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The Mechanism and Effects of Social Networking Site Communication: Analysis of Chinese Young People's Images of Japan

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ABSTRACT

Research objectives: The present study has a twofold purpose. First, it aims to discover the usage motivations of social networking sites (SNSs) that are widely used in China and the subsequent outcomes pertaining to the Chinese public's image of Japan. Second, it intends to explore the underlying mechanism of SNS communication behaviors by identifying the effects of receiving and expressing Japan-related messages via SNSs on Chinese public's image of Japan at a civil level.

Research questions: Accordingly, this study raises the following question: What are the effects of online communication motives and behaviors on Chinese public's image of Japan? The main research question can be specified and divided into the following subsidiary questions. (1) Why is an individual motivated to use a particular SNS? (2) What are the influences of an individual's SNS use motivations on his/her images of Japan? (3) What are the mechanism of online communication behaviors and an individual's images of Japan? The research questions derive from the weaknesses of the extent literature on SNS communication and a rethink of Japan-China relations under the new media environment in which individuals seamlessly switch between the recipient and sender roles.

Theoretical framework: To fill the gap existing in the previous studies, first, it is necessary to investigate SNS usage motivations extensively across platforms and the respective outcomes. Therefore, the present study adopts a uses and gratifications (U&G) paradigm to explore an individual's SNS usage motivations and images of Japan in terms of cognitive and behavioral outcomes. Then, this research incorporates the bidirectional message effects model (Pingree, 2007) into the O-S-R-O-R model of communication mediation (Cho et al., 2009; Shah et al., 2007) to investigate both reception and expression effects of SNS communication, which essentially differs from the previous research that merely focuses on the effect of receiving related messages on images of a foreign country without identifying theoretical mechanism.

Data and method: This study relies on an exploratory sequential mixed methods design involving focus group discussions (FGDs) and questionnaire survey on Chinese undergraduate students in Beijing between October and November, 2017.

Principal findings: First, this study found a notable distinction in usage motivation and patterns of WeChat and Weibo, two most-mentioned platforms by the participants. Compared to WeChat, the majority of the participants noted that they are more willing to express themselves on Weibo. Further analysis on the descriptive explanations of the participants indicated that anonymity, homogeneity (of e.g., interests, opinions, or values), and getting awards (e.g., comments and "Likes") considerably promote the level of revealing one's thoughts, moods, and emotions. Another difference of the two platforms lies in the level of media trust and information seeking behaviors. On Weibo, a higher level of exposure to diverse viewpoints leads to a cautious view on the credibility and objectivity of received information, accordingly facilitating seeking behaviors for related information, so that the users are able to distinguish credible information from excessive contents. However, on WeChat, the participants tend to stop seeking relevant information or news, since the contents posted on Moments by their peers are considered trustworthy. To explore the underlying reasons of this intriguing finding, I applied the principal of least effort (Zipf, 1949) to the analysis.

Given the above-mentioned uniqueness of Weibo, it was selected as a case study for investigating the relationships between usage motivations and Chinese university student's image of Japan. The results of ordinal logistic regression indicated that the social interaction motive significantly predicted an individual's impression of Japan and vigilant intention towards Japan. In addition, the information seeking motive is predictive of cognitive and behavioral responses to a large extent. Then, the community development motive is predictive only for vigilant intention towards Japan. Remarkably, this study found that the entertainment motive significantly promoted the respondents' positive images of Japan.

Furthermore, I investigated the effects of communication behaviors on Chinese university student's image of Japan with structural equation modeling (SEM). In addition to total effects and total indirect effects, I looked into specific direct effects of communication behaviors as well. The results indicated that the evaluation of Japan's progressiveness channeled the reception effects of SNS communication on behavioral intentions towards Japan except vigilance. In addition, impression of Japan mediated the reception effects on interest in Japan and reduction in social distance to Japan. However, message expression is on the contrary. Producing Japan-related messages on SNS did not produce any significant indirect effects on behavioral intentions neither mediated by progressiveness nor by impression of Japan, while perceived threat mediated its effect on vigilant intention and social distance.

Finally, based on the primary findings of this dissertation, the whole process of online communication involving receiving, participating/interacting, and expressing is delineated in this study.

Contributions: The contributions of this study lie in both theoretical and practical level. On the theoretical level, this study contributes to the literature on the subsequent outcomes resulting from various SNS usage motivations. Another major contribution of this study originates from extending the theoretical framework of online communication mediation model (Cho et al., 2009; Shah et al., 2007) to investigating the mechanism and effects of SNS communication behaviors by analyzing Chinese young people's image of Japan. On a practical level, the findings provide insights to not only media and communication researchers but also to practitioners of all sorts, in particular journalist, we-media practitioner, and political communicators, among others.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
BBS	Bulletin Board System
BMEM	Bidirectional Message Effects Model
CA	Cronbach's Alpha
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CR	Composite Reliability
DA	Data Augmentation
CMC	Computer-Mediated Communication
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GLM	Generalized Linear Model
IR	Item Reliability
MI	Multiple Imputation
MAR	Missing at Random
MCMC	Markov Chain Monte Carlo
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
QDA	Qualitative Data Analysis
SNS	Social Networking Sites
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science

SPT	Self-Perception Theory
RMSR	Root Mean Squared Residual
RMSEA	Root Mean Squared Error Of Approximation
TLI	Tucker-Lewis Index
U&G	Uses and Gratifications
UGM	User-Generated Media
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Chapter 1   Introduction

Due to the territorial and historical issues such as Senkaku Islands (known as Diaoyudao in China) dispute and Japanese Prime Minister's visit to Yasukuni Shrine, nationalistic sentiment has been fueled in the Chinese online sphere, which led to a series of anti-Japan demonstrations were held across major cities in China over the past decade. Protesters have been informed and gathered by information distributed on the Internet—particularly bulletin board system (BBS), micro-blogging services, or instant messengers. Although the rise of nationalism in the Chinese online sphere and anti-Japanese sentiment has been gaining wide scholarly attentions, few researchers have explored the underlying mechanism of online communication and the Chinese public's image of Japan.

Research on images of a foreign country, in a broad sense, is an interdisciplinary field spanning international relations, political science, media studies, communication research, cultural studies, sociology, and social psychology. In particular, the underlying reasons for the Chinese public's unfavorable image of Japan are subjects of international relations[1] (e.g., Benfell, 2002; Berger, 2008; Gries et al., 2016; Er, 2009; Hunter, 2009; Kristof, 1998; Ienaga, 1993; Lind, 2008; Nozaki, 2005; Orr, 2001; Penny & Wakafield, 2008; Vyas, 2011; Wakamiya, 1999), political science[2] (e.g., Barme, 1993; Brittingham, 2007; Callahan, 2006; Coble, 2007; Cohen, 2002; Gries, 2004; He, 2007; Mitter, 2000; Reilly, 2012; Shirk, 2007; Wang, 2008; Weiss, 2014; Zhao, 2005), and media and

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[1] Hyun, Kim, and Sun (2014) summarized the scholarly discussions on the tension between Japan and China. The authors concluded that international relations scholars argued that Japan's ambivalence toward its war responsibility during the World War II, insincere apologies for wartime atrocities, and conservative domestic politics should account for the hostile perceptions between the two countries,

[2] Hyun, Kim, and Sun (2014) argued that scholars of political science suggest that China' patriotic education, surging nationalism, and Chinese authority's manipulation of anti-Japanese sentiments for diplomatic purposes should be responsible for the anti-Japanese sentiments.

communication studies (e.g., Hyun, Kim, & Sun, 2014; Hyun & Kim, 2015; Ito & Zhu, 2008; Ishii, 2012; Jiang, 2013, 2014; Li, 2006; Liu, 1998).

One possible intersection at which these studies of different disciplines coincide is the upsurge of social networking sites (SNSs) and its potential impacts on nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiment in China. As Cui (2012) remarked, anti-Japan dimension in China has become "society-driven" rather than "state-led" on account of the Internet communication. Similar to Cui's argument, other scholars attributed this shift to SNS_which has been dispersing rapidly in China over the last few years as an optional medium of traditional mass media that are under Chinese Communist Party (CCP) control—provides a sufficient condition allowing Chinese Internet users funnel their nationalistic sentiments into activism (Hyun, Kim, & Sun, 2014; Kluver & Qin, 2013; Liu, 2010; Wu, 2007).

Although prior research on the Chinese public's image of Japan revealed that SNSs have a close relationship with nationalism—which is considered predictive of anti-Japanese sentiments—, few studies on this topic have examined how the Chinese public's online communication motivations and behaviors translate into individuals' images of Japan. One plausible reason for this pitfall could be that the interdisciplinary nature of this topic inevitably brings about barriers of communicating between different disciplines and containing a variety of viewpoints across disciplines. Apart from the contradictions that exist in the intersection of these disciplines, the study on images of a foreign country still suffers from a lack of consensus. Accordingly, with the above theoretical and empirical concerns, the present study has a twofold purpose. First, to fill the gap of previous research by extending our knowledge of SNS usage motivations and the subsequent outcomes that stem from the choice of particular SNSs, this study aims to discover the effects of

usage motivations of various SNSs on the Chinese public's image of Japan based on the focus group

discussions (FGDs) with Chinese university students. Second, it intends to explore the underlying

mechanism of online communication behaviors and the Chinese public's image of Japan by

identifying the direct and indirect effects of receiving and expressing Japan-related messages online

on image of Japan at a civil level.

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS[3]

The main research question that I tackled in this study is: What are the effects of online

communication motives and behaviors on the Chinese public's image of Japan? The research

question derived from the communication technology transformation and the deterioration of

Japan-China relations at government level and civil level at the beginning of this century particularly.

It can be specified and divided into the following subsidiary questions. (1) Why is an individual

motivated to use a particular SNS? (2) What are the influences of an individual's SNS usage

motivations on his/her image of Japan? (3) What are the mechanisms of online communication

behaviors and an individual's image of Japan?

As discussed in the previous section, it is believed that the popular nationalism in China is bred

by the Internet. At the same time, many scholars assert that popular nationalism which is based on

competing memories of historical events has triggered the tension between Japan and China (e.g.,

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[3] Figure 1.1 depicts the whole structure of this chapter, including research objectives, questions, theoretical framework, methods, and implications.

Gries et al. 2016; Er, 2009; Hunter, 2009; Vyas, 2011). According to public opinion polls[4], the impressions of Japan in the eyes of the Chinese nationals continue to deteriorated since 2005. Over the past decade, the penetration and use intensity of SNSs have increased exponentially. Despite many studies argue that the unfavorable impressions of Japan in China may be related to the information and communication technologies, the potential interrelationships between these two phenomena still remain unexplored.

To answer the first subsidiary question, it is necessary to understand the general conditions of SNSs use in China initially, especially why university students use particular SNSs over the alternative SNS platforms, and how they use these sites, prior to discussing the influences of online communication motives and behaviors on images of Japan. In addition, based on the basic understanding of SNS using habits, this study adopted a uses and gratifications (U&G) paradigm to explore an individual's SNS usage motivations and the subsequent outcomes, the images of Japan. Furthermore, this study employed communication theories to conceptualize reception and expression effects of online communication on the Chinese public's image of Japan with quantitative data collected through questionnaire survey.

Before moving to describing data and method this study relied on, it is necessary to address appropriateness of the study population. In this study, Chinese undergraduate students were selected as study population, because according to *the Statistical Report on Internet Development*[5] and

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[4] For example, the Japan-China Joint Public Opinion Survey which is conducted by the Genron NPO, the not-for-profit think tank in Japan.
[5] Chinese Internet Network Information Center (2017), *The 41th Chin*a *Statistical Report on Internet Development.* (Retrieved from http://www.cnnic.net.cn/hlwfzyj/hlwxzbg/hlwtjbg/201803/P020180305409870339136.pdf on May 14, 2018.)

*Development Report on Sina Weibo 2017[6], the primary users of SNSs are young and highly educated adults aged from 17 to 23 who possess advanced degrees. Another reason is that according to the previous studies, the Chinese younger generation is more inclined to perceive Japan as a threatening and militaristic country, and the protesters of anti-Japanese demonstrations are primariy composed of students. Thus, for the above reasons, undergraduate students are arguably the most relevant to the subject of this study.

1.2   DATA AND METHOD

This study relied on an exploratory sequential mixed methods[7] design involving FGD and questionnaire survey on Chinese undergraduate students in Beijing from October and November, 2017. Given the insufficiency of intensive and qualitative research on SNS usage motivations, in hopes of broadening and deepening the understanding of Chinese young adults' motivations of using SNSs, I first conducted FGDs to obtain a rich qualitative data, as qualitative data are often well suited to exploratory studies and generative of new understanding. The new themes generated from group interviews will be used in the subsequent surveys since the flexible and iterative properties make it possible to redesign and reconstruct the questioning throughout the process (Herbert & Rubin, 1995, pp.46-47).

In addition, a priori measurement scale adopted from the previous studies will in turn be confirmed or modified by virtue of qualitative research. The purpose of this phase is to elicit rich

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[6] Sina Weibo Data Center (2017), *Development Report on Sina Weibo 2017*, (Retriedbed from http://data.weibo.com/report/reportDetail?id=404&sudaref=www.baidu.com on May 14, 2018).
[7] Please refer to Chapter 3 (pp. 67-72) for the descriptions and rationales for adopting an exploratory sequential mixed methods design in this study.

descriptive information about the participants' SNS usage motivations and outcomes. Three focus group discussions were conducted on 24 Chinese university students aged from 18 to 23 affiliated with two public and comprehensive universities in Beijing. In the second phase, the anonymous survey was implemented at two universities of Beijing to collect quantitative data to test the proposed model and hypotheses. 473 valid responses in the age group of 17 to 25 were finally obtained. To assess the relationships between SNSs communication and behavioral responses that are mediated by cognitive outcomes, structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to quantitative data.

Figure 1.1 Structure of this dissertation

OBJECTIVE

| SNS usage motivations and patterns | → | The effects of SNS usage motivations on images of Japan | → | The effects of SNS communication on images of Japan |

QUESTION

| Why is individual motivated to use a particular SNS? | What are the influences of individual's SNS usage motivations on his-or her image of Japan? | What are the mechanism of online communication behaviors and individual's image of Japan? |

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Media and communication effects theories

METHOD

| qualitative approach: thematic content analysis Focus group interviews with 24 participants | quantitative approach: LM/GLM, SEM Questionnaire survey on 473 respondents |

IMPLICATION

- extending the proposed model to study the interrelationships among communication behaviors and cognitive and behavioral outcomes;
- tackling the difficulty of lacking of theoretical framework when investigating the determinants of the images of a foreign country;
- creating more effective interventions to instill individuals with certain desirable attitudes or behaviors and to improving relations between Japan and China at the civil level

1.3   RESEARCH FINDINGS

Throughout the proceeding sections, research background and method of this dissertation have been discussed in brief. This section therefore clarifies the answers to the three subsidiary research questions above of the investigation into the impacts of SNS usage motivations and comminution behaviors on the Chinese public's image of Japan. The main findings of qualitative research emerged from the FGDs with 24 selected undergraduate students currently enrolled in two public and comprehensive universities in Beijing.

The main subsidiary question that was tackled with the thematic analyses on the FGD data is: "What are the influences of an individual's SNS usage motivations on his/her images of Japan?". To seek the answers to this question, I relied on the U&G paradigm. One of the most intriguing findings is that the participants are more inclined to reveal their opinions, thoughts, or emotions on an open, unexclusive, and anonymous platform which is founded on the network consisting of strangers or virtual online friends (e.g., Sina Weibo), rather than a closed and private platform consisting of families, friends, or acquaintances (e.g., WeChat). Further analysis on the underlying reasons for this finding will be carried out in Chapter 4 applying the concept of self-disclosure[8]. Another surprising finding is a distinction in behaviors of seeking related information between Sina Weibo and WeChat. In order to predict the impacts of information received from different platforms on users' images of Japan in the next phase, I endeavored to make clear the reason for the difference.

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[8]   Self-disclosure, which is a concept derived from the social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973), can be simply explained as communicating personal information, thoughts, attitudes, and emotions with other people (e.g., Cho, 2007; Lee et al., 2011; Park & Chung, 2011). In the social penetration theory, self-disclosure is regarded as the medium of the relationship development.

The second subsidiary question is: "What are the effects of an individual's SNS usage motivations on his/her images of Japan?". To answer this question, Sina Weibo was selected as a case study. As I will discuss in the following chapter, images of Japan were conceptualized as a four-dimensional structure by thinking of cognitive outcomes and behavioral outcomes as distinct consequences that vary according to usage motivations and communication behaviors. In accordance with the previous research and the findings generated from the FGDs, I argue that social connection and self-expression motivation is powerful predictor of behavioral outcomes, because these motives demand higher levels of cognitive elaboration and collective consideration. Thus, compared to non-self-involved behaviors, a usage motivation involving participation and expression may exert a greater impact on an individual. Later in Chapter 4, I analyzed the extent to which each usage motivation affects the respondents' cognitive and behavioral outcomes in relation to Japan.

The third subsidiary question is: "What are the mechanisms of SNS communication behaviors and an individual's images of Japan?". As far as I have investigated the indirect effects of SNS communication in Chapter 5, in comparison to the expression effects, this study found that reception is playing a more pivotal role in the Chinese public's image of Japan. Whereas the effect of message expression mediated by cognitive characteristics is positively associated with vigilant behavioral intention, which is in contrast to reception effects. Therefore, I argue that exposure to diverse viewpoints on SNSs could eventually lead to Japan-China reconciliation at a civil level.

1.4   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

With the expansion of social media, in addition to theoretically and methodologically established reception effects, communication researchers are urgent to better understand expression effects systematically. In recent critical reviews of self-effects/expression effects (Valkenburg et al., 2016; Valkenburg, 2017), the authors pointed out that to date, only few communication theories have conceptualized how creating or sending messages for the purpose of communication to others may affect oneself. Understanding the mechanism of through which online communication behavior (reception or expression of messages) affects an individual's cognitive and behavioral responses may help media researchers or practitioners to create more effective interventions to infuse media users with certain desirable attitudes or behaviors, thereby improving the mutual understandings between Japan and China.

1.5   CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

The broader contributions of this study are fourfold. First, on the theoretical level, this study contributes to the literature on the U&G theory by investigating SNS usage motivations of various platforms and taking a close look at the effects of communicating a wide range of messages, thereby understanding the effects of SNS usage motivations on outcomes (i.e., the Chinese public's image of Japan) from a U&G perspective. Although previous research on the U&G has thoroughly examined the relationships between usage motivations and a variety of outcomes (including intentional behaviors of sustained SNS use, attitudes towards SNS, usage patterns, and psychological, behavioral, and social outcomes), the vast majority of the research overlooked how the outcomes vary from motivations, since they have restricted to a particular SNS. Not mention to cognitive and

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behavioral outcomes pertaining to a foreign country, most studies merely focus on the aspect of impression (e.g., Li, 2006; Liu, 1998; Ishii, 2012). Therefore, this study is different from the prior studies regarding images of a foreign country as cognitive and behavioral outcomes in accordance with the communication theories and the definition of "image" in social psychology.

The second contribution of this study lies in the theoretical framework. This study incorporated BMEM (bidirectional message effects model; Pingree, 2007) into O-S-R-O-R model of communication mediation[9] (Cho et al., 2009; Shah et al., 2007) to study the reception and the expression effects of SNS communication which essentially differs from the previous research that merely focuses on receiving related messages on images of a foreign country without identifying theoretical mechanism. More notably, this study applied media and communication effect theories to study the Chinese public's image of Japan thoroughly. Although there are numerous studies have discussed the underlying reasons for the unfavorable impression of Japan in China, little is known about the specific causes of the fast-spreading anti-Japanese sentiment. On account of these deficiencies of existing literature, causal relations among stimulus, outcomes, and mediating factors cannot be identified. This study is considerably more plausible than the alternatives, treating stimuli as contributing to cognitive outcomes, ultimately, behavioral intentions. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature on the mechanism of online communication behaviors and the Chinese public's image of Japan by elaborating on the cognitive processes (i.e., evaluation, recognition, impression) involved.

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[9] O-S-R-O-R model is revised by Shah et al. (2007) first based on the long-standing O–S–O–R model. This model is considered appropriate for studying mediating effects of media use on individuals. In addition to intrapersonal communication, this model also incorporates interpersonal communication into the communication processes. See Figure 2.5 for the diagram of the model.

Third, this study took expression-effects paradigm—which has begun to draw attentions of some scholars in the recent years (Finkel & Smith, 2008; Mclaughlin et al., 2016; Prislin et al., 2011; Shah et al., 2017; Valkenburg, 2017; Yoo et al., 2016)—into consideration by embedding it in nonreciprocal O-S-R-O-R framework. Several extant studies provided empirical evidence to bolster the argument that certain beliefs and attitudes are significant mediators between media use on political and health behaviors (Holbert & Stephenson, 2003). For instance, recent study in political communication theorize a set of reasoning process channel the influences of campaign advertisement exposure and news consumption (Cho et al., 2009). In the field of health communication, Yoo et al. (2016) identified self-efficacy for Middle-East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and perceived threat of MERS as intervening variables between receiving and expressing MERS-related information and MERS-preventive behavioral intentions, including handwashing intention and cough etiquette intention. Due to a lack of literature, it is hard to compare the effects of two types of SNS communication on cognitive outcomes and behavioral intentions in terms of Japan in China. Specifically, the direct effects of receiving and expressing message on SNSs are partially significantly associated with cognitive and behavioral outcomes. Receiving Japan-related information predicted higher levels of cognitive outcomes including progressiveness evaluation of Japan and perceived threat of Japan, and then led to higher levels of behavioral intentions except vigilant intention. Surprisingly, on the contrary to the previous studies that found significant relationship between expression and outcome responses, expressing Japan-related information on SNSs did not present significant associations with behavioral intentions towards Japan. As a result, the effect of expressing Japan-related information on behavioral intentions was not channeled by cognitive outcomes. On the other hand, receiving Japan-related information worked properly

through either progressiveness evaluation of Japan or perceived threat of Japan. Receiving Japan-related information led to greater intention of adopting positive behaviors towards Japan, mediated by progressiveness evaluation, as opposed to perceived threat.

Last but not least, on a practical level, the findings provided insights to not only communication researchers but also to media practitioners of all sorts, in particular journalist, we-media practitioner, and political communicators, among others. Specifically, the findings pertaining to mechanism of through which online communication behaviors affects the Chinese public's image of Japan may help researchers or practitioners to create more effective interventions to instill individuals with certain desirable attitudes or behaviors and to improving relations between Japan and China at individual level.

1.6   LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

In this subsection, I will address some potential limitations relates to the methods that were applied in this study. First, due to being scarce of literature on the effects of SNS usage motivations on images of a foreign country (as cognitive and behavioral outcomes), the results of this study are hard to contrast with previous studies. Second, all the participants are undergraduate students from two 4-year public and comprehensive universities in Beijing, which may not be representative of Chinese public opinion more generally. The third limitation relating to the research method is that the questions used in quantitative survey were restricted by the items included. Some variables which may determine a respondent's image of Japan were not included in the analysis, such as perceptions of historical issue or territorial dispute between Japan and China. Finally, instead of the

actual behaviors adopted by the respondents, behavioral intentions toward Japan were applied to the analysis. With the acknowledgement of the limitations mentioned above, to develop this research further, several future research agenda are presented in Chapter 6.

1.7   ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation is composed of six chapters including introductory chapter of the dissertation. At the beginning of Chapter 1, the pitfalls of the existing literature are proposed, followed by research objectives of the present study which lead to a set of research questions that will be tackled in the dissertation. Prior to presenting the main findings of qualitative and quantitative research, this chapter provides an overview of method applied to this study. It also includes considerations of significance, limitations, and contributions of this study. Lastly, this chapter presents the organization of this dissertation.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed review of relevant literature for this study. It begins with an introduction to the changes in images of Japan in the eyes of Chinese university students, particularly focusing on the disputes between Japan and China since the early 2000s. Following an introduction to development and present condition of SNSs in China, three primary features of online communication—selective, indirect, and bidirectional features—and empirical supports are identified in the context of SNSs. Theoretical and conceptual analytical framework is delineated based on the discussion of the previous research.

Chapter 3 copes with several crucial issues involved in designing mixed methods research. Prior to discussing the intentions of carrying out mix-methods research design throughout the

dissertation, a thorough review on various qualitative and quantitative research approaches ranging from research design to methods of data analysis are provided. It reviews the essences of and distinctions between qualitative and quantitative methodologies. To ensure replication of the findings and consistency across diverse methods, I also describe the procedures of data collection and analysis in detail in this chapter. Furthermore, primary principles of research ethics such as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and voluntariness of participation are discussed. This chapter concludes with the illustrations of each of the ways of analyzing qualitative and quantitative data.

Chapter 4 elicits qualitative findings about SNS usage motivations based on the FGDs with university students. This chapter begins with an overview of SNSs development status in China, followed by introductions to the features of each platform. Then, on the basis of a literature review on the U&G paradigm and relevant empirical studies, deficiencies of the previous research on SNS usage motivations were pointed out. To fill the gap of the prior research and extend our knowledge of SNS usage motivations and the subsequent outcomes that stem from the choice of the particular SNS platforms, research questions are thus proposed and answered. The procedures of data collection, data coding, and description of participants are described prior to moving to main findings. Furthermore, categories of usage motivations emerged from thematic analysis are thoroughly discussed respectively on the basis of FGD data in separate sections. Finally, a brief summary of findings arising from the analysis on FGD is presented.

Chapter 5 conveys detailed findings emerged from analyses on survey. This chapter begins with a review of existing literature about reception and expression effects of online communication behaviors on images of a foreign country. At this point, theoretical model and hypotheses are

proposed on the basis of literature review. Next, the descriptive statistics of major variables are presented to grasp the general picture of the respondents. Prior to testifying the proposed model, factor analysis is conducted to verify scale construction of mediating variable. Then, I apply SEM using behavioral intentions toward Japan as dependent variables. Mediation model is estimated using demographic characteristics as control variables, and using evaluation and recognition of Japan as mediating variables. The concluding section briefly recapitulates the empirical findings of this chapter.

Finally, the dissertation concludes by revisiting the research questions that I tackled in the dissertation and applying theoretical interpretations to explain the empirical findings. Then, the limitations of this study are noted after several major discussions are carried on. Moreover, to develop this study further, several future research agenda are presented.

Chapter 2　Literature Review

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The effects of SNS usage motivations and communication behaviors on images of Japan perceived by Chinese young people were examined in this study based on FGDs and survey questionnaires directed toward undergraduate students. Prior to discussing the effects of SNS use, it was necessary to identify the general conditions of SNS usage, including motivations and patterns—especially why university students use particular SNSs over alternative platforms and how they use these forms of communication media—, so as to investigate attitude, impression, and behavioral intention in terms of Japan. On the basis of gaining these basic understandings, media effect and communication theories and relevant empirical studies were reviewed in order to delineate the theoretical and conceptual analytical framework of this study,

2.2 CHANGES IN THE CHINESE PUBLIC'S IMAGE OF JAPAN

According to the *2017 Japan-China Annual Joint Opinion Poll*, which was conducted by the Genron NPO, the Chinese public's impression of Japan has improved over past 4 years, nevertheless approximately 67% of Chinese respondents have unfavorable or relatively unfavorable impressions of Japan (see Figure 2.1). Territorial and historical disputes between Japan and China are major unsettled problems triggering nationalistic sentiments, thereby resulting in unfavorable relations between the two countries in particular since 2004 (e.g., Er, 2009; Gries et al. 2016; Hunter, 2009; Hyun, Kim, & Sun, 2014; Vyas, 2011). The two controversial issues have been paid attentions and discussed widely in the field of media and communication research. Previous study found that

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territorial and historical conflicts with Japan were two main themes expressed in the Strong Nation

Forum[10] based on the results of content analysis (Wang, 2013). Furthermore, some scholars argued

that compared to other topics of coverage, the coverage in regard to stimulating nationalistic

sentiment, such as anti-Japan campaign, historical issues, and territorial disputes are more likely to

worsen the preference of Japanese for Chinese (Ito & Zhu, 2008).

Figure 2.1 Mutual impressions between Japanese and Chinese (%)[11]
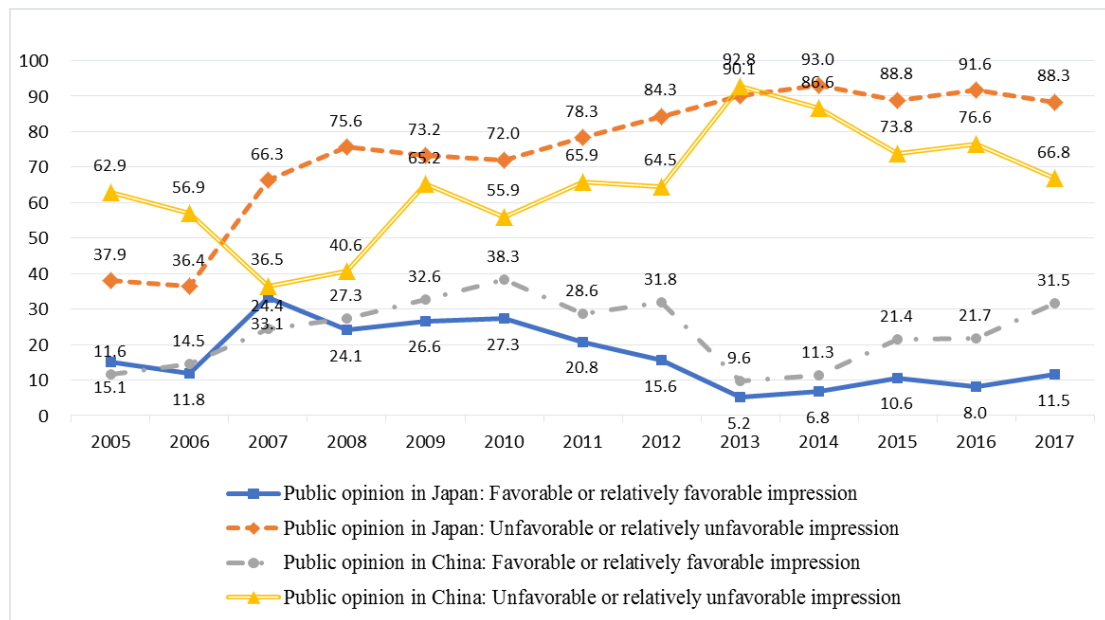
Source: Adopted from the report of the 13th Japan-China Annual Joint Opinion Poll; Created by the

author.

As discussed above, in the past decade, the rise of anti-Japanese sentiment in China has gained

wide scholarly attentions. International relation scholars and political scientists have attributed the

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[10] Strong Nation Forum (强国论坛 in Chinese) is a prominent online bulletin board on the website of People's Daily.
[11] Genron NPO (2017), The 13th Japan-China Annual Joint Opinion Poll ,
<http://www.genron-npo.net/world/archives/6837.html Retrieved on August 10, 2018>.

tension of Japan-China relations to nationalism which is based on competing memories of historical events (e.g., Gries et al. 2016; Er, 2009; Hunter, 2009; Vyas, 2011). Specifically, it is concluded that the discussions of international relations have been centered around the indecision of Japanese government toward its war responsibility during the World Was II, insincere and insufficient apologies for wartime atrocities, and conservative domestic politics (Benfell, 2002; Berger, 200, 2008; Ienaga, 1993; Kristof, 1998; Lind; 2008; Nozaki, 2005; Orr, 2001; Penny & Wakafield, 2008; Wakamiya, 1999). On the other hand, scholars of political sciences suggest that China's patriotic education, rising nationalism, and Chinese authority's manipulation of anti-Japanese sentiments for diplomatic purposes are responsible for the deteriorations in Japan-China relations (Barme, 1993; Brittingham, 2007; Callahan, 2006; Coble, 2007; Cohen, 2002; Gries, 2004; He, 2007; Mitter, 2000; Reilly, 2010; Shirk, 2007; Wang, 2008; Weiss, 2014; Zhao, 2005).

From the early 2010s, more and more communication scholars capture this issue from the perspective of online interpersonal communication effects on nationalistic and anti-Japanese sentiment. One possible interaction at which these studies of different disciplines coincide is the upsurge of the Internet and its potential impacts on cultivating popular nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiment in China. Especially, as primary causes of the tension between Japan and China, over the last few decades, several confrontations have attracted world-wide attention: Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni Shrine, Chinese opposition to Japanese pursuit of a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Japanese history textbook controversies, and territorial disputes over Diaoyu Islands (known as Senkaku Islands in Japan).

The competing claims regarding these issues have been a source of tension between the two countries before, when the anti-Japanese protests erupted. The most recent wave of demonstration

has occurred from August to September 2012. A series of anti-Japanese demonstrations were held

again across 208 of 287 Chinese prefectural cities (Wallace & Weiss, 2015) in China due to the

escalation of Diaoyu Islands dispute around the time of the anniversary of "Mukden Incident" (also

called "September 18 Incident") [12]. It is arguably the largest wave of anti-Japanese mass

demonstration since 1972 when China and Japan established diplomatic relations (Zhou & Wang,

2016). The last large-scale anti-Japan protests occurred in 2004, due to the Prime Minister

Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni Shrine. Demonstration in 2012 has gained more widely concern than

demonstration in 2004, since as the transformation of information environment and widespread

utilization of social media, information that may lead to anti-Japanese sentiment has been circulated

more rapidly and widely through Internet. Activists thus were informed and gathered by the

information that has been disseminated through the Internet and other communication technologies,

particularly BBS, micro-blogs, and instant messengers.

Many researchers of media studies have devoted their attentions to studying the impacts of

traditional mass media use on images of a foreign country. The research focus has been shifted to

social media since the early 2000s, given the development of online communication technologies. It

is argued that individuals are more likely to rely on and be influenced by interpersonal

communication via social media than traditional news media contents, since a strong decline in

public trust of news outlets was revealed in the prior studies (Turcotte et al. 2015). Therefore,

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[12] Mukden Incident was an event provoked by Japanese Kwangtung Army as a pretext for Japanese invasion of the northeast China. Refer to Sha's (2015) descriptions of the outbreak as follows. "In the evening of September 18, 1931,the squadron of Liutiao Lake of the Hushitai Garrison Unit, Japanese Kwangtung Army, detonated the dynamite placed in advance at Liutiao Lake South Manchuria Railway branch, 7.5 kilometers north of Shenyang, and sabotaged a section of the railway. After the explosion, the Kwangtung Army instantly accused the Chinese Army of the act and then branched out into columns to attack the garrison of Beidaying of the Northeastern Army and provoked the Mukden Incident, marking the beginning of Japanese invasion of the Northeast China".

researchers turned to examine the effects of using various platforms on images of a foreign country. For instance, Li (2006) found that the Internet use is positively correlated to the Chinese college student's impression of Japan. On the basis of Li's work, Jiang (2014) investigated the effects of different forms of information sources on the Chinese public's image of Japan. The results revealed that the perception of Japan is negatively correlated with viewing CCTV (China Central Television) news, international TV news, Anti-Japanese TV series and movies, while positively correlated with foreign drama, foreign radio, and magazine.

Taken as a whole, it appears that the debate about media and communication effects on images of a foreign country has been often mixed and paradoxical. Some previous studies found limited evidence that receiving the information about Japan is related to images of Japan. However, other researchers argue that the exposure to Japan-related information including mass media coverage or user-generated contents on SNSs highlighting national cohesion and achievement enhances a sense of national identity and pride (Guo et al., 2007; Shen & Guo, 2013). Furthermore, as an optional medium of traditional mass media, SNS breeds nationalistic sentiments and provides ample ground for anti-Japanese activities, since it enables users to "express, disseminate, and exchange ideas and mobilize opponents to initiate petitions and to organize protests" (Hyun, Kim, & Sun, 2014).

Weaknesses of previous study and research objectives

On the basis of the above discussion, several weaknesses of the previous research should be addressed. Firstly, despite of the active research on media effects on anti-Japanese sentiment in

China at the macro-level[13], there has been a surprising lack of research on images of Japan in the eyes of Chinese nationals from the perspective of media and communication studies. In particular, few studies have revealed the underlying mechanism through identifying the effects of communication behaviors on the Chinese public's image of Japan at a civil level. The present study thus intended to fill this gap by discovering the outcomes pertaining to images of Japan that stemmed from distinct usage motivations and investigating the mechanism of online communication behaviors and the Chinese public's image of Japan.

More importantly, the majority of the prior studies have only focused on reception effects of media use, while little research on this topic has taken expression-effects paradigm into consideration. As media scholars pointed out, nearly all of media effect theories have rooted in the reception-effects paradigm in which all effects of communication are unidirectional, and resulting from message reception, before Pingree (2007) proposing expression effects of online communication. He posited that the "production and distribution of content may affect not only its recipients, but also the sender him-or herself". To fill these gaps in the existing literature, this study investigates how receiving and expressing Japan-related information on SNSs affect the Chinese public's image of Japan from a bidirectional media effects perspective. Therefore, to explore the

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[13] Little work on influences of media use on images to a foreign country does reveal the underlying mechanism (e.g., Jiang, 2013, 2014; Li, 2006; Liu, 1998; Ishii, 2012). Instead, these works have merely identified the correlations or causalities without relying on a theoretical framework. For example, Li (2006) investigated the correlations between various information sources and Chinese respondents' images of Japan and found that the general Internet use is positively correlated to image of Japan in eyes of Chinese nationals. As an extension of Li's work, the results of Jiang's (2012) work revealed that social media use is not correlated to image of Japan in China. Although Ishii (2012) has attempted to identify the causalities between media use and Japanese publics' images to foreign countries, he failed to reveal the underlying mechanisms. All in all, the above studies on the effects of using various media and respondents' images of a foreign country remain at the macro-level without inspecting how these effects occur and through which process does communication behavior affect the outcome at the micro-level.

underlying mechanism of through which communication behaviors influences images of Japan, communication mediation model (Cho et al., 2009; Shah et al., 2007) and bidirectional message effects model (Pingree, 2007) are employed in this study.

To elaborate on the theoretical framework of this study, next section provides an overview of prominent theories of media effects. In addition, the empirical supports are presented to identify the position and originalities of this study.

2.3   SELECTIVITY PARADIGM IN MEDIA EFFECTS RESEARCH

Throughout the prior section, debates in terms of the widespread anti-Japanese sentiment in China were summarized after discussing the changes in the Chinese public's image of Japan in the 21st century. Next, it looked into research on nationalistic sentiment disseminated primarily via the Internet, and research on the influences of various information sources including traditional mass media and social media on images of Japan. Then, the primary findings of prior research were summarized, followed by addressing several theoretical and empirical weaknesses of the previous research on this topic.

Before continuing the discussion, it is necessary to make a term clear. In the light of social psychology, "image" is composed of four elements: recognition, evaluation, impression, and behavior (Midooka, 1990). Therefore, in accordance with the definition, images of Japan are measured from the dimensions of recognition and evaluation of Japan, impressions of Japan, and behavioral intentions toward Japan[14]. As such, this study considers images of Japan as cognitive and

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[14] The composition of images of Japan is illustrated in Figure 5.1 of Chapter 5.

behavioral outcomes in accordance with the definition in social psychology and media effects theories. Hence, in the rest of this section, three primary features of media effects—selective, indirect, and bidirectional features—as well as relevant theories and empirical supports are discussed in the context of SNS.

2.3.1 Uses and Gratifications and Selective Exposure Theory

The first feature to discuss is selectivity of (new) media effects. Selectivity paradigm is grounded on the propositions that only a limited number of messages out of rich and heterogenous information can potentially attract user's attention, and thereby exercise influences on them (Klapper, 1960; Knobloch-Westerwick, 2015; Rubin, 2009; also see overview of Valkenburg et al., 2016). Uses and gratifications theory (U&G; Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973; Rosengren, 1974; Rubin, 2009) and selective exposure theory (Zillmann & Bryant, 1985) are two theoretical perspectives that have been developed on the selective paradigm foundation. A crucial distinction between the two diagrams is that the U&G theory essentially conceptualize users as "active and goal-oriented consumers of media" who selectively attend the channels and contents to satisfy their needs and then fulfill their motivations; conversely, selective exposure theory argues that users are not (fully) aware of their selection motives (Alhabash, Chiang, & Huang, 2014; Valkenburg et al., 2016). This essential difference also results in methodological consequence between the two theories. In accordance with the proposition of the U&G that users are aware of their selection motive, research based on the U&G mainly relies on self-reports to evaluate use behavior (see review of Valkenburg et al., 2016). On the contrary, unobtrusive observational methods are adopted by research based on

selective exposure theory to investigate users' selective exposure to media (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2015).

As discussed in previous chapter, to answer the research question of "What are the influences of individual's SNS use motivations on his/her image of Japan?", it is necessary to understand the general condition of SNS use in China, specifically usage motivations and subsequent outcomes from the perspective of the U&G paradigm. The primary reasons that U&G theory is considered appropriate to study SNS. First, the U&G is helpful to overcome the obstacle of differentiating the impacts of mass and interpersonal communication on SNSs by emphasizing on the activation and rationality of media user and focusing on mere effects of selected media. SNS offers potentials for both mass and interpersonal communication (Johnson & Yang, 2009) which differs from traditional mass media. It is thus becoming harder to distinguish between mass and interpersonal communication on SNSs. In accordance with selectivity paradigm's property, the U&G is grounded on the proposition that media have no potential influences on those whom do not attend it, but on people whom rationally select a particular medium which meets people's needs (Rubin, 2009). Second, the U&G makes it possible to investigate the outcomes that derived from different SNS use motivations respectively. It is considered that online communication behaviors vary according to usage motivations, and then affect subsequent affective, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes (e.g., Kazt, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Weibull, 1985). To capture the effects of different use motivations on outcomes efficiently, the U&G approach is employed since it conceptualizes media users as rational and aware of their selection motives of channels and messages (Valkenburg et al., 2016). Third, in the light of the objectives of this study that exploring the SNS use motivations and behavior outcomes at an individual level, the U&G is suitable since it focuses on individual's use

and choice of media and subsequent outcomes. For the above reasons, this study adopted a U&G paradigm to explore the influences of individual's SNS use motivations on images of Japan. Following the above discussion on method, this study applied a self-reported qualitative research method to gather rich descriptive information for answering the first and the second subsidiary question.

2.3.2   Research on motivations of using different sites

In this section, I will provide a more thorough review especially on the literatures those empirically investigating usage motivations of different sites based on the discussion of its application. The U&G approach substantively explains why individual choose a specific medium over alternative communication media and to delineate the psychological and social needs that motivates and sustains an individual to engage with a particular medium (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011). Psychological and social motivations are arguably the key to understand behavior (Cooper, Shapiro, & Powers, 1998) which was verified that they have an effect on individuals' attitudes (e.g., Chang & Zhu, 2011; Kim, Sohn, & Choi, 2011; Lien & Cao, 2014), as social psychology and communication scholars have repeatedly proven that attitude is a reliable predictor of corresponding behavior. For instance, cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1962) proposes that individual tends to seek consistency among their attitudes, beliefs or behaviors. To hold the consistency, when there is a dissonance between attitude and behaviors, individuals will adjust themselves to eliminate the dissonance.

The U&G theory was initiated to explore the motivations for adopting traditional media use, such as newspaper and television (e.g., Ellison & Rosenberg, 1987; Rubin, 1981). With the advent of

the Internet, it was extended to study the motivations of the Internet use (e.g., Charney & Greenberg, 2002; Dimmick, Kline, & Stafford, 2000; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, as the rapid development of social media, a growing trend of research expands the U&G to study the needs that motivate and sustain the engagement of particular SNSs (Gan, 2018), such as Twitter (e.g., Chen, 2010; Coursaris et al., 2013; Johnson & Young, 2009), Facebook (e.g., Alhabash, Chiang, & Huang, 2014; Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011; Ha et al., 2015; Malik, Dhir, & Nieminen, 2016), MySpace (e.g., Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Urista, Dong, & Day, 2009), and instant messaging applications (e.g., Gan, 2017; Gan, 2018; Lien & Can, 2014; Shu et al., 2017). Figure 2.2 illustrates the tendency of articles in relation to uses and gratifications published from 1973 when Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch's work — "Uses and Gratifications Research — was first published in *Public Opinion Quarterly*. As shown in the figure, the number of published articles in the U&G increases exponentially from 2005. In the context of social media, the U&G explains how the active users would pursue a computer-mediated medium to gratify a psychological or social need, and how selected media satisfy their needs and motivations to communicate (Chen, 2011; Rubin, 2009). Since as mentioned previously, the proposition of the U&G is that users are aware of their needs which arouse motivations that influence their choice of communication media, thus resulting in affective, cognitive, or behavioral outcomes (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Weibull, 1985). In the light of the above argument, the U&G paradigm suggests that the medium that user selected and stick with must meets user's needs in some ways.

Figure 2.2 The number of published documents in uses and gratifications (in Scopus)
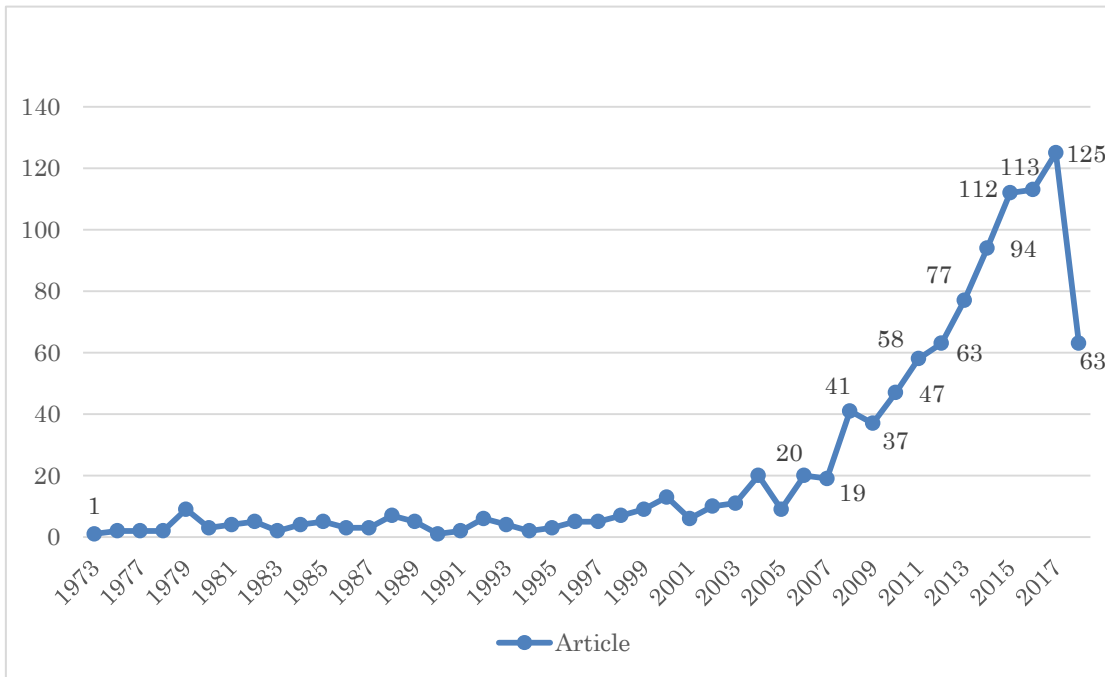
Table 2.1 Summary of dominant motivations and outcomes of using SNSs

	Study	*Type of SNS*	*Motivation/Gratification*	*Outcome*
1.	Cho (2007)	Online chatting	Interpersonal interaction, entertainment, information	Self-disclosure
2.	Joinson (2008)	Facebook	Social connection, shared identities, content, social investigation, social network surfing, and status updating	–
3.	Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert (2008)	Facebook	Social interaction	–
4.	Raacke & Bonds-Raacke (2008)	MySpace, Facebook	Keep in touch with old/current friends, post/look at pictures, make new friends, locate old friends, learn about events, post-social functions, feel connected, share information, academic purposes and dating	SNS use intensity
5.	Urista, Dong, & Day (2008) *(FGD)*	MySpace, Facebook	Efficient communication, convenient communication, curiosity about others, popularity, and relationship formation and reinforcement	–
6.	Johson & Yang (2009)	Twitter	Social motives, information motives	–
7.	Park, Kee, & Valenzuela (2009)	Facebook ('Groups')	Socializing, entertainment, self-status seeking, and information	Civic and political action (positive)
8.	Shao (2009)	UGM (YouTube, MySpace, Wikipedia)	Information, entertainment, social interaction, community development, self-expression, self-actualization	–
9.	Chang & Zhu (2011)	SNS in general	Information, entertainment, connecting with old friends, meeting new people, conformity	Attitudes towards SNS
10.	Chen (2011)	Twitter	Connection with others	Twitter use intensity (i.e., active months, hours per week on Twitter)
11.	Cheung, Chiu, & Lee (2011)	Facebook	Purposive value, self-disclosure, maintaining interpersonal interconnectivity, social enhancement, entertainment	Motivational use intention

	Study	Type of SNS	Motivation/Gratification	Outcome
12.	Kim, Sohn, Choi (2011)	SNS in general	Seeking friends, social support, entertainment, information, convenience	
13.	Zhang & Pentina (2011) *(Interview & Survey)*	Weibo	Professional development, emotional release, information seeking, citizen behavior, self-expression, social connection, visibility, and interaction with Weibo	Weibo use pattern
14.	Alhabash et al. (2010, 2012)	Facebook	Social connection, shared identities, content, social investigation, and status updating	Facebook use intensity (positive)
15.	Xu et al. (2012)	SNS in general	Utilitarian gratification of immediate access and coordination, hedonic gratifications of affection	SNS use intensity
16.	Alhabsh, Chiang, & Huang (2014)	SNS (*Review*)	Cognitive, entertainment, social connection, habitual use, identity motivation	–
17.	Gan & Wang (2014)	Weibo, WeChat	Information seeking, social interaction, entertainment, pass time, self-expression, information sharing, social networking	–
18.	Kim, Chung, & Ahn (2014)	SNS in general	Communication, information, entertainment	Well-being (mediated by self-disclosure)
19.	Lien & Cao (2014)	WeChat	Entertainment, sociality, information motivation	Attitudes towards WeChat
20.	Wang et al. (2014a)	Qzone	Escapism, relaxing entertainment, companionship, to pass the time, social interaction	Personality traits (i.e., sociability, shyness), attitudes, self-efficacy
21.	Wang et al. (2014b)	Qzone	Social, entertainment, self-disclosure	Well-being
22.	Han et al. (2015)	Twitter	Social connection needs	Continued usage intention of Twitter (positive)
23.	Bae (2018)	SNS in general	Sociability, convenience, social support, information, entertainment, escapism	Continued usage intention (mediated by satisfaction)
24.	Gan (2018) *(Interview)*	WeChat, Weibo	Hedonic gratification, affection gratification, information gratification, social gratification	–

Source: Created by the author.

Motivations to using different SNSs

On the empirical level, the U&G paradigm has been employed to a variety of media context to study the motivations of using different SNS platforms and outcomes that resulted from users' needs. Table 2.1 outlined individual's dominant motivations of adopting SNS that were proposed in previous research. A few studies have employed exploratory qualitative method such as intensive interviews or FGD to generate usage motivations based on the dialogues with participants (e.g., Gan, 2018; Urista, Dong, & Day, 2008), while the majority of extent studies have relied on quantitative questionnaire survey in which the measurements are drawn from previous studies (e.g., Gan & Wang, 2014; Joinson, 2008). For instance, Urista, Dong, and Day (2008)'s work identified five motivations of using MySpace and Facebook by conducting FGD on undergraduate students; those are efficient communication, convenient communication, curiosity about others, popularity, and relationship formation and reinforcement. It is notable that comparing with other sites, Facebook users are predominantly motivated by social connection needs rather than information seeking and entertainment needs. This observation is also in line with other literatures Facebook[15]. On the contrary, Zhang and Pentina (2011) and Gan (2018) conducted intensive interviews on Sina Weibo users and found that information seeking and hedonic needs primarily motivate and sustain users to engage with Sina Weibo.

Based on an extensive review of recent studies outlined in the table, emerged SNS use motivations can be broadly divided into *cognitive* (e.g., information, shared identity, self-status seeking, status updating, self-disclosure), *social* (e.g., communication, social connection/interaction, relationship formation and reinforcement), and *recreational* (e.g., entertainment, passing time,

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[15] For example, in Joinson's (2008) work, seven gratifications to Facebook were generated: social connection, shared identities, content, social investigation, social network surfing, and status updating. We can derive two major elements from the seven gratifications: social interaction and identity.

relaxing, affection) motivations. As is shown in the third column of the above table, a few of studies attempt to compare the usage motivations and patterns between two sites, while the majority of the studies on usage motivations focus on a single SNS. For instance, in Gan and Wang's (2014) work, different motivations of using Weibo and WeChat were emerged from qualitative data of interviews in terms of the U&G approach. The authors found that in addition to social networking, social interaction, and information sharing which coincide with Weibo, WeChat use gratifications also include convenient communication and high-quality information. However, the authors failed to put forward further discussion on the distinctions in the features of the two platforms which may result in different motivations. In a more recent comparative study on WeChat and Weibo which identified four general gratifications for using SNSs, the author also found that users obtain the similar types of gratifications from using WeChat and Weibo (Gan, 2018). Furthermore, it was revealed that information gratification is the most prominent motive for the use of Weibo, while affection gratification plays the most important role in using WeChat.

Shao (2009) attempted to systematically explain how and why individuals use user-generated media (UGM) including YouTube, MySpace, and Wikipedia. He presented a horizontal framework as shown in Figure 2.3 to depict the interdependence of consuming, participating, and producing. The author argued that users involve in UGM in different ways that are driven by different motivations, specifically, users consume contents for information and entertainment motivation, participate for social interaction and community development motivation, and produce contents for self-expression and self-actualization motivation. He argued that individuals' relationships with UGM begin with consuming the contents, and then individuals participate through interacting with the contents and other users, which is related closely to producing contents on UGM.

Figure 2.3 Interdependence of people's consuming, participating, and producing on user-generated media
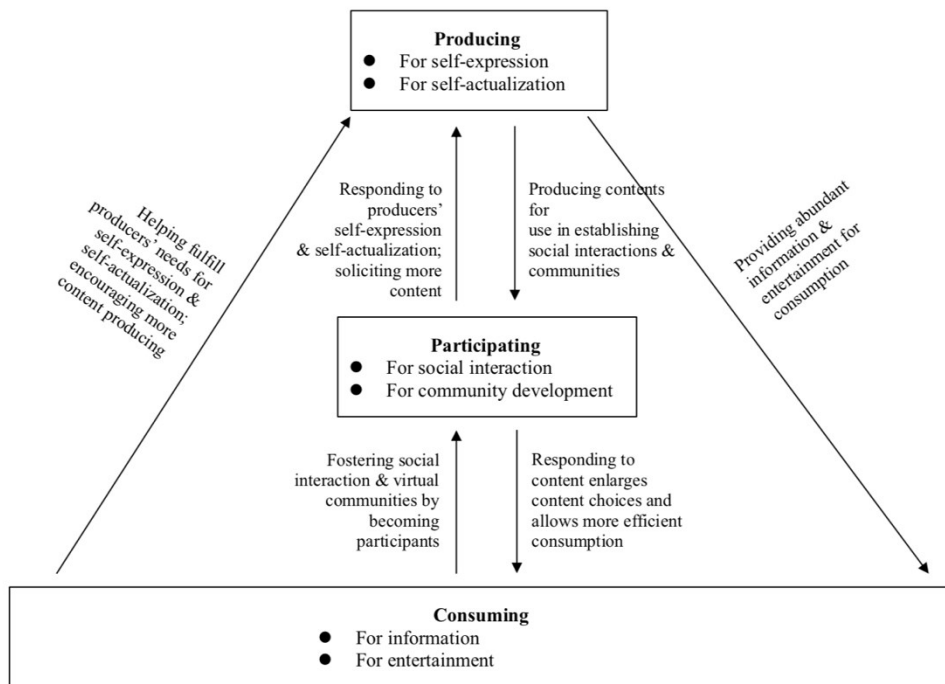
Source: Created by the author based on Shao (2009).

Usage motivations in different social context

The debate and empirical evidence about the needs and usage motivations of individuals in different social and cultural context has often been mixed. Previous study found that due to the social and cultural distinctions, users in different countries are motivated by different needs of engaging with SNS (Ji et al., 2010). On the contrary, Kim, Sohn, and Choi (2011) seeks the motives for using SNS among college students in the U.S. and Korea in cultural context and found that the major motives—seeking friends, social support, entertainment, information, and convenience—for using SNS are similar between the two countries, though different emphasizes were put on emerged

motives. In order to understand how and why individuals use SNSs in Chinese society, several

studies have adopted a U&G approach to study the usage motivations of popular SNSs in China,

such as WeChat, Weibo, and Qzone (e.g., Gan, 2018; Gan & Wang, 2014; Lien & Cao, 2014; Zhang

& Pennita, 2011). For instance, Zhang and Pentina (2011) identified eight Weibo motivations[16] by

conducting factor analysis on survey data and found that self-expression, social connection, visibility,

and interaction with Weibo gratifications are in varying degrees of impact on engagement with

Weibo (e.g., frequency of posting, time spend on Weibo, total number of postings, number of fans).

2.3.3   Outcomes of SNS Usage Motivations

Users who are involving in a variety of media channels and diverse viewpoints make a choice

of which media to be used based on the awareness of their needs, which thereby arouse motivations

to engage with a specific medium. Subsequently, the very usage motivation results in various

outcomes, such as affective, cognitive, and behavior outcomes (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974;

Weibull, 1985). In addition to identifying various SNS use motivations which I discussed in the prior

subsection, the relationships between usage motivations (psychological and social motivations) and

outcomes (affective, cognitive, and behavior outcomes) have been studied by scholars as well. Based

on literature reviews, the relationships between motivations and outcomes are summarized in Figure

2.1. Outcomes including (1) usage behaviors (usage intensity, usage patterns, usage intentions; e.g.,

Alhabash et al., 2010, 2012; Bae, 2018; Chen, 2011; Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011; Han et al., 2015;

Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Xu et al., 2012; Zhang & Pentina ,2011), (2) social or psychological

outcomes (well-being, personality traits, and attitudes towards certain issues; e.g., Chang & Zhu,

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[16]   In Zhang and Pentina's (2011) work, 37 motivations that were extracted from five in-depth
interviews with Weibo users were categorized into eight motivations (i.e., professional development,
emotional release, information seeking, citizen behavior, self-expression, social connection,
visibility, and interaction with Weibo) by factor analysis.

