Vol.2 No.4 2021
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Empirical Research on Vietnam's China-related Reports under the Background of the Belt and Road: Content Analysis Based on Mainstream Media Reports in Vietnam

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***Abstract**: By using the content analysis method, establishing the content-coding table of China-related reports on Vietnam's mainstream media, and using data crawling, translation, analysis, and visualization as a means, the content of these reports is analyzed from four dimensions: length, theme, tendency, and text sentiment value. It is found that China-related reports on Vietnam's mainstream media show five characteristics: Vietnam's mainstream media focus on the economic theme. The reports are flat in the distribution of the theme. Neutral tendency reports are the mainstream. The reports commonly use the positive framework to report content. Positive reports are pretty short, and negative reports are much longer.*

***Keywords**: Content Analysis; Vietnam; The Belt and Road*

Introduction

President of China Xi Jinping put forward the Belt and Road cooperation initiative. Until November 2020, China has signed 201 cooperation documents on the co-construction of the Belt and road, with 138 countries and 31 international organizations (Dai & An, 2020). The implementation of the Belt and Road strategy has strengthened the countries' exchanges and contacts along the route. However, the countries along the route have significant differences in ideology, economic development, cultural customs, and different countries' evaluations of the Belt and Road initiative. Vietnam is an important country along the Belt and Road and the only country in Southeast Asia connected with China's sea and land. It has significant geographical advantages in the construction of the Belt and Road (Kim, 2018). Besides, Vietnam is one of the ASEAN members. ASEAN is an important part of China's neighboring diplomacy and a vital object of cooperation for China to promote the Belt and Road initiative (Kim, 2018). The relationship between China and Vietnam will, to some extent, affect the cooperation between China and ASEAN countries under the Belt and Road initiative, which makes the Belt and Road initiative in Vietnam have crucial strategic significance.

Media image is a general situation of the country in the media, a general situation constructed by the mass media about the dissemination of national information (Ran & Dai, 2018). On the one hand, the media image is a reflection of the attitude and cognition of the people from a country to other countries. On the other hand, the media image displayed by the media report to a country often affects the cognition and attitude of the

people in the country. Since the implementation of innovation and opening up by the Vietnamese Party and the state, the state policy has supported the local media. They have gradually possessed rich communication experience, advanced communication technology, and muscular economic strength (Wu, 2014). Vietnam's media reports of China, especially Vietnam's mainstream media reports, are critical windows to understand Vietnam's perception about China in the Belt and Road context. In this context, it is of great significance to study the China-related reports on Vietnam's mainstream media to promote the Belt and Road initiative.

Literature Review

Since the Belt and Road initiative was put forward, many Chinese scholars have studied the China-related reports on foreign media under the Belt and Road background. Chinese scholars mainly focus on the media of developed countries such as Britain and the United States. An & Liang (2018), through content analysis, studied the relevant reports of Bloomberg News, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Washington Post, and USA Today on the Belt and Road International Cooperation Summit Forum, and analyzed the influence of the reporting framework of the Belt and Road Initiative on China's national image. Based on the self-built Belt and Road discourse prediction database, Zhong (2018) analyzed the Belt and Road initiative in 12 British national newspapers and four news websites and probes into the significance construction of the Belt and Road discourse in mainstream British media. Qu & Yu (2019) analyzed the features of news reports on mainstream media websites in Central and Eastern European countries under the Belt and Road background and put forward the strategies of guiding public opinion according to news reports' characteristics. With the advance of the Belt and Road initiative, the country-specific scope of the research sample has been gradually expanded. Researches of China-related reports on the media of Australia, Russia, India, and the Philippines emerged. The perspective of these researches includes the reporting trend of the Belt and Road initiative in the mainstream media of different countries (Zhao & Guo, 2020), the media presentation of China's national image (Sun & Jiang, 2017), and the construction of China's external communication power (Tang, 2018).

In the research of Chinese media image in Vietnamese media reports, scholars mainly use case analysis and content analysis to select a mainstream media in Vietnam as the research object and analyze the reports on Chinese image. Wu (2014) analyzed the construction and presentation of China's national image by the People's Daily, the central organ of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Pham (2019) studied the contents of the report of Vietnam Plus Electronic News from 2013 to 2018. From the perspective of communication effect, Ruan (2020) analyzed the reports on the Belt and Road initiative in the traditional Vietnamese media Labor Daily, People's Daily, and new Vietnamese media VnExpress, which finally reflected the attention paid by the Vietnamese media to the Belt and Road initiative. Taking the Vietnam Communication Network and the VnExpress as examples, Chen (2018) analyzed the Belt and Road initiative's reports by the Vietnamese network media.

