Original Paper

Research on the Construction of National Ecological Image in Marine Environmental Reporting by China's Mainstream Media

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Abstract

Marine environmental reporting by China's mainstream media is an important subject for research on the self-construction of national ecological image. This paper takes marine environmental reports from China Daily and other mainstream media between 2015 and 2025 as examples, establishing a specialized corpus. By integrating Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and corpus methods, this paper analyzes the lexical and grammatical features of high-frequency ecological vocabulary from the dimensions of text, discourse, and social practice. The study finds that through lexical selection and narrative logic, China's mainstream media successfully constructs a tripartite national ecological image as a "responsible governor", a "practitioner of sustainable development", and a "global cooperation contributor". This research fills a gap in the study of national ecological image in the context of marine ecology discourse to some extent, providing theoretical reference and data support for enhancing China's international discourse power in marine ecological governance and optimizing marine environmental communication strategies.

Keywords

marine environmental reporting, national ecological image, critical discourse analysis, mainstream media

1. Introduction

With the increasing importance of safeguarding maritime sovereignty and advancing marine development, marine environmental reporting, including issues like marine ecological protection, pollution control, and biodiversity preservation, has attracted widespread attention from various sectors of society (Liu, 2024). Given that marine environmental reporting plays a crucial role in raising public awareness of marine conservation, transmitting national ecological ideas, and shaping national

ecological images, research on marine ecological discourse and national ecological image has become a popular topic among scholars. As an essential component of national "soft power", a country's ecological image directly influences multiple fields, such as politics and economics (Guo, 2010). Therefore, exploring the relationship between marine ecological discourse and national ecological image is of great theoretical and practical significance.

Before the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, related studies mainly focused on the "other-constructed" ecological images portrayed by Western media. In contrast, research on China's self-construction of its ecological image was relatively scarce. Since the 19th National Congress, research on China's self-construction of ecological image has increased significantly, with a focus on constructing a positive and active national ecological image. However, few of these studies examine marine environmental reporting, which partially explains the gap in marine ecological discourse research and the incomplete representation of China's national ecological image in this critical area.

Therefore, this paper employs corpus methodology combined with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theory to quantitatively and qualitatively analyze high-frequency ecological vocabulary and their collocations and syntactic features in marine environmental reports. By doing so, the paper seeks to explain the national ecological image constructed by these linguistic features and the underlying factors that shape it, providing data support and strategic references for enhancing China's international discourse power in marine ecological governance.

2. Literature Review

National image is the overall recognition, evaluation, and emotional response that domestic and international audiences have regarding a country's politics, economy, culture, and other aspects (Wu, 2025). As an important part of national soft power, research on national image has been a hot topic in academia. National ecological image, as a subset of national image, refers to the public's comprehensive recognition, evaluation, and emotional response to a country's ecological governance, ecological philosophy, ecological practices, and ecological outcomes (He, 2023). In recent years, with the continuous strengthening of ecological civilization construction, national ecological image has become a core element of ecological civilization construction, playing a vital role in promoting ecological civilization and improving China's international ecological discourse power.

Initially, related research was limited, and there was a characteristic focus on "other-constructed" ecological images, such as Guo Xiaoping's (2010) study on how Western mainstream media, through news reporting strategies like amplification and attenuation, constructed a negative environmental image of China. After the 19th National Congress, research on China's self-construction of ecological image has increased, with an overall focus on media ecological environmental reporting or corporate ecological discourse (e.g., sustainability development reports). These studies often use corpus and CDA

methods to conduct both qualitative and quantitative analyses of the linguistic and grammatical features in media reports to construct a positive national ecological image. For example, Liu Ming (2023) examined climate change news reports from China Daily and used a corpus-assisted multi-dimensional analysis framework for national image construction. The study found that China Daily's climate change reports emphasized traditional Chinese ecological ideas of "harmony" and "differentiation", reflecting adherence to the "conscience principle", the "closeness principle", and the "constraint principle", thereby constructing an active Chinese ecological image, contrasted with a passive, negative image of developed countries. He Wei (2023) used content analysis and corpus-assisted discourse analysis to focus on the foreign dissemination of China's ecological civilization construction in the new era. The study identified the positioning of China as a "planner", "forerunner", and "governor" in ecological reporting, providing important insights for ecological image self-construction research. Research on corporate ecological discourse has further enriched this field, such as Zhang Lin's (2024) study on how Chinese oil and gas companies construct their ecological image in sustainability reports. The research found that Chinese oil and gas companies constructed a positive corporate image of being dedicated to green environmental protection, which became an important part of China's national ecological image.

