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## Original Research Article

# Analysis of narrative framework of “China image” in English media

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**Abstract:** This study focuses on the narrative framework of “China’s image” constructed by English media. By delving into the characteristics of positive, negative, and neutral narratives, it analyzes the factors behind their formation. It also evaluates the impact these narrative frameworks have on audience perception, China’s image construction, and the international communication landscape. The aim is to provide theoretical support and strategic references for understanding the dissemination of China’s image in the context of international public opinion.

**Keywords:** English media; China image; Narrative framework; International communication

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## 1. Introduction

In today’s era of deepening globalization, information dissemination transcends national boundaries, and the media plays a crucial role in shaping national images. English, as an international lingua franca, dominates global information dissemination through its medium, and the narrative framework it constructs for “China’s image” profoundly influences how the international community perceives China. Different narrative frameworks reflect the interplay of complex political, economic, and cultural factors. Analyzing the narrative framework of “China’s image” in English media can help us understand the dynamics of international public opinion, enhance China’s discourse power in international communication, and provide theoretical support for creating a positive and objective image of China.

## 2. Analysis of the narrative framework of China’s image in English media

### 2.1. Positive narrative framework

Some English media construct positive narratives about China in specific contexts. In the economic sphere, when China makes significant breakthroughs in emerging industries driven by technological innovation, some English media highlight China’s positive contributions to global technological progress and industrial upgrading from the perspective of global economic growth drivers. In the social domain, China’s remarkable achievements in poverty reduction are seen by some media as successful examples of global social development. By reporting on China’s poverty alleviation policies and practices, these media outlets showcase China’s efforts to improve people’s living standards and promote social equity. On the international cooperation front, China actively participates in global pandemic response, providing medical supplies and sharing pandemic control experiences with many countries. Positive narratives in English media emphasize China’s role as a major power and its humanitarian spirit, portraying China as an important guardian of global public health security.

### 2.2. Negative narrative framework

However, there is also a large amount of negative narrative framing about China in English media. Politically, some Western media outlets, based on ideological differences, unjustly criticize China’s political system, portraying its governance model as lacking democracy and freedom, attempting to mislead international audi-

ences' understanding of China's political structure. In the economic sphere, as China's economy continues to expand and its international competitiveness grows, some English media fabricate the "China economic threat theory," highlighting unfair competition practices in international trade that impact other countries' industries. On environmental issues, certain Western media ignore China's significant efforts and notable achievements in ecological conservation and energy efficiency, focusing instead on individual environmental incidents, depicting China as the primary culprit for environmental degradation, thereby tarnishing China's image.

### **2.3. Neutral narrative framework**

In addition to positive and negative narrative frameworks, neutral narrative frameworks also exist in English media. When reporting on cultural activities in China, such as the celebration of traditional Chinese festivals abroad or the presentation of Chinese artistic works on the international stage, some media outlets can present these events with an objective and neutral attitude, focusing solely on the events themselves without adding excessive biased evaluations. In international sports competitions, when Chinese athletes achieve outstanding results, media coverage often highlights their performance and competitive achievements, avoiding subjective praise or criticism of China's national image, thus providing relatively objective information to international audiences.

## **3. The analysis of the causes of narrative framework**

### **3.1. Media reporting positions and tendencies**

The owners and operators behind English media often have different political and economic interests. Some Western media outlets, influenced by specific political groups or commercial interest groups, tend to uphold the values and interests of those who already benefit<sup>[1]</sup>. Some media outlets cater to the political demands of domestic conservative forces, often presenting biased reports on China, using negative narratives to shape a negative image of China, aiming to hinder its development and maintain their dominant position in international affairs. In contrast, some media that adhere to principles of objectivity and fairness focus more on factual evidence when reporting on China, presenting diverse narrative frameworks, including positive and neutral perspectives.