To sum up, Chinese scholars' researches on China-related reports of foreign media provide ideas and references for this research. Different from previous researches, which only focused on Vietnamese media's China-related reports or Vietnamese media's reports on the One Belt and One Road initiative, this research focuses on the China-related reports on Vietnam's mainstream media under the background of One Belt and One Road. It can reflect Vietnam's attitude towards the Belt and Road initiative and the effect of the Belt and

Vol.2 No.4 2021
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2021.031

Road initiative in Vietnam (Fang, 2018). With the fact that Vietnam has been a neighbor of China with the same system and cultural affinity, how China-related reports on Vietnam's mainstream media to present and construct the image of China have become a question worth exploring for China.

Methods

In this research, the content analysis method was used as the research method, and American communication scientist Bernard Berelson defined the legal meaning of content analysis as "an objective, systematic and quantitative description of communication content with specific characteristics" (Bu, 1997). After crawling the relevant reports of Vietnamese mainstream media in a period, this research shows Characteristics of China-related reports on Vietnam's mainstream media after coding and analyzing the four dimensions of report length, reporting theme, reporting tendency, and text sentiment value.

From September 1, 2019, to September 30, 2019, the China-related reports of the mainstream media in Vietnam were selected as a sample, including the "Vietnamnet", "PRNewswire", "VOV" and other media reports. In this research, 233 news reports were obtained, and the remaining 89 news reports were cleared. The content analysis was carried out after manual coding.

Adopting the expert opinion method to code the length of the report and taking 600 words as the unit, the following length code is determined:

Table 1. Length of Reports

Dimensions	Coding basis	Code
Length of Report (L)	L≤600	Short
	600<L≤1200	Medium
	1200<L	Long

Using the existing literature on the content of foreign reports and learning from Shao Peiren's (2016) report theme coding, the following codes are identified:

Table 2. Themes of Reports

Code	Coding basis	Number
Military defense	China's military equipment, military service system, national defense strength, military exercises	1
Economy	China's economic policy, financial situation, people's life, international trade	2
Politics	China's political system, political conference, Taiwan issue, anti-corruption	3
Diplomatic relations	Sino-US relations, Sino-Vietnamese relations, Sino-Japanese relations, territorial disputes	4

Terrorism/ International crime	The terrorist incidents in China, China's related international crimes	5
Social issues	China's social population, social atmosphere, social order	6
Infrastructure/ Environment/Health	China's infrastructure, environmental protection, health care	7
Culture/Technology/ Education/Sports	Cultural exchange, scientific research projects, educational level, sports events	8
World system and global governance	The Belt and Road, Global Cooperation, United Nations, Trade War, Free Trade Zone	9
Other	All reports that failed to enter the above code	10

According to the expert opinion method and the relevant literature findings, the following indicators of reporting tendency are established:

Table 3. Tendency of Reports

Dimensions	Coding basis	Code
Tendency of reports	Show an upbeat and positive national image of China in the tone of advocacy, encouragement, praise to state, explain the news's facts, the overall tone of the report is upbeat, positive, expect phenomena or events to be promoted or continue to occur in the attitude.	Positive
	Present news facts directly and objectively, do not encourage, praise, do not criticize, satirize, and have no subjective explanation of facts.	Neutral
	Show China's negative national image, expose, criticize the events or phenomena that are opposite to the recognized morality or universal mode of operation, and have a negative impact on the dissemination of China-related public opinion.	Negative

By using the SnowNLP emotion value algorithm, the sentiment value of each content is obtained (0-1), and the sentiment value is encoded.

Table 4. Text Sentiment Value of Reports

Dimensions	Algorithm	Coding basis	Code
Text sentiment value (S)	SnowNLP self-contained algorithm	$0.67<S\leq1$	High
		$0.33<S\leq0.67$	Medium
		$0<S\leq0.33$	Low

This research invites journalism students who are proficient in content analysis to act as coders, encode the samples' contents one by one, and give the corresponding code. According to the coding category table, the two coders used 30 data to calculate the Holsti consistency before coding, most of which were higher than

Vol.2 No.4 2021
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2021.031

0.85. After separate discussion and expert participation, the specific entry attribution of the question code is determined. After the two coders encode 89 samples, the consistency of the measured Holsti is higher than 0.90, so the data can be counted and analyzed.

