A Critical Discourse Analysis of Corporate Image Construction Based on a Corpus: A Case Study of Huawei's Product Launch News

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Corporate image is the external manifestation of a company's cultural and spiritual essence, as well as the overall impression formed through its interactions with the public. Huawei, as a successful multinational enterprise, has established a robust corporate image in the international market through technological innovation and brand building. Moreover, Huawei's development is closely aligned with national policies and strategies, making it a representative enterprise for showcasing China's technological independence and national image. This study examines Huawei's English press releases on product launches published between 2022 and 2024 and conducts a comparative analysis with similar materials from Apple's official website. Based on Fairclough's three-dimensional discourse analysis model, this research explores the linguistic features of Huawei's corporate image construction from the perspectives of text, discourse practice, and social practice. The findings reveal that Huawei has successfully constructed a corporate image that emphasizes technological innovation, prioritizes user needs, and underscores its identity as a national enterprise. This study not only sheds light on Huawei's strategies for image construction in international competition but also provides a valuable reference for Chinese enterprises in their cultural communication and brand building during the globalization process.

Keywords: corporate image, critical discourse analysis, corpus-based research

Introduction

Corporate image is the external representation of a company's cultural and spiritual essence, as well as the overall impression formed through public interactions. With the intensification of business competition, corporate image has become increasingly important to a company's development. A positive corporate image not only reduces business costs but also increases market share (Dowling, 1996). Therefore, many companies strive to shape and maintain a favorable corporate image through symbolic communication methods, including advertisements and news events. Huawei, as one of China's largest telecommunications and smartphone manufacturers, has used its strong research and development capabilities and innovation to break foreign technological monopolies and advance global communication technologies. Closely aligned with national

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policies, Huawei not only exemplifies China's push for technological self-reliance but also plays a key role in shaping and promoting the national image. Examining how Huawei constructs its corporate image through discourse in news releases reveals its brand-building strategies and highlights how Chinese companies integrate national interests with global competition in shaping their international image. Competing with international brands, especially in technological innovation and product launches, Huawei adopts distinct strategies compared to Western firms. A comparison with companies like Apple can offer valuable insights into Huawei's use of discourse strategies to build its corporate image and strengthen its global position, providing important references for understanding how Chinese firms engage in cultural communication and image-building in the globalization process.

Literature Review

Research into the Corporate Image

With globalization accelerating, corporate image construction has become a significant topic in academic research. It is an interdisciplinary field that has also garnered interest from linguists. CDA, as a qualitative method, allows for in-depth text analysis. However, due to its reliance on manual reading, the number of texts analyzed is often limited, and the results can be criticized for lacking objectivity and credibility. Recently, scholars have increasingly turned to corpus linguistics to study media discourse, corporate discourse, and their roles in shaping corporate image. Corpus-based research in this area focuses on its application in fields like media reporting and cross-cultural communication.

Corporate image construction involves both promotional discourse and media reports. Corpus analysis has been employed to highlight the role of media discourse in shaping corporate image. Kim (2014) analyzed how major U.S. media outlets, such as CNN, Newsweek, and The New York Times, constructed North Korea's national image. Wang (2019) examined how foreign media portrayed Chinese corporate image through an analysis of news on "the Belt and Road". Similarly, Zuo (2019) used CDA and a corpus of U.S. media reports on Huawei (2009-2019) from the LexisNexis database to trace changes in Huawe's image over time. Li et al. (2018) analyzed global English media's reporting on Chinese companies using discourse theories. Zhao (2021) employed a discourse-historical approach and corpora to compare reports on Chinese corporate mergers and acquisitions by *China Daily* and *The New York Times*. These studies show that media discourse not only conveys information but also shapes public perception through emotional expression.

Corporate image is also closely tied to corporate social responsibility (CSR). Fuoli (2018) conducted a corpus-based stance analysis of annual and CSR reports, offering a descriptive basis for critically evaluating financial and CSR reporting. Scholars have explored the relationship between corporate image and CSR, emphasizing the importance of language strategies in cultivating a responsible and trustworthy image (Shi & Cheng, 2021; Hu & Zhou, 2024).

