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# Strategies for Optimizing the China-ASEAN Discourse System in the All-Media Era: A Study Based on COVID-19 and Corpus-Assisted Analysis

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**Abstract:**
*The establishment of an international discourse system constitutes a critical component of national soft power. This study employs AntConc 4.2.4 corpus analysis software to investigate how five major Chinese and English mainstream media outlets in ASEAN countries portrayed China's anti-pandemic measures from 2019 to 2024. The analysis identifies divergences in the depiction of China by ASEAN's official media and overseas Chinese media. Based on these findings, the study proposes strategies to enhance comprehensive engagement with ASEAN nations and develop a multifaceted, multidimensional discourse system guided by official initiatives and complemented by public participation, thereby bolstering China's international communication capability.*

**Keywords:**
*The All-Media Era, Discourse system, Corpus analysis, COVID-19*

## 1. Introduction

International communication capability is a fundamental indicator of the soft power of a nation. ASEAN serves as a pivotal strategic partner for China and a critical juncture along the "Maritime Silk Road." As the interconnectedness between China and ASEAN intensifies, constructing a discourse system tailored to the all-media era becomes imperative. Such a system aims to deliver authentic, compelling, and relatable narratives about China from third-party perspectives, thereby enhancing China's global influence within the framework of China's modernization.

## 2. Foundations and Advantages for Constructing the China-ASEAN Discourse System

This section should contain sufficient details so that methods can be appropriately cited and readers can assess whether the materials and methods justify the conclusions or not. [2] It can be divided into subsections if several other methods need to be described. You need explain how you studied the topic, identify the proce-

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dures you followed, and structure this information as logically as possible. [3]

### *2.1. Robust China-ASEAN Economic Relations as a Key Link*

Since the signing of the China-ASEAN Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement in 2002, economic cooperation between China and ASEAN has entered a fast track. China has been ASEAN's largest trading partner for 15 consecutive years, while ASEAN has surpassed the EU and the US to become China's largest trading partner for four consecutive years. In 2022, the implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) further accelerated positive and healthy economic cooperation between China and ASEAN. By 2023, bilateral trade volume reached $917.1 billion, with a year-on-year growth of 10.5% in the first half of 2024. These increasingly close economic ties provide a robust foundation and guarantee for constructing the China-ASEAN discourse system.[1].

### *2.2. Geographical Advantages and Overseas Chinese Communities as Key Foundations*

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is located at the crossroads of Asia and Oceania, where the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean meet. It is a region where Eastern and Western cultures converge, integrate, and coexist harmoniously. ASEAN is home to a rich tapestry of cultural traditions, including Confucianism, Buddhism, and Hinduism from the East, as well as Catholicism and Islam from the West. ASEAN is also a major hub for ethnic Chinese and overseas Chinese, with over 40 million Chinese individuals, accounting for more than 70% of the global Chinese diaspora and over 6% of the total population of ASEAN member states. Since the 1980s, more than 2.5 million Chinese immigrants have settled in ASEAN countries. Ethnic Chinese and overseas Chinese are natural disseminators of Chinese culture abroad. Having lived in various countries for extended periods, they interact with diverse industries and social classes, gaining a deeper understanding of the political tendencies and preferences of local governments and populations. Through everyday communication and interaction, they play a crucial role in telling the Chinese story, exerting a subtle and pervasive influence[2].

### *2.3. Chinese Enterprises in ASEAN as a Driving Force*

With the implementation of China's "Go Globally" strategy, ASEAN, with its geographical proximity, rich resources, and vast market, has attracted a significant amount of Chinese investment. According to China's 2023 Statistical Bulletin of China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment, China's direct investment in ASEAN amounted to $19.73 billion, marking a growth rate of 22.8%. Of this, direct investment in Singapore and Indonesia reached $12.78 billion. Chinese-funded enterprises in ASEAN have totaled nearly 6,200, employing approximately 580,000 local workers. In 2023, China's investment in ASEAN grew by 44.6%, spanning sectors such as manufacturing, wholesale and retail, leasing and business services, production and supply of electricity, heat, gas, and water, transportation, and construction. The supply chains and industrial chains of both sides are increasingly intertwined and integrated. Chinese enterprises entering ASEAN are committed practitioners of telling China's story and play a vital role in building a trustworthy international discourse system for China-ASEAN relations[3].

