

## *Original Paper*

# A Critical Discourse Study of the Construction of Alibaba's Corporate Image in Chinese and American Newspapers

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### **Abstract**

*With the development of China's digital economy, the corporate image of Chinese Internet enterprise has also become a focus of academic attention. In order to study the corporate image of Chinese Internet enterprises in the digital economy period, this paper takes Alibaba, a leading Chinese Internet enterprise, as the research object. This paper establishes Chinese News Corpus and English News Corpus and analyze characteristics of lexical collocation, concordance line and semantic prosody. It is found that by categorizing Alibaba's strong collocations, the images of Alibaba's enterprises that Chinese and American newspapers focus on include the image of the enterprise's workers, products, services. It is concluded that the image of Alibaba's employees has a positive influence in Chinese newspapers, while the image in American newspapers is more negative, including sexism. The image of Taobao, Alibaba's main product, is a platform that contributes to raises the income of the rural population in the Chinese newspaper; while it is a platform for fake products in the American newspaper. Alibaba's services are portrayed in the Chinese newspaper as diverse services platform and a provider of digital solutions for China's smart cities, but in the U.S. press as a monopolistic platform subject to the Chinese government.*

### **Keywords**

*Critical Discourse Analysis, corpus linguistics, corporate image, collocation, Chinese and American newspapers*

### **1. Introduction**

In the background of digital economy, the image of Internet enterprises, as an important part of corporate image, is an important channel for the public to understand the country in which the enterprise is located, and is an important embodiment of the soft power of the enterprise. Understanding the image constructed by Internet enterprises in media discourse helps Chinese Internet

enterprises to improve their international communication construction in the complex and changing international trade environment, and provides a boost to the development of China's digital economy. Corporate image is the overall cognition and attitude of individuals or groups towards an enterprise, which is influenced by the mimetic environment and audience perceptions. Therefore, mass media discourse is an important corpus for image research, and the critical discourse analysis method reveals the ideology behind the discourse by studying the text and the context, thus influencing the audience's conception and the image of the enterprise in a subtle way. Therefore it can be used as an entry point for corporate image.

## 2. Literature Review

The study of corporate image can be traced back to the late 1950s. In the past decades, corporate image construction has been a hot topic, and the discussion of corporate image has been mainly explored from the perspectives of business management, marketing and journalism and communication. In today's mediatized era, corporate image construction is gradually discursive, and the study of discourse strategies and discourse characteristics of corporate image construction has begun to receive attention in recent years.

Early research on corporate image was more from the perspective of the customer, defining corporate image as an individual's perception of a company and its interrelationships, and an abstraction and simplification of the company by consumers to facilitate overall thinking (Wu & Jiang, 2009). Corporate image is made up of multiple aspects: the physical (physical infrastructure), the ideology (philosophy and strategy) and the spirit (values) of a company (Schmidt, 1995) (Steidland, 1997). Corporate image also contains various elements such as corporate culture, corporate structure, corporate strategy and corporate communication (Balmer, 2001).

Research on how to shape corporate image is mainly divided into two categories: self-construction and other-construction.

The self-construction of corporate image refers to the enterprise or organization's business philosophy, spiritual purpose and other cultural systems through the performance of all employees and the overall identification system to the public. Internally the enterprise takes the unification of the values of the staff, the establishment of a unified standard of behavior within the enterprise, the formation of the staff's sense of identity and sense of belonging to the enterprise, the formation of centripetal force and cohesion within the enterprise. Externally enterprises can utilize public relations, advertising, communication and other activities to form an overall corporate logo in the public mind.

Compared with self-construction, corporate image shaping focuses on the perceived image of a company from an external perspective. Research on corporate image shaping is mainly analyzed from the perspectives of journalism and communication, linguistics, business management. From the perspective of journalism and communication, the research mostly adopts the theory of frame analysis, adopts a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, and analyzes the reporting frame and

reporting stance and tendency by means of content analysis, case analysis and in-depth interviews. From the perspective of business management, the researches study the PR crisis events of Chinese enterprises, and analyze the mechanism and causes of the crisis through the interpretation of news reports. From a linguistic perspective, most of the research on the construction of corporate image adopts the theory of critical discourse analysis and uses corpus to assist the analysis to interpret the media's construction of corporate image. Wang Qi (2019) analyzes media discourse descriptively from the perspective of collocations and modals by investigating a self-constructed corpus of English-language news from the Belt and Road countries to outline and describe the image of Chinese enterprises' products, services, citizenship and credibility, and to understand the media's attitudes toward Chinese enterprises.

### **3. Method**

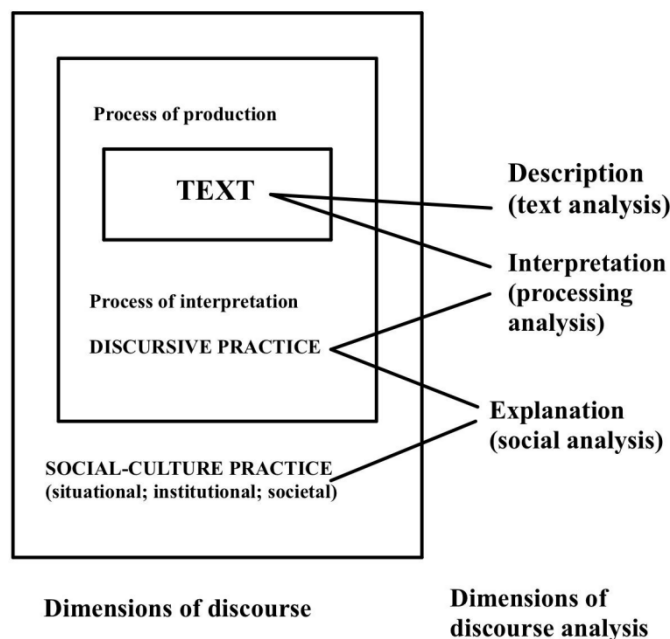
#### *3.1 Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Framework*

Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, emerged from the field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Fairclough's extensive work in sociolinguistics and language and power. Norman Fairclough, a British linguist, developed this model as a way to analyze the complex relationship between language, power, and ideology in social contexts.

