

A Comparative Study of Meta-Discourse in Chinese and American E-Commerce Corporate Culture Statements: From the Perspective of the Three Level Model of Organizational Culture

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ABSTRACT

With the continuous development and popularization of internet technology, the e-commerce industry has shown a rapid development trend globally. In this context, the culture of e-commerce enterprises has also become a topic of great concern. Corporate culture refers to a common set of values, belief systems, and behavioral norms formed within an enterprise, which is the soul and core competitiveness of the enterprise. Therefore, in-depth research on the characteristics and differences of e-commerce corporate culture statements is of great significance for promoting the healthy development of the e-commerce industry and enhancing enterprise competitiveness. This study is based on the perspective of a three-level organizational culture model, aiming to compare the meta-discourse of corporate culture statements in e-commerce between China and the United States, explore their differences and reasons, and propose how to promote foreign trade through corporate culture strategies, providing important references.

Keywords— Three-level model of organizational culture; meta-discourse; E-Commerce corporate culture.

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

The purpose of this study is to compare the differences and similarities between the cultures of Chinese and American e-commerce companies through the lens of the three-level model of organizational culture. With the continuous development of Internet technology, the e-commerce industry has become an important part of the global economy. And corporate culture is one of the keys to the successful development of e-commerce companies. On the other hand, language and culture are closely linked, and positive discourse analysis in pragmatics is actually developed from critical discourse analysis, which “compensates for the more negative impact of critical analysis on society and advocates a positive attitude towards the content of discourse in order to build a harmonious and beautiful society”(Qu, 2007: 80). Therefore, by studying the meta-discourse of Chinese and American e-commerce corporate culture, we can better understand the differences and similarities between the two countries’ corporate cultures and their impact on the successful development of the companies.

There are great differences in the culture of Chinese and American e-commerce companies. First of all, the cultural backgrounds are different. Chinese culture emphasizes “benevolence” and “harmony”, while American culture focuses more on “competition” and “self-actualization”. This difference in cultural background affects the shaping and development of corporate culture. Secondly, there are also differences in the laws and regulations between China and the United States. In China, the government heavily regulates the e-commerce industry, and

the corporate culture is often emphasized as “compliance” and “robustness,” while in the U.S., the government focuses more on market freedom and competition, and the corporate culture emphasizes more on “innovation” and “risk”.

By comparing the meta-discourse of Chinese and American e-commerce business cultures, we can better understand the similarities between the two countries’ business cultures. First, both Chinese and American e-commerce companies pay close attention to the needs of their customers. Both “customer first” and “user experience” are important elements in the corporate culture. Second, e-commerce companies in both countries emphasize teamwork and employee innovation. This “people-centered” culture helps to improve the motivation and innovation of employees. Finally, e-commerce companies in both countries are facing a rapidly changing and uncertain market environment. Therefore, “adaptability” and “flexibility” in corporate culture are also key elements in common.

This study also has important implications for the development and management of e-commerce enterprises in China and the United States. First, by comparing the differences and similarities of corporate cultures in different countries, it can provide guidance and reference for enterprises in their multinational operations. Secondly, for business managers, an in-depth understanding of the meta-discourse of corporate culture can help to better shape and maintain corporate culture and improve the motivation and innovation of employees. Finally, for academic researchers, this study can provide new perspectives and ideas for corporate culture research and promote the in-depth development of academic research.

B. Purpose

Under the perspective of the three-level model of organizational culture, by the study of Chinese and American e-commerce corporate culture statements meta-discourse, to find the differences between the two countries’ corporate culture statements, so as to change the strategy of Chinese corporate culture statements according to the American corporate culture expression habits, so as to meet the American customers’ reading habits, avoid misunderstanding, better enhance the corporate image and reach cooperation (Robertson, 1987: 136). Based on this research purpose, the following three research questions are proposed.

- (1) What are the similarities and differences in the use of meta-discourse in Chinese and American e-commerce corporate culture statements under the perspective of the three-level model of organizational culture?
- (2) What are the reasons for the above differences?
- (3) Strategies for improving the culture statement of Chinese e-commerce companies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Three-level model of organizational culture

In 1992, Edgar Schein, in his famous book *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, defined organizational culture as “a model of basic assumptions - invented, discovered, or developed by a particular group culture in dealing with external adaptation and internal convergence problems--that is recognized for working well and taught to new members of an organization as the right way to understand, think, and feel about relevant issues.” In an updated book in 1996, Schein again defined organizational culture as “a set of implicit assumptions about how a group of people share and determine the extent of their perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and overt behaviors.” It is shaped by the shared histories and expectations of organizational members and by the outputs of their social interactions with each other. There have been many studies on this theory in recent years, for

example, Hogan and Coote (2014: 1609-1621) constructed an empirical model based on Schein’s conceptual model by collecting data from nearly 100 law firms, with the aim of clarifying the relationship between the various levels of organizational culture and corporate innovation behavior.

