A Comparative Study on the Construction of China's Image in Media Reports by China and the United States on the Beijing Winter Olympics— A Corpus-Basitical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract:

This study focuses on the construction of China's image by Chinese and American media during the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. Utilizing a corpus-based critical discourse analysis method, this study analyses Chinese media reports and compares the differences in the construction of China's image. The findings reveal that Chinese and American media present different images of China, with American media tending to construct a complex and negative image, while Chinese media prefer to showcase a more positive aspect of the country. This research aims to understand the national image construction in international communication, contribute to the promotion of cross-cultural exchange, and provide strategies for the effective shaping of China's national image by Chinese media.

Keywords: China's image, Beijing Winter Olympics, critical discourse analysis, Chinese and American media.

1. Introduction

Many recent studies have focused on Beijing Winter Olympic Games and it has attracted extensive attention and coverage from Western media. As a key channel of international communication, media agenda setting and public opinion guidance have a profound impact on the shaping of national image and the audience's cognitive landscape. Under the important opportunity of presenting the national image, how do Chinese media actively display the national image of China in their reports, to what extent do the focus and forms of their discourse representations affect western perceptions of the national image of China, and what attitude and significance do they show in the representation. Starting from the above problems, a comparative analysis of the discourse construction of China's national image in Chinese and Western media during the Beijing Winter Olympics is of great significance.

It is the purpose of the present paper to analyze the Chinese and western media reports on the Beijing Winter Olympics in the social context. In addition, an effort is made to uncover the discourse construction

and image effects produced by Western media's coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics through comparative research. The information presented should be useful to provide references for the effective shaping of national image and communication strategies during the Beijing Winter Olympics.

2. Literature review

Research on the construction of national image has achieved significant results, particularly in the fields of journalism and communication studies, linguistics, and public relations.

There is research on how Western media construct China's national image in their coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics. Han Yunzhi observed that the construction of China's image by Western media has increased, showing a trend of in-depth, and diversified construction (2023). Shen Siqi believed that the media cannot avoid the shadow of Western ideology, the dual influence of national interests and foreign policy and the sense of crisis in Western countries due to China's economic rise (2021). Scholars such as Kang Yifei(2019) and Chen Li(2011) have stated that Chinese media reports have constructed an image of China as a responsible socialist power that promotes common development; most Western media reports are relatively objective, while some Western media distort facts and smear China, attempting to portray China as a country that seeks profit at the expense of justice and disregards human rights .

As Kim K H. pointed out, the American media uses specific means for discourse construction and dissemination, as well as constructing news discourse patterns based on the order maintenance of the American government (2014). Scholars such as Tang L.(2021) and Lyu, D., Leite Junior, E., & Pulleiro Méndez, C. (2023) have suggested that Chinese media have found that China is building its national image through sports narratives and athletes, linking sports success with the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."

However, little information focused on comparative studies on the construction of China's image by Chinese and American media in their coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics.

3. Methods

A Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach was employed to provide a systematic analysis of the linguistic strategies and discourse practices that construct China's image in the media. The primary data source for this analysis is China Daily, an English-language newspaper in China with a broad international readership. The study focuses on news articles published between the opening and closing of the Beijing Winter Olympics (February 4,

2022, to February 20, 2022). To ensure a representative sample, two articles were randomly selected daily from China Daily's online archives using the keywords "Beijing Winter Olympic Games." This selection process resulted in the compilation of individual small corpora for each day, which were then aggregated into a comprehensive dataset for analysis.

AntConc, a text analysis software, was utilized for the computational analysis of the corpora. This tool facilitated the identification of key terms, collocations, and concordance lines, which are essential for understanding the lexical choices and patterns that shape the discourse. The study analyzes the keywords in the Beijing Winter Olympics corpus, with a particular emphasis on categorizing the top 100 substantive keywords by frequency and semantic relevance. With "China" as the primary keyword, the study retrieves associated indexing lines to analyze the construction of discourses in Chinese media.

Building on existing research by Liu et al. (2022) on "Diversity and Bias: The Discourse Representation of China's National Image in Western Media's Coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics," this study conducts a comparative analysis between Chinese and Western mainstream media's portrayal of China.

