

# Language Analysis of Liaoning Urban Image in Chinese, American, and Canadian News Framework\*

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The research chose the reports about the cities in Liaoning Province, Dalian, Shenyang, and Anshan as the objects of study. These reports came from the three newspapers *China Daily*, *New York Times*, and *Globe and Mail*. This research was based on Frame Work Theory, and used language analysis and case study as the research methods to identify the discourse and organization. The first result is that there is serious stereotyping about the image of Liaoning cities in American and Canadian news. And Chinese news did not cover entire comprehensive topics and was too late to emergency events, so they lost the chance to be an original source of news and the possibility to set the agenda, even lost the discourse power. The second result is that the differences between Chinese reports and American and Canadian reports implied culture differences, the similarities between Canadian and American reports refer to the culture intercommunity. Third, American and Canadian news used multi-framework to make the reports more reliable, but the lack of multi-dimensional reports declined the trustworthiness.

*Keywords:* urban image, news framework, *China Daily*, *New York Times*, *Globe and Mail*

Urban image refers to the general judgment and social evaluation of the formation of a city's internal strength, external vitality, and future development prospects by public opinion (Lynch, 1960), including economic, political, social, cultural, sports, tourism, and other indexes. The cities Shenyang and Dalian are the important cities in "One Belt and One Road". Anshan, as the third largest city in Liaoning, is an important link between the central cities and the Liaodong Peninsula open area. The image of the three cities plays an important role in the development of cities themselves, the implementation of the "One Belt and One Road", and then establishing the international influence of Liaoning. Liaoning is the province with the best economic development conditions in Northeast China. Liaoning cities have been devoting themselves to shaping their own image. However, according to the previous survey results, 28% of foreign respondents have a vague image of Liaoning cities, 46% of foreign respondents have a negative attitude towards Liaoning cities, and most of them have never been to Liaoning. Most of the references to their understanding of Liaoning's urban image come from mass media reports (Yang, 2010).

Therefore, by comparing the similarities and differences of the reporting frameworks of three Chinese and Canadian English newspapers on Liaoning's three cities, this study intends to analyze the image of Liaoning's

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cities portrayed by China and the United States under the news framework, and draw a conclusion that the differences between the image of Liaoning's cities portrayed by North American countries and China can be reduced and eliminated, so as to enhance the external communication of the news media and suggestions on communicational capacity.

Since the 2008 Olympic Games, the construction and dissemination of Liaoning's urban image has gradually attracted the attention of scholars at home and abroad. Relevant studies have found that in terms of the main body of communication, the official mainstream media is the main body; in terms of the content of communication, newspaper puts forward a distinctive urban image construction policy; in terms of information sources, in addition to the local mainstream media, various international media have also joined the rank of reporting Liaoning's urban image. In terms of communication effect, there is a certain gap between the public's perception of Liaoning's city image and the government's expectation at home and abroad. It is found that the city's brand characteristics are not distinct, and the new-media information channels are not smooth (Zhou & Zheng, 2010). These studies enrich the theory and practice of urban image communication, but few of them analyze urban image from the perspective of comparison between Chinese and foreign news frameworks. Therefore, this study takes this as a perspective to analyze the construction of Liaoning's urban image by Chinese and foreign media.

### Research Theory

News framework is a special principle for news media to choose and deal with news facts. These principles come from the position of news media, editorial policy, and interest relationship with these news events. At the same time, they are restricted by the special law of news activities and stipulate the basic attitude and essential judgement of a media to news events (Chen, 2009). In news reporting, the news framework includes two levels: One is the choice of news materials, such as source of news; the other is the organization of news materials, mainly referring to the delineation of reporting objects, the performance of reporting content, the number of reports, layout, attitude, etc. (He, 2010). In empirical research, De Vreese (2002) proposed seven "universal frameworks" which can be widely used in multiple topic reports or even in different time and cultural contexts, including the factual framework, conflict framework, humanistic framework, responsibility framework, moral framework, economic consequences framework, and leadership framework.

### Research Methods

Based on the framework theory, this paper combines content analysis method and case study method.