2011; Kim, Chung, & Ahn, 2014; Lien & Cao, 2014; Wang et al., 2014b), (3) civic or political behaviors (e.g., Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009) that resulted from dominant motivations have been primarily studied in previous research.

With respect to use intensity, for example, Johnson and Yang (2009) suggested two factors that motivate Twitter use intensity (including the frequency of tweet, time spend on Twitter, and length of membership), that is, social motives and information motives. Similarly, the results of Chen's (2011) work indicated that active months and hours per week on Twitter are significantly predicted by individual's needs for an informal sense of connection with others. Additionally, the author also found that frequency of tweeting and interactions with other users (i.e., number of replies, public messages between Twitter users) are associated with ???. Alhabash et al. (2010, 2012) further found that apart from social network surfing, the rest of six motivations in Joinson's work were strongly and positively associated with Facebook use intensity. The results of Xu et al.'s (2012) work indicated that utilitarian gratification of immediate access and coordination, hedonic gratifications of affection and leisure are positively associated with the general use intensity of SNSs.

Taken as a whole, the previous studies described above imply that socializing and information motives in particular raise individuals' SNS use intensities. In media effects research, use intensity is one of main foci of discussion. In addition to use intensity, a few existing studies have sought to examine the impacts of SNS usage motivations on continued usage intentions and attitudes towards SNS, for example, Han et al. (2015), Chang and Zhu (2011), Lien and Cao (2014). However, unlike use intensity, which is well-studied by scholars of media research, studies on usage intention and attitudes towards SNS are still inadequate and results are inconsistent across studies in some

instances[17]. Furthermore, as I have summarized above, a few studies have sought to examine the relationships of SNS usage motivations and social and psychological outcome.

2.3.4 Weaknesses of previous research

According to the analysis above, the majority of prior research based on the U&G approach focuses on examining intentional behavior of sustained SNS use, attitude towards SNS, or SNS use patterns. Apart from it, a few studies attempted to investigate psychological (i.e., self-efficacy, personality; Kim, Chung, & Ahn, 2014; Wang et al., 2014) and social outcomes (i.e., well-being, social capital; Ahn, 2012; Ji et al., 2010; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Steinfield, Ellison, & Lampe, 2011; Skoric et al., 2016), and few research on behavioral outcomes (i.e., civic and political participation; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009).

Although the U&G theory has drawn a great renewed attention over the past decade, there are several weaknesses of previous research that need to be addressed. As shown in the figure that summarizes main research relating to motivations for and outcomes of using SNS with respect to uses and gratifications paradigm (Figure 2.1), in spite of a growing trend of research expands the U&G to study the motivations of using SNS (Figure 1.1), study on usage motivations of SNS websites in China is inadequate, especially the subsequent outcomes of using these SNSs. In addition, most of the prior research focuses on usage motivations of a particular SNS or comparison on motivations of two platforms (e.g., Alhabash, Chiang, & Huang, 2014; Chen, 2011; Gan & Wang,

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[17] Cheung, Chiu, and Lee (2011) investigated the effects of Facebook use gratifications including purposive value, self-disclosure, maintaining interpersonal interconnectivity, social enhancement, and entertainment value on motivational use intention (i.e., we-intention)[17]. Han et al. (2015) indicated that gratification of social connection promotes users' continued usage intention of Twitter. Chang and Zhu (2011) compared motivations for adopting SNS and sequent attitudes towards SNS between the groups of pre-adopter and post-adopter and found that for both groups, information, entertainment, connecting with old friends, meeting new people, and conformity motivations significantly facilitate positive attitudes toward SNS. In regard to the use of WeChat, Lien and Cao (2014) found that motivations of entertainment, sociality, and information are positively associated with attitudes towards WeChat.

2014; Ha et al., 2015; Johnson & Yang, 2009; Malik, Dhir, & Nieminen, 2016; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2011; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2006; Urista, Dong, & Day, 2009). However, on account of the observation that there is no theoretical or empirical evidence to verify that any of these SNSs can fulfill all psychological and social needs of individual, we have no access to understand how individuals balance the investments through engaging with several selected SNSs in order to fulfill their all needs without an extensive investigation of SNS use motivations across platforms. Instead, in the mixed environment of mass and social media, individuals are involved in the abundance of media choices, which makes it become more easily for them to seek and select media contents and channels actively (Alhabash, Chiang, & Huang, 2014). Considering the theoretical foundations and changes in communication technology, it is thus reasonable to expect that the choice of SNS platforms varies according to different motivations; thereby it will be reflected in outcomes.

For the above reasons, it is thus necessary to investigate SNS usage motivations extensively across platforms based on the understandings of what SNSs are the most widely and frequently used by individuals in China. Therefore, given the weaknesses of previous research, in hopes of broadening and deepening the understanding of why and how individuals choose a particular SNS for certain motivations, qualitative research was employed to obtain rich descriptive information and identify the key themes relating to research questions, as qualitative data are often well studied to exploratory studies and generative of new understandings.

Furthermore, in so far as I have discussed, previous research with respect to the U&G has thoroughly examined the relationships between usage motivations and intentional behaviors of sustained SNS use, attitudes towards SNS, usage patterns, well-being, civic and political participation, and so forth. Unfortunately, the majority of the research has overlooked why and how the outcome of media use varies from motivations. Hence, this study attempts to investigate the

Chinese university student's cognitive and behavioral outcomes regarding Japan that stem from usage motivations of various SNSs. More importantly, to fill the gap that was discussed in the previous section, this study takes "image" as cognitive and behavioral outcomes in accordance with the U&G paradigm and definition in social psychology to reveal the mechanism of shaping Chinese public's image of Japan. The main themes in terms of motivations for using SNSs and images of Japan that were generated from qualitative research were used in questions of subsequent survey to examine the relationships among SNS use and images of Japan[18].

2.4   INDIRECT EFFECTS IN MEDIA EFFECTS RESEARCH

A second feature of many media effects theories is that most media effects are indirect rather than direct (e.g., McLeod et al., 2009; Cacioppo & Petty, 1984; also see review of Valkenburg et al., 2016), which is arguably neglected in most extent studies[19] (Alwin & Hauser, 1975). Prior study suggests that recognition of the importance of indirect effects originated from the holdover of two-step flow model (Lazarsfeld, Berelsen, & Gaudet, 1944) of media influence that ushered in the limited media effects paradigm (Holbert & Stephenson, 2003). The two-step flow theory denoted that "[political] ideas flow from radio and print to the opinion leaders and from them to the less active sections of the population" (Lazarsfeld, Berelsen, & Gaudet, 1944). That is, the influence of mass media disseminates through opinion leader[20] to the general population indirectly.

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[18] Detailed analyses and discussions refer to Chapter 4.
[19] Holbert and Stephenson, (2002) summarized the use of SEM to analyze indirect media effect and found that only 14.4% of communication studies using this technique from 1995 to 2000 in even the most cursory fashion.
[20] People with "higher status, gregariousness, a large number of social contacts, and they attend to news media content more frequently than nonleaders" are referred as opinion leader by Lazarsfeld, Berelsen, and Gaudet (1944).

Table 2.2 Summary of three types of indirect effects in media effects theory

Type	*Independent Variable*	*Intervening variable*	*Dependent variable*
1	Pre media use	Media use	Outcomes
2	Media exposure	Cognitive/emotional/psychological processes	Outcomes
3	Media use	Postexposure (attitudes, beliefs)	Postexposure (behavior)

Source: adapted from Valkenburg et al. (2016, pp.324-325), created by the author.

In the review of media effects theories, Valkenburg et al. (2016) summarized three types of indirect effects that have been identified by media effects theories (see Table 3.2). In the first type of indirect effect, media use itself mediate pre-media-use variables (development, disposition, and social context factors) and outcomes variables. The U&G theory that was discussed in the previous section belongs to this type. Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch's (1974) U&G theory identified several factors that influence why individual turn to a specific media and why he/she takes away from a given mediated communication experience (Holbert & Stephenson, 2003). Based on the summary of Rosengren (1974), Rubin (2002) states that the U&G paradigm emphasizes on how individual differences constrain direct media effects on account of a mediated view of communication influence[21]. In the case of Chinese university student's image of Japan, pre-media-use variables could be, for example, preexisting attitudinal disposition towards Japan, experiences of traveling to Japan and interacting with local Japanese people, affection to traditional Japanese culture or popular culture, and so on. Media use is specified as receiving and expressing Japan-related messages on SNSs in this study. Cognitive and behavioral outcomes in terms of evaluation and recognition of

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[21] A few recent research have identified several pre-media-use variables that may affect usage pattern in terms of U&G (e.g., Bae, 2018; Han, Min, & Lee, 2015).

Japan, impression of Japan, and behavioral intentions towards Japan are taken as dependent variables in this case.

In the second type, cognitive, emotional, and psychological processes act as intervening variables between the effects of media exposure and outcomes. Valkenburg et al. (2016) gave two examples that belong to the second type of indirect effects: research based on the elaboration likelihood model (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984) and general aggression model (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Since the second type is not the focus of this study, it will not be discussed in detail. In the third type of indirect effects Valkenburg et al. (2016) summarized in their work, postexposure variables that may themselves be dependent variables (e.g., attitudes and beliefs) are conceptualized as mediator of other postexposure variables and media use. Several extant studies provided considerable evidence to bolster the argument that certain beliefs and attitudes are significant mediators between media use on political and health behaviors (Holbert & Stephenson, 2003). For instance, recent study in political communication theorize a set of reasoning process channel the influences of campaign advertisement exposure and news consumption (Cho et al., 2009). In the subdiscipline of health communication, for example, Yoo et al. (2016) identified self-efficacy for Middle-East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and perceived threat of MERS as intervening variables between receiving and expressing MERS-related information and MERS-preventive behavioral intentions, including handwashing intention and cough etiquette intention. As the above examples show, the recent trend in political and health communication is that researchers have turned their focuses from direct relationship between individual's media exposure to mass media and outcomes to the third type of indirect effects in particular (e.g., Cho et al., 2009; Shah et al., 2007; Shah et al., 2017; Yoo et al., 2016).

2.4.1 Total, direct, and indirect effects

Before proceeding to further discussion, it is necessary to consider several terms. Figure 2.4 illustrates an example adapted from Rosenberg (1968) to explain the terms and relationships between a dependent variable (i.e., variable A), two potential intervening variables (i.e., variable B and variable C), and an independent variable (i.e., variable D). A *direct effect* is the influence of one variable on another unmediated by any other variable (Holbert & Stephenson, 2003; Valkenburg et al., 2016). As shown in the model, variable A has direct effect on all three variables on its right, and the two intervening variables, variable B and variable C, also have a direct effect on dependent variable. An *indirect effect* is "one in which the influence of an independent variable [e.g., media use] on other variables [e.g., outcomes of media use] works through its influence on one or more intervening variables" (Hoyle & Kenny, 1999). The *total indirect effect* for one variable on another is the sum of specific indirect effect runs through all intervening variables respectively. According to the definition of Fox (1980), a *specific indirect effect* represents "the portion of the total indirect effect that works through a single intervening variable".

Table 2.3 Description of four types of effects

Effect	*Description*
Direct effect	The influence of one variable on another unmediated by any other variable
Indirect effect	The influence of an independent variable on other variables works through its influence on one or more intervening variables
Specific indirect effect	The portion of the total indirect effect that works through a single intervening variable

| Total indirect effect | The sum of specific indirect effect runs through mediator respectively |

Source: Adapted from Fox (1980); Holbert & Stephenson (2003); Hoyle & Kenny (1999); Valkenburg et al. (2016); Created by the author.

To delineate the estimations of direct and indirect effects in more detail, Figure 2.4 may be helpful. As illustrated in the figure, the total indirect effect for variable A on variable D is the sum of two specific indirect effects running through the two intervening variables (i.e., variable B and variable C) respectively. Testing the specific indirect effect of independent variables on each dependent variable is essential for assessing the role of a single intervening variable in a given relationship (Holbert & Stephenson, 2003). In accordance with the above discussion, this study will identify not only direct effects, but also indirect effects of media use (reception and expression; independent variable) on behaviors mediated (dependent variable) by attitudes and beliefs (mediator).

Figure 2.4 A single-step multiple mediator model
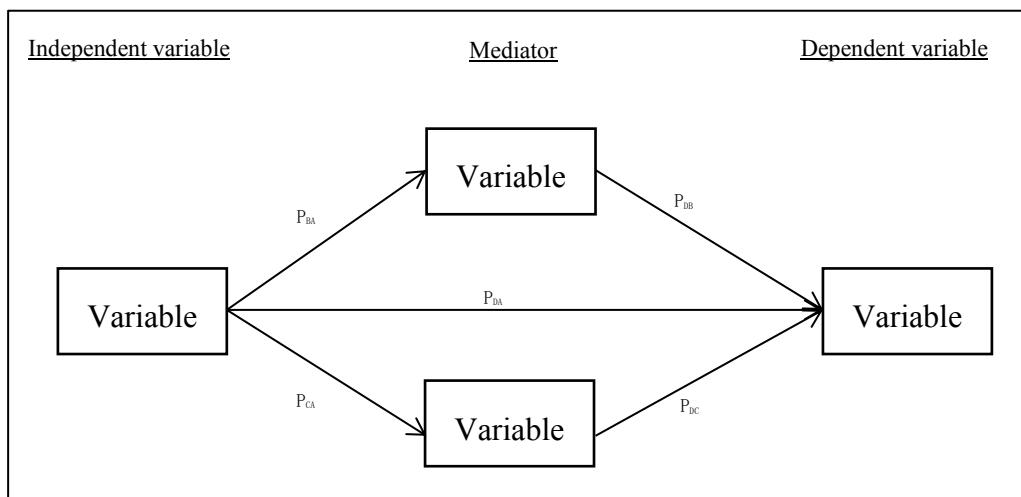
Source: Adapted from Figure 1 of Rosenberg (1968); Created by the author.

2.4.2 Structural equation modeling (SEM) in communication studies

An advanced multivariate statistical technique, covariance-based structural equation modeling (SEM), is employed by media scholars to assess potential mediation effect on the relationship between independent and dependent variables. As early as 1970s, Cappella (1975) introduced the field of communication to SEM and outlined how to construct and test a structural equation model. Since then, researchers of media effects have been afforded to study not only direct effects, but also indirect effects and total effects with SEM, once adequate fit of data has been obtained (Bollen, 1987). With respect to the type of variables for the creation of a structural equation model, Holber and Stephenson (2002) state that three different techniques are employed by communication researchers: observable variables, latent variable, and hybrid. Figure 2.4 illustrates a simple regression type of mediation model which is adapted from Rosenberg (1968) with only observable variables which regress the dependent manifest variable D with the linear terms of independent variable A that is mediated by intervening Variable B and Variable C. In Figure 2.4, the interrelationships among four variables can be represented by a set of structure equations. For instance, Equation 2.1[22] captures the *direct effect* of variable A on variable D, under the assumption that variable A is linearly related to other variables.

$$D_{direct} = P_{DA}A + P_{DD'}D' \qquad \text{Equation 2.2.1}$$

$$D_{indirect} = P_{DA}D + P_{DB}B + P_{DD'}D' \qquad \text{Equation 2.2.2}$$

$$D_{total} = P_{DA}D + P_{DB}B + P_{DC}C + P_{DD'}D' \qquad \text{Equation 2.2.3}$$

Equation 2.2 depicts a *specific indirect effect* of independent variable A and intervening variable B as causes of dependent variable D. The path coefficient $P_{DD'}$ is multiplied by the causal

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[22] P_{BA} represents a path coefficient of variable B to A, and B' represents residual term of variable B.

variable and represents the causal link between the residual term and the variable D. Further, since the total effect of one variable on another is the sum of its direct effects and indirect effects (Bollen, 1987), as shown in Equation 2.3, the *total effect* of variable A on variable D is equal to the direct effect of A on D plus the sum of the specific indirect effect through B and the specific indirect effect through C.

In addition to direct media effect, to fully understand the relationship between media use and outcomes, indirect media effect must be taken into consideration as well. Holbert and Stephenson (2003) suggest two reasons that conceptualization of indirect media effects is vital for media and communication studies. First, the authors suggest that investigating intervening variables helps to understand the occurrences of media effects and to design prevention and intervention programs. Another reason is that by taking into consideration indirect effects, a biased estimation of media effects sizes can be avoided.

From the above discussion, this study thus focuses on exploring the underlying mechanism of online communication behaviors and the Chinese public's image of Japan by identifying not only the direct and total effects, but also the specific indirect effects of SNS use on image of Japan using SEM (structural equation modeling) technique.

2.4.3   Mediation models in communication studies

Over the past few decades, scholars of mass communication, in particular in subfields of political and health communication, have started to devote a great attention to study a wide range of mediating variables that intervene in the relationship between media use and various outcomes. In related studies, the fundamental S-O-R model is considered as a perfect theoretical framework to study mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986) and also as best framework of representing the process of media influence on individuals (McLeod et al., 2002). This model was reemphasized by Markus and

Zajonc in 1985 after Woodworth (1928) initially made it popular. On this basis, Shah et al. (2007)

and Cho et al. (2009) proposed O-S-R-O-R (orientations-stimulus-reasoning-orientation-response)

model of communication mediation (see Figure 2.5) in the context of election campaigns, which

modified Markus and Zajonc's (1985) long-standing O-S-O-R model in communication

(communication mediation, citizen communication mediation; McLeod et al., 1996; McLeod et al.,

2002; Shat et al., 2005) and social psychology (cognitive mediation model; Eveland, 2001; Eveland

et al., 2003) by adding the middle "reasoning (R)" portion as a mediator of the effects of stimuli (S

portion in the model) on outcome orientations (the second O) and sequent responses (the second R).

According to Cho et al. (2009), reasoning in the model is referred to as "mental elaboration (a

decidedly more intrapersonal phenomenon) and collective consideration (an interpersonal and

intrapersonal phenomenon) encompassing both interpersonal and intrapersonal ways of thinking" in

a general sense. Notably, one of the strengths of the O-S-R-O-R model is that treats not only mass

communication, but also interpersonal communication as stimuli, stressing their mediating role

jointly on outcome orientations (the second "O"), as well as on responses (the second "R"; Cho et al.,

2009; Shah et al., 2007). On account of this strength, it is held theoretically reasonable that

integrating individual's exposure to mass communication with the effects of interpersonal

communication on individual in one model. Unlike face-to-face communication, in the environment

of social media, interpersonal communication could be commenting on, giving a "Like" to, or

forwarding the original post.

Figure 2.5 O-S-R-O-R model
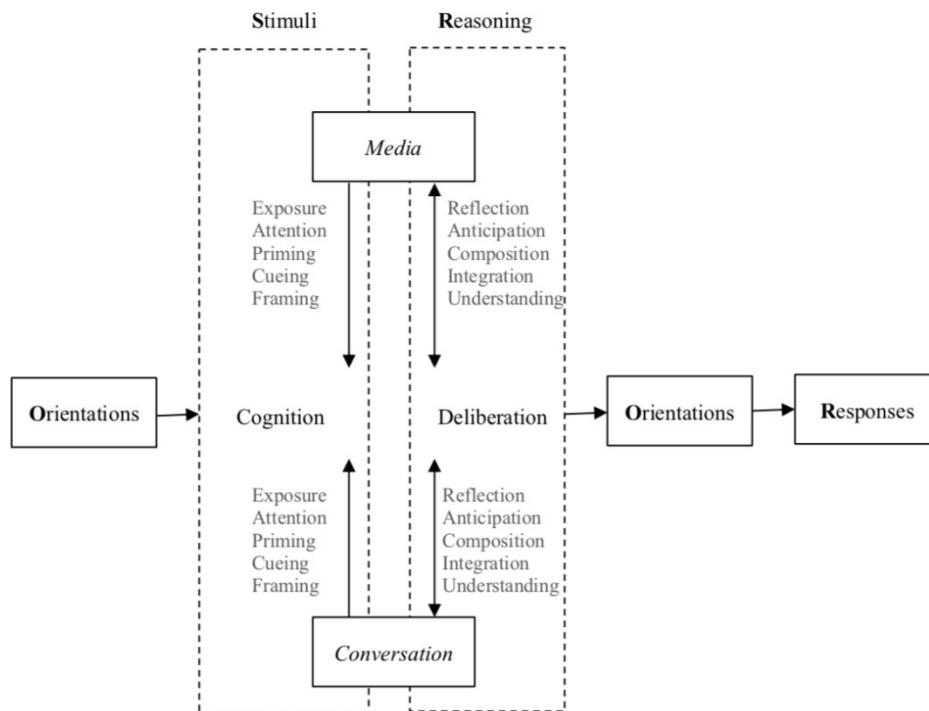
Source: Adopted from Figure 4 of Shah et al. (2007); Created by the author.

In O-S-R-O-R model that is illustrated in Figure 2.5, similar to the initial O-S-O-R model, the first "O" signifies the structural propositions including "structural, cultural, cognitive, and motivational characteristics the audience brings to the reception situation that affect the impact of the message (stimuli)", and the outcome orientations (the second "O") stand for "what is likely to happen between reception of message and the subsequent response", the "S" and second "R" portion (McLeod et al., 1994, pp. 146-147). Thus, the substantive S-R-O pathways are combinatory results of stimuli from message, and the middle "R" (reasoning) portion which represents mental elaboration plays a mediating role between message reception and response of the audience. Cho et al. (2009) elaborate that reasoning may crystallize in various ways such as reflection on media content (Eveland, 2001; Mutz, 2006), anticipation of conversation (Eveland et al., 2005),

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composition of idea for expression (Pingree, 2007), or integration and understanding. To be more specific, producer can be influenced by their own message by mentally elaborating on what they expect that the message will mean to others, how receivers will react and respond to it or by preemptively preparing their own responses (Mclaughlin et al., 2016). A theoretical framework of this study (see Figure 5.1) was developed partially based on the O-S-R-O-R model in Chapter 5. Each element in the framework was adapted and modified to the case of images of a foreign country.

Several studies which have been grounded on the communication mediation framework provide considerable supports for researching on the media influence processes in a variety of contexts (e.g., Beam, 2014; Cho et al., 2009; Yoo et al., 2016). For instance, Shah et al.'s (2007) work found considerable support for the theoretical model of communication mediation by investigating political advertising exposure and Internet use during election campaigns (see Appendix 1). The authors validated that interactive political messaging and interpersonal political conversation (i.e., online and offline expression) are critical mediators between media stimulus and behavioral responses (political and civic participation). By the same token, Cho et al. (2009) extends O-S-R-O-R framework to theorize a set of reasoning process that channel the influences of campaign exposure and news consumption. The theorized model (see Appendix 2) assesses campaign advertisement inputs as structural factor. Furthermore, the authors postulated the mediating variables (face-to-face political conversation, online political messaging, and cognitive reflection) between stimulus and responses in terms of political engagement. The results indicated that cognitive reasoning (including political conversation, political messaging, and cognitive reflection) mediates the effects of exposure to stimulus (campaign advertising exposure and news consumption). Beam (2014) investigates the impact of personalized news recommender system design on news information processing and knowledge outcomes utilizing an O-S-R-O-R model. The results indicate positive effects on elaboration and indirect effects on knowledge through elaboration in personalized recommender

system that displays only recommended headlines. O-S-R-O-R framework is also applied to the subfield of health communication to examine the intervening variables between exposure to media and preventative behaviors (or preventative behavior intentions). For instance, Yoo et al. (2016) found that cognitive characteristics (self-efficacy for MERS, perceived threat of MERS) mediate the effects of expressing and receiving Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS)-related information on the subsequent effects on MERS-preventative behavioral intentions (handwashing intention, cough etiquette intention; see Appendix 3).

2.4.4 Weaknesses of previous research and originalities of this study

Taken together, O-S-R-O-R model of communication mediation, which subsumes several models of mediated communication effects, suggests that interpersonal communication online and offline along with cognitive reflection plays a vital role in outcome orientations and sequent response in a broad sense. This framework provides a significant perspective for studies of indirect media effects and communication influences. Due to the nonreciprocal feature of this O-S-R-O-R framework, it makes possible to identify the causal relationships and mediators between stimuli ("S") and response (the second "R"). Based on the above discussion, it is therefore plausible that employing O-S-R-O-R framework to theorize the indirect media effects on image of foreign country that is composed of cognitive and behavioral outcomes. To my best knowledge, little theoretical and empirical work on influences of media use on images of a foreign country does reveal theoretical mechanism (e.g., Jiang, 2013, 2014; Li, 2006; Liu, 1998; Ishii, 2012). For example, Li (2006) found that the general Internet use is positively correlated to the Chinese public's image of Japan. On the other hand, results of Jiang's (2012) work revealed that social media use is not correlated to the images of Japan in China. Ishii (2012) found the causality by providing empirical evidence that the Internet use would worsen preference of Japanese for China, but failed to reveal the underlying

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mechanisms. Profound theoretical foundations and abundant empirical evidences in terms of political and health communication does render the mediation model proposed in this study considerably more plausible than these sorts of alternatives, treating Japan-related information reception and expression via SNSs as contributing to cognitive outcomes including recognition and evaluation of Japan, impression of Japan, and ultimately, behavioral intentions towards Japan.

One of the values of O-S-R-O-R framework lies in specifying reasoning processes at both interpersonal and intrapersonal level, and theorizing that these processes channel the effect of reception on outcome orientations and subsequent response (Cho et al., 2009; Shah et al., 2007). However, it is noted that this framework has not conceptualized the dynamic communication process that the communicator seamlessly switch between the recipient and sender/expresser roles. Therefore, to tackle this problem, the present study integrated expression effects paradigm with O-S-R-O-R framework. After the O-S-R-O-R framework (Cho et al., 2009; Shah et al., 2007) has been proposed a decade later, the authors revisits their proposed communication mediation model with a pivotal revision, considering how expression influences not only their receivers, but also the senders (Shah et al., 2017). Few recent studies recognize the significance of expression effects (Shah et al. 2017; Pingree, 2007; Valkenburg, 2017). In the light of the above weaknesses of previous research, to develop a comprehensive and integrated model, bidirectional feature of online communication will be discussed throughout the rest of this section. Apart from it, theorizing the process from receiving to sending messages (i.e., reasoning stage in O-S-R-O-R model) is a research agenda for the future.

2.5   MEDIA EFFECT IS BIDIRECTIONAL

As early as the beginning of the 21st century, Gillmor (2006, p. 13) noted that the social media has subverted traditional media transmissions of "one-to-many" or "one-to-one", for the first time,

gives user "many-to-many" and "few-to-few" communication. Gillmor further writes "This [communication transformation] has vast implications for the former audience and for the producers of news because the differences between the two are becoming hard to distinguish" (2006, p. 26). As Luders (2008) noted as below, another change that the advent of Web 2.0 brings to communication is that the boundary of personal and mass communication is no longer clear.

> Distinctions between personal media and mass media may be outlined as differences in the type of involvement required from users. Personal media are more symmetrical and require users to perform actively as both receivers and producers of message. (2008, p. 691)

As stated above, with the rise of information and communication technologies, individuals have been empowered to become a producer/sender of information (Valkenburg et al., 2016). Overall, such transmission process makes it hard to distinguish between mass and interpersonal communication, producer and audience (Gillmor, 2006; McQuail & Windahl, 2015). In the light of these changes and provocative new theories of new media or computer-mediated communication research, differing from the well-established audience-based perspective, this study attempted to capture not only the static snapshot of media effects on individuals, but also the dynamic process that how individuals swift between the recipient and sender/expresser roles at all stages of communication.

2.5.1 Bidirectional message effects model

As discussed above, it is unfortunately that almost all of media effect theories have rooted in reception-effect paradigm in which all effects of communication are unidirectional, and resulting

from message reception (Pingree, 2007; Valkenburg et al., 2016; Valkenburg, 2017). Until Pingree (2007) posits that the production and distribution of content may affect not only by its recipients, but also the sender him-or herself. He identifies the relationships between a single communicator, and the released and received messages in bidirectional message effects model (BMEM; see Figure 2.6). Pingree's BMEM is arguably inspired and grounded on Bem's (1967, 1972) self-perception theory (SPT) which is contrary to widely accepted cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1962). Cognitive dissonance theory posits that cognition and attitude precede one's behavior; conversely, SPT argues that people need to be consistent in their cognitions, beliefs, and attitudes that are derived from individual's prior overt behavior. As foundation of BMEM, SPT provides underlying explanation of why expressing message in turn affects sender's attitude, cognition, or behavior. The author divides the broader concept of expression effects into three component categories: expectation effects, composition effects, and message release effects and defines the effects as follows:

> Expectation effects occur if and when a person expects expression and affect the processing of received messages. Composition effects results from the actual composition of a message and can be absent if a message is not composed by its sender. Message release effects occur if and when the message is actually sent to others and are largely contingent on a perception that it was received. (Pingree, 2007, p. 443)

Senders are influenced by expectation effects through increasing attentions to or processing related received messages. *Composition effects* are not only "the act of revealing preexisting memory constructs", in accordance with the SPT, constructing messages may also result in "inferences about one's own attitudes, traits, or feelings" (Pingree, 2007). Furthermore, following the author's

argument, *message release effects* are composed of effects of perceived social commitment and other emotional effects. As such, the BMEM theorize direct causal relationships between a single communicator, *both as recipient and as sender,* and the released and received messages due to its nonreciprocal feature. The core argument of Pingree's (2007) expression effects perspective is that expectation of expression can "motivate exposure, attention, and elaboration of media messages, and the act of message composition is often much more effective than any act of reception could be". A significant and unique characteristic of theories and research into the effects of message on sender is that these studies, which recognize reciprocal interactions between message and user, have primarily investigated the expression effects as a phenomenon that follows form mass media exposure.

Figure 2.6 Bidirectional message effects model
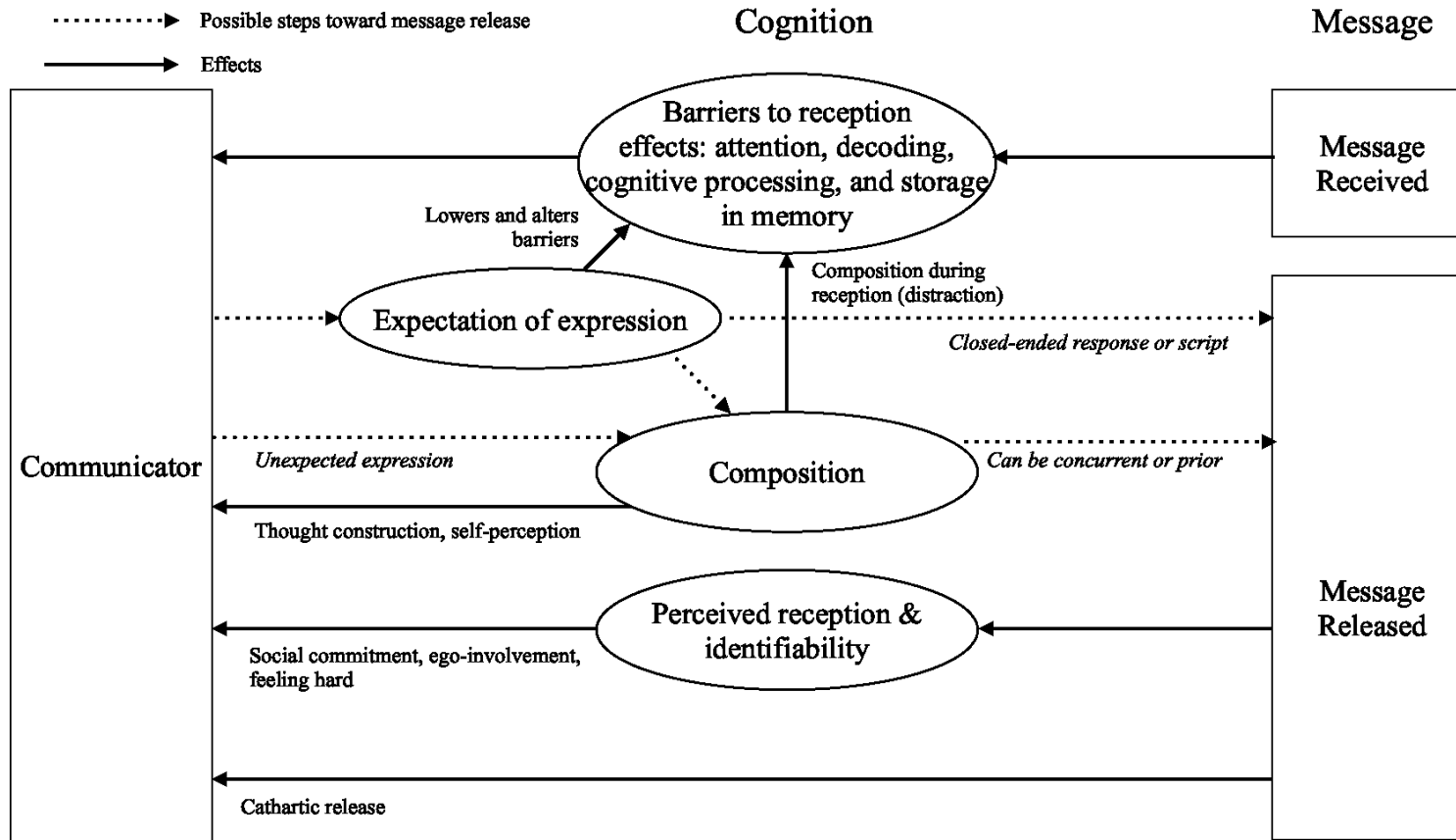
Source: Adopted from Figure 1 of Pingree (2007); Created by the author.

It is only in recent years that expression effect has begun to draw attentions of some scholars (Finkel & Smith, 2008; Mclaughlin et al., 2016; Prislin et al., 2011; Shah et al., 2017; Valkenburg, 2017; Yoo et al., 2016). For instance, Finkel and Smith (2008) argued that expression has more significant effects on message producer than reception, since message construction requires cognitive elaboration and collective consideration which is not needed in passive reception. In accordance with the SPT, the underlying reason is considered that expression behaviors may strengthen or weaken sender's cognitions, beliefs, and attitudes[23]. In the same vein, Prislin et al. (2011) have found expressers who had expressed a message on important social issues to others felt more strongly about the issues than their message audiences. Pingree's (2007) model theorized the processes throughout receiving and sending messages, which is conceptualized as S-R (stimuli-reasoning) portion in O-S-R-O-R framework.

2.5.2 Self- and reception effect model

A more recent work of Valkenburg (2017) introduced the term of "self-effects", which is referred to as "the effects of messages on cognitions (knowledge or beliefs), emotions, attitudes, and behavior of the message creator[/sender] themselves". She further proposed a general model of online self-and reception effects (Figure 2.8) to depict reciprocal communication processes which involve multiple communicators[24]. Valkenburg further concluded that self-effects may be stronger online than offline for three reasons. First, the author asserts that self-effects may be more potent

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[23] Detailed discussion on the underlying reason will be provided in Chapter 6.
[24] Although the online self-and reception effect model is based on the similar proposition with the BMEM, unlike BMEM which theorize direct causal relationships between a single communicator and received and released messages, the former one captures the bidirectional SNS communication and information transmission as reciprocal processes.

online is because sharing personal, self-related information may be more likely to result in self-effects than sharing nonpersonal information. With respect to online disclosure willingness, several studies have provided empirical evidence that individuals disclosed more information about themselves on social media than in general (e.g., Christofides, Muise, & Desmarais, 2009; more literatures related to Chapter 5). In addition, based on Boyd (2011), Valkenburg (2017) concluded that social media may further amplify self-effects in terms of scalability, asynchronicity, and cue-manageability. The third reason which aligns with Pingree's (2007) expression effects is that users may encounter more message with "communicatory utility"[25], which may strengthen the effects due to the anticipation of future discussion (i.e., expectation self-effects).

Figure 2.7 The online self- and reception effect model
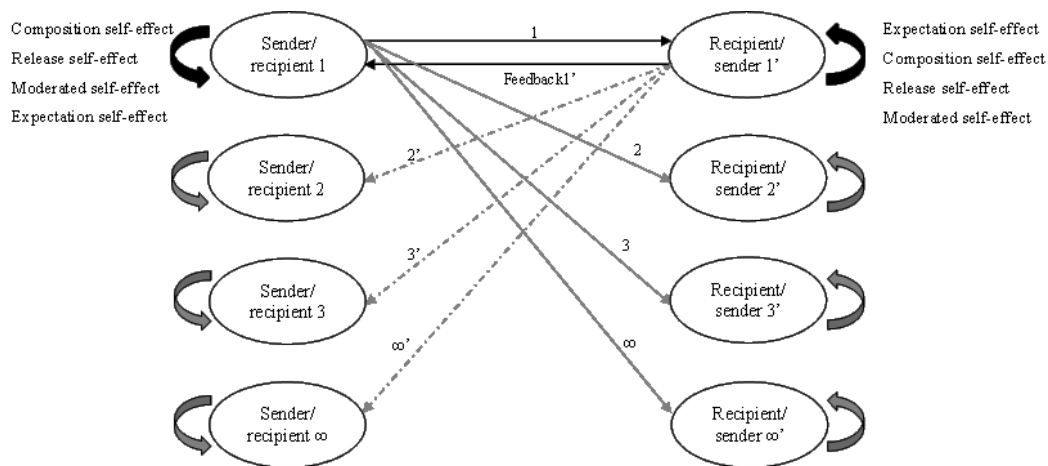
Source: Adopted from Figure 1 of Valkenburg (2017); Created by the author.

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[25] Valkenburg (2017) paraphrases Atkin (1972) and refers to "communicatory utility" as "the anticipated usefulness of existing messages that one encounters in terms of prospective importance for future discussion with friends and relatives". Atkin (1972) originally defined "communicatory utility" as "the anticipated usefulness of information future informational interaction with family, friends, co-workers, and acquaintances".

As an extension of BMEM (Pingree, 2007), Valkenburg (2017) developed a general model to delineate the dynamic communication process between sender and recipient in the context of social media. As shown in Figure 2.8, this general model attempts to explain how online- and reception effects may consolidate and amplify each other by capturing the flow of information dissemination and reciprocal interaction between sender and recipient. In addition to expectation self-effects, composition self-effects, and release self-effects that are proposed in BMEM, Valkenburg conceptualizes the effect of feedback from recipient on sender as moderated self-effects. Specifically, the author suggests that feedback from recipient may moderate—either strength or weaken—any self-effects within the sender, which essentially promote the reception effects for sender. Expectation self-effect occurs when potential sender anticipates future discussion in their shared network. With respect to the occurrence of composition and release self-effects, Valkenburg (2017) suggests that before, during, and after sender compose and release message, sender may be induced by several mechanism to adjust his/her belief, emotions, and attitudes towards certain issue.

2.5.3   Weaknesses of previous research

In spite of the cutting-edge improvement in conceptualization of the effects that are derived from SNS communication processes, many obstacles remain to be tackled. Most importantly, it should be noted that the interactive nature of self- and reception effects causes problems with studying a sole effect. Several existing studies on both effects (reception and expression effects) found that the two effects are mutually reinforcing each other (e.g., Yoo et al., 2016), and that self-effects are somewhat stronger than reception effects in general (e.g., Finkel & Smith, 2008). Another obstacle is how to measure or quantify the intrapersonal communication process, since it is

necessary for understanding the mechanisms. Regarding this point, Valkenburg (2017) highly recommends researchers adopting self-reported or thoughts verbalization methods such as thought listing or think-cloud protocols.

Based on the review of communication theories and relevant empirical studies, one of the values of this study is considered to lie in its theoretical framework. With the recognition of reciprocal and interaction feature of social media communication processes, this study incorporates bidirectional message effects model into O-S-R-O-R framework to study both reception and expression effects of SNS communication, which essentially differs from previous research that merely focus on receiving related messages on images of foreign country without identify theoretical mechanism by which influence individual's beliefs, cognitions, and behaviors. In this study, behavioral intentions toward Japan are treated as outcome responses, since there is a debate about whether it is plausible to extend outcomes to actual behavior response. Another expected value of this study lies on the research methodology. Following the recommendation of Valkenburg (2017), in addition to quantitative data collected through questionnaire survey, I asked the participants of FGD (focus group discussion) to recall the process of creating the most recent message posted on SNS.

2.6   SUMMARY

This chapter initially investigated changes in country image of Japan in the eyes of the Chinese public since the early 2000s using3 several major Japan-China disputes as a background. Next, prior to providing a thorough literature review on media effect and communication theories and relevant

empirical studies based on three features of (social) media effects and online communication, a brief description of the development and present condition of SNSs in China was introduced. Through the lens of literatures being reviewed, an urgent and significant issue to be resolved points to the anti-Japanese sentiments and populist nationalism in China that particularly has been bred by the Internet. The deterioration of the Chinese public's image of Japan and intensification of nationalism are hardly to be improved only if we understand the compound effects of interpersonal and intrapersonal communication in the context of social media.

The next chapter discusses several crucial issues involved in designing the current research and how research instruments can be executed to investigate SNSs use motivations and communication behaviors and their impacts on shaping Chinese university student's perceived image regarding Japan. It also provides a review on qualitative and quantitative research approaches ranging from research design to data analysis prior to claiming the intentions for adopting mixed methods that incorporate qualitative and quantitative approach in this study.

Chapter 3   Overview of Methodology

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of general methodology that was adopted throughout the dissertation. This chapter offers a thorough literature review on qualitative and quantitative research approaches ranging from research design to methods of data analysis. Using it as a base, I claim the intentions for adopting mixed methods that incorporate qualitative and quantitative approach in this study. To ensure replication of the findings and consistency across diverse methods, it describes the procedures of data collection and analysis in detail. This chapter is organized as follows.

At the beginning of this chapter, it conveys the objectives of this study, which leads to a set of research questions that will be tackled in this work. It is necessary to carefully construct a research design before proceeding to data collection and analysis. The second task of this chapter is, therefore, to cope with several crucial issues involved in designing mixed methods research, such as types of mix-methods design and analytic approach to mix-method analysis. Prior to continuing the discussion, it is necessary to review the essences of and distinctions between qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Then, this chapter describes the specific steps to conduct focus group discussion and questionnaire survey, followed by strategies for promoting reliability and validity in qualitative and quantitative researches. Research ethics have been strictly observed in the research process. Primary principles of research ethics such as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and voluntariness of participation are discussed. Ultimately, this chapter provides illustrations of each of the ways of analyzing qualitative and quantitative data.

3.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This chapter aims at exploring the effects of SNS communication on Chinese university student's image of Japan. The present study adopted mixed methods with a combination of qualitative and quantitative approach. Data were obtained through focus group discussions and questionnaire survey.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN OF THE PRESENT STUDY

This section focuses on several important issues involved in designing a study. Qualitative and quantitative methodologies are grounded on different assumptions about reality and worldview[26]. Accordingly, the two approaches differ on "logic, research path, mode of verification, and way to arrive at a research question" (Neuman, 2014, p. 176). Researchers cautioned that, however, assuming that qualitative and quantitative research are two absolutely conflicting and inconsistent strategies is unreasonable (e.g., Berg, 2004, p.2; Neuman, 2014, p. 629). Instead, qualitative and quantitative methodologies are arguably complementary in many ways (e.g., Bryman, 2016; Lune & Berg, 2017; Neuman, 2014). As I described above, by combining the features of qualitative and quantitative research method in this dissertation, the weaknesses of both methods could be offset.

3.3.1 Qualitative research design

Qualitative techniques[27] seek patterns of cases and provide means of accessing unquantifiable knowledge about the actual people (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 15). Researchers use these techniques to explore how people learn and make sense of themselves and others, how they compose their words,

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[26] The qualitative research is based on the assumption that "the reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative research" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 237-238)

[27] Qualitative research is an approach that involves "the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, and descriptions of things" (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 12). It comes no surprise that most qualitatively is grounded on the assumption that certain areas of social life are intrinsically qualitative (Neuman, 2014, pp. 176-177).

and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 6). Qualitative methodologies have not predominated in social science fields until the late 20th century, it usually takes much longer and requires greater clarify at the stage of research design, and cannot be analyzed automatically with computer programs (Berg, 2004, p. 2).

Qualitative research uses "[the] language of cases and contexts to conduct detailed investigations of particular cases or processes"[28] in a search for authenticity (Neuman, 2014, p. 195) to examine a variety of social settings and the groups of individuals who indwell in these settings (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 15; see also Berg, 2004, p. 7). Thus, qualitative data can be captured by "documenting real events, recording what actual people say, observing certain behaviors, examining written documents, and studying visual images" (Neuman, 2014, p. 177).

For this reason, the process is inductive and relies on a form of grounded theory[29], which contrasts with quantitative research. In the light of the above discussions, Chapter 4 employs an inductive analysis approach to FGD data to explore how individuals' SNS usage motivations influence their use of communication media, thereby forming their images of Japan.

3.3.1.1 Population appropriateness

At the stage of research design of a project, a rationale for identifying and using a particular setting as the population of data-collection must be taken into full consideration (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). For qualitative research design of this dissertation, one of the important decisions is

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[28] According to Neuman (2014, p. 179), all empirical studies can be divided into two types: case study (with one or a few cases) and cross-case study (comparing many cases). This study takes a case-oriented perspective in the first phase of research design. I attempt to observe a few cases (i.e., subjects or participants) from a variety of aspects and compare those cases with each other. And regarding the emphasis on the sequence of events in qualitative research, he argues that it helps to "reveal how an issue evolves, a conflict emerges, or a social relationship develops".
[29] Grounded theory is defined by Babbie (2015) as an approach that "attempts to combine a naturalist approach with a positivist concern for a 'systematic set of procedures' in doing qualitative research" (Babbie, 2015, p. 336).

who will comprise the study population. According to the recommendation of previous studies, research questions are generally regarded as the primary guide to decide population or setting (Flicker, 2006; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Silverman, 2006). In addition, the decision is established on the basis of who is most likely to possess relevant experience and knowledge on study subject, social networking sites, as well.

Based on the above discussion, undergraduate students have been selected as participants because according to *the Statistical Report on Internet Development*[30] and *Development Report on Sina Weibo 2017*[31], the primary users of SNSs are young and highly educated adults aged from 17 to 23 who possess advanced degrees. Thus, for this reason, undergraduate students are arguably the most relevant to the subject of this study.

3.3.1.2 Sampling strategies and representativeness[32]

When it comes to "sampling", it has distinct meanings in the context of qualitative and quantitative research[33]. In qualitative studies, researchers sample aspects or features of the social world, which is viewed as key dimensions or processes in a complex social life (Newman, 2014, p. 247). Most qualitative studies adopt a nonprobability method and nonrepresentative strategies[34] purposely since the purpose of qualitative research is usually gather detailed and in-depth

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[30] Chinese Internet Network Information Center (2017), *The 41th China Statistical Report on Internet Development.* (Retrieved from http://www.cnnic.net.cn/hlwfzyj/hlwxzbg/hlwtjbg/201803/P020180305409870339136.pdf on May 14, 2018.)

[31] Sina Weibo Data Center (2017), *Development Report on Sina Weibo 2017*, (Retriedbed from http://data.weibo.com/report/reportDetail?id=404&sudaref=www.baidu.com on May 14, 2018).

[32] Unfortunately, the statement of sampling strategies is often overlooked in articles of qualitative research and most books on sampling. Most of works only introduce its applications from the perspective of quantitative research design.

[33] Regarding this point, Luker (2008, p. 101) stated that "using the word sampling creates confusion in qualitative and quantitative research because the terms if closely associated with quantitative studies".

[34] This technique is an excellent means of obtaining preliminary information quickly and inexpensively under certain circumstance (Lune & Berg, 2017, p.39), though it has some serious risks.

information through a few cases. Among a variety of nonprobability sampling techniques outlined in Appendix 5, convenience sampling technique is commonly adopted to FGD.

Deciding how many interviews to conduct should hinge on the point at which the researcher expects to reach theoretical saturation (Strauss & Corwin, 1990). Basically, it is argued that the three to six different focus groups (Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1996; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009) or a sample size of 15 to 20 (Saumure & Given, 2008) is adequate to reach data saturation. Taken together, this study conducted focus groups on 24 participants on account of saturation has been reached. Chapter 4 will provide description of subjects and groups in detail. With respect to representativeness of sample, as discussed above, participants in FGD are hardly to be sampled through rigorous probability-sampling techniques, which means that the participants do not statistically represent the whole population (Babbie, 2015).

3.3.2 Quantitative research design

Quantitative research methods[35], an approach has gained wide currency in social sciences, are based on a positivist or realist tradition use the language of variable to study variations of attributes among people and people's artifacts (Riff, Lacy, & Fico, 2014, p. 51). The features of qualitative and quantitative methodologies[36] that discussed above can be mixed in a study to build on their complementary strengths. This approach is referred to as mixed methods approach, which will be discussed in the rest of this subsection.

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[35] Quantitative research is described by Bryman (2012) as: "Entailing the collection of numerical data, a deductive view of the relationship between theory and research, a preference for a natural science approach (and for positivism in particular), and an objective conception in social life." (p. 149)

[36] Many discussions about distinctions between qualitative and quantitative methodologies have been carried out. For instance, Neuman (2014, pp. 167-169) enumerate four differences in terms of the nature of the data, research process and assumptions, what researcher try to accomplish, and logic and path of conducting research. Braun and Clark (2013) summarized the predominant distinction as: qualitative technique uses "words as data and collected and analyzed in all sorts of ways. [In contrast,] quantitative research uses numbers as data and analyzed them using statistical techniques" (PP. 3-4).

3.3.2.1 Population appropriateness

Study population refers to the theoretically specified aggregation of study elements (Babbie, 2015, p. 134). Recall that Chinese undergraduate students are the target for this study. Thus, the delineation of the study population is undergraduate students who enrolled in Chinese (mainland) universities (either public or private) as of November 2017.

3.3.2.2 Sampling strategies and repetitiveness

As previously stated, "sampling" has distinct meanings in the context of qualitative and quantitative research. In contrast to qualitative sampling, quantitative studies sample and treat cases/units as carries of aspects/features of the social world. In quantitative studies, probability or like-probability samples are used to create representative samples (Neuman, 2014, p. 247). Specific types of probability sampling strategies include simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling, and multi-stage cluster sampling (see Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 38; Neuman, 2014, pp. 254-262). Appendix 6 outlined descriptions of these probability sampling techniques.

Simple random sampling (SRS) is the most elementary form of probability sample. All the units in the population have the same probability of being included in the SRS (Corbetta, 2003, p. 281; Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 38). *Systematic sampling* is statistically equivalent to simple random sampling except that instead of picking sample from random-number table, we select units directly from the sampling frame (Babbie, 2015, p. 218; Bryman, 2016, p. 178; Neuman, 2014, p. 258). *Stratified sampling* involves two phases. First, we divide population into subgroups (strata) on the basis of supplementary information, and then we draw random sample from each strata (Neuman, 2014, p. 262). This will ensure that sample chosen is representative of the population as whole. In fact, if the strata are accurate, stratified sampling produces a more representative sample than simple

random sampling (Neuman, 2014, p. 262). *Multi-stage cluster sampling*[37] is used when the population is dispersed and can be divided into subgroups (Corbetta, 2003, p. 220). It usually requires multiple stages: first we sample cluster (i.e., unit)[38], and then we draw elements (i.e., observation) from within the clusters selected in the first stage.

Based on the above discussion, this research relied on multi-stage cluster sampling since this technique can address two problems that this study confronts with: the virtual absence of ideal sampling frame for a dispersed population and the high cost and difficulty to access the sampled element[39]. The sampling unit of survey is university residence hall room, and the unit of observation is undergraduate students.

The primary use of probability sampling is "to create a representative sample that closely reproduces or represents features of interest in a larger collection of cases" (Neuman, 2014, pp. 246-247). By following the sampling and data collecting procedures, the sample is arguably representative of population[40].

3.3.3 Mixed methods research

This section aims to provide a rationale for applying mixed methods[41] to the present study. In brief, the combination of qualitative and quantitative research within a single project is defined as mixed methods research. It is specifically defined as research in which the researcher or practitioner "collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences incorporating qualitative

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[37] It is also called "cluster sampling" or "multistage sampling" in some works (e.g., Corbetta, 2003; Neuman, 2014).

[38] Cluster is "a unit that constrains final sampling elements but can be treated as a sampling element itself" (Neuman, 2014, p. 262).

[39] It is argued that cluster sampling technique is efficient to deal with these two problems (Neuman, 2014).

[40] See chapter 5 for detailed data collecting procedures of quantitative survey.

[41] As a new approach to conducting social research, mixed methods research has become increasingly accepted and used in social research especially in the past two decades (Somekh, Lewin, 2005, p. 215; Neuman, 2014, p.636).

and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of study"[42]. Mixed methods approach involves both qualitative and quantitative data gathering and analysis techniques. That is to say, the collection or analysis of multiple forms of qualitative or quantitative data would not constitute a mixed methods study[43] (Given, 2008, p. 527).

Before stimulating further discussion about research design, the reasons for mixing the methods in this dissertation should be made clearly. According to Given (2008), there are four primary reasons for adopting mixed methods approach: (1) to provide a more complete understanding of the research problem; (2) to follow up on initial exploratory findings; (3) to better explain initial quantitative results; (4) to enhance a large data set with a smaller, more focused data set[44] (p. 527). The most commonly employed mixed methods designs are: convergent parallel design, exploratory sequential design, explanatory sequential design, and embedded design (Bryman, 2016, pp. 637-640). Descriptions and aims of four basic types of mixed methods design are summarized in Table 3.1.

In accordance with the features of different types of research design described above, this study relies on an *exploratory sequential mixed methods design* involving focus group interviews with and questionnaire survey on Chinese undergraduate students in Beijing.

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[42] This definition of mixed methods is currently being used on the home page of the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* for calling manuscripts.
(https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/mst/journal-of-mixed-methods-research/journal201775 Access on May 9, 2018).
[43] For the reasons and the purposes for advancing mixed methods approach, see also Bryman (2016, pp. 637-640) and Greene, Kreider, & Mayer (2005). "Combining qualitative a quantitative methods in social inquiry" in Somekh, Lewin (Eds.), *Research methods in the social science.*
[44] To fulfill these aims, corresponding mixed methods designs outlined in Table 3.1 should be applied to study.

Table 3.1 Basic types of mixed methods design

DESIGN	DESCRIPTION	AIM
Convergent parallel design	Entailing the simultaneous collection of QUAN and QUAL data which typically have equal priority.	Comparing two sets of findings; offsetting the weakness of both methods.
Exploratory sequential design	Entailing the collection of QUAL data prior to QUAN data.	Generating hypotheses and hunches; developing research instruments such as questionnaire questions; assessing scope and generalizability of QUAL findings
Explanatory sequential design	Entailing the collection and analysis of QUAN data followed by the collection of QUAL data.	Elaborating or explaining the QUAN data.
Embedded design	Having either QUAN or QUAL research as priority approach but draws on the other approach as well within the context of a study.	Enhancing either QUAN or QUAL research with the other approach.

Source: based on Bryman (2016; pp. 637-640).

Note: QUAN and QUAL stand for quantitative and qualitative, respectively.

In hopes of broadening and deepening our understanding of subjects' motivations and usage patterns of SNSs, I first conducted focus groups to obtain a rich qualitative data, as qualitative data are often well studied to exploratory studies and generative of new understanding. As stated previously, qualitative research is effective in development of research instruments of survey in the next phase. Therefore, the new themes emerged from focus groups interviews will be used in questionnaire surveys and in turn the priori measurements adapted from previous studies will be confirmed or modified by virtue of qualitative research. In sum, this research design accomplishes the above mentioned purposes by (1) gathering in-depth information on subjects' SNS usage so that generating hypotheses regarding research problem and developing questionnaire survey instruments; (2) adapting descriptive data yielded from qualitative data to interpret the quantitative data; (3) analyzing focus group data both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Li, Marquart, and Zercher (2001) identified two analytic approaches to mixed methods analysis in their study of pre-school inclusion: parallel tracks for component designs, and cross-over tracks for integrated designs. In parallel tracks analysis, analyses are conducted separately through the qualitative and quantitative tracks until the point of data comparison and integration[45] (p. 120). On other hand, in cross-over track analysis, data emerged from qualitative and quantitative methods are concurrently analyzed (p. 126).

This study relies on *parallel tracks analysis* because it is appropriate to conduct two separate and complementary studies. Again, in the present study focus groups were conducted to gather descriptive information and survey was designed to collect standardized information on a more representative sample. Because of exploratory sequential mixed methods design and parallel track analysis, the weaknesses of both qualitative and quantitative methods are offset. The steps in the parallel tracks analysis of the focus groups and survey data are presented in Figure 3.1. Based on the

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[45] With respect to the arguments of mixed-method data analysis, see also Green, Kreider, and Mayer (2005).

argument of Li, Marquart, and Zercher (2001, p. 119), I proceeded through the steps of reduction, transformation, comparison, and integration when analyzed the data set of mixed methods.

Finally, it is notable that despite mixed methods research has become increasingly accepted and used in the field of social science, there are still challenges waiting for mix-method researchers. Without any doubt, more discussion about adaption and improvement in practice are needed in future study, especially the consensus of sample size and the ways of analyzing and reporting findings emerged from diverse data. The following sections describe the procedures I employed to collect and analysis different types of data.