Fairclough drew inspiration from various theoretical and methodological approaches, including Marxist social theory, poststructuralism, and linguistic analysis. He sought to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the role of language in reproducing and challenging social inequalities and power structures.

The model's development can be traced back to Fairclough's seminal book, "Language and Power", published in 1989. In this work, Fairclough introduced the concept of the dialectical relationship between language use and social structures, suggesting that language is both shaped by and shaping of social power.

Fairclough's model expanded over time with further developments in his subsequent works, such as "Discourse and Social Change" (1992) and "Critical Discourse Analysis" (2003). He refined and elaborated on the three dimensions—textual, discursive, and social—to provide a more systematic and comprehensive analytical framework. A vivid presentation of the three-dimensional frame is given by the following Figure 3.1:



**Figure 3.1 Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model**

In Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, the three dimensions—textual, discursive, and social—are interconnected and mutually constitutive. The textual dimension focuses on the analysis of language at a micro level, examining the linguistic features and structures within a text. It involves studying the grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and other linguistic elements to uncover how meaning is constructed and conveyed. Discursive practice refers to the process of text generation, dissemination and acceptance, which is oriented toward discourse production as well as the interaction between the author and the reader. The social dimension explores the broader social, cultural, and historical contexts in which language is situated. It focuses on the social structures, power relations, and ideologies that influence and are influenced by language use.

### *3.2 Corpus-Based Analytical Functions*

Corpus technology can observe repeated language in a large number of texts, providing a large number of examples reflecting linguistic phenomena. Corpus analysis can help people find and relate to language patterns. Therefore, when corpus linguistics is combined with critical discourse analysis, the analysis software of corpus can not only help researchers find the repeated language patterns in the text, but also reveal the ideology hidden behind the text that researchers have not expected. As more and more scholars combine corpus technology with critical discourse analysis, it is found that these studies mainly use word frequency, collocation and concordance in the analysis function of corpus linguistics. Word frequency refers to the number of times an element (such as a word) appears in a corpus. Word frequency analysis enables researchers to identify the overall distribution of words in a particular corpus. By comparing the word frequency of each word, it can help scholars to discover special linguistic phenomena.

In corpus linguistics, collocation refers to the co-occurrence of words or lexical items in a specific context or language. It involves examining the patterns of words that tend to occur together more frequently than would be expected by chance. Collocations are important because they reveal lexical associations and language patterns that contribute to the overall meaning and usage of words. By studying collocations, linguists can gain insights into how words are typically used together and understand the linguistic and semantic relationships between them. Corpus linguistics provides a valuable tool for identifying and analyzing collocations. Linguists analyze large collections of texts called corpora to observe the recurring patterns of word combinations. They use specialized software and statistical measures, such as mutual information or log-likelihood ratio, to determine the strength and significance of collocations. McEnery et al. (2006) believe that MI3 values have a corrective effect on the tendency of MI values to overestimate low-frequency words. Hunston (2012) and Salama (2011) pointed out that collocation words meet both MI value  $\geq 3$  and T value  $\geq 2$ , indicating that there is a statistically significant collocation relationship between the two words (Tang Liping, 2016, p. 94). The study represents all collocations belonging to node words that fall within  $\pm 5$  words of the span around node words (Jones & Sinclair, 1974). In order to determine the collocations related to Alibaba's corporate image to be studied, we will select words that simultaneously meet MI value  $\geq 3$ , T-value  $\geq 2$ , and frequency greater than 6. In the span, 5 words on the left and 5 words on the right are selected as the span.

Partington (2004) believes that evaluative connotations associated with certain words or phrases can be identified through the analysis of semantic prosody. Semantic prosody not only reveals the semantic features of lexical item pairs, but also reveals the pragmatic functional features of people's attitudes and evaluation of events expressed through collocation paradigms. In this study, collocation is mainly to find out the focus of Alibaba's corporate image in the two newspapers, while semantic prosody is to help find the attitude and evaluation of Alibaba in the two newspapers.

In corpus linguistics, a concordance is a tool used to display the occurrences of a particular word or phrase within a corpus of texts. It provides a detailed view of the word's context, allowing linguists and researchers to analyze its usage patterns, collocations, and syntactic structures.

A concordance typically consists of a series of lines or entries, with each entry representing an occurrence of the target word or phrase. Each line in the concordance displays the word or phrase in its specific context, often surrounded by a specified number of words or characters on either side. This context helps linguists understand how the word is used, the words that frequently co-occur with it, and the grammatical constructions surrounding it.

Therefore, the concordance tool is used in the description and explanation stage of this study. At the descriptive level, the concordance provides collocation with the specific context to discover the specific form of Alibaba's corporate image. Similarly, at the explanatory level, the concordance is used to show the reported discourse and the context of the news source, thus clearly seeing how the news of both newspapers was produced.