Schein divided the organizational culture into three levels, the material layer, the espoused values and the underlying assumptions, as shown in the figure below (Schein, 1984: 12). And in 2004, Schein introduced the concept of the essence of organizational culture, which he redefined as a shared underlying assumption that can solve the problems of external adaptation and internal integration of the organization and is acquired by members, considered as an effective mechanism by the organization because it works well, and passed on to new organizational members as the right way to think and solve problems.

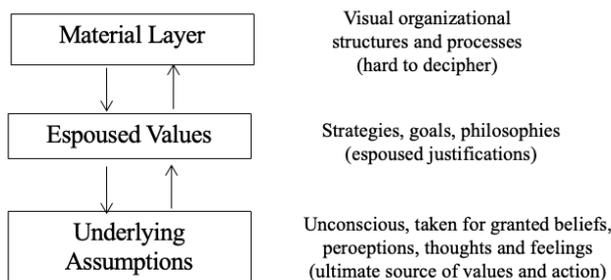


Fig. 1 Three Levels of Culture

1) Material layer

Artifacts are those external cultural products that can be seen, heard, and touched, but are not easily understood, including the company environment, dress code, slogans, and other external things. Although this level of internal culture is the most visible to external members, these “physical forms” reveal important characteristics of the company that are difficult to understand if you are not part of the culture.

2) Espoused values

Hidden beneath the artifacts are the “beliefs and values” of the organization, which are its strategy, goals and philosophy. If we compare the cultures of banks and advertising agencies, we find that in the culture of banks, success comes from strict financial controls, conservative prudence and respect for the management hierarchy. In contrast, the culture of an advertising agency may view personal self-imagination as a source of success and, therefore, place less emphasis on authority and the exchange of opinions. In both types of companies, those past occurrences reflect the company’s values, and thus its culture.

3) Underlying assumptions

The core or essence of organizational culture are unconscious assumptions, values, beliefs, norms, etc. that have long been rooted in people’s minds and are difficult to observe because they are mostly at an unconscious level. However, it is because of their existence that we are able to understand why each specific organizational event occurs in a particular form. These basic implicit assumptions exist in people’s natural attributes, in their interpersonal relationships and activities, in their reality and facts.

It is not difficult to find that the basic invisible assumptions and values, whether the outwardly visible artifacts or the beliefs and values hidden inside, are the core of the corporate culture. Only when every employee is integrated into the corporate culture can they identify with it from the inside to comply with it, internalize it in their hearts and minds, externalize it in their actions, and form a cohesive force that will naturally bring value to

the company.

B. Interpersonal classification model of meta-discourse

The study of meta-discourse first emerged in English, and meta-discourse was first proposed by Harris (1959: 37-50), and its definition was gradually refined in the process of continuous development. Xie Qun studied meta-discourse in business negotiation and pointed out its interpersonal role in verbal interaction (2012: 19-23). Researchers use different terms to describe discourse information, serving only occasions such as discourse coherence and interpersonal interaction. With the development of discourse analysis theory, more and more attention has been paid to the meaning of the discourse itself, and the study of meta-discourse has become a hot topic in discourse research.

As research continued and understanding of meta-discourse deepened, scholars recognized this and began to add interpersonal functions to the definition of meta-discourse as a discourse that is unrelated to and does not add to the propositional message and guides the reader to understand, accept, and interpret the propositional message (Vande Kopple, 1994: 82-93; Cristmore, 1993: 25-27). Hyland points out the interpersonal nature of organizing discourse meta-discourse because the author takes into account discourse contextual information when using linguistic resources to guide the reader, which is actually an interaction as well (Hyland, 2017: 16-29).

Thus, he re-divides meta-discourse into Interactive and Interactional. The former is a linguistic resource that directs the audience's attention to discourse organization methods, while the latter involves the author's intervention, thinking about the propositional content, attitude, evaluation and introducing the audience to the discourse to interact directly with it. This interpersonal classification model, which allows for the decoupling of the conceptual meanings carried by basic discourse, as well as the decoupling of the interpersonal and discursive meanings carried by meta-discourse, is currently the most widely accepted discourse classification model.

Besides, meta-discourse is also classified into internal and external meta-discourse (Ifantidou, Elly, 2005: 1325-1353). Some examples are shown in the table below.