Figure 3.1 Analytic framework of this study for the parallel tracks analysis
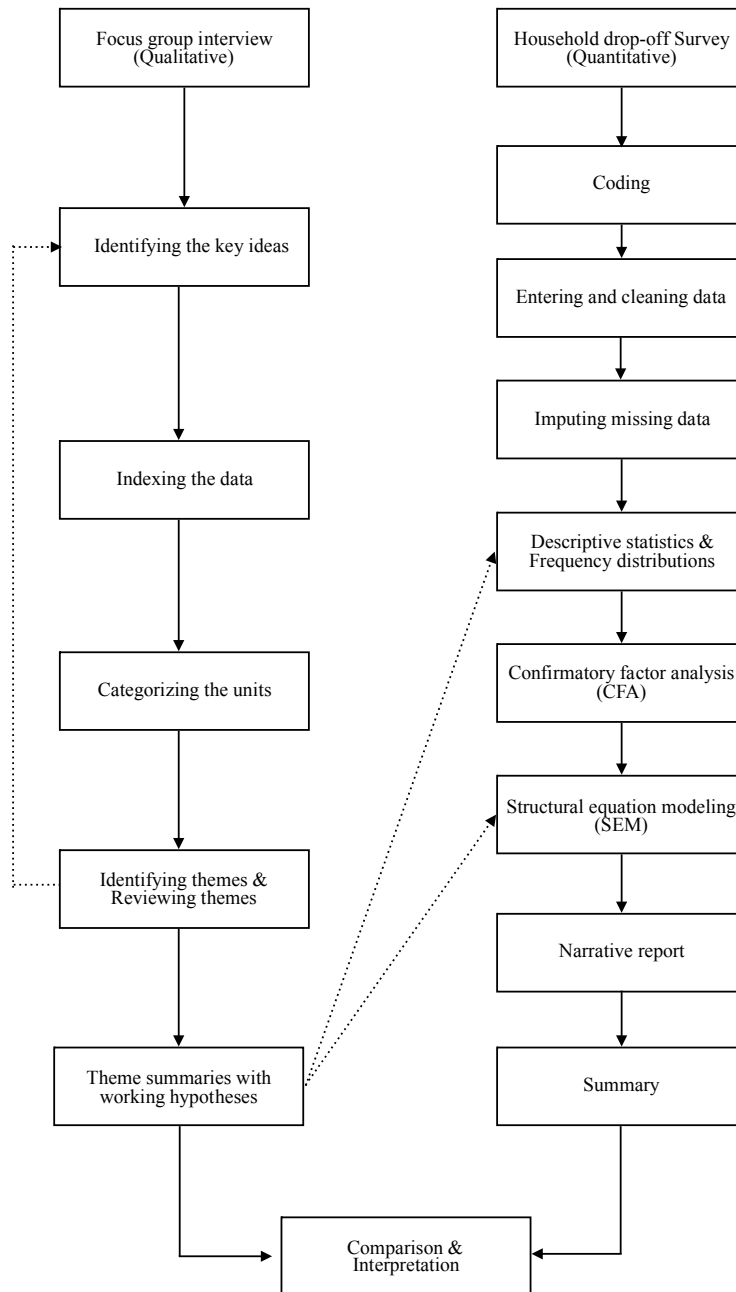
Source: Created by the author.

3.4   DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

This section will elaborate on the detailed procedures of data collection. The data used in this study were obtained from focus groups and survey. In the first phase, focus groups were conducted on 24 participants to gather more in-depth information regarding their SNSs usage in general. Predetermined questions relating to research questions are asked according to the order that from general questions to concrete questions. Follow-up questions are probed at any time in the process of discussion on the topic. In the second phase, the anonymous survey was implemented on 473 undergraduate students. Research assistant visited the dorm rooms that are located in university campus to recruit voluntary respondents. Before stimulating further discussion about the steps involved in conducting focus groups and survey, the following ethical principles should be taken into consideration.

3.4.1 Ethical concerns

Prior to conduct the formal research, an ethical approval was sought from Waseda University Office of Research Ethics. To obtain the research approval for human subjects, the research proposal consisting of detailed research methods and literature reviews on media effects and the Chinese public's image of Japan was submitted to the University ethics committee in July 2017. After the second round of review, the approval was officially granted (see Appendix 3) in September 2017.

All participants were informed affront of their voluntary participations and a high degree of confidentiality. In questionnaire survey, respondents were provided full anonymity. Considering the procedure of data collection, although assistant investigators may know to whom questionnaires were distributed, if no marks have been identified on the returned questionnaires, the respondents remain anonymous (Bruce, 2004). Participants were notified that they are given the options to participate or decline the participation at any time without any penalty both verbally and in writing.

Participants were aware that neither possible adverse consequence nor potential benefit may result from the participation in focus group discussion (FGD). Voluntary FGD participants were requested to fill up in the informed consent if they agreed to proceed with the interviews and to be sound recorded. They were also reminded that they would only need to answer the certain questions or join in the certain discussions which they feel comfortable with. By doing so, participants are free from the question that may make them feel uncomfortable or upset. The gathered records, lists, questionnaires, and notes were securely stored in the lockable cabinet and will not be preserved any longer than is necessary (i.e., five years after graduation). In all transcripts and in my dissertation, I certainly used pseudonyms to conceal the participants' identities. The transcripts of FGD and questionnaires were only made available to my supervisor and examiners from Doctoral Thesis Examination Committee.

3.4.2 Research instruments

As discussed in the previous section, it is believed that a multi-method approach is preferable to utilizing a single research instrument (Given, 2008; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). FGD were conducted first and then used in development of research instruments of survey in the next phase. The rationales for the range of focus group size and time duration and sample size of questionnaire will be described in detail in chapter 4.

This study used the household drop-off questionnaire[46] to deliver hard-copy forms by hand to identified university residence hall room for collection at some later time[47]. Before proceeding with

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[46] The household drop-off survey is considered as a hybrid of the mail/postal and the group-administrated survey (see Birmingham & Wilkinson, 2003).

[47] There are essentially three types of questionnaire – the online survey (including via Email questionnaire and Web-based survey; see Bryman, 2016, pp. 229-230), the group-administered questionnaire, and the household drop-off survey (Birmingham & Wilkinson, 2003, p. 10; Bryman, 2015). The online administration of survey which has achieved a massive growth in recent years is widely accepted and utilized especially by communication scholars. However, it is undeniable that there are some methodological challenges facing Internet-based surveys, for instance, low response rates (Birmingham & Wilkinson, 2003, p. 10) and the practical impossibility of probability sampling

the formal survey, the questionnaire was pilot tested with a group of voluntary respondents. Questionnaire was revised based on their feedback regarding research instruments such as comprehensibility of the questions, question order, and affected wording of questions[48]. Assistant investigator left the questionnaires to voluntary respondents and asked them to fill out the questionnaire in their free time. The filled out questionnaires were collected by the assistant at a later time.

3.4.3 Focus group discussion

The focus group method (also called focus group interview) is essentially "a way of collecting qualitative data, which involves engaging a small number of people in an informal group discussion (or discussions), 'focused' around a particular topic or set of issues" (Wilkinson, 2004, p. 177). This technique has been recognized particularly useful for marketing research to assess consumers' attitudes and opinions (Merton, 2001; Greenbaum, 1998), but also for political, educational, and health research. Social science researchers can thus acquire multiple merits from adopting focus group (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009), for example, Krueger (1988, p.47) noted several advantages of focus group as follows: (1) this technique is grasping real-life data in a social setting; in addition, (2) it has flexibility, (3) high face validity, and (4) speedy results; furthermore, (5) it is low-cost. Apart from these advantages, the sense of attachment to a group can raise the participants' sense of "cohesiveness" (Peters, 1993), and help them to feel secure to share views and opinions (Vaughn et al., 1996). Furthermore, the interaction occurs among participants may create the more spontaneous responses (Bulter, 1996). Last but not the least, the multidirectional and dynamic natures of focus

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using Internet-based surveying (Somekh & Lewin, 2005, p. 330). The group-administer questionnaire and household drop-off survey are two longstanding types of instruments. The former one is often used to collect data from "a sample of respondents who are naturally be brought together", such as students attending in lecture, or teachers in a school (Somekh & Lewin, 2005, p. 330). Thus, for the above reasons, this study applied household drop-off method to distribute questionnaires.
[48] Refer to Lune and Berg (2017, p. 100).

group resulting from these advantages frequently bring out aspects of the topic that would not have been anticipated before the focus group was carried out and would not emerged from interviews with individuals (Babbie, 2015, p. 320). As such, focus group methodology is utilized as an effective technique in conduct of preliminary research to grasp general information and in development of research instruments, in particular for understanding the problems involved in subjective or motivation research (Merton, 2001, p.565). Compare with one-to-one interview, group dynamics enable researchers to study interviewee in a more natural conversation.

However, the advantages are accompanied by several disadvantages as well; "(1) Focus group afford the researcher less control than individual interviews; (2) Gathered data are difficult to analyze; (3) Moderators of group discussion require special skills; (4) Difference between can be troublesome; (5) Groups are difficult to assemble; (6) The discussion must be conducted in a conductive environment" (Krueger, 1988, p. 48). Fully taking into account the above disadvantages of convening focus groups, focus group method was combined with quantitative method. Rather than to describe, the purpose of conducting focus group is to explore how and why the participants utilize various social networking sites and provide potential qualitative explanation to the results of survey. As suggested by Morgan (1993), focus groups are an excellent device for generating questionnaire items for a subsequent survey. The questionnaire survey will be detailed in the next section. Before continuing to conduct focus group formally, it is notable that some challenges along with disadvantages await researchers to conquer and need to be pay great attention in the process. In particular, controlling the dynamic within the group is a primary task, as Babbie (2015) noted:

"Letting one interviewee dominate the focus group interview reduces the likelihood

that the other subjects will express themselves. This can generate the problem of

group conformity or groupthink, which is the tendency for people in a group to

confirm with the opinions and decisions of the most outspoken members of the group." (p. 321)

The other considerable challenge Babbie (2015) suggested is that the interviewer should lead up to the given topic when discussion digressing from the subject, as group dynamics may influence the direction of discussion and distract participants from the topic. With this in mind, a set of procedures were implemented for the collection of qualitative data as described in the next section.

3.4.3.1 Procedures of focus group

To ensure the focus groups organized and efficient, in addition to 8 participants, each focus group has a moderator team consisting of a moderator (i.e., the author) and a trained assistant moderator. Prepared questions were asked first by moderator in an interactive group setting where participants are encouraged to talk with other group members as well. The moderator is responsible for facilitating the discussion, prompting members to speak (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009), getting everyone to participate fully on all the issues, and bring discussion back to the subject (Babbie, 2015). Before the focus group started, the moderator needs to introduce the study and obtain informed consent of participants. In addition to taking notes and recording the session, the assistant moderator is also responsible for preparation (e.g., setting up voice recorder, arranging refreshments, asking participants to fill in sign-in sheet, and distributing consent forms), asking supplementary questions at the end of interview, and converting the recording into text records. Focus groups were conducted in accordance with the following steps.

Step 1: Preparation

In order to enable the participants to involve in the focus group positively and to express views honestly, a comfortable and supportive environment must be established. Vaughm, Schumm, and

Sinagub (1996, pp. 79-81) proposed two main recommendations on how to make efforts to develop such an environment: firstly, the authors suggested that moderator should ensure that the refreshments and beverages are prepared, delivered, and set up at the focus group site before the arrival of participants, since the availability of refreshments often promotes recruitment and serves as an ice-breaker; in addition, it is also recommended that recording equipment must be set up and ready prior to the participants' arrival. In short, any trivial details those are likely to make participants view the focus group well-prepared and under control must be takin into account and thoughtfully arranged.

On the basis of the above recommendations, prior to the arrival of participants, moderator and assistant moderator have set up the refreshments (chips, biscuits, and chocolates), beverages (tea and juice), as well as recording equipment (all participants gave their permission in writing). Moreover, registration form, blank names tags, and marker pens were placed on the reception desk. Once the participants have arrived, they were asked to write down their demographic information on registration form for later analyses and the first name on name tag for individual information protection.

Step 2: Informed consent

Nature of the project should be fully introduced at the beginning of each focus interviewing. Then, as described in the section entitled "Ethnical Concerns", moderator informed all participants affront of their voluntary participations and security of personal information. Then, potential risks and benefits stemming from participation in this study were informed to the participants of focus groups. In addition, participants were guaranteed to withdraw from the research at any time. Participants who agreed to proceed with the interview were requested to fill up in the informed consent.

Step 3: Opening remarks and guidelines

The opening introductions are consisting of greetings, basic description of the project, clarification of novel concept, and explanation of ground rules (Appendix _). In addition to the brief introductions, participants have been told about the expected duration of the whole process, interval, and procedures in advance. Moderator then introduced assistant moderator and participants to each other. In accordance with the recommendation of Bruce (2004, p. 134), moderator explained that an open, polite, and orderly environment where everyone in the group will be encouraged to participate is expected. Several important basic rules were established around the interactions during focus group. Specifically, the moderator clarified that there are no right or wrong answers but rather differing point of views and that all of these opinions are expected. This allows participants feel free to share their view or opinion even if it differs from what others have said. Secondly, moderator should make participants aware that the discussion process will be sound-recorded even though the assent already has been obtained in order to get informed consent. To digital recording clearly, one person speaks at a time. Discussion will be in turn on a first name basis, and any names will not be used in reports so that complete confidentiality is afforded to all participants. Prior to starting formal discussion, moderator should confirm whether all participants understand the project, procedure, and their role in the research.

Step 4: Ending the focus group interview

The three focus group discussions all ended within the scheduled time (90 to 120 minutes). Before the end of the discussion, moderator summarized the main points derived from the discussion, and asked participants whether they have any supplementary opinion or thought on the focus group (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub; 1996, p. 85). At last, moderator reminded participants again that they are assured to withdraw from the research at any time by contacting with the researcher after focus group ended.

3.4.3.2 Matters needing attention

During the focus group interview, the following matters need to pay attention to. Firstly, as group dynamics may influence the direction of discussion, moderator should lead up to the topic when discussion digressing from the subject. Secondly, the moderator needs to probe follow-up questions as well which should be carefully phrased in clear, short, and conversational wordings. Thirdly, in the process of discussion, the moderator and the assistant moderator either takes notes of nonverbal observation or the vital points they are getting from the group discussion.

3.4.4 Questionnaire survey

Data used for this analysis were taken from the undergraduate student questionnaire survey, which was conducted in Beijing from October to November 2017. The questionnaire is composed of three main parts: 1) demographic characteristics; 2) communication behaviors on SNSs, and 3) images of Japan. Variables were measured with ordered Likert-scale. Prior to determining an appropriate analysis method, it is necessary to conduct normality test on dependent variables to ascertain the distributions. The reason is that treating ordered variables as continuous data from normal distribution can lead to invalid conclusions (see Olsson, 1979a, b; Lee, Poon, and Bentler, 1990a, b; Lee, 2007). Furthermore, close-ended questions with predetermined responses were used on question items of 2) communication Behaviors on SNSs, 3) images of Japan, and 1) demographic characteristics apart from age.

Part 1: Demographic characteristics

At the beginning of the questionnaire, 7 items that contains 2 fill-in questions and 5 single choice questions were asked to identify respondents' demographic characteristics. These questions are mainly asked the information about affiliated university, majors, academic year, gender, year of

birth, estimated total annual household income for 2017, and origin. Descriptive statistics are delineated, then four of these factors served as exogenous variables in the mediation model proposed in chapter 6, and their paths are linked to all endogenous variables[49] for control purposes.

Part 2: Communication Behaviors on SNSs

Communicative behaviors on SNSs consist of two elements: reception of Japan-related messages on SNSs and expression of Japan-related messages on SNSs. The measurements were adapted from Yoo et al. (2016) which were originally utilized to measure how frequently individuals received and expressed messages relating Middle-East respiratory syndrome (MERS) on SNSs during the outbreak of MERS in South Korea, using two items on five-point continuous scale from 1 to 5 (1 = never to 5 = very often). According to Nueman (2013, pp. 327), when asking respondent about past behaviors, researcher should provide aids to respondent recall, such as a fixed timeframe. Taking into account this recommendation, I thus set 30 days as a timeframe.

Japan-related message reception (adapted from Yoo, Choi, & Park. 2016) is measured using a single question: "How often have you read or seen comments, questions, pictures, videos, or other information about Japan on SNSs (e.g., Weibo, WeChat moments, QQ/Qzone, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) in the past 30 days". As such, message expression is assessed using a single item to ask how often the respondents have posted or reposted comments, questions, pictures, videos, or other information about Japan on above listed SNSs in the past 30 days.

Part 3: Images of Japan

In the present study, consistent with the definition of "image" in social psychology (Midooka, 1990), images of Japan are composed of three key scales: recognition and evaluation of Japan,

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[49] Endogenous variable is referred by Byrne (2010, p. 5) as "synonymous with dependent variables and are influenced by the exogenous variables (i.e., independent variables) in the model, either directly or indirectly".

impression of Japan, and behavioral intentions toward Japan. With respect to the evaluation and recognition of Japan, Jiang (2013) measured 9 pairs of semantic differential (SD) items, using the semantic differential method. She asked respondents to indicate what kind of feelings they have for Japan on a five-point scale (1 = do not like it at all 5 = like it very much) and measured behavioral intention against Japan with 4 key factors: degree of interest, degree of vigilance, degree of imitation, and degree of intimacy (Jiang, 2013, pp. 229-230).

This study adapted Jiang's (2013/2014) images of Japan scale. Recognition and evaluation of Japan measurement is consisting of 8 SD items in total as interval scales ranging from 1 to 5. One item was deleted from previous study due to the low-loading. In the questionnaire form, the left side is negative evaluation and right side is positive evaluation. Impression of Japan is frequently used in opinion poll as a significant indicator of image. This study measured impression of Japan by asking respondents to choose the most appropriate response to the question: "What kind feelings do you have for Japan?" Responses range along a five-point scale (1 = very unfavorable to 5 = very favorable). Behavioral intention against Japan is constructed with four scales: degree of vigilance, degree of intimacy, degree of interest, and social distance to Japan. Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agree or disagree with the corresponding statements: (1) "I think we should be vigilant to Japan"; (2) "I think that we should deepen the cooperation and build intimate relations with Japan in the future"; (3) "I am interested in Japan"; (4) "I hope I can stay or live in Japan". The responses are ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The number of items and level of measurement for each of scale is outlined in the table below.

Before creating questionnaire, layout and format for questions and responses must be decided since they relate to validity, accuracy, and completeness of survey. A good questionnaire is clear, neat, and easy to follow (Neuman, 2014, p. 340). In the light of Neuman's recommendation, I put objectives of the project, identifying information (name, affiliation, and E-mail address of author),

and serial number on the questionnaire and noted that all of the information and answers the respondent provided will be used only for academic use and processed digitally. With respect to question format, I listed numbers to be checked vertically in response and presented a set of questions using the same response category as a matrix question[50] (see Appendix _), because by doing so, it makes investigator and respondent easier to recognize answers.

3.5 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE STUDY

Reliability and validity[51] (including internal and external validity) are the most commonly used concepts that help to establish trustworthiness of findings. Either in qualitative or in quantitative research, reliability and validity are concerns that can be achieved through careful attention to "a study's conceptualization and the way in which the data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented"[52] (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 237-238), whereas the criteria for assessing the rigor in qualitative and quantitative research are different since they are arguably grounded on different assumptions about reality and worldview[53]. To enhance the

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[50] Matrix question is a compact way to present a series of questions that share the same answer categories (Neuman, 2014, p. 341).

[51] Validity (i.e., credibility or internal validity) refers to how well an idea fits with actual reality, and reliability which is similar to dependability or consistency refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated under the identical or very similar conditions (Neuman, 2014, p. 212).

[52] Generalization is commonly used to evaluate the trustworthiness of findings. The extent to which the findings can be applied to other situations which is referred to as generalizability (also known as transferability or external validity) is considered as a criteria for trustworthiness in quantitative research rather than in qualitative research. Generalizability in qualitative research is more likely to be understood as reader or user generalizability that involves leaving the extent to which the findings of a study can be applied to the reader his/her particular situation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 256).

[53] According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015, p. 242), the qualitative research is based on the assumption that "the reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative research". Due to the various types of qualitative research, there is no consensus on the criteria for reliability and validity. As such, scholars address different criteria to ensure the rigor in qualitative practice, e.g. validity/credibility/internal validity, generalizability/transferability/external validity, and dependability/consistency/reliability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

trustworthiness in research, strategies that suggested by scholars were carefully adapted (Appendix 7 and Appendix 8).

Specifically, the present study adopted the following steps to establish the rigor of results from the quantitative analyses. In order to verify equivalence and representative reliability[54] of questionnaire survey, this study applied reliability analysis by presenting Cronbach's alpha coefficients[55] and conducting analysis of variance (ANOVO). Reliability analysis determines how well the set of items (i.e. observed variables) go together into a single latent variable. It is argued that as a general rule, researchers believe that the coefficients should not below .07 for widely used scale (DeVellis, 1991, p. 85). In fact, Cronbach's alpha coefficients of this study are over .07. In addition, using multiple items (i.e. latent variables) to measure a single latent construct also enables measurement validity[56] increases (see Table 4.2). Before applying SEM, confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were first conducted on latent items to test pre-existing factor models to see how well the hypothesized factor structure fits the data obtained from this study (see Chapter 5). The results of CFA showed that each observed item has a substantial loading on its corresponding factor. Finally, to assess the rigor of the proposed model, several model fit indices were proposed to evaluate the extent to which the model fit the data obtained from the survey.

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[54] Nueman (2013, pp. 211-213) identified three types of reliability in quantitative research: stability reliability (i.e., a measure that yields consistent results at each time pointes assuming what is being measured does not change itself), representative reliability (i.e., a measure that yields the same results for a construct when applied to different subgroups), and equivalent reliability (i.e., a measure that yields consistent results using different specific indicators assuming that all measure the same construct).

[55] Reliability analysis is also referred to as a measure of ''internal consistency'' in some literatures e.g. Carmines & Zeller (1979); Neuman (2014).

[56] There are also several general types of measurement validity: face validity, content validity, criterion validity, and construct validity (Nueman, 2013, pp.215-217).

3.6   DATA ANALYSIS

Throughout the preceding sections of this chapter, rationales for research methodologies and applications of data collection have been discussed. Before conveying analyses, it is necessary to describe the methods generally to stimulate further discussions about data analysis process. Therefore, this section illustrates the particular ways in which qualitative data and quantitative data yielded from focus groups and questionnaire survey will be presented and analyzed.

3.6.1 Methods of qualitative data analysis

It is criticized by qualitative researchers that most of the emphasis has been placed on the description of data procedures but little emphasis has been placed on the methods of analysis for focus group interviews (e.g., Bertrand, Brown, & Ward, 1992, p. 200; Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996, pp. 103-104). Therefore, in the light of the argument, this section will provide thorough information on how the data obtained from focus groups were analyzed.

A variety of approaches can be taken to the analysis of focus groups, for instance a conversation analytic approach, concentrating on group dynamics, or proving an understanding of substantive issues in the data (Bloor et al., 2001, pp. 58-59) which is the most commonly adopted by qualitative researchers. In order that rigorous analysis takes place, an approach which lays down step-by-step procedures can be adopted to analyze substantive content (Bloor et al., 2001), such as the commonly used method of analytic induction (Znaniecki, 1968) and less well known logical analysis (Williams, 1981a; 1981b; 1990). Analytic induction is "the process of developing constructs" such as categories, statements of relationship, generalizations, and so forth (Given, 2008, p. 15).

Logical analysis is considered suitable for analysis of certain topics, "in particular for revealing the interrelation of definitions, beliefs, or evaluations, whether individual or cultural" (Williams, 1981b, p.182). For the purpose of focus groups, step-by-step procedure[57] is followed when I process and analyze focus group data. In addition to this reason, Nueman (2013, p. 515) suggested that in order to procced the discussion in a logical, step-by-step manner should be followed as well when report how and why researcher conducted the various steps of the research project. Thus, for the reasons discussed, in the present study, the data were analyzed by following the steps[58] suggested by Vaughn, Schumm, and Sinagub (1996, pp. 103-113) and Bloor et al. (2001, pp. 63-70).

Step 1: Identifying the key ideas

This step occurred as soon as focus groups finished. The main ideas and themes emerged from intensity of participants' responses, interactions among focus group members, nonverbal communications, emotions, as well as notes made by moderators were identified at this step. What is important at the step is not only to digest all the key ideas, but also to distinguish the strong, significant themes from the less significant ones (Folch-Lyon, Trost, 1981). Based on the suggestion of Vaughn, Schumm, and Sinagub (1996, p. 105) and Braun and Clark (2006, p. 87), I will reread the transcripts couple of times so as to refine the key ideas regarding participants' motivations and usage patterns of SNSs and images of Japan. Nonetheless, big ideas concluded from this stage will merely be identified "as impressions or hypotheses rather than as definite findings" (Vaughn, Schumm, and Sinagub, 1996, p. 105).

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[57] Details regarding step-by-step procedure refer to Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub (1996, pp.103-113).
[58] Steps prior to data analysis were not outlined here (see Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996, pp. 99-103).

Step 2: Indexing the data

This process identifies the units of information that will become the basis for defining categories of next step. The aim of indexing is as Coffey and Atkinson (1996) stated, "to bring together all extracts of data that are pertinent to a particular theme, topic or hypothesis". Researcher can identify the units through manual or mechanical procedure. The former one is using a highlighter to mark the index codes and the latter one is use qualitative data analysis (QDA) software program to assist with organizing data and identifying themes (Bloor et al., 2001, p. 63). In this analysis, NVivo was used as the tool of organizing and indexing the units emerged from transcripts. In addition, I use Microsoft Excel to outline the demographic information of participants and their responses to each question, so that I can manage the data with consideration given to both demographic factors and consistency of participants' responses throughout the interview.

Step 3: Categorizing the units

In the previous step, all the relevant information units are separated from the text. At this point, it is therefore possible to sort the identified units into relevant piles that will be used to represent the categories or themes, and rules or criteria that describe category properties should be defined (Vaughn, Schumm, and Sinagub, 1996, pp. 107-108). All of the relevant units are placed in corresponding category with the help of NVivo.

Step 4: Identifying themes

The procedure Vaughn, Schumm, and Sinagub (1996, pp. 112-113) recommended for this step are as follows. Main ideas generated in the first step are reexamined the extent to which the ideas are supported by the categories. The reframed and restated ideas are referred to as themes in this step. Then the researcher needs to determine whether categories support these themes. On the basis of the authors' suggestion, I will reconsider the appropriacy of categories and themes refer to the big ideas that identified in the first step by rereading the transcripts.

3.6.2 Methods of quantitative data analysis

This section provides an overview of the ways in which the data yielded from survey were analyzed. Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) Statistics Version 25, the R Project for Statistical Computing (R) Version 3.4.4, and Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS) Version 18 have been chosen for quantitative analysis. The software was used for different analyses based on both function and feature, which will be descried in more detail below.

Processing data procedure is composed of coding, entering, and cleaning data. Before analyzing the data, the raw data should be systematically recognized into a specific format that is easy to analyzing using statistics software as with coding in content analysis that was described previously (Neuman, 2014, p. 393). To create a consistently apply rules for transferring information from questionnaire to assigned certain number, as quantitative researchers suggested (e.g., Babbie, 1998; Mattew & Ross, 2010; Neuman, 2014), I first created a detailed codebook that describes the coding procedure and rules. Next, numerical data were entered according to the codebook in a grid form in

SPSS[59]. The reason that I selected SPSS for entering data is because its interface and feature makes it easily to manage the data and apply explanatory analysis. After coding and entering data in computer, it is necessary to recheck my dataset before proceeding. Neuman (2014) suggested two ways to verify the accuracy of coding: possible coding cleaning and contingency cleaning. Here I adopted the former one that "checks the categories of all variables for impossible codes" (p. 396) by generating frequency tables in SPSS.

Before proceeding further analysis, scholars recommended that the first stage of most quantitative analyses should perform frequency distributions and descriptive statistics, for example frequency, mean, median, mode, variation, and standard deviation for main variables (Mattews & Ross, 2010, p. 410; Neuman, 2014, p. 396). Both techniques are useful to describe information and basic patterns in the data. Therefore, the discussion will first center on frequency distributions and descriptive statistics in quantitative analysis.

Factor analysis is the best-known statistical analysis approach to investigate the covariance "among a set of observed variables in order to gather information on their underlying latent constructs" (Byrne, 2010, p. 5). There are two basic types of factor analysis, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)[60]. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is designed for exploring the unknown or uncertain links between the observed and latent variables (Byrne, 2010, p. 5). In contrast to EFA, *confirmatory factor analysis* (CFA) is a method for verifying a priori theoretical measurement model that describes or explains the relationship between the

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[59] Each variable in SPSS is listed with information about its numeric type, name (Label), values, missing values, and measure (Scale, Ordinal or Nominal).
[60] With regard to the classification of factor analysis, see Blunch (2012), Byrne (2010), and Knoke, Bohrnstedt, and Mee (2002).

underlying latent constructs[61] and the empirical measures[62] (Knoke, Bohrnstedt, & Mee, 2002, p. 414). With respect to the advantages of confirmatory models, as Blunch (2012, p. 129) suggested, prior knowledge can be taken into account and various methods for testing the methods are opened up. A confirmatory factor model is identifies if the following rules are fulfilled: 1) at least three indicators are included in each indicator; 2) no manifest variable is indicator for more than one factor; 3) the error items are not correlated (Blunch, 2012, p. 129). In accordance with these rules, we can see from Figure 4.3 that the model of this study can be identified as confirmatory model. In addition, to assess the reliability of the measuring instrument, I will use the definition of coefficient of determination to calculate reliability coefficient (Blunch, 2012, p.151; see chapter 6).

Path analysis is defined as a "statistical method for analyzing quantitative data yields empirical estimates of the effects of variables in a hypothesized causal system" (Knoke, Bohrnstedt, & Mee, 2002, p.377). It begins with a set of structural equations that represent a structure of interrelated hypothesis in a model. In this analysis, *structural equation model (SEM)* is composed two components—a CFA model which relates the latent variables (mediators) to corresponding manifest (observed) variables[63], a regression type structural equation which regresses the dependent manifest variables with the linear terms of independent manifest variables that was mediated by latent mediators. While two kinds of variables, namely manifest and latent variable, are usually involved in in most cases of social sciences. AMOS was used to perform the SEM analyses. As previously stated, all of variables were operationalized as continuous scales instead of commonly used ordered scales

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[61] In factor analysis, the variables are considered functions of latent variables called "factors" and manifest variables called "indicators" (Blunch, 2012. P. 127).
[62] See also Byrne (2010, p. 5) and Blunch (2012, pp. 127-129).
[63] Manifest variable are those that can be measured directly, conversely, latent variable cannot be directly measured by a single manifest variable (Lee, 2007, p. 1).

since treating ordered variables as normal arguably lead to problems (see Olsson, 1979a, b; Lee, Poon, and Bentler, 1990a, b; Lee, 2007).

3.7 SUMMARY

In this section, a brief recapitulation of the main points that were conveyed in this chapter will be provided. This chapter is concerned with the methodology that was adopted in this research study. It began with a thorough literature review on qualitative and quantitative research approaches before proceeding with discussion of mixed methods approach. And on this basis, I provided a general overview of various types of mixed methods design and claimed the rationales of incorporating qualitative and quantitative approaches in this study. Next, primary principles of research ethics such as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and voluntariness of participation were addressed prior to discussing the procedures of data collection in detail. Research instruments of the whole research were briefly reviewed at this point. Then, this chapter proceeded to description of the specific steps to conduct focus group discussion and questionnaire survey, followed by strategies for promoting credibility and validity in qualitative and quantitative researches. This chapter ended with a discussion of the particular ways in which qualitative and quantitative data were presented and analyzed in the present study.

Chapter 4 How Does SNS Usage Motivation Affect Chinese University Student's Image of Japan?

4.1   INTRODUCTION

Throughout the preceding chapters, theoretical background and techniques for collecting and analyzing data have been discussed. This chapter therefore aims to elicit descriptive findings about SNS usage motivations based on the FGDs and questionnaire survey with Chinese university students. Prior to proceeding to the discussion on the effects of SNSs on forming images of Japan, it is necessary to investigate the general conditions of SNS usage motivations and patterns, especially why university students use particular SNSs over alternative platforms and how they use these sites. Since some scholars have challenged the traditional arguments by proposing that online communication behaviors, which significantly affect the influences of SNSs use on cognitive and behavioral outcomes, vary according to different usage motivations. For instance, Li et al. (2015) concluded from previous studies that goal-directed individuals are motivated by their certain needs to engage with specific media channels and contents; and subsequently, their choice of communication media lead to various outcomes, such as affective, cognitive, and behavior outcomes.

Thus, for these reasons, the uses and gratifications (U&G; Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Rosengren, 1974; Rubin, 2009) framework will be employed to explore what motivates and sustains individuals to use specific SNSs, and the effects of each motivation on the outcomes pertaining to an individual's image of Japan. The U&G theory framework was applied to examine the traditional media context initially (e.g., Ellison & Rosenberg, 1987; Rubin 1981); then it was extended to explore Internet usage motivations (e.g., Charney & Greenberg, 2002; Dimmick, Kline, & Stafford, 2000; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). Since the early this part of this decade, with the advent of social media, a growing trend in research has been expanding the U&G approach to study SNSs (Gan, 2018), such as Twitter (e.g., Chen, 2010; Coursaris et al., 2013; Johnson & Young, 2009), Facebook (e.g., Alhabash, Chiang, & Huang, 2014; Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011; Ha et al., 2015; Malik, Dhir,

& Nieminen, 2016), Myspace (e.g., Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Urista, Dong, & Day, 2009), and instant messaging applications (e.g., Gan, 2017; Gan, 2018; Lien & Can, 2014; Shu et al., 2017).

Thus, the U&G paradigm has been adopted in a variety of media contexts to study the motivations for using various platforms. It is most commonly applied to explore social and psychological antecedents that determine gratification sought, media choice, and behaviors (Papacharissi, 2008). In addition, comparative analyses have been conducted for public and private SNSs (e.g., Facebook and Twitter, WeChat and Weibo; Phua, Jin, & Kim, 2017; Gan, 2018) or two private SNSs (e.g., Facebook and Myspace; Facebook and Kakao Talk; Ha et al., 2015; Urista, Dong, & Day, 2009) to identify the motives regarding media use. Furthermore, some researchers have applied the U&G theory to examine media use effects and consequences (Papacharissi, 2008; e.g., Malik, Dhir, & Nieminen, 2016).

Despite the rise in SNS research on usage motivations and subsequent outcomes, the vast majority of research has adopted a quantitative approach, focusing merely on the motivations of one or two specific platforms (e.g., Alhabash, Chiang, & Huang, 2014; Chen, 2011; Gan & Wang, 2014; Ha et al., 2015; Johnson & Yang, 2009; Malik, Dhir, & Nieminen, 2016; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2011; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2006; Urista, Dong, & Day, 2009). In addition, it should be noted that few researchers have addressed the overall distinctions in needs and interests that motivate individual to use different SNS platforms or the reasons that individuals choose a particular SNS to fulfill certain needs. Because individuals have an abundance of media choices, it has become easier for users to seek and select media contents and channels (Alhabash, Chiang, & Huang, 2014). It appears plausible, then, that the choice of SNS platforms varies according to each motivation. Accordingly, this study hypothesizes that Chinese university student's images of Japan hinges on different SNS usage motivations. Second, although domestic SNSs have achieved high penetration rates and a significant influence in China, studies about these sites are particularly scarce. Consequently, given the lack of previous research, qualitative approach was

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adopted in this study to explore the ways in which individuals choose particular SNS and delineate the corresponding needs through their own rich descriptions and explanations. A further quantitative analysis on the outcomes from distinct SNS usage motivations was built on this foundation.

Hence, the present research was designed to fill these gaps in previous research (mentioned above) and   extend our knowledge of SNS usage motivations across platforms. The subsequent outcomes stemming from choices for particular communication media were also explored. Accordingly, this chapter has a twofold purpose. First, it explores the needs that motivate individuals to choose particular SNS. Before carrying on this discussion, it is indispensable to investigate what forms of SNS are widely and frequently used in China. Second, it discusses how an individual's SNS usage motivation influences his/her use of communication media, thereby forming his/her images of Japan. Instead of proposing theorized preset hypotheses, an inductive analysis approach was employed in this study based on general research questions which will be presented in the following section.

This chapter is organized as follows. First, it provides a brief introduction to the development of SNSs use in China and an overview of relevant literatures. Next, it conveys the objectives of this research based on the literature reviews—which leads to a set of research questions that will be tackled in this chapter. Prior to proceeding to the analysis, it is necessary to describe the rationales for FGD data collection, including specific steps of data analysis, and detailed description of participants. Furthermore, it identifies research participants' frequently used SNSs, followed by the motivations and usage patterns of these SNSs platforms. According to the analysis of FGD data, Chinese young adults' motivations to use SNSs could be divided into four categories in a broad sense. Each category will be thoroughly analyzed respectively. In the second phase of this study, the major themes emerging from FGD were incorporated into the survey to investigate Sina Weibo usage motivations on respondents' images of Japan. To compare the difference in Sina Weibo motivation between male and female participants, an analysis of variance (ANOVO) test was

applied. Furthermore, generalized linear regressions were conducted to explore the relationships between each usage motivation and images to Japan. Following a description of the study method, this chapter concludes with a short discussion of the main findings of the research.

4.2   BACKGROUND

With the emergence of Facebook and Twitter in the early 2000s, the studies of social networking sites (SNSs) have been attracting numerous researchers to study in this decade. SNSs, such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and LinkedIn, are member-based online community that allows users to edit personal profile (i.e., username and photo) and communicate with other members of network in a variety of ways such as sending public or private messages, sharing photos online, and commenting on a variety of topics such as current events or personal life (Mahajan, 2009; Orchard et al., 2014; Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2008; Wang et al., 2014). Another predominant feature of SNSs is to provide users with entertainment opportunities, such as watching videos, listening to music, playing online games, and browsing daily news (Wang et al., 2014). In brief, SNSs embody the aspects of "social, leisure, and informational services" and enable individuals to develop and maintain social/interpersonal networks in a broad sense (Orchard et al., 2014).

Figure 4.1 Usage rate of typical SNSs (Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2017)
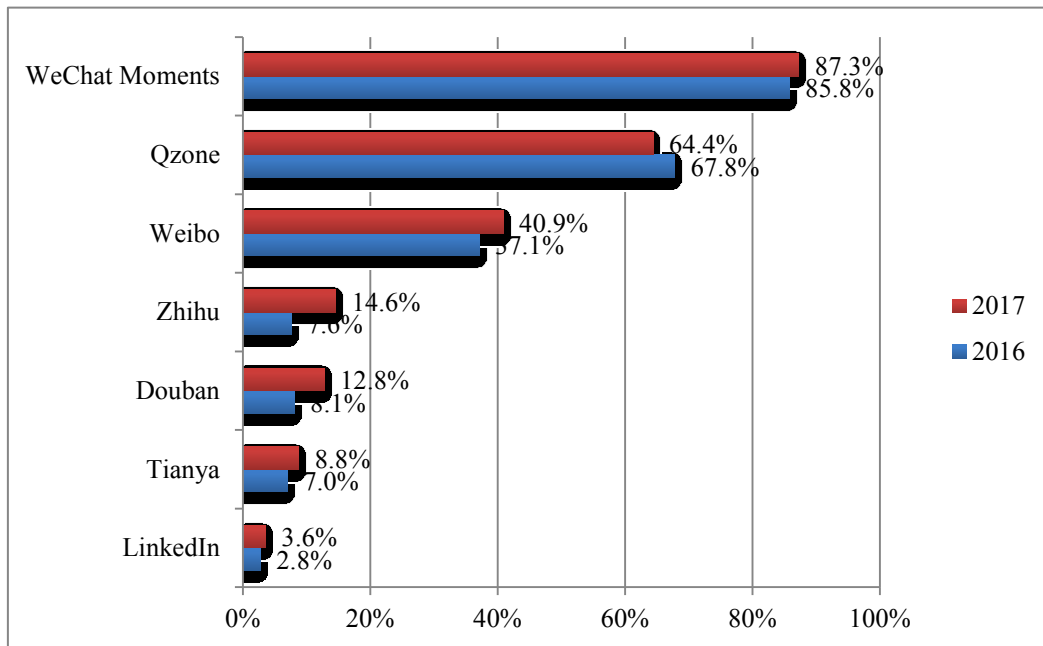
Source: Chinese Internet Information Center (2018). *Statistical Report on Internet Development in China;* Created by the author.

As the most popular and widely used SNS today, Twitter, Facebook, and MySpace have been studied adequately in fields of media and communication research, yet I have discussed in Chapter 2, the study of Chinese domestic SNSs is still scarce. As the blocking of international SNSs in China since 2009, Chinese citizens cannot completely free to access those sites. The blocking has resulted in a flourishing social media landscape dominated by Chinese domestic player such as SNSs WeChat and QQ, microblogging service Tencent Weibo and Sina Weibo, as well as video sharing websites Bilibili and AcFun. According to *the Statistical Report on Internet Development* released by Chinese Internet Information Center in 2018, as of December 2017, WeChat Moments is ranked in the first place with 87.3% of usage rate, followed by Qzone (64.4%), Weibo (40.9%), Zhihu (14.6%), and Douban (12.8%; see Figure 4.1). In the rest of this section, the features of the top three

SNSs — WeChat Moments, Qzone, and Sina Weibo — with the largest usage rate in China, will be overviewed.

Figure 4.2 Users' daily time spent on WeChat
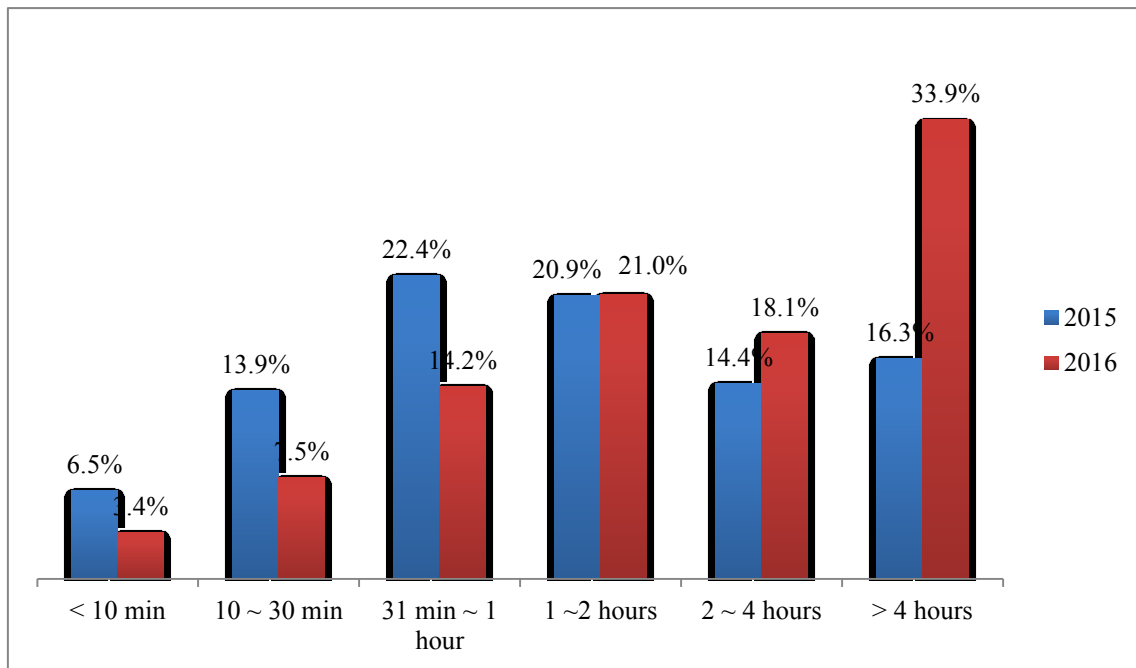
Source: China Academy of Information and Communication Technology (2017). *WeChat Social Economic Impact Report*; Created by the author.

WeChat, which was released first in 2011 by Tencent, is a smartphone-based application that combines instant messaging and social networking service. It supports multiple communications including private chat as well as group chat. WeChat features the similar functionality with WhatsApp. It enables real-time communications via text, voice, and video messaging, as well as video telephone (Gan, 2018). In addition to the above instant messenger capabilities, WeChat Moments allows users to post text, photo, and video messages as well as share outside links. Users can communicate and interact with their contacts through commenting on or giving 'Likes' to the original posts. Furthermore, the function of Official Accounts provides users with opportunities of

following businesses or organizations and receiving a variety of information[64]. According to *the WeChat Social Economic Impact Report*, the proportion of highly engaged users increased drastically in 2016 as compared with 2015 (see Figure 5.2). The number of users who reported that they spend more 4 hours on WeChat per day is roughly twice (33.9% in 2016) that of 2015.

As previous discussion, WeChat, QQ, and Weibo are three most widely used SNSs in China at present (see Figure 4.1). 87.3% of Internet users reported that they have used WeChat during the six months prior the survey. The corresponding proportions of QQ and Sina Weibo are 64.4% and 40.9% respectively as of December 2017. Similar to WeChat, QQ is also developed by Tencent. QQ is an instant messaging service similar to OICQ or MSN messenger initially released in 1999. Qzone, arguably the first SNS in China, was developed in 2005 by Tencent as an extension of QQ (Wei, 2003). User's personal profile and status update are not publicly viewable in both WeChat and QQ. User can send message to or comment on the other users' updates posted in Qzone or WeChat Moments only if his/her request of being friends was accepted. Qzone features very similar functionalities to blog, such as keeping diaries and posting photos. As private-oriented SNS, WeChat and QQ share some features designed mainly for acquaintances and friends, such as instant messaging service, group chat, Moments/ Qzone (Su et al., 2017). Therefore, both of these two SNSs are primarily based on acquaintance community.

Sina Weibo is ranked in the third place with 40.9% of usage rate (see Figure 4.1). Sina Weibo is a microblogging and social networking service that provide users with multiple communications over microblogging network. Sina Weibo features the same functionality with Twitter in several aspects. First, both of them combine microblogging service with social networks. Users can broadcast short messages within a limit of 140 characters or share the links of web sites, and allows receivers to comment on the original message and forward the message. In addition to posting

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[64] WeChat Official Accounts Platform, *WeChat Official Platform Operation Rules*, (https://mp.weixin.qq.com/cgi-bin/readtemplate?t=business/faq_operation_tmpl&type=info&lang=e n_US&token= Retrieved on August 17, 2018).

message and commenting on other's postings, Sina Weibo allows users to give a "Like" to the posting, save the posting as favorites, share the reviews of movies and music, upload videos, share pictures, insert graphical emotions, and communicate through instant messaging. Figure 4.3 takes the account of *Global Times* as an example to indicate the user interface and functionalities of Sina Weibo. Similar to Twitter, user's profile is publicly viewable by not only mutual followers, but also strangers (Zhang & Pentina, 2012). Nevertheless, there are several distinctions between Twitter and Sina Weibo. For instance, on Sina Weibo, users can comment under the message without reposting, while for Twitter, users cannot comment only if forward the original tweet (Guan et al., 2014).

Figure 4.3 An example of Sina Weibo microblogging service interface[65]
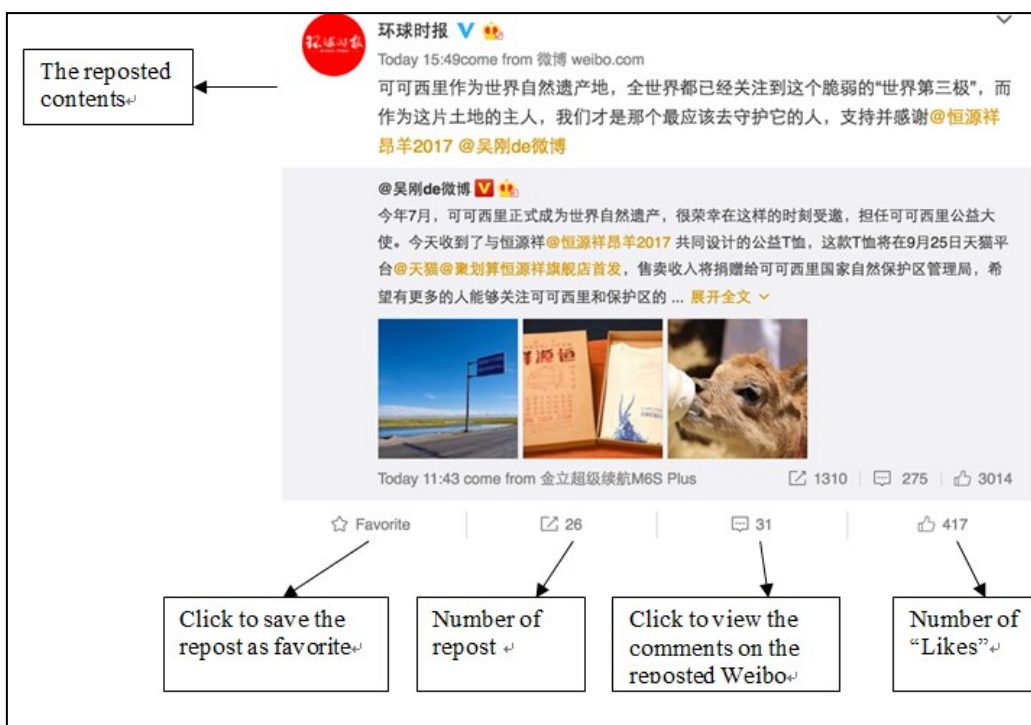
As a hybrid of Twitter and Facebook, Sina Weibo is the most popular and influential micro-blogging service in China at present, with approximately 376 million monthly active users (MAU) and 165 million daily active users (DAU) as of December 2017 (see Figure 4.4)[66]. In addition to the large amount of users, Sina Weibo was chosen for this case study of quantitative research for the following reasons. First, the results of FGD suggest that participants are more inclined to express their views on Sina Weibo than other platforms. It is therefore valuable to study why Sina Weibo makes users more willing to disclose their real thoughts, attitudes, and emotions. Accordingly, it appears that Sina Weibo users are more likely be affected by cognitive elaboration which resulted from compositing or expressing the messages than users of other platform. Additionally, from Wenzhou train collision in 2011 to RYB Kindergarten child abuse in 2017, Sina Weibo substantially influences the process of social events even agenda of Chinese authorities by providing users a public sphere to engage in social events and express their view on public issues (Gang & Bandurski, 2010; Guan et al., 2014).

Figure 4.4 Monthly (MAU) and Daily (DAU) active users of Sina Weibo (million)
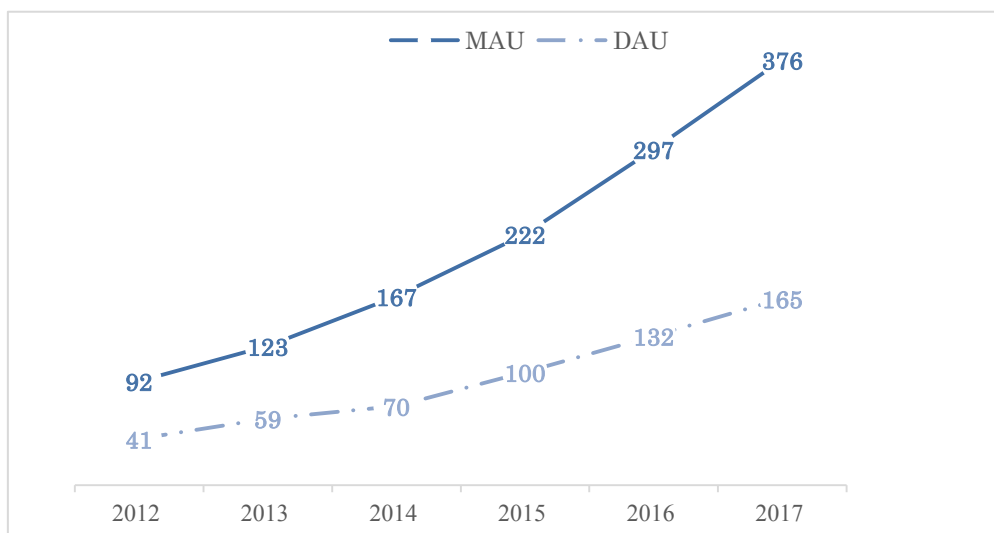
[66] 微博数据中心（2016），《微博用户发展报告 2016》，
(http://data.weibo.com/report/reportDetail?id=346, Retrieved on August 25, 2017).

Source: Weibo Data Center (2017). Development Report on Weibo Users (《2017 微博用户发展报告》); Created by the author.

4.3   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS OF THIS STUDY

Prior to designing and developing further quantitative analysis of the SNS usage motivations on images of Japan, it is necessary to explore how Chinese university students utilize SNSs, and what kind of image regarding Japan has been formed by SNSs use. Accordingly, the main questions I tackled in this chapter is: (1) Why is individual motivated to use a particular SNS? (2) What are the influences of individual's SNS usage motivations on his/her images of Japan? With the research purposes proposed in the preceding section, this study relies on an exploratory sequential mixed methods design involving FGD and questionnaire survey. By adopting this method, it enables to broaden and deepen our understanding of SNS usage motivations and usage patterns across SNSs, and the effects of usage motivations on cultivating the images of Japan in the eyes of Chinese university students. Given the lack of previous research especially on SNS usage motivations and the outcomes in relation to images of a foreign country, instead of proposing theorized preset hypotheses, this study adopted an inductive analysis approach based on the research questions.

4.4   METHOD

With the theoretical and empirical concerns in mind, this chapter relies on an explanatory sequential mixed methods[67] design involving FGD with a quantitative analysis to tackle the above research questions. In hopes of broadening and deepening the understanding of how participants

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[67]   For details, see chapter 3.

utilize SNSs, and what are the effects of SNSs use on formation of images of Japan, I first conducted FGD to obtain rich descriptive information and identify the key themes relating to research questions, as qualitative data are often well studied to exploratory studies and generative of new understanding. Ultimately, the main themes regarding motivations for using SNSs that were generated from FGD are used in questions of survey to examine the relationships among usage motivations and images of Japan by employing regression analysis.

4.4.1 Data collection of FGD

Three FGD[68] were conducted on 24 Chinese university students aged 17 to 22 affiliated with two public and comprehensive universities in Beijing. Undergraduate students have been selected as participants because according to the *Development Report on Sina Weibo 2017*, the primary users of Sina Weibo are young and highly educated adults[69] (see Appendix 9 and Appendix 10). Thus, the sampling of university student is the most relevant.

Following the previous studies that argued well-designed focus groups last between 1 and 2 hours (Morgan, 1997; Vaughn, et al., 1996) and consists of 6 to 12 participants per group (Baumgartner, Strong, & Hensley, 2002; Neuman, 2013; Shart-Hopko, 2001), each focus group lasts 90 to 100 minutes and consists of 8 interviewees in the present study. The rationales for this range of FGD size derives from the objective that should encompass enough participants to "yield diversity in information provided" (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009) and assure each interviewee has enough opportunity to contribute to the discussion. Given the topic of this study, participants are limited to undergraduate students who are likely to have great amount of experience of using SNS. Therefore,

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[68] Focus group methodology is an effective qualitative research technique in conduct of preliminary research to grasp general pictures and in development of research instruments. It is thus usually combined with quantitative research. Compared with one-to-one interview, given the multidirectional and dynamic nature, FGD enables investigator to study interviewee in a more natural conversation and through interactions of group members. Additionally, this approach yields rich data and makes possible to conduct group interview and participation observation at once.

[69] Based on the report released by Sina Weibo Data Center on December 2017, 77.8% of users possess higher education degree; and 27.8% of users are in the age group of 18-22.

it must be noted here that following the established practice, participants in FGD have not been chosen through probability-sampling techniques (e.g., Babbie, 2015).

Gender ratio of each group was adjusted to approximately one to one (11 male and 13 female). It is argued that commonly more than one FGD is conducted due to the serious danger that a single group of 6 to 12 people will be too peculiar to afford any generalizable insights[70] (Babbie, 2015, p.320). Multiple focus groups allow researcher to assess the extent to which saturation has been reached, rather than multiple meetings of a focus group (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009, pp. 3-4). Hence, three groups of discussion were held on account of data saturation[71] has been reached. As a result, 24 interviewees from 10 provinces 3 municipalities, and 1 autonomous region participated in FGD. The goal of conducting focus group discussion is to elicit general information about the participants' motivations and usage behaviors on various SNSs, for example, how interviewees use different sites by motivations, how they process the received messages.

The detailed procedures of designing and conducting FGD have been described in the chapter entitled "Overview of Methodology". Before outlining the questions used in FGD, it is indispensable to provide short rationales for these questions. As suggested (Vaughn, Schumm, and Sinagub, 1996, pp. 81-83), questions should be inquired in sequence from general questions to specific areas; open-ended questions should be used instead of close-ended questions. Reasons for avoiding specific and close-ended questions can be twofold according to the authors: rigid questions restrict the respondents' responses to limited prechosen answers resulting in failure of capturing the full characteristics of the respondents' own experience; having to select from prechosen answers implies that one answer is superior to the others, so that it arguably may put pressure on respondents[72].

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[70] Although generalization is not the goal of qualitative research, to reach the theoretical saturation, adequate and diverse data are needed.
[71] Data saturation is referred to the point in data collection when no new or relevant information emerges (Saumure & Given, 2008, pp. 195-196).
[72] "Matters need attention" on FGD refer to Chapter 2.

4.4.2 Data collection and analysis

All of the FGD were audio-recorded, transcribed by the moderator (i.e., the author) and assistant moderator on the basis of recordings and notes, and cross-checked for accuracy by each other. Qualitative data analysis (QDA) software program NVivo (version 11) was used to assist with organizing and analyzing FGD transcripts. As already discussed in the previous chapter, data analysis followed the steps of: (1) identifying the key ideas; (2) indexing the data; (3) categorizing the units; and (4) identifying the themes (Bloor et al., 2001, pp. 63-77; Neuman, 2014, p. 515; Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996, pp. 103-113; see chapter 4). In step of *identifying the key ideas*, the main ideas relating to research questions were extracted from intensity of participants' verbal responses, interactions among group members, nonverbal communications, emotions, as well as written notes. The second step, *indexing the data*, aims to bring together all extracts of data that pertinent to a particular theme as a node (i.e., unit or code). This process was constituted of systematic line-by-line coding of each transcript. Then, highly relevant units were sorted into piles that are used to represent the categories in step of *categorizing the units*. Ultimately, key ideas that generated at the beginning are possible to be reexamined and reframed on the basis of the previous steps.

Following the grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the procedures of analysis were conducted in an iterative process, in which data from one participant are endorsed by or opposed to data from other participants in order to improve the generated theoretical categories, propositions, and conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Throughout this process, new codes were extracted sequentially as the analysis proceeds, and then prior transcripts were recoded to comprise new nodes (i.e., themes; see Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006). On the contrary, if some codes were found that they are conceptually identical, then these codes were removed and extracts pertain to the collapsed codes were broken out into separate codes (Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006) or made up a new code.

It is argued that the validity and reliability of data analysis can be achieved by following the analysis and coding procedures (Babbie, 2015, p. 336).

4.4.3   Description of participants and groups

Prior to implementation of the analysis, a thorough description of participants in groups is provided first. A total of 24 participants were separated to three groups to be interviewed. The demographic profiles are displayed in Table 4.1. In order to preserve anonymity, pseudonyms will be used throughout this chapter. The participants represented ten provinces, three municipalities, and one autonomous region[73]. The sample is composed of 13 female and 11 male aged from 19 to 22. The majority of the participants are majoring in liberal arts. Ten of the participants were in senior year, followed by sophomore (8) and junior (6) year.