## 4. Research Design

### 4.1 Research Questions

The purpose of this paper is to figure out the corporate image of Aliabba constructed in Chinese and American newspapers. It combines the approach of CDA and corpus linguistics. In order to reach this goal, two related questions are put forward:

- 1) What are the linguistic representations of Alibaba's corporate image constructed by mainstream Chinese and American newspaper?
- 2) What specific corporate image of Alibaba is constructed in the two newspapers and what are the similarities and differences?

### 4.2 Data Collection

Chinese Internet companies are a huge group. This paper selects Alibaba (China) Co., Ltd. as the research object from the latest list of "Top 100 Internet Enterprises in China" in 2019 released by the official website of China Internet Enterprise Association.

The news texts were taken from China Daily and the New York Times. Their Website are <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn> and <http://www.nytimes.com/>. These two newspapers are influential and representative in China and the United States respectively. The report was obtained by typing the keywords "Alibaba" and "Jack Ma Alibaba" into the search bar.

As this paper explores the image of Chinese Internet enterprises under the digital economy, the time of news corpus is set from September 4, 2016 to September 4, 2022. September 2016 is the first time for China's "digital economy" to be proposed at the G20 Summit in Hangzhou, ensuring the quantity and timeliness of data.

The two newspapers separately built their own corpus of all the reports on Alibaba during this period. The two corpora are named CCNA (Corpus of Chinese news on Alibaba) and CANA (Corpus of American news on Alibaba). Specific information about these two corpora is shown in the table below:

**Table 4.2 Specific Information about the Two Corpora**

Corpora	News sources	Time Period	Files	Tokens
CCNA(Corpus of Chinese news on Alibaba)	China Daily	September 4, 2016-September 4, 2022	4, 1636	1,098,510
CANA(Corpus of American news on Alibaba)	The New York Times	September 4, 2016-September 4, 2022	4, 601	787,753

## 5. Result

Collocation in the corpus is “the occurrence of two or more words within a short distance of each other in a text” (Sinclair, 1991, p. 170), and collocational behaviors resulting from the co-occurrence of node and collocational words usually indicate the trade-offs of textual meanings, reflecting the speaker’s attitudes. The repeated co-occurrence of specific collocational behaviors in texts contributes to the production of specific discourse or imagery, which is linked to the underlying discourse motivation and is one of the core concerns of researchers (Hu Kaibao et al., 2018, p. 237). In this paper, the research uses Wordsmith Tools 6.0 to conduct collocation search with Alibaba as the node word, and the collocation span is set as “L5-R5” for searching. McEnery et al. (2006) argued that the MI3 value has a corrective effect on the tendency to overestimate low-frequency words in MI value. Hunston (2012) and Salama (2011) pointed out that collocations satisfy both MI value  $\geq 3$  and T value  $\geq 2$ , indicating a statistically significant collocation relationship between two words (Tang Liping, 2016, p. 94).

The node word Alibaba was searched in CCNA and CANA respectively, and 190 collocations were screened out among the collocations that satisfy both MI3 value  $\geq 3$  and T-value  $\geq 2$ , with the CCNA accounting for 123 collocations, and the CANA accounting for 67 collocations. The obtained collocations are categorized by observation.

**Table 5.1 Classification of Collocates with Node Words “Alibaba” in Two Corpora**

Category	CCNA	CANA
Company name	Tencent/Baidu/JD/companies/Lazada/Xiaomi/Amazon/Huawei	Baidu/Tencent /JD.com / Yahoo Japan/Amazon/Facebook/Google/apple/firms
Participant	Jack Ma/founder/chairman/chief executive	Jack Ma /employees/executives /rival said /fired /accused/respond
product	/said/manager/general/officer/vice-president/president/rival/Daniel/Zhang/employee/co-founder/leader/proposed/	/chief/chairman/Daniel/Zhang /billionaire/spokesman/vice/customer/urged
service	Taobao/chain/business-to-customer/launched/unveiled/Tmall/owned/initiated/Ant Financial Service/cloud computing/platform/Entertainment/pictures/unit/marketplace /Foundation/logistics /Fliggy/site/arm/online/Announced/affiliate/created/established/fined/invested/colaborated/cooperated/backed/subsidiary/acquired/teamed/	Taobao/shopping/marketplace/Tmall/singles/run Ant Financial Service/stake /affiliate/online /antitrust /fined /invested /record/raised /spun /platforms/public /investment/Alipay/payment/listed/deliver y/cloud/owned

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comprehensive evaluation	e-commerce/giants/partnership/behemoth	e-commerce/giant/giants/declined
	/titan/heavyweights/dominance/internet/ Tech/Chinese/	comment /titan /billion/statement/internet /Chinese/Tech/behemoth/
	pledged/signed/ joined/	

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The strong collocations in the table above show the main companies Alibaba Enterprises works with, main products, service areas, the people in charge of the business, investors and a comprehensive evaluation of the business. The following is an in-depth analysis based on the categorization in the above table.

### 5.1 Overall corporate Image Comparison

In the category of company name, with the help of the corpus analysis software Wordsmith Tools 6.0, the most frequent collocations of each collocation with “Alibaba” are found, and these high-frequency collocations are used as nodes to search in the corpus. The following list of collocations is obtained by filtering the collocations from the top 20 collocations in the collocation list.

