

## **FROM MANGA TO SOCIAL MEDIA: ANALYZING THE RISE AND CONSEQUENCES OF EARTHQUAKE RUMORS IN JAPAN THROUGH THE LENS OF SOCIAL CONTAGION THEORY**

***Chi Hong LEUNG & Jialing Juley XIAO***

*Department of Management and Marketing, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hung Hom, Hong Kong, China*

### ***ABSTRACT***

*This paper uses Social Contagion Theory (SCT) to analyze how rumors about a predicted mega-earthquake in Japan in July 2025 spread, focusing on social and psychological mechanisms. SCT suggests that information and behaviors propagate through social networks like disease transmission, highlighting social influence and imitation. Key societal factors driving rumor spread include uncertainty, super-spreaders, social media structures, internet anonymity, and confirmation bias. Psychological elements such as emotional arousal, lack of accountability, and social identity play significant roles in this contagion process. The rumors originated from the manga "Watashi Ga Mita Mirai" and have notably impacted Japan's tourism industry. A content analysis of online discussions in Hong Kong revealed five major rumor types: misinformation, exaggerated damage, unsubstantiated theories, misinterpretations, and conspiracy theories. The study concludes with recommendations for mitigating the effects of rumor contagion, offering insights into managing misinformation in the digital age.*

***KEYWORDS:*** Social Contagion Theory, Rumor, Misinformation, Social Media, Japanese Manga, Natural Disasters, Economic Impact

---

### ***Article History***

***Received: 06 Dec 2025 | Revised: 15 Dec 2025 | Accepted: 19 Dec 2025***

---