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[73]   Participants of FGD come from 14 provinces, municipalities and autonomous region, including 云南省,安徽省,四川省,河南省,浙江省,山西省,福建省,辽宁省,陕西省,黑龙江省,北京市,天津市,重庆市,广西壮族自治区.

Table 4.1 Summary of demographic information of FGD participants

Subject	Gender	Age	Major	Academic Year	Origin
FG01YY	Female	21	Business English	Senior	Yunnan
FG02CW	Male	19	Law	Sophomore	Anhui
FG03CT	Female	19	Finance	Sophomore	Anhui
FG04GR	Male	20	Finance	Sophomore	Sichuan
FG05WY	Female	19	International Economics and trade	Sophomore	Sichuan
FG06ZH	Male	19	Economic management	Sophomore	He' nan
FG07WF	Female	20	Business English	Junior	Zhejiang
FG08JH	Male	20	Translation	Junior	Shanxi
FG09YH	Male	22	Diplomacy	Senior	Anhui
FG10GW	Male	20	International Politics	Junior	Liaoning
FG11MH	Male	21	Diplomacy	Senior	Beijing
FG12LW	Female	21	International Politics	Senior	Chongqing
FG13SR	Female	20	Japanese	Senior	Heilongjiang
FG14JQ	Female	21	International Politics	Senior	Zhejiang
FG15ZR	Female	20	Philosophy, Politics and Economics	Junior	Liaoning
FG16ZY	Female	21	Finance	Senior	Fujian
FG17HC	Female	20	Politics	Senior	Sichuan
FG18BL	Male	19	Public Service Administration	Sophomore	Sichuan
FG19BL	Female	19	International Politics	Sophomore	Guangxi
FG20LS	Female	21	Diplomacy	Senior	Beijing
FG21XH	Male	19	International Politics	Junior	Anhui
FG22JZ	Male	21	Diplomacy	Junior	Tianjin
FG23YM	Female	20	Japanese	Senior	Liaoning
FG24LW	Male	19	Sociology	Sophomore	Shanxi

Source: created by the author.

4.5 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF SNS USAGE MOTIVATIONS: FROM A USES AND GRATIFICATIONS PERSPECTIVE

This section focuses on discussing the FGD data on university students' SNS usage motivations, patterns, and the effects of using SNSs on forming the images of Japan. Prior to conducting questionnaire survey, we need to gather rich information about the general situations of SNS use in China, such as how participants use different SNSs in accordance with different needs and to what extent the outcomes vary according to these different usage motivations. A number of recent studies have investigated how individuals distinguish usage patterns of SNSs and SNSs platforms according to different intended objectives. For instance, Chen (2011) found that the need to connect with others is positively related to the frequency of tweets, time spend on the Twitter, total number of tweets, and active months on Twitter. Furthermore, a distinction in SNS usage motivations between male and female has been verified by previous research. A study of Pew Research Center found that women are more likely to utilize social media for the motivation of contacting with families than men[74]. Thus, this section aims at exploring Chinese university student's SNS usage motivations and the subsequent cognitive and behavioral outcomes in relation to images of Japan by employing the U&G approach.

Based on the detailed discussion on the properties and applications of the U&G theory in Chapter 2, the primary reasons that the U&G theory is considered appropriate to study SNSs are as follows. First, the U&G is helpful to overcome the obstacle of differentiating the impacts of mass and interpersonal communication on SNSs by emphasizing on the activation and rationality of media user and focusing on mere effects of selected media. SNS offers potentials for both mass and interpersonal communication (Johnson & Yang, 2009) which differs from traditional mass media. It

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[74] Pew Internet Project. (2011), Why Americans use social media.
file:///H:/Why%20Americans%20Use%20Social%20Media.pdf (Retrieved on April 19, 2018).

is thus becoming harder to distinguish between mass and interpersonal communication on SNSs. In accordance with selectivity paradigm's property, the U&G is grounded on the proposition that media have no potential impact on those who do not attend it, but that people rationally select a particular media because it meets people's needs (Rubin, 2009a; Rubin, 2009b).

Second, the U&G makes it possible to investigate the outcomes that derived from different SNS usage motivations respectively. It is considered that online communication behaviors vary according to usage motivations, and then affect subsequent affective, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes (e.g., Kazt, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Weibull, 1985). To capture the effects of different usage motivations on outcomes efficiently, the U&G approach is employed, since it conceptualizes that media users are (fully) aware of their motivations to select particular channels and messages (Valkenburg et al., 2016).

Third, in the light of the objectives of this study that exploring the SNS usage motivations and behavior outcomes at an individual level, the U&G is suitable since it focuses on individual's use and choice of media and subsequent outcomes. For the above reasons, this study adopted the U&G paradigm to explore the influences of individual's SNS usage motivations on images of Japan. Following the above discussion on method, this study applied a self-reported qualitative research method to gather rich descriptive information for answering the first and the second subsidiary question. Therefore, as discussed above, this study provides an exploratory look at several widely used SNSs in China, including WeChat, QQ, and Sina Weibo from the perspective of the U&G paradigm. Given the relative lack of prior research especially on comparative analysis across SNSs, qualitative research method was used to explore the ways in which participants choose the specific SNS platforms and elucidate the psychological and social needs motivate participants to choose the particular platforms through their own rich descriptions and explanations. For above reasons, this study adopted an inductive analysis approach based on general research questions informed by literature on the U&G theory.

4.5.1 Frequently used SNS and gratifications

The findings in this section are based on the data from FGD. To diffusely explore participants' frequently used SNSs, general and open-ended questions were asked by the moderator: "What are your frequently used SNSs, and how do you use them for different motivations?", after proposing a basic definition of SNS and giving several examples. Basically, participants took turns answering the questions; nevertheless, the moderator probed follow-up questions when requiring further details and other members in the group were encouraged to join in the discussion.

In the first place, the main ideas and themes were identified based on the intensity of participants' responses, interactions among focus group members, and notes made by the moderators. As outlined in Table 4.2, frequently used SNSs were classified into three different types in accordance with usage motivations: "social motivation", "information orientation", and "interest orientation". The key ideas drawn from this stage will be conveyed to next step as impressions or hypotheses.

Table 4.2 Three classifications of the most frequently used SNSs in terms of motivations

Social orientation	Information orientation	Interest orientation
WeChat, QQ	Zhihu, Sina Weibo, Baidu Tieba	Sina Weibo, Hupu, Bilibili, Lofter, Douban

Source: Created by the author.

In the process of coding the data, I brought together all extracts of FGD data that are pertinent to the topic of motivations of using SNSs through mechanical procedure using QDA software. I used NVivo (version 11) as a tool to assist me in the process of managing the transcripts, coding the units,

categorizing the units, and mapping the themes and categories. Also, NVivo possesses a very useful feature that develops the codes in terms of trees of interrelated ideas (Bryman, 2016, p.593) in the step of categorizing the units. These processes are accomplished through creating nodes in NVivo. Figure 4.5 displays the interface of creating hierarchically organized nodes.

Figure 4.5 Screenshot of NVivo 11
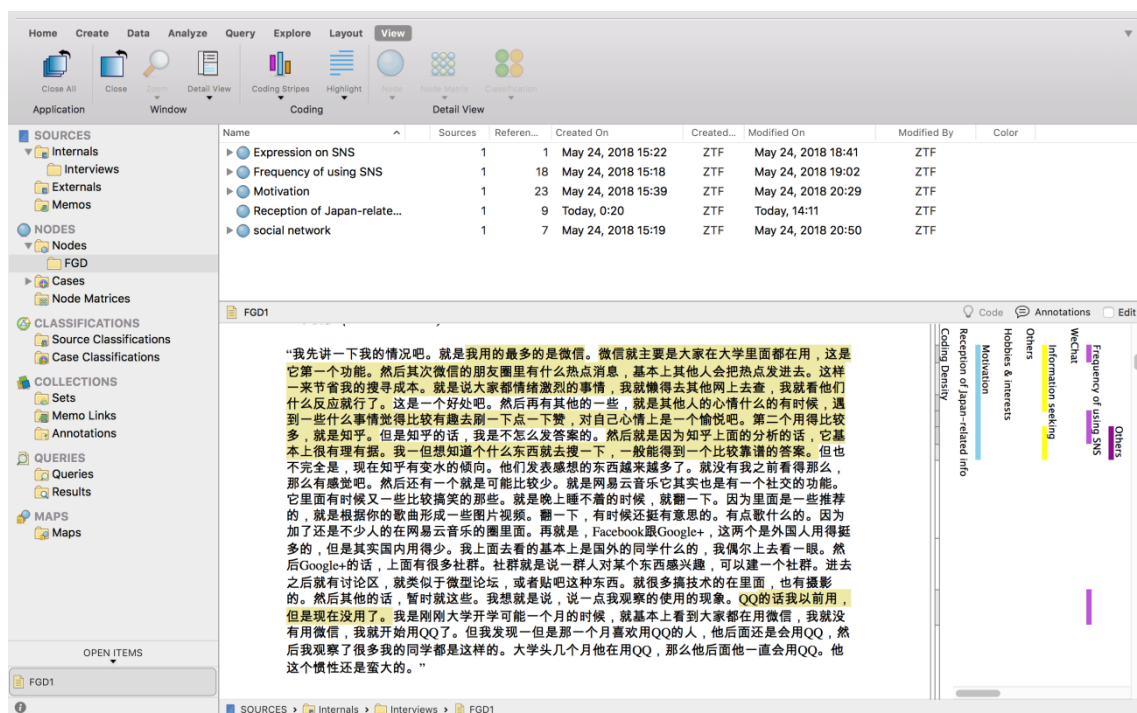
The most frequently used SNS

Then, in the step of categorizing the units, with the help of NVivo, all of the relevant information were separated from the transcripts and sorted into corresponding categories. We can

detect that WeChat[75] is the most frequently used SNS especially for social connection motivation, which is consistent with the big ideas that derived from the first step. For example, as FG07WF (female) said, "*The most commonly used SNS is definitely WeChat*", and FG04GR (male) also made the same answer: "*Let me talk about my case first. The SNS I use most is WeChat.*" Like these two participants, other participants gave the similar responses as well, for instance, FG02CW (male) remarked that "*I personally use WeChat, QQ, and an application called 'Hupu' more often*", and "*WeChat is the most frequently used one, because there are too many people using it now...*", said FG20LS (female). Based on the narratives, it is convinced that all participants ranked WeChat first in their list of the most frequently used SNSs. Considering the fact that WeChat possesses the largest amount of MAU (monthly active users) in China, and 87.3% of Internet users reported that they have used WeChat during the six months prior the survey[76], this finding which conforms to preconceived idea is not surprisingly. However, the comparison of WeChat and QQ which will be discussed later, may lead to some interesting findings.

Usage motivations emerged from FGD

As illustrated in Figure 4.6, the thematic analysis reveals that Chinese undergraduate students utilize SNSs mainly for seven types of motivations: (1) contacting with current acquaintances and friends; (2) following the updates of friends; (3) keeping in touch with previous friends of high schools; (4) acquiring information about hobbies or interests; (5) seeking a variety of information (including news or hot issues and knowing other peoples' views); (6) following the updates or gossips of celebrities; (7) expressing themselves (including feelings or opinions, making complain).

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[75] WeChat is a multi-purpose instant messaging communication application similar to WhatsApp based on smartphone platform firstly released in 2011. A feature of WeChat, named "Moments", allows users to share photographs, videos, and links with maximum five thousand WeChat contacts.
[76] Chinese Internet Network Information Center (2018), *Statistical Report on Internet Development in China*, <Retrieved from https://cnnic.com.cn/IDR/ReportDownloads/201611/P020161114573409551742.pdf on May 26, 2018>

Furthermore, the seven categories have been broadly fitted into four classifications — social connection, information seeking, entertainment, and self-expression. The categories of usage motivations emerged here were conveyed to generating questions items for subsequent survey. Table 4.6 summarizes the classifications of gratification, the sites that used for the certain motivation, and proportion of communication behaviors for each motivation.

Figure 4.6 Themes concerning SNS usage motivations emerged from FGD
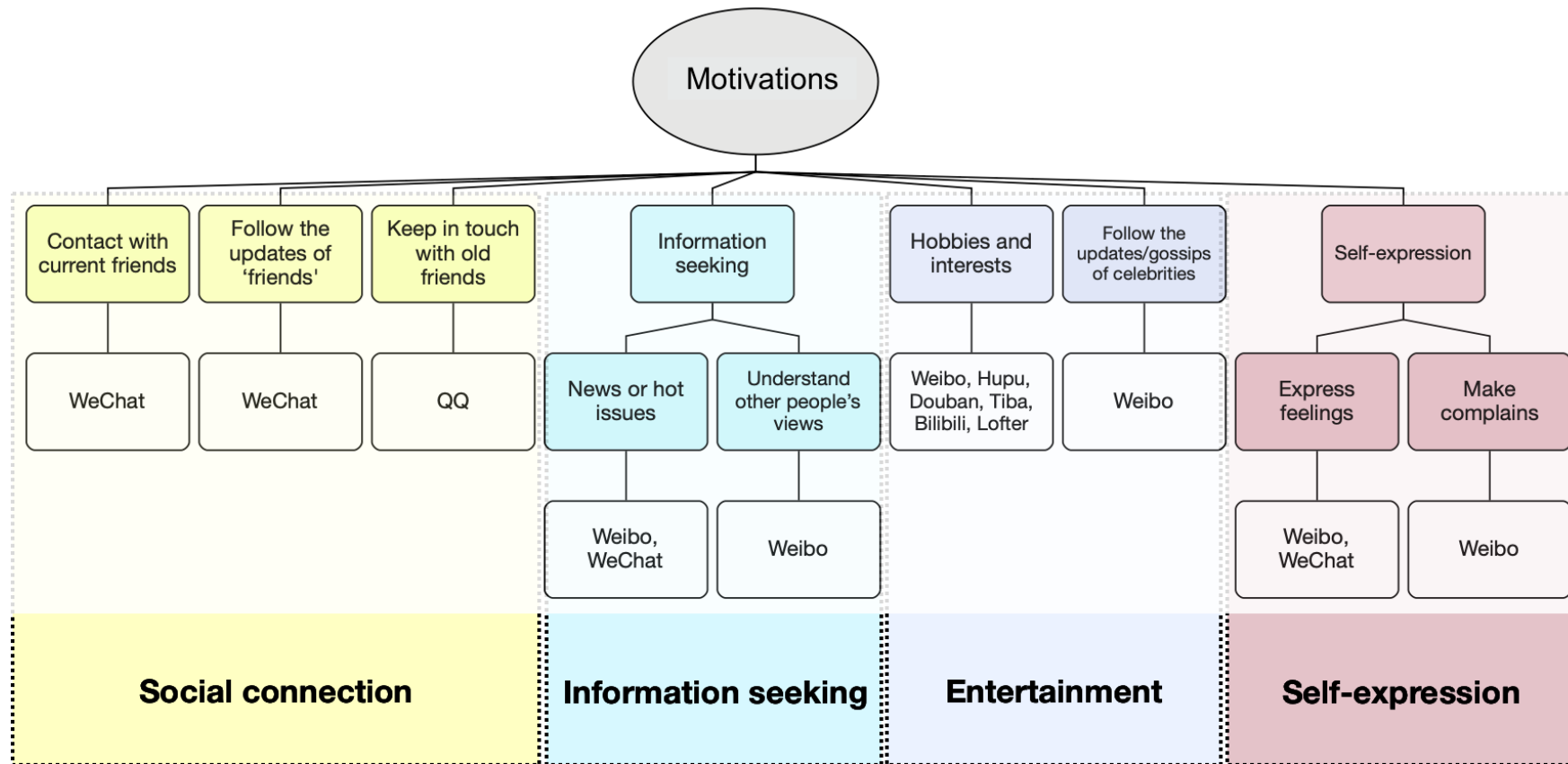
Source: Created by the author.

4.5.2   Classification 1: social connection motivation

As discussed above, regardless of gender, all of the participants reported that they use WeChat for contacting with friends, acquaintances, families, and so on very frequently. The same tendency has been displayed in other SNSs as well. According to the survey conducted by Pew Research Center in 2011[77], the proportions of Internet users reported that staying touch with current friends and family members are a primary consideration in their adoption of SNSs (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn and/ or Twitter) are 67% and 64% respectively. The vast majority of participants I interviewed mentioned that the use of WeChat is mainly confined to contacting with current friends and colleagues they knew at university, which is somewhat in line with the findings of Pew Research Center. For example, a male participant explained how he uses WeChat as follows.

> *Let me talk about my case first. The most commonly used SNS is WeChat. It is because everyone is using WeChat in college. This is its first function for me. Second, if there is any hot news, in most cases, other people will post it on Moments. I can learn about the recent news directly from the Moments, which can save my searching costs; that is to say, if an incident that caused intense reactions and discussions occurred, I can see how other people were thinking about it on Moments without having to search relevant information online. This is a benefit of using WeChat. Or when other people posted   a message about things happened to them or their feelings, if I find it interesting, I would like to give them a thumb-up. It's also a pleasure for me."* (FG04GR, male)

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[77]   Pew Research Center (2011), *Social networking sites and our lives*, (http://www.pewinternet.org/2011/06/16/social-networking-sites-and-our-lives/   Retrieved   on August 17, 2018).

In this case, the participants summarized his gratifications of using WeChat as two aspects: (1) acquiring information about current events and understanding viewpoints of other people (information seeking motivation), (2) maintain interpersonal relationships through interacting with people who are in his network (social connection motivation). Furthermore, two observations can be derived from his narrative. First, the participant started to use WeChat after entered in the college. In addition, it seems natural to infer that WeChat has replaced other media to gratify participant's need of social connection as an alternative. This raises two questions: "why did he start to use WeChat after entered the college" and "what SNS did the participant use before". These two questions will be answered later in this section. This conjecture was confirmed by the responses of other participants. For instance, one male participant who is primarily using WeChat but also using QQ occasionally explicitly spoke of the core of social media channel is "everyone around me is using it".

> *I have used QQ very loyally before I went to college… Afterwards, I had to use WeChat for various reasons. Because I think the core of social media channel is that everyone is using it. If people around me all use different [platforms], then I absolutely do not need to use it. So I turned to WeChat. But I have a very good friend who has been using QQ till now. So I log in QQ every day to see if he talked to me. But that's it. I never sent anything on Qzone.* (FG08JH, Male)

According to the two interviews, it appears that there is a considerable overlap between participants' online and offline network of social ties on WeChat and QQ, or it also might be said that WeChat and QQ essentially tap onto existing offline interpersonal relationships. It relates to the previous argument that the participants have started to use WeChat since entering the college, which explains that why most of the contacts on WeChat are the acquaintances or friends they knew in universities. And another reason is due to the closed and private features of the two sites. Either on

WeChat or QQ, user cannot follow another user's account without his/her authentication. Several empirical studies have made the similar observations. For example, Boyd (2008) found that youths primarily use social network sites to interact with known friends. Facebook, as a SNS in which online and offline connections are closely coupled, was used by adults to post personal information and status updates to their high school friends and other acquaintances they knew in college (Ellison et al., 2007).

However, although there is a coincidence of online and offline interpersonal networks on both WeChat and QQ, a notable distinction in interpersonal network between the two platforms has been revealed. In sum, a personal network of QQ and WeChat is built on "previous friends" and "current friends"[78]. To be more specific, the majority of the participants I interviewed reported that they interact primarily with junior-senior high school friends on QQ, while maintain their current interpersonal relationships[79] on WeChat. A male participant recalled his experiences of how he transited from QQ to WeChat later on after attending university.

> "*Actually, I used QQ a little bit more when I was freshmen, because social groups of high school are mainly on QQ. I have not ever used WeChat when I was in high school. However, after entering college, QQ has gradually faded out. Now the social groups are mainly composed of friends I met after I went to college, so now I am using WeChat more often.*" (FG02CW, Male)

In this case, the participant attributed the transition of SNS platforms to the changes in his offline social relationships after going to college. As QQ has been replaced by WeChat, his focuses have shifted to acquaintances and friends knew in college or maybe vice versa. Although many high

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[78] The exact words that participants used in the interview are "老朋友" and "新朋友" in Chinese.
[79] Friends, acquaintances, or colleagues they have known at college or during internships.

school friends have "faded out" of their present life, some participants spoke of the reason that they continue to use QQ is to get in touch with their previous friends as described previously. With regard to the triggers of the transition from QQ to WeChat, participants have discussed in an interactive group setting as follows.

FG08JH (male): People in our university barely use QQ.

FG04GR (male): Yes, what I said is our university.

FG08JH (male): Are you still using QQ alone?

FG04GR (male): Uh…Right. From what I have seen, people who are using QQ now have used QQ very often in high school.

FG05WY (female): In my opinion, that depends on the climate (氛围) of each university. For example, in our university, we basically use WeChat for everything. So you can only rely on WeChat to work [in student organization] and communicate [with others]. It might be that [the social circle of] QQ is composed of previous friends. But like my friend who is at Z University[80], I never saw anything he had sent on his WeChat Moments. Even if I chat with him on WeChat, his reply has a long delay. But you can always find him on QQ. I asked him if the students in his university do not use WeChat. He said that we do not use WeChat, only QQ. This may have something to do with the climate, or entire habit of each university.

In above dialogue, other participants also admitted that compare to QQ, WeChat has occupied a dominant position in almost multi-dimension of their university campus life. FG02CW concluded from his experience that using QQ or WeChat varies according to each university's "climate". To

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[80] Pseudonym is used. Z University is located in Anhui province.

support this view, he gave an example of his friend who is enrolled in a university of Hefei, the capital of Anhui province. He attributed using different SNS platforms for social contact to the different climate of each university, without extending the phenomena to the geographical distinctions. In fact, the participant did not notice that Z University is not located in another city when he was telling the example. Another participant went on to talk about his views on the distinctions in the using of QQ and WeChat.

> *I feel that some of my high school classmates have not use QQ, but some of them are very happy to use. I think girls are still using QQ, basically. Then I think maybe... It may not be too objective... I think that except major cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, my former classmates [who is going to universities] in small cities are using QQ more. But this is only a subjective feeling, not necessarily correct.* (FG06ZH, male)

In this case, the participant considered that gender and demographical distinctions might be responsible for the differences in usage habits through observations based on his personal experiences. The participant FG04GR further inserted his general observations on this phenomenon after recalling his personal experiences.

> *I want to add an observation that I made. I used QQ before, but I am not using it now. Just one month after entering university, I found that basically everyone was using WeChat, so I turned to WeChat and did not use QQ anymore. But I found that once a person insisted on using QQ for the first month, he/she would continue to use QQ later. I have observed that many of my classmates are like this. He/she was*

using QQ for the first few months of college, and then he will always use it. The

"usage inertial" (使用惯性 in Chinese) is quite large. (FG04GR, male)

This participant noticed that entering university is a turning point from using QQ to WeChat, though WeChat was released as early as 2011[81] when they were in high school. In addition, he mentioned that the "inertial" will considerably sustain the usage of the certain platform. In this context, inertial is supposed to refer to that once the interpersonal relations have been established on a platform, unless tremendous changes and alternations happened to individuals' personal networks or environment, it seems that they are unlikely to transfer their established interpersonal relationships to other platforms, since it is costly and goes against the core of social media channel, that is "everyone around me is using it". However, that raises a question, if they only need to expand interpersonal relationship network to acquaintances who they have known in university, why not continue to use QQ but turn to WeChat? Understanding how participant thought of WeChat before using it will help answer this question. A participant who has only used QQ in middle school shared his perception on WeChat.

I have used QQ very loyally before going to college. I 'looked down on' WeChat at

that time, because only the elderly have using it. Indeed, soon after WeChat was

launched, only the middle-aged people used it. So at that time, WeChat was very

'looked down upon' [by young people]. (FG08JH, male)

FG22JZ further explained that the reason for starting to use WeChat is that after entering the university, the needs of communicating with professors and instructors were emerged, and most of them are using WeChat.

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[81] Participants entered university in 2013~2017.

After attending university, [we need to have] more contact with adults, for instance,

to contact with counsellors of Communist Youth League Committees, also to

communicate with professors or instructors. Most of the adults are using WeChat,

so it plays a transitional role. (FG22JZ, male)

Combing his views with the response of FG08JH, it is conceivable that in addition to peer influences, beginning to integrate into the adult world is also one of the primary reasons that they started to use WeChat, which is not surprisingly because unlike QQ[82], WeChat was launched initially as a smartphone-based application in 2011, middle-aged people with relatively stable financial foundation were the main consumers of smart phones at that time.

Overall, the vast majority of participants use WeChat and QQ simultaneously for social connection. In regard to social network, there is a large degree of overlap between offline and online interpersonal relationships on either WeChat or QQ. However, a notable distinction in interpersonal networks between the two platforms was found. Specifically, WeChat is used for developing and maintaining relationships especially with current acquaintances, colleagues, and friends they knew after entering the universities. However on the contrary, social relationships on QQ primarily built on previous friends of participants, such as junior-senior high school friends.

According to *WeChat User and Business Ecosystem Report 2017* that was released by China Tech Insights[83], 57.2% of respondents reported that their recent new WeChat contacts are mostly work-related, while the proportion of respondents who answered that their newly added contacts are families or friends is rarely 20%. As WeChat has achieved a rapid widespread over past seven years,

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[82] QQ is developed based on both computer and smartphone.
[83] China Tech Insights (2017), WeChat User & Business Ecosystem Report 2017, (https://technode.com/2017/04/24/wechat-user-business-ecosystem-report-2017/ Retrieved on August 17, 2018)

users have established stable and close interpersonal networks on WeChat. Therefore, the report argues that relationship ties on WeChat have extended from strong ties among families and friends to weaker ties build upon career networks. Furthermore, most of the participants have experienced a transition from QQ to WeChat, but few of them are still using QQ occasionally. The majority of the participants acknowledged that the primary reason that they have started to use WeChat is because professors and instructors on campus, or other adult colleagues in internship work place are using WeChat.

To summarize, the underlying reasons for transferring from QQ to WeChat ought to be manifold, for instance, the services that WeChat provides is not confined to social networking, but also Official Accounts, Mini Programs, Mobile Payment, and so on. As far as we can tell from the above cases, there are two primary reasons that triggered their usage of WeChat. One is the climate change resulted from the new environment, and another is the need of integration into the adult world which is composed of professors, instructors, or colleagues in internship employment. Beyond that, there is no gainsaying the fact that QQ still possesses a large amount of users. After all, it was almost the only computer-based instant messenger that was so widely used in China since 1999. As some participants mentioned, through observations based on their experiences, some participants believed that the QQ or WeChat, which software to use depends on gender, region, or university.

Notably, considering that the networks of WeChat and QQ are comprised of loose acquaintances and intimate friends respectively, it is expected that the expression behaviors on these two kinds of platforms are different. Also, it seems plausible that the impacts of messages posted by different people on different sites on individuals are not in the same league.

4.5.3 Classification 2: information seeking motivation

Given that the tendency toward homogeneity in social networks is well proved (Ogawa et al. 2014), it is thus suggested that when news/information consumers encounter the choice of massive

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information, one exceedingly effective way to decide what to pay attention to is through peer recommendations (Beam, 2014; Mutz and Young, 2011; Turcotte et al., 2015) which have considerable potential to polarize people's information environment by decreasing exposure to ideologically diverse and counter-attitudinal contents. Based on this argument, we can thus expect that homogeneity of social network hinders the exposure to counter-attitudinal contents. Furthermore, other studies suggested that online networks are likely to be much larger and include a considerable number of "friends" who are merely "loose acquaintance" even non-acquainted users that plays significant roles in information dissemination as well (Mutz and Young, 2011; Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2011). Therefore, in the light of the above discussion, this subsection aims at depicting the distinctions of peers' recommendations and non-acquainted users' recommendation in participant's gratification of information seeking on different platforms.

In addition to social connection gratification, the findings of FGD indicate that the need of information seeking predominantly motivated participants to use the particular sites including Sina Weibo and WeChat. Previous research argued that information seeking motivation stems from people's desire to deepen understanding and knowledge of one's self, others, and the world (Shao, 2009). According to the thematic analysis, information seeking gratifications is mainly consisting of (1) searching for trending news or hot issues and (2) understanding other people's views. In most cases, these two gratifications coexist and occur in succession. Furthermore, there is a distinction between male and female participants in terms of platforms. In general, I found that male participants possess stronger motivations of obtaining a wide range of trending news and information in relation to social issues, as well as other people's views on these issues via WeChat Moments. The majority of male participants recounted that they primarily acquire news shared by other contacts on WeChat Moments. For example, a participant who learns about recent news and other people's views on the topical issues via WeChat Moments noted:

If there is any hot news, in most cases, other people will post it on WeChat

Moments. I can learn about the recent news directly from the Moments, which can

save my searching costs; that is to say, if there is an incident that caused intense

reactions and discussions, I can see how other people were thinking about it on

Moments without having to search relevant information online by myself. This is a

merit of using WeChat. (FG04GR, male)

Consistent with the findings of previous studies, the participant expressed his trust in the news his peers posted on WeChat Moments. Along with trust in media content, media trust has been conceptualized in other ways, including trust in media ownership and trust in those delivering the news (Williams, 2012). Considering that public trust in not only traditional news outlets but also official accounts of news agencies with strong official color is declining, conceptualizing individual's media trust is necessary for a number of reasons. In this case, the participant deemed that WeChat Moments is a "cost saving" channel to comprehend public issues that aroused heated discussions among his peers without spending more energy on searching other relevant information online by himself. By saying this, the participant indirectly implied that peers' news recommendations on WeChat Moments did not facilitate his further news-seeking behaviors.

Most of the previous studies on media trust and information seeking found a close link between peer's news recommendation, news trust, and further news seeking behaviors. For instance, the results of Pan and Chiou's (2011) work indicated that online messages are perceived as credible when they are posted by those with whom readers have close social relationships. Similarly, Turcotte et al. (2015) found that news stories recommended by respondents' real-life Facebook friends advance the levels of media trust and provoke the desires for following more news from that particular media outlet. However, an observation which can be made through the narratives of FG04GR is that in the network that is consisting of real-life acquaintances and friends, although the

participant considered that peer recommended information are credible, his trust in the messages does not favor to his further information seeking behaviors. The inconsistent findings with the previous studies were repeatedly verified by interviews with other participants. Very similarly, another male participant believed that through WeChat Moments, he can get news about different fields or aspects.

> *In fact, I feel that Moments has a great potential. Now I basically get news through Moments, Official Accounts, and private chat on WeChat. I found that although we are in the same university, we are interested in a variety of topics. For example, someone reposted news about something new has been found in the chemistry community, or someone reposted news relating to politics or Standing Committee. This is quite interesting. Because everyone's foci are different, I can get different news from different people.* (FG06ZHR)

In the above cases, WeChat Moments is admitted by participants as an efficient and credible platform for acquiring news, as well as understanding how their peers' viewpoints and opinions on the social issues. Although well-documented association between news credibility and attitudinal trust and relevant information-seeking behavior is confirmed by previous research, in the above two cases, information recommendation strong-tied real-life friends did not promote participants' further relevant news-seeking behaviors, albeit either of the participants considered that the contents posted on Moments by their peers are useful and trustworthy. Most of studies adopt two-step flow of communication model (Lazarsfeld, Berelsen, & Gaudet, 1944) to address the mediator role of opinion leaders are playing on SNS in transmitting news content from news outlet to individuals. While on SNS that taps onto acquaintance community, individuals often rely on friends for product recommendations (Forbes & Vespoli, 2013). The two-step flow model is useful to examine the

effects of news outlets and recommendation of opinion leaders on recipients, but it does not account for explaining the recipients' underlying behaviors.

In this case, to understand why the influences of peer recommendation on WeChat Moments do not promote participants' information-seeking behavior, effort-based theories are commonly to be identified. Several major theories in sociology and psychology related to information seeking have been summarized by Case (2007), including principle of least effort, uses and gratifications, sense making, media use as social action, play and entertainment theory, and information load. These theories are elaborated into "effort for usage" (i.e., principle of least effort and information overload) and "usage motivation for accessing the information" (i.e., uses and gratifications, sense making, media use as social action, and play and entertainment theory) by Liang, Lai, and Ku (2006).

Principle of least effort theory which was initially coined by Zipf in 1949 demonstrates that "each individual will adopt a course of action that will involve the least average work from the person". More specifically, the effort needed by a user to seek relevant information will be curtailed by precise and credible content recommendation (Liang, Lai, & Ku, 2006). Hence, it is natural to infer that users' information seeking behavior will stop as soon as they find the recommended contents are accurate and credible. From the above discussion, we can conclude that in the case of WeChat, given its private and exclusive feature, recipients and producers are bound up by trusted relationships thus resulting in high level of trust in information posted on WeChat Moments. Then, because participants are satisfied with accuracy and trustworthiness of the contents provided by their peers, they incline to stop seeking further relevant information. Otherwise, in accordance with this argument, if users cast doubt on the news credibility, they might want to seek more relevant information to fill the information gap so that they can verify the authenticity of received information.

Under this assumption, this study thus reached a conclusion in line with Zhang et al. (2016). That is, on an open and public SNS, such as Sina Weibo, users will become overwhelmed by the

excessive content generated by the large number of unidentified users. On the contrary to the high level of media trust in messages posted on WeChat Moments, Sina Weibo users should invest more energy to distinguish credible information from excessive contents posted by the open and public users. To testify this inference, I will quote the narratives of participants who mentioned that he/she are motivated by the needs of information seeking to use Sina Weibo, which is referred to as a stranger community (Shu et al., 2017) that builds on loose interpersonal relationships among followers and followings. For example, a participant who mainly uses Weibo to acquire news noted:

I also use Weibo to follow the news, because Weibo has the feature of 'hot search list'. Besides, on Weibo, it is possible to keep an ear to the opinions from various aspects. (FG24LW, male)

In this case, the participant mentioned that the feature of hot search list assists his news seeking behavior. Real-time Weibo hot search list represents the most heated news that is the most frequently searched by users simultaneously on Sina Weibo. Real-time search hotspots are updated every ten minutes. The search lists were simply ordered by total searches in the past. However, from 2018, in order to "more fully reflect users' attentions and behaviors of participation to the hotspots"[84], the ordering rules for hot search list were changed. According to the new rules, the search lists are ranked by the weighting of three parameters: popularity of searching, topical factor, and interactional factor[85]. It appears that Weibo hot search list plays a vital role in telling users what to think about and what the majority of users pay attention to. Therefore, for deep understanding, further analysis

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[84] Weibo Hot Search List (March 15, 2018), (https://m.weibo.cn/status/4217902854416855?wm=3333_2001&from=1086093010&sourcetype=weixin&featurecode=newtitle Retrieved on August 18, 2018).
[85] The method to count the popularity index is: popularity of searching * topical factor * interactional factor.

on the hot search list is significant. Furthermore, another participant stated that he mainly acquires news from the recommendations posted by those he is following.

"Sina Weibo is my window for understanding the world. I gradually found that WeChat Moments is too narrow. What you see is not what it really is, because it is limited to the channel. Indeed, Sina Weibo is very narrow as well. But it is slightly better than WeChat. I learn about news or current events through Weibo…But I rarely look at hot search list, I only look at those people I am following." (FG08JH, male)

Then the moderator asked FG08Jh for further information about what kind of users he is following on Sina Weibo. As a consequence, I found that the categories of the accounts he is following are closely related to his motivations of using Sina Weibo. To engage with news and current events, he is following some micro-bloggers of social commentary who "essentially have the similar opinions as me" on Weibo. Although he does not know those producers personally, their news recommendations are perceived credible due to the attitudinal trust in those producers who delivering news and opinions. This case is a little bit identical to WeChat Moments. According to the least effort theory, the satisfactory to the content which is endorsed by trustworthy producer will not facilitate information-seeking behavior. However, what is notable is that trust in contents does not equal to approval to it. In other words, recipients may echo to or denounce the message itself and the idea what the message conveys.

Indeed, some participants acknowledged that opinions around the matter are even more attractive to users' attentions than the matter itself. For instance, FG05WY noted that "*Sometimes, what we are concerned is not the incident itself, but the comments on it*". Furthermore, the participants also emphasized that he can learn about alternative viewpoints on Weibo, which implies

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that the formation of attitudes is somewhat mainly obtained by commenting on the current events made by those with whom the users are following. Yet in terms of the diversity on Weibo, a participant pointed out that users should be wise to distinguish between credible and incredible news contents.

[I get news by browsing] Sina Weibo. But I think that there is a problem with getting news on Weibo, that is, to a great extent, [you] should rely on your ability of judgement [to distinguish which news is credible and which is not]. Because as far as I am concerned, those official accounts on Weibo have their own stances. In fact, sometimes it is obviously that they are trying to guide public opinion by slandering a certain party. (FG01YY, female)

From the above case, it is evident that the participant held a cautious view that the more people are exposed to a complex and diverse information environment such as on Weibo, the more they need to be able to distinguish between objective facts and distort facts. On the contrary to the participants who primarily get news on WeChat, users who are exposed to an environment of diverse viewpoints on Weibo are unsatisfactory with credibility of news. Credibility or trust plays a critical role in ensuring a satisfactory and expected transaction outcome (Gefen et al., 2003), and it relates to sequent information-seeking behaviors (e.g., Turcotte et al., 2015). Previous research has categorized trust into cognitive trust and emotional trust. Cognitive trust which refers to a customer's confidence or willingness to rely on the target's competence and reliability (Rempel et al., 1985) arises from a rational choice by the trustor (Choi & Lee, 2016). Emotional trust is categorized by feelings of security and by perceived relationship strength (Choi & Lee, 2016).

A few empirical studies have provided evidences that online message are cognitively perceived as credible when they are posted by those with whom the recipient has a close relationship (Dou et

al., 2013; Pan & Chiou, 2011). Conversely, on open SNS, since message producers are unidentified in most instances, recipients need to spend more efforts seeking suitable and accurate information which fit their interests (Choi & Lee, 2016). As discussed previously, on Weibo, users are more likely to seek relevant information to fill the information gap so that they can verify the authenticity. And not only that, as several participants mentioned, when getting news on Weibo, she must spend more efforts to deciding whether the news and comment are neutral or represent a latent stance by slandering another party. In recent research, a willingness of individuals to engage with other perspectives has been revealed (e.g., Beam, 2014; Garrett, 2009).

Although most of the literatures are pessimistic about exposure to counter-attitudinal information environment on SNSs by arguing that peer information recommendation has considerable potential to polarize people's information environment by decreasing exposure to ideologically diverse and counter-attitudinal contents. In so far as I have discussed in this section, receiving information in relation to current events and opinions of other people on open and public SNSs which provide individuals the possibilities to choose media channels and contents more actively may promote further information-seeking behaviors.

4.5.4 Classification 3: entertainment motivation

Furthermore, the results indicate that the need of entertainment also motivated participants to use the particular SNS. Compared to information seeking, entertainment may be a more salient motive for media use (Rafaeli, 1986). I found that entertainment motivation is primarily consisting of (1) searching and sharing information about hobbies and interests and (2) following the status updates or gossips of celebrities. It is obvious that male and female participants use different sites to meet their entertainment need. Additionally, most of the female participants mentioned they use Sina Weibo for following the status updates of celebrities and idols, whereas none of the male participants spoke of this need. According to the interviews, Sina Weibo is the most frequently mentioned SNS

by participants for reading and sharing their hobbies and interests-related information. For instance, a female participant noted as below.

"I like to watch Anime… and some 'Dōjin' or derivative works of anime. 'Taitai' (太太 in Chinese)[86] usually send their works on Sina Weibo. And another function of Weibo is going after idols. My idol is a Japanese 'Utaite ('歌い手' or '歌ってみた' in Japanese)'. He certainly does not use Weibo. He just tweets on Twitter. It is not convenient for us to connect to Twitter. When the information is not very timely, Weibo users those who are in Japan will forward his tweets on Weibo, and sometimes will translate to Chinese language. Through these translated Weibo, I can understand more [about him]" (FG03CT, female)

In this case, the participant mentioned that the needs of reading Dōjin works of her interested manga and acquiring the translated messages posted by her idol on Twitter have motivated her to use Sina Weibo. In addition, since Twitter was unavailable to access in China from June 2009, Sina Weibo alternatively serves as a bridge connecting the contents and consumers through 'carrier' ("搬运主" in Chinese) on Sina Weibo. In fact, other participants also referred to the role of the 'carrier' in assisting users to cross over space, language, and censorship barriers. For example, in terms of the use of Sina Weibo, a female participant noted:

"I use Weibo for two main purposes. On the one hand, I like pet very much, so I am following a number of pet micro-bloggers. On the other hand, because the use of Twitter is not very convenient, it is also inconvenient to search and look at the

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[86] Taitai (太太) is a word used in two-dimensional world by amateurs of ACG. It generally refers to people who are very good at painting or costume playing.

photos of my idol. 'Carriers' on Weibo will take photos from Twitter."(FG20LS,

female)

As above cases indicated, female participants are more likely to use Sina Weibo to fulfill the

recreational needs, such as following the status updates of celebrities, searching and sharing the

information about their interests, and looking for people who have the similar hobbies or interests.

Compared to other platforms, the open and public features of Sina Weibo make it easier to search the

recreational information they are interested in. Furthermore, Sina Weibo also serves as an alternative

of Twitter which is inaccessible by Chinese users to connect consumers to contents through

'carriers'.

In addition to Weibo, several participants mentioned that they also use Douban, Baidu Tieba,

Hupu, Bilibili, and Lofer to satisfy the entertainment gratification. According to *the 41th Statistical*

Report on Internet Development, as of December 2017, Douban is ranked in the fifth place with 12.8%

of usage rate, coming after WeChat Moments (87.3%), Qzone (64.4%), Weibo (40.9%), and Zhihu

(14.6%). Some participants I interviewed reported that they sometimes use Douban primarily for

rating films, music, or books they consumed recently. Douban[87] is a comprehensive SNS site which

assembles online social function (e.g., Tongcheng, Xiaozu, Youlin), expressive function (e.g., Wodu,

Wokan, Woting, Riji), and recreational function (e.g., Dushu, Yinyue, Dianying, FM). According to

the interviews, none of the participants referred to social and expressive functions. For example, a

female participant (FG14JQ, female) who likes watching movies mentioned that sometimes she rates

the movies that she has watched in Douban and also writes film review in Qzone. The moderator

asked whether she had posted film reviews in Douban, she said she has never posted anything on it.

Another male participant noted that "*I once have tried to use Douban as an alternative of Weibo. But*

its interface is so unfriendly. Douban is so hard to use. So I gave up soon" (FG08JH, male). Tieba,

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[87] https://www.douban.com/

which is arguable the largest Chinese online communities was launched by search the engine company, Baidu, in 2003. As of June 2018, there are more than 20 million forums[88]. The forums are about entertainment profession, television program, drama, movie, game, idols, sports, and so forth[89]. The majority of the forums are created by users. Baidu Tieba is referred to as "an interactive platform that integrates like-minded people based on interests"[90]. Only two participants reported that they use Baidu Tieba for entertainment motivation. For instance, a participant whose interest includes anime and movies said:

"I personally like watching anime or movies. In most cases, the sources are uploaded in Tieba. Moreover, since there are no such 'high-end' users on Tieba as on Zhihu, there will be many weird and silly remarks. When I feel unhappy, reading the comments will cheer me up."(FG05WY, female)

In this case, the participant remarked that she uses Tieba for looking for the sources relevant to her interests. As far as the participant concerned, compared to Zhihu users, Tieba users are more, as she put it, 'low-end'. Another male participant (FG15ZR, male) reported that he use Tieba basically for the similar motivations to FG05WY. Furthermore, according to the interviews with 24 university students, a site is merely used by male participants, that is Hupu. It integrates sports news and online community, namely Hupu Buxingjie (Hupu Pedestrian Street). A participant noted that his usage motivation of Hupu is twofold.

"I use Hupu to watch basketball game. Because sports fans tend to be men, male chauvinists ("直男" in Chinese), Hupu users are basically male chauvinists. In

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88 https://tieba.baidu.com/index.html
89 http://tieba.baidu.com/f/index/forumclass
90 https://tieba.baidu.com/index.html?traceid=

addition to watching basketball games, Hupu has another function, that is, you can understand Chinese male chauvinists' opinions on current hot issues."(FG06ZH, male)

To summarize, due to the distinctions in interests between male and female, SNSs that used for satisfying entertainment gratifications vary according to gender to a large degree. In general, Sina Weibo is the most widely used sites in particular by female participants. It is primarily used for both searching and sharing interest-related information and following the status updates or gossips of celebrities. In terms of the former motivation, especially for those who are following foreign celebrities, as an alternative of Twitter, Sina Weibo acts as a bridge connecting consumers and contents. As a consequence, the existence of 'carrier' on Weibo thus facilitates participants' motivations of using Sina Weibo for accessing timely and translated information of their idols. Other comprehensive sites including Douban, Baidu Tieba, Hupu, Bilibili, and Lofter are also used for recreational needs by a few participants.

Based on the cases described above, it is reasonable to conclude that individual chooses a specific entertainment type SNS primarily due to irreplaceability of sources/contents, theme domain. Additionally, interface is also taken into account when other competitors (featuring the same function) exist (e.g., Weibo and Douban). It is apparently that the choice of a particular site hinges on individual's interests or hobbies, for instance, sports fan uses Hupu for reading sports news or watching broadcast live, or movie-lover uses Douban for rating or searching movies. Furthermore, according to the interviews, most of the participants use no more than two sites for recreational needs.

It is noted that few of the participants mentioned that the number of their real-life friends is a consideration of choosing a specific platform. In terms of this point, Kraut et al. (1998) argued that the Internet takes users away from developing and reinforcing real-world friendship, which resulting

in reduction of real-life friendship quality and well-being because SNS relationships begins with strangers that are less beneficial than real-world relationships, and consequently reduce time that spend with existing relationships. However, on the other hand, recent studies have found that online friendships on SNSs can also promote real-life friendship quality so that increase the user's well-being while decrease depressive symptoms (e.g., Morgan & Cotton, 2003; Valkenburg & Peter, 2007).

Furthermore, with respect to the subsequent outcome of using SNSs for entertainment motivation, Wang et al.'s (2014) work provided empirical evidences to validate that although SNS usage for entertainment is not related to well-being, social type SNS use is positively related to user's well-being. Overall, interviews with 24 Chinese university students indicate that the majority of the participants consume the products of Japanese traditional culture or popular culture for entertainment motivations more or less. Based on the analyses on FGD, Figure 4.7 illustrates the major themes concerning Japan-related information and media contents that interest to the participants. It is evident that there is a difference between male and female participants. As delineated in the figure, male participants are more inclined to consume Japanese traditional culture on SNSs for entertainment. On the contrary, in so far as I have discussed, female participants showed great interests to searching information about Japanese popular culture and chasing pop stars on SNSs[91]. The thing they have in common points to the enjoyment of these media contents and thus resulting in very positive images of Japan.

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[91] As I mentioned previously, some of them rely on the "carriers" on Sina Weibo to get translated messages that posted by their interested idols on Twitter or Instagram.

Figure 4.7 Major themes concerning japan-related information contents consumed for entertainment motivation
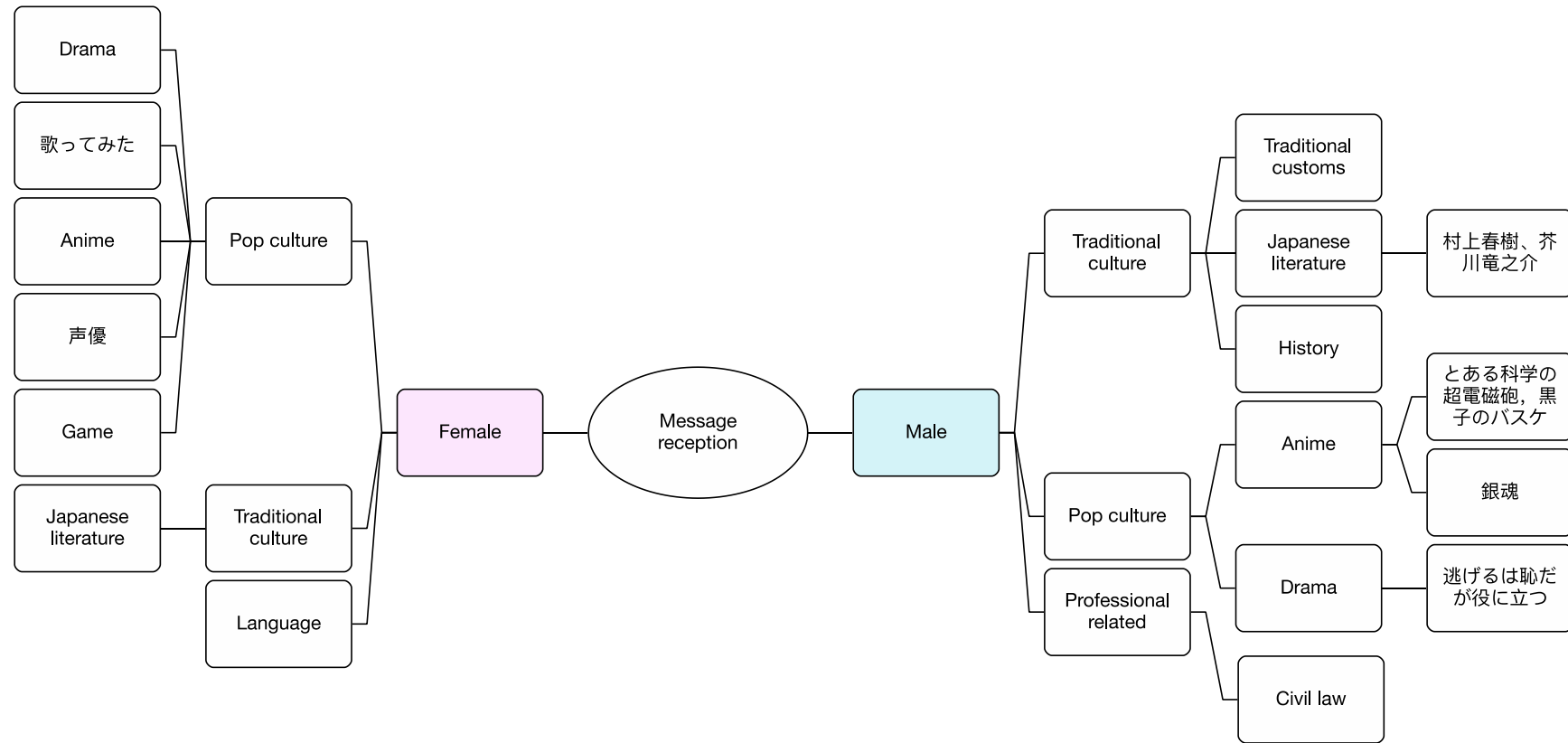
Source: Created by the author.

4.5.5 Classification 4: self-expression motivation

Finally, interviews with university students revealed that they are motivated to use Sina Weibo and WeChat primarily for expression. The psychological needs that motivated and sustained the participants to engage with these two platforms are expressing one's feelings and grumbling about the circumstances. With respect to the level of self-expression on SNS, there is a notable distinction between male and female participants. The differences over perception and use of social media between male and female have been revealed by previous works as well. For example, it has been validated that female users discuss their personal life more frequently on blog (Schler et al., 2006), and more likely to view and share photos, keep in touch with friends, and post status updates on Facebook (Joinson, 2008). The findings of this study are generally in line with these extent studies. It found that female participants are more likely to post their personal life and reveal their emotions on SNSs, as opposed to male participants. However, to my surprise, both male and female participants noted that they tend to not express their thoughts, opinions, and emotions on WeChat Moments. Only one female participant stated that she is willing to post on WeChat Moments under certain circumstance. She stated, "*When I feel that I have done a very good job, I will post a message on WeChat Moment to show off*" (FG07WF, Female). After a follow-up question for further details on the motivations to express on WeChat Moments, she added, "*Also, I will post on Moments when I am very pleased*". Then she continued to describe how she feels anxiety and depressed if she found that no one has given a 'Like' to her postings.

> *I am very concerned about the views from the outside world. For example, if there is only a few 'Likes', I will be made to feel that I have done something terrible. So when I send a post on Moments, I might be more careful than on Weibo. If my posting was not 'Liked' by anyone, I will delete it.* (FG07WF, Female)

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On the basis of FG07WF's narratives, we can see that she explicitly expressed her concerns about how others might look at her, and interpret her messages posted on WeChat Moments. Especially, she said that she usually gives a more careful consideration on constructing messages that is being sent on WeChat which is referred to as an "acquaintance community" than in "stranger community" [92] of Sina Weibo. In fact, similar to her, other participants also express similar misgivings even depressions about not getting 'Likes' from or being negated by their WeChat contacts. For example, a female participant acknowledged that she will consider well over before she post messages in Moments.

"I will be thinking about whether this message will be 'Liked' by others before posting a message on Moments. So basically, if today I met something interesting or I went to party with friends, I will definitely post a message [on WeChat]. And I found that photos are likely to get more 'Likes'. For example, during the holidays, I went on a trip to Jiuzhaigou with classmate. I sent a lot of photos, including selfies and landscape photos. Those days were the time when my Moments got the most 'Likes' in my entire life up to now. There was a post with more than one hundred 'Likes'. It is a lot for me. But [I found that] if I update my status every day, 'Likes' will become less and less, because everyone is tired of you. So in order to control the posting frequency, I sent message every few days. Basically, every time I can get fifty to sixty 'Likes', which makes me very happy." (FG01YY, female)

In this case, in addition to the thorough consideration before posting on WeChat Moments, the participant also shared her experience of how to get more 'Likes', that is keeping the posting

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[92] See Shu et al. (2017) for discussions of acquaintance and stranger community.

frequency. In addition, she gave some examples about in what cases she will produce a message. All of these examples she gave relate to her campus life. Although she noted that she cares the interactions with other people a lot, she is not willing to disclose her opinions, thoughts, moods, or emotions, which is arguably the best way to form and develop interpersonal relationships on Internet[93] (Canary, Cody, & Manusov; 2008; Cho, 2007; Ellion, Heino, & Cibbs, 2006). Notably, self-disclosure is different from revealing oneself to strangers on the train or disclosing behavior at a hospital facility, because it is arguably based on familiar ties (Lee, Lee, & Kwon, 2011). In order to understand that why a difference in the level of self-disclosures between WeChat and Sina Weibo is existing, the concept of self-disclosure[94] was adopted to the analysis.

Many researchers have attempted to explore the factors affecting the level of self-disclosure. Taken as a whole, they found that the level of self-disclosures is related to gender differences (e.g., Dindia & Allen, 1992; Rosenfeld, 1979), individual differences (e.g., Cozy, 1973), and individual goals (e.g., Derlega & Allen, 1992; Quattrone & Jones, 1978). In general, the factors that may influence the level of self-disclosures in interpersonal communication can be broadly divided into: structural characteristics factors (e.g., gender, personalities) and motivational factors (e.g., goals, motivations). Notably, most of these works are based on non-mediated interpersonal communication. More recently, Cho (2007) investigated the effects of usage motivations (i.e., interpersonal relationships, entertainment, and information) and gender in self-disclosure in adolescents' online chatting. The results indicate that the level of self-disclosures in online chatting is significantly associated with usage motivations, while no significant association is found for gender. To be more specifically, the author argues that the mean of self-disclosure for information motivation was higher than either entertainment or interpersonal relationships motivation. In other words, respondents are

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[93] The discussion on positive relationship between self-disclosure and intimacy is mostly based on the social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Social penetration theory regards self-disclosure as the medium of the relationship development.
[94] Self-disclosure can be simply explained as communicating personal information, thoughts, attitudes, and emotions with other people (e.g., Cho, 2007; Lee et al., 2011; Park & Chung, 2011).

more willing to disclose for getting information. Cho's (2007) findings provide evidence for the proposition of social penetration theory that the level of self-disclosures hinges on the norms of reciprocity (Altman & Taylor, 1973). However, it still remains questionable why the level of self-disclosure is different across platforms. Because the findings of this study indicate that both female and male participants noted that they would rather express their thoughts, opinions, and emotions on Sina Weibo than on WeChat Moments[95].

As previous studies suggested, intimacy in relationship is linked to feeling understood by one's interaction partners and reinforced through disclosing one's thoughts, opinions, and emotions (Reis & Shaver, 1988). In accordance with this argument, the desire of intimate interpersonal relationship and being understood by others will in turn facilitate the self-disclosure (see also Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006). However, given the lower level of self-disclosures on WeChat and higher level of self-disclosure on Sina Weibo, this study argues that intimate relationship hindered individual's self-disclosure rather than promote it in some instances. The reasons could be manifold, for instance, a participant gave an example to explain why she is not willing to express on WeChat.

"For instance, I post some subjective comments and feelings about a BL manga on Weibo. Those people who with the same interest will understand, 'Ok, you think so, I think so', then communicate with each other. But I think in real life, they may not necessarily accept this circle, and then they think this information is annoying, or disgust with my remarks."(FG13SR, female)

In this case, the participant deemed that her interest is a niche and may not be accepted by or even be disgusted by her real-life friends on WeChat. Then the moderator asked her about what kind

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[95] Despite the lower level of expression on WeChat regardless of male and female, compared to male participants, it appears that female participants are more likely to post their personal life on WeChat.

of messages she usually posted on Moments. The participant answered, "*I would like to post some interesting or embarrassing things that I encountered in daily life, or for example, if I went to some three-dimensional activities, such as art exhibitions and so on, I may share with my real-world friends.*" Consistent with the findings described previously, FG13SR primarily sends campus life-related messages on WeChat Moments. Other participants also expressed the similar concerns about other people's disagreements on her opinions or views.

"*I like writing film reviews. I am afraid that if I post on Moments, others may hold different opinions…but there certainly are people who do not agree with me. I just do not want to argue with him/her…But it is interesting to post [film reviews] on Qzone and discuss with friends…I don't want to add anyone whom I know [in real life] on Weibo, unless one or two very close friends. Just don't want to find anyone I know on Weibo.*" (FG14GQ, female)

In these two cases, although both of the participants tend to conceal their opinions or views on WeChat Moments, the needs of expression were not vanished or diminished. In fact, they have vigorously pursued other alternative channels for expressing themselves, such as Qzone and Sina Weibo. As discussed previously, QQ mainly taps onto high school friends, while the network of Sina Weibo is primarily composed of a number of total strangers, some surreal life friends, as well as a few of intimate real-life friends who share the same values and have similar interests with the individual. Although the vast majority of the users who are included in the network of Sina Weibo are not close friends engaging with the participants' present life, the homogeneities in opinions and interests facilitate expression by reducing the concerns about arising arguments with others on some topics. A similar finding also has been obtained in the previous research. Kim, Chung, and Ahn

(2013) have suggested that anonymity enables SNS users to freely express themselves unsuppressed by social prejudice and constrains in face-to-face interactions.

