Discourse Historical Analysis of Identity Construction of New Energy Enterprises in China and the United States

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Abstract: *In recent years, with the increasing awareness of climate change and environmental protection, new energy vehicles have gradually become a hot topic in the automotive industry. This article uses the Social Responsibility Report of BYD and Impact Report of Tesla as corpus, adopts a discourse-history research approach to analyze the three-dimensional framework of discourse analysis, and uses the corpus tool Wmatrix 6.0 to analyze the macro-themes, meso-discourse strategies, and micro-language features of corporate identity construction in China and the United States, explaining their similarities and differences in the construction of new energy enterprise identities. This study provides reference for the identity construction of new energy enterprises in China, and has practical significance for enhancing the international discourse construction ability of Chinese new energy enterprises.*

Keywords: Corporate identity construction; Discourse-historical studies; Three-dimensional framework.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, new energy vehicles have become an unstoppable trend, bringing opportunities and challenges to new energy enterprises. Among them, the construction of corporate identity is an objective need for the development of enterprises, and it is the foundation for building the external image of enterprises, representing the strength, reputation, and image of enterprises (Sun Xiuli, 2021). Tesla is an American electric vehicle and energy company with a market value of $1.03 trillion, and is a leading enterprise in the field of new energy vehicles abroad. BYD Co., Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as "BYD") operates across four major industries: automobiles, rail transit, new energy, and electronics. Its revenue and market value both exceed 100 billion yuan, making it a leading Chinese new energy enterprise. The various reports published on the official website of enterprises are an important way for their identity construction. This article uses discourse historical analysis method and corpus tool Wmatrix to compare the commonalities and individualities of identity discourse construction in social responsibility reports of new energy enterprises from three levels: macro-themes, meso-discourse strategies, and micro-language features.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 Research Corpus

This article downloads the 2022 BYD Social Responsibility Report (with 27239 tokens and 4749 types) and the 2022 Tesla Influence Report (with 25602 tokens and 4309 types) from the company's official website, and uses Wmatrix 6.0 to establish a corpus. The standard tokens/types ratios of the two corpora are close, indicating good comparability between the them.

2.2 Analytical Framework

This article is based on the discourse-historical analysis method to form a theoretical framework for constructing the identity of new energy enterprises. As a major branch of critical discourse analysis, discourse history analysis focuses on how discourse reflects social structure and influences its forms of expression (Chen Jianping, 2016). It advocates that discourse analysis should be conducted from three dimensions: 1. Determine the thematic content of specific discourse. 2. Search for various discourse strategies. 3. Observe language features and specific language forms (Reisigl, 2001). Therefore, this article proposes a research framework for identity construction of new energy enterprises.

3. THREE DIMENSIONAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF NEW ENERGY ENTERPRISES IN CHINA AND THE US

3.1 Macro-thematic Analysis

This article uses Wmatrix 6.0 to automatically identify the prominent thematic semantic domains in the reports of Chinese and American new energy giants. The BYD and Tesla corpora are used as observation corpora, and the BNC CG Business corpus is selected as the reference corpus to generate thematic semantic domain schemas. (as shown in Tables 1).

Table 1: BYD Partial Theme Semantic Domain in China and US

	BYD	Tesla
1	M3 Vehicles and transport on land	A2.2 Cause & Effect/Connection
2	N1 Numbers	N1 Numbers
3	G2.1 Law and order	I4 Industry
4	X5.2+ Interested/excited/energetic	O1 Substances and materials generally
5	S8+ Helping	O1.1 Substances and materials: Solid
6	S7.1+ In power	W5 Green issues
7	O3 Electricity and electrical equipment	M3 Vehicles and transport on land
8	A15+ Safe	A15- Danger
9	T3- Time: New and young	I2.2 Business: Selling
10	I2.2 Business: Selling	O3 Electricity and electrical equipment

This article selects the top 20 semantic domains for comparative analysis. From Table 1, we can find that the two countries' enterprise reports share a total of 11 semantic domains, including: M3 [vehicles and land transportation], N1 [numbers], X5.2+[interested/excited/positive], O3 [electrical and electrical equipment], I2.2 [commercial: sales], O2 [ordinary objects], W5 [green themes], A1.1.1 [ordinary actions/manufacturing], I2.1 [commercial: ordinary], I4 [industrial], A9- [giving]; The corporate identities constructed in the reports of the two countries have commonalities. 11 shared semantic domains describe the common thematic features of new energy enterprises in the two countries in terms of enterprise products, nature, and operational strategies.