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### *2.4. ASEAN Students in China as an Essential Group*

Following the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2021, interest in Chinese culture and national strength among ASEAN countries has grown, leading to a steady increase in the number of ASEAN students studying in China. From 2013 to 2018, over 480,000 ASEAN students pursued studies in China. Although numbers temporarily declined during the pandemic, they rebounded in late 2022. Between 2014 and 2020, China dispatched over 14,000 international Chinese language teachers to ASEAN countries, establishing 42 Confucius Institutes and 16 Confucius Classrooms by 2023. Seven ASEAN countries, including the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia, have incorporated Chinese into their national education systems. ASEAN students studying in China and locals learning Chinese culture foster mutual understanding and provide a balanced perspective on China's rise, becoming indispensable to the China-ASEAN discourse system.

## 3. Research Design

### *3.1. Research Corpus*

this study utilized the Factiva database to retrieve reports on "China" from five major ASEAN media outlets: The Straits Times (Singapore), New Straits Times (Malaysia), The Jakarta Post (Indonesia), Lianhe Zaobao (Singapore), and Nanyang Siang Pau (Malaysia). The retrieval period spanned December 27, 2019, to August 13, 2024, focusing on "COVID-19 pandemic" and "epidemic outbreak" topics. After deduplication and filtering irrelevant content, a self-built corpus was established, as shown in Table 1.

*Table 1 Corpus Information*

| Source | Number of Articles | Type Count |
|---|---|---|
| *The Straits Times* | 3442 | 2052225 |
| *New Straits Times* | 537 | 276009 |
| *The Jakarta Post* | 342 | 262812 |
| *Lianhe Zaobao* | 1186 | 718021 |
| *Nanyang Siang Pau* | 843 | 207048 |
| Total | 6350 | 3516115 |

### *3.2. Research Methodology*

Firstly, this study will use AntConc 4.2.4 as the analytical tool, focusing on high-frequency content words. The time point of December 7, 2022 (the date of the release of China's "10 New Measures") will be used as the reference for the text analysis. This analysis will reveal the attitudes of the media towards China's anti-epidemic measures.

Secondly, this study will apply Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theory to analyze the discourse practices of the 5 mainstream media outlets, interpreting the processes of text generation, dissemination, and reception the discourse practices of the five mainstream ASEAN media outlets. The aim is to explain the processes of text generation, dissemination, and reception, as well as to analyze the relationship between the text and discourse practices.

Lastly, this study will examine the social practices underlying the coverage of China's anti-epidemic efforts

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in the five mainstream ASEAN media outlets. It will explore the relationship between the coverage and social culture, uncovering the similarities and differences in the image of China shaped by major media outlets since the outbreak of COVID-19, along with the ideological factors behind these portrayals.

## 4. Research Process and Results

### *4.1. Descriptive Analysis*

High-frequency words serve as indicators of the focal issues or concerns of the discourse's subject, directly contributing to the construction of the subject's image. This study involves the analysis of the top 20 high-frequency content words, as illustrated in Tables 2 and 5.

*Table 2: Top 20 High-Frequency Words from 2 Chinese-language Media Outlets (Prior to the " 10 New Measures")*