Apart from the above factors, the level of self-disclosure also hinges on each relationship of social exchange in terms of the norm of reciprocity[96] (Cho, 2007; Canary, Cody, & Manusov, 2008). According to this argument, it seems plausible to expect that the getting responses from reviewer will further facilitate discloser to reveal. This expectation was verified by several cases. For instance, a female participant initiatively shared a case of her roommate in free discussion as below.

> *"This reminds me of my roommate. Her Moments is very neat and uniform, posting food or demonstrating her affection. One day she found that only me and another roommate gave 'Likes' to her Moments, then she was very depressed. Eventually, we both no longer gave 'Like' to her postings. She began to 'compel' us to do that. And now, she does not post on Moments anymore."* (FG07WF, female)

Notice from this case that the participant mentioned that her roommate stop posting on Moments after no one gave her feedbacks. Other participants also shared their similar personal experiences. For example, as described in previous subsection, FG01YY (female) noted that her knack for getting more 'Likes' are keeping the frequency of status updates and posting photos instead of verbal messages. FG08JH (male) agreed and added that posting timing is also very crucial to get more 'Likes': "*For example, posting message in the morning, at noon, and at eight p.m., the number of 'Likes' obtained are different.*" According to these responses, the majority of participants stated that they concerned more about how many feedbacks (i.e., "Likes", comments) they can receive before posting messages on Moments than Sina Weibo.

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[96] Reciprocity refers to offering responses that match interaction partner's previous communication (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

Overall, several inspiring observations can be made from the above cases. Homogeneities in values and interests, anonymity condition, and interactions with other users promote individual's disclosure of personal information, thoughts, opinions, and emotions. In the case of WeChat and Sina Weibo, although these three platforms do not adopt real-name policy[97], the real-name system has been implemented gradually from 2004, and then eventually was applied to most online services operating in China[98]. Since June 2017, most network operators are required to collect and verify users' identify when user register accounts. The condition that SNSs users cannot be assured to express their opinions and interact with other people in complete anonymity will inevitably constrain users' expression on SNS. The specific effects of expression and the subsequent outcomes of expression will be discussed in next chapter. Furthermore, getting awards and encouragements (i.e., 'Likes', positive comments) from reviewers will promote further self-disclosure, otherwise, individuals inclined to stop revealing their personal information, thoughts, attitudes, and emotions. Lastly, analyses of this section found a conspicuous difference in the needs of self-expression differences between male and female participants. Although the discussions of this section have focused on three Chinese domestic SNS platforms, the above findings are possible to be extended to other "strong-tied" and "weak-tied" platforms.

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[97] Some SNSs, such as Facebook, adopts real-name policy indicating that "Facebook is a community where everyone uses the name they go by in everyday life. This makes it so that you always know who you're connecting with".

[98] Cyber Security Law of the People's Republic of China (《中国人民共和国网络安全法》) was authorized by Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on November 7, 2016 and implemented on June 1, 2017. Article 24 stipulates that "Where network operators provide network access and domain registration services for users, handle network access formalities for fixed-line or mobile phone users, or provide users with information release services, instant messaging services and other services, they shall require users to provide true identity information when signing agreements with users or confirming the provision of services. If any user fails to provide his/her true identify information, the network operator shall not provide him or her with relevant services." <http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/xinwen/2016-11/07/content_2001605.htm Retrieved on June 18, 2018>.

4.6   EFFECTS OF SNS USAGE MOTIVATIONS ON IMAGES OF JAPAN

To examine the relationships between SNS usage motivations and country image of Japan in the eyes of Chinese university student, Sina Weibo was chosen for this case study for three primary reasons. The blocking of Facebook and Twitter in China since 2009 has resulted in a flourishing social media landscape dominated by Chinese domestic player such as SNSs Renren and Kaixin001, microblogging service Tencent Weibo and Sina Weibo. Among these SNSs, Sina Weibo, as a hybrid of Twitter and Facebook, is the most popular and influential micro-blogging service in China at present, with approximately 376 million monthly active users (MAU) and 165 million daily active users (DAU) as of December 2017[99]. Secondly, the results of preliminary interview suggest that participants are more inclined to express their views on Sina Weibo than other platforms. It is therefore valuable to study why Sina Weibo makes users more willing to express; and Sina Weibo users are more likely be affected by behavior of expression than users of other platform. Thirdly, from Wenzhou train collision in 2011 to RYB Kindergarten child abuse in 2017, Sina Weibo provides users a public sphere to engage in social events and express their view on public issues (Gang & Bandurski, 2010).

Sina Weibo features the same functionality with Twitter in several aspects. Both of them combine microblogging service with social networks. Users can broadcast short messages within a limit of 140 characters or share the links of web sites, and allows receivers to comment on the original post, forward the post. In addition to posting message and commenting on other's posts, Sina Weibo allows users to give a thumb-up to the post, save the post as favorites, share the reviews of movies and music, upload videos, share pictures, insert graphical emotions, and communicate through instant messaging. Figure 4 takes *Global Times* account as an example to indicate the user

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[99] 微博数据中心（2016），《微博用户发展报告 2016》，
(http://data.weibo.com/report/reportDetail?id=346, Retrieved on August 25, 2017)

interface and functionalities of Sina Weibo. Similar to Twitter, user's profile is publicly viewable by not only mutual followers, but also strangers (Zhang & Pentina, 2012). Nevertheless, there are several distinctions between Twitter and Sina Weibo. For instance, on Sina Weibo, users can comment under the message without reposting, while for Twitter, users cannot comment only if forward the original tweet (Guan et al., 2014).

4.6.1 Method

The data for this quantitative analysis are drawn from the questionnaire survey. Before proceeding to questions pertaining to general information of Sina Weibo account, respondents were asked to indicate whether they have Sina Weibo account[100]. Directions then instructed those respondents who had check yes to proceed to the questions relating to detailed information about usage patterns and motivations of Sina Weibo.

4.6.2 Measurement of questionnaire survey

i. *Uses and gratifications*

This study takes Sina Weibo as an example to examine whether SNS usage motivations is affected by demographic factors, use intensity, and image of Japan. Data for this analysis are drawn from undergraduate student survey described in the chapter entitled "Overview of Methodology". Before conducting survey, the transcripts yielded from focus group discussion were analyzed to generate a list of motivations to complement items proposed by previous works. Ultimately, usage motivation was measured with 15 items (partially adapted from Zhang & Pentina, 2012) on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree 5= strongly agree). Roughly 69 percent of respondents (N = 324) stated they have registered Sina Weibo account, and 14.6 percent of whom have more than one account.

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[100] Three choices to the question "Do you register a Sina Weibo account?" were provided: (1) Yes, I have an account; (2) Yes, I have more than one account; (3) No, I do not have an account.

These Sina Weibo users were asked to report to what extent they agree or disagree to the statement beginning with "I use Sina Weibo to_____". The measurement of usage motivations is consisting of four elements: "personal communication", "information seeking", "self-expression", "citizenship behavior", and "emotional release". "Personal communication" element stems from the need to keep in touch with real-life friends, families, to look for users who have the same troubles, and to broaden friendship. "Information seeking" factor reflects the needs to get information, to know other's opinion on current events, and to learn about news they interested. "Self-expression" motivations include recording thoughts and feelings and expressing opinions on Sina Weibo. "Citizenship behaviors" factor reflects user's desires to make social contributions, to join in volunteer activities, and to provide information to others. Ultimately, "emotional release" factor manifests needs to vent, complain, and relieve pressure on Sina Weibo.

ii. *Images of Japan*

The questions for Chinese university student's images of Japan are composed of three main parts: 1) evaluation and recognition of Japan; 2) impression of Japan, and 3) behavioral intentions towards Japan[101]. The variables are measured with five-point ordered Likert-scale. Instead of commonly employed linear regression, this study applied generalized linear regression to the analysis. The reason is that treating ordered variables as continuous data from normal distribution may lead to erroneous conclusions (see Olsson, 1979a, b; Lee, Poon, and Bentler, 1990a, b; Lee, 2007).

4.6.3 Analyses and Results

The objective of this section is to provide analytic procedures and results. First, it presents descriptive statistics and frequency distributions. Next, principal component analysis (PCA) was carried out to examine the underlying latent constructs of Sina Weibo usage motivations. The final

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[101] The measurements are described in detail in Chapter 5.

analysis was based on thirteen items and 334 Sina Weibo users. Then, ANOVA are conducted to determining the effects of use gratifications on Sina Weibo use intensity and image of Japan. This section is organized based on the results pertaining to respondents who currently had at least one Sina Weibo account. The results in terms of respondents who did not have a Sina Weibo account are not included in this analysis.

Descriptive statistics

Figure 4.8 Proportions of Sina Weibo user and nonuser
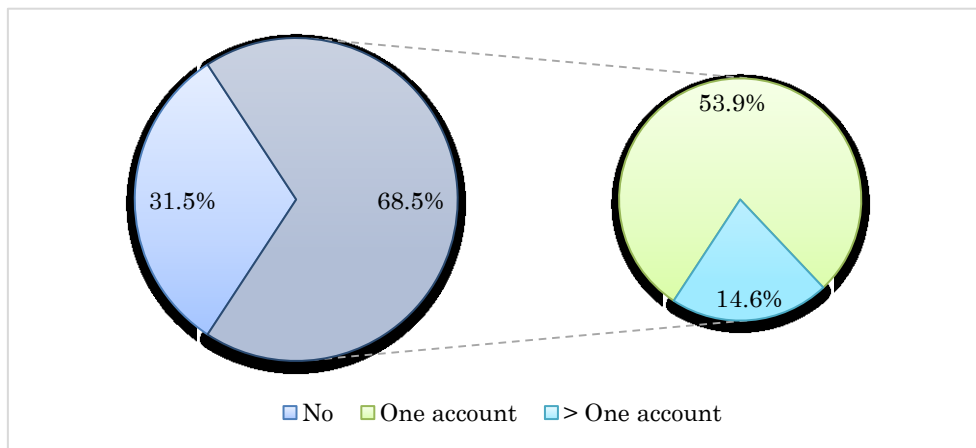
Source: Created by the author.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the response to the question "Do you have Sina Weibo account?" According to the results, 31.5% of the respondents reported that him-or her is not Sina Weibo user. Of those who registered as user, 53.9% of the remainders have one account, and surprisingly, 14.9% of remainders have more than one account. In the following subsection, PCA was performed on Sina Weibo usage motivations.

Table 4.3 provides an item-by-item comparison of SNS usage motivations by Sina Weibo users. There are 76% of the respondents who agree that they use Sina Weibo for "relaxing", followed the motivation of "understanding other people's views on social issues" (72.4 %) and "searching for

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useful information" (69.2%). There are no notable distinctions in the top three usage motivations between male and female users.

Table 4.3 Descriptive statistics of Chinese university student's responses to the questions regarding SNS usage motivations (%)

	1	2	3	4	5
Letting others know how I have been doing	15.9	21.6	27.5	28.4	6.6
Getting in touch with family members	27.2	29.9	28.1	11.7	3.0
Staying in touch with friends	9.9	16.5	33.8	30.5	9.3
Connecting with people who live abroad	24.3	32.0	34.7	7.5	1.5
Understanding other people's view on social issues	3.0	4.8	19.8	46.4	26.0
Searching for useful information	3.3	6.0	21.6	47.6	21.6
Understanding domestic and international situations	5.7	7.2	28.4	42.2	16.2
Sharing information with communities and carrying out regional activities	33.5	25.4	28.1	11.4	1.5
Making social contribution	22.8	25.1	39.5	9.9	2.7
Expanding my network	14.7	18.6	40.7	20.7	5.4
Interacting with celebrities	6.0	8.1	23.1	35.0	27.5
Connecting with others have common hobbies or interests	7.8	9.0	29.6	36.8	16.8
Relaxing	2.1	2.1	19.5	48.8	27.2
N			334		

Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

4.6.3.1 Results and reliability of PCA[102]

After deleting two items due to low loading or cross loading, the PCA calculated four components based on the consideration of scree plot, explaining 69.24 percent of the variance. Table 2 presents the items retained for each factor along with their initial Eigenvalues, percentages of variance explained, and Cronbach's alpha scores. Assumptions of sphericity (Barlett's Test of Sphericity; $p<.001$), and sampling adequacy (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure = .816) was met. The extracted components of usage motivations were labeled "Social interaction" (four items), "Information seeking" (three items), "Community development" (three items), and "Entertainment" (three items), making variance contribution to the construct of 19.490%, 17.514%, 17.493%, and 14.742% respectively. To confirm the validity of variable parings, each of the four components extracted by PCA was subjected to scale reliability analysis to obtain a Cronbach's alpha score level. All four components present relatively higher alpha values.

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[102] In this chapter, instead of FA, the analytical technique of PCA was employed to construct the latent combination of variables. These two methods are very familiar in many ways. While, one of the most fundamental difference between FA and PCA lies in that the logics are different. Specifically, FA is a measurement model of a latent variable; and PCA is a linear combination of variables. Given that the purpose of this step is to create two index variables from a larger set of measured variables, PCA is considered more appropriate for the analysis.

Table 4.4 Factor loadings of measures of motivations for using Sina Weibo after rotation

	Component			
	Social interaction	*Information seeking*	*Community development*	*Entertainment*
Letting others know how I have been doing	0.795			
Getting in touch with family members	0.761			
Staying in touch with friends	0.718			
Connecting with people who live abroad	0.673			
Understanding other people's view on social issues		0.828		
Searching for useful information		0.801		
Understanding domestic and international situations		0.784		
Sharing information with communities and carrying out regional activities			0.869	
Making social contribution			0.843	
Expanding my network			0.592	
Interacting with celebrities				0.760
Connecting with others have common hobbies or interests				0.691
Relaxing				0.662
Eigenvalues	4.555	2.280	1.283	0.883
Percentages of variance explained (%)	19.490	17.514	17.493	14.742
Cronbach's alpha scores	0.717	0.797	0.801	0.661

Note: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = .816

The "social interaction" factor which consists of four items reflects respondent's needs to keep in touch with the family and friends, as well as strangers. It also manifests the needs to earn other people's attention by expressing moods, feelings, and recent life. The "information seeking" factor is consisting of searching useful information, news relating domestic and international situations, as well as understanding other people's (i.e., followings) views or opinions on social issues. It reflects respondent's needs that keeping him-or herself to be informed of current affairs and to be open to useful information, thereby satisfying respondent's utilitarian gratifications of immediate information access. It also reflects respondent's curiosity about others' thoughts and opinions on certain topics. "Community development" factor includes sharing information with communities, making social contribution, and expanding network. This factor demonstrates respondent's desire to involve in regional communities by sharing information or joining in various activities. The fourth factor, "entertainment", indicates that Sina Weibo is used for fulfilling respondent's hedonic gratifications of affection through interacting with celebrities and people who share the same hobbies or interest, or just for relaxing.

4.6.3.2 Analysis of variance (ANOVA)

In the previous step, factor scores were calculated with regression method for each component. To assess the effects of gender on Sina Weibo usage motivations, an ANOVA was conducted on combined factor scores of four motivations scales. Since according to the findings emerged from qualitative research, there is a notable distinction in usage motivations between male and female FGD participants. ANOVA results indicate that the differences in combined Sina Weibo motives scale between the male and female are not statistically significant (F = 2.348, P = 0.54). However, for each motive, the results of between-subjects effects indicate that "Community development" factor significantly differs by gender (F (1, 322) = 4.776, p = .030). Furthermore, univariate ANOVAs were conducted as follow-up test to compare the mean scores between male and female

for "Community development" factor. As a result, men are more likely to devote themselves to regional community on Sina Weibo, such as sharing information with community members, making social contribution, and expanding network than women. Figure 4.8 delineates the mean factor scores of male and female's "Community development" motivation by gender. The rest motivations are seemingly equal important for both male and female users.

Figure 4.9 Mean value of "Community development" motivation by gender (factor score)
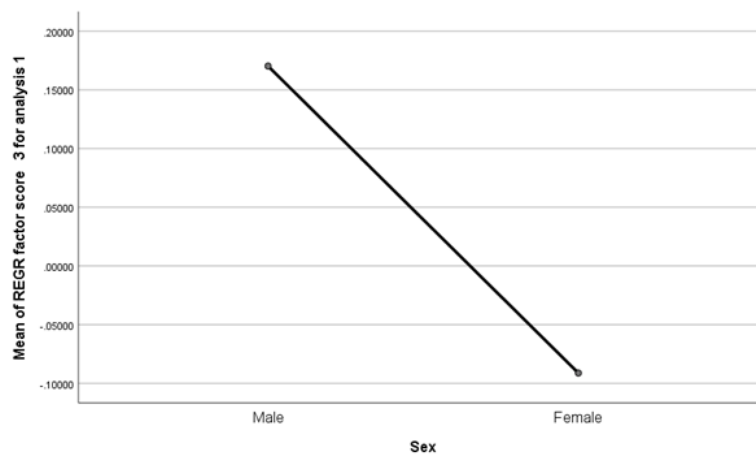
4.6.3.3 Generalized Linear Models (GLMs)

Previous studies on SNS usage motivations (e.g., Orchard et al., 2014; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Zhang & Pentina, 2012) commonly employed multiple regression analysis to predict sequent outcomes without considering the distribution of dependent variable. In this study, ordered logistic regression model was applied to assess the predictive ability of Sina Weibo usage motivations on respondents' images of Japan (including progressiveness evaluation, perceived threat, impression, and behavioral intentions). The GLMs were applied respectively using the items pertaining to Sina Weibo usage motivations as dependent variables. GLM was chosen because it is a feasible way for non-continuous and non-normal distribution data. Ordered logistic regression (Equation 4.1) is

applied to model multiple ordered categories, in particular used for predicting variable that is measured by Likert-scale in social science disciplines.

$$y_i \sim \textbf{Ordered (P)} \qquad \text{Equation 4.1}$$

$$\log(p_k) = \alpha_k - \Phi_i$$

4.6.3.4 Sina Weibo usage motivations on the images of Japan

To select an appropriate analysis method, in addition to presenting histograms of dependent variables, this study conducted Shapiro-Wilk normality test to ascertain the distributions[103]. According to the results of Shapiro-Wilk test on progressiveness and perceived threat[104], the raw data of the two dependent variables are not in line with normal distribution at the 0.05 level (see Figure 4.9)[105]. Furthermore, Figure 4.10 presents Q-Q plots[106] for the two dependent variables to help me to interpret the result of normality tests[107]. As seen from the plots, for both variables, the observed values of both variables are the same as we expect to get from a normal distribution[108]. Consequently, it is appropriate to employ multiple regression (Equation 4.2) analysis to progressiveness and perceived threat[109].

$$D_i \sim \textbf{Normal } (\pmb{\mu_i}, \pmb{\sigma}) \qquad \text{Equation 4.2}$$

$$\mu_i = \alpha + \beta x_i$$

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[103] Shapiro-Wilk normality test was merely conducted on the measurement of progressiveness and perceived threat, given that impression and behavioral intentions were measured using five-point Likert-scale, ordered logistic regression model is thus considered appropriate for cumulative non-continuous data.

[104] Component scores of the two variables converted by PCA were used in this study.

[105] The highly significant p value indicates a deviation from normality.

[106] The normal Q-Q chart plots the values that we would expect to get if the theoretical values are in line with normal distribution against the values actually observed in the data set (Field, Miles, & Field, 2012, p. 182-184).

[107] Empirical researchers suggested that Shapiro-Wilk test should be combined with graphical test, such as histogram, Q-Q plot, because in some instances, it can give a misleading answer.

[108] The observed values almost falling along a straight line means that distribution of the variable is following a normal distribution.

[109] Although Shapiro-Wilk test normality is significant, indicating that both distributions are not normal, the Q-Q plots show that normality is probably a reasonably good approximation.

Figure 4.10 Histogram of progressiveness and perceived threat
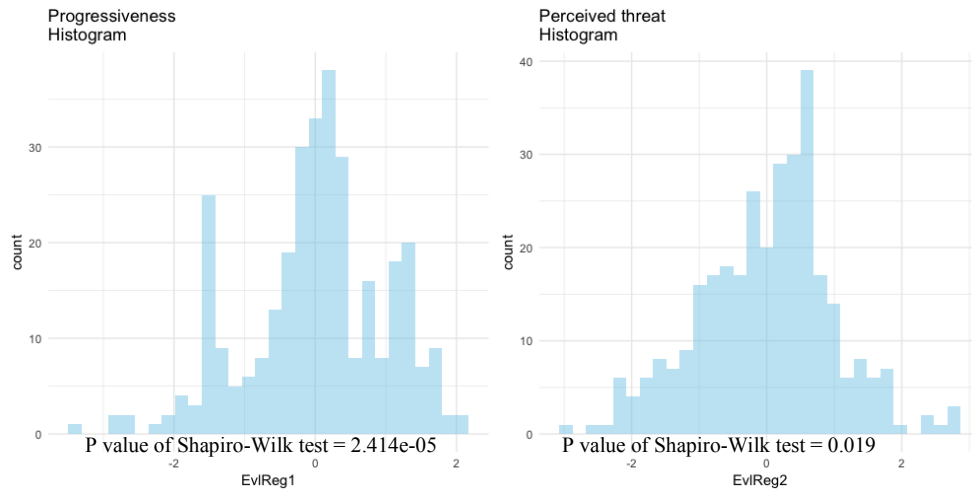
Figure 4.11 Q-Q plot of progressiveness and perceived threat
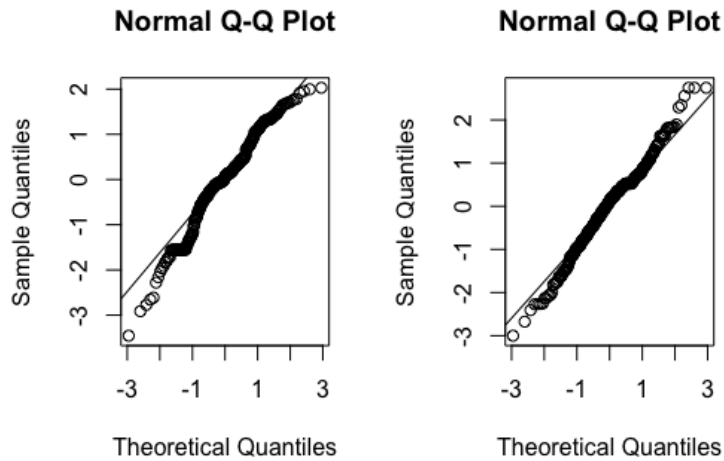
Component score[110] of progressiveness and perceived threat converted by PCA are used in this

study, since it is commonly used to carry out further analysis as a weighted average of a large set of

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[110] Component score is described in terms of the variables measured and the relative importance of them for the factor by Field, Miles, and Field (2012, p.755-758).

original data (Field, Miles, & Field, 2012, p.755-758). Several refined computation methods are commonly used to weight component score, such as regression method, Bartlett method, and Andersen-Rubin method. In this study, component scores were calculated with regression method for each component. With this method, independent variables in the regression equation are the standardized observed values of the items (i.e., latent variables) in the estimated components, and dependent variables are factor scores (DiStefano, Zhu, & Mindrila, 2009).

Progressiveness

As discussed previously, the results of ANOVA indicated that community development component significantly differs by gender ($F (1, 322) = 4.776$, $p = .030$). Therefore, interaction effect of gender and community development will be put into the regression models, and then apply Akaike information criterion (AIC) to candidate models. As a result, the model without interaction effect presents a smaller AIC value, and thus it is considered as a good model to estimate the future values[111]. The results of analysis indicated that gender ($\beta = -.444$, $p < .001$) is a predictive factor for respondents' evaluation in terms of progressiveness of Japan. The equation is as follows:

$$\mu_p = .024 + .037*Age - .444*Sex - .060*Soc.Int + .133* Info.Seeking - .107*Comm.Devlp + .199*Entm. \ [112]$$

Male users, more so than female users, tend to highly evaluate Japan as a progressive country (see Figure 4.12). Then, the effects of Sina Weibo usage motivations on progressiveness were estimated. The outcomes reveal that, information seeking ($\beta = .113$ $p < .05$) and entertainment ($\beta = .199$, $p < .001$) motives are positively, while community development motive is negatively ($\beta =$

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[111] The AIC value for interaction model is 892.2, and that for model without interaction effect is 890.7.
[112] Where μ_p stands for the predictive value of a respondent's response to the evaluation of Japan's progressiveness in terms of intercept, age, gender, and motivation of social interaction, information seeking, community development, and entertainment

-.107, p < .10) significant associated with progressiveness. Users scoring higher on the information seeking and entertainment motivation scales favor the high evaluation of progressiveness regarding Japan. As shown in Table 4.5, the 2.5% and 97.5% confidence intervals (CIs) for predictors do not cross 0, and thus the parameter estimates are statistically significant.

Table 4.5 Coefficients predicting the effects of usage motivations on Chinese university student's evaluation of Japan's progressiveness

VARIABLE	Estimate	S.E.	t value	CI		P value
				2.5%	97.5%	
Age	0.037	0.043	0.869	-0.047	0.121	0.385
Sex	-0.444	0.118	-3.753	-0.677	-0.211	0.000***
Soc.Int	-0.060	0.054	-1.105	-0.166	0.047	0.270
Info.Seeking	0.113	0.054	2.078	0.006	0.219	0.039*
Comm.Devp	-0.107	0.055	-1.943	-0.216	0.001	0.053 .
Entm.	0.199	0.054	3.691	0.093	0.306	0.000***

Note: Standardized coefficients are reported; *** P < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, . p < 0.1.

Figure 4.12 Plots illustrating the significant effects of usage motivations on Chinese university

student's evaluation of Japan's progressiveness
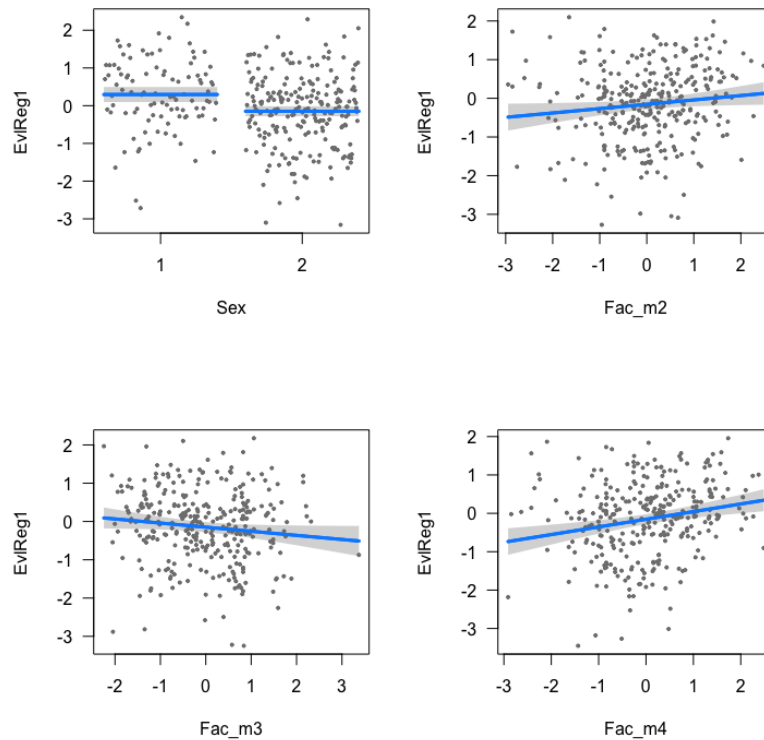
Perceived threat

Table 4.6 summarizes the results of regression estimations for perceived threat. Information

seeking (β = -.118, p < .05) was found to significantly influence the model predicting the perceived

threat of Japan, while social interaction (β = .101, p < .10), community development (β = -.374, p

< .10), and the interaction between gender and community development (β = .225, p < .10) worked

as indicators due to their lower coefficients. The equations are as follows:

$$\mu_i = -.846 + .138*Age + .180*Sex + .101*Soc.Int - .120* \, Info.Seeking - .374*Comm.Devlp$$

$$- .077*Entm. + .225Sex*Comm.Devlp \ ^{113}$$

---

[113] Where μ_i stands for the predictive value of a respondent's perceived threat of Japan in terms of
intercept, age, gender, motivation of social interaction, information seeking, community
development, and entertainment, and the interaction effect of gender and community development

Table 4.6 Coefficients predicting the effects of usage motivations on perceived threat of Japan to Chinese university students

VARIABLE	Estimate	S.E.	t value	CI		P value
				2.5%	97.5%	
Age	0.051	0.044	1.167	-0.035	0.137	0.244
Sex	-0.180	0.122	-1.480	-0.419	0.059	0.140
Soc.Int	-0.101	0.055	1.837	-0.007	0.210	0.067 .
Info.Seeking	-0.120	0.055	-2.169	-0.229	-0.011	0.031 *
Comm.Devp	-0.374	0.202	-1.848	-0.772	0.024	0.066 .
Entm.	-0.077	0.056	-1.385	-0.187	0.032	0.167
Sex:Comm.Devp	0.225	0.117	1.915	-0.006	0.455	0.056 .

Note: Standardized coefficients are reported; *** P < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, . p < 0.1

Figure 4.13 Plots illustrating the significant effects of usage motivations on perceived threat of Japan to Chinese university students

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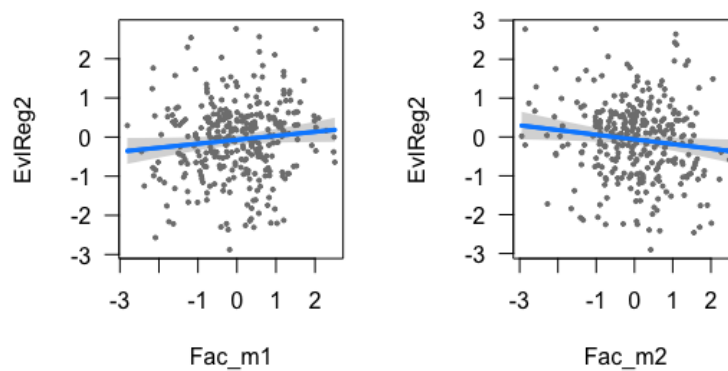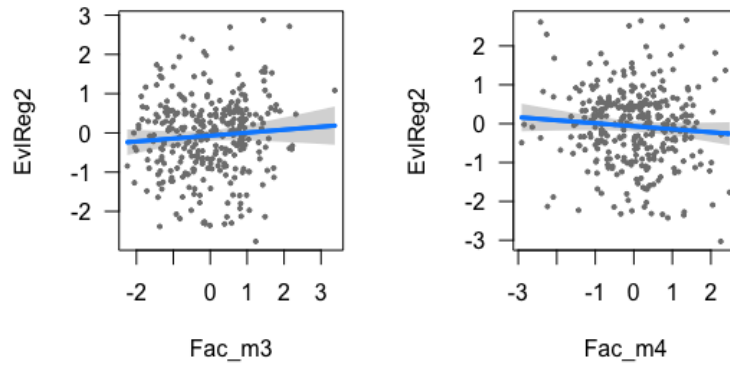
Figure 4.12 illustrates the effect of each independent variable on perceived threat of Japan to Chinese university students. For Sina Weibo users, those scored higher in information seeking motivation are less likely to perceive Japan as a threat. Social interaction and community development motivation is a positive indicator of perceived threat at the 0.1 level. The interaction between gender and community development reveals an inverse effect on threat perception of Japan to male and female respondents (see Figure 4.14). As

Figure4.14 Interaction effect
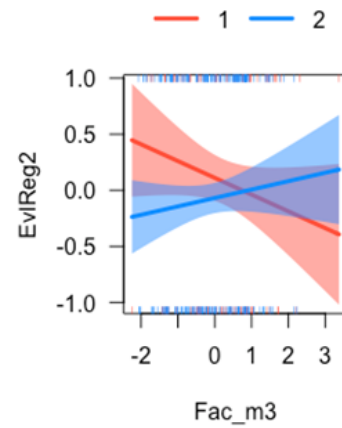
shown in Table 4.3, the 2.5% and 97.5% confidence intervals (CIs) only for information seeking does not cross 0, and thus the parameter estimate is statistically significant.

Impression

Ordered logistic model was estimated using Sina Weibo usage motivations as main effect variables, along with age and gender as control variables. The equation is as follows:

$$\log (p_i) = -.629 - .138 \ast Age + .471 \ast Sex - .158 \ast Soc.Int - .298 \ast Info.Seeking + .123 \ast Comm.Devlp$$

$$- .266 \ast Entm. \ ^{114}$$

Table 4.7 Coefficients of log odds ratio predicting the effects of usage motivations on Chinese

university student's impression of Japan

VARIABLE	Estimate	Odds ratio	S.E.	t value	CI		P value
					2.5%	97.5%	
Age	0.138	1.148	0.083	1.664	0.977	1.353	0.096 .
Sex	-0.471	0.625	0.232	-2.031	0.396	0.982	0.042 *
Soc.Int	0.158	1.171	0.106	1.492	0.952	1.442	0.136
Info.Seeking	0.298	1.347	0.109	2.744	1.090	1.669	0.006**
Comm.Devp	-0.123	0.884	0.107	-1.148	0.717	1.091	0.251
Entm.	0.266	1.305	0.107	2.488	1.058	1.610	0.013*

Note: *** $P < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.1$

Table 4.7 summarizes the results of ordinal logistic regression estimations for Chinese

undergraduate student's impression of Japan. In addition to gender (odds ratio = .625, p < .05),

information seeking (odds ratio = 1.347, p < .01), and entertainment (odds ratio = 1.305, p < .05) all

significantly impacted upon the regression model. The 2.5% and 97.5% confidence intervals (CIs)

for these variables are consistent, and thus the parameter estimates are statistically significant. Male

Weibo users, as well as those scoring higher in motives of social interaction, information seeking,

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[114] Where $\log(p_i)$ stands for the probability of a respondent's response to impression of Japan (moving fro 1 to 5) in terms of intercept, age, gender, and motivation of social interaction, information seeking, community development, and entertainment

and entertainment, are more likely to have favorable impressions regarding Japan. Due to the low p value and unstable confident interval, age (odds ratio = 1.148, p < .1) is considered as an indicator of impression.

Figure 4.15 illustrates the probability mass for each response that is resulted from the independent variables respectively. With respect to the distinction in gender, we can see from the second figure that female Sina Weibo users (the probability is 57.7%) are more likely to hold 'very unfavorable' impression regarding Japan than male users (the probability is 46.1%)[115]. In addition, the probability mass for 'unfavorable impression' of those scoring higher in information seeking motivation dramatically declines. That is, users who are motivated to use Sina Weibo for information seeking are significantly less likely to have 'very unfavorable impression' regarding Japan. To be more specifically, we would say that for a one unit component score increase in information seeking motivation, the probability (or odds) of moving from 1 (Very unfavorable impression) to 2 (Somewhat unfavorable impression) are multiplied by 1.34[116]. For entertainment motivation, there is a negative relationship between entertainment motivation and 'very unfavorable' impression. That is, when an individual's component score in entertainment increase one unit, the probabilities of 'Very unfavorable' impression versus the rest of options combined are 1.30 times greater.

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[115] The probability of response to 'unfavorable impression' for female user is estimated with logistic (-0.6286-(-0.4705)*2), and for male user is logistic(-0.6286-(-0.4705)*1).
[116] exp(0.2981) = 1.34

Figure 4.15 Plots illustrating the significant effects of usage motivations on Chinese university

student's impression of Japan
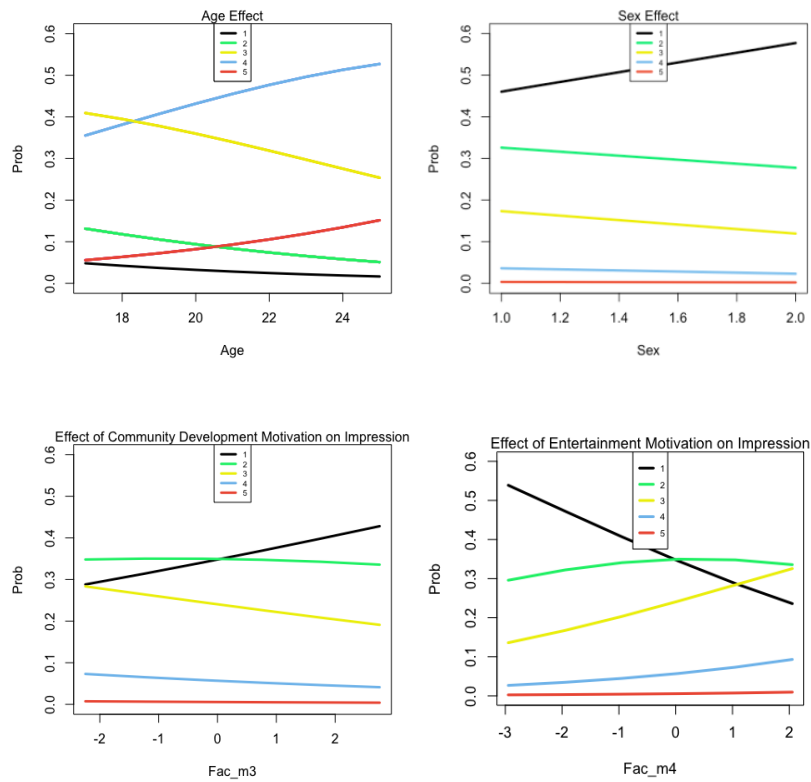
Vigilant intention

Social interaction (log odds = -.179, p < .10) and community development (log odds = .179, p

< .10) have scant influences on users' vigilant intention towards Japan. Table 4.8 summarizes the

results of estimations for respondents' vigilant intention towards Japan. Based on the results, the

equations for predicting model of vigilant intention are as follows:

log (p_v) = -.418 + .013*Age + .102*Sex + .179*Soc.Int − .167* Info.Seeking − .179*Comm.Devlp

− .048*Entm. [117]

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[117] Where log(p_v) stands for the ratio of a respondent's response to vigilant intention toward Japan (moving from 1 to 5) in terms of intercept, age, gender, and motivation of social interaction, information seeking, community development, and entertainment

Table 4.8 Coefficients of odds ratio predicting the effects of usage motivations on Chinese university student's vigilant behavior intention towards Japan

VARIABLE	Estimate	Odds ratio	S.E.	t value	CI		P value
					2.5%	97.5%	
Age	-0.013	0.986	0.083	-0.161	0.838	1.160	0.872
Sex	-0.102	0.903	0.227	-0.4481	0.578	1.411	0.655
Soc.Int	-0.179	0.837	0.106	-1.692	0.680	1.029	0.091 .
Info.Seeking	0.167	1.181	0.109	1.527	0.955	1.465	0.127
Comm.Devp	0.179	1.196	0.107	-1.671	0.970	1.477	0.095 .
Entm.	0.048	1.049	0.104	0.464	0.856	1.287	0.643

Note: *** P < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, . p < 0.1

Figure 4.16 Plots illustrating the significant effects of usage motivations on Chinese university student's vigilant behavior intention towards Japan

Figure 4.16 illustrates the probability mass for each response that is resulted from the independent variables respectively. For social interaction, for a one unit increase in social interaction motivation, the probability of 'strongly agree' with being vigilant towards Japan to 'somewhat agree'

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are multiplied by 0.84[118], which means that with the increase of scoring in social interaction motivation, the odds of 'strongly agreeing' with being vigilant towards Japan decreases. On the contrary, for community development, we would say that for a one unit component score increase in community development motivation, the probability of moving from 5 (Strongly agree) to 4 (Agree) are multiplied by 1.20[119]. However, it is notably that the 2.5% and 97.5% CIs of both variables cross 1, which means the predictive abilities of social interaction and community development are not stable.

Intimate intention

Table 4.9 outlines the results of estimations for intimate intention towards Japan. Gender (log odds = -1.163, p < .001), information seeking motivation (log odds = .256, p < .05), and entertainment motivation (log odds = .400, p < .001) loaded onto the predictive model of intimate intention towards Japan. Given that the 2.5% and 97.5% confidence intervals (CIs) for predictors are consistent, the parameter estimates are statistically significant. The equations of predictive model for intimate behavior intention are as follows.

$$\log(p_t) = -6.451 + .019*Age + 1.163*Sex + .055*Soc.Int - .256* Info.Seeking$$
$$+ .095*Comm.Devlp - .400*Entm. \ [120]$$

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[118] exp(-0.17866) = 0.84
[119] exp(0.17897) = 1.20
[120] Where log(p_t) stands for the probability of a respondent'response to intimate intention toward Japan (moving from 1 to 5) in terms of intercept, age, gender, and motivation of social interaction, information seeking, community development, and entertainment

Table 4.9 Coefficients of odds ratio predicting the effects of usage motivations on Chinese university student's intimate behavior intention towards Japan

VARIABLE	Estimate	Odds ratio	S.E.	t value	CI		P value
					2.5%	97.5%	
Age	-0.019	0.981	0.084	-0.227	0.833	1.156	0.819
Sex	-1.163	0.313	0.247	-4.714	0.192	0.505	0.000***
Soc.Int	-0.055	0.946	0.108	-0.514	0.766	1.169	0.608
Info.Seeking	0.256	1.292	0.115	2.226	1.032	1.621	0.026*
Comm.Devp	-0.095	0.909	0.110	-0.866	0.732	1.127	0.387
Entm.	0.400	1.491	0.111	3.585	1.201	1.860	0.000***

Note: *** P < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, . p < 0.1

Male users and those scoring higher in using Sina Weibo for the motivations of information seeking and entertainment tend to favor intimate behavior intention towards Japan. For male Sina Weibo use, the probability of 'strongly disagreeing' (1) and 'strongly agreeing' (5) with the statement that "I think that we should deepen the cooperation with Japan, and build the intimate relations between China and Japan in the future" is 0.5%[121] and 9.3% respectively, while that of female users are 9.3% and 3.1% respectively.

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[121] logistic (-6.4508 + 1.16248) = 0.005; 1 − logistic (1.1193 + 1.16248) = 0.093. For female, logistic (-6.4508 + 1.16248*2) = 0.016; 1 − logistic (1.1193 + 1.16248*2) = 0.031

Figure 4.17 Plots illustrating the significant effects of usage motivations on Chinese university student's intimate behavior intention towards Japan
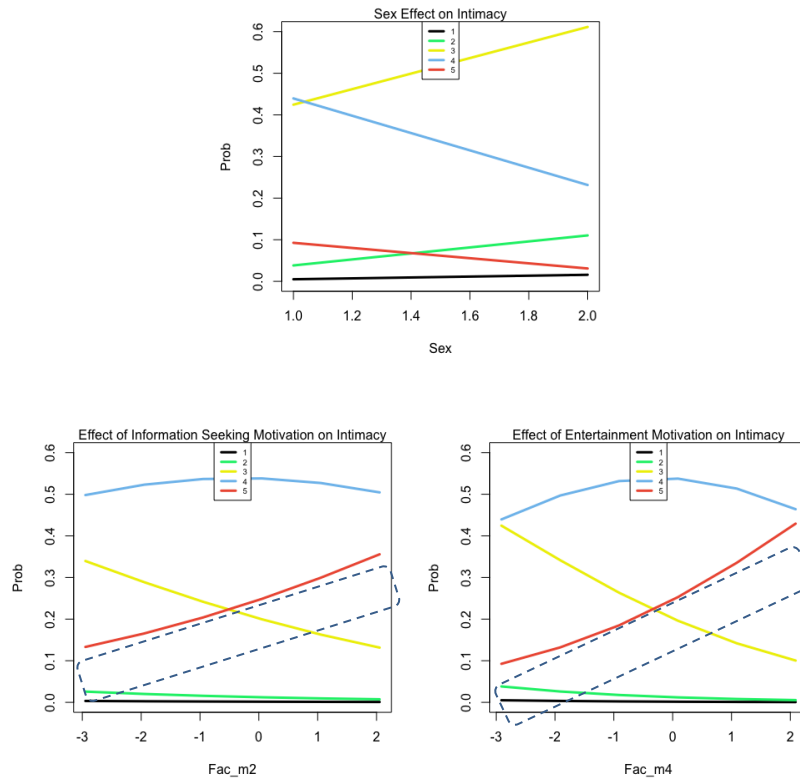
Figure 4.17 presents the effects of independent variables by graphing the probability mass for each response (from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree) to intimate behavior intention. For information seeking motivation, as we can see from the fourth plot, along with the increase of scoring in information seeking motivation, the probability of strongly agreeing to deepen the cooperation and build the intimate relations with Japan increased. Specifically, we would expect that for a one unit increase in component score of information seeking, the odds of moving from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 2 (Disagree) are multiplied by roughly 1.3 times. For entertainment motivation, the trend is similar to that for information seeking, but the probability mass is superior, which shows that when an individual's entertainment component score moves one unit, the odds of 'strongly disagree' versus 'disagree' are approximately 1.5 times greater.

Interest

Table 4.10 illustrates the estimated coefficients for responses to the question in terms of the extent in which the respondents are interested in Japan. The results indicated three predictors, they are gender (log odds = -.585, p < .05), information seeking motivation (log odds = .301, p < .01), and entertainment motivation (log odds = .244, p < .05). The equations are presented below.

$$\log (p_n) = -3.793 - .019*Age + .585*Sex - .026*Soc.Int - .301* Info.Seeking + .141*Comm.Devlp - .244*Entm. \ ^{122}$$

Table 4.10 Coefficients of odds ratio predicting the effects of usage motivations on Chinese university student's interest in Japan

VARIABLE	Estimate	Odds ratio	S.E.	t value	CI		P value
					2.5%	97.5%	
Age	0.019	1.019	0.081	0.233	0.870	1.195	0.816
Sex	-0.585	0.557	0.232	-2.524	0.353	0.876	0.012*
Soc.Int	0.026	1.026	0.104	0.248	0.837	1.258	0.804
Info.Seeking	0.301	1.352	0.113	2.659	1.083	1.690	0.008**
Comm.Devp	-0.141	0.868	0.107	-1.325	0.704	1.070	0.185
Entm.	0.244	1.276	0.107	2.273	1.035	1.577	0.023*

Note: *** P < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, . p < 0.1

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[122] Where log(p_n) stands for the probability of a respondent's response to intimate intention toward Japan (moving from 1 to 5) in terms of intercept, age, gender, and motivation of social interaction, information seeking, community development, and entertainment

Figure 4.18 Plots illustrating the significant effects of usage motivations on Chinese university student's interest in Japan
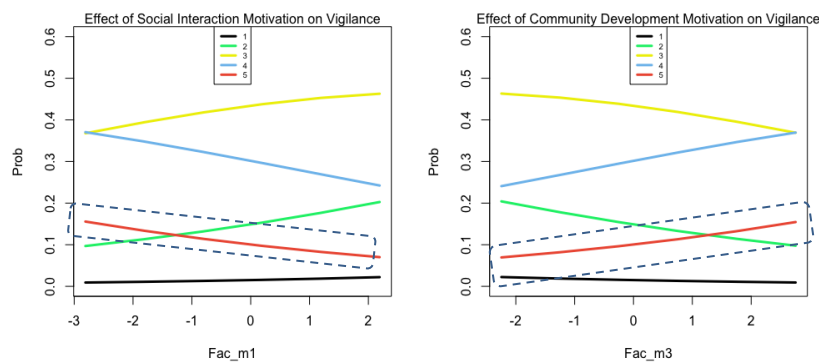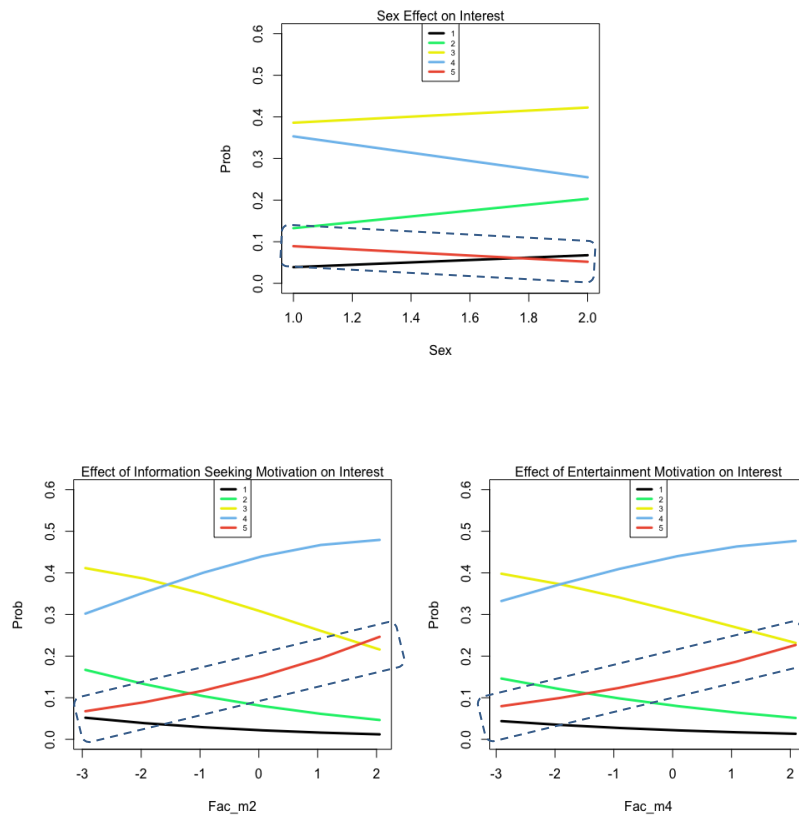

Figure 4.18 illustrates the probability mass for each response of independent variables. Generally, male Weibo user tends to be interested in Japan than female user. The probability of 'strongly disagree' with the statement that "I am interested in Japan" is only 3.9%[123], while the probability for female user is roughly 6.8 %[124]. In addition, those who are motivated to use Sina Weibo for information seeking and entertainment are significantly more likely to be interested in Japan. Specifically, for a one unit component factor increases in information seeking motivation, the probability of moving from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 2 (Disagree) are multiplied by approximately 1.4 times. For respondent with the highest component score in entertainment motivation, his/her

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[123] logistic (-3.7928 + 0.58506) = 0.039
[124] logistic (-3.7928 + 0.58506*2) = 0.068

probability of being very uninterested in Japan is only 1.2%. Since the 2.5% and 97.5% confidence

intervals (CIs) for the three variables are consistent, the parameter estimates are statistically

significant.

Social distance

The final behavioral intention of social distance was not significantly predicted by any of

predictors, which may infer that besides usage motivations, there must be other predictive factors

that play vital roles in determining individual's intention of narrowing social distance with Japan. As

we can see from Appendix 2, which plots the effects of Sina Weibo usage motivations on probability

mass for each response, the increase in usage motivations has hardly led to changes in social

distance.

Table 4.11 Coefficients of odds ratio predicting the effects of usage motivations on Chinese

university student's social distance to Japan

VARIABLE	Estimate	Odds ratio	S.E.	t value	CI		P value
					2.5%	97.5%	
Age	0.007	1.007	0.081	0.081	0.859	1.180	0.936
Sex	-0.066	0.936	0.220	-0.298	0.608	1.442	0.765
Soc.Int	0.100	1.106	0.102	0.985	0.906	1.352	0.325
Info.Seeking	0.129	1.138	0.105	1.231	0.927	1.398	0.218
Comm.Devp	-0.082	0.921	0.105	-0.786	0.750	1.131	0.432
Entm.	-0.020	0.980	0.102	-0.198	0.803	1.197	0.843

Note: *** $P < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, . $p < 0.1$.

4.7   SUMMARY

To summarize, the images of Japan are conceptualized as a three-dimensional structure by thinking of cognitive and behavioral outcomes as distinct consequences that vary according to SNS usage motivations. Gender is a crucial predictor for respondents' evaluation of Japan's progressiveness and impression of Japan. In addition, consistent with the findings generated from FGD, information seeking motivation has a strong predictive power for progressiveness, perceived threat, impression, and interest in Japan. It also has a scant influence on intimate intention. As compared with WeChat and Sina Weibo in prior section, although individuals are overwhelmed by the excessive content generated by the large number of unidentified users on Sina Weibo, individuals are more inclined to search relevant information to distinguish the credible information from the excessive content. In this kind of process, to tackle the barriers to receive messages, a deliberative thinking is needed. Therefore, the ideas and themes that emerged from the FGD and the results of questionnaire survey are basically consistent with and complementary to each other.

Furthermore, the results indicate that social interaction[125] motivation for using Sina Weibo is a crucial predictor for Japan's country image in the eyes of Chinese university students rather than any of the others. It also predicted an individual's impression of and vigilant intention towards Japan as an indicator due to the relatively low coefficients and significant level. Furthermore, this provides a more convincing evidence for the findings of FGD discussed in the previous section. Social interaction motivation, in the context of analysis on questionnaire, involves not only development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships (i.e., participation and interaction), but also expression of one's opinions, moods, feelings, and recent life (i.e., production/expression) on Sina

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[125] Based on the results of PCA, the "social interaction" component which consists of four items reflects respondent's needs to keep in touch with the family and friends, as well as strangers. It also includes the needs to earn other people's attention by expressing moods, feelings, and recent life. Social interaction component in questionnaire can be seen as a combination of social connection and self-expression motivation that emerged from FGD.

Weibo. In other words, for users who are motivated to use Sina Weibo for participating and interacting and producing, their images of Japan are significantly more likely to be influenced. To deepen and broaden the understanding of this mechanism, next chapter will look into the direct and indirect effects of receiving and expressing messages on respondents' images of Japan at a micro-level. The final chapter will elaborate on how the effects have occurred in the process of receiving, participating, and expressing based on detailed examples, although the step-by-step involvement is not necessarily followed by everyone.

Finally, I found that entertainment motivation is positively predicted progressiveness, impression, intimate intention, and interest in Japan. Reversely, community development motivation is only associated to vigilant intention. To understand the strong predictive power of entertainment motivation for images of Japan, inspecting the forms of contents that individuals consumed for entertainment on Sina Weibo is indispensable. As discussed previously, interviews with 24 Chinese university students indicated that the majority of the participants consume the products of Japanese traditional culture or popular culture for entertainment motivations to varying degree (see Figure 4.7). Although the results of ANOVA shown that entertainment motivation is seemingly equal important for both male and female users, there is a difference in types of consumed contents between male and female participants. As delineated in Figure 4.7, male participants are more inclined to consume Japanese traditional culture on SNSs for entertainment. On the contrary, in so far as I have discussed, female participants showed great interests to searching information about Japanese popular culture and chasing pop stars on SNSs. The thing they have in common points to the enjoyment of these media contents and thus resulting in very positive images of Japan.

Chapter 5　What Are the Mechanisms of SNS Communication Behaviors and Chinese University Student's Image of Japan?

5.1 INTRODUCTION

A number of media scholars attribute the deterioration in Japan-China relations and the mutual understandings of Japanese and Chinese to traditional media coverage. With the advent of Web 2.0, social media has subverted traditional media transmissions of "one-to-many" or "one-to-one", for the first time, gives user "many-to-many" and "few-to-few" communication (Gillmor, 2006, p. 13). Including blog, BBS or SNS, social media provides a fertile ground allowing Chinese Internet users funnel nationalistic sentiment into activism (Hyun, Kim, & Sun, 2014). Thus, anti-Japanese dimension has arguably become "society-driven" rather than "state-led", given that individuals have become increasingly capable of influencing or even frustrating the government's own agenda especially when disputes have occurred between the two countries (Cui, 2012). Furthermore, more recent research in communication studies found that, compared to traditional media, individuals are more likely to rely on and to be influenced by interpersonal communication and intrapersonal communication via SNSs than traditional news media (Turcotte et al., 2015). Therefore, on account of the above changes in media environment and communication technologies, an urgent task to be tackled points to the deeper and comprehensive understanding of the mechanism of SNS communication and the subsequent outcomes. Since understanding the mechanism of through which online communication behaviors affects the Chinese public's image of Japan may help researchers or practitioners to create more effective interventions to infuse individuals with certain desirable attitudes or behaviors, thereby improving relations between Japan and China at a civil level.

There is a considerable amount of literature has studied the images of the other country between Japan and China. Scholars attributed the unfavorable impressions between Japanese and Chinese to competing historical memories, popular nationalism, or patriotic education campaign (e.g., Er, 2009; Gries et al., 2016; He, 2007; Hunter, 2009; Vyas, 2011). The mutual understandings between the two countries have also long been a focus of media and communication studies. Some researchers have

argued that mass media (e.g., Ito & Zhu, 2008; Jiang, 2014; Liu, 2005) and social media (e.g., Ishii, 2012; Li; 2006) have significant effects on shaping the images of the other country. However, there is no consensus on this topic both theoretically and empirically, thus resulting in inconsistent results in the previous studies. In addition, little is known about the mechanism of communication behaviors (i.e., receiving and expressing message) and images of a foreign country. Notably, to my best knowledge, little study on this topic has taken expression-effects paradigm into consideration, but merely examined reception effects of information sources.

Based on a relatively thorough literature review (Chapter 2), several shortages of the previous research need to be addressed prior to moving to the analysis. Although prior research on the Chinese public's image of Japan observed that SNS use has a close relationship with nationalism which is considered as a significant predictor of anti-Japanese sentiments, few studies on this topic has inspected how the Chinese public's SNS usage motivations and behaviors translate into individuals' images of Japan. One possible reason for this pitfall could be that the interdisciplinary nature of this topic inevitably brings about barriers of communicating between different disciplines and containing a variety of viewpoints across disciplines. Apart from contradictions that exist in the intersection of these disciplines, the study on images of foreign country still suffers from a lack of consensus.

Accordingly, this chapter aims to fill these gaps by investigating the effects of receiving and expressing Japan-related information on images of Japan perceived by Chinese young people. The main question of this chapter— "What are the mechanisms of online communication behaviors and an individual's image of Japan?"—specified and divided into the following subsidiary questions. (1) How do online communication behaviors (i.e. receiving and expressing message) influence the Chinese public's images of Japan? (2) What are the mediated effects of communication behavior on behavioral intentions toward Japan?