[Example 1] The new energy *vehicles* sector was facilitated by explosive development in technology, product and market size, and delivered a record high of 1,788,000 new energy vehicles in 2022, representing a year-on-year growth over 217.6%. (BYD)

[Example 2] Vertical integration and regionalization help us source *battery* materials responsibly and have more control over supply (Tesla)

BYD has mastered the core technologies for the entire industry chain of new energy vehicles in terms of *battery*, motor, electrical control, and chip. (Tesla)

The semantic domain M3 is used to introduce enterprise products, with high-frequency words such as vehicles, automobile, vehicle, car, etc. Both companies have established themselves as global leading suppliers of new energy vehicles by describing their products and development (see Example 1). The semantic domain O3 contains high-frequency words such as battery, electric, batteries, and electricity, ranking seventh and tenth respectively for BYD and Tesla. This indicates that both companies attach great importance to research on automotive batteries and use clean energy to drive, further promoting sustainable energy development. For example, in Example 2, Tesla purchases battery materials through vertical integration and regionalization, allowing the company to gain control over battery supply and achieve a virtuous cycle of sales, showcasing a positive image of using clean energy and valuing sustainable development; In Example 3, BYD has mastered the core technologies of the entire new energy vehicle industry chain, including batteries, motors, electronic controls, and chips. All of these reflect that companies from both countries are trying to shape their positive image of exploring new energy and integrating resources to achieve sustainable development through discourse.

[Example 4] Direct sourcing from *mining* and refining companies allows us to engage in environmental and social issues in local contexts instead of enabling more transparent and traceable supply chain data All contracts include binding environmental and social requirements. (Tesla)

[Example 5] Thus, a new landscape of passenger vehicle sector as the leading business with synergistic development of remaining sectors was built. BYD was lucky enough to usher in the opportunity of *industry* development. (BYD)

According to the analysis of usage frequency and high-frequency words of shared semantic domain, there are also differences between them. For example, semantic domain I4 ranks third and appears more frequently in Tesla, while it ranks fifteenth and appears relatively less frequently in BYD. In the semantic domain I4, high-frequency words such as mining, factories, mine, refineries, industry, etc. are commonly used to describe the operational mode of enterprise factories. The frequency of using these high-frequency words by American new energy companies is significantly higher than that of Chinese new energy companies, indicating that compared to Chinese new energy companies, American companies attach more importance to product production modes and processes, actively pay attention to production steps, and ensure that these behaviors comply with environmental requirements. For example, Tesla proposes to directly purchase minerals and refined oil to ensure that our company not only publishes more transparent and traceable supply chain data, but also participates in solving local environmental and social problems (Example 4). BYD believes that the automotive industry should take the lead, build a new situation of coordinated development among multiple industries, and strive to achieve sustainable development (Example 5).

[Example 6] BYD formulations compliance *management* system, integrates compliance requirements into all business and *management* processes, and standardizes all activities of production, operation and *management*. (BYD)

According to Tables 1, it was found that BYD has unique thematic semantic domains such as G2.1 [Law and Order], S8+[Help], S7.1+[Governance], A15+[Safety], T3 [Time: New and Young], O4.3 [Color and Color Type], X9.1+[Ability and Intelligence], P1 [General Education], Y1 [General Science and Technology]. G2.1, S7.1+, P1 and other semantic domains contain high-frequency words such as "regulation", "management", "training", and "control", demonstrating that Chinese new energy enterprises attach great importance to internal management and compliance with domestic and foreign laws and regulations, integrate compliance requirements into all business and management processes, and regulate all activities of production, operation, and management (Example 6).