Results and Discussion

Table 5. Dimensional Encoding Distribution of Reports

Dimensions	Code	Distribution	Dimensions	Code	Distribution
Length of reports	Short	34	Themes	Culture/ Technology/ Education/ Sports	1
	Medium	28		World System and Global Governance	21
	Long	27	Reporting tendency	Positive	22
Themes	Military Defense	6		Neutral	55
	Economy	38		Negative	12
	Politics	4	Text Sentiment Value	High	57
	Diplomatic Relations	16		Medium	18
	Terrorism/ International crime	3		Low	14

The dimensional coding distribution of the report is shown in Table 5. This section will summarize the coding distribution of length, theme, tendency, text sentiment value and cross-analyze the coding distribution of these four dimensions.

In the length of the report, short stories account for more in Vietnam's mainstream media reports. Of the 89 sample reports, 34 are under 600 words, 28 are between 600 and 1200 words, and 27 are over 1200 words. After the chi-square test of the three types of space in this dimension, it's found that the significant level is 0.617 (the significant level >0.05), and the distribution of the length of the report is uniform.

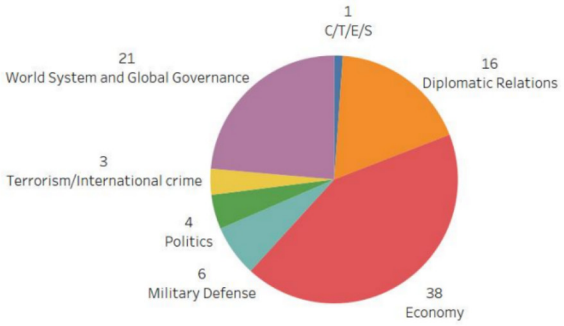

Figure 1. Distribution of Themes

By coding the classification of news themes, the theme of China-related reports on Vietnam's mainstream media is divided into seven categories. After a chi-square test of the coded distribution of the dimension, A significant level of 0.000 (significant level <0.05) shows that the subject of its report has significant bias. Statistics show that "Economy" and "World System and Global Governance" are the essential issues in Vietnam's mainstream media reports, with 38 articles and 21 articles, respectively. Both have accounted for more than two-thirds of the total. The theme of "Economy" focuses on China-Vietnam international trade. In the world system and global governance, the focus is on the Sino-US trade war and the Belt and Road. Compared to the first two, "Diplomatic relations" and "Military defense" related themes are also much more. Its main content revolves around the South China Sea problem and the Sino-foreign military conflict. In the distribution of topic coding, there is only one sample on the theme "Culture/Technology/Education/Sports; none of the themes "Social issues" or "Infrastructure/Environment/Health" are covered. This shows that China's national image formed by Vietnam's mainstream media's reports is not complete and comprehensive.

Some studies show that the media will adopt specific attitudes, positions, and views when reporting news events, thus forming the tendency of reporting. The tendency of reports is influenced by many factors, such as different media development courses, operation attributes, market position, policy, and purpose (Han, 2017). Based on the reporting tendency to China, this research divides it into three dimensions: positive, neutral, and negative. After the chi-square test of this dimension's coding distribution, the significant level is 0.000 (significant level <0.05), which indicates that the reporting tendency is significantly biased. The results show that positive reports account for 13.5%, neutral reports 61.8%, and negative reports 24.7%. China-related reports on Vietnam's mainstream media are generally neutral and negative.