These studies, unlike those by Guo Xiaoping (2010) that focused on "other-constructed" images, paid attention on Chinese media reports or corporate ecological discourse and primarily construct positive national ecological images. They provide important practical references for enhancing China's international ecological discourse power, highlighting the significance of China's mainstream media in self-constructing ecological image. However, existing research on self-construction rarely focuses on marine environmental reporting in China's mainstream media, leading to a gap in marine ecological discourse research and the failure to fully encompass the marine ecological dimension of national ecological image.

Thus, this study, based on corpus methodology combined with CDA, aims to extract high-frequency ecological vocabulary and analyze their collocations and syntactic features in China's mainstream media marine environmental reports, shedding light on the national ecological image constructed therein and offering theoretical and data support for enhancing China's international ecological discourse power.

3. Theoretical Framework

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) originated in the 1970s with the aim of analyzing linguistic features and cultural contexts to uncover the ideologies hidden behind language and reveal the complex relationship between language, power, and ideology. Scholars have provided different interpretations of CDA, among which Fairclough's (2013) three-dimensional discourse analysis model has had a significant influence. This model analyzes discourse from three dimensions: text, discourse practice, and social practice, aiming to reveal the impact of ideology on discourse and its reciprocal effects. The

first step in this analysis is text analysis, which involves a detailed examination of the text's vocabulary, grammar, coherence, and structure, especially linguistic forms that carry ideological functions, such as transitivity, modality, and metaphor. The second step, discourse practice, explores the process of text generation, dissemination, and reception within social and cultural contexts, revealing how social structures and interaction norms shape discourse. The third step, social practice, involves a critical exploration of the social and cultural factors that influence the ideologies behind discourse. These branches collectively enrich the methodological framework of CDA, making it applicable to analyzing complex social discourses such as environmental communication.

Based on this theory, this study employs CDA as the theoretical framework for text analysis and investigates marine environmental reporting by China's mainstream media. The study first collects marine environmental reports from China Daily and other mainstream media from 2015 to 2025, establishing a specialized corpus. Next, it conducts a qualitative analysis of high-frequency ecological vocabulary and their collocations and syntactic features, deconstructing the national ecological image and finally examining the deeper causes of image construction from the perspective of discourse and socio-cultural factors.

4. Research Design

4.1 Corpus Construction

This study focuses on the construction of China's national ecological image in marine environmental reporting. Data were collected from official websites of China's mainstream media, including China Daily, CGTN, People's Daily, Global Times, and other foreign-facing English platforms. The time frame for data collection is from 2015 to 2025, covering the key stages of marine ecological civilization construction during the 13th and 14th Five-Year Plans. A combination of keyword searches was employed, using terms like "South China Sea" as the geographical scope and "environment", "ecology", "ecosystem", "marine", or "development" as thematic keywords. After manually screening the results, 398 valid reports were selected, resulting in a specialized corpus containing approximately 321,113 word tokens on the topic of "China's Marine Ecological Civilization Construction and Foreign Dissemination". To ensure the reliability of subsequent analysis, the original corpus was standardized through processes such as text cleaning, metadata annotation, and quality control.

4.2 Analysis Steps

This study, guided by CDA theory, combines corpus linguistics methods to explore the construction mechanism of China's marine ecological civilization image from the dimensions of text, discourse practice, and social practice. The specific steps of analysis are as follows: First, high-frequency ecological verbs are extracted using a South China Sea Multimodal Linguistic Information Retrieval Platform, and vocabulary directly related to the environment and ecology is filtered and categorized based on semantic features. Second, from the categorized high-frequency verbs, core verbs with strong

relevance to ecological image construction are selected, and their significant collocations and concordance lines are analyzed using AntConc. Next, based on the aforementioned analysis of linguistic features, this paper summarizes the three core ecological images repeatedly constructed in the reports, namely the "Responsible Governor", the "Practitioner of Sustainable Development", and the "Contributor to Global Cooperation". Finally, the findings of the linguistic analysis are situated within the macro socio-cultural context of the "Marine Power" strategy and maritime geopolitics to elaborate on the deep-seated motivations influencing the construction of these images.

