

ABSTRACT

Along with the development of China, South-East Asia is taking a more and more important role as the strategic partner of China, both in the political and economic point of view. This study takes a pioneering attempt to examine the attitudes and consciousness of SE Asian local English-speaking netizens towards China, to observe how the netizens shared their ideas to impact each other, and construct their common opinions following the case of the Beijing Olympic Games by means of *Fantasy Theme Analysis*. 627 posted comments from three forums of different countries were analyzed in this study. Finally, there were five different *fantasy themes* and *fantasy types* found in these online communities. The first fantasy theme dramatized China as a cruel despot who enslaved people and fooled the whole world with lies to glorify him. The second one identified Chinese migrants with avarice. The third dramatized Chinese migrants as competitors who may try to “take over” their countries through economic power and the Chinese migrants. The fourth honored China as the “root” of those SE Asian Chinese and treated China with great good will and tolerance. The fifth indicates that Chinese were praised as “Jews of the East” and were considered “hardworking” and “brilliant”. The constructed rhetorical visions for the netizens towards China bear distinct appearances and the sentiment of SE Asian netizens towards China was diversified and ambivalent.

Keywords: fantasy theme, Symbolic Convergence Theory, rhetorical vision, South-East Asia, online community