Comfortable Outsiders: "Western" and "Chinese" Tourist Consumption and Digital Imagining of Japan as Other

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ABSTRACT
The broader theme of my study is to look at the ways in which the “imagined Japan” is constructed through online media, and explore how this may be intertwined with tourist encounters with Japan. I will begin by pointing out that English-based cybermedia tend to fantasize Japan as something far removed from the ordinary, and refer to the hermetically sealed cycle in which imagination cultivated in this way directly feeds into what the tourists actually choose to see during their travel. I will then continue to look at tourism practice itself, especially taking a comparative approach between how “Western” and “Chinese” tourists perceive Japan, and simultaneously, how they are received by the Japanese locals. Connecting to the institute’s theme, I question to what extent can tourist count as contributing to the multicultural Japan, and suggest that while Western tourists are “pure outsiders” who will never be considered a part of Japan’s multiculturalism, a new kind of “China scare” in the tourism sector emerging as a popular topic in Japan seems to underscore an ambivalent sentiment towards the Chinese tourists who could not be quite fully accepted as mere outsiders.