Accordingly, this study first reviews the existing literature about media effects on the Chinese public's image of Japan. In addition, to grasp the general picture of the current situation, I present descriptive statistics of the major variables. Next, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is conducted to verify scale construction of mediating variable. Then, I apply structural equation modeling (SEM) in AMOS using behavioral intentions toward Japan as dependent variables. Mediation model is estimated using age, gender, origin, and annual household income as control variables, and using evaluation, recognition, and impression of Japan as mediating variables. Moreover, the concluding section recapitulates the empirical findings of this paper in short, and then notes the limitations of this study. Finally, to develop this study further, several future research agenda are presented.

5.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THIS STUDY

Based on the above theoretical and empirical foundations, this study proposes a theoretical framework as illustrated in Figure 5.1 to conceptualize the interrelationships between online communication behaviors (i.e., expressing and receiving messages) and the outcomes pertaining to how the Chinese public perceive Japan. The framework primarily grounded on two communication models: the O-S-R-O-R communication mediation model (Cho et al., 2009; Shah et al., 2007) and the bidirectional message effects model (BMEM, Pingree, 2007). Due to the nonreciprocal feature of the two models, causalities and mediators between stimuli and outcome can be identified. The present study is also inspired by Valkenburg's (2017) recent proposed online self-and reception effect model and revised communication mediation model of Shah et al. (2017).

Furthermore, grounded on the theoretical perspectives and literature review summarized throughout Chapter 2, an overall hypothesized model as displayed in Figure 5.3 is proposed to delineate the interrelationships between receiving and expressing Japan-related information via

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SNSs and the cognitive and behavioral outcomes, including evaluation, cognition, impression, and

behavioral intentions.

Figure 5.1 Theoretical framework for the mechanism of SNS communication behaviors and images of Japan

O

Structural characteristics

Age

gender

household income

origin

S–R

Communication behaviors

Receiving
Japan-related
messages

Expressing
Japan-related
messages

O–R

Images of Japan

Evaluation&Recognition

Progressiveness
Perceived threat

Behavioral intentions

Vigilant intention
Intimate intention
Interest
Social distance

Impression

Favorable
impression
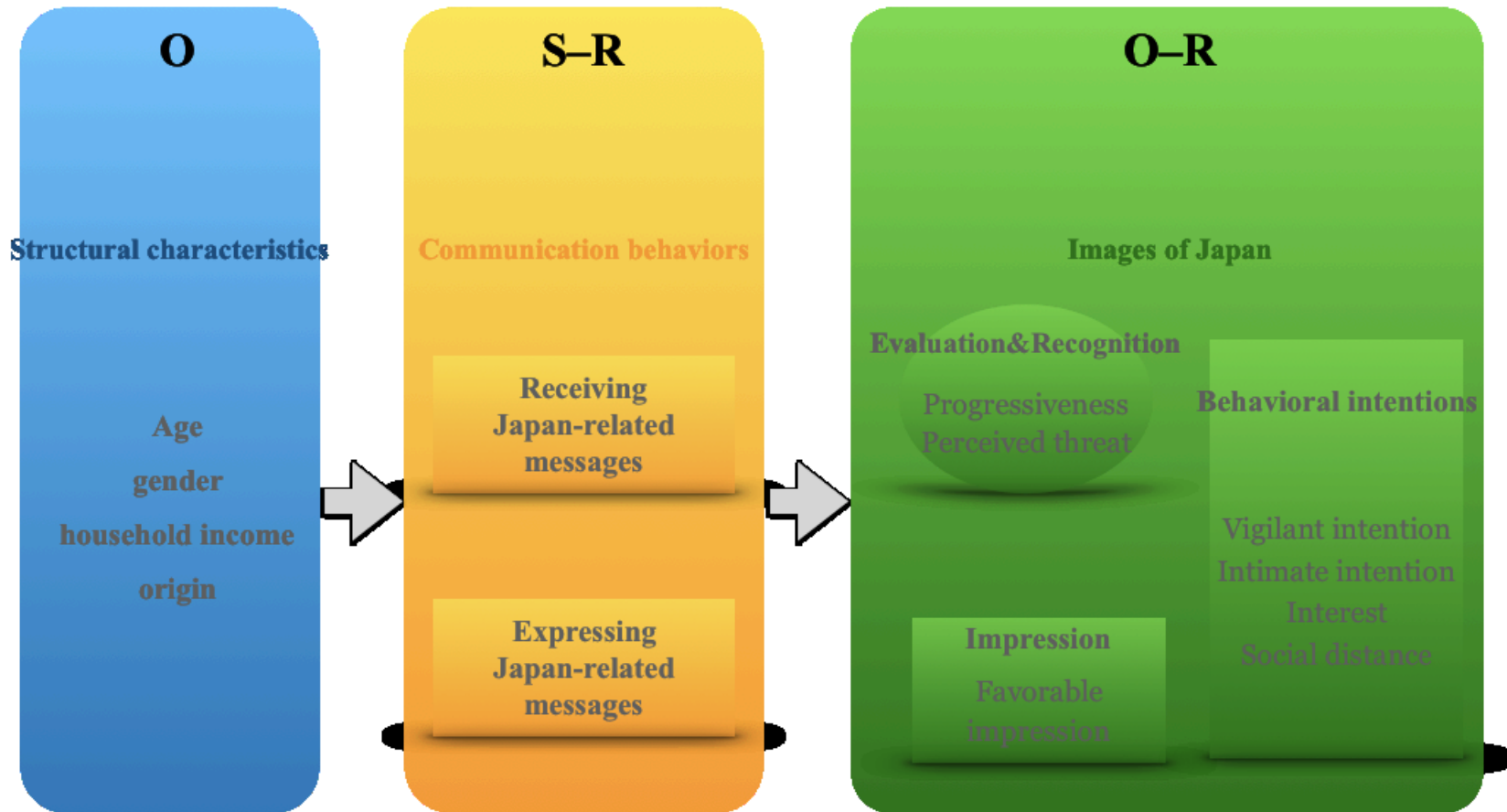
Source: Created by the author.

Linking SNS communication to cognitive characteristics and behavioral intentions

Based on a review of the studies into mass communication effects on images of a foreign country, the majority of the relevant literature has investigated the effects of social media use on the cognitive characteristics such as impression or perception of the other country but with mixed success. The small and disappointed reception effects of SNS use on images of a foreign country yielded from previous studies[126] defy both common sense[127] and theoretical proposition (e.g., Jiang, 2013, 2014; Li, 2006; Liu, 1998; Ishii, 2012; Zhang, 2018)[128]. What is less clear is the effect of producing messages on the sender/producer's images of a foreign country, although expression effect has been one of the emerging foci with the study of mass and interpersonal communication effects in recent years. As an example of Web 2.0 technology applications, SNSs have significantly changed the way of consuming and disseminating information from one-way "read only" communication model to a two-way model characterized by participation, collaboration, and openness (Eysenbach, 2008; Yoo et al., 2016). Furthermore, assessments of the expression effects/self-effects have found that expression behaviors may strengthen or weaken a sender's cognitions, beliefs, and attitudes. More precise measurement of images of a foreign country using the concepts of image and attitude research has confirmed that the Chinese public's actions toward Japan are largely based on recognition and evaluation of Japan (e.g., Jiang, 2013, 2014), nevertheless, the effects of SNS communication have not been testified in the context of images of a foreign country.

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[126] The results of Jiang's (2014) work revealed that social media use is not correlated to the images of Japan in China. Zhang (2018) found that expression and reception information in general on social media have no significant effects on mutual perceptions between Japanese and Chinese.

[127] Valkenburg (2017) noted that everyday experience may offer us many anecdotal examples of strong (social) media effects.

[128] Detailed discussion on the strength of SNS communication effects refers to Chapter 2.

There is growing evidence that online communication is very influential in reinforcing or transforming an individual's cognitions and behaviors. For instance, within the study of political communication, Shah et al. (2007) examined the effects of political advertising exposure and Internet use on political/civic participation during election campaigns. Their findings showed that expression channels the impacts of both conventional and new media stimulus on behavioral outcomes. The linkages between SNS communication and behaviors are bolstered by Cho et al.'s (2009) work as well. Including the above examples, a sizable body of recent research has highlighted the importance of expression—such as online messaging, interpersonal talk for deliberation and political engagement (Mutz, 2006; Pingree, 2007; Valkenburg et al., 2016; Valkenburg, 2017). Furthermore, there is also evidence that receiving and expressing related information directly influencing cognitive characteristics, which in turn may shape the levels of corresponding behaviors. For example, Yoo et al. (2016) found that cognitive characteristics in relation to Middle East respiratory syndrome mediated SNS communication and preventive behavior intentions.

However, in the case of images of a foreign country, the impacts of SNS use on an individual's cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors have been largely overlooked. Based on the previous discussion that SNS has been recognized as an effective communication tool raises awareness during nationalistic or anti-Japanese campaign (e.g., Hyun & Kim, 2015; see Chapter 2), it is reasonable to assume that communication via SNSs of information pertaining to Japan affects an individual's images of Japan. That is, the use of SNS, including receiving/consuming and expressing/producing Japan-related messages, may strengthen or weaken an individual's certain cognitive or behavioral responses of Japan[129]. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed.

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[129] In this study, "images" of Japan include the aspect of evaluation, recognition, impression, and behavioral intentions.

H1: Receiving Japan-related messages on SNSs is associated with the cognitive and behavioral outcomes in relation to Japan.

H2: Expression Japan-related message on SNSs is associated with the cognitive and behavioral outcomes in relation to Japan.

H3: Orientation outcomes (i.e., evaluation, recognition, and impression) are predictive of behavioral intentions toward Japan.

Cognition mechanism: mediating roles of evaluation, recognition, and impression

Before proposing the general theoretical framework, as foundation of this study, I will briefly recap the O-S-R-O-R (Orientation–Stimuli–Reasoning–Orientation–Response) model of communication mediation (Cho et al., 2009; Shah et al., 2007). In the model, the first "O" represents the structural propositions including "structural, cultural, cognitive, and motivational characteristics the audience brings to the reception situation that affect the impact of the message", and the second "O" stands for "what is likely to happen between reception of message (i.e., "S" portion) and the subsequent outcomes (i.e., the second "R")". "S" portion is not limited to mass communication, but also takes interpersonal communication as stimuli. The "S-R-O" pathways are combinatory results of stimuli from message obtaining from mass or interpersonal communication, and then experience mental elaboration that plays a mediating role between message reception and response of the audience.

This study integrated the bidirectional message effects with the O-S-R-O-R model to investigate the interrelationships among SNS communication (S and the first R portion), orientation outcomes (the second O), and behavioral outcomes (the second R). The theoretical framework of the present study is depicted in Figure 5.1[130]. Following the above-described O-S-R-O-R model, in the

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[130] Due to the nonreciprocal feature of this model, the causal relations and mediators between stimuli and outcome can be identified.

proposed framework, an individual's demographic characteristics, including age, gender, origin, and annual household income, are used to signify the structural propositions of the audience—the first "O" in the model. The "S" and "R" portion are operationalized as message reception and expression, measured as frequency of exposure to and frequency of production of Japan-related messages respectively. Outcome orientation, the second "O" portion, is operationalized through measures of evaluation, recognition, and impression of Japan, following the previous research on Chinese national's image of Japan. Evaluation and cognition of Japan were assessed by a series of adjectives. Ultimately, the measures of behavioral intentions (four items) were employed in the mediation model as outcome responses (the second "R").

On account of the theoretical reasoning and empirical findings depicted above, I contend that orientation outcomes mediate the effects of SNS communication on behavioral responses. Integrating the extant research with these assertions leads me to advance the following hypothesized model (Figure 5.2). Focusing on the case of Chinese young people's images of Japan, this model highlights expression effects of SNS communication considering the features of Web 2.0 technologies and theoretical argument. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed to explore how evaluation, recognition, and impression of Japan channel the relationships between SNS communication behaviors and behavioral intentions toward Japan.

H4: The effects of receiving Japan-related message via SNSs on behavioral intentions are mediated by evaluation, recognition, and impression in relation to Japan.

H5: The effects of expressing Japan-related message via SNSs on behavioral intentions are mediated by evaluation, recognition, and impression in relation to Japan.

Figure 5.2 Hypothesized model for examining the effects of SNSs communication on behavioral intentions
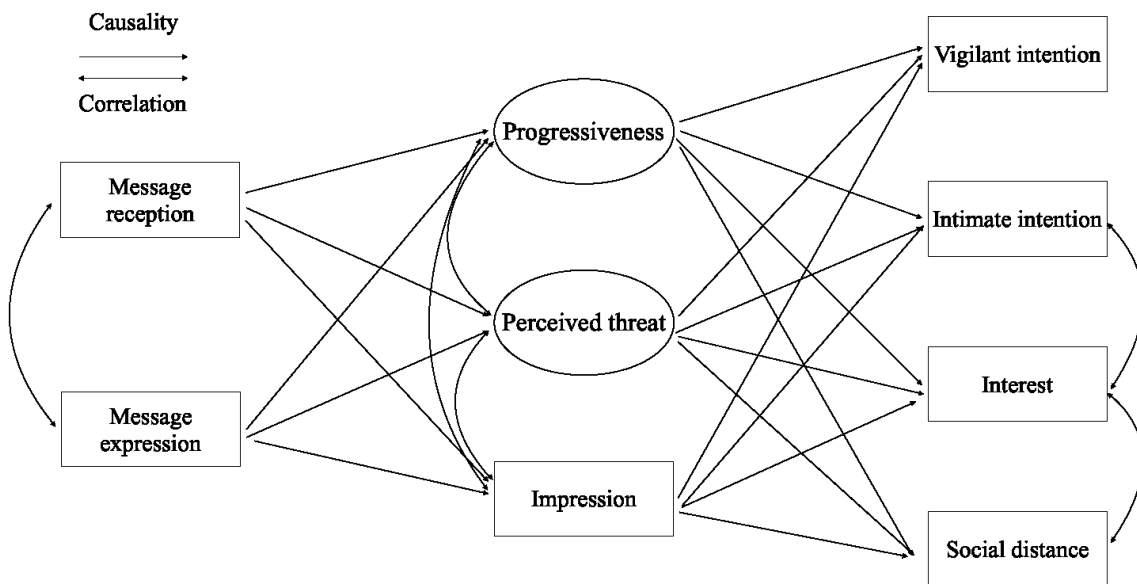
Note: Age, gender, annual household income, and origin are included in the theorized model as control variables, but no shown here.

To summarize, this model, which is primarily grounded on the O-S-R-O-R model and expression-effect paradigm, conceptualizes the process of SNS communication as follows: a communicator begin his/her relationship with Japan-related information as a recipient/consumers (the "S" portion) with his/her structural propositions (the first "O"). After tackling the barriers to reception (e.g., attention, decoding, processing data; see Figure 5.3), a communicator participates through interacting with contents by relaying reconstructed messages to other users by commenting on the original message. communicator who intend to express his/herself experiences compositing process simultaneously while receiving messages. Following Pingree's (2007) BMEM (bidirectional message effects model; Figure 5.3), in this process, a communicator's attitudes, traits, or feelings are influenced by the composition effects that may include thought construction and self-perception. Finally, a communicator comes to release Japan-related messages on SNS. Notably, the theorized

model accounts for the distinctions in frequency of reception and expression on individual differences. The proposed model conceptualizes the relationship between reception and expression as a correlation instead of causality, because participating/expressing can in turn contribute to consuming/receiving by for instance, posting comments, rating the message, or sharing with others (Shao, 2008). Thus, this study expected that receiving Japan-related message on SNSs is correlated to message expression.

Figure 5.3 Bidirectional message effects model
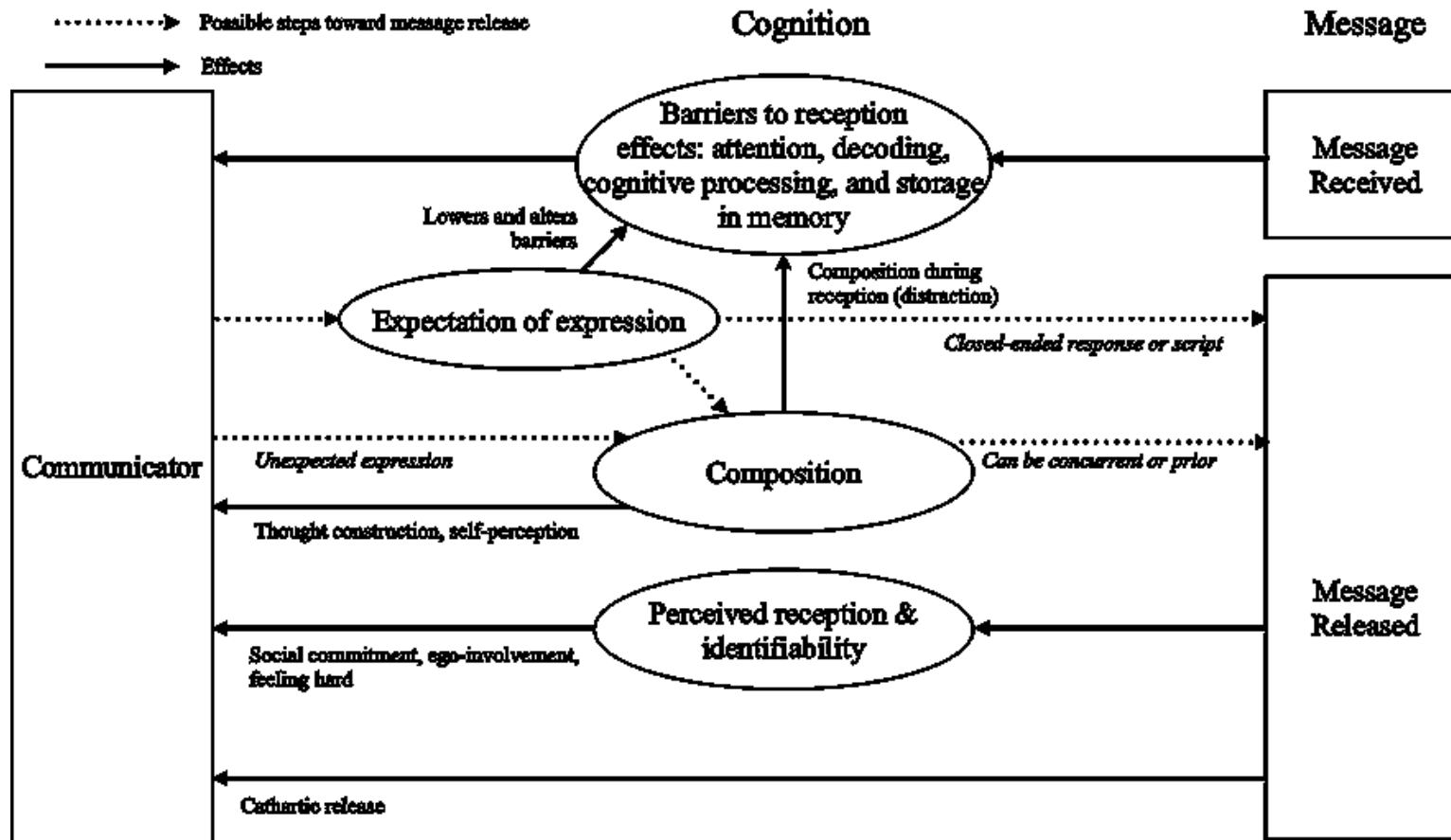
Source: Created by the author based on Figure 1 of Pingree (2007).

5.3   METHOD

This chapter relies on an explanatory sequential mixed methods design to test the above hypotheses and theorized model. The key ideas and the key themes emerging from the FGDs (Chapter 4) were carried into questionnaire survey. I am thus able to test the preliminary findings in both qualitative and quantitative method and bounce them off the groups and individuals. In addition, it is to be expected that insights and underlying reasons provided by the group interviews are capable of explaining the empirical findings of survey thoroughly with the qualitative data.

5.3.1 Sample size

The anonymous survey was implemented at two public universities in Beijing. With regard to the optimal sample size for applying SEM[131], researchers and analysts commonly recommended that a sample of 200 respondents is practically reasonable[132]. For instance, in the work of Hoyle and Kenny (1999), the authors recommend 100 respondents at the minimum, while encourage 200 for simple mediating models with moderately reliable measures. Nevertheless, extant studies offer no fixed methodological rule to follow to estimate the optimal sample size. Considering the population and other statistical indices, this study adopted the following equation to estimate the sample size of survey:

$$n = (\frac{z\sigma}{\varepsilon})^2 = \frac{z^2 \hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})}{\varepsilon^2} = \frac{z^2}{4\varepsilon^2}$$

Where:

σ = standard error of the sample mean;

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[131] The statistical properties of the various estimators are dependent on large samples (MacCallum & Austin, 2000), whereas large sample studies are not common in not only media and communication studies but also other disciplines (Holbert & Stephenson, 2002).

[132] Anderson & Gerbing (1988) suggest that a minimum of 150 respondents is needed. Another study suggests that a sample of 200 is relatively small but practically reasonable (Chou & Bentler, 1995). Similarly, Holbert and Stephenson (2002) suggest communication researchers should aim for a minimum of 150 participants per model, while, once again, reliability of variable and complexity of model should be taken into consideration.

z = level of confidence of the estimate (in the case of 95% = 1.96);

ε = sampling error;

n = sample size.

As seen from the equation, the estimate made on the sample hinges on the sampling error (ε). The size of sample (n) can be easily established by replacing ε with the error that the researcher are prepared to accept (Corbetta, 2003, pp. 212- 215).The sample size is thus estimated with 95% confidence level (z score = 1.96) of proportion of respondents, and a margin of sampling error (ε) of ± 5%. Assume a population proportion (p̂) of 0.5, and unlimited population size. Because when p̂ equals to 0.5, p̂ (1- p̂) reaches to its highest value so that the sample will be all the more sufficient. As a consequence of calculation, a minimum of 385 respondents is needed for the questionnaire survey[133]. Furthermore, according to Appendix 14 which outlines the sample size for three different degrees of error (Cobetta, 2003, p. 216), a minimum of 400 respondents is needed while the population exceeds 8000 persons (sampling error = 5%).

To summarize, based on the above discussion on sample size, a sample of 400 is practically ideal for a mediating model with moderately reliable measures.

5.3.2 Sampling design of questionnaire

The quantitative survey relied on probability sampling technique, multi-stage cluster sampling[134], to recruit respondents. Sample size of each university depends on the portion of currently enrolled undergraduate students retentive to the total number of undergraduate students. As of December 2016, there are approximately 5,300 undergraduate students at A University, and 8,300

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[133] The work of Tanaka (1987) performs fairly stable estimates in a sample of latent-variable structural equation model with 4:1 sample size-to-parameters ratio. Fifteen parameters are included in the analytical model of this study.
[134] See chapter 3 for the description of multi-stage cluster sampling technique.

students at B University as of September 2016. Thus, the sample of questionnaire survey consists of over 146 students at A University and over 239 students at B University.

Dormitory rooms[135] were used to constitute the sampling frame, since all undergraduate students are theoretically required to live in dormitory rooms in China[136]. Finally, 473 valid responses in the age group of 18-23 were obtained[137]. Based on the estimation above, the participants of questionnaire survey consist of *215 students at A University* and *258 students enrolled in B University*. Both questionnaire recovery rate and effective rate were higher than 90%. Given the procedures of data collection, the sample should be reasonably representative of university students in Beijing.

5.3.3 Measures

The questions for this analysis are composed of three main components: 1) demographic characteristics; 2) communication behaviors on SNSs, and 3) images of Japan. Variables of 2) and 3) are measured with ordered Likert-scale. The descriptions of the variables are presented below.

    i.   Reception and expression of Japan-related messages[138]

Japan-related *message reception* (adapted from Yoo, Choi, & Park. 2016) was measured using a single question on a five-point scale (1 = never to 5 = very often): "How often have you read or seen comments, questions, pictures, videos, or other information about Japan on SNSs (e.g., Weibo,

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[135] The sampling unit is university residence hall room, but the unit of observation is student.

[136] For details of procedures of recruitment, see Appendix 15.

[137] 510 survey questionnaires were sent out in total.

[138] To confirm whether event that may dramatically affect the respondents' perceptions of Japan had happened in the past 30 days (from October 15th to November 15th 2017), I have searched the news coverage on Japan in China domestic main stream media (e.g., the People's Daily, the Guangming Daily) using the database of CNKI. According to the search results, although the amount of coverage on Japan is very limited (7 for the People's Daily and 2 for the Guangming Daily), the reporting is mostly in a comprehensive and objective manner. For instance, the People's Daily reported on November 12 and 14 that Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang met with Japanese business community and Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo respectively. Both of the news reporting emphasizes on the importance of the improvement and growth of China-Japan relations.

WeChat moments, QQ Zone, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) in the past 30 days" (M = 2.87, SD = 1.18). As such, *message expression* was assessed using a single item to ask how often the respondents have posted or reposted comments, questions, pictures, videos, or other information about Japan on above listed SNSs in the past 30 days. The questions did not specify the sites. Responses range along a five-point scale (1 = never to 5 = very often; M = 2.06, SD = 1.15).

ii.   Evaluation and recognition of Japan

Images of Japan are constructed with three scales: evaluation, recognition, impression, and behavioral intention (adapted from Midooka, 1990; Jiang, 2013, 2014). *Evaluation and recognition of Japan*[139] elements are consisting of 8 SD items in total as interval scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed on the responses to evaluation and recognition of Japan to verify scale constructions. As is shown in Appendix 16, the results of analysis identified two subcomponents[140], including progressiveness (Cronbach's α = 0.71) and perceived threat (Cronbach's α = 0.78). The factor loadings of all the variables are greater than 0.50.

iii.   Impression of Japan

Impression of Japan was measured using a five-point scale (1 = very unfavorable 5 = very favorable), in which the respondents were asked to indicate how do they perceive Japan (M = 3.20, SD = 0.97).

iv.   Behavioral intentions towards Japan

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[139] The evaluation of Japan's progressiveness and perceived threat of Japan are significantly correlated ($\psi = 0.40$, $p < 0.01$).
[140] The results of CFA are consistent with Jiang's (2014) work.

The measurement of *behavioral intentions towards Japan*[141] is constructed with four elements based on the results of PCA: vigilant intention, intimate intention, interest of Japan, and social distance to Japan. Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agree or disagree with the following statements: (1) "I think we should be vigilant to Japan" (M = 3.17, SD = 0.93); (2) "I think that we should deepen the cooperation and build intimate relations with Japan in the future" (M = 3.58, SD = 0.81); (3) "I am interested in Japan" (M = 3.53, SD = 1.02); (4) "I hope I can stay or live in Japan" (M = 3.00, SD = 1.18). The responses are measured using a five-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree; Cronbach's α = 0.77).

v.   Demographic variables

Four sociodemographic variables served as exogenous variables[142] in the mediation model of this analysis, and their paths were linked to all endogenous variables[143] for control purposes. These demographic variables account for the structural characteristics (the first O portion in the communication mediation model) of a communicator. Respondents were asked their gender, to fill their age as of their last birthday in the blank, and to choose from 7 geographic divisions of China (1= Northeast China, 2= East China, 3= North China, 4= Central China, 5= South China, 6= Southwest China, 7= Northwest China) as variable of origin. Respondents were also asked to report an estimate of their family household for 2017 on a 1-6 scale (1 = less than RMB 100,000 to 6 = more than RMB 180,000)[144].

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[141] Vigilant intention is negatively correlated to intimate intention ($\psi = -0.99$, $p < 0.05$), interest of Japan ($\psi = -0.17$, $p < 0.001$), and social distance ($\psi = -0.22$, $p < 0.001$). Intimate intention is positively correlated to interest ($\psi = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$) and social distance ($\psi = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, strong correlation was found between interest and social distance with a psi coefficient of 0.66 ($p < 0.001$).

[142] Exogenous variables refer to independent variables that cause fluctuations in the values of other latent variables in the model (Byrne, 2010, p. 5).

[143] Endogenous variables are synonymous with dependent variables and are influenced by the exogenous variables in the model, either directly or indirectly (Byrne, 2010, p. 5).

[144] According to National Bureau of Statistics of China, urban per capita annual income (yuan) in 2015 is 62,029 (Retrieved from

Table 5.1 Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents

Age		
	Mean (SD)	19.37 (1.299)
Gender		
	Male	182 (38.5%)
	Female	290 (61.3%)
Origin		
	Northeast China	38 (8.0%)
	East China	152 (32.1%)
	North China	80 (16.9%)
	Central China	52 (11.0%)
	South China	41 (8.7%)
	Southeast China	55 (11.6%)
	Northeast China	54 (11.4%)
Annual household income		
	Below RMB \100,000	118 (24.9%)
	RMB \100,001 ~ 120,000	79 (16.7%)
	RMB \120,001 ~ 140,000	55 (11.6%)
	RMB \140,001 ~ 160,000	46 (9.7%)
	RMB \160,001 ~ 180,000	29 (6.1%)
	Over RMB \180,001	136 (28.8)
Respondents		N=473

Source: Created by the author.

http://data.stats.gov.cn/easyquery.htm?cn=C01&zb=A0Q0G&sj=2015 on March 17, 2018), and average number of employed persons per household are 1.5 persons in 2015 (Retrieved from http://data.stats.gov.cn/easyquery.htm?cn=C01&zb=A0Q0G&sj=2015 on March 17, 2018).

The sociodemographic characteristics of this study sample are shown in table 5.1. The mean age of respondents is 19.37 years old (range = 17 – 23 years) and 38.5% were male. The percentage of the respondents from each geographic division is consistent with the *National Population Census of China* in 2010[145], well reflecting the geographic diversity of China. The median category for annual household income was the range RMB \120,001 ~ 140,000.

5.4   ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Previous section elaborated on the application of data collection in questionnaire survey. The objective of this section is to provide analytic procedures and results. Before presenting descriptive statistics and frequency distributions, introducing the imputation methods that were applied to missing data in this study is indispensable. Next, CFA is conducted to examine the underlying latent constructs of evaluation and cognition of Japan. Then, both direct and indirect effects of SNS communication behaviors on behavioral intentions towards Japan are investigated by conducting structural equation model (SEM). Lastly, to validate the research model, a model comparison between trimmed model and model of alternate causal ordering is conducted to find a better model.

5.4.1 Imputation methods for missing data[146]

Prior to proceeding to data analyses, the methods of dealing with missing data[147] need to be taken into account since it will cause problems at all stages of analysis, especially in SEM.

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[145] National Bureau of Statistics of China, Tabulation of the 2010 Population Census of the People's Republic of China, 2010, retrieved from
http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/Statisticaldata/CensusData/rkpc2010/indexch.htm on March 17, 2018.
[146] For details of the discussions on imputation methods and the procedures of dealing with missing data, see Appendix 18.

Researchers of statistical science have paid a lot of attentions to solution to missing data, however, unfortunately, little empirical study devotes space to describing the application and procedure of the method of dealing with incomplete dataset. Several solutions to this problem are suggested by social researchers, such as excluding missing data from the construction of the index and the analysis, treating missing data as one of the variable responses, or yielding an interpretation of the meaning of missing data (Babbie, 2015, pp. 208-209). Whereas analysts approach missing data problem from a slightly different angle, for example, likewise deletion, and filling in the missing data values by mean estimates, least square (LS) estimates (Lee, Poon, & Bentler, 1990, p. 355). Among these methods, *multiple imputation* (MI) (Rubin, 1987) is a standard and straightforward method for handling missing data (e.g., Murray, 2018; Takahashi, 2017). Thus, this study relied on MI to fill the missing data values.

There are several widely used algorithm of multiple imputation in software program[148]. This study applied the full conditional specification (FCS) since it is generally believed that FCS methods are less likely to generate biased imputation and flexible for multilevel data (Audigier et al., 2018). The process of estimating the missing values is as described in Appendix 18.

Appendix 19 illustrates the total missing rates of all the variables which will be included in the imputation model. As shown in the figure, variable and case missing rates are 25% and 1.3% respectively. In order to verify the appropriateness of imputation method, Appendix 20 presents the patterns for each incomplete variable. Since as mentioned above, Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) method is established on the assumption of MAR, it is appropriate for the data with an arbitrary pattern of missing values. The imputed dataset without missing data was utilized to test the theorized model.

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[147] Rubin (1976) and Little and Rubin (1987) address three primary patterns of missing data: those missing completely at random (MCAR), those missing at random (MAR), and those missing not at random[147] (MNAR; also known as nonignorable nonresponse).
[148] Those are the data augmentation (DA) algorithm, the full conditional specification (FCS), and the expectation-maximization bootstrapping (EMB; Takahashi, 2017).

5.4.2 Descriptive statistics

Reception and expression of Japan-related messages

Figure 5.4 illustrates Chinese university student's responses to the questions concerning the frequency of receiving (M = 2.87, SD = 1.18) and expressing (M = 2.06, SD = 1.15) Japan-related messages on SNS. As displayed, the percentage of the respondents who have not received Japan-related information via SNSs at all in the past 30 days is merely 11.6%. However, with respect to the percentage of expressing message, 42.9% of respondents have not posted or forwarded Japan-related messages on SNS at all. As a consequence, 88.4% and 57% of the respondents reported that they have received and sent Japan-related messages on SNS in the past 30 days, respectively.

Figure 5.4 Frequency of receiving and expressing Japan-related message on SNSs
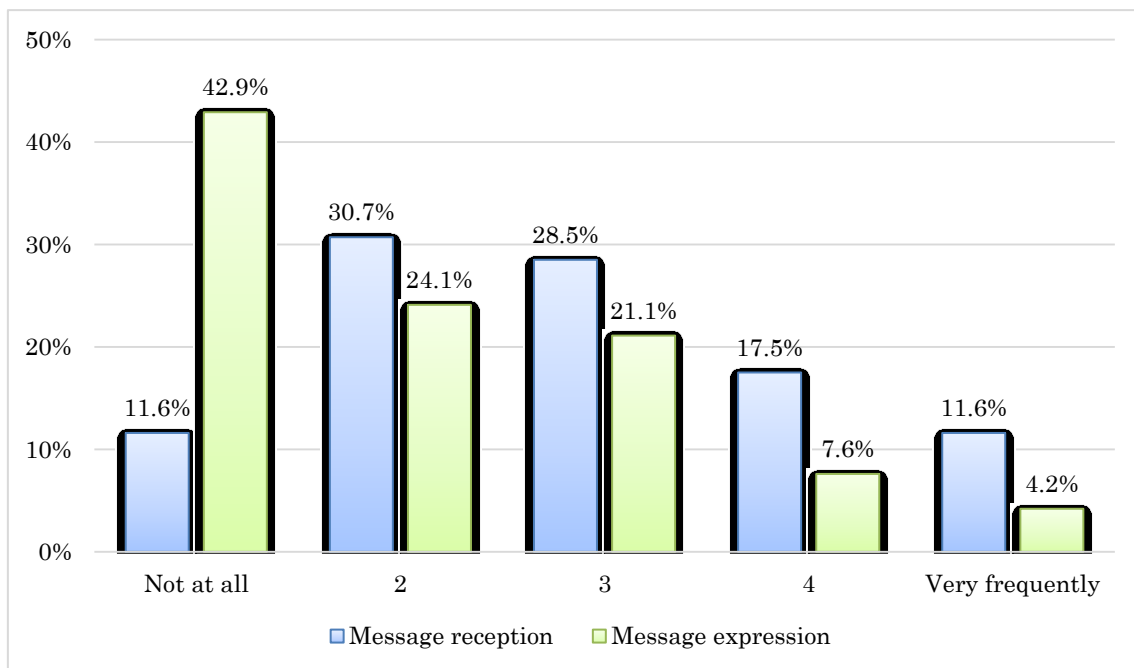
Source: Created by the author.

As discussed in the previous chapter, some studies found differences over perception and use of social media between male and female. For instance, it has been verified that compared to male, female users discuss personal life more frequently on blog (Schler et al., 2006), and more likely to view and share photos, keep in touch with friends, and post status updates on Facebook (Joinson, 2008). In the light of these findings, it is thus necessary to look into the distinctions in the frequency of receiving and expressing messages on SNS between male and female.

As can be seen from Figure 5.5, the proportion of male users (42.9%) receiving information in terms of Japan frequently on SNS is much higher than that of female users (20.7%). In the meantime, the ratio of female users not receiving information relating to Japan at all is 15.5%, approximately triple that of male users. The tendency of expression is remarkably similar to reception. As illustrated in Figure 5.6, despite the overall trend of expression for both male and female has declined, the proportion of male users producing messages on SNS is higher than that of female.

Therefore, based on the results of survey, this study found that in China, male undergraduate students are more inclined to receive and produce message in relation to Japan on SNS than female, which is seemingly inconsistent with the previous literature and findings of the FGDs. However, considering that disclosing personal life, emotions, and thoughts online differs from producing messages in terms of a foreign country, it does not mean that this result is contrary to the above-mentioned research and the findings emerging from the FGDs. In the following sections, the predictive effects of gender on cognitive and behavioral outcomes are testified by including the sociodemographic characteristics into the model as control variables.

Figure 5.5 Frequency of message reception by gender
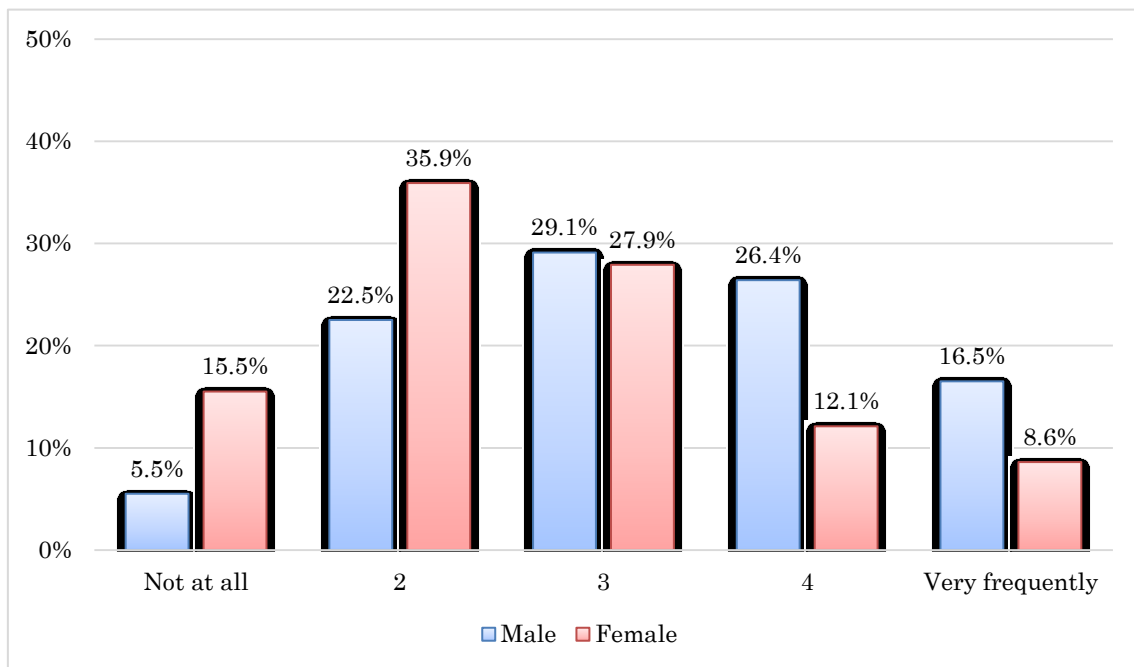
Source: Created by the author.

Figure 5.6 Frequency of message expression by gender
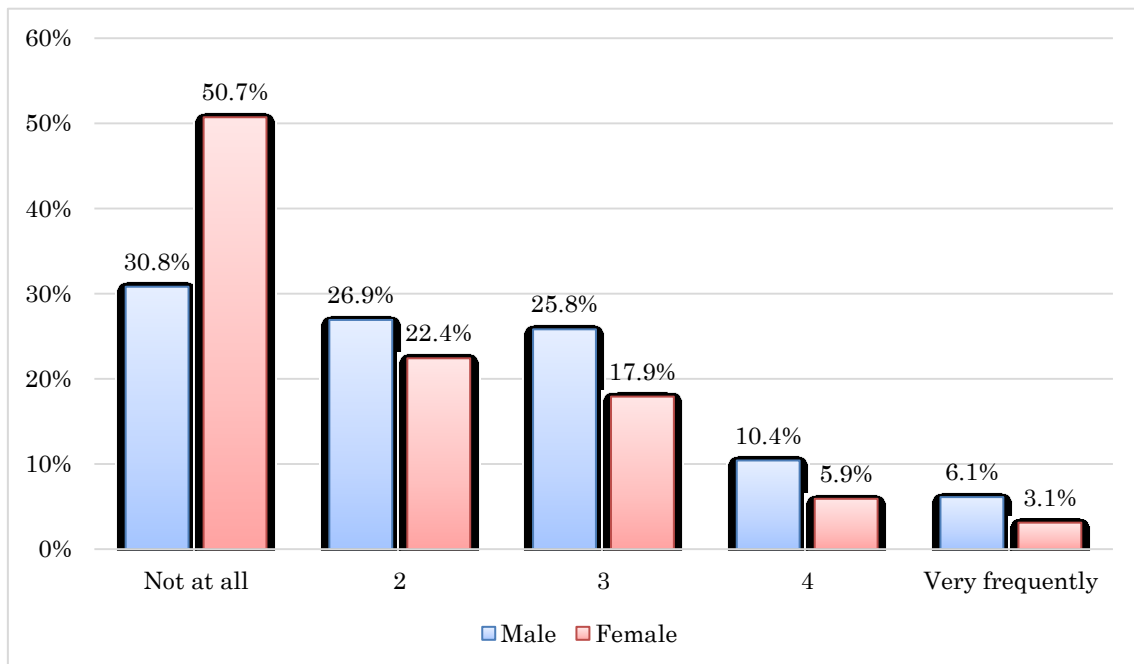
Source: Created by the author.

Evaluation and recognition of Japan

Figure 5.7 presents responses to the 8 SD items regarding the respondents' evaluations and recognitions of Japan. The following groups of antonyms are included: backward and advanced, dangers and safe, impoverished and affluent, untrustworthy and trustworthy, culturally barren and rich, militant and peace-loving, conservative and open and free, and threatening and contributing. As shown in the figure, the most responses are concentrated in higher evaluations and greater recognitions, which is contrast to the stereotypes and the results of conventional opinion polls.

Figure 5.7 Chinese university student's evaluation and recognition in terms of Japan
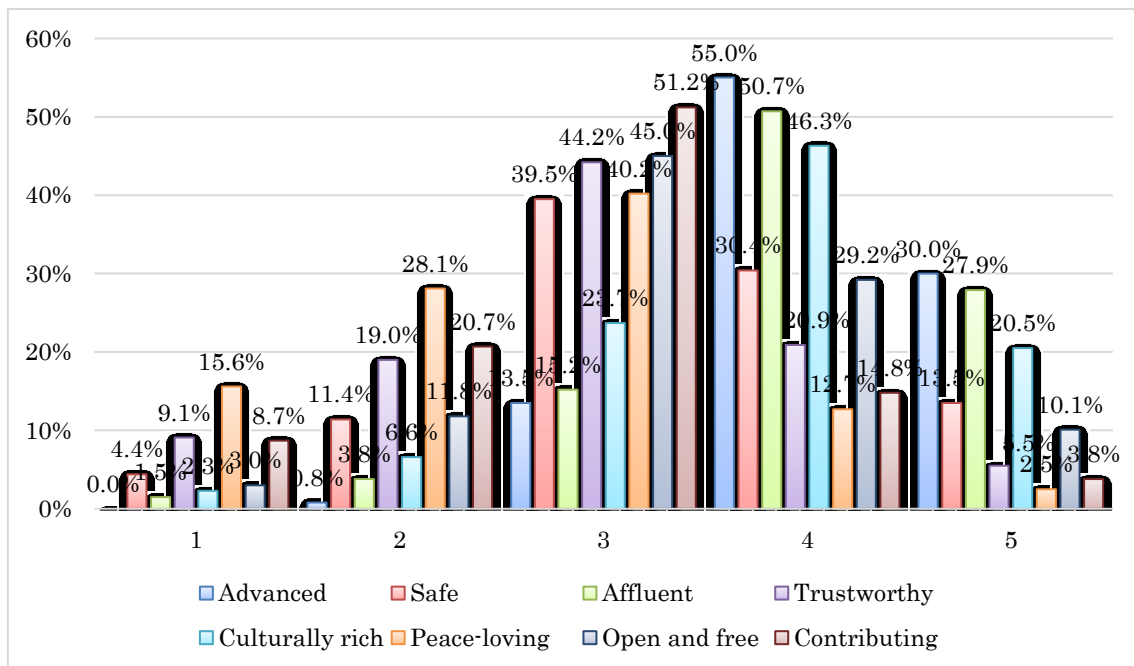
Source: Created by the author.

Impression of Japan

Figure 5.8 illustrates the overall proportion of Chinese university student's impression of Japan, and the percentages in accordance with gender. Not surprisingly, 40% of the respondents answered

that they have neither favorable nor unfavorable impression of Japan, with the highest proportion. As displayed in the figure, there is no obvious distinction in impression of Japan between men and women. Whereas, since some previous research argues that women are inclined to perceive Japan as favorable than men, a gender difference in impression is empirically examined in the following section.

Figure 5.8 Chinese university student's impression of Japan
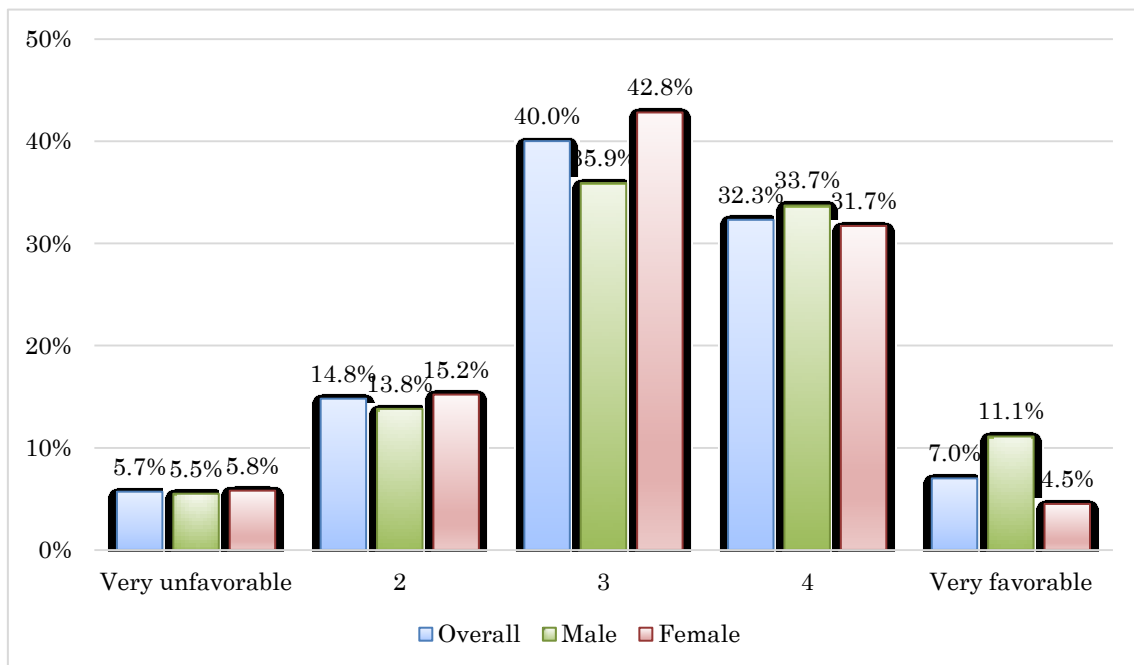
Source: Created by the author.

Behavioral intentions towards Japan

Figure 5.9 illustrates the percentage of the responses to question regarding to behavioral intentions towards Japan. In respect to vigilant intention, respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agree or disagree with being vigilant to Japan. There are nearly half of respondents maintained a neutral stance on being vigilant to Japan. The proportion of respondents who disagree (including 1 = strongly disagree and 2 = disagree) and agree (including 4 = agree and 5 = strongly

agree) the statement is approximately 18% and 33% respectively. Instead, more than 50% of respondents acknowledged that "We should deepen the cooperation and build intimate relations with Japan in the future". Consistent with expectation, it implies that on the one hand, Chinese respondents have been wary of Japan that caused by the threat of Japan. Whereas, on the other hand, for utilitarian consideration, respondents considered that close cooperative relation between Japan and China is necessarily and significantly[149].

Figure 5.9 Chinese university student's behavioral intentions towards Japan
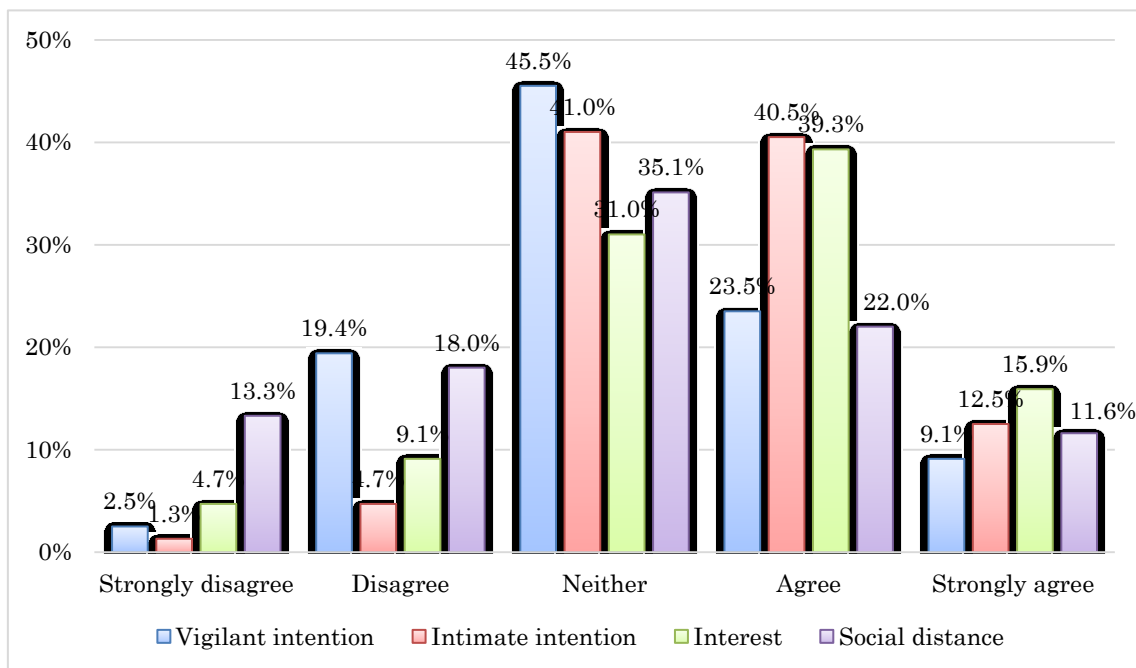
Source: Created by the author.

The proportion of respondents who are interested in Japan (including 4 = interested and 5 = strongly interested) accounts for 55.3%. Approximately 33% of respondents would like (including 4

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[149] For example, the term "cold politics and a hot economy" has often appeared in mass media and scholarly discussion to describe Japan-China relations. It means that the relationship in terms of economy is hot, though there is a persistent divergence in historical and territorial issues between the two countries.

= agree and 5 = strongly agree) to stay or live in Japan. Furthermore, this research also investigated respondent's actual number of travel to Japan. According to the results, 14.6% of respondents have experience of traveling to Japan. Figure 5.10 illustrates the responses to "Have you visited Japan?" and "How many times have you been in Japan?" 76.8% of the remainders have been to Japan for once, and 5.6% of remainders have been to Japan for more than twice.

Figure 5.10 The number of travel to Japan
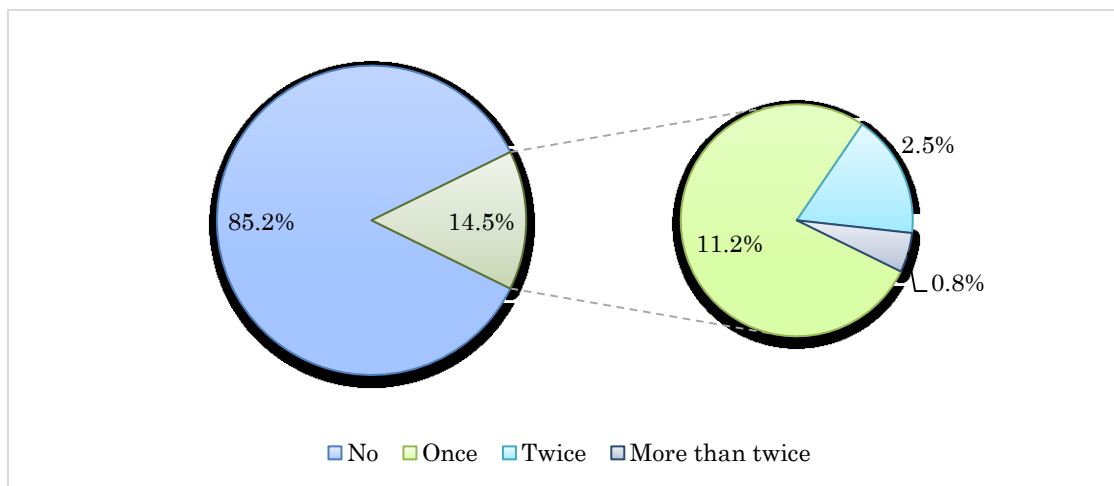
Source: Created by the author.

5.4.3 Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

As discussed previously, CFA is used to estimate the parameters of a measurement model when the researcher has some priori knowledge of the underlying latent variable structure (Byrne, 2010, p. 5; Blunch, 2012, pp. 127-128; Knoke, Bohrnstedt, & Mee, 2002, p. 414)[150]. Factor loadings serve as criteria to assess the degree to which the sample data are consistent to the theoretical constructs. Figure 5.11 displays the completely standardized estimates[151] for a two-factor model where the

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[150] For detailed rationales of applying CFA, see Chapter 3.
[151] AMOS can represent relationships in both unstandardized and standardized coefficients forms.

eight indicators of evaluation and cognition in relation of Japan hypothesized to load on separate but correlated factors, labeled "EvlReg1" and "EvlReg2". The correlation between the two latten variables is 0.43, indicating that they share 18.5% of their variation ($r^2 = (0.43)(0.43) = 0.185$). The model produced an unsatisfactory model fit to the covariance matrix: $\chi^2 = 167.6$; $df = 19$; $p = .000$; CFI = 0.864; GFI = 0.908; AGFI = 0.827; SRMR = 0.0942; RMSEA = 0.130, with 90% confidence interval from 0.112 to 0.148. Thus, we need to reconsider the modification indices.

Figure 5.11 Standardized estimates for two-factor model
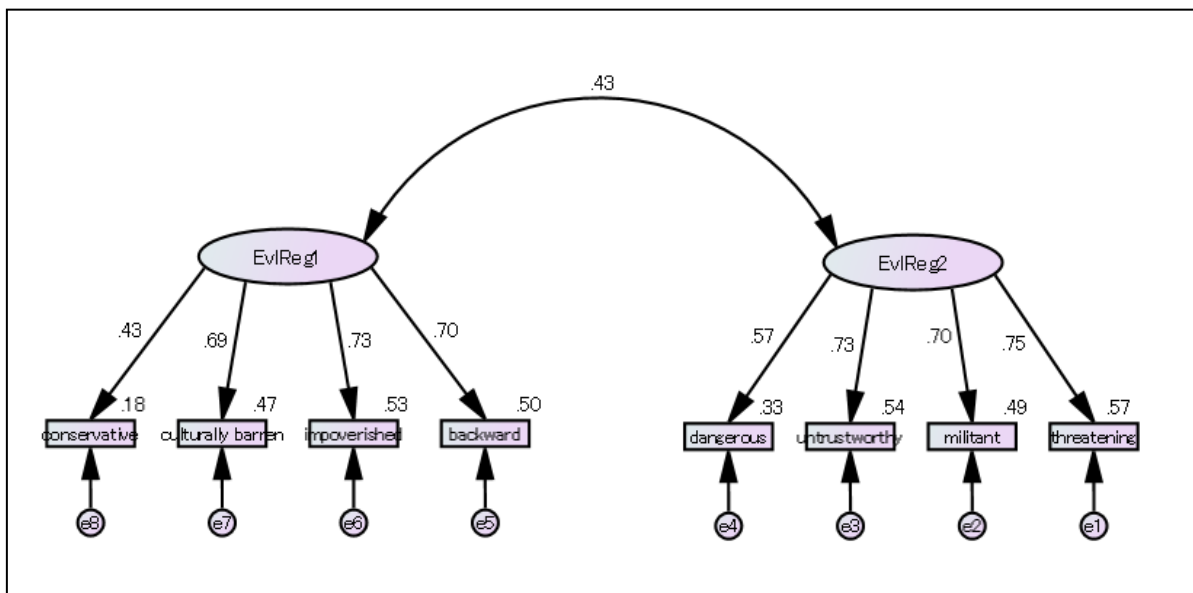
If we look into the indicators, we can find that: in accordance with the results of correlation analyses (1) it appears that the indicator of 'impoverished' is very close and correlated to 'backward' ($\theta = 0.577$, $p < 0.01$) and 'culturally barren' ($\theta = 0.492$, $p < 0.01$); (2) the indicators of 'militant' and 'threatening' ($\theta = 0.613$, $p < 0.01$) are very likely to be correlated more than caused by their common cause; (3) the same can be said on 'dangerous' and 'untrustworthy' ($\theta = 0.492$, $p < 0.01$), 'untrustworthy' and 'threatening' ($\theta = 0.517$, $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, following Blunch's (2012, p. 144) suggestion that the modification in a model needs to be based on substantive rather

than pure empirical evidence, it also important to take into consideration other expected correlations. The modified model with standardized coefficients is shown in Figure 5.12. In the improved model, the correlation between the two latten variables is 0.69, indicating that they share 47.6% of their variation (r^2= (0.69(0.69) =0.476).The model produced a chi-square of 40.7 with 11 degrees of freedom giving a P value of 0.000. Although P value of chi-square is still significant[152], it is considerably smaller than in the first run (chi-square = 167.6 and 40.7 in the first and second run, respectively)[153].

