

Research on Jiangxi's International Image Based on NOW Corpus^{*}

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This paper retrieves and classifies reports on Jiangxi from 2010 to June 2024 in the NOW corpus, analyzing the status quo of Jiangxi's international image portrayed by English news media through word frequency and collocates. It is found that international attention towards Jiangxi is closely related to the holding of the World Conference on VR Industry in Nanchang, and there are apparent regional disparities. With a severe labeling of its mining industry, Jiangxi's international image lacks independence and distinctiveness, resulting in a relatively monotonous overall image. Based on this, relevant suggestions for further enhancing Jiangxi's international image are proposed.

Keywords: NOW Corpus, Jiangxi Province, international image

Introduction

In recent years, experts and scholars in the field of national image research have conducted comprehensive and systematic studies on various topics related to the construction and communication of China's international image. In early 2019, the "Blue Book of National Image" titled *Annual Report on National Image Communication (2017-2018)* became the first professional annual report in China systematically studying the development of China's national image communication. Jiangxi, an essential commodity export region on the Silk Road, has contributed significantly to economic and cultural exchanges between the East and the West by exporting porcelain and tea overseas, thereby promoting the dissemination of Chinese civilization. In April 2020, the State Council approved the establishment of Jiangxi Inland Open Economy Pilot Zone, ushering in new opportunities for Jiangxi's opening up. Correspondingly, with the enhancement of overseas communication in the era of social networking, it has become a significant proposition to construct Jiangxi's international image (Zhang & Gong, 2021, p. 27). This paper conducts a discourse analysis of overseas media reports on Jiangxi to check the

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international image of Jiangxi constructed in these reports and provides a reference for shaping Jiangxi's international image.

Literature Review

Amid globalization and the rapid development of new media technologies, the construction of local international images has become a crucial link in enhancing regional soft power and promoting international economic and cultural exchanges. Jiangxi, as an essential province in China, has increasingly attracted the attention of academia regarding its international image construction. Several research outcomes and trends can be summarized through the analysis of the research conducted by domestic and foreign scholar.

Multiple studies have pointed out that the rapid development of new media technologies has provided new opportunities and challenges for the communication of Jiangxi's international image. Through the analysis of the relevant data from Twitter accounts, Guo Chaowen (2023) revealed the current status of Jiangxi's international communication on new media platforms and proposed improvement suggestions. This indicates that new media platforms have become significant channels for constructing Jiangxi's international image, yet their communication effect still needs further enhancement. Yan Yiwen and Li Silong (2023) employed a multi-modal discourse analysis method to conduct an in-depth study of Jiangxi's global promotion conference promotional videos and compared them with California's promotional videos. This research offers a new perspective on the translation of city image promotional videos, emphasizing the challenges and opportunities in cross-cultural communication, which has important implications for enhancing Jiangxi's international image. Zhang Guohui and Gong Suina (2021), as well as Yin Ying and Yuan Zhenxiang (2021), explored strategies for constructing Jiangxi's international image from different angles. The former focused on strategic analysis in the era of social networking, while the latter, taking Yichun as an example, analyzed communication strategies under the new media environment. These studies provide specific strategic guidance and case studies for constructing Jiangxi's international image, which have practical value. Wen Lingying (2021) and Guo Ji, Yi Kui, and Su Qike (2020) respectively studied the international image perception of Jiangxi's characteristic towns and tea cultural tourism destinations. These studies reveal the important role of unique resources in constructing Jiangxi's international image and propose corresponding communication strategies. The showcase of Jiangxi's unique resources can help enhance Jiangxi's international popularity and reputation. The research conducted by Wang Min and Zhou Zhenzhen (2019) delved into the opportunities presented by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) for the construction of Jiangxi's international image. Specifically, they exemplified ceramic culture to analyze the prospects for Jiangxi's international media image building within the context of the BRI. This study provides crucial theoretical foundations and practical references for Jiangxi to showcase its unique cultural charm on the global stage.

In summary, current research on the construction of Jiangxi's international image encompasses diverse aspects such as new media communication, multi modal discourse analysis, strategy formulation, exploitation of distinctive resources, and the BRI. These studies have furnished abundant theoretical support and practical guidance for enhancing and disseminating Jiangxi's international image. While these endeavors have undoubtedly contributed positively to the self-shaping or external communication of Jiangxi's image, there remains a scarcity of research that examines the current status of Jiangxi's internationally perceived image from the combined perspective of corpus and discourse analysis. Such an approach could significantly propel the comprehensive enhancement of Jiangxi's international image.