#### Sampling

In terms of media selection, this study focuses on *China Daily*, *New York Times*, and *Globe and Mail*. *China Daily* is the only Chinese newspaper that has effectively entered the international mainstream society and has the highest reprinting rate in foreign media. It has a high international influence. The *New York Times* is the most popular and influential newspaper in the United States. It has good authority. The *Globe and Mail* is Canada's most influential newspaper and the only national newspaper in Canada.

Sample selection is based on the LexisNexis Academi database to obtain samples of historical reports from *China Daily*, *New York Times*, and *Globe and Mail*. By inputting the keywords "Dalian", "Shenyang", and "Anshan", we search for news reports that meet the search criteria from January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2017. After reading and excluding reports with little relevance, 408 valid samples were obtained from *China*

*Daily*, 72 valid samples from *New York Times*, and 60 valid samples from *Globe and Mail*. In addition, in order to make an in-depth analysis of the media coverage framework of China, the United States and Canada, all relevant reports on iron and steel production in three cities from January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2017 were selected for in-depth study. The effective samples were 18 articles in *China Daily*, nine articles in *New York Times*, and five articles in *Globe and Mail*.

### **Categories**

According to the research on the category of news report and the index system of urban image, the analysis category is set as four categories: the number of reports; the theme of reports; the tendency of reports; and the source of information. Among them, the topics covered include five categories: economy, politics, culture and sports, society, and tourism environment. Reporting tendencies are divided into positive, neutral, and negative.

According to De Vreese's classification of general news framework, the news framework used in case analysis is divided into factual framework, conflict framework, humanity framework, responsibility framework, moral framework, economic consequence framework, and leadership framework.

## **Comparison of Liaoning Urban Image from Three Countries**

### **Number of Reports**

Comparing the number of reports, *China Daily* is obviously 80% more than the *New York Times* and the *Globe and Mail*. From the changing trend, the reports of *China Daily* on three cities showed an upward trend, while the reports of *New York Times* and *Globe and Mail* showed a fluctuating trend.

Data show that 2008, 2012, and 2017 are the peak periods of three newspapers' reports, reaching the peak in 2017. The 2008 Olympic Games related sports events were held in Liaoning; the financial crisis in 2012 brought great impact on steel production; in 2017, the "One Belt and One Road" Summit was held, and Liaoning actively carried out external cooperation. This shows that the major events with international influence are the focus of American and Canadian media tracking reports, and the continuous multi-angle reports of foreign media on related events have a strong impact on the international transmission of urban image.

### **Theme of Report**

Consistently, the reports of *China Daily*, *New York Times*, and *Globe and Mail* on Liaoning's three cities all focus on the theme of culture and sports. *China Daily* accounted for 32%, *New York Times* for 32%, and *Globe and Mail* for 30%. This shows that different countries all pay attention to cultural commonalities. In terms of differences, *China Daily* accounts for 48% of the economic reports, highlighting the economic importance of the old industrial base. The *New York Times* and the *Globe and Mail* pay more attention to politics and tourism. The *Globe and Mail* also pays attention to China's social situation, while the *China Daily* pays less than 2% attention to tourism.

### **Report Tendency**

Overall, *China Daily* reports are mainly positive reports, accounting for 70%, neutral reports 28%, and negative reports only 2%. The *New York Times* reports are mainly neutral, accounting for 46%, 34% of negative reports, higher than 20% of positive reports. The percentage of neutral and positive reports in *Globe and Mail* was 40% and 36% respectively, and that of negative reports was 24%.

In-depth analysis found that the reports of *China Daily* mostly focused on economic and social aspects, and held a positive trend, while neutral reports focused on sports culture. The *New York Times* has distinct attitude in its reporting. It has obvious negative attitude in its political, economic, and social reporting. It has neutral or positive tendency in its cultural, sports, and tourism reporting. *Globe and Mail's* political and social coverage is obviously negative, and its economic coverage is neutral.