4. Results and Discussion

In the reports on the Beijing Winter Olympics by Chinese and American media, the construction of China's image shows significant differences.

4.1 Discourse representation of China's national image in China and the United States media reports on Beijing Winter Olympics

In the corpus under examination, the thematic elements of the textual units provide insights into the expressive traits of the corpus, with keywords being intrinsically connected to the content. The analysis of these keywords reveals specific preferences within the textual expressions. The top 100 substantive keywords were categorized into event themes, involved entities, and social elements, with further detailed subdivisions for each category. Notably, event themes, which include essential reporting terms such as "Winter," "Olympics," "Games," and "Sports" (accounting for 13% of the total), do not exhibit a significant correlation with the construction of national image. Consequently, the study's discussion is centered on the involved entities and social elements, which are more closely related to the portrayal and perception of the nation's image.

4.1.1 Extensive attention to the subjects involved in the Beijing Winter Olympics

The dominant category of keywords within the corpus pertains to the entities involved, which includes terms

that are geographically specific to the event, those with a strong thematic connection, as well as references to individuals, organizations, and governmental bodies affiliated with the subject matter (as detailed in Table 1). These pivotal keywords underscore three distinct areas of discourse concentration and their implicit significance.

Table 1 Keywords and categories of the subject of the Beijing East Olympic Games

Category	Subcategory (%)	Keywords (critical)
Subject involved 55%	City(7)	Beijing(12775.972), Capital(672.42), City(448.28), Haidian(336.21), Pyeongchang(336.21), Zhangjiakou(560.35), Fontana(448.28)
	International(7)	International(2129.329), World(2689.678), European(336.21), Global(336.21), Overseas(336.21), Diplomatic(336.21), Foreign(448.28)
	Country(10)	China(9413.874), Chinese(4146.587), Country(2353.469), Italian(448.28), Korea(336.21), Korean(1008.629), Nation(448.28), Russian(336.21), Thailand(1120.699), States(896.559)
	Institution(7)	Administration(448.28), Committee(1120.699), Delegation(784.49), Fudan(336.21), School(1344.839), University(896.559), College(448.28)
	People(22)	Athletes(2353.469), Audiences(448.28), Chen(448.28), Children(1120.699), Commentators(336.21), Crumpton(336.21), Gu(1008.629), Jin(784.49), Liu(560.35), Man(448.28), Member(560.35), Parents(560.35), Performer(560.35), Player(560.35), Princess(336.21), Staff(672.42), Students(1344.839), Women(672.42), Zhang(896.559), Coach(448.28), Performers(896.559), Sirindhorn(672.42)
	Province(2)	Hebei(560.35), Province (672.42)

Firstly, the use of terms such as "Global," "Overseas," and "Foreign" highlights the global significance of the Winter Olympics, while emphasizing appreciation for international cooperation and the integration of diverse cultures. Western media showcase the modern spirit of sports and the globalization of the involved subjects (i.e., athletes, organizers, spectators, etc.). However, this ideology of globalization emphasizes cross-border communication, cooperation, and understanding. At the same time, Western media also demonstrate a reflection on the trend of globalization, namely the so-called "anti-globalization" trend, which includes questioning globalism and international cooperation.

Secondly, Chinese media frequently use terms such as "children" "students," showcasing the broad participation of social personnel, from urban to rural areas, and from children to the elderly. This reflects efforts to promote national fitness and the strategy of building a strong sports nation. Western media are more concerned about the lack of highly influential sports stars in China's winter sports, which to some extent indicates that the foundation of China's ice and snow sports is relatively weak and its international influence needs to be enhanced.

4.1.2 A concentrated report on the social elements of Beijing Winter Olympics

It is evident from the table of social element category keywords that Chinese media's focus on the Beijing Winter Olympics extends beyond the competitions themselves, encompassing various aspects of the politics, economy, and culture of the host country and city (see Table 2).