### **3.2. Social and cultural background**

The differences in social and cultural backgrounds across different countries and regions have a profound impact on the narrative frameworks of English media. The long-standing cultural superiority complex in Western societies has led to certain cultural biases when viewing non-Western cultures like China. This cultural bias is reflected in media reports, manifesting as misunderstandings and distortions of Chinese culture and social systems<sup>[2]</sup>. Western culture emphasizes individualism, while Chinese culture values collectivism. This cultural difference makes it difficult for some Western media to understand and correctly interpret the logic of collective action in China when reporting on Chinese social phenomena, thus constructing narrative frameworks that do not align with reality. The historical experiences of countries where some English media outlets are located also influence their narratives about China. For example, the colonial history of some media outlets instinctively views China's rise as a challenge to the existing international order, thereby constructing negative narrative frameworks.

### **3.3. International political and economic situation**

Changes in the international political and economic landscape are significant external factors shaping the narrative frameworks of English media. In the international political arena, as China's global influence contin-

ues to grow and it plays an increasingly important role in international affairs, some Western countries, out of concern for their own international standing, use the English media they control to portray China negatively, attempting to undermine China's international influence. In the economic sphere, with the rapid development of China's economy, competition and cooperation in trade, investment, and other areas with other countries have become increasingly complex. Some national media outlets, in order to protect domestic industrial interests, tend to construct negative narratives when reporting on issues related to China's economy, such as exaggerating the impact of Chinese products on their markets and overlooking the opportunities that China's economic development brings to the world.

## **4. The influence analysis of narrative framework**

### **4.1. The influence on the audience's cognition**

The narrative framework of English media directly influences international audiences' perceptions of China. A positive narrative framework can guide audiences to focus on China's positive development achievements, enhancing the international community's goodwill and trust in China. For example, positive reports on China's technological innovation can help international audiences recognize China's significant role in driving global technological progress, improving China's international image in the field of science and technology. On the other hand, a negative narrative framework can mislead audiences, causing them to form misunderstandings and biases about China. Audiences who are frequently exposed to negative reports may believe that China has serious issues in politics, economics, and the environment, which can affect people-to-people exchanges and cooperation between China and other countries. While a neutral narrative framework can provide objective information to audiences, in an era of information overload, neutral reports are often overshadowed by strongly biased ones, thus having relatively limited impact on audience perception.

### **4.2. The influence on the shaping of China's image**

Negative narrative frameworks severely hinder the positive shaping of China's image, putting it under pressure in international public opinion<sup>[3]</sup>. Some segments of the international community, influenced by negative reports, form negative impressions of China, which is detrimental to China's diplomatic, cultural exchange, and economic cooperation activities abroad. On the other hand, positive narrative frameworks can help enhance China's international image, showcasing its development achievements, cultural appeal, and responsibility as a major power, thereby earning more understanding and support for China in international affairs. However, negative narrative frameworks still dominate in English media, posing a serious challenge to the shaping of China's image.

### **4.3. The impact on the international communication pattern**

Its narrative framework also profoundly influences the international communication landscape. The widespread dissemination of negative narratives exacerbates imbalances in international communication. Western media, leveraging their dominant position in the global communication system, attempt to suppress China's voice in the international public sphere through negative reporting, thereby solidifying their advantage in discourse power<sup>[4]</sup>. While the emergence of positive narratives has, to some extent, helped break this imbalance, the long-standing dominance of Western media means that the reach and influence of positive narratives still need improvement. The existence of neutral narratives provides room for the diversified development of the international communication landscape, encouraging a more objective view of China by the international community. However, to change the current international communication landscape, China must continue to strengthen its capabilities in international communication.

## 5. Conclusion

The narrative framework of “China’s image” in English media exhibits complex and diverse characteristics, coexisting with positive, negative, and neutral narratives. Its formation is influenced by a combination of factors, including the stance of media reports, socio-cultural background, and international political and economic situations. These narrative frameworks significantly impact international audiences’ perceptions, the shaping of China’s image, and the global communication landscape. To enhance China’s discourse power in international communication and shape a positive, objective image of China, it is necessary for China to delve into the narrative patterns of English media, strengthen its international communication capabilities, and break through the limitations of Western media narratives through innovative methods such as diversifying content and enriching communication approaches, presenting a real, multifaceted, and comprehensive China to the world.

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