[Example 7] Supporting high *safety*, long *service* life and long duration and free of nickel or cobalt, Blade Battery has passed the nail penetration test, the industry s toughest single-cell battery test, and highly recognized by the market. (BYD)

The semantic domains of S8+, A15+, O4.3, etc. contain high-frequency words such as "service", "safety", "protection", and "green", demonstrating that Chinese new energy enterprises attach great importance to product quality and customer service, actively develop green new energy, and protect the home of human survival (Example 7).

[Example 8] For Special Patients Since 2022, the foundation will donate a total of 500000 BYD A shares (approximately RMB 160 million at the time of donation) to support the establishment of a hematology research center at Peking University Shenzhen Hospital, hoping to promote study in hematology diagnosis, continuously explore *new technologies* and *innovative* treatments, for the purpose of allowing more hematology patients to receive the most advanced diagnosis *technologies*, and raising the hope for hematology patients. (BYD)

T3-, X9.1+, Y1 and other semantic domains contain high-frequency words such as "new", "innovation", "intelligent" and "technology", demonstrating BYD's continuous exploration of new technologies and innovative treatment methods in the process of developing itself, striving to help more patients with blood disease in society, and reflecting the company's strong sense of social responsibility (Example 8).

[Example 9] Recycling can help reduce our reliability on primary mined *materials*. Tesla sees to reduce its reliability on primary mined *materials* and contribute.

[Example 10] The SAQ is a scalable, ongoing approach to monitoring supply chain social and environmental *risks* based on practices at supplier manufacturing facilities.

Tesla has unique thematic semantic domains such as A2.2 [cause and effect/connection], O1 [ordinary substances and materials], O1.1 [substances and materials: solid], A15- [danger], X2.2 [knowledge], A1.5.1 [use],

A1.8+[inclusive], T2++ [time: start], W3 [geographic terminology], etc. A2.2, O1, O1.1, A15-, A1.5.1, T2++, W3 and other semantic domains contain high-frequency words such as "materials", "impact", "risks", and "sustainable", demonstrating that American new energy companies focus on sustainable development, reduce dependence on raw materials through recycling, and achieve the highest resource utilization rate, demonstrating the great image of green environmental protection, crisis awareness, and cherishing natural resources [Example 9] [Example 10].

[Example 11] Hotspot analysis Collect primary GHG data for all hotspots Develop targeted GHG reduction efforts at hotspots (Tesla)

[Example 12] Direct sourcing from mining and refining companies allows us to engage in environmental and social issues in local contexts instead of enabling more transparent and traceable supply chain data All contracts include binding environmental and social requirements. (Tesla)

The high-frequency word in X2.2 [Knowledge] is "data", which reflects that enterprises use scientific data to analyze the environmental and social problems caused by automobiles, and actively do a good job in energy conservation and emission reduction (Example 11). However, what companies showcase to the public is not just data, but also practical actions, directly demonstrating the achievements of participating in local issues of environment and society, reflecting the social responsibility and courage of leading enterprises (Example 12).

3.2 Analysis of Discourse Strategies in the Construction of Corporate Identity

By comparing and analyzing the two corpora of BYD and Tesla, it is found that the discourse in the Report, texts of the two countries' enterprises widely uses the reference strategy, perspective strategy, and reinforcement and weakening strategy in discourse historical analysis for corporate promotion, and uses different language means to construct and shape the differentiated identity image of Chinese and American new energy enterprises.

3.2.1 Reference Strategy

The referential strategy is often used to highlight a certain image of a group or individual, and is therefore a key strategy for understanding discourse identity construction (Qiu Qing Ding Song, 2022). There are significant differences in the discourse strategies of self-identity construction between Chinese and American new energy vehicle companies in the discourse of the report. BYD uses the company name BYD to refer to itself; Tesla often uses the adjective possessive pronoun "our" and the first person pronoun "we".