| | ***Nanyang Siang Pau*** | | ***Lianhe Zaobao*** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rank | Content words | Frequency/ Frequency per 100 words | Content words | Frequency/ Frequency per 100 words |
| 1 | 中国 | 6737/1.58 | 中国 | 13151/1.17 |
| 2 | 疫情 | 3815/0.89 | 疫情 | 10891/0.97 |
| 3 | 肺炎 | 2102/0.49 | 香港 | 3360/0.30 |
| 4 | 武汉 | 1829/0.43 | 人 | 3278/0.29 |
| 5 | 经济 | 1359/0.32 | 经济 | 3263/0.29 |
| 6 | 人 | 1351/0.32 | 国家 | 2938/0.26 |
| 7 | 全球 | 1300/0.30 | 病例 | 2750/0.24 |
| 8 | 病例 | 1176/0.28 | 武汉 | 2612/0.23 |
| 9 | 新冠 | 1128/0.26 | 防疫 | 2494/0.22 |
| 10 | 确诊 | 1112/0.26 | 措施 | 2487/0.22 |
| 11 | 大马 | 1090/0.26 | 病毒 | 2480/0.22 |
| 12 | 国家 | 1078/0.25 | 新加坡 | 2410/0.21 |
| 13 | 病毒 | 1058/0.25 | 上海 | 2341/0.21 |
| 14 | 影响 | 1030/0.24 | 美国 | 2257/0.20 |
| 15 | 冠状病毒 | 988/0.23 | 疫苗 | 2238/0.20 |
| 16 | 政府 | 872/0.20 | 政府 | 2208/0.20 |
| 17 | 美国 | 848/0.20 | 社会 | 2101/0.19 |
| 18 | 口罩 | 794/0.19 | 出现 | 2008/0.18 |
| 19 | 香港 | 772/0.18 | 影响 | 1927/0.17 |
| 20 | 例 | 752/0.18 | 昨天 | 1924/0.17 |

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*Table 3: Top 20 High-Frequency Words from 2 Chinese-language Media Outlets (Following the " 10 New Measures")*

| | ***Nanyang Siang Pau*** | | ***Lianhe Zaobao*** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rank | Content words | Frequency/ Frequency per 100 words | Content words | Frequency/ Frequency per 100 words |
| 1 | 中国 | 924/1.71 | 中国 | 3492/1.74 |
| 2 | 疫情 | 406/0.75 | 疫情 | 1592/0.79 |
| 3 | 大马 | 211/0.39 | 新加坡 | 729/0.36 |
| 4 | 游客 | 188/0.35 | 经济 | 639/0.32 |
| 5 | 经济 | 172/0.32 | 人 | 598/0.3 |
| 6 | 国家 | 165/0.3 | 香港 | 558/0.28 |
| 7 | 旅游 | 149/0.28 | 冠病 | 527/0.26 |
| 8 | 防疫 | 142/0.26 | 防疫 | 482/0.24 |
| 9 | 我国 | 137/0.25 | 国家 | 476/0.24 |
| 10 | 人 | 134/0.25 | 今年 | 454/0.23 |
| 11 | 马来西亚 | 134/0.25 | 旅客 | 434/0.22 |
| 12 | 香港 | 125/0.23 | 旅游 | 420/0.21 |
| 13 | 发展 | 114/0.21 | 恢复 | 405/0.2 |
| 14 | 冠病 | 102/0.19 | 可能 | 394/0.2 |
| 15 | 政府 | 102/0.19 | 北京 | 391/0.19 |
| 16 | 今年 | 92/0.17 | 措施 | 391/0.19 |
| 17 | 市场 | 89/0.16 | 政策 | 388/0.19 |
| 18 | 冠病疫情 | 87/0.16 | 疫苗 | 377/0.19 |
| 19 | 开放 | 85/0.16 | 感染 | 369/0.18 |
| 20 | 措施 | 85/0.16 | 美国 | 359/0.18 |

*Table 4: Top 20 High-Frequency Words in Three English Media Outlets (Prior to "10 New Measures")*

| | ***The Strait Times*** | | ***New Strait Times*** | | ***The Jakarta Post*** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rank | Content words | Frequency/ Frequency per 100 words | Content words | Frequency/ Frequency per 100 words | Content words | Frequency/ Frequency per 100 words |
| 1 | china | 14300/0.76 | covid | 1865/0.70 | china | 1786/0.78 |
| 2 | covid | 8550/0.46 | china | 1487/0.56 | indonesia | 1282/0.56 |
| 3 | singapore | 6504/0.35 | malaysia | 1169/0.44 | covid | 1217/0.53 |
| 4 | coronavirus | 6374/0.34 | health | 776/0.29 | vaccine | 778/0.34 |
| 5 | chinese | 5324/0.28 | vaccine | 771/0.29 | percent | 757/0.33 |
| 6 | people | 5109/0.27 | virus | 688/0.26 | countries | 703/0.31 |
| 7 | percent | 4387/0.23 | people | 668/0.25 | government | 703/0.31 |
| 8 | virus | 4321/0.23 | percent | 629/0.24 | health | 692/0.30 |
| 9 | hong kong | 4000/0.21 | pandemic | 618/0.23 | jakarta | 670/0.29 |
| 10 | health | 3947/0.21 | government | 593/0.22 | people | 652/0.28 |