Table 2 Social elements category keywords and their categories

Category	Subcategory (%)	Key words (critical)
Social element 31%	Economy (3)	Development (784.49), Industry (336.21), Economy (560.35)
	Facility (13)	Acupuncture (896.559), Digital (784.49), Hospital (336.21), Medicine(448.28) Meteorological (336.21), Radars (60.35), Screen (448.28), Speed (1568.979), Stadium (1120.699), Tcm (560.35), Technology (1568.979), Track (560.35), Vaccines (560.35)
	Media (2)	Xinhua (784.49), Chinadaily (672.42)
	Culture (7)	Mascot* (334.106), Dwen (336.21), Bing (336.21),Costumes (448.28), Culture (1008 .629), Ethnic (1008.629), Wearing (560.35)
	Politic (3)	Rights (336.21), Political (448.28), Official (336.21)
	Others (3)	Feb (1681.049), Pandemic (560.35), Friday (560.35)

Firstly, the topics such as "acupuncture" and "traditional Chinese medicine"demonstrates China's promotion of traditional medicine. Acupuncture, a gem of traditional Chinese medicine, with its unique therapeutic methods and concepts, not only has a long history and profound cultural roots in China but also has garnered widespread attention. Culturally, the mascot "Bing Dwen Dwen" has become a cultural symbol of the Beijing Winter Olympics. The widespread use of terms like "clothing," "ethnicity," and "attire" further highlights the richness and unique charm of traditional Chinese culture.

Secondly, against the backdrop of the current global pandemic, the reporting on "vaccines" by Chinese media reflects China's high regard for health and safety in epidemic control. The development and widespread use of Chinese vaccines also contribute to the global fight against the pandemic. However, Western media chose to avoid China's achievements in epidemic prevention and control in their coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics, highlighting the reporting tendency of negative issues such as smog and environmental pollution.

4.2 The construction of China's national image meaning in China and the United States media's coverage of Beijing Winter Olympics

With the research objective of revealing the meaning construction of Western media's discourse on China's national image, the term "China" was selected as the search keyword. Using AntConc to search within the Beijing Winter Olympics corpus, a total of 84 index lines were retrieved. Based on the discourse meanings presented in the index lines, an attitude classification was conducted, which included 47 positive discourses, 0 negative discourses, and 37 neutral discourses.

As shown in Table 3, the content of the index lines indicates that the positive discourse of Western media on the Beijing Winter Olympics issue is mainly concentrated in three areas.

Table 3 Classification and Proportion of Positive Discourse in Chinese Media's Coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics

Topic Classification	Discourse Topics	Number of Index Lines	Proportion(%)
Event-Related Category	Ice and Snow Sports	8	17.02
Involved Subject Category	Event Experience	9	19.14
	Urban Development	7	14.89
	Sports Status	4	8.51
Ice and Snow Sports, Event Experience	Infrastructure	10	21.27
	Ice and Snow Industry	3	6.38
	Cultural Issues	6	12.76

Western media employ various methods to construct the image of China in their reports. For instance, they use concessive and adversative sentence structures, such as "although…but…", to acknowledge China's achievements while introducing negative information. By covering voices against China hosting the Winter Olympics, they use negative political issues and exaggerated narrative techniques to create a "China-fearing" sentiment.

However, Chinese media tend to focus more on infrastructure construction and international cooperation in their reports. Phrases like "bright prospects of China's future" and "offered audience a glimpse of China's glorious history" highlight the experience of athletes and spectators, showcasing the Chinese people's hospitality and respect for the spirit of sports, thus constructing a friendly and inclusive national image.

5. Conclusion

This study draws the following conclusions, hoping to provide strategies for Chinese media in constructing the national image and spreading Chinese culture to the West. Positive language could be used in the reports to describe China's development and culture. For example, by emphasizing the Olympic concept of "green, shared, open, and clean," it showed China's sense of responsibility and commitment to sustainable development. By telling the stories of athletes, behind-the-scenes heroes, and ordinary volunteers, Western audiences were able to understand Chinese culture. These narrative storytelling methods are more likely to touch people's hearts and have a better dissemination effect.

However, it must be pointed out that the media corpus included in the study did not extend to the discourse of television and radio media with potential influence, nor did it explore the framework of new media such as social media, which is one of the limitations of the study. Future research can start from the perspectives of cognitive linguistics, psycholinguistics, rhetoric, etc., to explore the reporting narrative framework, providing new research perspectives for the overseas dissemination of China's national image

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