5.1 Textual Analysis of Ocean Environment Reporting by Chinese Mainstream Media

5.1.1 Analysis of High-Frequency Nouns

In corpus analysis, word frequency analysis is a fundamental and effective methodological tool. "Word frequency, which refers to the frequency or occurrence of a word in a corpus, is a key indicator of a word's importance. Specifically, the higher the frequency of a specific word in a text, the more important it is, and it functions as a key element in constructing the basic semantic structure of the corpus". Therefore, we used Antconc to perform a frequency analysis of high-frequency words in 398 ocean environment reports from Chinese mainstream media, identifying the top 25 high-frequency ecological nouns, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Top 25 High-Frequency Nouns

High-Frequency Noun	Frequency	proportion（%）
development	1194	1.34%
sea	1155	1.30%
cooperation	829	0.93%
environment	801	0.90%
countries	692	0.78%
protection	669	0.75%
areas	588	0.66%
government	500	0.56%
research	411	0.46%
energy	390	0.44%
resources	359	0.40%
pollution	347	0.39%
city	343	0.39%
region	341	0.38%
islands	295	0.33%
province	282	0.32%
construction	273	0.31%

reef	262	0.29%
management	262	0.29%
projects	262	0.29%
conservation	256	0.29%
carbon	248	0.28%
climate	207	0.23%
species	185	0.21%
ecosystem	182	0.20%

From Table 1, it is evident that high-frequency nouns in the ocean environment discourse of Chinese mainstream media can be categorized into three types:

(1) Geographical and Organizational Terms: countries, areas, city, region, islands, province, government;

(2) Ecological Issues and Natural Environment Terms: environment, sea, ecosystem, energy, pollution, reef, carbon, climate, species;

(3) Environmental Action and Management Terms: development, cooperation, protection, research, resources, construction, management, projects, conservation;

We input each of these categories into Antconc for retrieval, extracting high-frequency terms that were most closely associated with image construction. We then analyzed their co-occurrence and concordance lines to explore the linguistic construction of China's marine ecological governance practices and its role in shaping national ecological image. Other words, with weaker associations to image construction, were not analyzed in detail. The specific results are as follows:

In the marine ecological discourse, the first category of high-frequency geographical and organizational terms mainly involves the spatial scope and the main actors of marine environmental governance. First, terms like province, city, and region frequently co-occur with city names or island names (e.g., Shandong, Changdao, Zhubi, Diaoyu). For example, in Example 1, "province" is associated with Shandong in the context of ocean ranch development and ecological monitoring stations, highlighting the emphasis on grassroots marine governance in Chinese mainstream media's ocean environment reporting:

Example 1: "Growing up on Changdao Island of the coastal city of Yantai in Shandong province, Chen pioneered marine farming in 2013. More than 30 nautical miles away from the shore, the marine ranch called Changjing No 1 is where Chen and his four employees work".

In macro-level geographic terms, countries often co-occur with terms like ASEAN, neighboring, and developing. As seen in Example 2, China steadfastly adheres to international laws and works with ASEAN countries to implement the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea:

Example 2: "China will firmly uphold and promote the international rule of law and, as always, work with ASEAN countries to implement the Declaration on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea and stay firmly committed to concluding the COC at an early date".

Terms like areas frequently pair with cooperation, as shown in Example 3, which emphasizes international cooperation in marine governance to address global climate challenges. These examples demonstrate that China, rather than avoiding the challenges posed by climate change, assumes a proactive responsibility as a major power, contributing actively to global cooperation and shaping the image of a "global cooperation contributor".

Example 3: "Under this committee, both countries will deepen cooperation in areas such as combating cross-border crimes, maritime search and rescue, marine environmental protection and emergency response".

Additionally, when government is co-occurring with terms like Chinese, local, and central, it reflects the government's national and hierarchical attributes. In addition, the government often takes on roles of implementing, involving, and carrying out actions, with a focus on policy, approval, and cooperation, reflecting the planning, decision-making, and execution functions of the government. Two representative concordance lines with government illustrate how actions such as "has been doing" emphasize the continuity and reliability of government activities, supporting the image of a "responsible governance actor". Furthermore, the adverb actively in Example 4 reflects the government's proactive involvement in both domestic and international affairs, shaping the image of China as a responsible governance actor that advocates and drives international cooperation. Example 5 explicitly mentions international responsibility and obligation, highlighting the government's international responsibility, which goes beyond national interests.