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| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11 | pandemic | 3689/0.20 | countries | 485/0.18 | pandemic | 623/0.27 |
| 12 | outbreak | 3611/0.19 | vaccines | 465/0.17 | chinese | 555/0.24 |
| 13 | beijing | 3265/0.17 | chinese | 464/0.17 | coronavirus | 552/0.24 |
| 14 | government | 3232/0.17 | country | 461/0.17 | virus | 551/0.24 |
| 15 | wuhan | 2810/0.15 | outbreak | 419/0.16 | economic | 516/0.22 |
| 16 | city | 2713/0.14 | ministry | 387/0.15 | asean | 488/0.21 |
| 17 | countries | 2674/0.14 | coronavirus | 372/0.14 | global | 467/0.20 |
| 18 | country | 2625/0.14 | economic | 347/0.13 | country | 414/0.18 |
| 19 | measures | 2304/0.12 | public | 307/0.12 | indonesian | 399/0.17 |
| 20 | global | 2238/0.12 | yesterday | 299/0.11 | outbreak | 399/0.17 |

*Table 5: Top 20 High-Frequency Words in Three English Media Outlets (Following "10 New Measures")*

| | ***The Strait Times*** | | ***New Strait Times*** | | ***The Jakarta Post*** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rank | Content words | Frequency/ Frequency per 100 words | Content words | Frequency/ Frequency per 100 words | Content words | Frequency/ Frequency per 100 words |
| 1 | china | 2037/1.11 | china | 191/1.43 | china | 332/0.98 |
| 2 | covid | 1843/1.00 | covid | 164/1.22 | covid | 183/0.54 |
| 3 | chinese | 758/0.41 | travellers | 83/0.62 | pandemic | 138/0.41 |
| 4 | percent | 647/0.35 | health | 74/0.55 | countries | 122/0.36 |
| 5 | beijing | 535/0.29 | country | 62/0.46 | chinese | 119/0.35 |
| 6 | people | 523/0.29 | malaysia | 56/0.42 | indonesia | 111/0.33 |
| 7 | singapore | 508/0.28 | tourists | 52/0.39 | people | 107/0.32 |
| 8 | health | 458/0.25 | countries | 50/0.37 | health | 104/0.31 |
| 9 | pandemic | 455/0.25 | government | 50/0.37 | asean | 102/0.3 |
| 10 | country | 356/0.19 | chinese | 44/0.33 | percent | 87/0.26 |
| 11 | virus | 354/0.19 | ministry | 40/0.3 | global | 81/0.24 |
| 12 | travellers | 323/0.18 | people | 37/0.28 | economic | 74/0.22 |
| 13 | government | 306/0.17 | tourism | 31/0.23 | government | 71/0.21 |
| 14 | travel | 303/0.17 | pandemic | 30/0.22 | growth | 71/0.21 |
| 15 | hong kong | 275/0.15 | entry | 29/0.22 | policy | 70/0.21 |
| 16 | policy | 269/0.15 | travel | 29/0.22 | vaccines | 65/0.19 |
| 17 | infections | 267/0.15 | public | 28/0.21 | cooperation | 59/0.17 |
| 18 | countries | 262/0.14 | infections | 27/0.2 | jakarta | 54/0.16 |
| 19 | economy | 258/0.14 | measures | 27/0.2 | trade | 53/0.16 |
| 20 | city | 251/0.14 | surge | 26/0.19 | country | 52/0.15 |

Before the release of the 10 New Measures, the high-frequency word lists from Nanyang Siang Pau and Lianhe Zaobao showed that both media outlets primarily focused on pandemic-related topics such as " 中国 ," " 疫情 ", and " 病例 ". These terms indicate that the media coverage focused on the social and economic impacts of the pandemic and the implementation of preventive measures. Additionally, the frequent appearance of the place name " 武汉 " reflected early attention to the epicenter of the outbreak. Further analysis of the term "Wuhan" revealed that the coverage was more about presenting the actual situation of the pandemic's

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development rather than merely emphasizing its negative effects. Over time, the coverage gradually became more comprehensive.