### **Information Sources**

If the media can use the residents of a city or the witnesses involved in the event as the source of information when reporting news about a city, it can give the city more opportunities to show its self-image (Wu, 2010). From the point of view of individual newspaper, *China Daily* reports mainly came from Beijing, Shanghai, and other cities, and only 35% of the reports were from the three cities' residents or witnesses. *New York Times* and *Globe and Mail* mostly collected information mainly from the United States, Japan, and South Korea, and then from Beijing and Shanghai. Information from Liaoning's three cities accounted for 25%. Most of the information sources reported by *Globe and Mail* came from the United States, followed by Beijing and Shanghai, and 12% came from Liaoning's three cities. Because of the inability to actively act as a source of information, the discourse power of constructing urban image has been left to the media of Western countries.

## **Liaoning Urban Image Constructed by Sino-US and Canadian Reports**

### **Economic Image**

The study found that international cooperation has become the focus of media attention at home and abroad. The reports on this topic last for 10 years and they are objective and positive. The *New York Times* and the *Globe and Mail* attached particular importance to this issue, with more than half of the reports. *China Daily* attached more importance to economic construction, indicating that the topics of American and Canadian newspapers focus on bilateral cooperation, while Chinese newspapers focus on their own development process. During the economic crisis, the Chinese and foreign media tracked the changes of steel production and prices. The reports of *New York Times* and *Globe and Mail* focused on the turbulence and economic losses caused by the falling steel prices, which tended to be negative. *China Daily* focuses on the effective control of iron and steel prices by the government. The steel industry has gradually stabilized and maintained a positive trend. It can be seen that the *New York Times* and the *Globe and Mail* are more concerned about the impact of international cooperation and exchanges on their respective economic development and the factors of instability, while *China Daily* is more concerned about shaping its own economic image of stable urban development.

### **Political Image**

Among the political reports, the *New York Times* and the *Globe and Mail* had the most negative reports on human rights and democracy. In contrast, *China Daily's* reports paid more attention to the formulation and implementation of political policies, and they were positive. Over the past decade, the *New York Times* and the *Globe and Mail* have paid more attention to corruption among Chinese officials. People lived in a political environment without human rights and democracy, and their negative tendencies are clear. *China Daily* habitually avoided some political issues and left a voice for the Western media in information transmission.

### **Culture and Sports Image**

The topics and tendencies of the three newspapers' reports on culture and sports showed a high degree of consistency. Chinese and foreign media have focused on the rich cultural life of Liaoning cities, international

art cooperation, and major sports events. However, there are few reports on education in Shenyang, Dalian, and Anshan. Generally speaking, the cultural image of Liaoning cities is positive, but its educational characteristics are not prominent.

### **Social Image**

Generally speaking, the reports of the *New York Times* and the *Globe and Mail* show negative social images of social instability, frequent accidents, and obvious contradictions between the government and the people in Liaoning. Specifically, the *New York Times* and the *Globe and Mail* focus on accident reporting, including natural disasters, train collisions, oil spills, factory accidents, and so on. The occurrence, causes, and follow-up treatment of the incidents were continuously reported, suggesting the government's administrative negligence and the negligence of the person in charge behind the incidents. Due to the lack of agenda setting for emergencies, *China Daily* often misses the priority of reporting events and cannot actively set the agenda. *China Daily* often pays more attention to solving people's livelihood problems, affirming the government's efforts in controlling housing prices, medical security, transport facilities, and so on. Its report shows the positive action of the municipal government, attaching importance to the quality of people's lives, and encouraging the progressive social image of guaranteeing.

### **Tourism Image**

According to the data, the *New York Times* and the *Globe and Mail* reported 16 and nine stories on scenic spots and delicacies in three cities of Liaoning respectively, most of which were positive reports. On the contrary, *China Daily* has only one report on tourism. It shows that *China Daily* has not paid enough attention to the city value of these three cities as tourist destinations, and the coverage of the topics is not comprehensive.

### **News Framework Analysis of Urban Image: A Case Study of Iron and Steel Production**

In order to better study the reporting framework of Liaoning urban image, based on the most concerned iron and steel production in Liaoning, an old industrial base, we deeply analyzed the reporting framework of three newspapers on iron and steel production in Liaoning. Among them, *China Daily* accounted for 50% of economic reports, *New York Times* for 18%, and *Global Times* for 10%.