**Table 5.2 Collocation in the Classification of Company Name**

Node word	CCNA	Node word	CANA
Alibaba and Tencent	Giants(30)	Alibaba and Tencent	China(9)
	Baidu(28)		Tech(7)
	Internet(22)		Chinese(6)
	Tech(11)		Companies(6)
	Trinity(2)		Giants(6)
	Companies(13)		Baidu(4)
	Heavyweights(3)		Internet(3)
	BAT(2)		
	Chinese(11)		
	Firms(4)		
Baidu, Alibaba	Tencent (43)	Baidu	Internet(3)
	Giants(14)		Tech(3)
	Internet(10)		Giants(7)
	Companies(7)		
	Chinese(5)		
	JD(5)		
	BAT(3)		



Alibaba and JD	E-commerce(19) Giants(11) Chinese(5) Platforms(4) Companies(4) Services(3) Offline(3)	Alibaba and JD	Giant (2) Biggest (2) E-commerce(2)
Huawei and Alibaba	Giants(4) Tencent(2) Companies(3) Tech(2) Heavyweights(2)	Yahoo Japan	Investment(2) Stake(3) giant(3) Internet(2)
Xiaomi	Commerce(3) Giants(3) Chinese(4)	Facebook and Alibaba  apple	Tech(4) Band(2) Giants(2) Internet (2) Tech(2) Giants(2)
Lazada	Online(12) Southeast(11) E-commerce(14) Retailer(5) Backed Alibaba(9) Stake(5) Asian(5) Shopping(3)	Google	Digital (2) Power(2) Investment (2)
Alibaba Group Holding Ltd and Amazon	Amid(3) Fierce (3) Competition(3) E-commerce(2)	Amazon and Alibaba	Tech (3) Platform(2) E-commerce(4) Competition(3) Direct(2)

Through careful observation, it can be found that the collocation of Alibaba enterprises with different types of enterprises is found to form different corporate images. In the CCNA, the enterprises paired with Alibaba can be categorized into three main groups according to their collocations: Internet enterprise, technology enterprise, and e-commerce enterprise. Internet enterprise are mainly Tencent

and Baidu, technology enterprises are mainly Huawei, and e-commerce enterprises are Xiaomi, Laizanda, and Amazon. Observing the collocations of “Tencent” and “Baidu” in the corpus, we find that both of them have “internet”, “tech”, “giants”, “Chinese” in their collocations. Combined with the concordance lines, it is found that the semantic tendency of their composition is that Alibaba, Tencent and Baidu are Chinese Internet technology giants. Observe that the collocations of “Huawei” are “tech”, “giants”, “companies”, “heavyweights”. The semantic tendency is that “Huawei and Alibaba are China’s tech giants.” Looking at the collocations of “Xiaomi”, “Amazon” and “Lazada”, we find that they all contain “e-commerce”. By expanding the scope of observation, we find that Xiaomi and Alibaba belong to China’s e-commerce giants, while the collocations “fierce” and “competition” and the concordance lines in the figure below indicate that Amazon is an e-commerce giant in the United States and competes fiercely with Alibaba in overseas markets.

as it accelerates expansion in overseas markets amid fierce competition from Alibaba Group Holding Ltd and Amazon.com Inc. JD will offer Australian and New to bring its unmanned store technology overseas, amid fierce competition from Alibaba Group Holding Ltd and Amazon.com Inc. Located in a popular shopping

**Table 5.3 Sample Concordance Lines for the Word “Alibaba Group Holding Ltd and Amazon” in CCNA**

The collocations such as “Southeast”, “E-commerce”, “Backed”, and “Stake” are related to Alibaba’s acquisition of Lazada, the largest e-commerce platform in Southeast Asia, which is an overseas e-commerce platform owned by Alibaba. Summarizing the collocations of Alibaba with different types of enterprises in China Daily demonstrates that Alibaba’s corporate image can be mainly categorized as a Chinese Internet enterprise, a technology enterprise and an e-commerce enterprise giant.

In the New York Times, Alibaba’s corporate image is categorized into four main groups based on the words they are paired with: internet enterprise, tech enterprise, e-commerce enterprise, and digital enterprise. Internet companies are mainly Baidu, Tencent and Yahoo, technology companies are Facebook and Apple, e-commerce companies are Amazon and JD, and digital-oriented companies are Google. As in the China Daily corpus, words collocated with “Baidu” and “Tencent” also include “internet”, “giants”, and “companies”, which lead to the semantic meaning of “Alibaba, Baidu, and Tencent are China’s Internet giants”. Similarly, in the collocation of “Facebook” and “Apple”, the main collocations are “tech” and “giants”, which form the semantics that Alibaba and Facebook are tech companies. In the collocation of “Amazon” and “JD”, the main collocations are “e-commerce” and “competition”, which constitute the semantics that Alibaba, Amazon and Jingdong as e-commerce giants. Amazon is also Alibaba’s competitor in this field. The collocations of “google” are “digital”, “power”, its semantic tendency is Alibaba and Google are the digital giants of China and the United States. (For example, *As the already popular (and mostly American or Chinese) digital powers like Google and Alibaba try to expand their reach to nearly every corner of the globe, they’re competing more and more - particularly in Asia, Africa and Latin America - with powerful local or regional companies.*)

Summarizing the words used to match Alibaba with different companies in the New York Times shows that Alibaba's corporate image is a collection of Internet company, technology company, e-commerce company and digital company.

### 5.2 Enterprise Employee Image Comparison

The collocations under the category of participants mainly involve Alibaba's president, vice presidents, department managers, employees, and rivals, reflecting the hot objects and hot events of media attention to Alibaba's enterprises in the two corpora.

