

摘 要

党的二十大报告指出,要加快发展数字经济,打造具有国际竞争力的数字产业集群,随着 5G 时代的来临,我国通讯企业在迎来发展机遇的同时也面临着压力与挑战。在此背景下,通讯企业如何建构自身身份,打造良好的国际声誉,成为亟待解决的问题。企业年度报告结合了信息性和说服力元素,分别以陈述公司事务状况、树立公司积极形象为交流目的,从而维护与利益相关者的关系,促进企业长期发展。鉴于此,本研究基于语篇历史分析法(DHA),建立中国通讯企业年报(CCAR)和美国通讯企业年报(ACAR)语料库,借助语料库软件 Wmatrix, Antconc, 和 Sketch Engine,以三维分析框架为基础,探究中美通讯企业年报中的主题,沟通策略和语言资源的使用以及由此产生的企业身份建构的特征、差异与原因。

研究结果表明:(1)宏观主题层面,中美通讯企业共享四类话语主题:企业概况、企业评估、企业使命及企业策略,对应构建了中美通讯企业一流通信服务提供者、积极向上施为者、社会责任贡献者及创新发展者的身份。不同之处在于,中企注重总结历史经验、陈述未来发展愿景,美企侧重专注于当下、实现当前的发展目标;中企强调拥党爱国的集体身份,美企强调服务个体利益相关者及社区的责任。(2)中观沟通策略层面,中企侧重企业能力沟通策略,美企侧重企业社会责任沟通策略。(3)微观语言资源层面,中美通讯企业对指称词、谓词及情态词的侧重有所不同。中企倾向使用“the company”自称,建构权威的群外身份;使用的谓语动词大多搭配直观反应企业硬实力的宾语,反应企业实干家身份;倾向使用高值情态词和中值情态词,建构出强势与温和并蓄的企业形象。美企倾向使用“we”等第一人称代词自称,建构亲和的群内身份;使用的谓语动词大多搭配反应企业软实力的宾语,反应企业社会关怀者的身份;倾向使用低值情态动词,建构出对话性、可协商性的企业形象。(4)中美在文化维度上的差异造就了中美通讯企业在身份建构上的差异。

关键词: 通讯企业; 企业身份; 语料库; 语篇历史分析; 年报

Abstract

The report of the 20th Party Congress points out that we should accelerate the development of digital economy and build a digital industry cluster with international competitiveness. With the advent of the 5G era, Chinese communication enterprises are facing pressure and challenges while ushering in development opportunities. In this context, how telecom enterprises construct their identity and build international reputation has become an urgent issue. In order to maintain relationships with stakeholders and foster long-term development, corporate annual reports contain informative and persuasive aspects that describe the company's current state and establish a favorable impression, respectively.

Based on the Discourse History Approach (DHA), the present thesis builds two corpora of Chinese and American communication corporate annual reports (CCAR and ACAR). With the help of corpus tools Wmatrix, Antconc, and Sketch Engine, this study employs three-dimensional analysis framework to explore the themes, communication strategies, and linguistic resources in CCAR and ACAR.

The results of the study show that (1) at the macro level, Chinese and American communication companies share four types of discourse themes: corporate profile, corporate self-evaluation, corporate mission, and corporate strategy, which correspond to the identity of Chinese and American communication companies as first-class communication service providers, positive doers, social responsibility contributors, and innovators. The differences are that Chinese companies focus on historical experience and future development vision, while U. S. companies focus on present goals and achievements; Chinese companies emphasize the collective identity of supporting the Party and patriotism, while U. S. companies emphasize the responsibility of serving individual stakeholders and communities. (2) At the meso-communication strategy level, Chinese companies focus on CAB-focused communication strategies, while U. S. companies focus on CSR communication strategies. (3) At the micro-level of linguistic resources, Chinese and U. S. communication companies differ in their emphasis on referents, predicates, and modals. Chinese companies tend to use “the company” to build