TABLE 1 Meta-Discourse Classification

| Categories | Function | Chinese Examples | English Examples |
|---------------|--------------------|--|--|
| Interactive | Code glosses | 即 (that is to say); 如 (for instance) 具体而言 (in detail) | namely; e.g.; such as; in other words |
| | Endophoric markers | 上述 (above-mentioned); 以下 (below) | noted above; see; in section 2 |
| | Evidentials | X 指出 (X point out) | according to X; Z states |
| | Frame markers | 首先 (firstly); 在...方面 (in...part) | finally; to conclude |
| | Transitions | 同时 (meanwhile); 因此 (so); 但是 (but) | in addition; but; thus; and |
| | Attitude markers | 甚至 (even); 更重要的是 (the most important is); ! | unfortunately; I agree |
| Interactional | Boosters | 必须 (must); 一直 (always); 认为 (think) | in fact; definitely |
| | Self-mentions | 我们 (we); 本公司 (our company) | I; we; my; me; our |
| | Engagement markers | 我国 (our country); 详 情请见 (details refer to); ? | consider; note; you can see that |
| | Hedges | 看来 (look like); 大约 (about) | might; perhaps; possible; about |

Meta-discourse has been a research boom in the past three decades, especially with the development of the

Internet and technology and the gradual rise of cross-border e-commerce, business discourse has been increasingly studied, and business discourse is a new type of discourse in meta-discourse research, which mainly involves online communication discourse (Lou, 2014: 105-109), business letters, letters to shareholders (Li, 2017: 8-10) and advertisements (Wang, 2012: 1-7), etc. Although some achievements have been made in research about this area, there are still some problems to be solved, such as the theoretical framework is still not perfect, the study of meta-discourse mainly relies on linguistics, but the definition is very vague, and there are differences in judgment criteria due to individual differences in the specific discourse context. Second, localization research also needs to be strengthened. Domestic research on meta-discourse is still mainly referring to foreign results without incorporating the Chinese language with Chinese characteristics, so promoting the localization of meta-discourse is a key topic for our research.

Data Analysis

There are similarities in some aspects of Chinese and American e-commerce corporate culture, such as the emphasis on innovation, customer service, and employee development. However, there are also huge differences in some aspects, such as the organizational structure, values, and behavioral norms. Based on the knowledge related to the three-level model of organizational culture, organizational structure is naturally understood as the difference at the institutional level, the difference in values can be understood as the difference at the value level, and the difference in behavioral norms can be understood as the difference in underlying values.

The differences in culture are also presented through the expression of meta-discourse. The following will analyze the differences in the three levels of culture statements between Chinese and American e-commerce enterprises with case studies. The comparative study of the meta-discourse of cultural statements in Chinese and American e-commerce enterprises helps us better understand the cultural characteristics of e-commerce enterprises in both countries and provides useful reference and inspiration for the cultural construction and development of enterprises.

A. Organizational structure

First, there are differences in the organizational structures. Chinese e-commerce companies usually adopt a centralized management and vertically integrated organizational structure, emphasizing hierarchical relationships and authoritative decision-making, while U.S. e-commerce companies usually adopt a decentralized management and flat organizational structure, emphasizing autonomous innovation and teamwork. The differences in organizational structure can be directly expressed through the institutions, which are the external features of corporate culture. The institutional level includes the company's laws, slogans, visionary goals, etc. The comparison reveals that there is a difference between the institutional statement meta-discourse of Chinese and American e-commerce companies.

1) Self-Mentions

The first is the difference of self-mentions. Chinese e-commerce companies lack self-mentions when stating their systems, more often directly replacing them with company names and not paying attention to subject-predicate grammar, while American e-commerce companies pay more attention to the consistency of subject-predicate and rarely omit the subject.

Sample 1. “聚美优品创立于 2010 年 3 月，是以美妆为主，涵盖服装、食品等多个品类的综合型电商平台。”(Source: <http://bj.jumei.com/>)

Sample 2. “We at Best Buy work hard every day to enrich the lives of consumers through technology”. (Source: <https://www.bestbuy.com/>)

From the above two examples, we can see that Jumei company will directly use the company name as the main language, while the BestBuy prefers to use words such as “we”, “our” to refer to the company. The application of self-mention language in US e-commerce companies is far more than that in China, the use of self-mention language can shorten the distance with customers, make the words no longer look cold and pull in the distance between customers.

2) Target frame marks

The second is the use of target frame markers. By comparing Alibaba’s and Amazon’s corporate vision studies, I found that Alibaba’s use of target frame markers is less than Amazon’s, and Amazon’s vision is more direct in expressing the service to customers.