Cross-cultural communication plays a key role in corporate image construction amidst increasing globalization. Scholars have analyzed Chinese companies' image-building in global markets from the perspective of cross-cultural adaptation (Zhong, 2017; Shi & Shan, 2019). Xu and Zi (2020) created a bilingual parallel corpus of corporate profiles from Beijing-listed companies and analyzed corporate image strategies using the USAS semantic analysis system. Other researchers have examined how corporations use language strategies

to build a global brand image through corpus analysis. Hu and Sheng (2020) analyzed linguistic features in the English translation of Huawei's Sustainability Report. Sun (2021) studied identity construction strategies in PetroChina's news reports on its official website, showing how high-frequency words, collocations, and perspectivization shape corporate identity.

By systematically analyzing the language shaping Huawei's corporate image, corpus analysis reveals its linguistic strategies and discourse features in cultural communication and image-building.

Methodology

Corpus and Tool in the Study

This study constructed a self-built corpus using 47 news articles from Huawei's official overseas website (from June 21, 2022, to December 17, 2024) with the keyword "product release." The corpus, named "Huawei Official News," contains 22,541 tokens, including only the main text and titles after removing irrelevant content, such as publication dates. A reference corpus, "Apple Official News," was created from 10 press releases (from September 12, 2023, to September 9, 2024) sourced from Apple's official website using the keyword "press release," also containing 18,113 tokens after removing extraneous content.

The tool used in this study is the corpus analysis software AntConc 4.3.1. Using AntConc, a frequency wordlist was generated from the "Huawei Official News" corpus. Furthermore, with the "Apple Official News" corpus as the reference, a keyword list was produced. Data were subsequently processed and analyzed with Excel for statistical purposes.

Procedures

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) views discourse as a tool for social construction. Fairclough's (1995, pp. 97-98) three-dimensional model of discourse analysis posits that discourse includes three levels of meaning: as a text, as a discursive practice, and as a social practice. This framework guides the analysis in three stages: (1) linguistic description of the text; (2) interpretation of the relationship between the text and discursive practices; (3) explanation of the connection between discursive processes and social processes. Based on the theory, this study first focus on high-frequency content words and keywords. High-frequency words can be directly applied to the construction of the speaker's image, while keywords indicate the focal points of the speaker's attention. By analyzing keywords along with their collocations, one can analyze the speaker's image indirectly. Although such studies typically involve modal verbs, due to the formal language of the press releases selected from the official websites, which contain very few modal verbs, this study will more focus on the other three aspects mentioned above.

Firstly, we used the corpus analyzing software AntConc to generate a wordlist from Huawei's product release news. The top 20 high-frequency nouns and verbs were manually extracted into Excel. High-frequency nouns highlight the topics and main content of the discourse, while high-frequency verbs, especially material process verbs, describe the occurrence of events, the actions taken, and the implementation status, which can help to sketch the corporate image of Huawei. Secondly, we created a list of the top 20 keywords from Huawei's product release news, referencing the corpus of Apple's official news. Keywords are words whose frequency differs significantly when compared to the reference corpus (Scott & Tribble, 2006, p. 55). By comparing keywords and their collocations, we can identify the most prominent concepts and ideas in Huawei's corporate

image. Finally, based on the above linguistic analysis and discourse practice interpretation, this study discusses the social practices underlying the image.

Results and Discussion

High-frequency Nouns and the Huawei's Image

Table 1
High-Frequency Nouns

Rank	High-Frequency Nouns	Frequency
1	huawei	355
2	network	217
3	solution	127
4	industry	121
5	networks	109
6	experience	103
7	operators	82
8	china	79
9	antenna	71
10	energy	71
11	services	71
12	band	70
13	technology	68
14	product	64
15	solutions	64
16	data	60
17	service	60
18	world	60
19	deployment	59
20	products	55

From the analysis results, we can categorize the high-frequency nouns into three main types: the first category includes nouns related to the corporate itself, such as "Huawei", "industry", "operator", "China" and "deployment"; the second category consists of terms related to the industry and technology fields, such as "network/networks", "antenna", "energy" and "band"; the third category includes nouns related to user needs and the company production, such as "solution/solutions", "experience", "service/services" and "product/products". By analyzing these high-frequency nouns, we can gain insights into the strategies and focal points in its corporate image.

Firstly, the frequent occurrence of nouns related to the company and industry highlights Huawei's focus on its own development and technological progress. For instance, the repeated use of "Huawei" underscores its self-identification and global leadership in technology. Industry-specific terms like "network/networks" and "antenna" reflect Huawei's expertise in network equipment and technology, reinforcing its commitment to innovation in global communications. These terms contribute to portraying Huawei as a technology-driven company focused on innovation and development.