an authoritative and “out group” identity; the predicate verbs are mostly paired with objects that reflect the company’s hard power, and project the company’s identity as a capable doer; they tend to use high- and median-value modals to build a corporate image of both strength and moderation. In contrast, U. S. companies tend to use first-person pronouns such as “we” to build an “in group” identity of affinity; most of the predicate verbs are paired with objects that reflect the company’s soft power, and shape the company’s identity as a social caregiver; and they tend to use low-value modal verbs to build a negotiated corporate image. (4) The differences in cultural dimensions between China and the U. S. contribute to the differences in identity construction between Chinese and American communication companies.

Keywords: communication companies; corporate identity; corpus; Discourse-Historical Approach; annual report

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Corporate identity construction helps to grab public attention, sustain consumer retention, and reap business success. Thus, the study of corporate identity construction is meaningful not only in theoretical aspects but also in realistic aspects. This research makes a corpus-based comparative study of the corporate identity construction in annual reports of Chinese and American telecom companies from the perspective of Discourse-Historical Approach (abbreviated as DHA). In this chapter, the author will introduce the need for the study and the organization of the thesis.

1.1 Need for the study

From the perspective of social background, corporate annual reports play a programmatic role in positioning the development of companies (Wang & Han, 2015). Externally, annual report is an essential channel for enterprises to communicate with investors. Internally, Annual report is the epitome of the company's performance and development, conducive to enhancing public relations and image.

Many domestic enterprises turn their attention to the international market under the impetus of the "Belt and Road" initiative and the "Go abroad" strategy. Consequently, China's exchanges with other countries are becoming increasingly frequent and prominent, especially in economic and cultural aspects. However, international business scholars contend that enterprises from developing countries tend to suffer misunderstanding and discrimination from the stakeholders of the host country after "going abroad". Under this circumstance, multinational enterprises from developing countries need to improve their image and hard power. This necessitates them to emphasize the importance of constructing corporate identity, which is the self-representation of the company (Christensen, 2008).

In the context of the fourth industrial revolution marked by informatization and intelligence sweeping the world, technological innovations such as 5g mobile communication, big data and cloud computing are surging. As the fundamental underpinning of advanced manufacturing industry, information and communication industry becomes significant to manufacturing and trading powers and is a key engine of the national economy. Therefore, it is crucial for telecom companies to release top-notch

annual reports to establish positive corporate image so that they can draw in customers, expand enterprises' foreign exchanges and cooperation, and enhance enterprises' international influence. Given the aforementioned social environment, the purpose of this study is to investigate the similar or dissimilar strategies of identity construction discourse in ARs of both Chinese and American telecom companies.

Regarding the theory background, identity mainly originates from the evaluative and the emotional components of one's notion of the in-group and one's membership (Tajfel, 1981). Many scholars assume that organization also has an identity (Coupland & Brown, 2004). Since the 1990s, corporate identity has been a topic of inquiry for scholars worldwide. The conceptual content of corporate identity has been examined from management and marketing perspectives (e.g., Balmer, 1995; Melewar & Saunders, 1999).

The diametrically opposed perspectives on identity construction throughout its development are defined as essentialist and constructionist. The former sees identity as a relatively fixed entity and a static product, whereas the latter assumes that identity is fluid, dynamic, and emergent in the process of interaction (Ho, 2010). Thanks to the discursive turn in identity studies, the discursive construction of corporate identity has gradually received attention of the linguistic community. However, this topic is rarely studied domestically. Linguistic theories and methods are scarcely seen in relevant studies.

The construction of corporate identity is also conditioned by cultural context. The discourse system is a comprehensive reflection of a country's state of mind, values, and image (Zhang, 2015). The formation of the discourse system is rooted in social culture (Chen, 2016). Therefore, the communicative agents' communication styles vary widely depending on the cultural setting. Annual report is the discourse practice of enterprises' external communication, which is also affected by cultural context. Based on existing studies, the current study will investigate the discursive construction of corporate identity in the annual reports of Chinese and American telecom companies under the instruction of identity theory and cross-cultural theory.