Figure 5.12 Standardized estimates for the final CFA model
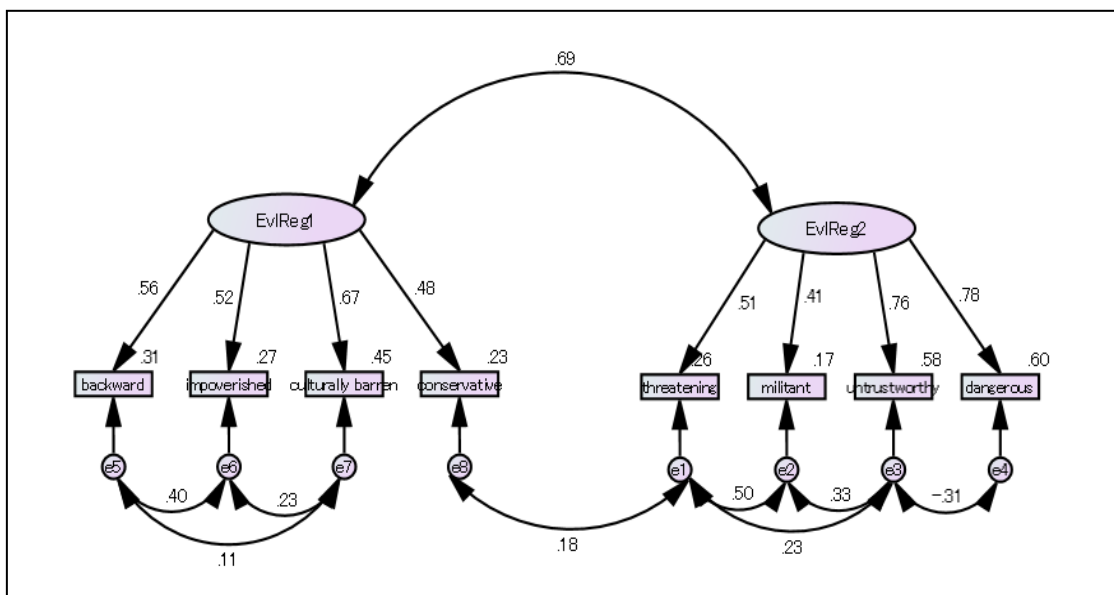
Several supplementary indices are also reported as follows: CFI = 0.973; GFI =0.979; AGFI = 0.932; SRMR = 0.0432; RMSEA = 0.076, with 90% confidence interval from 0.052 to 0.102,

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[152] In usual, a low and nonsignificant chi-square is considered as a sign of good model fit (Knoke, Bohrnstedt, & Mee, 2002, 421).

[153] Chi-square is usually accepted as a good model fit, however, chi-distributed statistic is often problematic such as with small sample or due to the lack of multivariate normality in the model (Hu & Bentler, 1995). The authors therefore argued that treating Chi-square as a criterion of model fit is not appropriate.

indicating a very satisfactory fit between the model and the data since all the indices are quite up to standards. CFI and GFI values of 0.90 or greater are considered a good model fit (Bentler, 1992; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1981). SRMR value under 0.06 and RMSER value less than 0.08 indicate that the hypothesized model observed the data very well (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Compared to the first run, the final model is considerably improved. The modified model will be applied to the mediation model.

Before proceeding to testify the proposed model, the descriptions of the above factors need to be explicit. As a result of CFA, two factors, "EvlReg1" and "EvlReg2", were extracted. "EvlReg1" and "EvlReg2" is named as "progressiveness" and "perceived threat" respectively by considering the components of each factor. Therefore, the factor of "progressiveness" is defined as an evaluation of considering Japan as an advanced, affluent, culturally rich, and open and free country. The recognition that Japan is a dangerous, militant, untrustworthy, and threatening country is referred to as "perceived threat" in the following analysis. Although both of the factors are used to measure the cognitions regarding Japan, the former one places emphasis on the evaluation of Japan's culture, society, economics, and so forth. However, the latter factor captures the political aspect and Japan's international image (e.g., responsible, reliable image).

5.4.4 Assessing reliability and validity of the analysis

To ensure trustworthiness of the findings, it is necessary to assess reliability[154] and validity[155] of the quantitative analysis that was carried out in this chapter[156]. In the first place, the

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[154] Reliability refers that a questionnaire should consistently reflect the construct that it is measuring (Field, Miles, & Field, 2012, p. 798).

[155] See Chapter 3 for the definitions of different types of validity. This chapter employs construct validity to assess the trustworthiness of quantitative research, because compared to the face validation and criterion validation, construct validity is said to be the strongest kind of validation procedure since it requires more information than the other two types of validation (Bailey, 2008, p. 70).

[156] The definite strategies for promoting overall trustworthiness of quantitative research have been proposed in chapter 3.

trustworthiness of the analysis is established on creating reliable measures and procedures. The strategies that are suggested by social researchers (e.g., Babbie, 2015, pp. 148-154; Bailey, 2008, pp. 67-77; Neuman, 2013, pp. 215-217; summarized in Appendix 8 for enhancing the rigor of the measurements are followed in the phase of creating survey questions and pilot testing the questionnaire (see Chapter 3).

Then, CFA was conducted for assessing construct validity in SEM (Jöreskog, 1969; see preceding subsection). For that purpose, several techniques were adopted to cross-check the reliability of the measurement model. To be more specific, this study applied reliability analysis by presenting Cronbach's alpha (CA) coefficients[157] (Cronbach, 1951), which is the most common measure of scale reliability, to assess the internal consistency. As the results of reliability analysis, all the CA coefficients are greater than 0.7[158], indicating a substantially reliable scale.

Table 5.2 Estimation of IR (item reliability), CR (composite reliability), and AVE (average variance extracted)

	Factor1 (λ_i/λ_i^2)	*Factor2 (λ_i/λ_i^2)*
Backward	0.820 (0.672)	
impoverished	0.843 (0.711)	
Culturally barren	0.712 (0.501)	
Conservative	0.433 (0.187)	
Militant		0.856 (0.733)
Threatening		0.835 (0.697)

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[157] Cronbach's alpha is estimated as: $\alpha = \frac{N^2 \overline{Cov}}{\sum s_{item}^2 + \sum Cov_{item}}$ (Field, Miles, & Field, 2012, p. 798).

[158] It is argued that 0.7 is a widely accepted cutoff criterion (see DeVellis, 1991, p. 85; Field, Miles, & Field, 2012, p. 799).

Untrustworthy		0.738 (0.545)
Dangerous		0.548 (0.300)
$\sum \lambda_i$	2.808	2.977
$(\sum \lambda_i)^2$	7.885	8.863
CR[159]	0.804	0.837
AVE[160]	0.519	0.744

Source: Created by the author.

Furthermore, in order to assess the reliability of the overall scale score, item reliability (IR)[161] of the multiple indicator CFA model are formulated[162]. The coefficients of indicators are outlined in Table 5.2. All the squared lambda coefficients[163] are greater than 0.5 except for indicator of conservative and dangerous. The composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) are calculated to assess the convergent validity[164] of the measurement (see Appendix 23 for calculation of CR and AVE). The results proved validity and reliability of the measurement model, yielding satisfactory values of CA, CR, and AVE.

5.4.5 Effects of online communication behaviors on behavioral intentions

This section provides quantitative findings emerged from SEM analysis on questionnaire survey. It begins with an assessment of model evaluation through providing a brief introduction to

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[159] The acceptable value of CR is 0.7 and above.
[160] Values above 0.7 are considered very well, whereas, the validity is questionable if the value is less than 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).
[161] Knoke, Bohrnstedt, and Mee (2012) define item reliability as the proportion of an observed variable's variance that is attributable to the effect of the unobserved variable.
[162] The formulation of item reliability: $\lambda_{ij}^2 = \frac{\sigma_{y_i}^2 - \sigma_{\epsilon_j}^2}{\sigma_{\eta_j}^2}$ (Knoke, Bohrnstedt, & Mee, 2012, p. 473).
[163] Through the formula, it is easily to infer that the lower the error term (i.e., ϵ_j) is, the indicator reliability (i.e., λ_{ij}) is higher.
[164] Convergent validity refers to the degree to which the

several commonly used model goodness-of-fit indices and cutoff values of these indices. Next, since previous research on mediation model in communication studies argues that the conceptualization of indirect media effects is vital for the deeper understanding of how and why media effects occur and avoiding biased estimation of effects sizes. For the above reasons, specific indirect effects are assessed using bootstrapping after identifying direct effects and total effects between endogenous and exogenous variables. Then, correlations among endogenous variables are estimated. This section ends up with model comparison between trimmed model and alternate causal ordering of variable cluster.

Table 5.3 Direct effects of Japan-related message reception and expression on behavioral intentions

	Estimate	P	Sig.
Vigilance <— Message reception	-.083	.187	n.s.
Intimacy <— Message reception	.091	.146	n.s.
Interest <— Message reception	.179	.008	**
Social distance <—Message reception	.108	.132	n.s.
Vigilance <— Message expression	-.010	.916	n.s.
Intimacy <— Message expression	.023	.717	n.s.
Interest <— Message expression	-.005	.922	n.s.
Social distance <— Message expression	.012	.938	n.s.

Note. Standardized coefficients are reported. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Prior to testing the theorized mediation model, the direct effects[165] of SNS communication on behavioral intentions are presented in Table 5.3. The results indicate that there are no significant

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[165] A direct effect, which is the influence of one variable on another, is represented in a structural model by a single path (Holbert & Stephenson, 2003).

relationships between independent and dependent variables except message reception and interest in Japan ($\beta = 0.179$, $p < 0.01$). Consistent with the theorized pathway, the result suggests that people who frequently receive Japan-related information on SNSs were more likely to be interested in Japan.

To explain the underlying reasons to this result, the findings that emerged from the FGD will be carried into the interpretation. I will put forward a plausible explanation based on Chapter 4. As implied by the interviews with 24 Chinese university students, the majority of the participants stated that they consume the products of Japanese traditional culture or popular culture for entertainment motivations to varying degrees (see Figure 4.7). Most of participants explicitly noted the linkage between consumption of Japanese culture productions on SNSs and their favorable impression of Japan, though male and female participants tend to consume different genres of media productions. Cultural attractiveness of Japan has been widely discussed and highly evaluated by scholars of culture studies and public diplomacy in particular. As a most vital soft power of Japan, Japanese media cultural has established appealing images of Japan (Iwabuchi, 2015). Apart from the above explanation, information in relation to Japanese society, economy, or politics that respondents received on SNSs for information seeking motivation may also play a vital role in shaping their images of Japan. Therefore, to examine the effects of different types of Japan-related messages, content-based analysis should be developed in the future.

Next, to test the theorized model described in Figure 5.2, structural equation modeling (SEM) is generated using behavioral intentions towards Japan as outcome variables in the following subsection. First, I started fitting a saturated model with all theorized paths. Then, following standard modification approaches for the refinement of SEM (Bollen, 1989; Kline, 1998), nonsignificant paths were removed from the overall theorized model to identify the best fitting model, controlling by age, gender, annual household income, and origin. As a result of model evaluation, modified

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model exhibits better model fits than the overall theorized model without changing the theorized interrelationships.

5.4.5.1 Model Evaluation

In order to determine the goodness-of-fit between the theorized model and the sample data, modified model was first assessed with several goodness-of-fit indices. In general, there are two types of fit indices: absolute[166] and incremental[167] (Bollen, 1989; Gerbing & Anderson, 1993; Hu & Bentler, 1995). The most common absolute fit index is the χ^2 goodness-of-fit test[168] (Hoyle & Panter, 1995). The χ^2-distributed test suggests that the model does not fit the data, yielding a chi-square value of 329.7 with 90 degrees of freedom and a probability of less than .0001, thereby suggesting that the fit of the data to the hypothesized model is not adequate[169]. However, the χ^2-distributed statistic is arguably problematic in some instances[170]. Thus, researchers have proposed many supplemental indices to evaluate to what extent the model fit the data collected in the survey.

The comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler & Bonett, 1980) and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI; Tucker & Lewis, 1973) are the most commonly used incremental indices assessing the proportionate improvement in model fit by comparing the hypothesized model with the less restricted baseline model[171] (Byrne, 2012). Following the recommendation of Browne and Cudeck (1993), this study

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[166] Absolute indices determine if the proposed model is consistent with the data without the use of a reference model (Holber & Stephenson, 2002).

[167] Incremental indices assess the "proportionate improvement in fit" by matching the hypothesized model with a nested baseline model (Hu & Bentler, 1995, p. 82).

[168] A *nonsignificant* value of χ^2 is usually accepted as a good model fit.

[169] This study also reported goodness-of-fit index (GFI) in combination with χ^2. GFI was introduced by Jöreskog & Sörbom (1981) as an absolute test to counter the inherent weakness associated with $\chi 2$ test.

[170] As described previously, χ^2-distributed statistic is problematic with small sample or due to the lack of multivariate normality in the model (Byrne, 2010, p. 76; Hu & Bentler, 1995). Likewise, if the sample is sufficiently large any model will be rejected (Blunch, 2012, p. 110).

[171] CFI and TLI cutoff values close to 0.95 for large sample are considered a good model fit (see Bentler, 1992; Hu & Bentler, 1999).

present root mean squared residual (SRMR)[172] instead of TLI in combination with the root mean squared error of approximation[173] (RMSEA). In this case, SRMR value under 0.06 and RMSEA value less than 0.08 indicate the hypothesized model observed sample data very well (Hu & Bentler, 1999; MacCallum et al., 1996).

In the light of the above discussion, in addition to chi-square, this study presents SRMR, GFI, CFI, and RMSEA to evaluate the model fit[174]. But it should be noted that chi-square, GFI, and RMSEA are arguably sensitive to the sample size and can be overtly influenced by the sample size (see Thompson & Wang, 1999). Overall, based on the cutoff criteria (see Appendix 25), the model presented a reasonably good fit of the data: χ^2 = 156.518 p = 0.00, df = 81, SRMR = 0.034, RMSEA= 0.046, CFI= 0.968, GFI = 0.966. Thus, we can assert that the hypothesized model fits the sample data fairly well.

5.4.5.2 Effects of Japan-related message reception

Prior to identifying the specific indirect effects, total effects of exogenous variables on endogenous variable are identifies in this subsection. To recap briefly, the total effect of one variable on another is composed of its direct effects and indirect effects (Bollen, 1987). For example, as shown in Equation 5.1, the total effect of message reception (R) on vigilant intention towards Japan (V) is equal to the direct effect of R on V plus the sum of the specific indirect effect through progressiveness (S), perceived threat (T), and impression of Japan (M) respectively (see Figure 5.13). Therefore, the equation can be expressed as below:

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[172] SRMR represents the average value across all standardized residuals ranging from zero to 1.00.
[173] Browne and Cudeck (1993) suggest reporting standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) instead of TLI in combination with the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) when a sample is greater than 250, since it is proved that when the sample size is small, the TLI and RMESA tend to over reject true population models (Hu & Benteler, 1999).
[174] Because of their sensitivity to sample size, model misspecification, and distributional properties of the model's variables, it is suggested that the following fit indices perform poorly and should not be reported: goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), normed fit index (NFI), Bollen 86, Akaike's information criterion (AIC), cross-validation index (CI), critical N, and the χ^2 to degree of freedom ratio (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Bollen, 1989).

$$V = P_{VR}R + P_{VS}S + P_{VT}T + P_{VM}M + P_{VV'}V' \qquad \text{Equation 5.5.1}$$

Figure 5.13 Path diagram with coefficient symbols for behavioral intentions against Japan
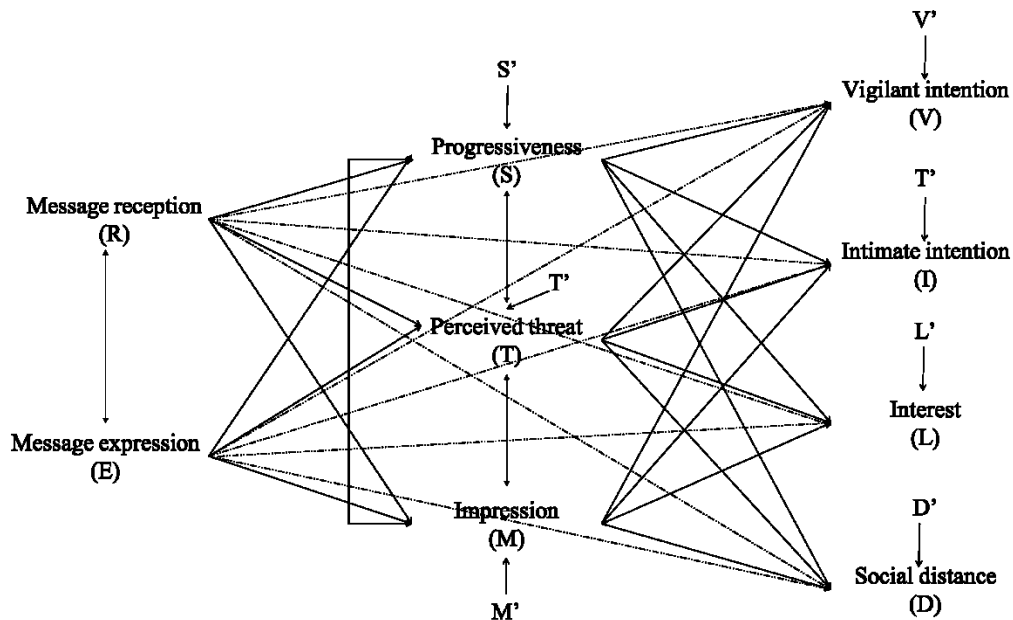
Figure 5.14 delineates the results of all hypothesized paths and Table 5.6 presents the estimates of the interrelationships among communication behaviors and three dimensions pertaining to Japan's country image in the eyes of Chinese university students. First, the results indicate that as expected in the theorized model (see Figure 5.2), message reception is positively correlated to message expression (r = 0.61, p<0.001). That is, respondents who receive Japan-related information frequently are more likely to produce Japan-related messages on SNSs and vice versa. In contrast to most of the previous studies into communication mediation, the present study conceptualized a correlation between reception and expression instead of causality. Because a systematic study on SNS communication process implies that expressing can in turn contribute to receiving through interacting (Shao, 2008).

In addition, for direct effects of receiving Japan-related messages on SNSs, as proposed in H1, the relationships observed here indicate that receiving Japan-related information on SNSs facilitates Chinese university student's evaluation of Japan's progressiveness (β = .184, $p < 0.01$) and impression of Japan to respondents (β = .225, $p < 0.001$), whereas no significant effects on perceived threat (β = .122, n.s.) were found. Contrary to the assertion that SNSs use is closely link with popular anti-Japanese sentiment in China, this result provides strong evidence that obtaining Japan-related information on SNSs improve individuals' evaluation and impression of Japan. In contrast to the findings that domestic mass media use will deteriorate people's impression of Japan (Jiang, 2014), the positive effects of SNS communication may be accounted for being exposed to diverse and counter-attitudinal viewpoints on SNSs.

Figure 5.14 Structural equation model for predicting the receiving and expressing Japan-related messages on behavioral intentions toward Japan
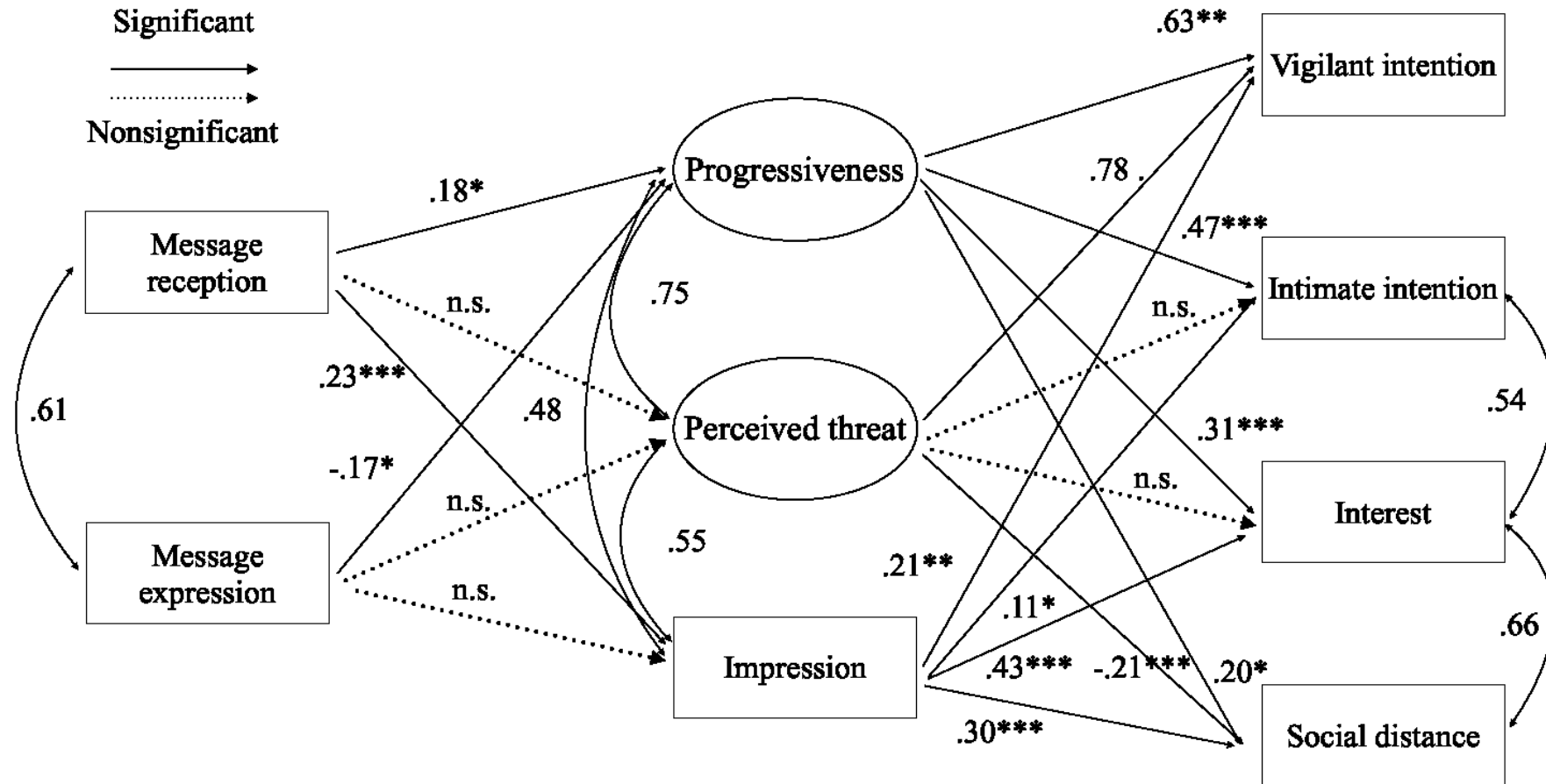
Note: Standardized path coefficients are reported. Age, gender, household income, and origin are included as exogenous variables, but not shown here. $\chi^2 = 156.518$ p = 0.00, df = 81, SRMR = 0.034, RMSEA= 0.046, CFI= 0.968, GFI = 0.966. *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, . p < 0.10.

Furthermore, H1 also predicted that receiving Japan-related message is associated with behavioral intentions towards Japan. As shown in Table 5.3, although message reception has a positive direct effect on respondents' interest in Japan (β = .179, p < 0.01; Equation 5.2), however, there is little total effect of message reception on vigilant intention (β = -.079, n.s.), intimate intention (β = .092, n.s.), interest in Japan (β = .175, n.s.), and social distance to Japan (β = .113, n.s.).

$$I_{reception} = P_{IR}R + P_{II'}I \qquad\qquad \text{Equation 5.2}$$

Therefore, this study failed to find support for total effects of Chinese university student's Japan-related message reception via SNSs on their behavioral intentions towards Japan.

Table 5.4 Structural relationships among exogenous and endogenous variables (Standardized total effects)

	Evaluation & recognition (Estimate/S.E)		Impression (Estimate/S.E)	Behavioral intention (Estimate/S.E)			
	Progressiveness	Perceived threat		Vigilance	Intimacy	Interest	Social Distance
Age (γ)	.046 (.018)	.097 . (.029)	.041 (.034)	-.045 (.036)	-.055* (.025)	-.004 (.028)	-.014 (.036)
Gender (γ)	-.179** (.049)	-.163** (.079)	-.042 (.091)	-.029 (.097)	-.169 (.070)	-.050 (.077)	-.011. (.099)
Household income (γ)	.071 (.011)	.119 . (.018)	.124** (.020)	-.027 (.021)	.110 (.015)	.096 (.017)	-.059 (.022)
Origin (γ)	-.018 (.012)	-.009 (.020)	.029 (.023)	-.058 (.023)	.026 (.017)	.019 (.019)	.066 (.024)
Message reception (β)	.184* (.024)	.122 . (.040)	.225*** (.047)	-.079 (.050)	.092 (.036)	.175 (.040)	.113 (.051)
Message expression (β)	-.173* (.025)	.078 (.041)	-.017 (.047)	-.011 (.059)	.023 . (.039)	-.099 (.043)	.011 (.054)
Progressiveness (β)	–	–	–	.632*** (.383)	.472** (.264)	.309*** (.223)	.200*** (.226)
Perceived threat (β)	–	–	–	.778*** (.250)	-.109 (.111)	-.077 (.120)	-.215 . (.155)
Impression	–	–	–	-.215** (.074)	.109* (.046)	.427*** (.050)	.301*** (.064)

Note: Coefficients of standardized Gama (γ) and Beta (β). *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, . $p < 0.1$.

5.4.5.3 Effects of Japan-related message expression

Supporting H2, expressing Japan-related messages on SNSs yielded a scant effect on the evaluation of Japan's progressiveness ($\beta = -.173$, $p < 0.05$; Equation 5.3). That is, respondents who frequently produce Japan-related messages on SNSs are more likely to exhibit lower levels of evaluation of Japan's progressiveness. However, another theorized relationship between message expression and perceived threat of Japan fell just short of the threshold of significance. Thus, the findings partially supported.

$$S_{expression} = P_{ES}S + P_{SS'}S \qquad \text{Equation 5.3}$$

H2 also posited that Japan-related message expression on SNSs is negatively associated with respondent's behavioral intentions against Japan. As shown in Table 5.4, no total significant effects of Japan-related message expression on behavioral intentions of Japan were found except intimate intention. The results show that expression has a positive but scant effect on Chinese university student's intimate intention towards Japan ($\beta = .023$, $p < 0.10$). Thus, H2 is partially supported by the results.

5.4.5.4 Effects of evaluation and recognition of Japan

Supporting H3, evaluation of Japan's progressiveness has positive associations with behavioral intentions ($\beta = .632$, $p < 0.001$ for vigilant intention, Equation 5.4, $\beta = .472$, $p < 0.01$ for intimate intention, Equation 5.5; $\beta = .309$, $p < 0.001$ for interest of Japan, Equation 5.6; $\beta = .200$, $p < 0.001$ for social distance, Equation 5.7). The structural equations for each dependent variable can be established as follows. The linkage between evaluation of Japan's progressiveness and behavioral

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intentions received distinctly strong empirical evidence. Therefore, H3 were supported by the results of analysis.

$$V_{progressiveness} = P_{VS}S + P_{VV'}V \qquad \text{Equation 5.4}$$

$$I_{progressiveness} = P_{IS}S + P_{II'}I \qquad \text{Equation 5.5}$$

$$L_{progressiveness} = P_{LS}S + P_{LL'}L \qquad \text{Equation 5.6}$$

$$D_{progressiveness} = P_{DS}S + P_{DD'}D \qquad \text{Equation 5.7}$$

In addition, as proposed in H3, perceived threat of Japan is positively associated with vigilant intention (β = .778, p < 0.001; Equation 5.8), while negatively associated with social distance (β = -.215, p < 0.10; Equation 5.9). The relationships between evaluation of progressiveness and intimate intention (β = -.109, n.s.) and interest in Japan (β = -.077, n.s.) appear to leave relatively little to be explained. As discussed above, the findings largely supported H4.

$$V_{threat} = P_{VT}T + P_{VV'}V \qquad \text{Equation 5.8}$$

$$D_{threat} = P_{DT}T + P_{DD'}D \qquad \text{Equation 5.9}$$

5.4.5.5 Indirect effects

As many theorists argued, most media effects are indirect rather than direct (e.g., McLeod et al., 2009; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Thus, to fully understand why and how the media effects occur, indirect effects of mass and interpersonal communication must be taken into account. The preceding subsections have investigated the direct and total effects of message reception and expression on cognitive and behavioral outcomes. This subsection thus aims at examining the total indirect and specific indirect effects of SNS communication on Chinese university student's image of Japan.

As the most significant type of effects for assessing mediation in structural equation models (Brown, 1997; Hays, 2009; Holbert & Stephenson, 2002), specific indirect effects represent the

portion of the total indirect effect that works through a single intervening variable (Fox, 1980). To assess whether one or both of the intervening variables are mediators, each specific indirect effect should be isolated and tested respectively. However, commonly used SEM software package such as LISREL, EQS, and AMOS provides direct effects, the total indirect effects, and total effects, but not the specific indirect effects necessary for assessing mediation (Holbert & Stephenson, 2003).

Analysts and researchers refer to bootstrapping methodology[175], which has become popular in recent decades in literatures as an alternative to Sobel tests[176], as one of the more valid and powerful methods for testing intervening variables effects (Hayes, 2009; MacKinnon et al., 2004). Compared to other methods such as Sobel tests, the inference of bootstrapping is based on an estimate of the indirect effect itself, that is, it is not built on the assumptions about the shape of the sampling distribution of the direct effect (Hayes, 2009). As demonstrated previously, although the various SEM software packages do not directly estimate the statistical significance of specific indirect effects, bootstrap procedures easily generalized to estimators of standardized regression coefficients, indirect effects, and total effects, and generate confidence intervals. To summarize, compared with classical procedures, there are two advantages of bootstrap for testing specific indirect effects. First, the bootstrap does not assume any particular distribution for the variables (Hayes, 2009). Second, it is customized to the specific data that is being analyzed (Bollen & Stine, 1990). Thus, I estimated the specific indirect effects of SNS communication on behavioral intentions by running the syntax described in Appendix 12 using the technique of bootstrap.

Total indirect effects

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[175] The bootstrap is an approach to estimating properties of estimators based on samples drawn from the original observations, and is also useful in forming confidence intervals (Bollen & Stine, 1990).
[176] Sobel tests were designed to test the statistical significance of the total indirect effects of an independent variable on some dependent variable in the structural model (Sobel, 1982, 1986).

First, Table 5.5 summaries the estimates and critical values for 95% confidence interval of total indirect effects of two exogenous variables, message reception and expression, on behavioral intentions. The total indirect effect of receiving Japan-related message via SNSs on behavioral intentions towards Japan is the sum of specific indirect effect runs through progressiveness, perceived threat, and impression of Japan respectively. As such, the total indirect effects of message expression on behavioral intentions are shown in the fifth column of Table 5.5. As a result, message reception produces positive total indirect effects on intimate intention (β = .125, p < 0.001), interest in Japan (β = .162, p < 0.001), and reduction in social distance to Japan (β = .131, p < 0.001). In accordance with the above results, I thus infer that the consumption of some kind of Japan-related information which may provoke higher evaluation and favorable impression of Japan and thus resulting in friendly behavior intentions attracts sufficient attention which generates memory trace that can be recalled later (Pingree, 2007; Yoo et al., 2016; Southwell et al., 2002).

Table 5.5 Standardized total indirect effects of message reception and expression on behavioral intentions towards Japan

	Message reception			Message expression		
	Estimate	LB	UB	Estimate	LB	UB
Vigilant intention	-.027	-.168	.225	.166 **	.889	.048
Intimate intention	.125 **	.020	.258	-.075	-.234	.057
Interest	.162 **	.062	.272	-.054	-.181	.098
Social distance	.131 **	.039	.229	-.023	-.138	.077

Note: Standardized coefficients are reported; *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, . p < 0.1.

Japan-related message expression has a positive total indirect effect on vigilant intention towards Japan (β = .166, p < 0.001) running through outcome orientations (i.e., evaluation and recognition of Japan and impression of Japan), which means that the more frequently individuals produce Japan-related messages on SNSs, the more likely they intend to be vigilant against Japan.

The above findings confirmed that the effects of expression channeled by cognitive characteristics are positively link with vigilant behavioral intention, which is contrast to reception effects. The anticipated reasons to the inverse findings regarding the effectiveness of communicating Japan-related information will be discussed in the concluding section of this chapter.

Specific indirect effects

Table 5.6 presents the estimates and 95% confidence intervals of specific indirect effects of message reception and expression mediated by cognitive outcomes on behavioral intentions representatively (see Appendix 14 for estimating syntax). H4 posited that the relationships between receiving relevant information and behavioral intentions would be mediated by cognitive outcomes. Consistent with the hypothesis, evaluation of Japan's progressiveness channeled the effects of receiving Japan-related message via SNSs on behavioral intentions except vigilant intention (β = .132, p < 0.01 for intimate intention, ie2; β = .148, p < 0.01 for interest of Japan, ie3; β = .133, p < 0.01 for social distance, ie4). In addition, higher levels of receiving relevant messages led to favorable impression of Japan (Figure 5.4). This in turn predicted higher levels of interest in Japan (β = .082, p < 0.001, ie19) and willingness of reducing social distance to Japan (β = .068, p < 0.001, ie20).

As proposed in H5, perceived threat of Japan mediated partially the effects of expressing Japan-related messages on behavioral intentions. To my surprise, higher levels of expressing Japan-related messages led to higher levels of perceived threat of Japan, which resulted in greater vigilant intention (β = .266, p < 0.01, ie13) and greater intention of reducing the social distance to

Japan (β = .093, p < 0.01, ie16). However, impression of Japan was not shown to mediate the relationships between expressing Japan-related messages and behavioral intentions towards Japan. Therefore, H4 and H5 were supported partially.

Table 5.6 Mediating pathways between receiving/expressing Japan-related information and behavioral intentions

Specific indirect effect	*Label*	*Estimate*	*S.E.*	*Lower*	*Upper*	*Sig.*
Reception —> Progressiveness —> Vigilance	ie1	.092	.007	-.005	.388	.062
Reception —> Progressiveness —> Intimacy	ie2	.060*	.039	.005	.166	.039
Reception —> Progressiveness —> Interest	ie3	.049*	.033	.007	.148	.025
Reception —> Progressiveness —> Social distance	ie4	.037*	.030	.001	.147	.046
Expression —> Progressiveness —> Vigilance	ie5	.141	.035	-.236	1.972	.386
Expression —> Progressiveness —> Intimacy	ie6	.092	.224	-.107	.735	.391
Expression —> Progressiveness —> Interest	ie7	.075	.175	-.065	.552	.327
Expression —> Progressiveness —> Social distance	ie8	.057	.109	-.036	.479	.219
Reception —> Perceived threat —> Vigilance	ie9	-.075	.095	-.420	.010	.104
Reception —> Perceived threat —> Intimacy	ie10	.009	.005	-.008	.062	.221
Reception —> Perceived threat —> Interest	ie11	.008	.015	-.010	.059	.268
Reception —> Perceived threat —> Social distance	ie12	.026	.030	-.004	.109	.105
Expression —> Perceived threat —> Vigilance	ie13	.266**	.877	4.232	.035	.002
Expression —> Perceived threat —> Intimacy	ie14	.033	.017	-.027	1.740	.144

Specific indirect effect	Label	Estimate	S.E.	Lower	Upper	Sig.
Expression —> Perceived threat —> Interest	ie15	.028	.150	-.039	.820	.193
Expression —> Perceived threat —> Social distance	ie16	.093**	.107	.019	.580	.002
Reception —> Impression —> Vigilance	ie17	-.038	.032	-.087	.010	.084
Reception —> Impression —> Intimacy	ie18	.017	.011	-.001	.047	.056
Reception —> Impression—> Interest	ie19	.082***	.025	.044	.140	.000
Reception —> Impression —> Social distance	ie20	.068***	.023	.033	.125	.000
Expression —> Impression —> Vigilance	ie21	.003	.011	-.013	.029	.562
Expression —> Impression —> Intimacy	ie22	-.001	.005	-.017	.006	.560
Expression —> Impression —> Interest	ie23	-.006	.022	-.051	.038	.787
Expression —> Impression —> Social distance	ie24	-.005	.017	-.044	.027	.689

Note: Standardized coefficients are reported ; *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

5.4.5.6 Model comparison

Finally, Table 5.7 reports the trimmed model for each of the specifications, the alternate causal ordering of variable cluster (model 2) was far less well fitting than the theorized model (model 1). When cluster of evaluation and recognition of Japan served as mediator between SNSs communication and behavioral intention, model fit was poor. The theorized model performs considerably better model fit than this inverse causal ordering.

Table 5.7 Model comparison

	AIC	CAIC	RMSEA	χ^2/df
1. Online Comm. —> Eva. & Cog. —> Beh. Inte.	491.7	909.6	0.046	156.6/81
2. Online Comm. —> Beh. Inte. —> Eva. & Cog.	897.3	1310.1	0.123	737.3/91

Note. Online Comm. = Online communication; Eva. & Cog. = Evaluation and cognition; Beh. Inte. = Behavioral intentions. Trimmed model with all nonsignificant paths from fully saturated mediated model removed. Age, gender, household income, and origin are included as exogenous variables in both models.

5.5   DISCUSSION

The purpose of present study was to investigate the effects of receiving and expressing Japan-related messages via SNSs on cognitive outcomes, and the subsequent effects of these variables on behavioral intentions towards Japan such as vigilant intention, intimate intention, interest in Japan, and social distance. The key question I tackled in this chapter is: What are the

mechanisms of online communication behaviors and individual's images of Japan. In order to answer this question, six hypotheses were proposed. The results of analyses are generally consistent with the hypothesized pathways. The main findings of this research are summarized as follows.

The findings pertaining to the effects of online communication behaviors demonstrate that receiving and expressing relevant messages produce effects on cognitive and behavioral outcomes in relation to Japan. For total reception effects, the frequency of receiving relevant information was found to have a positive association with Chinese university student's evaluation of Japan's progressiveness and impression of Japan. Reversely, expressing Japan-related messages on SNSs was negatively associated with respondent's evaluation and impression of Japan. That is, as the ratio of message expression becomes greater, however, evaluation of Japan's progressiveness becomes lower.

These findings appear to be poorly supported by the extant studies on expression effects/self-effects of online communication which argue that expression has a more significant influence on communicator than reception (e.g., Finkel & Smith, 2008; Prislin et al., 2011; Pingree, 2007). In comparison to the expression effects, this study found that reception is playing a more critical role in cognitive and behavioral outcomes. More importantly, as far as I have investigated the total/specific indirect effects of SNS communication, the effects of expression mediated by cognitive characteristics are positively associated with vigilant behavioral intention, which differs from reception effects. Indeed, individuals may encounter a great deal of Japan-related information on SNSs in an incidental or passive manner, but nevertheless, the expression of message is a self-involved and goal-directed behavior (Namkoong et al., 2013; Shaw et al., 2006; Shim, Cappella, & Han, 2011; Yoo et al., 2016). It thus appears that composing and releasing messages which may

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lead to perceived threat or unfavorable impression of Japan demand higher levels of cognitive elaboration. In order to further seek the reasons leading to these results, we need to make it clear the relationships between different topics pertaining Japan and cognitive outcomes in the future.

Beyond the effects of online communication behaviors, one of the most intriguing findings is the distinction in direction and slope of each frequency of communication behaviors, in particular message expression. The tendency of frequent Japan-related message sender is inconsistent to the general tendency of other frequencies. For instance, as shown in Appendix 16, for respondents who have not produced Japan-related messages on SNSs at all in the past 30 days, the higher they scoring on Japan's progressiveness, the lower vigilant intention they possess.

The structure of the relationships within mediation model was further assured by the test of alternate ordering of the key variable clusters. The trimmed model was found to perform a better model fit in comparison to the inverse causal ordering of mediated effects. It thus appears that as cognitive characteristics, evaluation and recognition of Japan are crucial for mediating the effects of receiving and expressing Japan-related message on SNSs on behavioral intentions toward Japan.

Implications

The broader implications of this study are threefold. Firstly, this study which found a considerable support for the mediation model provides a range of important insights for online communication behaviors and cognitive and behavioral outcomes in the context of images of a foreign country, especially when compare with the studies rooted in mere reception-effects paradigm. Additionally, the value of this model also lies in its focus on the mechanism through which communication behaviors generate effects, remedying the limitations in the simple, direct effects.

Notably, this study identified the relationships between receiving Japan-related message and behavioral intentions towards Japan are mediated by respondent's evaluation and recognition regarding Japan.

5.6   SUMMARY

Throughout this chapter, the current status of SNS usage and images of Japan in China were presented. A mediation model was constructed to investigate the bidirectional effects of online communication behaviors on behavioral intentions towards Japan mediated by cognitive characteristics. To conclude, the results of analysis on communication mediation are essentially aligned with the theoretical and empirical literatures which indicate that cognitive characteristics would mediate the effects of online communication on behavioral responses.

This study relied on media and communication effects theories to tackle the interdisciplinary research problem —images of a foreign country. Although many attempts have been made to reveal the causes of anti-Japanese sentiment in China by scholars of political sciences in particular, there has been surprising lack of research on this problem from the perspective of communication effects studies. As far as I am aware, this study is one of the first to explore the mechanism of SNS communication and the subsequent outcomes in relation to perceptions of a foreign country. This study highlights the compound and mediated effects of SNS expression on behavioral intentions towards Japan. Next chapter will apply theoretical interpretations to explain the major findings of this dissertation.

Chapter 6　Discussion and Conclusion

Citizens are not passive containers to be filled up with good citizenship by received messages. Expression, not reception, may be the first step toward better citizenship.

— Pingree (2007, p. 447)

The preceding chapters have validated that SNS usage motivations and communication behaviors had exercised great and compound effects on Chinese university student's image of Japan. Due to the explosive growth of Chinese social networking sites, SNS has almost replaced the traditional media as the most influential medium, especially for highly educated young people. Although there is an ongoing discussion on the effects of communication via new media, most communication theories to date pessimistically dismissed the likelihood that exposure to diverse viewpoints and complex information environment could lead to deliberation[177]. Based on the evidences that the Internet and social media use has a close link with popular nationalism, scholars have largely attributed the large-scale outbreak of anti-Japanese sentiment in China to the Internet and new information and communication technologies, since they provide a sufficient condition allowing users to fuel their nationalistic sentiment through exposing to a great amount of (attitude-consistent) information in the online environment.

Indeed, individuals have been involved in the abundance of media choices than ever before, which makes it possible for them to seek information contents and media channels more actively and selectively (Alhabash, Chiang, & Huang, 2014). However, the empirical findings of the present study refutes the results reported in the literature. Instead of reinforcing the exposure to attitude-consistent messages, I found that an open and public SNS environment plays a constructive role in processing and comprehending the received messages.

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[177] A number of communication theories take the stance that SNS users tend to expose to the messages which are consistent to their preexisting attitudes, and then receive the messages passively without reasoning. For example, selective exposure theory and the concept of information overload.

Furthermore, this study offers compelling evidence for expression effects of SNS communication. Considering that Web 2.0 empowers individuals switch between the content recipient and expresser roles seamlessly, this study has integrated sender-based expression effects paradigm with the model of communication mediation to study the bidirectional message effects of SNS communication on Chinese young people's images of Japan. According to descriptions and narritives of the FGDs participants, Chinese young adults are more inclined to disclose their thoughts, opinions, and emotions in anonymous condition with higher level of homogeneities (e.g., Sina Weibo). This is the single most conspicuous observation to emerge from the comparison on various platforms. In addition, I found that for those who are motivated to use Sina Weibo for interacting and expressing (i.e., social interaction), their images of Japan are more likely to be influenced. Overall, based on the major findings of this study[178], in contrast to most of the existing studies, I claim that the exposure to diverse viewpoints and active expression on SNS could eventually lead to Japan-China reconciliation at a civil level.

To summarize, my main argument in this dissertation is that exposing to an open and unexclusive SNS environment and active expressions pertaining to Japan contribute to Chinese SNS users' favorable impressions of and amicable behavior intentions towards Japan[179]. Accordingly, in an attempt to clarify my argument, the main question to be tackled in this dissertation has been: "What are the effects of SNS usage motivations and communication behaviors on the Chinese public's image of Japan?" To elaborate on this: whether the outcome orientations (i.e., evaluation, recognition, and impression of Japan) and behavioral responses (i.e., behavioral intentions towards Japan) vary according to different motives and communication behaviors? If yes, how would the

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[178] For example, this study found that individuals who use Sina Weibo for information seeking motive are more likely to score higher in Japan's progressiveness, and less likely to perceive Japan as a threat. Another example is on the communication process. Although expressing Japan-related message on SNSs has scant effect only on intimate intention towards Japan, it has strong specific indirect effects on vigilant intention and social distance mediated by perceived threat of Japan.
[179] The detailed discussions on how message reception and expression affect individuals' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors refer to Chapter 2.

cognitive/behavioral outcomes be different and through which process does the communication behaviors affect the subsequent outcomes?

To answer the above question, this study relied on the perspective of new media studies and communication research. Specifically, it first adopted an approach of the U&G (uses and gratifications; Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973; Rosengren, 1974; Rubin, 2009) [180] to explore an individual's motivations to use a variety of SNSs, and then investigated the influences of usage motivations on how Chinese undergraduate students perceive Japan. Next, bidirectional message effects model (Pingree, 2007) was incorporated into O-S-R-O-R framework (Cho et al., 2009; Shah et al., 2007) to fully capture the effects of receiving and expressing messages on SNS. Notably, in addition to direct effect which is typically examined in most previous research on media and communication effects [181], this study took the (total and specific) indirect effects of SNS communication on the cognitive/behavioral outcomes into consideration as well.

As described in Chapter 3, a mixed methods design was performed using an exploratory sequential method of involving qualitative research first and then quantitative research. The qualitative research solicited data through the FGDs (focus group discussions) with 24 undergraduate students, and quantitative research relied on the data collected through questionnaire survey on 473 undergraduate students enrolled in two public and comprehensive universities in Beijing.

In the reminder of this chapter, the primary findings emerging from qualitative and quantitative research are summarized, followed by several major points which are worth discussing. Then, a few theoretical and practical implications for media researchers and practitioners are presented to refine

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[180] Although debate on users' awareness of their media selective motives remains underway, U&G conceptualizes users as active and goal-oriented consumers of media who actively select channels and messages to satisfy their needs.
[181] Section 2.4 engaged in a detailed discussion of the indirect effects in media and communication research.

the theory or create more effective interventions. Finally, this chapter concludes with potential limitations of the present study.

6.1 STATEMENT OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This section aims at providing an introduction to several major findings of the current study. What I have attempted to tackle throughout this dissertation can be summarized as three subsidiary questions concerning the effects of SNS usage motivations and communication behaviors on Chinese young people' images of Japan. I answered these three subsidiary questions primarily in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 based on an adequate review on relevant literature and research methodologies in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. The first question is an exploratory question that is grounded on the U&G approach, and the other two questions are theoretically oriented question in new media studies and computer-mediated communication research.

The first subsidiary question that was tackled with the thematic analyses on FGD data is: *Why is an individual motivated to use a particular SNS?* Prior to investigating the specific influences of SNS usage motivations on individuals by considering the cognitive and behavioral changes, I first explored SNS usage motivations and patterns of the participants, to delineate the psychological and social needs that motivate and sustain Chinese young adults to engage with a particular medium. As a result, seven types of needs that predominantly motivated participants to engage with various SNSs have been broadly fitted into four classifications: social connection, information seeking, entertainment, and self-expression (see Figure 4.6).

As anticipated, WeChat and Sina Weibo are two most-used platforms based on the findings of the FGDs. The vast majority of the participants mentioned that they are motivated to use WeChat for developing or maintaining social interrelationships, acquiring information in regard to hot news or social issues, and understanding other people's opinions on the current issues. On the other hand,

with regard to Sina Weibo usage motivations, it was observed that there is a conspicuous gender distinction. Specifically, the difference lies in that female participants are more inclined to engage in Sina Weibo for recreational and expressive motivations, however, male participants tend to search for information on Sina Weibo.

Furthermore, another intriguing observation is that the participants prefer to reveal their opinions, thoughts, or emotions in the "stranger community" (e.g., Sina Weibo) which comprises of strangers and virtual online friends than in the "acquaintance community" (e.g., WeChat) which consists of relatives, real-life friends, and acquaintances. In the light of this finding, I employed the concept of self-disclosure (Cho, 2007; Lee et al., 2011; Park & Chung, 2011) to the data collected by the FGDs in order to figure out important factors determining the levels of self-disclosure. Instead of focusing on individual level as the extant literature[182], this study has mainly focused on the differences of platform level. As such, thematic analysis on the qualitative data extended our knowledge of dominating factors encouraging online expression across platforms. One notable finding is that that anonymity, homogeneity (of e.g., values, opinions, interests), and getting awards (e.g., positive comments, "Likes") considerably promote the willingness and the levels of disclosing one's opinions, thoughts, moods, and emotions online. Otherwise, involving in a non-anonymous network which is primarily composed of real-life acquaintances makes individuals conceal their real thoughts, attitudes, or interests from those "loose acquaintances" in varying degrees. Since WeChat and Sina Weibo are most widely used by young and highly educated adults in China, and there are obvious differences between the two platforms in many aspects, I mainly focused on comparing WeChat and Sina Weibo by analyzing the seemingly contradictory findings about online disclosures and outcomes that resulted from different usage motivations[183].

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[182] In terms of the deciding factors, previous research found that the level of self-disclosure hinges on gender differences (e.g., Dindia & Allen, 1992; Rosenfeld, 1979), individual differences (e.g., Cozy, 1973), and individual goals (e.g., Derlega & Allen, 1992; Quattrone & Jones, 1978).

[183] The reason for the comparison on the two applications is that Sina Weibo satisfies all of the requirements, while WeChat fails to fulfill any of the requirements.

The second subsidiary question this dissertation attempted to answer is: *What are the influences of an individual's SNS usage motivations on his/her images of Japan?* To answer this question, Sina Weibo was selected as a case study[184]. As I have discussed in Chapter 4, in accordance with the previous research, images of Japan were conceptualized as a four-dimensional structure by considering cognitive and behavioral outcomes as distinct consequences that vary according to varied usage motivations. To summarize the effects of usage motivations on images of Japan, the motivation of social interaction serves as an indicator of an individual's impression of and vigilant intention towards Japan. In addition, information seeking motivation is predictive of cognitive outcomes to a large extent, as well as an individual's interest in Japan. And it also has a scant influence on intimate intention toward Japan. Then, it was found that community development motivation is predictive only for vigilant intention towards Japan. Furthermore, similar to social interaction, recreational motivation to use Sina Weibo significantly promotes the respondents' favorable images of Japan (i.e., progressiveness, impression, intimate intention, and interest in Japan).

The third subsidiary question concerning the mechanism of SNS communication behaviors[185] and the subsequent cognitive/ behavioral outcomes[186] is: *What are the mechanisms of SNS communication behaviors and an individual's images of Japan?* Based on the theoretical foundation and empirical evidence, the mechanism was illustrated as the analytical framework of chapter 5 combining expression effects and communication mediation model. To validate the proposed theorized mediation model (Figure 5.1), this study relied on analysis method of SEM (structural equation modeling). I investigated total effects, direct effects, and indirect effects (total and specific

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[184] For the reasons that Sina Weibo was selected as a case study, refer to Chapter 4. For the empirical consideration, another reason lies in that based on the preliminary FGD, participants are motivated more or less by all of the above-mentioned motivations for using Sina Weibo — a microblogging and social networking service that provide users with multiple communications over microblogging network.
[185] i.e., receiving and expressing Japan-related messages on SNSs
[186] i.e., images of Japan

indirect effects) of two communication behaviors on evaluation, cognition, impression, and behavioral intentions separately.

To summarized the total indirect effects of the communication behaviors: expression effects on images of Japan shows an opposite result of reception. To be more specific, reception of messages produces positive total indirect effects on behavioral intentions[187] except vigilant intention towards Japan. In contrast to reception effects, message expression exercises a positive total indirect effect on vigilant intention towards Japan running through outcome orientations (i.e., the second O portion in the model, including evaluation, recognition, and impression), which refers that the more frequently an individual expressed/produces Japan-related messages on SNSs, the more likely he/she would intend to adopt vigilant behaviors against Japan. The inverse findings of receiving and expressing messages might be attributed to the distinction in the efforts demanded in cognitive processes between reception and expression, and thus resulting in opposite outcomes. And it can be inferred that different topics (in relation to Japan) have different levels of impact on recipients. This inference seems in good agreement with Ito and Zhu's (2008) proposition. They argued that compared to other topics of newspaper coverage, the coverage that will stimulate nationalistic sentiment is more likely to worsen the preference of Japanese for Chinese.

The last but not the least, I attempted to examine the specific direct effects of communication behaviors on each variable of behavioral intentions running through every single orientation outcome. As expected, the respondents' evaluation of Japan's progressiveness channeled reception effects on behavioral intentions except vigilant intention. Additionally, impression of Japan mediated the reception effects on interest in Japan and reduction in social distance to Japan. On the contrary, message expression did not produce any significant indirect effects on behavioral intentions neither mediated by progressiveness nor by impression of Japan, while perceived threat

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[187] i.e., intimate intention towards Japan, interest in Japan, and reduction in social distance to Japan

mediated its effect on vigilant intention and social distance. In the following section, the theoretical interpretation of the above findings will be elaborated.

6.2   ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION

In the preceding section, I summarized the major findings by revisiting the research questions tackled throughout this dissertation. This section intends to put forward a discussion on several major points for the possible future research directions of social media and communication effects studies.

6.2.1 Significance of expression

It has been gradually convinced by communication scholars in recent years that expression has a more significant influence on communicators rather than reception. Although there were a few social psychology theorists have come up with the possibility that one's attitudes hinge on his/her behaviors than vice versa, almost all of media and communication effect theories have rooted in the reception-effect paradigm over the past few decades (Pingree, 2007; also see review of Valkenburg et al., 2016). The effects of sending message were systematically and comprehensively researched by Pingree (2007) first. After he have posited that "the production and distribution of content may affect not only by its recipients, but also the sender him/herself", several empirical studies offer empirical evidence for the effects of expression. For instance, expressers who had produced a message on important social issues to others felt more strongly about the issues than their message audiences (e.g., Finkel & Smith, 2008; Prislin et al., 2011).

The fundamental cause of expression effect[188] is that message construction requires cognitive elaboration and collective consideration which is not needed in passive reception (Mclaughlin et al., 2016). To be more specific, cognitive process involves in expression is crucial for people's internal deliberation and reflection on the antecedent attitudes. Because expression is not merely "the transportation of preexisting information" (Pingree, 2007), it results in cognitive tuning intrinsically. This is not to say that reception effects can be underestimated, as I have discussed previously, message reception is the first step towards shaping a communicator's attitudes, and thereby bringing on the consequent expression behavior.

6.2.2 Interdependence of reception, participation, and expression

Phase 1: Reception effects on receiver

On the whole, in online environment, the process of communicators engaging with contents (Japan-related messages in this case) and being affected by received messages is as follows. First, communicators begin their relationships with (Japan-related) messages as consumers or lurkers with their preexisting propositions such as structural, cultural, cognitive, and motivational orientation[189]. With the exception of an individual's structural characteristics such as origin, education level, household income, and so forth, cultural or motivational orientations can be also brought to the reception situation and affect the degree to which a receiver is affected by stimuli. For instance, these orientation factors can be the experience of traveling to Japan or exchange studying in Japan, keen on Japanese modern literature, or interests in Japanese popular culture (e.g., Anime, Manga, Games, fashion, J-pop, etc.). In this very process, SNS users select media channels and information

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[188] Pingree (2007) elaborates the broader concept of expression effects on three component categories concretely; those are expectation effects, composition effects, and message release effects. The definition of each effect refers to Chapter 2.
[189] It is referred to as first "O" (orientation) portion in the O–S–R–O–R framework of mediation communication.

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contents actively and rationally to gratify certain motivations[190]. As I discuss this in more detail later in this section, with the preexisting-orientations, an individual's psychological and social needs motivate and sustain him-or her to engage with a particular medium or a particular form of information contents. As the findings of the qualitative research revealed, the participants are predominantly motivated by seeking the current news and searching for the recreational information to receive/consume messages via SNSs (see Chapter 4).

In addition, taking Sina Weibo[191] as an instance, I investigated that to which extent these two dominant usage motivations affect the respondents' images of Japan. Generally speaking, the results have further strengthened our confidence in reception effects (of information seeking and entertainment motivation) on cognition outcomes in relation to Japan[192]. We can see from these cases that the respondents who are motivated by the needs of information seeking and entertainment to use Sina Weibo tend to perceived Japan favorably. To be more precise, the received messages pertaining to hot discussed issues and recreational information (in particular on Sina Weibo) which meet an individual's needs largely affect him-or her[193].

Although few previous studies has investigated the effects of SNS usage motivations on images of a foreign country so far, this study successfully validated the positive causalities between SNS usage motivations for receiving topical news and discussions around hot social issues (information seeking), messages relating to users' interests or hobbies, gossips and status updates of celebrities (entertainment), and the respondents' image of Japan. The specific interpretation in regard to the

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[190] According to the proposition of U&G theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973; Rosengren, 1974; Rubin, 2009), SNSs users are active and goal-oriented consumers of media; and users select channels and messages actively to satisfy their needs.

[191] The reasons of selecting Sina Weibo as a case study refer to Chapter 4.

[192] As a result, it was found that to a large extent, information seeking is *positively* associated with all three cognitive outcomes, and interest in Japan. It also has a scant *positive* influence on intimate intention. As for the impacts of entertainment motivation, it significantly *promotes* respondents' progressiveness, impression, intimate intention, and interest in Japan. Detailed analyses and results refer to Chapter 4.

[193] This discussion is based on the argument of previous research that media have very limited or no impact on those who do not use it, but that people rationally select a particular media because it meets people's needs (Rubin, 2009a; Rubin, 2009b).

process of receiving these messages will be elaborated on in the following paragraphs in terms of different forms of SNS.

Furthermore, a number of surprising findings derived from a comparison of communication behaviors between public and private platform. One thing that nearly all researchers studying the relationship between news credibility and news seeking seemingly agrees on is that media credibility matters to information-seeking behaviors (e.g., Turcotte et al., 2015). As the principal finings generating from the FGDs indicated, compared to WeChat, a higher level of exposure to diverse viewpoints on Sina Weibo resulted in a cautious view on credibility of the obtained information, thus further facilitating seeking behaviors for relevant information[194]. However, on WeChat, the participants tended to stop seeking further information, since the messages that posted on WeChat Moments by their peers are considered accurate and trustworthy.

