news of Xinhua, supporting the recognition of the image of the expo for the protection of non-heritage sites and traditional culture. It agrees with the support for environmental protection. On November 21, 2022, London Chinese expressed its admiration for the traditional Chinese non-heritage cultures in the exhibition hall. If we want to exhibit China's national culture precisely, we must highlight the recognition of China's image, that is, to show Chinese elements with its distinct characteristics. There are different definitions of Chinese elements, some think that Chinese elements should be refined from traditional culture, some think that Chinese elements are unique to China and can reflect what China is. Large-scale and world-level coverage has changed China's weak position in international communication during the China-South Asia Expo, giving China the opportunity to transmit a large number of outbound information to the overseas, at the same time, China has complete autonomy over these information.

The China-South Asia Expo is a global event, which brings China a wide range of attention from all over the world. Meanwhile, the expo is also a process of cultural exchange and sharing, which constructs a common group experience for visitors, and these kind of memory is easier to be retained for a long time. A successful expo can also improve the soft power of the country and change the stereotyped image of China in the international arena to a certain extent.

Some media have expressed their admiration for Chinese traditional culture, which will further strengthen Chinese nation's sense of national identity for its own heritage, and help to transmit a positive image as a major country.

### **5. The function of global communication of China-South Asia Expo in the construction of national image**

#### ***5.1. Comprehensive strength of China shown to the world***

From bidding to venue construction to exhibition, the expo has demonstrated China's comprehensive strength to the international community in all aspects. First of all, the holding requires strong economic strength as a basis, a large number of facilities need investment, and the use of amounts of scientific and technological means in the expo also shows the world the ability of science and technology in China. One of the purposes of the China-South Asia Expo is to promote economic and trade exchanges, to show the advanced science and technology industry to attract investors, so the success of the expo not only brings considerable economic benefits to the host country, but also shows the national scientific and technological strength. The theme of Sharing Development Opportunities Through Opening Up also makes the world feel that besides economic development, China pays much attention to A Community of Shared Future for Mankind and maintains the balanced development of people, cities and environment.

#### ***5.2. Fully displayed science and technology image***

We are willing to show the achievements of green energy development in Yunnan and the prospects of a strong province of green energy; to demonstrate green energy one base, three demonstration and one hub construction results; to show that green energy should lead to build China Green Aluminum Valley and Photovoltaic Capital, to promote the development of green aluminum and silicon industry chain, and fully support the market prospects of green high-end manufacturing; to show the achievements of Yunnan in tackling key scientific and technological problems in the fields of energy conservation and emission reduction, low-carbon development and climate change.

### 5.3. *A good platform for national image of opening up*

With the main line of big channel drives big logistics, big logistics drives big trade, and big trade drives big industry, it focuses on the construction of China's radiation center for South Asia and Southeast Asia, actively serving and integrating into the Belt and Road construction and other national development strategies; we actively docking RCEP, and deepening the practical results of economic, trade and investment cooperation with the countries along the Belt and Road and the RCEP agreement countries. Also, we set up RCEP zero tariff product display area. It shows that Yunnan takes the construction of free trade pilot zones as the core, optimizes the layout and kinetic energy orientation of various open and cooperative functional zones, focuses on stabilizing foreign trade and foreign investment, promotes a higher level of opening to the outside world, and builds a higher level of open economic system. We show the measures and achievements taken by Yunnan Province to build China-Laos railway freight products with local economic characteristics, accelerate the transformation of regional advantages, release the potential of international major corridors, and continuously expand the scale of cross-border trade and logistics, taking the completion and opening of China-Laos Kunwan Railway as an opportunity.

## 6. Conclusions

Large-scale and world-level coverage has changed China's weak position in international communication during the China-South Asia Expo, giving China the opportunity to transmit a large number of outbound information to the overseas, at the same time, China has complete autonomy over these information. Compared with the general external communication, the information transmitted by China during the expo will be more acceptable to the international community, and the media also need this official source of information when obtaining information. In addition to visiting the expo lively, the audience who can not arrive at can also visit the expo synchronously through the network, which further enlarges the attention and influence of the South Expo and attracts more audiences. The information globalization makes the world linked together closely, the network makes the individual no longer just the recipient of mass media, but also exists more and more as communicators. Therefore, as the transmitter of information of the expo, individuals play an increasingly important role, and ordinary supporters of the expo can make a greater influence. At the same time, the characteristics of network transmission enable individual communicators to attract a large number of audiences within a second, and make interpersonal communication achieve a wide range of promotion, while the information of an unofficial image communication can complement the information from official. Thus, under the dual influence of the reports from the traditional media and the large-scale information transmission of the network, the 6th China-South Asia Expo has formed a larger concern group than the traditional media era, which has greatly enhanced the attention of China's national image. Promoted China's external image dissemination.

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