Sample 3. As part of the Alibaba Group, our mission is to make it easy to do business anywhere. (Source: <https://www.alibaba.com/>)

Sample 4. Amazon strives to be Earth’s most customer-centric company, Earth’s best employer, and Earth’s safest place to work. (Source: <https://www.amazon.com/>)

These two examples shows that Alibaba’s vision is expressed briefly and superbly, while Amazon expresses the intensity of the mission more forcefully and enhances the degree of tone of the sentence in a prose way.

In addition, in terms of the internal system for employees, Alibaba has a widely known “996 work system”, which means a six-day work week and a 12-hour workday. This work system emphasizes efficiency and dedication, promotes an “innovation culture”, emphasizes long-term vision and self-innovation, and requires employees to constantly forge ahead. Within Amazon, the company’s core values are clearly defined as the “Leadership Principles”. This principle emphasizes the need for leadership and innovation among Amazon employees and team members, and encourages employees to be free to innovate, to take risks, and to experiment through a range of systems and regulations. At the institutional level, Chinese e-commerce companies have a more discursive statement of authority and management, while U.S. companies are more focused on creating a good working atmosphere, perhaps because of this, Amazon was called “Top U.S. company where people want to work in 2023” by Collage.

B. Values

There are also differences in the values of Chinese and American e-commerce companies. Chinese traditional culture focuses on collectivism and family concept, so Chinese e-commerce enterprises focus more on teamwork and entrepreneurship, and the expression of Chinese language is more emotional, not focused on empirical evidence, and more inclined to vague expression. In contrast, American culture focuses on individualism and competition, so American e-commerce companies focus more on individual innovation and market competition, and American language expressions focus more on authenticity, preferring to use data or relevant proof to express.

Attitude markers

The first is the use of attitude markers, which convey the author’s personal emotion and attitude, and their degree of use is related to the objectivity of the discourse. Collecting the cultural corpus of Chinese and American e-commerce companies reveals that both use attitude markers to a small extent, but Chinese e-commerce companies use more attitude words, which also reflects the simplicity and subjectivity of Chinese language, which tends to emphasize the intentional fit of words, while American language is more objective.

Sample 5. We choose the high-quality material for our products. (Source: <https://www.ebay.com/>)

Sample 6. We've made it easier for you to find what you need right at your fingertips. (Source: <https://corporate.walmart.com/>)

Sample 7. Please contact us before leaving neutral or negative feedback. (Source: <https://www.alibaba.com/>)

Sample 8. 华为加入 400 多个标准组织、产业联盟和开源社区，积极参与和支持主流标准的制定，推动产业良性发展。(Source: <https://www.huawei.com/cn/>)

The above three examples show that Chinese e-commerce companies express their emotions more intensely and express their feelings more intuitively, with Huawei's introduction being the most obvious, with verbs such as “积极参与”(actively involved), “支持”(support), “推动”(promote) playing a role in strengthening the tone. This shows that Chinese companies are more subjective than American e-commerce companies in stating their culture, while American companies are more objective and appear more rational.

2) Evidence markers

The second is the use of evidence markers, evidence markers can strengthen the authority of the text, make people more convinced, highlight the objectivity of the statement, Chinese and American e-commerce companies in listing the achievements, will cite some evidence to confirm, the difference is that Chinese companies prefer to use human evidence or cite scripture, while American companies tend to use data, direct and clear, so that customers can understand at a glance.

Sample 9. That is, the extent to which the statistics of our observations differ, on average, from the true statistics of the intervention—by 80%. (Source: <https://www.amazon.com/>)

Sample 10. 国际知名零售咨询公司凯度零售咨询 (Kantar Retail) 发布《2016 年中国快消品电商力量研究》，报告认为，唯品会成为未来三年最具影响力的三大电商之一。(Source: <https://www.vip.com/>)

The statistics in Amazon are accurate and intuitive with the figure of “80%”, while Vipshop quotes authoritative reports to confirm that both have their advantages and disadvantages. Expressing directly with data will let readers intuitively feel the content conveyed by the company, while quoting reports and experts will also give the text a certain authority.

3) Statement of values

Finally, Chinese and American e-commerce companies have different strategies for stating their values. Chinese companies prefer to use punctuation to connect keywords, while American companies prefer to connect with transition markers, which are more easily understood by readers.

Sample 11. “Trust and security, contribution and participation, truth-seeking and pragmatism, personalized service, and diversity and inclusion”. (Source: <https://www.amazon.com/>)

Sample 12. 客户为先、诚信、协作、感恩、拼搏、担当。(Source: <https://www.jd.com/>)

The above two examples clearly show the difference in the use of meta-discourse between Chinese and American e-commerce companies in stating their values, Amazon uses “and” as a connection when stating their value culture, while Jingdong directly separates them with an apostrophe.