Two different ways of referring highlight the different group of corporate identities. In order to promote personalized discourse reference, first person pronouns are a common strategy used by companies in external publicity, which helps to narrow the distance between the company and readers. In addition, using first person pronouns such as "we" has an "empathy" effect, which connects the two sides of the discourse and enhances its persuasiveness and infectiousness (Xu Xin, 2010). Therefore, the personalized discourse style of American new energy vehicle companies shapes an intra-group identity where the company and readers belong to the same group; Chinese new energy vehicle companies, on the other hand, often start from the third person perspective of the "enterprise group", aiming to form a non-personalized communication style and shape their authoritative external identity independent of the reader group.

3.2.2 Perspective based strategy

According to the research framework, we analyzed the commonly used discourse means of representational perspective strategies quotations, and found that there are two ways of quotation in discourse: 1) direct quotation: commonly marked with quotation marks, the discourse is faithful to the form and content of the quotation; 2) Indirect quotation: Without quotation marks, the discourse is only faithful to the quoted content (Wu Nan, Zhang Jingyuan, 2019).

3.2.2.1 Direct quotation

[Example 13] In CBPs February 2023 Validation Report, CBP commended Tesla for "commit[ting] significant resources to ensure that their supply chains and business partners meet ethical sourcing and labor requirements" and recognized the processes we have in place to screen business partners as a best practice—"outstanding in both

scope and depth." (Tesla)

Tesla's Report uses a direct citation strategy to construct corporate identity, while BYD's Report does not have a similar citation strategy throughout the entire text. The above example directly quotes the authoritative discourse of the US Customs to construct a corporate identity, making the constructed corporate identity traceable, and authoritative.

3.2.2.2 Indirect References

According to recently published research in Environmental Research by Harvard University, in collaboration with the University of Birmingham, the University of Leicester and University College London, air pollution causes over eight million premature deaths annually. (Tesla)

According to the research of IPCC, human activities are estimated to have contributed to about 1.0°C of global warming as compared with that prior to the Industrialization. (BYD)

The sources of information in both examples are precise authoritative institutions, enhancing the public understanding of the feasibility of the information. Tesla cites articles published by three well-known universities in authoritative magazines, objectively presenting the fact that global air quality is poor. BYD cites research from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to demonstrate that human activities are one of the causes of global warming. Both indirectly cite to inform the public of the fact that the Earth's environment is deteriorating, seize the public's pain points, and then launch our company's new energy vehicles and various pollution-free products.

3.2.3 Strengthening/Weakening Strategy

In terms of strengthening/weakening strategies, it mainly manifests in the application of different modal means in discourse. Modal verbs are divided into high value modal verbs (must, light to, need, have to), medium value modal verbs (will, will, will, shall, should), and low value modal verbs (can, could, may, might) (Hu Kaibao et al., 2018:85). Using Wmatrix 6.0 to search the modal verb vocabulary, the frequency of the first six modal verbs in Tesla and BYD's Report was calculated, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Frequency of Modal Verbs for Tesla and BYD

	BYD		Tesla	
	Modal verbs	Frequency	Modal verbs	Frequency
1	will	44	will	25
2	can	37	can	19
3	may	7	need	8
4	shall	5	may	7
5	must	4	could	4
6	would	4	should	4

BYD and Tesla, apart from each having a high value modal verb, are all low and medium value modal verbs. High value modal verbs generally indicate the speaker's subjective orientation and determination, conveying a coercive attitude. Low value modal verbs have a gentle tone, and the speaker tries to distance themselves from the listener, making their posture appear polite and friendly. Medium value modal verbs not only guide the listener to a certain extent, but also maintain a friendly attitude (Hu Kaibao et al., 2020:100).

The most frequently used modal verb in Tesla's Report is 'will', which is often paired with the subjects 'we' and 'Tesla'. Next is the low value modal verb 'can', which is often paired with the subject 'we'. The use of these words indicates that American new energy companies politely and warmly express their views and propositions.