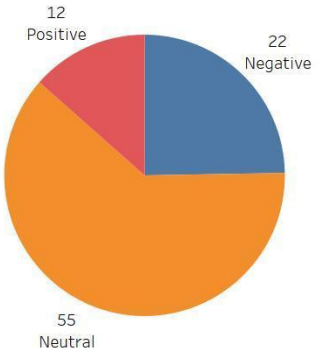

Figure 2. Distribution of Tendency

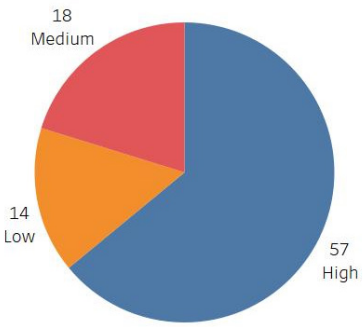

Figure3. Distribution of Text Sentiment Value

Vol.2 No.4 2021
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2021.031

This research obtains the specific sentiment value of each sample by using the SnowNLP tool in Python to process all the text contents of the sample in natural language (0-1), Then it is encoded according to the coding table to obtain the text sentiment value coding distribution. Text sentiment value is different from reporting tendency. A bias towards an object does not determine it. It is determined by judging the text's sentiment degree (positive-negative) after natural language processing. In general, the higher the sentiment value, the more positive the text is; the lower the sentiment value, the more inclined to the negative framework. After a chi-square test of the coded distribution of the dimension, a significant level of 0.000 (significant level <0.05) shows that the sentiment value of the text has significant bias. In this research sample, the number of high sentiment values reaches 64.1%, and the content of middle emotion value and low emotion value reaches 20.2% and 15.7%, respectively. This shows that China-related reports on Vietnam's mainstream media mostly use a positive framework to report content.

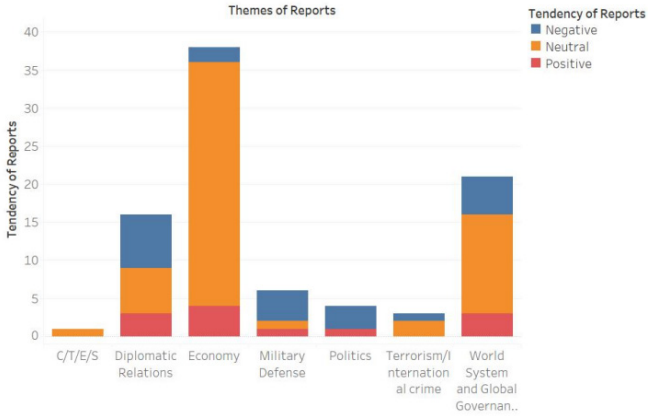

Figure 4. Cross-section Themes and Tendency

After cross-analysis of the reporting theme and the reporting tendency, it is found that the negative tendency of the other themes is significantly higher than the positive tendency except for the "economic" theme, which is particularly evident in the themes of Diplomatic relations, Military defense, Politics, World system, and global governance. Most of the positive and neutral contents of the theme of "Economy" focus on the economic benefits that Vietnam can obtain in economic exchanges between China and Vietnam. The negative content of other themes mainly focuses on the threat that China's military and political system poses to Vietnam and other related countries in the development process, which seems to be closely related to the history of the Sino-Vietnamese military conflict.

Fig. 5 is a cross-analysis diagram of the topic, tendency, and length of the report. The color of the circle in the graph represents the classification of the length of the report, and the size of the circle is the quantity of each classification. Under each theme, through the cross-analysis of the length of the report and the tendency's coding, it can be found that the long content in the positive tendency is less, while the long content is concentrated in the neutral and negative tendency. The themes of "Diplomatic relations" and "World system and global governance" are covered with more negative contents.