Example 4: "Since 2015, the Chinese government has been actively involved in and promoted exchanges and cooperation on disaster relief in the Asia-Pacific region".

Example 5: "The Chinese government has been carrying out maintenance and construction work on some of the garrisoned Nansha islands and reefs with the main purposes of optimizing their functions, improving the living and working conditions of personnel stationed there, better safeguarding territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, as well as better performing China's international responsibility and obligation in maritime search and rescue, disaster prevention and mitigation, marine science and research, meteorological observation, environmental protection, navigation safety, fishery production service, and other areas".

Through the analysis of the co-occurrence patterns and concordance lines of geographical and organizational terms, it is clear that China is actively seeking international cooperation in marine environmental governance and embracing its responsibility as a major power in the global arena, thus shaping the image of a "responsible governance actor" and a "global cooperation contributor".

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The second category of high-frequency ecological issue and natural environment-related nouns focuses on marine ecological issues, further shaping the image of a "responsible governance actor" and "sustainable development practitioner". After selecting representative words, we focus on environment and pollution as examples: First, terms related to environment are predominantly paired with marine-related terms and governance verbs like protection and improve. In contrast, pollution commonly pairs with verbs like control and prevention. From the concordance lines below, we observe that Example 6 uses marine and Example 7 uses protect/improve in combination with environment, while Example 8 combines plastic/protection with pollution. These expressions align with the narrative logic of "raising issues/topic—cause analysis—solution", demonstrating China's scientific approach to environmental issues and its commitment to sustainable development practices, thereby constructing the image of a "responsible governance actor" and a "sustainable development practitioner".

Example 6: "All units and individuals shall have the obligation to protect the marine environment and have the right to supervise and expose the act of any unit or individual that causes pollution damage to the marine environment, as well as the act of any functionary engaged in marine environment supervision and control that constitutes a neglect of duty in violation of the law".

Example 7: "This Law is enacted to protect and improve the marine environment, conserve marine resources, prevent pollution damages, maintain ecological balance, safeguard human health and promote sustainable economic and social development".

Example 8: "In the future, the center will utilize its location to provide more insights on ocean acidification, reef protection, and curbing micro-plastic pollution and marine disasters".

The co-occurrence patterns of high-frequency terms in ecological issues and natural environment categories reflect the discourse logic of "raising issues—cause analysis—solutions", emphasizing China's commitment to marine environmental protection and sustainable development practices, thereby shaping the image of a "responsible governance actor" and a "sustainable development practitioner".

The third category, high-frequency terms related to environmental action and management, covers all dimensions of environmental protection, including scientific research, management, ecological protection, and restoration. These terms demonstrate China's active approach and value orientation in marine ecological governance, collectively constructing the image of a "responsible governance actor", "sustainable development practitioner", and "global cooperation contributor".

Firstly, among the terms co-occurring with development, sustainable, economic, and green rank highly. Notably, the frequency of sustainable paired with development surpasses economic, indicating China's focus on sustainable development while emphasizing the importance of economic development. The pairing of terms like coordinated, quality, and peaceful with development further illustrates that China seeks a harmonious, high-quality, and peaceful sustainable development rather than a single-minded pursuit of economic growth. This notion aligns with the contemporary idea that "lucid waters and lush

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mountains are invaluable assets", highlighting the governance wisdom of harmonizing marine ecology and economic development.

Secondly, cooperation reflects China's international approach to marine ecological governance. It frequently co-occurs with ASEAN, international, and maritime, often supplemented by terms like mutual and bilateral, which highlight China's commitment to win-win international cooperation in marine governance. Protection is closely linked with environmental, marine, and ecological, reflecting the broad scope of China's marine ecological governance. Similarly, conservation and protection complement each other, reflecting China's approach to holistic protection and precise restoration of marine ecosystems, with a focus on biodiversity and damaged ecosystems for restoration. Research illustrates the scientific nature of China's marine ecological governance, frequently paired with scientific, institute, team, and marine, emphasizing the professionalism of governance.

In the concordance lines below, Example 9 emphasizes cooperation with ASEAN for regional stability and prosperity, Example 10 focuses on biodiversity conservation and achieving global goals, and Example 11 highlights scientific research cooperation in environmental protection.

Example 9: "China and ASEAN working in concert has been a key underlying factor behind the strong momentum of China-ASEAN cooperation and its important role in ensuring regional stability and prosperity".