The most frequently used modal verb 'will' in BYD's' Report is also the medium value modal verb, which is often paired with the subjects 'we' and 'BYD'. Next is the low value modal verb 'can', which can be paired with a variety of subjects such as employees, users, system, battery, products, and so on. The use of these words indicates that the company not only focuses on expressing its own ideological blueprint, but also demonstrates its emphasis on employees, users, and products. From the example, it can be seen that BYD has also set up personalized activity venues such as billiard rooms, cinemas, and children's playgrounds in its industrial park to meet the exercise needs

of employees and their families in all aspects, allowing employees to work happily and live healthily.

[Example 16] Moreover, BYD has set up billiard rooms, cinemas, childrens playgrounds and other personalised activity venues in its industrial parks to cater to the exercise needs of employees and their families in various aspects, so that employees can truly work happily and live healthily.

3.3 Analysis of Micro-Language Features in Enterprise Identity Construction

3.3.1 Word frequency analysis

Word frequency analysis is an important part of corpus linguistics research, which involves statistical analysis of the frequency of occurrence of important vocabulary in a discourse to maximize the interpretation of its semantic potential. Use Wmatrix 6.0 to generate a word frequency table in descending order of frequency, and remove functional vocabulary and personal pronouns to obtain the analysis results (as shown in Table 3).

Table 3: High frequency Vocabulary of BYD and Tesla

	BYD		Tesla	
	High frequency words	Frequency	High Frequency words	Frequency
1	management	174	impact	116
2	2022	150	2022	114
3	employees	147	report	88
4	energy	138	supply-chain	70
5	report	114	emission	70
6	new	108	energy	68
7	system	105	suppliers	60
8	development	95	environmental	50
9	quality	95	use	46
10	company	89	vehicle	46

The word ranked first by the Chinese side is management, indicating that the Chinese side pays more attention to the management of various internal matters within the enterprise. The word ranked first by the US is impact, indicating that the US is more concerned about the impact of corporate behavior on various aspects of society.

The top ten high-frequency words in the report of Chinese companies mention internal stakeholders, namely employees, demonstrating that the company attaches great importance to employee interests and development. The other high-frequency words development, new, and quality demonstrate that Chinese companies place great emphasis on technological innovation, product quality optimization, and enhancing their core competitiveness.

However, the US mentioned other stakeholders, namely suppliers, and also mentioned the closely related term supply chain, demonstrating a high level of importance placed on the interests of suppliers. The other high-frequency words environmental and emission indicate that American companies place great emphasis on the impact of their actions and product emissions on the ecological environment.

3.3.2 Analysis of high-frequency word collocations

The conceptual function in systemic functional linguistics emphasizes that language can reflect and construct social reality. We use high-frequency words such as new and development as search terms, randomly extract and analyze relevant index rows in BYD, and further explore the image of Chinese new energy vehicle companies.

Development high-frequency word collocation index

...has been actively disclosing its fulfillment of environmental responsibility, corporate social responsibility and corporate governance to the general public, so that the society will understand and supervise BYD s corporate responsibility work and promote the understanding, communication and interaction between BYD and the public, thus realizing the sustainable *development* of the company.

In the process, we also referenced Sustainable *Development* Goals (SDGs) of United Nations, Sustainability Reporting Standards by the Global Report Initiative (GRI) and CASS-CSR Guidelines (CASS-CSR4.0) by

Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Reviewing 2022, BYD, following the green, innovative and opening-up new *development* philosophies, has firmly seized the opportunity of automobile atomization and intellectualization reform, and achieved breakthroughs in 4 key sectors: automobile, rail transit, renewable energy and electronics.

The index line shows that development is often paired with words such as sustainable, goals, and new. It can be determined based on the content of the index line. BYD actively responds to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, proactively fulfills its responsibility to protect the environment, and promotes the company's sustainable development. Not only that, but also adhering to the new development concept of green, innovative and open, BYD has demonstrated its active practice of Xi Jinping's new development policy, while meeting the dual development goals at home and abroad.

New high-frequency word collocation index

BYD has mastered the core technologies for the whole industry chain of new energy vehicles in terms of battery, motor, electrical control and chip. Carving a path from independent innovation to comprehensive opening-up innovation, BYD continues to lead the accelerated reform of *new* energy vehicles.