Besides, the frequent appearance of "China" in the corpus, often used geographically, indicates Huawei's strong connection to the Chinese market and national image. This choice emphasizes its identity as a Chinese enterprise, reflecting positive responses to national support and reinforcing its alignment with national strategies. In the way, Huawei's corporate image is framed as one that emphasizes local development and national pride in the global market.

The third category of high-frequency nouns focuses on users and the company's achievements, includes terms like "solution/solutions", "experience", "service/services", and "product/products". The frequent use of these terms highlights Huawei's commitment to meeting user needs. Verbs that frequently collocate with "solution/solutions", such as "allow", "help", "provide", and "improve", convey positive connotations, showing Huawei's active role in offering technological solutions that enhance user experience. These verb collocations emphasize that Huawei's focus is not only on providing technology but also on improving user experience, further shaping its image as a user-centric, service-oriented company.

High-frequency Verbs and the Huawei's Image

Table 2
High-Frequency Verbs

Rank	High-Frequency Verbs	Frequency
1	have	50
2	support	41
3	build	39
4	said	37
5	improve	32
6	provide	32
7	launched	31
8	use	31
9	help	30
10	provides	26
11	deployed	25
12	achieve	22
13	helping	22
14	work	22
15	report	21
16	continue	20
17	enables	19
18	launch	19
19	enable	18
20	deliver	17

We extracted 20 high-frequency verbs from Huawei's self-built corpus and conducted a comparative analysis of these verbs and their collocations, as shown in Table 2. Based on Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistics theory, verb processes are categorized into material, mental, and relational types. This study focuses on material process verbs, which depict the company's actions and initiatives.

The analysis of the KWIC for the verb "have" reveals its primary use in expressing the perfect tense, highlighting Huawei's achievements. Phrases like "have achieved" and "have developed" emphasize completed

tasks and results, portraying Huawei as a pragmatic, action-oriented company. Additionally, most material process verbs, such as "improved", "launched", and "deployed", appear in the past or perfect tense. Key features from the KWIC analysis include: (1) frequent use of the past or perfect tense; (2) agents such as "we", "operator", or "Huawei", with implied agency when not explicitly stated; (3) frequent collocations with specific goals and outcomes, such as "They reliably achieved 10km link distance with 30% less service disruption." These patterns highlight Huawei's focus on clear goals, strong execution, and a performance-driven approach in its corporate image. Verbs like "provide" and "help" also appear frequently, often collocating with "users" or "carriers", which further emphasizes Huawei's focus on meeting user needs and taking active steps to support and assist users.

In summary, the analysis of material process verbs and their collocations reveals Huawei's image as a grounded, goal-oriented company that prioritizes user needs and demonstrates strong performance in its corporate communication.

Keywords and the Huawei's Image

Table 3
Huawei Keywords

Rank	Keywords	Frequency	Keyness
1	g	373	442.736
2	huawei	355	421.242
3	network	217	237.339
4	solution	127	140.034
5	networks	109	119.023
6	operators	82	96.854
7	intelligent	95	95.973
8	industry	121	85.012
9	china	79	84.167
10	antenna	71	83.846
11	mobile	78	83.01
12	service	60	70.843
13	services	71	68.739
14	digital	77	65.529
15	commercial	55	64.934
16	ghz	53	62.57
17	deployment	59	61.103
18	band	70	57.996
19	microwave	49	57.844
20	coverage	51	51.938

We referred to Apple's self-built corpus to extract the top 20 keywords from Huawei's corpus and analyzed these keywords and their collocations, as shown in Table 3. Specialized terms such as "G" and "GHz" were excluded, focusing instead on meaningful keywords like "networks," "operators," "service/services," "intelligent," and "deployment."

The appearance of "China" as a keyword does not merely reflect Huawei's connection to the country. To compare, we generated a frequency wordlist of related country terms in Apple's corpus, revealing that terms like

"American/America" and "US" appeared only four times, a stark contrast to Huawei's frequent mention of "China." This difference highlights Huawei's emphasis on its national identity, reinforcing its close ties to China, a feature not as prominent in Apple's discourse. This suggests that Huawei's global strategy integrates its national identity more overtly. Huawei's focus on a user-oriented approach also distinguishes it from Apple. For instance, "service/services" appears frequently in Huawei's corpus, signaling its emphasis on service. Further analysis of collocates like "enablement" and "provisioning" shows Huawei's commitment to providing value through technology and services to enhance user experience.