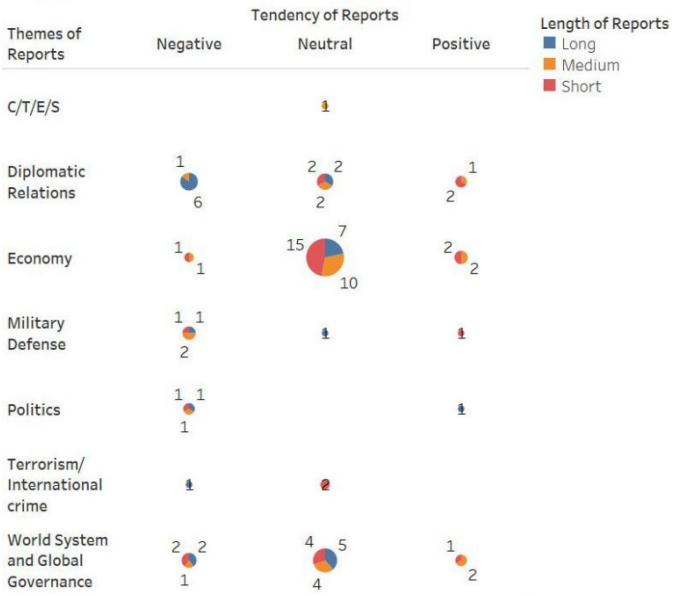

Figure 5. Cross-section of Themes, Tendency, and Length

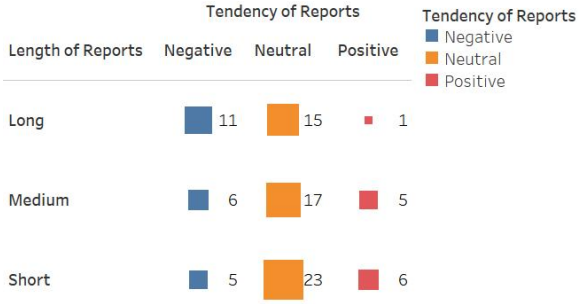

Figure 6. Cross-section of Tendency and Length

Fig. 6 is a cross-analysis diagram of the tendency and the length of the report. The square's size is the number of the cross-distribution of the tendency and length. The color of the square is the classification of the tendency of reports. It can be found from figure 6 that the content of positive tendency is mainly distributed in short and medium articles, and the content of positive tendency of the short piece is higher than that of the negative tendency of the short piece. That is, the more positive, the shorter the report is. The negative tendency is mainly distributed in the middle and long articles, and the content of the long negative tendency is significantly higher than the content of the long positive tendency. That is, the more negative, the longer the report is. The content of neutral tendency is distributed evenly in length.

Conclusion

Based on the content analysis of 89 China-related reports on Vietnam's mainstream media, this research found that the reports show the following characteristics:

First, the economic theme is the focus of these reports. The statistics show that the theme distribution of

Vol.2 No.4 2021
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2021.031

China-related reports on Vietnam’s mainstream media is not balanced. With the deepening of cooperation between China and Vietnam, China and Vietnam's interests have gradually increased. In the reports about China, various economic themes related to Vietnam have become these reports' focus.

Second, the theme distribution of the report is relatively flat. In the distribution of topic coding, we can find that only one sample has a theme about "Culture / Technology / Education / Sports". "Social Issues" and "Infrastructure / Environment / Health" are not covered. These reports of the theme dimension are relatively flat, which can not fully reflect the overall situation in China.

Third, the number of reports in neutral tendency is relatively large. In general, China-related reports on Vietnam's mainstream media use a neutral trend. However, adverse tendency reports are significantly higher than positive tendency reports. Its negative tendency reports mainly focus on "Diplomatic relations", "Military defense", "Politics", and "World system and global governance". The negative aspects of these themes focus on the threat that China's military and political system poses to Vietnam and other related countries in development, which seems to be closely related to the history of military conflicts between China and Vietnam and the South China Sea problem.

Fourth, Vietnam's mainstream media commonly use the positive framework to report Chinese content. Generally speaking, the higher the sentiment value, the more the text content tends to the positive framework, while the lower the sentiment value, the more it tends to the negative framework. In this research's sample content, the number of content with high sentiment value reached 64.1%, and the number of content with medium sentiment value and low sentiment value reached 20.2% and 15.7%, respectively. For China-related reports, Vietnam's mainstream media reports often use a positive framework to report content.

Fifth, the positive tendency report content is shorter, the negative tendency report content is longer. The results of cross-analysis of reporting tendency and reporting length show that the content of positive tendency is mainly distributed in short and medium reports, and the content of positive tendency of the short piece is higher than that of the negative tendency of the short piece. That is, the more positive, the shorter the report is. The negative tendency is mainly distributed in the middle and long articles, and the content of the long negative tendency is significantly higher than the content of the long positive tendency. That is, the more negative, the longer the report is. The content of neutral tendency is distributed evenly in length.

Under the background of the Belt and Road initiative, Sino-Vietnamese exchanges and cooperation will be closer. How to tell Chinese stories well and spread Chinese voices will face more opportunities and challenges. This research analyzes the general characteristics of China-related reports on Vietnam’s mainstream media by using the content analysis method through 89 reports published by the mainstream media in Vietnam. These characteristics have specific reference significance for us to understand the China image constructed by the mainstream media in Vietnam. To some extent, the conclusion can help the relevant departments better formulate the communication strategy to Vietnam.

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