According to the frequency of collocations under the category of participants, it can be found that the highest frequency is Jack Ma, followed by "employees, executives, rival" in both corpora, so the above four collocations are used as the node words for searching in the two corpora respectively. The collocations are filtered out from the top 20 collocations to get the following collocation list.

**Table 5.4 Collocation in the Classification of Employee**

Node word	CCNA	CANA
Jack Ma	Founder (94)	Founder (61)
	Chairman (71)	Alibaba (62)
	Alibaba (109)	Billionaire (14)
	Executive (22)	Famous (6)
	Foundation (18)	Businessmen (3)
	Charismatic (5)	Chairman (9)
	Richest (4)	Empire (5)
	Powerful (3)	Tycoons (3)
		Warned (3)
		Prominent(2)
Employee	Female (8)	Former (15)
	Accused (3)	Female (7)
	Introduces (2)	Manager (6)
	Said (14)	Raping (2)
	Alibaba (8)	Said (20)
	Internal (2)	Fired (4)
	Incentive (3)	Alibaba (11)
	Accused (4)	
Rival	Arch (10)	Main (11)
	Alibaba (16)	Uber (18)
	Tencent (10)	JD (10)
	Dianping (4)	Lyft (19)

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	JD (8)	Alibaba (15)
	Marketplaces (3)	Tencent (8)
	Major (7)	Amazon (9)
	Meituan (4)	Facebook (7)
		Silicon (4)
Executive	Chief (118)	Chief (343)
	Officer (67)	Chairman (53)
	Chairman (40)	Former (56)
	Director (46)	Founder (40)
	Said (109)	Said (91)
	President (31)	Vice (25)
	Alibaba (33)	Daniel (15)
	Ma (25)	Zhang (21)
	Daniel (7)	
	Zhang(17)	

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The above Table shows that the collocations of Jack Ma in both corpora include “Alibaba”, “chairman” and “founder”. Therefore, it can be concluded that the basic image of Jack Ma is the founder and president of Alibaba.

Jack Ma’s collocations in CCNA are Alibaba, chairman, founder, charismatic, powerful, and rich, forming the semantic meaning of Jack Ma, the chairman and founder of Alibaba Group, who is one of the richest people in China, and who has a strong charismatic and influential personality. The words “charismatic” and “powerful” have positive connotations. From the collocations of Jack Ma, we can conclude that the China Daily has a positive attitude towards Jack Ma, the president of Alibaba Group. On the other hand, observing the collocations of the verb “proposed” in CCNA, we find that the most frequent collocation is “proposed”. The most frequent collocation between “proposed” and “Alibaba” is “proposed by Alibaba”, and the collocations obtained from searching this structure in the corpus are “founder”, “Jack Ma”, “initiative”, “chairman”, “first”, “concept”. Combined with the concordance lines, the semantic tendency of its composition is that the founder of Alibaba is the first to put forward a certain initiative or concept. It shows that Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba, is innovative. Taken together, it is concluded that Jack Ma, chairman and founder of Alibaba, is portrayed in Chinese daily newspapers as one of the richest people in China with great charisma, influence and innovation.

In CACN, the collocations of “Jack Ma” not only include neutral collocations such as “founder, chairman, Alibaba” in CCNA, but also include collocations with positive and negative meanings such as “prominent”, “famous” and “wounded”. Combining the concordance lines, it is found that the New York Times evaluates Jack Ma both positively and negatively, on the one hand, it evaluates him as the most famous businessman in China, the founder of Alibaba and the one who has helped China become

the largest e-commerce market in the world. On the other hand, it pointed out some of Ma's inappropriate comments, such as making a sex joke when he was hosting a mass wedding for his employees in 2019 (*A widely circulated video showed that Jack Ma, Alibaba's billionaire founder, made a sex joke when he was hosting a mass wedding for his employees*); publicly accusing Chinese regulators of being too obsessed with controlling financial risks, and directly quoting Jack Ma's attitude toward the Chinese government, "Love the government, but don't marry them" (*As Jack Ma of Alibaba once warned, "Love the government, but don't marry them. As Jack Ma of Alibaba once warned, "love the government, but don't marry it"*); and publicly expressed that working from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., six days a week, was a blessing. (*Alibaba's co-founder celebrated a 72-hour workweek. Jack Ma said that working from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m., six days a week, was a "huge blessing"*). In conclusion, Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba, is portrayed in the New York Times as China's most famous businessman and the man who helped make China the world's largest e-commerce marketplace, while at the same time being disrespectful to women and oppressive to his employees.

San Francisco, governments have taken steps to restrict police use of facial recognition." "Jack Ma, the most famous businessman China has ever produced, is avoiding the have recently circled in on another empire — that of China's most famous billionaire, Jack Ma. It's a sharp reminder to China's private sector and big highflying companies Chinese officials met with the country's two most powerful internet tycoons, Jack Ma of Alibaba and Pony Ma of Tencent, to talk about deeper cooperation between most valuable private companies and the bedrock of the business empire of Jack Ma, its most famous tycoon, was the biggest move yet in the government's campaign who had called Mr. Xi a clown, was given an 18-year prison sentence last year. After Jack Ma, China's most famous business leader, criticized Chinese regulators in of last year. (Ant, of course, was the brainchild of China's most famous tech hero, Jack Ma, an energetic chatterbox of an entrepreneur — good luck trying to get a word

**Table 5.5 Sample Concordance Lines for the Word "Jack Ma" in CCNA**

to contain. One of China's most prominent businessmen, the Alibaba founder Jack Ma, who is close to the country's leaders, Burkina Faso from one of China's most prominent businessmen, the Alibaba founder Jack Ma. The World Health Organization has ser