To sum up, the present thesis, adopting the annual reports of three Chinese and three American telecom companies from 2019 to 2021 as corpora, probes into the discursive construction mechanisms of corporate identities. Specifically, this study analyzes the features and differences of the annual report discourse in macro-meso-micro dimensions of DHA, and identifies what types of corporate identity these features construct. Finally, the author explores potential explanations for the distinctions between the identities

constructed in the annual reports of Chinese and American telecom corporations.

1.2 Significance of the study

Positioned as an applied study of DHA, this current thesis, adopting the annual reports of both Chinese and American telecom companies as corpus, helps expand the application of DHA, which may inspire future studies to conduct DHA with other new types of discourse. In respect of practical implications, firstly, exploring the construction relations between corporate discourse and corporate identity may help enterprises employ proper communicative strategies and linguistic means for corporate identity construction, maintenance, and presentation. Secondly, the present study may render enterprises more reflection on the discursive construction of corporate identity, so as to provide assistance for the comprehensive and healthy development of Chinese enterprises in the international market.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis encompasses six chapters and the organizational structure is presented as follows:

The first chapter offers a brief and overall introduction of the study, covering the need for the study, together with the structure of the thesis.

The second chapter proceeds with the literature review of both domestic and foreign studies of DHA as well as the discursive construction of corporate identity, both in theory and application aspect.

The third chapter demystifies the theoretical framework of DHA and intercultural communication theory.

The fourth chapter demonstrates the research methodology, which incorporates research questions, research instruments, corpus data, and research procedures.

The fifth chapter, as a core section of the thesis, firstly identifies the heightened themes in Chinese and American telecom companies' annual reports; and then identifies the communication strategies that echo the macro theme in Chinese and American telecom companies' annual reports; next explores the micro linguistic features in Chinese and American telecom companies' annual reports; and finally analyzes possible reasons for differences in the corporate identity discourse of Chinese and American telecom companies.

The final chapter concludes the thesis. The major findings based on the analysis in the fifth chapter will be summarized and presented, which is followed by the limitations

of the study coupled with suggestions for future study.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Identity and corporate identity

Identity is a complex concept that has been extensively studied in the fields of philosophy, psychology, sociology, linguistics, etc. From sociological perspective, identity refers to the interpretation and construction of personal experience and social status in a cultural context (Stryker, 1987). Social Psychologists (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) regard identity as a tendency to identify with a group. Once individuals in society tend to identify with a certain group, they maintain high self-esteem as members of that group. Based on the above foundation, Simon (2004) states that identity is a social and cognitive interpretation of oneself based on personal experiences and material and social environmental relationships, which provides a more comprehensive and integrated definition of identity.

As for identity construction, it refers to a series of self-definition and continuous revision of self-construction. The process of identity construction cannot be explored without tracing its philosophical origins, and the social constructionist theory, which opposes the established view of essentialism, is one of its philosophical foundations. Essentialism believes that identity is “an essential, cognitive, socialized, psychic or fixed phenomenon that governs human action” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 3). However, according to the social constructivist perspective (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Hall, 1996), identities are fluid and plural, of which various pieces are often at variance with others. Serious challenges to the essentialist and static view of identity have culminated in the mainstreaming of social constructionism, which emphasizes the dynamic, fluid, and multiple aspects of identity (Tracy & Robles, 2013). The centrality of language in the study of identity has been confirmed due to the development of intersection and complementarity among disciplines (Yang, 2008). According to postmodern constructivism, identity is the result of discursive construction and needs to be maintained, reinforced, and developed through language.

Scholars believe that companies also have identity (Coupland & Brown, 2004; Wagner & Pedersen, 2014), which allows companies to define and demonstrate themselves. A strong corporate identity offers numerous potential benefits for a company,

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