After the release of the 10 New Measures, the high-frequency words in both Nanyang Siang Pau and Lianhe Zaobao shifted significantly, reflecting the vocabulary associated with changes in China's epidemic prevention measures. Words like " 开放 " and " 恢复 " appeared frequently. Additionally, terms related to the tourism industry, such as " 旅游 " and " 游客 " emerged, reflecting the media's attention to the impact of the new measures on the tourism sector.

Before the release of the 10 New Measures, The Straits Times, The New Straits Times, and The Jakarta Post all included the names of their respective countries (e.g., China, Malaysia, Indonesia) among the top high-frequency words, indicating their strong focus on how China's pandemic situation might affect their own countries. Furthermore, the word "Percent" appeared within the top ten in all three media outlets, suggesting that they employed a relatively detailed data analysis approach in their reporting.

However, the focus of the coverage on China differed significantly across the outlets. In The Straits Times, the high-frequency words "Hong Kong," "Beijing," and "Wuhan" were prominent. Specifically, "Hong Kong" and "Wuhan" were mostly used as place names, showing the media's geographical focus on these locations, while "Beijing" was used more to refer to the official stance of the Chinese government. For example, in the sentence "Beijing will not steer away from continuing to press for unification," The Straits Times emphasized China's political and diplomatic positions.

In contrast, The New Straits Times focused more on public health issues. Although the term "Economic" had a frequency of 0.13 and ranked 18th, terms like "Health," "Vaccine," and "Virus" had higher frequencies (over 0.2), reflecting a stronger emphasis on public health rather than economic concerns. The frequencies of "China" and "Malaysia" were 0.56 and 0.44, respectively, indicating a balanced focus on the relationship between China and Malaysia, especially during the pandemic.

Meanwhile, The Jakarta Post placed more emphasis on international cooperation and economic impacts. The high-frequency terms "China," "Indonesia," and "Countries" had frequencies of 0.78, 0.56, and 0.31, respectively, showing a dual focus on the impact of China's pandemic situation on Indonesia and other countries. The term "Economic" ranked higher at 0.22, reflecting the media's attention to the economic effects of the pandemic, particularly how these impacts could affect Indonesia's economy.

After the release of the 10 New Measures, while "China" and "COVID" remained dominant in the high-frequency word lists of all three media outlets, their coverage shifted notably. All three outlets featured words related to tourism, such as "Traveller" and "Tourism," reflecting their focus on the recovery of the tourism sector after China relaxed its epidemic prevention measures. The Jakarta Post in particular added more terms related to the ASEAN region's economy, such as "ASEAN," "Economic," and "Trade," indicating a strong focus on the impact of China's new policies on Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia.

When comparing the high-frequency words before and after the 10 New Measures in Chinese and English media, several differences in focus, reporting angle, and presentation style are evident. Chinese media primarily focused on the dynamics of the domestic pandemic situation and the effectiveness of epidemic control

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measures. Before the 10 New Measures, high-frequency words in outlets like Nanyang Siang Pau and Lianhe Zaobao were centered around terms like "China," "pandemic," and "pneumonia," indicating their high attention to the domestic situation and its development trends. The core issues in the reporting were how to effectively control the pandemic, protect public health, and promote China's economic recovery under the pandemic measures. As a result, Chinese media reports were more focused on domestic economic recovery and development. After the 10 New Measures, words like "economy," "tourism," and "epidemic prevention" emerged frequently, reflecting the media's attention to the recovery of China's economy and its impact on domestic demand and the tourism sector.