C. Behavioral norms

The behavioral norms are the expression of potential values. The potential values of enterprises are not easily

perceived, hidden deep in the corporate culture, and expressed through interpersonal relationships, daily behavior and other levels, which is a process of internalization in the heart and externalization in action. Chinese e-commerce companies focus more on long-term and stable development and therefore pay more attention to compliance and social responsibility, while U.S. e-commerce companies focus more on market laws and efficiency, and therefore prefer to adopt flexible business models and strategies. The potential value of a company is communicated to consumers through language and behavior. In the process of communicating to customers, language plays a big role and has an intuitive impact on customers, and through language, customers are able to have an intuitive impression of the company.

1) Engagement markers

The engagement marker is to approach customers, retain them and make a good impression on them, so the language needs to be expressed in a way that highlights the importance of the customer. Collating the meta-discourse of e-commerce companies in China and the US, it is found that US companies use more engagement markers, like *you*, *your* and other references to customers, and modal verbs such as *should*, *could*, *must*, etc., which have a leading role in involving customers in the discourse, eliminating their doubts and leading them to have good emotions towards the company (Li, 2020: 57). Chinese companies, on the other hand, rarely use them, and instead refer directly to them with words such as “客户”, “消费者”, etc.

Sample 13. 国美全面布局智能家电、智能家居等领域，为用户提供更深度的“智慧家庭”整体解决方案。(Source: <https://www.gome.com.cn/>)

Sample 14. To join online, simply select a membership type and add it to your cart. Once you've made your purchase, your new member number(s) will be emailed to you. (Source: www.costco.com.cn)

Sample 15. 普惠，人为先，更开放。坚持本分价值观，站位消费者，不断为满足最广大用户的需求而不懈努力。(Source: <https://www.pinduoduo.com/>)

Sample 16. Wayfair believes everyone should live in a home they love. (Source: <https://www.wayfair.com/>)

In the above four examples, Gomez and Pinduoduo use more words like “客户”(custom) and “消费者”(consumer) to refer to customers, while Costco and Wayfair use “your” and “you” directly to establish contact with customers, and use the modal verb “should” to show a more friendly image. Due to the cultural differences between China and the United States, China believes that pronouns can show more respect for customers, but American customers can feel alienated, so using engagement markers to address customers directly will close the distance with customers, in order to better develop foreign trade, Chinese companies need to improve this point.

2) Hedges

There are also differences in the use of vague language between Chinese and American companies. Fuzzy language, as the name implies, will give the reader a sense of ambiguity. The use of fuzzy language has a great role for companies to make cultural statements with some room for negotiation, which can reduce disagreement, the accuracy and reliability of fuzzy language, usually expressed by words such as probably, maybe. At this level, Chinese e-commerce companies use fuzzy language less frequently than U.S. companies, which leads to a lack of negotiating room and persuasiveness for companies when customers point out problems, and reduces authority and credibility if not handled properly, for example:

Sample 17. Market by Macy's is smaller than an average Macy's store. (Source: <https://www.macys.com/>)

Sample 18. 京东零售集团主要构架于京东商城。(Source: <https://www.jd.com/>)

Sample 19. Whether you are buying new or used, plain or luxurious, commonplace or rare, trendy or one of a kind if it exists in the world, it probably is for sale on eBay. (Source: <https://www.ebay.com/>)

When stating the culture of a company, every part cannot be expressed precisely, otherwise it is easy to cause ambiguity, among which Macy's uses the comparative level of "smaller than" to give the statement room for negotiation, which is rarely used by Chinese companies. On the contrary, when Chinese companies make cultural statements, they reduce the use of ambiguity to reduce ambiguity, which is also caused by the cultural differences between the two countries.

Based on the three-level model of organizational culture, the differences in meta-discourse statements between Chinese and American e-commerce companies at the levels of organizational structure, values and behavioral norms were comparatively studied and found that they have both commonalities and differences. Both uses guided meta-discourse and interactive meta-discourse to a large extent, but in terms of proportion, U.S. companies still use them more frequently than Chinese e-commerce companies. The similarity lies in the fact that both Chinese and American e-commerce companies focus on sociability and identity construction when making corporate culture statements, and strive to convey the idea of customer service and customer first; the difference lies in the fact that Chinese companies' speech expressions are more emotionally charged and Chinese thinking is obvious, while American corporate culture statements are more rigorous and more objective.