Research Design

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the three-dimensional analytical approach of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as formulated by Fairclough (1992), aiming to explore the portrayal of Jiangxi's image by overseas English-language media through an analysis of their relevant reports.

CDA delves into the structural features of language to reveal the social meanings, implicit ideologies, power relations, and value orientations embedded within (Xu, 2013, p. 137). Fairclough (1992) proposes an analytical model encompassing three dimensions: text, discourse practice, and social practice. Text dimension focuses on analyzing the content and form of language, including vocabulary, grammar, and semantics. Discourse practice examines how text producers create texts, how receivers understand information, and how existing discourses and genres are utilized for interpretation. Social practice emphasizes social analysis, exploring the reconfiguration of discourse within a specific social context or power relation and identifying the underlying factors that influence social practice, particularly the ideological information concealed within discourse. This study primarily focuses on the dimensions of discourse practice and social practice, where discourse and social structures can be shaped by each other (Hu & Tian, 2018, p. 80). As a form of social practice, media discourse not only reflects ideological constraints but also exerts a reciprocal influence on people's thoughts, perceptions, and impressions within its realm. Consequently, English language overseas media discourse, in reporting on Jiangxi, is not merely constrained by the ideologies of its societal context but also actively contributes to the construction of Jiangxi's international image (Zhang & Luo, 2023, p. 25)

Corpus Sources and Research Objectives

The data for this study are drawn from the News on the Web (NOW) corpus which is a dynamic and structured online news repository established by American scholar Mark Davis. Since 2010, NOW has extensively collected approximately 17.8 billion words of data from online newspapers and magazines across over 20 English-speaking countries, with continuous updates at a rate of approximately 200 to 220 million words per month (or approximately 2.4 billion words annually). Renowned for its abundant data resources and exceptional search capabilities, NOW can be used in various retrieval methods, including word frequency lists, word frequency charts, collocate analysis, comparative studies, and keyword in context. Its comprehensive coverage of media outlets and rapid updating feature enable researchers to effortlessly track changes in word frequency trends, specific collocations, and usages, thereby facilitating extensive application in studies of national or regional image.

Employing CDA methods, this study examines and analyzes Jiangxi's international image based on the NOW corpus. Through overseas media reports on Jiangxi from 2010 to June 2024, statistical analysis is conducted on the frequency, timing, country distribution, and collocates of Jiangxi-related reports to address the following research questions: (I) What characteristics has the international attention on Jiangxi Province shown from 2010 to 2024? (II) What is the current situation of Jiangxi's international image as perceived by others? (III) What strategies does Jiangxi employ to shape its own international image? The ultimate goal is to clarify and analyze Jiangxi's international image within the discourse of overseas media and propose suggestions for improving and further shaping Jiangxi's international image.

Results and Discussion

Distribution of Reporting Time

When “Jiangxi” is utilized as the node word from 2010 to 2024, the total frequency of occurrences and their annual trends can be retrieved. The data results are presented in Figure 1.