In contrast, English media outlets placed more emphasis on the international implications of China's pandemic situation, particularly for global relations and the world economy. Whether in The Straits Times, The New Straits Times, or The Jakarta Post, high-frequency words like "China," "Covid," and "Economic" were prominent, indicating a stronger focus on how China's epidemic control measures affected global markets, international trade, and their own countries. English media's attention to China's epidemic prevention policies was more centered on the economic impact on the global scale. After the 10 New Measures, these media outlets particularly focused on the potential effects on global tourism and the economic opportunities that might arise from these policy adjustments. Words like "Travellers" and "Tourism" appeared significantly more frequently, reflecting their attention to the potential changes in international travel and economic exchanges following China's easing of its restrictions.

### *4.2. Interpretive Analysis*

Interpretive practice is the second dimension of Fairclough's three-dimensional discourse analysis framework, which focuses on how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed. This dimension emphasizes the process of discourse creation and the interaction between the author and the audience. It involves the generation of discourse, its means of transmission, and how audiences receive and interpret it, thereby revealing how discourse forms and functions within specific social and cultural contexts. In news discourse, there are numerous citations, and by analyzing their sources, we can uncover the underlying ideologies behind the discourse.

In the coverage of the five ASEAN media outlets, there are also many references to external information. On the whole, most of the news sources in these outlets are clearly identified, with direct attribution to the speakers or the source of the information. However, there is still a significant amount of information where the source is unclear or lacks proper attribution, and these often appear around the time of the release of the 10 New Measures.

### *4.3. Explanatory Analysis*

According to Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, explanatory analysis is the third dimension in Fairclough's three-dimensional discourse analysis framework. Through the analysis of text and discourse practices, it reveals the underlying ideologies and power structures in discourse, as well as how these factors influence the generation, dissemination, and reception of discourse. Media social practice analysis requires consideration of the media's position and the social context.

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The five ASEAN media outlets involved in this study are all controlled by private commercial groups. SPH Media, the parent group of The Straits Times and Lianhe Zaobao, controls Lianhe Zaobao and The Straits Times, while Media Prima Berhad controls New Straits Times. Nanyang Siang Pau is controlled by World Chinese Media Limited, listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, and The Jakarta Post is owned by a consortium of four local media groups: Kompas Gramedia Group, Tempo, Suara Karya, and Sinar Harapan.

Compared to government-controlled media, which often serve as official mouthpieces, these outlets maintain a certain degree of independence, allowing their reporting to be more objective and authentic.

However, no matter how neutral or objective they claim to be, the media's position is inevitably influenced by the overall national ideology. As China is a comprehensive strategic partner of ASEAN, with deep cooperation in political security, economic trade, and socio-cultural areas, ASEAN media differ from Western outlets in their coverage of China, often presenting a less malicious or defamatory portrayal of China..

# 5.Suggestions for Optimizing the China-ASEAN Discourse System in the All-Media Era

This section should present your findings objectively, explaining them largely, concisely, precisely in the text. You should show how your results contribute to the scientific knowledge in academic community clearly and logically. Results and Discussion may be divided by subheadings, concluding equations, figures, tables, etc. [6]

## *5.1. Focus on Cultivating and Integrating Diverse Talent Resources to Strengthen International Discourse Power*

In the All-Media Era, constructing the China-ASEAN discourse system requires a wealth of rich and emotionally impactful content, especially materials created from the perspective of ordinary citizens, such as images, short videos, TV shows, and written materials. These form an essential part of external communication. Short videos, in particular, have gained global popularity. For instance, TikTok, the international version of Douyin, has surpassed 4.92 billion downloads globally by 2024, with more than 1.428 billion monthly active users [4]. The short-series entertainment app Reelshort is also a sensation across the U.S., with its revenue accounting for 71% of the global short drama industry by February 28, 2024. As a new medium for telling China's story, short videos allow global audiences to learn about China through a simple swipe of their fingertips [5].

Building the China-ASEAN discourse system not only requires the cultivation of excellent media talents, such as those skilled in filmmaking, video editing, video promotion, multilingual commentary, image editing, and cross-cultural communication, but also the integration of various talents into professional teams. This will enhance the strength of external discourse promotion, ensuring that the story of China is rich in content, close to the people in perspective, and aligned with the media and people's preferences in ASEAN countries. This will make it easier to resonate with audiences and build trust, achieving a result where facts speak louder than words and silently dispelling lies [6].