In terms of major issues and reporting frameworks, the *New York Times* reports were mainly on the conflict framework and economic consequences framework, focusing on criticizing the immaturity of the Chinese market by reporting steel price cuts and production cuts, leading to chaos and turmoil in the US steel market, and conveying the adverse impact of changes in China's steel production on the international steel situation. The *Globe and Mail* adopted a responsibility framework and an economic consequences framework, arguing that too much government regulation has resulted in a sluggish response of steel production to the market. The report of *China Daily* was a factual framework. It reports that the government has stabilized the production and price of iron and steel through regulation and active economic policies, so as to keep the development of iron and steel production in a good state. At the same time, it summarized the problems in iron and steel production, such as how to save costs and make full use of resources, and affirms the quality of iron and steel production in Liaoning Province through the reports of iron and steel production cooperation between India, Central Europe and Africa, and other countries.

Through the analysis of the main-body reports used in iron and steel production issues, it is found that in the news reports of leadership framework, the *New York Times* comprehensively used four news subjects: government, companies, economists, and the general public, which made the reports more three-dimensional

and in-depth. It had not only the authoritative analysis of professionals, but also the cut of the masses. Experience increased the credibility and authenticity of news reports. By contrast, *China Daily* had a relatively single main body, mainly the government's policy-making and supervision and control of relevant departments. Its reports were not diversified enough, which reduced the effectiveness of the reports.

### Discussion and Conclusion

First, American and Canadian newspapers had serious reporting preferences and stereotyped impressions on Liaoning's urban image. Chinese newspapers could not actively act as a source of information because of the incomplete reporting topics, the untimely handling of emergencies, the inability to actively set a schedule, and the weakening of the right to speak in shaping their own urban image. When reporting on the economic, political, and social aspects of three cities in Liaoning, the *New York Times* and the *Globe and Mail* selectively reported the negative information of the events and reported them in the framework of conflict, with stereotyped evaluation. The report of *China Daily* avoided some political topics, lacks of reports on tourism issues, delayed in dealing with emergencies, and failed to seize the opportunity of agenda setting. It seldom acted as a source of information, leaving the discourse right of city image shaping to the western media.

Secondly, the differences and consistency of media reports between China and the United States and Canada illustrated the impact of cultural similarities and differences on communication. There was a lot of consistency between the reports of China and the United States and Canada in the three cities of Liaoning. The three newspapers all focused on economic issues first. The three newspapers all had neutral or positive tendencies towards the cultural and sports reports of the three cities of Liaoning. These consistencies reflected the mutual adaptation and integration of culture in the process of communication. However, there were also many differences in the reports of the three newspapers, such as different interpretations of economic, political, and social issues, and different purposes of reporting. *China Daily* had a positive tendency, while the United States and Canada had a negative tendency. There were also many differences between American and Canadian newspapers. Compared with the *New York Times*, the *Globe and Mail* paid more attention to social issues; in terms of economic issues, the *Globe and Mail* tended to be neutral. These differences showed the conflicts and differences in cultural awareness in cross-cultural communication. Therefore, when Liaoning's cities spread abroad, special attention should be paid to adjusting the differences and conflicts between Chinese and foreign cultures, making full use of the inherent composition of Western culture to construct a news reporting framework, eliminating cultural barriers and constructing a real image of Liaoning's cities.

Thirdly, American and Canadian newspapers used a variety of news frameworks to increase the credibility of news; China lacked three-dimensional and multiple reports at different levels, which weakens the effectiveness of reporting. The United States and Canada adopted a variety of news frameworks in news reporting, which had a negative guiding effect on the audience, and used the multi-subject reporting method to display the reliability and authority of news in a multi-level, multi-angle and three-dimensional manner (Meng, 2009). The effect of news reporting has been greatly enhanced. The news frameworks and reporting subjects of *China Daily* were both simple (Wang, 2014). In this regard, the Chinese media can draw lessons from the multiple expressions of American and Canadian media, combine with a variety of news frameworks, and reach content consensus with the audience through flexible expression mechanism in interaction, thus affecting the orientation of foreign mainstream public opinion, thus vividly and stereoscopically shaping the image of Liaoning cities.

In the future, we will study the influence of thematic structure, plot structure, syntactic structure, and rhetorical structure on the communication effect of news reports.

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