The index line shows that new is often paired with words such as energy and product. According to the content of the index line, it can be judged that BYD has mastered the core technology of the entire new energy vehicle industry chain, opened up a path from independent innovation to comprehensive open innovation, and continues to lead the accelerated reform of new energy vehicles.

Similarly, we used high-frequency words such as use and energy as search terms, randomly extracted and analyzed relevant index rows in Tesla, and further explored the image of American new energy companies.

Energy high-frequency word collocation index

Encouraged suppliers to transition to renewable energy sources and follow up on commitments to install solar *energy* capacity Reviewed industry roadmaps and work plans to decarbonize the nickel mining sector.

Our mission is to accelerate the world s transition to sustainable *energy*. Since its inception, Teslas business model has centered on the opportunities presented by the sustainable energy transition. We have developed a clean energy ecosystem that addresses the energy generation and storage and transportation sectors.

Energy is highly paired with sustainable and renewable, and by analyzing its index lines and regressing the content of the report text, it can be seen that Tesla has always been committed to developing sustainable and renewable energy. Not only does Tesla encourage suppliers to transition to renewable energy, but its business model has always been centered around sustainable energy transformation, committed to building a clean energy ecosystem to address issues in the energy production, storage, and transportation sectors. It demonstrates a strong commitment to environmental protection by large enterprises and shapes a green image that fully promotes sustainable development.

Use high-frequency word collocation index

These trips focused on questions related to water usage, indigenous peoples rights and the use of new technologies, such as Direct Lithium Extraction (DLE), to extract lithium in a more efficient way that reduces land use, water use and energy use. The Chile trip included visits to an energy storage project. Audits Six audits completed, including 50% of all lithium extraction sites in our supply chain, against responsible production standards.

Use is often paired with energy, personal, and product. Based on the content of the index line, it can be inferred that Tesla intends to use its trip to Chile to address issues related to water use, indigenous peoples' rights, and the use of new technologies, in order to extract lithium more effectively and reduce the usage of land, water, and energy.

4. CONCLUSION

This article uses BYD's Social Responsibility Report and Tesla's Influence Report as data to establish a corpus, and

adopts a discourse-historical research path of discourse analysis three-dimensional framework. By analyzing the macro-themes, meso-discourse strategies, and micro-language features of corporate identity construction, it explains the similarities and differences in corporate identity construction between China and the US. Research has found that the discourse identities constructed by two companies through reports have both similarities and differences. Firstly, in terms of macro-themes, there are many similarities between new energy enterprises in China and the US in terms of their products, nature, and operational strategies. However, American new energy companies place greater emphasis on production models and processes that meet environmental requirements, while Chinese focus on sustainable models led by automobiles and coordinated development across multiple industries. Secondly, in terms of meso-discourse strategy, Chinese and American new energy companies adopt different reference strategies to construct their identities. The Chinese side expects to construct an authoritative corporate image, while American companies attempt to shape a people-oriented corporate image. In terms of perspective-based strategies, both China and the US use indirect quotations with high objectivity and rigor. However, the US side still adopts direct quotation, which has a strong subjective constructiveness, while the Chinese side does not have a similar quotation strategy throughout the entire text. In terms of strengthening and weakening strategies, the frequency of modal verbs used by the Chinese side is much higher than that of the American one. The most frequently used words in both cases are medium value modal verbs, which politely and affectionately express their own views and opinions. Thirdly, in terms of micro-linguistic features, the Chinese pays more attention to the management of various internal matters within enterprises, while the American is more concerned about the impact of corporate behavior on various aspects of society. In addition, Chinese companies attach great importance to employee interests and product technology innovation, while the US highly values interests of supplier and the impact of corporate actions on the ecological environment. This study has made us realize that multinational corporations should have a big picture perspective, not only focusing on their own operations, but also on their impact on the world. This article provides ideas for the identity construction of other new energy enterprises in China in the future, and also has guiding and practical significance for enhancing the international discourse construction ability of Chinese new energy enterprises.

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