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### *5.2. Strengthen Cultural Exchanges with ASEAN Countries, Emphasizing the "Media + N" Model*

In building the China-ASEAN discourse system, it is essential to strengthen cooperation with mainstream media in ASEAN countries, including Chinese-language media. These outlets should make full use of their mature media networks to amplify China's voice, tell the Chinese story, and establish a responsible and powerful image of China abroad. They should also learn to "sail out on a borrowed ship", mainly focusing on telling China's story in their own voice, while also integrating others' narratives. This can be achieved by leveraging the discourse leadership of influential foreign media, think tanks, publishers, and pro-China individuals.

Additionally, actively exploring the "Media + N" model—such as "media + multiple subjects," "media + diverse content," and "media + various formats"—is crucial. On one hand, media can collaborate with ASEAN governments, local governments, Chinese-funded enterprises, Chinese business chambers, and ethnic Chinese community organizations to jointly promote the Chinese story and form a collective momentum[7]. On the other hand, media content should be diverse, using big data and network analysis to perform targeted promotion based on the readership data of ASEAN populations, considering different countries, ethnicities, and social classes to enhance the effectiveness of communication. Finally, innovation in promotional formats is essential. Traditional media, such as print and broadcast, should be innovated using technological empowerment, enhancing interactivity and emotional appeal. For instance, organizing AR exhibitions on China-ASEAN historical cooperation would be a novel approach.

### *5.3. Unite Overseas Enterprises, Overseas Chinese, and International Students in a Triangular Civil Society Media Force*

ASEAN countries are a key destination for Chinese enterprises expanding abroad, outbound tourism, studying abroad, and for overseas Chinese communities. With the full implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), many Chinese enterprises are riding this wave of opportunity, actively investing and expanding in ASEAN countries. According to the 2024 UOB Corporate Outlook Survey (China Mainland Edition), 45% of 600 large and medium-sized Chinese companies surveyed indicated plans to expand their business in ASEAN countries over the next three years, the largest share among overseas markets. ASEAN is also the most concentrated region for overseas Chinese, with large Chinese communities residing in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia, constituting a significant proportion of the population.

The Development of Chinese Students Studying Abroad (2023-2024) notes that the number of Chinese students in countries along the Belt and Road Initiative, such as Thailand and Malaysia, has increased. Overseas Chinese-funded enterprises, overseas Chinese communities, and international students in China have deep connections with China. They live and work overseas, engaging in all aspects of ASEAN countries. They are vital "human resources" for China abroad and play an indispensable role in building the China-ASEAN discourse system.

Through various civil organizations, groups, and China-ASEAN cooperation platforms, we can actively communicate and enhance cooperation with overseas business chambers, Chinese community organizations,

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and student associations to support the construction of China's international discourse system. These grassroots "amplifiers" help tell China's story in everyday interactions, subtly speaking for the country and becoming overseas spokespersons for China's image. They provide a multi-dimensional display of China's image and its national stature.

## 6. Conclusion

ASEAN is an important strategic partner of China. Its unique geographical location, trade and investment relations, and socio-cultural foundation make the China-ASEAN discourse system a crucial component of China's broader international discourse system. This study, through an analysis of the discourse on China's anti-pandemic measures from 2019 to 2024 across five mainstream Chinese and English-language media outlets in ASEAN, draws the following conclusions:

Before and after the release of the "10 New Measures" ( 新十条 ), ASEAN Chinese-language media focused primarily on domestic pandemic developments and policy implementation. In contrast, ASEAN English-language media paid more attention to the international impact of China's pandemic situation, particularly its ripple effects on ASEAN countries. Moreover, although these media outlets were influenced by their respective national ideologies, their reports were generally objective and neutral.

Therefore, by using ASEAN as a starting point, China should actively construct a multi-dimensional, multi-faceted China-ASEAN discourse system, led by official guidance and grassroots initiatives. This approach will allow ASEAN countries to serve as neutral voices in telling the story of China and ASEAN's collaboration, the story of China's commitment to peaceful development, and the story of building a community with a shared future for mankind. Through this process, valuable experiences will be accumulated, helping optimize China's international discourse system and enhance China's global influence in the era of globalization.

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