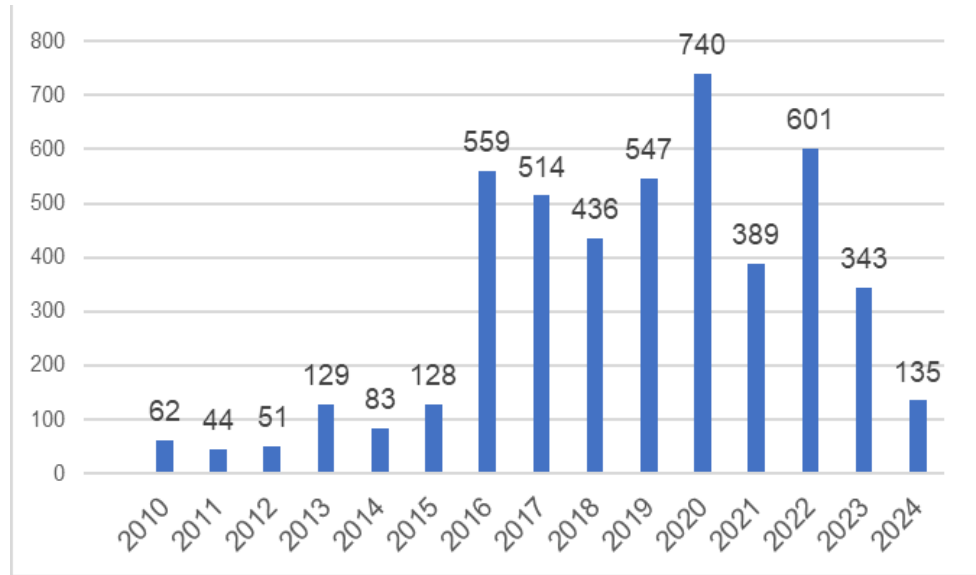


Figure 1. Distribution of word frequency for the node word “Jiangxi” in the NOW Corpus (by year).

An analysis of Figure 1 reveals that the total frequency of “Jiangxi” in English news media was 4,761 times from 2010 to June 2024. Overall, Jiangxi’s presence in English news media remains relatively low, indicating that international attention towards the province needs to be enhanced.

In terms of temporal trends, the total frequency exhibited a generally flat trend from 2010 to 2015. However, the frequency surged to 559 occurrences in 2016, marking a significant increase compared to previous years. Subsequently, although an overall growth trend is observable, it is not a continuous yearly increase. Years with more international media attention towards Jiangxi include 2016, 2017, 2019, 2020, and 2022. Notably, 2020 recorded the highest frequency of 740 occurrences among the 14-year period, followed by a decline in 2021 to 389 occurrences. According to the Jiangxi Provincial Climate Center, 2020 witnessed 1,896 millimeters of annual precipitation, 13% above normal. Influenced by El Niño and La Niña events, the climate in Jiangxi was notably abnormal in 2020, resulting in a poor agricultural climate assessment. From July 6 to 10, 2020, Jiangxi’s flood prevention emergency response in Jiujiang escalated from Level IV to Level I within five days. Since the implementation of the graded system for flood prevention emergency responses, both the response level and the speed of escalation have been historically unprecedented. This suggests that the heightened frequency of Jiangxi in English news media in 2020 is closely related to these events.

Moreover, from 2021 to 2024, the total frequency of Jiangxi in English news media generally declined, with the exception of 2022. On November 12-13, 2022, the 2022 World Conference on VR Industry was held grandly in Nanchang, Jiangxi. This event triggered significant international attention towards Jiangxi, demonstrating that the World Conference on VR Industry effectively enhanced the province’s international profile and provided an important opportunity for the world to learn about Jiangxi.

Distribution of Reporting Countries

An examination of the NOW corpus reveals the distribution of reporting countries for the node word “Jiangxi,” showcased the total frequency (FREQ) of mentions across the top 15 nations, as depicted in Figure 2.