Reasons

The differences in the cultural statements of Chinese and American e-commerce companies are caused by a variety of factors, including the history, culture, social system, level of economic development, and market environment of both countries. The following are different aspects of the analysis respectively.

A. Historical and cultural differences

There are differences in cultural traditions and historical development between China and the U.S. This is an important factor in the cultural differences between the two countries' e-commerce companies. Chinese traditional culture focuses on collectivism and family values, so Chinese e-commerce companies focus more on teamwork and entrepreneurship. In addition, Chinese culture focuses on the harmony and integration of human beings and nature, and the value of "benevolence and love", which has a profound impact on the values of Chinese e-commerce companies.

Sample 20. 通过产品创新、数据分析和资源倾斜等, 与中小企业共同成长, 培育、发展更多中国品牌, 为最广大用户提供更多品质、实惠的国货选择。_(Source: <https://www.pinduoduo.com/>)

Sample 21. 立志成为中国跨境电子商务的领头羊, 让每一个消费者都能买到放心、优质、舒心的海外商品。(Source: <https://www.kaola.com/>)

For example, when describing their corporate culture, Pinduoduo and Wangyi Kaola do not separate their companies from the Chinese environment, but rather integrate themselves into it by invoking the words "中小企业"(small and medium-sized enterprises) and "电子商务"(e-commerce), and target the widest range of users, not just customers, reflecting the cohesiveness of Chinese companies as a whole.

The American culture focuses on individualism and competition, so American e-commerce companies pay more attention to personal innovation and market competition, emphasizing individualism, market competition and efficiency orientation, and emphasizing the concept of "winner takes all" in business activities, which has shaped the American e-commerce companies' highly competitive market consciousness and strong goal-oriented culture.

Sample 22. We can bring positive influence to every community run by Wal Mart. (Source: <https://www.walmart.com/>)

In Wal-Mart's culture statement, the dual emphasis on "We" and "Wal Mart" shows that the company's main focus is on its own interests and whether it can bring value to its customers, reflecting a strong sense of market competition.

B. Social system differences

The social systems, laws and regulations, and policy environments in China and the U.S. are also important factors that lead to cultural differences between the two countries' e-commerce enterprises. In China, the government controls and manages enterprises more strictly, and enterprises need to operate and develop under the guidance of the government. This social system has brought common values and a positive sense of social responsibility to Chinese e-commerce companies, such as Alibaba and Jingdong, which have a strong social operation strategy and are committed to launching green products and developing public welfare in order to give back to society and build a good social image.

Sample 23. 以“物爱相连”物资募捐系统、“暖东公益”资金募捐系统等为依托，倡导人人公益。(Source: <https://www.jd.com/>)Jingdong public welfare is part of Jingdong's corporate culture, and putting public welfare in the statement of corporate culture will leave a good corporate image to customers.

In the U.S., on the other hand, the government has relatively less control over enterprises, and enterprises have more independent decision-making power and market freedom. For example, Jeff Bezos' pushing Amazon to the world's No. 1 e-commerce platform is behind the distinct market-driven and customer-first operation philosophy. This difference in political system and legal environment also affects the development model and corporate culture of e-commerce companies in both countries.

C. Differences in economic development levels

The difference in the level of economic development between China and the United States is an important factor in the cultural differences between the two countries' e-commerce companies. Chinese e-commerce companies need to face the shortage of resources and capital in the starting stage, so they focus more on efficiency and scale expansion. American e-commerce companies, on the other hand, are at a mature and developing stage, focusing more on improving service quality and technological innovation. This difference in the level of economic development also affects the management style, corporate culture, and market strategies of e-commerce enterprises in both countries.

Sample 24. 未来，宝尊电商将继续深耕电商服务，拓展价值链上下游和国际化市场，并招募培养更多人才为自身经营做储备。(Source: <https://www.baozun.com/>)

Sample 25. We at Best Buy work hard every day to enrich the lives of consumers through technology, whether they come to us online, visit our stores or invite us into their homes. (Source: <https://www.bestbuy.com/>)“深耕服务”(serious service), “拓展市场”(expand the market), “招募人才”(recruit talents), the procession of these three verb phrases can reveal Baozun's future plans and visions for e-commerce. Since most Chinese cross-border e-commerce companies are still in the growth stage so far, they will focus on describing their goals and plans in their cultural statements. The business model of U.S. e-commerce companies has become mature, so the corporate culture statement highlights more service, quality and other aspects. Best Buy, for example, focuses on “consumers” when describing the future, demonstrating that everything the company does is ultimately for the benefit of its customers.