Example 10: "China has made some vital achievements in biodiversity conservation and contributed to realizing the global biodiversity conservation targets and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals".

Example 11: "China and the ASEAN countries conducted a series of exchanges and cooperative events on maritime security, scientific research, and environmental protection".

Therefore, the co-occurrence of high-frequency ecological terms in environmental action and management reflects China's emphasis on international cooperation, sustainable development, and green governance. These terms collectively construct the multi-dimensional national ecological image of a "responsible governance actor", "sustainable development practitioner", and "global cooperation contributor".

5.1.2 Analysis of High-Frequency Verbs: Exploring National Image Construction through Dynamic Practices and Discourse Struggles

Verbs are key to examining the dynamic practices of the actor and their engagement in discourse struggles. After clarifying the basic elements of image construction through noun analysis, we proceed to analyze the collocational patterns, concordance lines, and discourse functions of high-frequency ecological verbs. This analysis explores how Chinese mainstream media use linguistic choices to respond to international concerns and engage in discourse struggles, constructing a multidimensional national image of marine ecological governance.

From the high-frequency ecological verbs extracted from the corpus (see Table 2), they can be classified into three categories: development and construction, protection and governance, and

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cooperation and exchange. These categories form a complete narrative loop, moving from domestic practices to international contributions: development and construction as the fundamental goal, protection and governance as the basic guarantee, and cooperation and exchange as the external extension. The following will explore the discourse construction of representative verbs.

Table 2. Core High-Frequency Ecological Verbs in Ocean Environment Reporting by Chinese Mainstream Media

High-Frequency Verb	Frequency	Proportion（%）
promote	250	0.55%
improve	208	0.46%
make	206	0.46%
build	185	0.41%
protect	167	0.37%
promoting	162	0.36%
take	159	0.35%
provide	150	0.33%
set	149	0.33%
held	149	0.33%
signed	146	0.32%
strengthen	137	0.30%
launched	134	0.30%
become	131	0.29%
provided	130	0.29%
ensure	129	0.29%
develop	127	0.28%
continue	124	0.27%
developing	121	0.27%
put	119	0.26%

(1) Development—Addressing the "Development-Ecology" Binary Narrative

The collocational strategy of Develop directly responds to the Western narrative of "China sacrificing marine ecology for development". It avoids pairing with crude economic indicators and instead combines with terms like marine economy and sustainable ocean resources, placing development within the "sustainable" framework. This reinforces the image of China as a "sustainable development practitioner".

Example 1: "To develop the harbor industry, Zhanjiang needs to enhance its international cooperation".

Example 2: "The expo was written in this year's provincial Party committee report as a key platform to develop the marine economy and trade with ASEAN".

Example 3: "China has begun construction of a deep-sea research platform in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, marking a major step in the country's efforts to explore extreme marine environments and develop sustainable ocean resources".

These expressions make clear the discursive intention to reframe "development" and "ecology" as a unified concept of "coordinated ecological and economic development", thus constructing China's image as a "sustainable development practitioner".

(2) Protection—Aligning Global Agendas with China's Practices

The verb Protect links China's governance practices with global marine issues, using direct and diverse expressions like marine environment, marine biodiversity, and reefs as objects of protection. These forms demonstrate the Chinese government's efforts in global governance, addressing international concerns in marine environmental protection.

Example 4: "Article 4 all units and individuals shall have the obligation to protect the marine environment and have the right to supervise and expose the act of any unit or individual that causes pollution damage to the marine environment, as well as the act of any functionary engaged in marine environment supervision and control that constitutes a neglect of duty in violation of the law".

Example 5: "He asked countries to work together to strengthen the prevention and control of marine environmental pollution, to protect marine biodiversity and to promote the conservation and restoration of marine ecosystems".

Example 6: "In addition to Mr. Chen, reef guards volunteer to help protect the terns. Once a week they come here to collect rubbish from the seas".

These examples demonstrate how the verb Protect serves to construct China's identity as a "responsible governance actor", working under the frameworks of law, international cooperation, and voluntary engagement.

(3) Promote—China's Role as a Cooperative Global Actor

The verb Promote illustrates China's positioning as a cooperative actor in global marine governance. Frequently used with terms like sea of peace, friendship and cooperation, joint R&D, and resolution of disputes through dialogue, it defines China's role in international marine issues as fundamentally cooperative.