**Table 5.6 Sample Concordance Lines for the Word "Jack Ma" in CANA**

"Employee" in both two corpus is strong collocation. Its collocations are "female", "accused", "manager". Combined with the concordance lines reveal that it is mainly about the hot incident in which a female employee of Alibaba accused Alibaba executives and customers of sexual assault. The New York Times report cited this incident as a longstanding and rampant problem of sexism within Alibaba's organization. (*The account raised an uproar within Alibaba, a company that has long publicly celebrated the importance of its female staff, with employees saying that it was symptomatic of deeper problems, including rampant casual sexism.*) In addition to this, in CANA the collocations also include the verb "urged" with a negative connotation. The concordance lines suggest that it was in reference to sexual harassment comments and games at Alibaba's orientation program, which employees urged to stop. (*In a letter to management signed last month by more than 6,000 Alibaba workers, employees urged the company to forbid sexual remarks and games in orientation events.*) In CCNA, the collocation of "employee" also includes "introduces, internal", etc. As we can see from the concordance lines, it reports some positive news about Alibaba's employees, including Alibaba employees saving lives and Alibaba employees introducing new technologies. The above can be

summarized that China Daily has more comprehensive coverage of Alibaba's employees, while New York Times only focuses on Alibaba's employee sexual assault case. Therefore, there is sexism in Alibaba's corporate image as reported by the New York Times.

Observation of the concordance lines reveals that "rival" refers to Alibaba Group's competitors in the report, which constitutes a semantic tendency that Alibaba's competitors across its platforms include Chinese enterprises such as Tencent, Dianping, JD, and Meituan, as can be seen in the following concordance lines example:

crowds at public events. JD.com, Alibaba's main rival in online shopping, is helping China's military to	
for customers' attention with its better-known rival Alibaba. Mr. Liu is married to the Chinese	
inside and outside of China marveled. Tencent rival Alibaba scrambled to come up with its own	
vast market is still growing. Alibaba and its largest rival, a Chinese games-and-social-media	
to pay the rent for his first business. Alibaba and its rival JD.com rolled out microloans and other efforts	
others as well, with Tencent Holdings, a major rival to Alibaba, reporting a strong rise in profit and	
be still optimistic. A case in point: Alibaba's closest rival, JD.com. On Tuesday, the company posted a	
alleged that the billionaire founder of the Alibaba rival JD.com, Richard Liu, had raped her after an	
stake. Meituan later allied itself with a top Alibaba rival, Tencent. Koubei, whose name roughly	
include JD.com, which like Tencent is an Alibaba rival, suggesting the new shareholders may not	
huge blessing." Richard Liu, who runs the Alibaba rival JD.com, said people who frittered away their	
year, to \$2.9 billion. And while it has a lead over rival offerings from Alibaba, it is unclear how long	
peak. JD.com, the Chinese e-retailer and Alibaba rival, has had a similarly rough year. Investor	
stake. Meituan later allied itself with a top Alibaba rival, Tencent. Koubei, whose name roughly	

**Table 5.7 Sample Concordance Lines for the Word "rival" in CCNA**

The collocations of "executive" and "president" include the words "Daniel Zhang" and "chief", which, when combined with the concordance line, refer to the news about Alibaba Chairman Jack Ma announcing his retirement and handing over the baton to Zhang Yong.

Under the category of participant, the image of Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba, constructed by the Alibaba collocations in the Chinese and American newspaper differs; in the news of the China Daily, Jack Ma as the founder of Alibaba is highly charismatic and influential, whereas in the news of the New York Times, there are two sides to the image of Jack Ma, on the one hand, he is the most famous businessman in China and has helped to make China the largest e-commerce market in the world. On the other hand, he is also a businessman who shows disrespect for women and oppresses employees.

By looking at the collocations of employee, the image of Alibaba's company is also shown differently in the two newspapers, in the New York Times, through the sexual abuse of a female employee by Alibaba's managers only shows that Alibaba's company is sexist, while in the China Daily, not only does it report on the sexual abuse of Alibaba's company, but it also focuses on Alibaba's employee's heroism and technological ability.

The image of a company's leader affects the image of the company to a certain extent. A good entrepreneurial image will enhance the corporate brand image and reduce the cost of the company to produce a premium effect. Whereas, negative image of entrepreneurs such as improper speech will reduce the brand trust and recognition of the company among the public. Similarly, the image of the

company's employees reflects the corporate culture and corporate image to a certain extent. Therefore, Alibaba's corporate image is more positive in China Daily and more negative in New York Times.

### 5.3 Enterprise Product Image Comparison

In the category of product, collocation words includes Taobao, Cloud, etc. Taobao is the online trading platform of Alibaba and the core e-commerce business of Alibaba Group. In order to further study the specific product image of Alibaba, Taobao is taken as the representative of Alibaba products. Taobao is searched as the node word in the Chinese-English corpus and the following collocation word list is obtained. The content words in collocation were selected from the top 30 collocation words to make the collocation words list. The following table shows collocation words in the two corpora.