D. Market environment differences

There are also differences in the market environment between China and the U.S., which is an important factor in the cultural differences between the two countries' e-commerce companies. China's e-commerce market is highly competitive, with a variety of price wars and marketing tactics, so Chinese e-commerce companies focus more on marketing and brand building. While the U.S. e-commerce market is relatively mature and standardized, focusing on product quality and service experience.

Sample 26. 聚美成立于 2010 年，先后在电子商务、影视娱乐、共享经济等诸多创新赛道持续发力，孵化出聚美影视、街电等领先企业。(Source: <http://bj.jumei.com/>)

Sample 27. We care about our valued customers, and will always try to help you. (Source: <https://www.ebay.com/>)

This is particularly prominent in the corporate culture of Jumei Youpin, which is committed to building its brand image in various fields, and therefore involves a number of fields other than e-commerce in its cultural statement, such as “电子商务”(e-commerce), “影视娱乐”(film and television entertainment), “共享经济”(share economy), etc. This is also a marketing strategy that reflects the eagerness of Chinese e-commerce companies to develop. The development of e-commerce in the United States has been a long time, the system tends to mature, the focus of development is how to obtain more customer trust through service, as eBay's cultural statement, “valued, help” and other verbs straightforward expression of customer service.

In conclusion, the differences between Chinese and American e-commerce enterprise culture statements are caused by a variety of factors, both from the history and cultural traditions of the two countries, and also influenced by the development of the enterprises themselves and environmental changes. Therefore, when conducting a comparative study on the cultural statements of Chinese and American e-commerce enterprises, it is necessary to consider a variety of factors and adopt different cultural construction strategies, respecting both local cultural characteristics and absorbing international advanced experiences for continuous innovation and development.

Strategies

The above study found that meta-discourse is very important for shaping corporate culture and is an important means of organizing the discourse of cultural statements. Guided meta-discourse can coherently structure the discourse and make it clear to the reader, while interactive meta-discourse can make the reader immersive and connect with the reader. Swales (2004: 228) has described the role of language, at one extreme. moves ‘can be realized by a clause; at the other, by several sentences. The statement of Chinese and American e-commerce corporate culture has both similarities and differences. In order to better develop foreign trade, the English statement of the corporate culture of Chinese e-commerce needs to be close to the expression habits of Americans so that misunderstandings between the two sides can be reduced and cooperation can be reached. The marketing communication strategy developed by e-commerce companies needs to consider multiple factors to ensure that the information communication achieves the desired effect on the cognitive, psychological, and behavioral levels of consumers and ultimately promotes purchase decisions (Cai, 2022: 6).

A. Enhancing the objectivity of cultural statements

Chinese statements mostly take the way of thinking directly into language, while the process of English into language has an integration process, Chinese is relatively loose while English is relatively strict, which also leads to the statement of Chinese e-commerce corporate culture is more subjective, while American customers prefer objective expressions. Therefore, in the statement of e-commerce corporate culture, we should improve the language rigor, combine the meaning and form, reduce the subjective factors, express the ideas you want to express objectively, so that the American customers intuitively feel the advantages of the enterprise, and more

efficient to facilitate cooperation.

Sample 28. 超 1000 个知识产权，10 个研发专利，发明 PIQ 3.0 技术，兼容苹果安卓，首个将氮化镓技术引入充电产品。(Source: <https://www.anker.com.cn/>)

When introducing the advantages of the company, Anker's language statement is worth learning from, without too many modifiers and tone words, but in a flat way to list the superiority of the company's products, not only let customers quickly understand the advantages of the company, but also make the text seem objective and fair, rich in objective statements, more easily to convince American customers.

B. Use of presentation methods by occasion

Corporate culture is composed of several parts, including values, systems, behaviors, etc., and the different parts cannot be stated in a general way. For example, at the system level, objectivity and fairness are needed, while at the value level, soft words are needed to make customers truly feel the warmth and friendliness of the company, and at the behavior level, a combination of soft and hard words are needed to use enhanced tone and verbal markers. In addition, when describing content or conditions that may cause losses to consumers' own interests, a lighter degree of ambiguous markers can be used to soften the tone. In the information feedback section, a more affable tone of voice organization is needed to express the merchant's service attitude (Liang, 2020: 40).