Through the comparative analysis of Apple and Huawei's corpora, we observe significant differences in their image construction. Huawei's image extends beyond digital product development, actively engaging with national and global issues and demonstrating strong social responsibility and global contribution. This focus is closely linked to Huawei's connection to national interests, requiring the company to shoulder greater corporate responsibility beyond typical business obligations.

In contrast, Apple's image centers more on product contribution to user experience and convenience. Apple downplays its national identity, positioning itself as a global innovator independent of national or political affiliations. This contrast may stem from cultural differences: Western cultures, emphasizing individualism, tend to focus on products and brand value, while Eastern cultures, with their collectivist tendencies, often highlight national identity. The underlying causes of these differences require further investigation to fully understand the complex relationship between culture and corporate image construction.

Discourse Practices and Social Practices

Discourse practice analysis examines the processes of text creation, dissemination, and reception, aiming to uncover how discourse connects social practices and texts. Huawei's official Newsroom serves as a key medium for the company's external communication, not only conveying corporate achievements and strategies but also shaping its brand image.

To highlight Huawei's actions in technological innovation, user services, and global development, the news reports frequently reference specific data and achievements. These details underscore the outcomes of technological breakthroughs and business implementations, enhancing the credibility of the text. Moreover, Huawei's annual reports, which detail the company's business performance, global revenue, and other developments, reinforce its market leadership. The content on Huawei's Newsroom extends beyond text, emphasizing multimodal communication. In showcasing technological achievements, multimodal elements complement textual descriptions, allowing readers to more intuitively grasp Huawei's innovations.

Huawei's news corpus constructs a corporate image centered on users, technological innovation, and tangible achievements, using specific data, verb collocations, and multimodal communication. This multi-layered discourse not only bolsters the text's authority and credibility but also promotes the company's image and brand value, enhancing its competitiveness.

In addition to discourse practices, social practices play an equally crucial role. Huawei has long emphasized management and technological innovation. Through ongoing reflection and improvement, the company continuously optimizes its products and technologies to meet diverse user needs. Moreover, Huawei's focus extends beyond development goals to address global issues such as wildlife protection, environmental

governance, and digital talent cultivation. Huawei is also committed to meeting the needs of minority groups, as seen in its "TECH4ALL" initiative launched in 2019, which promotes equitable education, environmental protection, and more. As a national enterprise, Huawei collaborates with other Chinese companies to advance digital infrastructure and set strategic goals. These social practices are reflected in Huawei's language, including high-frequency terms like "user," "help," "develop," "China," and "provide." The alignment between linguistic and social practices shows that Huawei's corporate image is not just built through discourse but is grounded in its long-term actions and sense of responsibility, forming a credible and socially responsible image.

Conclusion

This study, based on the three-dimensional model of discourse analysis, established a self-constructed corpus of news articles from Huawei's official website Newsroom, with a comparative reference corpus of news articles from Apple's official website Newsroom. Using Antconc corpus analysis software, the study conducted an in-depth analysis of Huawei's corporate image and its shaping methods from the perspectives of text, discourse practice, and social practice.

By analyzing the high-frequency content words and their collocations compared with the reference corpus, we found that the construction of Huawei's corporate image has features including the emphasis on technological innovation and development, a comprehensive commitment to user and industry responsibility and its identity as a Chinese national enterprise. However, the shaping of Huawei's corporate image not solely depend on discourse practice, as the actual contribution of social practice is equally crucial. Huawei's social practices in fields such as technology, education, and environmental protection provide a solid foundation and support for its corporate image construction.

Nevertheless, the thematic focus of the corpus in this study is on news articles related to new product releases, which only presents the shaping of Huawei's corporate image in a specific domain. Therefore, the generalizability of the research findings is limited. Besides, although thematically similar corpora were manually selected, differences in corpus categorization between Huawei and Apple's official websites may have led to some thematic deviations, resulting in different focal points in the study. Future research could expand the corpus in terms of both quantity and themes, selecting more diversified corpora to reduce potential result errors caused by thematic discrepancies.

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