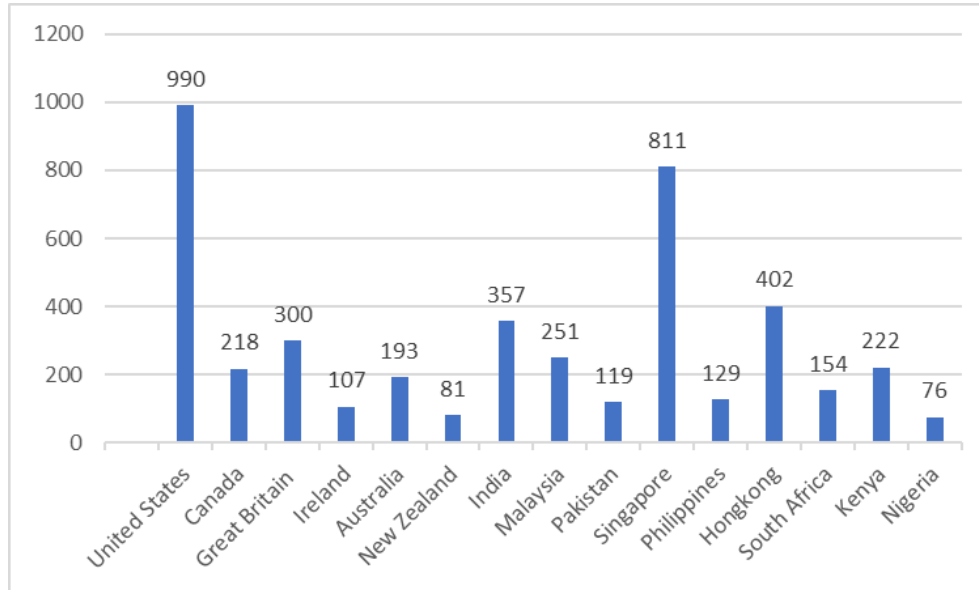


Figure 2. Distribution of word frequency for the node word “Jiangxi” in the NOW Corpus (by reporting countries).

Within the NOW corpus, nearly 20 countries and regions have reported on Jiangxi from 2010 to June 2024. Based on the volume of coverage, these nations and territories are ranked as follows: the United States, Singapore, Hong Kong (China), India, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Kenya, Canada, Australia, South Africa, the Philippines, Pakistan, Ireland, New Zealand, and Nigeria (Figure 2). Notably, the United States and the United Kingdom, both developed nations, harbor a complex mindset of anticipation and caution towards China’s rising influence, resulting in their substantial reporting on Jiangxi. Additionally, countries such as Canada, India, and Australia maintain heightened attention towards China due to economic and political considerations. Meanwhile, nations like Pakistan and South Africa show interest in Jiangxi due to the BRI and political-economic diplomacy.

The analysis of the frequency of “Jiangxi” per million words (PER MIL) offers further insights. While the United States leads in the absolute number of reports, its PER MIL stands at 0.13, indicating a relatively low density. In contrast, Hong Kong (China) tops the list with a PER MIL of 4.14, reflecting its status as a Special Administrative Region that closely monitors developments in mainland China’s cities. Following Hong Kong are Singapore, Kenya, and Malaysia, suggesting that news coverage of Jiangxi in these countries, particularly Singapore and Malaysia, along with some African nations, tends to be more focused. Singapore, with a 70% Chinese population and strong ties to China, reports extensively on Jiangxi, likely due to the numerous commercial and cultural tourism exchanges between the two regions. An analysis of the search terms reveals that overseas media coverage of Jiangxi predominantly revolves around international conferences, basic city introductions, infrastructure projects, and public events.

Retrieval of High-Frequency Collocates

The concept of “collocate” was proposed by Firth, the founder of the London School, in the 1950s. In corpus, collocate refers to “the occurrence of two or more words within a short distance of each other in a text” (Sinclair,

1991). The collocational behavior arising from the co-occurrence of a node word and its collocates often indicates textual meaning selection, reflecting the speaker's attitude. Moreover, the recurrent co-occurrence of specific collocational patterns in texts contributes to the emergence of particular discourses or intentions, which are intertwined with underlying discursive motives (Hu & Tian, 2018). CDA posits an inseparable link between lexis and grammar, aligning with the notion of “collocates” in corpus linguistics (Huang, 2022, p. 74). Therefore, this paper delves into the high-frequency collocates of the search term “Jiangxi” to further investigate the international image of Jiangxi portrayed by overseas media.

High-frequency noun collocates. Through the search function of “collocates”, the high-frequency noun collocates of the node word “Jiangxi” can be retrieved, spanning from 2010 to 2024, with a span of four words to the left and right of “Jiangxi”. The top 30 high-frequency noun collocates are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Notable Noun Collocates of the Node Word “Jiangxi” in the NOW Corpus

	Collocates	FREQ		Collocates	FREQ
1	Province	2113	16	Construction	39
2	Copper	281	17	Morning	35
3	Provinces	224	18	Plant	34
4	Co	164	19	Lake	33
5	City	156	20	Odds	30
6	Lithium	127	21	Water	30
7	Company	114	22	Parts	29
8	County	94	23	Police	29
9	People	76	24	Authorities	28
10	University	72	25	China	28
11	Capital	64	26	Head	28
12	Government	59	27	School	28
13	Corporation	55	28	Investment	27
14	Group	54	29	Bishop	26
15	Technology	40	30	Village	26

According to Table 1, the high-frequency geographical descriptors collocated with “Jiangxi” include “Province/Provinces”, “City”, “Capital”, and “Village”. When referring to Jiangxi and its prefecture-level cities, English news media tend to introduce its basic information and cities, etc., and even rely on other provinces such as Hunan, Hubei, and Anhui. As a result, Jiangxi's overall image lacks a sense of independence and distinctiveness.