**Table 5.8 Collocation in the Classification of Product**

Node word	corpus	Part of speech	collocates
Taobao	CANA	N.	Taobao/marketplace/toy/merchants/Merchandise/fakes/links/repl ica Platform/storefront/guns/transition/site/manager/handguns/com merce Counterfeits/warns/shopping/firearms
		Adj.	Notorious/bazaar
		V.	Displays /seeking /managed
	CCNA	N.	Taobao/tmall/villages/livestreaming/marketplace/shopping/platfo rm/E-commerce/platforms/customer/site/marketplaces/portal/sho p
		Adj.	Online/rural
		V.	launched

It can be seen from the above table that the terms used with Taobao in both the New York Times and China Daily include “marketplace, platform and shopping”, indicating that the basic image of Taobao in Chinese and American newspapers is a market and platform for shopping. But the difference is that in the New York Times Taobao is filled with a strong negative semantic atmosphere (such as: fakes, counterfeits, notorious), by expanding the scope of observation, It can be found that these words with negative semantic prosody are related to the existence of a large number of fake goods on Taobao (such as “*Taobao to its list of ‘notorious markets’ for counterfeit goods*”, “*from counterfeiters, who peddle cheap copies of his creations on internet marketplaces run by Alibaba*”).

In addition to words such as “marketplace, platform and shopping”, livestreaming and villages are also

available in China Daily. By observing the corresponding concordance lines, it is found that “villages” refers to Taobao villages. As you can see from the examples below, Taobao Villages are businesses set up by farmers in rural areas using Alibaba’s online sales platform Taobao. These Taobao villages help rural people out of poverty and provide new job opportunities. Therefore, one of the images of Taobao in China Daily is that it is a platform that contributes to the country’s economic development and raises the incomes of rural people.

*The first of the so-called Taobao villages to take up e-commerce on a large scale was a farming community in East China’s Jiangsu province. (China Daily)*

*A Taobao village is defined as having annual online transactions of at least 10 million yuan (\$1.48 million), and with at least 10 percent of households involved in e-commerce or where there are at least 100 active e-shops. (China Daily)*

*In 2019, the 63 Taobao villages located in the country’s most impoverished areas generated about 2 billion yuan in e-commerce sales. (China Daily)*

#### 5.4 Enterprise Service Image Comparison

In the category of service, collocation words includes Alibaba’s main service platforms Ant Financial Services and Cloud Computing, etc. “Ant Financial” and “Alibaba cloud” taken as node words are searched in CCNA and CANA. And collocation content words were selected from the top 20 collocation words to obtain the following collocation word list.

**Table 5.9 Collocation in the Classification of Service**

Node word	CCNA	CANA
Ant Financial	Affiliate (43)	Group (59)
	Group (84)	Affiliate (22)
	Arm (27)	Alibaba (36)
	Services (68)	Fintech (7)
	Financial (36)	Alipay (10)
	alibaba’s (29)	Public (17)
	Payment (17)	Regulators (11)
	Operated (6)	Offering (11)
	Fintech (8)	Initial (9)
		Internet (13)
	Services (10)	



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Alibaba cloud	Computing (18)	Computing (70)
	Arm (11)	Services (30)
	Collaborated (2)	Provider (6)
	Smart (5)	Uploaded (2)
	Tencent (5)	Business (12)
	Intelligence (4)	Data (8)
	Solution (2)	Allows (3)
	Local (3)	Alibaba (8)
		Amazon (20)

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As can be seen from the above table, the collocation words in the two corpora generally include “affiliate, group, services, fintech, Alibaba”, etc. Observing by combining the concordance lines, The semantic tendency of those words is that Ant Financial is the financial affiliate of Alibaba, and one of its payment apps is Alipay. Compared with collocates in the CCNA, in addition to the above mentioned collocates, in the CANA, there are also “Initial Public Offerings, regulators”. With the help of the concordance lines, these collocates mainly refer to incidents in which regulators canceled the initial public offering of Ant Financial Services, the technology and finance company led by Mr. Ma, and fined Alibaba. In describing the incident, the report used words with a strong negative semantic atmosphere, such as “bullied, the most defiant”, to describe Alibaba’s bullying of smaller competitors and its attitude towards regulators as dismissive. (For example, *Alibaba used to be the most defiant in its dealings with the regulators, which once looked the other way as the e-commerce giant bullied its smaller competitors and vendors.*) The reports used the ironic phrase “talk is cheap” to describe Alibaba Group’s failure to take action after the fine. (For example, *talk is cheap, and the platforms have done little to show they are opening up.*)

On the other hand, in the collocation with “Alibaba cloud” as the node word, the collocates in the two corpora are quite different. In the CCNA, the collocation word “collaborated, solution” are words with positive semantic atmosphere. Combining the concordance lines, it can be found that the collocation word “smart” refers to smart cities and smart agriculture policies, and Alibaba’s cloud computing services provide digital solutions for them. Therefore, Alibaba’s cloud computing service image is the digital technology provider of China’s smart cities.

*Alibaba Cloud, the cloud services and smart city solutions provider from Alibaba Group, has cooperated with more than 30 cities for smart city projects, Liu said, adding that an awareness of the similarities and differences among regions is key to applying digital solution successfully.* (China Daily)

*Leong Pui Sam, who calls himself Sam, said the collaboration with Regaltech and Alibaba Cloud in smart farming is life-changing.* (China Daily)

*The event was jointly organized by the CCUD, the Cyberspace Administration of China and other*

*government units, and attracted exhibitors in the form of cities like Wuhan, Hubei province and Haikou, Hunan province, and smart city solution providers such as Alibaba Cloud. (China Daily)*

In the CANA, its collocation words include “Alibaba, computing, service, provider”, etc., which constitutes the semantic meaning that Cloud Computing is the cloud service provided by Alibaba. The collocation words “data, allow, Amazon, center”, combined with the concordance lines, can be found to refer to the American companies Amazon and Microsoft are dissatisfied with the requirements of Chinese law requiring foreign companies to enter into joint ventures with local partners. In the report, Alibaba’s cloud computing service is taken as a comparison object. Compare the freedom of Alibaba Cloud to operate in the United States and the government regulation of investment in China with the obstruction of American companies to operate in China.