In other words, although peer recommendations on WeChat Moments have gained receivers' attitudinal trust in the contents, the trustworthiness in contents has not favored receivers' information-seeking behaviors. This finding with respect to media credibility and further information-seeking behavior extended the propositions of the principle of least effort theory (Zipf, 1949). That is, accurate and trustworthy content recommendation reduces the effort needed by a user to search for relevant information (Liang, Lai, & Ku, 2006). Nevertheless, the efforts of processing received messages to overcome the barriers to reception are essential elements for cognitive process of reception.

In accordance with the above discussion, on an open and public site that is more likely to make an individual to expose to a variety of viewpoints or tones, diversity and untrustworthiness brings about barriers to reception which requires a higher level of cognitive processing of received messages by making judgement on both agencies and contents. Taken as a whole, these descriptive

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[194] Individuals are enabled to distinguish between objective and distorted information by being exposed to different perspectives.

findings successfully provide a possibility for development of media/communication effect studies of news credibility and news seeking.

Phase 2: Participation and interaction

Then, after tackling the barriers to reception as discussed above[195], the communicators participate through interacting with the contents and other users by relaying or commenting on original messages[196] (Pingree, 2007; Shao, 2009). The synthesis of expression/production and reception/consumption is also referred to as "prosumption" which has been vigorously discussed particularly in sociology[197]. As detailed in Chapter 4, social interaction motivation fulfills an individual' needs of developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships with contacts primarily by revealing their statuses on SNSs. It is noted that the step-by-step involvement from receiving to participating is not necessarily followed by everyone single communicator, for instance, one may not comment on other's postings but create an original message on SNS although it may be based on a response to the previously read message. Converse to this example of skipping "participation", as an extension of receiving messages concerning one's interests and hobbies, he/she may have a heated discussion on for example, a Japanese Anime or a song of J-pop with other amateurs sharing the same interests. This can be considered as a kind of social interaction as well.

Before or during the above-described participating/interacting process, the line between recipients/consumers and senders/producers become blurred. Communicators may alternate between

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[195] Pingree (2007) have elaborated the barriers to reception effects on attention, decoding, cognitive process, and storage in memory (see Figure 5.2).
[196] The whole process of SNS communication may stop at any point, for instance, one may stop at imaged composition of response to a message posted by one of his/her followings without actual expression. If the communication stops at receiving stage, the expression effects will not exert influence on communicators.
[197] For example, in the context of sociology of art, Nakajima (2012) argued that although the practice of art has always been a process of art since the very beginning of the history of art, the focus of social theory is on production first, and then shifted to consumption, and then recently on presumption particularly with the rise of information and communication technologies.

the roles any instant, and be influenced by expected expression effects and composition effects[198] in the process of participation/interaction. The likely mechanisms are as follows. During an act of reception, if a recipient realized that the message means something to him/her and thus expects to expression based on the received message, the "attention to or processing of related received messages" increase (Pingree, 2007). Subsequently, the barriers to reception are reduced by involving idea constructions or their transformation into language (Greene, 1984). In regard to the impacts of language or idea composition for an expressive act on tuning attitudes or beliefs, as the passage that I quoted blow stated:

> This reconstruction often results in new ideas and may even lead us to abandon
>
> prior beliefs because it forces us to confront gaps and contradictions in our thinking
>
> in order to construct a coherent narrative. (Pingree, 2007, p. 444)

As suggested in the above quoted passage, mere composition is enough for affecting one's attitudes, traits, or feelings. The principle of generating influences through message composition can be explained on the basis of SPT (self-perception theory, Bem, 1967). Message composition may lead to inferences about one's preexisting cognitions, and resulting in lasting perceptions about the imaged contents.

The results pertaining to the effects of social interaction motivation on cognitive and behavioral outcomes indicated that, social interaction produced a scant negative effect on perceived threat and vigilant intention respectively. In other words, users who are motivated to use Sina Weibo for fulfilling the needs of developing and reinforcing interpersonal relationships with contacts and

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[198] Pingree (2007) elaborated expression effects into three specific effects: expected expression effects, composition effects, and message release effects. The introduction to his BMEM (bidirectional message effects model) and to its application to the theoretical framework of this study refer to Chapter 2 and Chapter 4.

joining in community activities less likely perceive Japan as a threat and intend to adopt vigilant behaviors against Japan.

Phase 3: Expression effects on producer

As I have stated in chapter 2 and chapter 4, the reason that expression has more significant effects on communicators than reception is because message construction requires cognitive elaboration. In addition to expected expression effects and composition effects which have been discussed in phase two, message release effects[199] is also included in the broad concept of expression effects. According to different situations, communicators may be affected by one or some of the effects. In a typical case of online communication, individuals who intend to express themselves (i.e., expectation effects) experience idea or language construction (i.e., composition effects) simultaneously while receiving message (i.e., reception effects). Expresser can release message without composition in some instances, for example, give an impromptu speech or respond to a closed-ended question. However, in SNSs communication, actual composition of a message occurs if the expresser intends to release a message, no matter it is a response to received message or an improvisation. Because the expected expression effects and composition effects were discussed in "participation and interaction", this part will concentrate on message release effects.

Before discussing the implications of this study, I will illustrate the whole process of communicating Japan-related messages on SNSs and its effects on users' images of Japan. The results of qualitative research revealed that the level of self-expression is predominantly contingent on several factors. The first one is that anonymous environment may promote the level of willingness to reveal real thoughts, opinions, or emotions. Under this condition, except cathartic

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[199] According to the definition of Pingree (2007), message release effects occur "if and when the communicator actually send to others and are largely contingent on a perception that it was received".

release effect, all the other sub-categorical effects are blocked[200]. On the other hand, communicators involving in non-anonymous online environment, such as WeChat, may be affected by social commitment, ego-involvement, and feeling heard effects, but not be affected by cathartic release effects. In the next subsection, I will attempt to elaborate the comprehensive effects of SNS communication on Chinese young people's images of Japan from the above aspects through delineating the whole processes of communication.

6.2.3 Consolidation of online reception and expression effects in terms of images of Japan

To capture the SNS communication process in more detail, BMEM (bidirectional message effects model; Figure 2.6) and theoretical model of the present study (Figure 5.1) may be helpful. Assuming that a sender, PT01, is about to post a message on Sina Weibo to reach out to her followers who are primarily composed of strangers/virtual online friends or a few close friends with higher homogeneity in interests or opinions. Supposing the message he/she forwarded is a piece of news from the official account of *Global Times*[201] on Sina Weibo of a criticism on Abe Administrations' China Policy, the enhancement of US-Japan alliance, and increase in military equipment of Japan Self-defense Forces (see Appendix 24). PT01 relayed the commentary denouncing the arguments that Japan is threatening to East Asian region, and aims at disrupting Japan-China relations and the international order, together with his/her comments. Further, PT01 expressed his/her personal views on how Japan is sharing the burdens and responsibilities of maintaining the international order and experience with traveling to Japan and interacting with the Japanese people in the past. PT01, as a recipient and a sender either, before and during compositing the message, he/she may be induced by several mechanism (thought construction, self-perception,

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[200] Pingree (2007) divided the message release effects into two conditions in a broad sense: condition of anonymity and non-anonymity.
[201] *Global Time* is a daily newspaper under the auspices of *People's Daily*.

social commitments, national identity; Pingree, 2007; Valkenburg, 2017) to adjust his/her attitudes, beliefs, or emotions towards the *Global Times*, Japan, the Japanese people, and him own.

Then, after the message was sent, in PT01's social network on Sina Weibo, one of his/her followers, PT02, encounters PT01's forwarded message. As discussed in Chapter 4, on public and anonymous sites[202], users have a relatively high threshold for inviting someone as a connection (i.e., following each other) than private and non-anonymous sites. One of the most crucial standards is sharing his/her interests, opinions, or values. In the light of this finding, PT02 certainly has a much better chance of agreeing with the positive attitudes towards the views of PT01, or at least finding out that his comment is persuasive. If this were the case, PT02's attitudes towards the *Global Times*, Japan, the Japanese people, PT01, and herself may establish or strengthen correspondingly. Notably, this is not to say that only attitude-consistent messages exercise effects on the recipient, but the recipient is also normally exposed to an environment full of counter-attitudinal messages. Otherwise, if the premise is invalid, then the mechanisms[203] may induce PT02 to tune her above attitudes[204]. At this point, PT02 may recall her own experiences, compare with other followings' arguments those who are perceived as opinion leaders by her, or relate to her anterior attitudes and beliefs regarding image of Japan and the credibility of *Global Times*[205]. So far, expression effects due to PT01's exposure to mass communication on Sina Weibo, the message posted by the *Global Times* end upon the starting of PT02's reception.

Either BMEM (Pingree, 2007) or O–S–R–O–S model (Cho et al., 2009; Shah et al., 2007) do not fully capture the dynamic communication process that the communicator seamlessly switch between recipient and expresser roles at all stages of communication[206]. In the context of online

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[202] Although on Sina Weibo, user's profile is publicly viewable by not only mutual followers but also strangers, user cannot follow another user's account only if he/she knows the user name.

[203] i.e., thought construction, self-perception, social commitments, national identity

[204] i.e., attitudes towards the *Global Times*, Japan, the Japanese people, PT01, and herself

[205] These effects are referred to as reception effects, which was discussed in phase one.

[206] Also see Valkenburg (2017). BMEM identifies the relationships between a single communicator and received and released messages. O–S–R–O–S model identifies the mediating role of reasoning

communication[207], as the merging of reception and expression effects on PT01 which was delineated in the above mass communication process, reception effects due to interpersonal communication messages on PT02 occurs along with PT01' messages expression in his network[208]. Overall, the above discussion delineated a cycle of reception and expression effects on PT01 (switched his role from recipient to sender) and PT01 (as a recipient) due to mass and interpersonal communication message. As a potential sender, PT02 who are involving in PT01's network may react to or forward[209] the message posted by PT01 in the immediate future. If she is about to do so, then another circulation of reception, participation/interaction, and expression may happen[210].

6.3   THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study present several theoretical implications for research into two communication subdisciplines: computer-mediated communication (CMC) and social media research. Despite the widely accepted arguments about the close relationship between information and communication technologies and anti-Japanese sentiment in China (e.g., Cui, 2012; Kluver & Qin, 2013; Liu, 2010; Wu, 2007), this study has gone some way towards extending our knowledge about the mechanism of how the communication processes act on a recipient/sender, and challenging the pessimistic views on social media by providing compelling evidence that the involvement in an open and public SNS environment is extremely beneficial for an individual's internal deliberation. Since as Pingree (2007) stated, expression is potential for cultivating better citizenship.

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between mass or interpersonal communication messages and changes in outcome orientations and behavioral responses.

[207] In this case, it especially refers to an open and public network, such as Twitter, or Sina Weibo.

[208] At the same time, PT01 has being influenced by expression effects before, during, and after he forward the message of the *Global Times* with his own comment.

[209] PT02 may echo or denounce PT01's message.

[210] As discussed previously, the pathway may stop at any point. And in accordance with how far she goes, the corresponding mechanisms work on her. Refer to the discussion on three phases (reception, participation/interaction, expression) for detailed analyses.

The results so far have been very promising for future communication research on extending the proposed framework (Figure 5.1) to study the interrelationships between communication behaviors and cognitive/behavioral outcomes. Additionally, I hope that the present study will be constructive in solving the difficulty of lacking of theoretical framework when investigating the predominant determinants of images of a foreign country. In my view, the early successes constitute an initial step toward applying communication theories to resolve the theoretical and methodological problems of international relations and area studies, such as the relationships between mass/new media and nationalism, the effects of fake news circulated through SNSs on various political participation, social media use and protest movements, and so forth.

The last but not the least, the present study could potentially provide insights to media practitioners of all sorts, in particular journalist, we-media practitioner, political communicator, and even general SNS users. Specifically, the findings pertaining to themechanism of SNS communication behaviors and the Chinese public's image of Japan may help both researchers and practitioners to create more effective interventions to instill individuals with desirable attitudes or behaviors and to improving relations between Japan and China at a civil level.

6.4 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study has furthered the extant literature in some aspects, while several limitations should be noted in the final section of this dissertation. First, due to being scarce of the literature on the effects of SNS usage motivations on images of a foreign country, the results of this study are hard to contrast with the previous studies. Second, all the participants are undergraduate students from two 4-year public and comprehensive universities in Beijing, which may not be representative of the Chinese public opinion more generally. The third limitation relating to the research method is

that, the questions used in quantitative survey were restricted by the items included. Some variables which may determine the respondents' images of Japan were not included in the analysis, such as attitudes towards historical issues and territorial disputes between the two countries. Finally, instead of the actual behaviors adopted by respondents, behavioral intentions towards Japan were applied to the analysis.

Based on the above discussed limitations, several future research agenda need to be presented. Incomparable results regarding uses and gratifications of SNS in the literature can lead to difficulties for communicating within the discipline and exchanging a variety of viewpoints across disciplines. Hence, future research on understanding the outcomes of different SNS usage motivations should be expanded to a wide range of psychological, social, or behavioral outcomes. Next, as I repeatedly stated in the preceding chapters, a notable distinction in SNS usage motivations and patterns has been revealed by analysis on group interviews, however, is it hard to say that the discussion on the potential reasons is adequate in this dissertation. Therefore, future research could improve the understanding of the gender difference in motivations to use SNS by conducting in-depth interviews. Thirdly, although the vast majority of the previous research in terms of SNSs has selected university students as participants of investigation, considering that there has been a tendency in recent years that SNSs are popularized gradually among middle-aged and elderly people, future studies on SNSs communication should include middle and old aged users and not confined to the first tier cities. Moreover, with regard to the effects of SNS communication, although expression-effect paradigm has begun to draw attentions of some scholars (e.g., Finkel & Smith, 2008; Mclaughlin et al., 2016; Prislin et al., 2011; Shah et al., 2017; Valkenburg, 2017; Yoo et al., 2016) in recent years, our understanding on expression effects of interpersonal and intrapersonal communication is far from enough, not mention to adopt this paradigm to explore how expressing related messages on SNSs will influence an individual's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors regarding a variety of issues.

As SNS becomes an indispensable communication tool in everyone's daily life, more questions regarding its impacts on users will be raised. Hence, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to study the mechanism of communication processes and dynamics within communicators in the future.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As discussed at the beginning of this dissertation, research on images of a foreign country is an interdisciplinary field dedicated to understanding the formation of a country's image in the eyes of foreign nationals. Scholars of political science and international relations typically take a diplomatic policy or historical perspective to deal with the tension between Japan and China. In media studies and communication research, exploring the influence of various information sources on images of a foreign country is one of the main subjects of discussion[211]. Whereas, few studies into the deterioration of the Chinese public's image of Japan appeared to have successfully imported concepts or theories from related disciplines. Hence, I hope that the present study will be constructive in offering a mean of furthering intellectual exchange between communication and other (sub)disciplines to explain a particular phenomenon.

In attempts to improve small and sometimes contradictory reception effects that have been yielded from mass media and communication research in decades, numerous studies have investigated the moderating effects of dispositional, environmental, and situational factors on a wide range of outcome variables (Valkenburg et al., 2016; Valkenburg, 2017) and mediating variables that intervene in the relationship between media use and outcomes, with mixed success. Confronting with more complex and diverse information environment than ever, apart from reception effects, it is time to opens up new possibilities for the investigation of SNS communication. Focusing on the case of SNS communication effects on the Chinese younger generation's image of Japan, this dissertation is my initial attempt to melt expression effects/self-effects into SNS communication processes interpersonal and intrapersonal communication effects research.

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[211] In political communication, which is considered one of the fittest subfield to study this topic, it still remains undeveloped.

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結果から」『マス・コミュニケーション研究』(69): 22-40.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1 Theorized model of campaign communication mediation
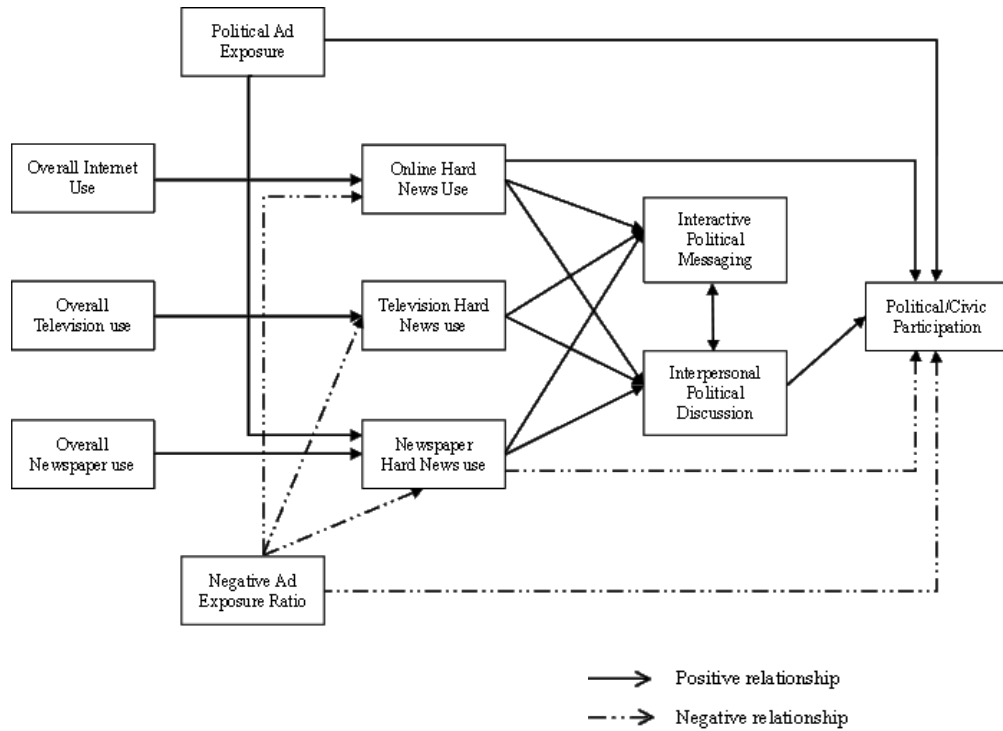
Source: Created by the author based on Figure 1 of Shah et al. (2007).

Appendix 2 Theorized model of campaign communication and participation
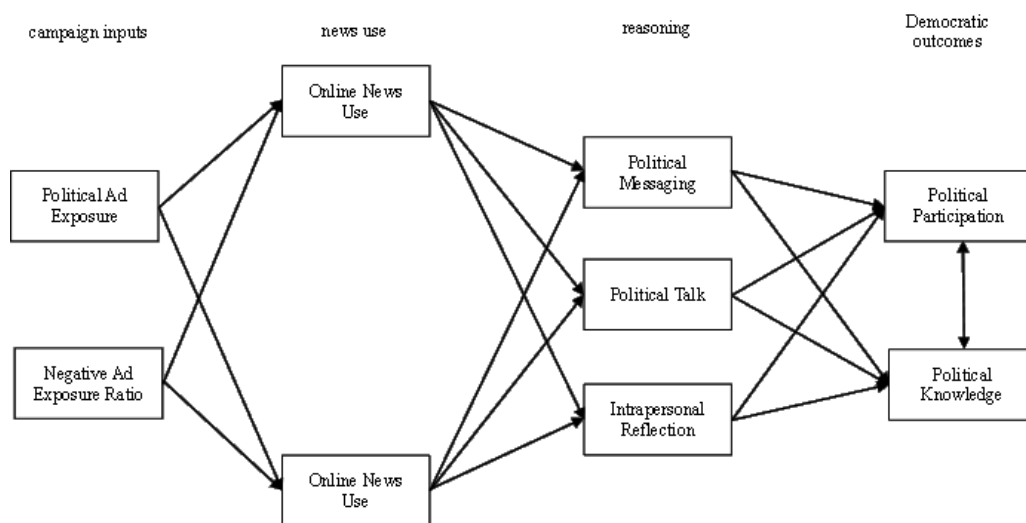
Source: Created by the author based on Figure 1 of Cho et al.'s (2009).

Appendix 3 Certificate of approval for research with human subjects

Research Management Section No.551

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

FOR RESEARCH WITH HUMAN SUBJECTS

This is to certify that the following research plan has been approved based on the assessment of the Ethics Review Committee on Research with Human Subjects of Waseda University.

Application No.: 2017-199

Title of Research Project: How Media Cultivated Divided Chinese Images of Japan

Head Researcher: NAKAJIMA ,Seio
Associate Professor, Faculty of International Research and Education, Waseda University

Representative Researcher: ZHANG,Tengfei
Second-year Doctoral Program, Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University

Approval Date: 5 October 2017

[Signature] _____   [Official Seal] _____

KAMATA, Kaoru
President
Waseda University

Appendix 4 Hypothesized model for examining the effects of expressing and receiving

MERS-related information on handwashing intention and cough etiquette intention
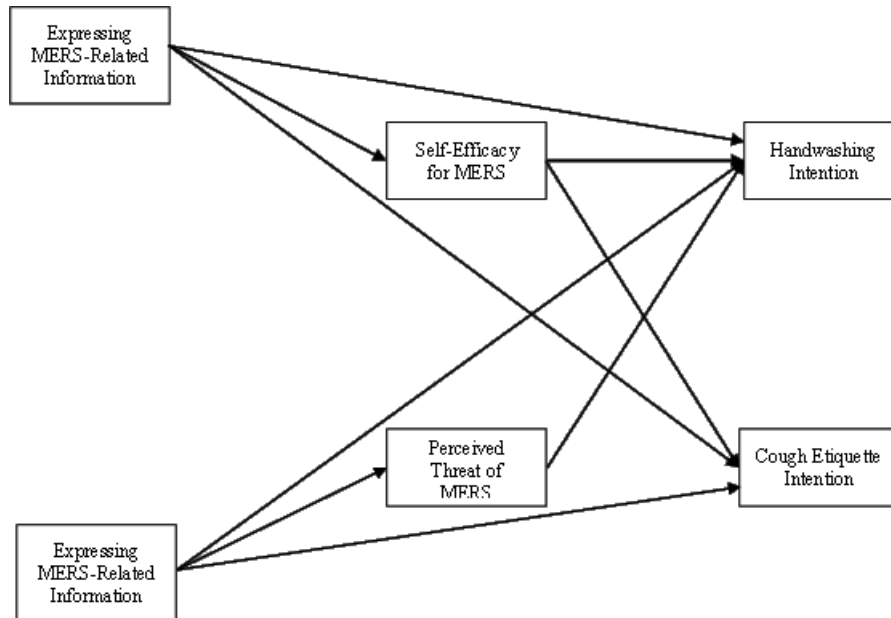
Source: Created by the author based on Figure 1 of Yoo et al. (2016).

Appendix 5 Types of nonprobability samples

Type of sampling	Principal
Convenience	Get any cases in any manner that is convenient.
Purposive	Get all possible cases that fit particular criteria using various methods.
Snowball	Get cases using referrals from one or a few cases, then referrals from those cases and so forth.
Quota	Using haphazard methods get a preset number of cases in each of several predetermined categories that will reflect the diversity of the population.
Adaptive	Get a few cases using knowledge of likely locations of a hidden population, use random techniques or recruit, and then use a snowball sample to expand from a few cases.

	Get cases that substantially differ from the dominant pattern (a special type
Deviant case	of purposive sample).
Sequential	Get cases until there is no additional information or new characteristics (often used with other sampling methods).
Theoretical	Get cases that will help reveal features that are theoretically important about a particular setting/topic.

Source: Compiled by the author based on Neuman (2017, p. 278)

Appendix 6 Types of probability samples

Type of sampling	Technique	Application
Simple random	Create a sampling frame for all cases and then select cases using a purely random process (e.g., random-number table or computer program).	
Systematic	Create a sampling frame, calculate the sampling interval 1/k, choose a random starting place, and then take every 1/k case.	When the list of the elements is available.
Stratified	Create a sampling frame for each of several categories of cases, draw a random sample from each category, and then combine the several samples.	When a stratum of interest is a small percentage of population or easily missed.
Cluster	Creating a sampling frame for large cluster units, draw a random sample of the cluster units, create a sampling	When either impossible or impractical to

		frame for cases within each selected cluster unit, then draw a random sample of cases, and so forth.	compile the list of the elements.

Source: Compiled by the author based on Neuman (2017, p. 278)

Appendix 7 Strategies for Promoting Reliability and Validity of Qualitative Research

TYPE	STRATEGY		DESCRIPTION
Validity Credibility Internal Validity	1.	Methods triangulation	Using multiple methods, multiple sources of data, or multiple data collection methods to confirm emerging findings.
	2.	Member checks/respondent validation	Getting feedback on interpretations/emerging findings from some of the people that you interview.
	3.	Adequate engagement in data collection	Adequate time spent collecting data such that the data become saturated; this may involve seeking discrepant or negative cases.
	4.	Researcher's position	Critical self-reflection by the researcher regarding assumption, and relationship to the study that may affect the investigation.
Dependability Consistency Reliability	5.	Methods triangulation	(See item 1)
	6.	Peer examination	(See item 2)
	7.	Investigator's position	(See item 4)
	8.	The audit trail	Describing in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout inquiry

	9. Rich and thick description	Proving highly descriptive, detailed presentation of the setting and the findings of a study.
Generalizability Transferability External validity	10. Maximum variation	Purposefully seeking variation in sample selection to allow for wide range of application of the findings by the readers.

Source: Compiled by the author based on Merriam & Tisdell (2015, p. 237-259)

Appendix 8 Strategies for Promoting Reliability of Quantitative Research

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION
1) Clearly conceptualize constructs	Developing unambiguous and clear theoretical definitions.
2) A precise level of measurement	Using indicators at higher or more precise levels of measurement.
3) Multiple indicators	Using multiple indicators.
4) Pilot studies and replication	Developing one or more draft of preliminary versions of a measure and try them before applying the final version.

Source: Compiled by the author based on Neuman (2014, p. 213-215)

Appendix 9 Age structure of Chinese Internet users (Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2017)
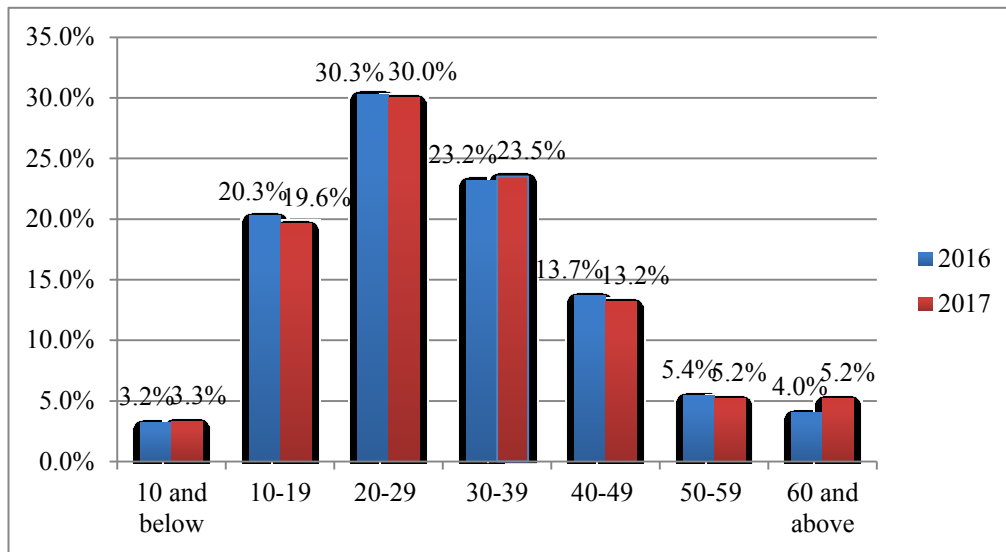
Source: Chinese Internet Information Center (2018). *Statistical Report on Internet Development in China;* Created by the author.

Appendix 10 Occupational structure of Chinese Internet users (Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2017)
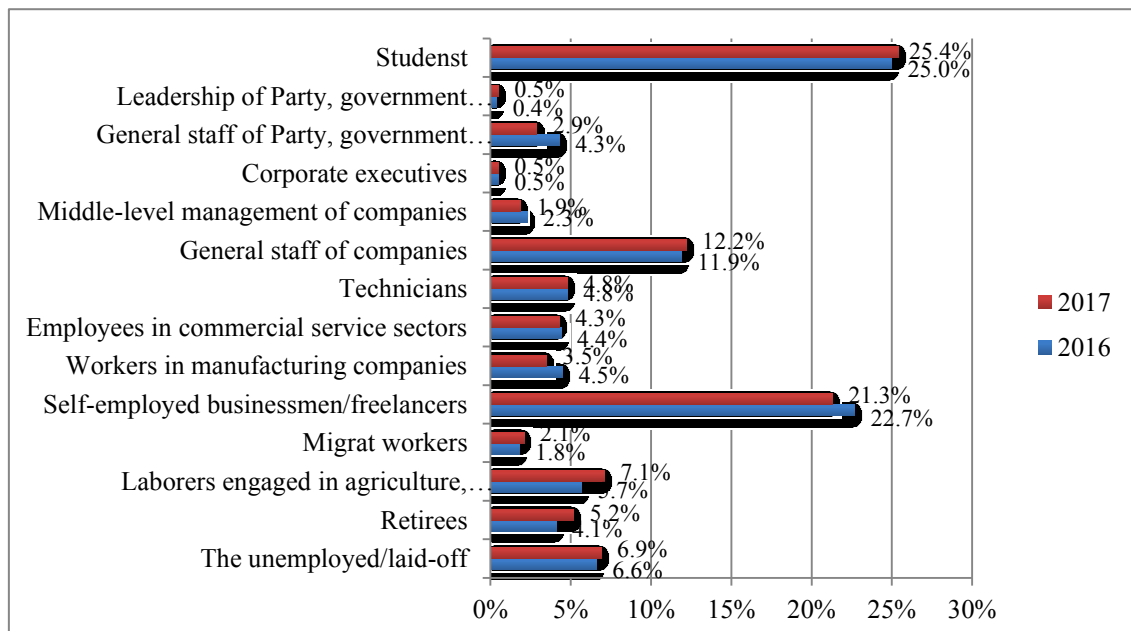
Source: Chinese Internet Information Center (2018). *Statistical Report on Internet Development in China;* Created by the author.

Appendix 11 Notes on normality test

This study relied on Shapiro-Wilk normality test to determine whether regression analysis for normal distribution is appropriate.

In analysis on the influences of Sina Weibo usage motivations on images of Japan, Shapiro-Wilk normality test was merely conducted on the measurement of progressiveness and perceived threat, given that impression and behavioral intentions were measured using five-point Likert-scale, ordered logistic regression model is thus considered appropriate for cumulative non-continuous data. According to the results of Shapiro-Wilk test on progressiveness and perceived threat of Japan which were converted to continuous factor scores by PCA[212], the raw data of the two dependent variables are not in line with normal distribution at the 0.05 level (see Figure 4.9)[213]. It is suggested that Shapiro-Wilk test should be combined with graphical test, such as histogram, Q-Q plot, because in some instances, it can give a misleading answer. Figure 4.10 presents Q-Q plots[214] for the dependent variables of progressiveness and perceived threat to help me to interpret the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test. As we can see from the plots, for both variables, the observed value almost fall along a straight line, which means that the observed values are the same as we expect to get from a normal distribution. Thus, although Shapiro-Wilk test is significant, indicating that both distributions are not normal, the Q-Q plots show that normality is probably a reasonably good approximation. Consequently, based on the above discussion, it is appropriate to employ multiple regression analysis to progressiveness and perceived threat.

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[212] See the second subsection of "Analyses and Results".
[213] The highly significant p value indicates a deviation from normality.
[214] The normal Q-Q chart plots the values that we would expect to get if the theoretical values are in line with normal distribution against the values actually observed in the data set (Field, Miles, & Field, 2012, p. 182-184).

Appendix 12   Plots illustrating the effects of usage motivations on Chinese university student's

social distance to Japan
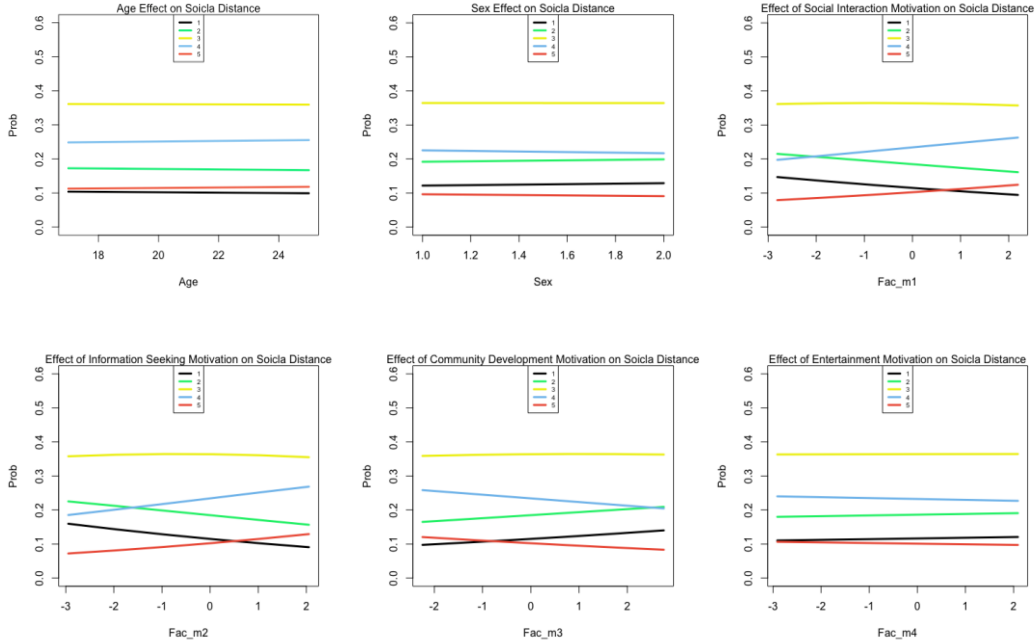
This survey is designed for the purpose of understand how university students use social and cultural media in daily life, and what you think about Japan and Japanese. This is an anonymous questionnaire investigation. All of the information and answers you provided will be used only for academic use and processed digitally. So please tell us your frank opinion.

When you answer the question, please indicate it by "✔". You can answer each question item optionally and stop at any time during the study. If you want to terminate the participation halfway, please do not hesitate to tell the stuff. Your choice will have no effect on your academic status or grade in any circumstance.

If you have any questions, please contact with:

Research representative: ZHANG Tengfei (Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University, Ph.D. Program)
E-mail: t.zhang@akane.waseda.jp
Mobile: +86 187-3492-5190

Q1. Which university are you from?

_____ University

Q2. Do you major in sciences or in arts?
　　1.　Science (natural sciences, engineering, medicine, or related subject)
　　2.　Arts (social science, humanities, fine arts, or related subject)

Q3. Please indicate your current academic year.
　　1.　Freshman
　　2.　Sophomore
　　3.　Junior
　　4.　Senior
　　5.　Other

Q4. Please indicate your sex.
　　1.　Male
　　2.　Female

3.   Other

Q5. Please state your birthday (MM/DD/YYYY)

   _____

Q6. Please estimate the annual family income for 2017.
   1.   Less than 100,000 RMB
   2.   100,000 ~ 120,000 RMB
   3.   120,000 ~ 140,000 RMB
   4.   140,000 ~ 160,000 RMB
   5.   160,000 ~ 180,000 RMB
   6.   More than 180,000 RMB

Q7. Please indicate your origin.
   1.   Northeast China (Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning, eastern Inner Mongolia Autonomous
         Region)
   2.   East China (Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Fujian, Jiangxi, Shandong)
   3.   North China (Beijing, Tianjin, Shanxi, Hebei, central Inner Mongolia Autonomous
         Region)
   4.   Central China (Henan, Hubei, Hunan)
   5.   South China (Guangdong, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Hainan)
   6.   Southwest China (Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Chongqing, Tibet Autonomous Region)
   7.   Northwest China (Shanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia hui Autonomous Region, Xinjiang
         Uygur Autonomous Region, Western Mongolia Autonomous Region)

Q8. Please indicate your main information sources of getting news.
   1.   Newspaper
   2.   Television
   3.   Magazine
   4.   Radio
   5.   Domestic portal sites (e.g., Sina, SOHU, NetEase, Tencent, Xinhua Net, People's
         Network, Phoenix New Media)
   6.   News client (e.g., Toutiao, ZAKER, Jiemian)
   7.   Weibo (e.g., hot search, hot topic, hot comments, post)
   8.   WeChat (e.g., WeChat official accounts, Moments, private chat)
   9.   Other social networking sites (e.g., Baidu Tieba, Hupu, Tianya)

10. In-person conversation with family or friends

11. Other (please specify) _____

<u>The following questions are regarding to the use of Sina Weibo. Please log in your Sina Weibo account and confirm the following information. If you have more than one account, the frequently used account shall prevail.</u>

Q9. In the past 30 days, how often have you read or seen comments, questions, pictures, videos, or other information about Japan on SNSs (e.g., Weibo, WeChat moments, QQ Zone, Baidu Tieba, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)?

Never |—————|—————|—————|—————| Very often

Q10. In the past 30 days, how often have you posted or reposted comments, questions, pictures, videos, or other information about Japan on SNSs?

Never |—————|—————|—————|—————| Very often

Q11. Do you register a Sina Weibo account?

1. Yes, I have an account
2. Yes, I have more than one account
3. No

Q12. Please log in your Sina Weibo account, and fill information in the blanks.

The total number of Weibo	_____posts
The number of "following"	_____users

The number of "follower"	_____users
The number of "friend circle"	_____users
The number of friends or acquaintance you frequently keep in touch or interact with on Sina Weibo	_____users

Q13. Who will you include as Sina Weibo "friend" (i.e. following each other)? Please choose the most appropriate answer.

1. Only like-minded people
2. Acquaintance or friend
3. People whom I have met only once or twice
4. Even strangers

Q14. Please choose one statement that is the closet to your Sina Weibo followers and followings.

1. Most of them are of similar background
2. Many of them are from different background, but still a significant portion are from similar background
3. They come from a variety of backgrounds

Q15. Please estimate the proportion of their Sina Weibo "friends" who are of similar age.

1. 0-20%
2. 21-40%
3. 41-60%
4. 61-80%
5. 81-100%

Q196 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements relating to your motivation and purpose of using Sina Weibo? Please choose the most appropriate answer for each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
Get in touch with family and friends	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
Communicate with people who live abroad	1	2	3	4	5
To discuss homework or subjects of school	1	2	3	4	5
Let others know my mood and how I have been doing	1	2	3	4	5
Search useful information	1	2	3	4	5
To understand other people's view on social issues	1	2	3	4	5
Follow the updates of friends	1	2	3	4	5
Find people who have the same interests or hobbies	1	2	3	4	5
Expand my network	1	2	3	4	5
To make social contribution	1	2	3	4	5
To share information with communities and carry out regional activities	1	2	3	4	5
To understand domestic and international situations	1	2	3	4	5
For relaxation	1	2	3	4	5
Follow and communicate with celebrities	1	2	3	4	5
Using without purpose	1	2	3	4	5
Other_____	1	2	3	4	5

Q17. Have you visited Japan?

      1.   Yes (→to Q21)

      2.   No (→to Q22)

Q18. Please indicate the number of your visiting times and period of stay in total.

Number of times: _____

Period of stay: _____year(s) _____month(s) _____day(s)

Q19. What's your impression of Japan? Please choose the most appropriate answer.

Very unfavorable   ├──────┼──────┼──────┼──────┤   Very favorable

Q20. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Please choose the most appropriate answer.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
I think we should be vigilant to Japan	1	2	3	4	5
I think that we should deepen the cooperation with Japan, and build the intimate relations between China and Japan in the future	1	2	3	4	5
I am interested in Japan	1	2	3	4	5
I hope I can stay or live in Japan	1	2	3	4	5

Q21. Please choose the most appropriate answer from "1" to "5" to evaluate Japan for each set of adjectives.

backward	1	2	3	4	5	advanced
dangerous	1	2	3	4	5	safe
impoverished	1	2	3	4	5	affluent
untrustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	trustworthy
culturally barren	1	2	3	4	5	culturally rich
gender-unequal	1	2	3	4	5	gender-equal
militant	1	2	3	4	5	peace loving
conservative	1	2	3	4	5	open and free
threatening (to international community)	1	2	3	4	5	contributing (to international community)

Appendix 14 Size n of a simple random sample required for a given precision of the estimate (maximum error, in absolute percentage points) and a given size N of the whole population (for a 95% confidence level)

Precision of the estimate							
5%			2%			1%	
N	n		N	n		N	N
100	80		100	96		100	99
300	170		300	270		300	296
500	220		500	415		500	475
1000	285		1000	715		1000	910
5000	370		5000	1660		5000	3330
> 8000	400 (n_0)		10000	2000		10000	5000
			> 50000	2500 (n_0)		20000	6350
						> 200000	10000 (n_0)

Source: Compiled by the author based on Cobetta (2003, p. 216, TABLE 8.1).

Appendix 15 Notes on respondents recruitment

University A has one female dormitory building and four male dormitory buildings; University B has three female dormitory and two male buildings. Given a target sample size of 385 or more and the fact that each room housed four to six students, the calculated number of samples for each university was averaged to each floor. Research assistant visited the dorm rooms of even number to ask whether students whom are living in that room are willing to participate in the survey, until enough samples are collected on each floor. Respondents were asked to answer the following questions outlined in next subsection within around 30 minutes. Assistant left the questionnaires to voluntary students and asked them to fill out the questionnaire in their free time. The filled out

questionnaires were collected by the research assistant at a later time. 473 valid responses in the age

group of 18-25 were obtained ultimately. Based on the estimation above, the participants of

questionnaire survey consist of 215 students of A University and 258 students enrolled in B

University. Both questionnaire recovery rate and effective rate were higher than 90%[215]. Given the

procedure of data collection, the sample should be reasonably representative of university students in

Beijing.

Appendix 16 Factor loadings of the measures of evaluation and recognition of Japan after rotation

	Component 1	*Component 2*
Backward – advanced	0.152	0.836
Impoverished – affluent	0.141	0.861
Culturally barren – culturally rich	0.298	0.716
Conservative – open and free	0.472	0.508
Militant – peace loving	0.898	0.051
Threatening – contributing	0.861	0.218
Untrustworthy – trustworthy	0.721	0.362
Dangerous – safe	0.550	0.444

Appendix 17 Correlations among endogenous variables

Although not diagrammed in the theoretical model, the analysis provides evidence that

evaluation of Japan's progressiveness and perceived threat of Japan are correlated ($\psi = 0.40$, $p <$

0.01). In addition, vigilant intention is negatively correlated to intimate intention ($\psi = -0.99$, $p <$

0.05), interest of Japan ($\psi = -0.17$, $p < 0.001$), and social distance ($\psi = -0.22$, $p < 0.001$). Intimate

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[215] 510 survey questionnaires were sent out.

intention is positively correlated to interest ($\psi = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$) and social distance ($\psi = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, strong correlation was found between interest and social distance with a psi coefficient of 0.66 ($p < 0.001$).

Appendix 18 Notes on imputation methods for missing data

Several solutions to missing data[216] are suggested by social researchers, such as excluding missing data from the construction of the index and the analysis, treating missing data as one of the variable responses, or yielding an interpretation of the meaning of missing data (Babbie, 2015, pp. 208-209). Whereas analysts approach missing data problem from a slightly different angle, for example, likewise deletion, and filling in the missing data values by mean estimates, least square (LS) estimates (Lee, Poon, & Bentler, 1990, p. 355). Among these methods, multiple imputation (MI) (Rubin, 1987) is a standard and straightforward method for handling missing data (e.g., Murray, 2018; Takahashi, 2017). These approaches are established on the assumption of MAR (or MCAR) which means the probability of missingness depends solely on observed data (Audigier et al., 2018). With the introduction to computational software to generate imputations and combine the estimates, it has become easily and common for researchers to replace missing data points with estimated values based on a predictive distribution of data points that models the underlying mechanism of missing data (Byrne, 2010, p. 358; Murray, 2018). As such, the software program computes the estimates of the mean and variance based on the full sample so that satisfy a statistical criterion (Kline, 2005).

There are several widely used algorithm of multiple imputation in software program: those are the data augmentation (DA) algorithm, the full conditional specification (FCS), and the expectation-maximization bootstrapping (EMB; Takahashi, 2017). This study applied FCS since it is

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[216] Rubin (1976) and Little and Rubin (1987) address three primary patterns of missing data: those missing completely at random (MCAR), those missing at random (MAR), and those missing not at random[216] (MNAR; also known as nonignorable nonresponse).

generally believed that FCS methods are less likely to generate biased imputation and flexible for multilevel data (Audigier et al., 2018). The process of estimating the missing values is as follows. First, the missing rates of all variables in the model will be presented. Next, in order to impute the incomplete data, a statistical model should be formulated for each incomplete variable and for the missing-data patterns (Schunk, 2007). Thus, all variables which will be used in the final analyses are supplied to the software program, SPSS, including independent, mediator, and dependent variables. Then, the imputation model will be operated in SPSS to produce the MI dataset which contains both the observed and imputed data that are highlighted in yellow color. The MI dataset will be used to carry out the following analyses.

Appendix 19 Overall summary of missing values
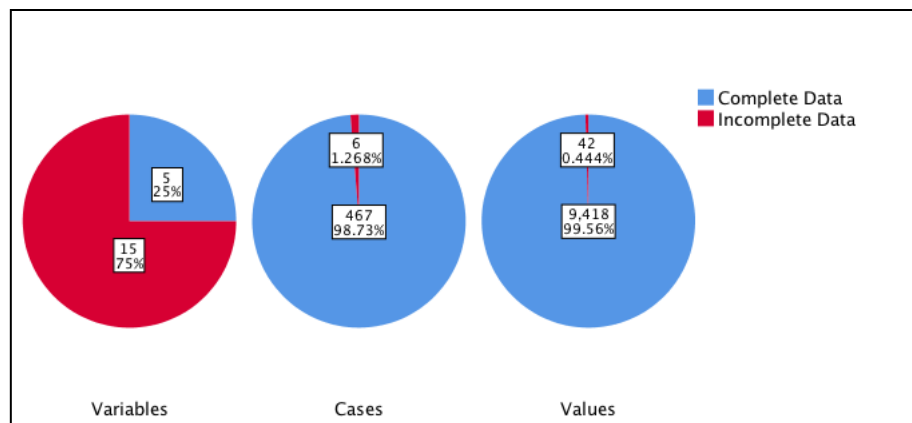
Appendix 20 Missing value patterns of all variables in imputation model
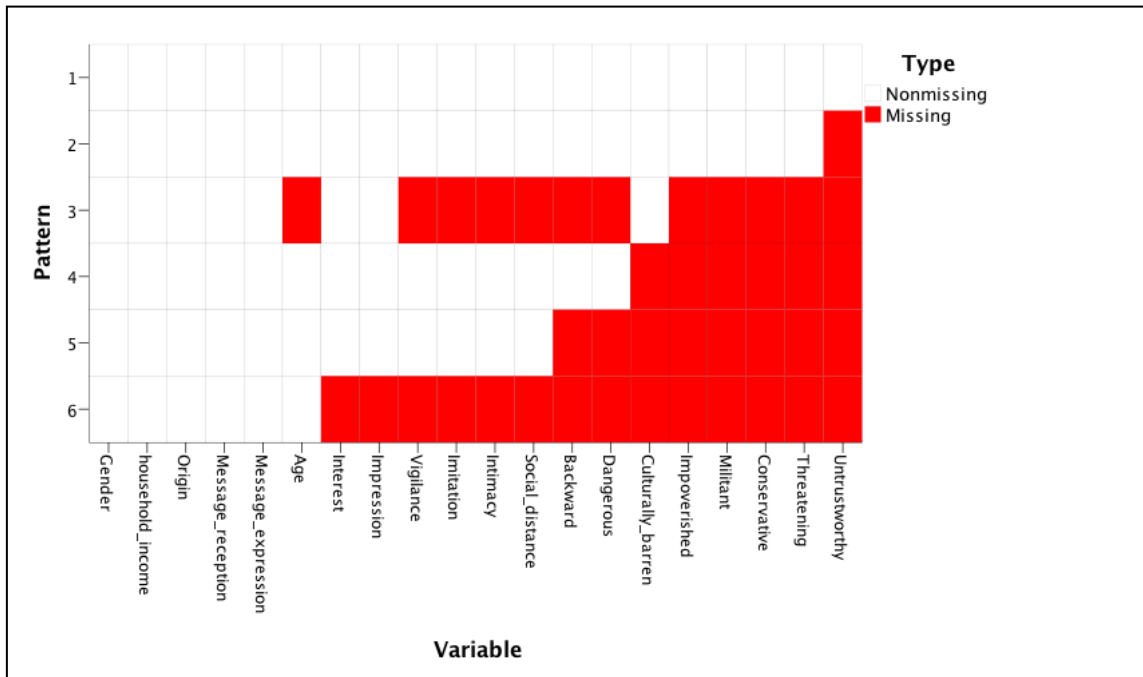
Appendix 21 Descriptive statistics and reliability tests

	M	SD	Alpha
Backward – advanced	4.15	0.67	0.77
Dangerous – safe	3.38	1.00	0.76
Impoverished – affluent	4.01	0.85	0.78
Untrustworthy – trustworthy	2.94	1.00	0.76
Culturally barren – culturally rich	3.77	0.93	0.76
Militant – peace loving	2.58	0.99	0.78
Conservative – open and free	3.32	0.92	0.78
Threatening – contributing	2.84	0.92	0.77
Vigilant intention to Japan	3.17	0.93	0.83
Intimate intention to Japan	3.58	0.81	0.76

Interest of Japan	3.53	1.02	0.76
Social distance to Japan	3.00	1.18	0.77

Appendix 22 Standardized coefficients for the CFA model

	Estimate	*S. E.*	*C.R.*	*Sig.*
Backward <— EvlReg1	.558			***
Impoverished <— EvlReg1	.517	.135	8.708	***
Culturally barren <— EvlReg1	.670	.195	8.565	***
Conservative <— EvlReg1	.477	.199	5.834	***
Threatening <— EvlReg2	.508	.096	6.175	***
Militant <— EvlReg2	.412	.094	5.533	***
Untrustworthy <— EvlReg2	.762	.113	8.646	***
Dangerous <— EvlReg2	.777			***

Note: *** $P < 0.001$

Appendix 23 Notes on estimation of composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE)

The validity and reliability of the measuring instrument of this quantitative analysis were assessed in section 5.4. In addition to adopting strategies of promoting validity in the phases of research design and preliminary research, construct validation was assessed by conducting CFA. Apart from CA, CR and AVE were estimated for assessing convergent validity of the overall scale scores.

The convergent validity[217] of the measurement can be assessed by the composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). CR values were estimated by plugging squared sum of coefficients ($\sum \lambda_i$) and sum of error terms ($\sum \epsilon_i$) into the formula proposed by Raykov (1997):

$$CR = \frac{(\sum \lambda_i)^2}{(\sum \lambda_i)^2 + (\sum \epsilon_i)}$$

As a result, CR values for the two factors were greater than 0.8[218] (see Table 4.8), indicating a considerably reliable scale. Along with CR, AVE is generally used to assess the convergent validity of the scale for CFA by measuring "the amount of variance that is captured by the construct in relation to the amount of variance due to measurement error" (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The value of AVE can be calculated as:

$$AVE = \frac{\sum \lambda_i^2}{\sum \lambda_i^2 + \sum \epsilon_i}$$

The results that shown in the last line of Table 5.3 indicate that the values of AVE were over 0.5[219] for both factors.

Appendix 24 Notes on model evaluation

In general, there are two types of fit indices: absolute and incremental (Bollen, 1989; Gerbing & Anderson, 1993; Hu & Bentler, 1995). Absolute indices determine if the proposed model is consistent with the data without the use of a reference model (Holber & Stephenson, 2002). Incremental indices assess the "proportionate improvement in fit" by matching the hypothesized model with a nested baseline model (Hu & Bentler, 1995, p. 82). The most common absolute fit index is the χ^2 goodness-of-fit test (Hoyle & Panter, 1995). A nonsignificant value of χ^2 is usually

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[217] Convergent validity refers to the degree to which the
[218] The acceptable value of CR is 0.7 and above.
[219] Values above 0.7 are considered very well, whereas, the validity is questionable if the value is less than 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

accepted as a good model fit. The χ^2-distributed test suggests that the model does not fit the data, yielding a chi-square value of 329.7 with 90 degrees of freedom and a probability of less than .0001, thereby suggesting that the fit of the data to the hypothesized model is not adequate. However, it is widely believed that the χ^2-distributed statistic is often problematic with small sample or due to the lack of multivariate normality in the model (Byrne, 2010, p. 76; Hu & Bentler, 1995). Likewise, if the sample is sufficiently large any model will be rejected (Blunch, 2012, p. 110). Researchers have addressed the limitations of χ^2 by proposing many supplemental indices to evaluate to what extent the model fit the data collected in the survey.

The comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler & Bonett, 1980) and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI; Tucker & Lewis, 1973) are the most commonly used incremental indices assessing the proportionate improvement in model fit by comparing the hypothesized model with the less restricted baseline model (Byrne, 2012). CFI and TLI cutoff values close to 0.95 for large sample are considered a good model fit (see Bentler, 1992; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Browne and Cudeck (1993) suggest reporting standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) instead of TLI in combination with the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) when a sample is greater than 250, since it is proved that when the sample size is small, the TLI and RMESA tend to over reject true population models (Hu & Benteler, 1999). SRMR represents the average value across all standardized residuals ranging from zero to 1.00. In this case, SRMR value under 0.06 and RMSEA value less than 0.08 indicate the hypothesized model observed sample data very well (Hu & Bentler, 1999; MacCallum et al., 1996). Goodness-of-fit index (GFI) was introduced by Jöreskog & Sörbom (1981) as an absolute test to counter the inherent weakness associated with χ^2 test.

Appendix 25 Cutoff criteria of commonly used goodness-of-fit indices

Index	*Cutoff criteria*	*Literature*
CFI	> 0.9	Bentler (1992)
	> 0.95	Hu & Bentler (1999)
TLI	> 0.95	Hu & Bentler (1999)
GFI	Close to 1.00	Jöreskog & Sörbom (1981)
SRMR	< 0.06	Hu & Bentler (1999)
RMSEA	< 0.08~0.10	MacCallum et al. (1996)
	< 0.6	Hu & Bentler (1999)
	< 0.05	Browne & Cudeck (1993)

Source: Created by the author based on Bentler (1992); Browne & Cudeck (1993); Hu & Bentler (1999); Jöreskog & Sörbom (1981); Jöreskog & Sörbom (1981).

Appendix 26 Amos syntax of estimating specific indirect effects

'Reception —> Progressiveness —> Vigilance

ie1 = par1*par5

'Reception —> Progressiveness —> Intimacy

ie2 = par1*par6

'Reception —> Progressiveness —> Interest

ie3 = par1*par7

'Reception —> Progressiveness —> Social distance

ie4 = par1*par8

'Expression —> Progressiveness —> Vigilance

ie5 = par3*par5

'Expression —> Progressiveness —> Intimacy

ie6 = par3*par6

'Expression —> Progressiveness —> Interest

ie7 = par3*par7

'Expression —> Progressiveness —> Social distance

ie8 = par3*par8

'Reception —> Perceived threat —> Vigilance

ie9 = par2*par9

'Reception —> Perceived threat —> Intimacy

ie10 = par2*par10

'Reception —> Perceived threat —> Interest

ie11 = par2*par11

'Reception —> Perceived threat —> Social distance

ie12 = par2*par12

'Expression —> Perceived threat —> Vigilance

ie13 = par4*par9

'Expression —> Perceived threat —> Intimacy

ie14 = par4*par10

'Expression —> Perceived threat —> Interest

ie15 = par4*par11

'Expression —> Perceived threat —> Social distance

ie16 = par4*par12

'Reception —> Impression —> Vigilance

ie17 = par12*par14

'Reception —> Impression —> Intimacy

ie18 = par12*par15

'Reception —> Impression—> Interest

ie19 = par12*par16

'Reception —> Impression —> Social distance

ie20 = par12*par17

'Expression —> Impression —> Vigilance

ie21 = par13*par14
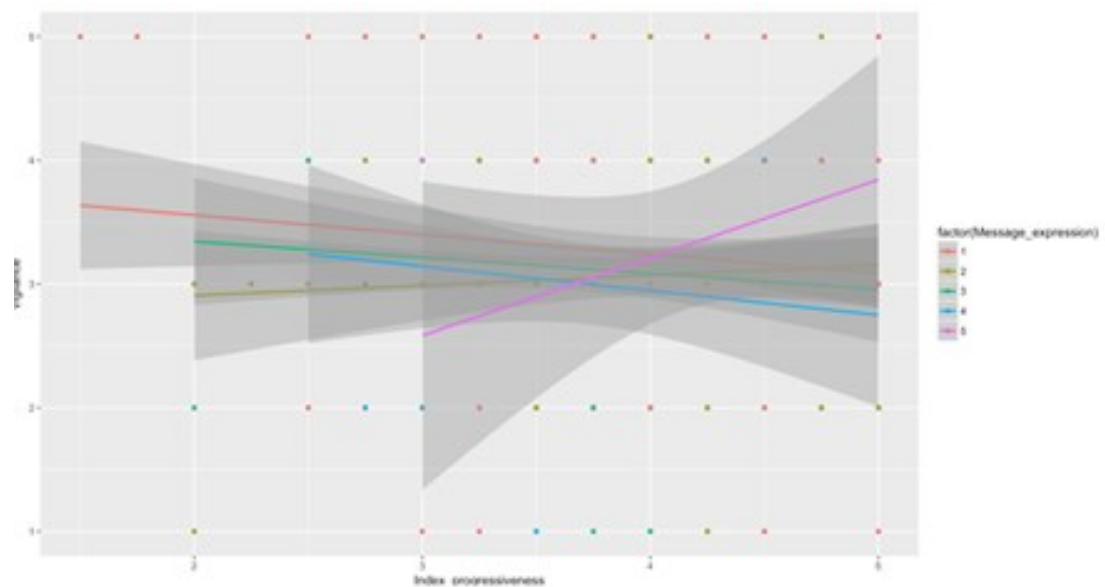
'Expression —> Impression —> Intimacy

ie22 = par13*par15

'Expression —> Perceived threat —> Interest

ie23 = par13*par16

'Expression —> Perceived threat —> Social distance

ie24 = par13*par17

Appendix 26 Effects of evaluation of Japan's progressiveness on vigilant intention by frequency of expression of relevant message

Appendix 27 Path diagram of the theorized model