The collocate “Capital” occurring 64 times and ranking 11th, refers specifically to Nanchang, indicating that the provincial capital garners more attention from international English news media than other prefecture-level cities. For instance, “Speaking at a virtual reality conference in Nanchang, capital of southeastern Jiangxi province on Saturday, Liu said China will work with the US to address each...” (2019-10-18-perthnow.com.au). Nanchang, as the permanent host of the World Conference on VR Industry, has hosted five consecutive editions since 2019, projecting it as a pioneer in VR technology and a vibrant city of technological innovation.

The second most frequent notable noun collocate is “Copper”, which is associated with “Jiangxi Copper Corporation Limited” with precise retrieval. These reports mainly focus on the industrial development related to Jiangxi Copper Group, demonstrating the intense interest of English news media in China's copper industry. High-frequency collocates such as “Co”, “Lithium”, “Company”, “Corporation”, “Group”, “Plant”, and

“Construction” reveal a substantial proportion of reports on Jiangxi’s metallurgical industry. Mentions of “Ganfeng Lithium Co.” and “Jiangxi Construction Engineering Group Co., Ltd.” are prevalent, as exemplified by “...with one of the world’s largest lithium producers, China’s Jiangxi Ganfeng Lithium Co. It also has a 40 per cent stake...” (2023-10-27-theage.com.au). Influenced by the mining-dominated industrial structure, Jiangxi continues to be portrayed in English news media as a predominantly metallurgical and mining province.

Furthermore, other notable noun collocates related to Jiangxi, such as “University” and “School” occur frequently, indicating that the academic achievements and social legal systems of Jiangxi’s universities also garner attention from English news media. However, an examination of specific report texts reveals that coverage of Jiangxi primarily revolves around the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters like floods, and mining, suggesting a somewhat negative and monolithic international image of Jiangxi.

High-frequency adjective collocates. The NOW corpus’s “collocate” supports the retrieval of adjective data associated with keywords through the “keyword + ADJ” search method. By employing the query “Jiangxi + ADJ” and selecting a span of four words to the left and right of the node word “Jiangxi”, researchers obtained the top 30 high-frequency adjectives associated with “Jiangxi” from 2010 to 2024, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Notable Adjective Collocates of the Node Word “Jiangxi” in the NOW Corpus

	Collocates	FREQ		Collocates	FREQ
1	Eastern	201	16	Electric	23
2	Fujian	136	17	Largest	22
3	Southern	133	18	Limited	22
4	Chinese	124	19	Rare	22
5	Central	112	20	Agricultural	19
6	Southeastern	111	21	Special	19
7	Provincial	90	22	High	18
8	International	88	23	Normal	18
9	Ltd	52	24	South-eastern	18
10	Open	43	25	Native	16
11	New	32	26	Neighbouring	16
12	Economic	31	27	Northern	14
13	Local	29	28	Auxiliary	13
14	Other	27	29	Financial	13
15	Rural	26	30	Industrial	12

As evident from Table 2, geographical adjectives such as “Eastern”, “Southern”, “Chinese”, “Southeastern”, and “Central” are prominently associated with “Jiangxi”. Based on the collocates “Fujian”, “Provincial”, “Local”, and “Neighbouring” as well as the reporting texts, the image of Jiangxi is a province adjacent to Fujian with its location in southeastern China in the eyes of social community. Jiangxi’s frequent mention alongside provinces like Fujian and Hunan in English news media underscores its interconnectedness with other regions, but also hints at a lack of distinctiveness in its image portrayal. Additionally, based on the collocates “Largest”, “Electric”, and “Rare” and other related reporting texts, English news media still closely associate Jiangxi with the mining industry. Its reputation includes descriptions of Jiangxi as the “Hometown of Non-ferrous Metals” and “China’s Copper Capital”.