*Both Microsoft and Amazon, dominant forces in cloud computing in the United States, have local partnerships in China. By contrast, China’s e-commerce giant Alibaba operates two data centers in the United States without any partner. (The New York Times)*

*New Chinese rules often force foreign tech companies into partnerships with local companies — in part to gain expertise, in part to assert control. New Chinese rules often force foreign tech companies into partnerships with local companies — in part to gain expertise, in part to assert control. (The New York Times)*

In addition, according to the collocation word “clients, uploaded” and its concordance lines, it can be found that “clients” refers to “Alibaba cloud’s clients”. “uploaded” means “uploaded material to their digital platforms”. The facial recognition technology in Alibaba’s cloud computing service, which is reported to be a tool to help the government identify minorities, is racially discriminatory. The report used the word “tracked, persecuted” to describe the Chinese government’s action to minorities with a strong negative semantic atmosphere. Therefore the image of Alibaba’s cloud service as a helper of the Chinese government in its fight against the Uighurs in Xinjiang is racially discriminatory in this kind of report.

*“As the Chinese government tracked and persecuted members of predominantly Muslim minority groups, the technology giant Alibaba taught its corporate clients how they could play a part. (China Daily)*

*Alibaba’s website for its cloud computing business showed how clients could use its software to detect the faces of Uighurs and other ethnic minorities within images and videos. (China Daily)*

The two main service images of Alibaba are different in the two corpus. In China Daily, Ant Financial is a financial technology company affiliated to Alibaba and its payment software Alipay is widely used in the Chinese market. Alibaba’s cloud computing services provide digital solutions for China’s smart cities. In the New York Times, Ant Financial, a fintech company owned by Alibaba, has a tendency to bully small businesses and belittle regulators. Alibaba’s cloud computing service is a tool to help the government identify and monitor ethnic minorities in Xinjiang.

## 6. Discussion

Regarding the differences in the construction of Alibaba's corporate image in Chinese and American newspapers, this paper will explain it from two aspects: the political context and the economic context.

### 6.1 Political Context

Comprehensive rural revitalization and accelerated modernization of agriculture have been important goals for China since the Chinese government announced its poverty eradication policy in 2015. Alibaba Enterprises, as China's Internet business giant, assists in the scientific development of the countryside, providing Taobao's e-commerce platform and Ali's technical services. Therefore Alibaba Enterprises is a positive image in the Chinese newspaper. But since the trade friction between China and the United States in 2018, the image of Chinese enterprises in the U.S. press has been influenced to some extent by the ideology of the United States. More prominent is that Alibaba Enterprises' technology service platform is regarded as a tool to serve the government in the American newspaper, and is seriously doubted by the Trump administration.

The political systems of China and the United States have had a huge impact on the way Alibaba has portrayed its corporate image in the two newspapers. China is a socialist country that emphasizes common prosperity as the essential requirement of socialism, while the United States has always promoted democracy and freedom and the advantages of the capitalist political system (Li & Wu, 2019), and the ideologies of the two are very different. In this case, national interest will become an important principle when Chinese and American newspapers report events related to Alibaba. Both Chinese and American newspapers are dominated by the national interests of their own countries, and this is particularly evident in this in the choice of vocabulary and the way of news production. When reporting on Alibaba, Chinese newspapers use more positive vocabulary than American newspapers and select more positive and comprehensive aspects of Alibaba coverage. As a result, Alibaba's positive corporate image was portrayed in Chinese newspapers. Particularly in the image of Alibaba's products and services, a large number of direct quotes are used in Chinese newspapers to show the benefits of Alibaba's corporate products and services for individuals and governments. In contrast, U.S. newspapers conceal the U.S. government's political opposition to Alibaba's businesses, including its boycott of Taobao, based on the principle of safeguarding national interests. U.S. newspapers implicitly supported the U.S. government's accusation that Alibaba's technology services discriminated against minorities by serving the Chinese government.

### 6.2 Economic Context

The difference in the image construction of Alibaba's enterprise in Chinese and American newspapers is also related to the economic context. Since the concept of digital economy was put forward at the G20 Hangzhou Summit in 2016, China's digital economy has entered a phase of rapid development. Since modern information network is an important carrier in the digital economy, Internet enterprises are also an important element in the digital economy. Therefore, during this period, Alibaba actively cooperated with the government to promote the construction of digital infrastructure. Therefore, the

image of Alibaba Enterprises in Chinese newspapers is more positively affected by the digital economy policy. On the other hand, with the promotion of China's strategy of going global, Alibaba Group has also started its internationalization process. In this process Alibaba enterprises continue to expand overseas markets. Since American companies such as Amazon are competitors in the same field as Alibaba, the U.S. government has emphasized the problems of China's Alibaba in order to protect the interests of U.S. companies when competing for overseas markets. U.S. newspaper reports on Alibaba enterprise also focus only on its negative news, ignoring other aspects. As a result, Alibaba's corporate image is mainly constructed as a negative corporate image in American newspapers.

To summarize, in the political context, Alibaba's corporate image in Chinese and American newspapers is influenced by the underlying ideology and national interests. In the economic context, Alibaba's corporate image is influenced by the development of China's digital economy and Alibaba's own internationalization process. Therefore, Alibaba's corporate image is constructed differently in the two countries' newspapers

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