Example 7: "China will firmly uphold and promote the international rule of law and, as always, work with ASEAN countries to implement the Declaration on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea".

Example 8: "The Chinese government has also established the Belt and Road Environmental Technology and Transfer Centre to promote the joint R&D and application of advanced eco-friendly technologies".

Example 9: "The goal of maintaining the 'status quo' in the South China Sea should be to promote the resolution of disputes in the South China Sea through friendly dialogue and consultation".

These examples highlight China's role as a "cooperative discourse actor", using cooperation to promote shared benefits and position itself as a "global cooperation contributor".

Through the analysis of Develop, Protect, and Promote, it is clear that Chinese media constructs a logically connected national image of marine ecological governance. These verbs interact within the framework of sustainable development, legal protection, and international cooperation, collectively building a coherent, multi-dimensional image of a nation committed to ecological responsibility. This strategic discourse is not only a response to Western ecological narratives but also an active reconstruction of China's role in global marine governance.

5.2 Discourse Practice Analysis

Mainstream media outlets like China Daily, Xinhua News, and CGTN serve as important platforms for disseminating national messages and reflecting public life, acting as windows for the world to understand China. These sources, with their growing influence, are the core of China's international discourse. In this study, the discourse on marine ecological images is derived from the English-language international dissemination platforms of Chinese mainstream media. These sources possess high international influence, credibility, and authority, with the content published on these platforms serving as an accurate transmission of China's marine governance actions and ecological philosophy.

The dual-track dissemination mode of domestic official release and international English-language media coverage ensures both the consistency of domestic marine ecological discourse and the adaptability of international discourse, allowing Chinese mainstream media to consistently project China's actions in marine ecology and vividly construct the nation's image as a "responsible governance actor", "sustainable development practitioner", and "global cooperation contributor".

5.3 Social Practice Analysis

According to Fairclough's (2013) three-dimensional model, discourse analysis reveals the social and cultural influences behind discourse. China's marine ecological image is shaped not only by its achievements in marine environmental protection and sustainable development but also by the comprehensive drivers of the marine power strategy, China's marine economic interests, and the cultural value of the "marine community of shared future".

5.3.1 The Comprehensive Drive of the Marine Power Strategy

Given the complex international environment, the marine power strategy has a profound impact on shaping China's marine ecological image. As marine issues are directly tied to national security and long-term development, this strategy focuses on environmental action and governance, reflecting China's prioritization of marine ecological protection. High-frequency terms like protection,

management, and conservation are central to this discourse, directly supporting China's national marine power strategy.

5.3.2 The Economic Pursuit of High-Quality Marine Economic Development

The pursuit of high-quality marine economic development is a driving force in the construction of the nation's ecological image. The frequent appearance of the term development reflects not just a passive reflection of domestic economic transformation but an active narrative strategy: transforming domestic economic demands into an internationally acceptable ecological discourse. By linking "development" with "sustainable", China refutes the Western narrative of "sacrificing ecology for growth", thus positioning itself as a "sustainable development practitioner" on the global stage.

5.3.3 Empowering Discourse through the Cultural Value of the "Marine Community of Shared Future"

The concept of a "marine community of shared future" serves as a cultural resource in international discourse strategies. The high frequency of cooperation in the corpus shows how China transforms the "harmony and coexistence" philosophy into universally understandable cooperative discourse. This discourse not only reflects China's cooperative role in global marine governance but also grants its image of "global cooperation contributor" the legitimacy needed for international recognition.

6. Conclusion

This study addresses a gap in the research on China's self-construction of its marine ecological discourse and national ecological image. By applying Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) within the framework of corpus linguistics, the study analyzes high-frequency ecological vocabulary and discourse patterns in Chinese mainstream media's marine environmental reporting between 2015 and 2025. The analysis shows that Chinese mainstream media successfully constructs three key aspects of China's national ecological image: "responsible governance actor", "sustainable development practitioner", and "global cooperation contributor".

Through textual analysis, discourse practice, and social practice dimensions, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of how China constructs and projects its marine ecological image. The findings are theoretically significant, as they contribute to the study of self-constructed ecological image and discourse in international settings, and practically valuable, offering a theoretical and empirical foundation for enhancing China's international discourse power in marine ecological governance.

Future research can expand the scope by including Chinese-language versions of marine environmental reports and conducting comparative studies to explore differences in the construction of marine ecological discourse both domestically and internationally.

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