All in all, the social community's attention towards Jiangxi is relatively low and unevenly distributed, resulting in a homogenized image of the province. This can be attributed to several factors: (I) From a diachronic perspective, Jiangxi's international visibility is generally low, with peaks primarily dependent on the World Conference on VR Industry. (II) In terms of reporting countries, there are significant regional disparities in the dissemination of Jiangxi's international image, with some countries showing low reporting rates. (III) The frequency of geographical descriptive terms among significant collocations related to Jiangxi is relatively high; however, these reports often reference neighboring provinces such as Hunan and Fujian, leading to a lack of independence and distinctiveness in its image. (IV) The international community's focus on Jiangxi mainly centers around mining, the COVID-19 pandemic, and natural disasters, portraying Jiangxi as a monolithic province with a strong mining industry. (V) While the international community acknowledges and recognizes Jiangxi's mining development, the overall impression and evaluation tend to be negative.

Strategies for Self-shaping the International Image of Jiangxi

Jiangxi's strategy for shaping its international image should focus on integrating historical and cultural elements with modern aspects, while also comprehensively strengthening brand development within the province. There are some ways to help Jiangxi establish a unique and appealing international image, such as a deep exploration and inheritance of historical and cultural heritage, the integration of modern elements, innovative communication methods, promotion of the "Jiangxi Local Specialty Business Scope Publicity", enhancement of product quality and service levels, increased publicity efforts, and expansion into international markets.

Integration of Historical and Cultural Elements and Modern Elements

Firstly, it is crucial to excavate and preserve historical culture. Jiangxi boasts a wealth of historical and cultural resources, including ceramic culture, religious culture, Hakka culture, bronze culture, academy culture, and rice farming culture, all of which are vital components in shaping Jiangxi's national image. By delving into the essence of these cultures, people can witness its profound historical foundations and cultural allure. Secondly, modern elements should be integrated. While preserving historical culture, Jiangxi should also actively integrate modern elements to present an image of openness, innovation, and inclusiveness. For instance, modern technological tools such as Virtual Reality can be employed to provide immersive cultural experiences for tourists in tourism development. Lastly, innovative communication methods should be adopted. Utilizing new media platforms like social media and short videos can disseminate Jiangxi's cultural resources widely, making it more convenient for international audiences to understand and appreciate Jiangxi's culture. Additionally, producing cultural promotional videos with Jiangxi's distinct characteristics and broadcasting them through international television channels and online platforms can elevate the international recognition of Jiangxi's culture.

Enhancement of In-Province Branding in an All-Around Manner

In its external communication endeavors, Jiangxi should deliberately leverage its inherent strengths to establish a unique Jiangxi brand image, thereby enhancing its international fame and communication influence. For example, leveraging the "spotlight" effect generated by large-scale domestic and international projects, events, conferences, and exhibitions can integrate Jiangxi's city image into media activities. Additionally, through the momentum of international media focusing on Jiangxi's affairs, Jiangxi can be entered into the eyes of the social community. What's more, collaboration with both Chinese and other international media can

optimize communication resource allocation, enabling Jiangxi to present itself in a multi-faceted discourse style on the global stage (Liu, Yin, & Qin, 2021, p. 90).

Conclusion

Drawing upon the NOW corpus, it is evident that overseas media attention towards Jiangxi has been escalating over time. By analyzing the diachronic changes in the frequency of the term “Jiangxi” from 2010 to 2024, regional distribution patterns, notable collocates, and related textual content retrieved from the international coverage in the NOW corpus, this study provides insights into the portrayal of Jiangxi’s international image. The social community’s heightened interest in Jiangxi is closely tied to the hosting of the World Conference on VR Industry, showcasing pronounced regional disparities. Notably, Jiangxi’s international image suffers from a lack of independence and distinctiveness, with a prevalent stereotype as a major mining province, contributing to an overall monolithic representation. In response to this phenomenon, two strategies are proffered for Jiangxi’s self-shaping of its international image. Firstly, Jiangxi should enhance the integration of historical and cultural elements with modern cultural features. This approach can help reinforce Jiangxi’s rich historical heritage while simultaneously projecting a contemporary, innovative, and inclusive image. Secondly, it is imperative for Jiangxi to expedite the establishment of a unique brand identity, thereby continuously boosting its international communication power and visibility. By implementing these strategies, Jiangxi can elevate its international image, transcending the limitations of its current monochromatic portrayal.

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