Sample 29. 在基础平台层，公司已具备全链路数字化能力，并搭建了“小前端+大中台”的敏捷型组织架构。(Source: <https://www.sailvan.com/>)

Sample 30. 满足并超越客户需求，感恩，用心服务，成就客户。(Source: <https://www.sailvan.com/>)

Sample 31. 考核公平，激励无限，奖优汰劣。(Source: <https://www.sailvan.com/>)

The above corpus is taken from the official website of Safeway Times, reflecting the different approaches of the company in stating different cultural areas. Example 28 is the institutional culture of the Safeway era, which used a lot of leading meta-discourse, such as “在”(in), “并”(and), “已经”(have), etc. Example 29 shows the company's values towards its customers, using a lot of interactive meta discourse, such as “满足”(satisfy), “超越”(surpass), “感恩”(gratitude), “服务”(service) and other modifying verbs to establish a good connection with customers. And Example 30 illustrates the employee guidelines of Safeway Times, highlighting the attitude of cultivating employees in a prose way. A good corporate culture statement should be distinguished in each part and use different rhetorical or discourse methods to integrate the discourse, so that the discourse can be cascaded and also make the customers feel the sincerity of the company.

C. Using personal pronouns

As mentioned above, due to thousands of years of authoritarian rule in China, the language has a straightforward attitude and rarely uses accusative language, more often using the third person as the subject, while the United States prefers to use the name of the company or organization as the subject, acknowledging the existence of other voices, which makes customers feel more affinity, and strives to build a friendly, equal and guide identity when communicating the corporate image, by lowering their identity to “communicate” with their users in order to achieve their acceptance and recognition of their values and ideas (Dong, 2018: 209). Of course, this is the result of historical differences between China and the U.S. There is no right or wrong, but to enhance the image of e-commerce companies, more use of self-referential terms is needed in the statement of culture, and personal pronouns can shape the corporate image of humility, prudence, honesty and trustworthiness.

Sample 32. 拼多多拥有一支年轻且极富创造力的团队。(Source: <https://www.pinduoduo.com/>)

Sample 33. 为使我们的合作更愉快，沟通更高效，再次通知提醒..... (Source: <http://www.youkeshu.com/>)

Take Pinduoduo and Tree platform for example, Tree directly refers to itself by “我们”(we), the tone is more modest, in foreign trade, easy to get customer recognition, here “拼多多”(Pinduoduo) if changed to “我们”(we) will pull in the distance with the customer, in line with the U.S. refers to the culture, more favored by American customers.

D. Enhancing the construction of a high-context culture

In the cultural statements of Chinese and American e-commerce companies, it can be seen that the United States tends to express the code of conduct and ethics in clear language, while Chinese corporate culture expressions mostly stay at the material level, which is also a characteristic of Chinese meaningful cooperation.

Sample 34. Pathways: Training and Education to Build a Future. (Source: <https://www.walmart.com/>)

Sample 35. 沃尔玛旨在为同事提供全面而多样的薪酬福利待遇。(Source: <https://www.walmart.cn/>)

The above two examples are both from Wal-Mart platform, the difference is that one is the original platform in the U.S. and the other is the sub-platform in China. When describing the employee guidelines, you can see that Wal-Mart has proposed a code of conduct to nurture employees, “Training” and “Education”. Walmart China, on the other hand, directly motivates its employees with the base of salary and treatment, which reflects more material aspects. Code of conduct or ethics is a textual presentation of the corporate management system, which regulates the daily behavior of employees in a direct dialogue and presents prospects and hopes, and can more intuitively show a united and cohesive corporate culture.

E. Improving the use of verbal markers

Chinese and American companies both like to give examples and arguments in their cultural statements, the difference is that Chinese likes to quote scriptures and emphasize human evidence, rarely specifying the source, while the US likes to speak with a lot of data and experts and likes forensic evidence. Chinese e-commerce companies should strengthen the use of verbal markers, which are the best meta-discourse resources, which are meaningful for enhancing the reliability of the company and gaining the trust of customers.

Sample 36. 在品质生态行动方面，京东采信绿色、有机、节能等自愿性认证，如海洋管理委员会(MSC)认证。(Source: <https://www.jd.com/>)

The use of speech marks points readers to the source of information and makes the text more authoritative and persuasive. For example, when proving its ecological effectiveness, Jingdong directly writes out the MSC certification, which makes the language much more credible and lets customers understand the real situation of the company. Chinese e-commerce companies should strengthen the use of verbal markers when listing the honors their companies have received to create a sincere and credible corporate image.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the background and significance of the study, this research compares the meta-discourse of culture statements of Chinese and American e-commerce companies, explores the differences and reasons for them based on the perspective of the three-level model of organizational culture.

From a comparison of meta-discourse, I found that guided meta-discourse and interactive meta-discourse are used far more frequently in the U.S. than in Chinese companies, and Hyland’s study of meta-discourse in presidential letters provides strong evidence of the relationship between the rhetorical nature of business

discourse and meta-discourse and good corporate image. For example, hedges can create a humble, honest and trustworthy corporate image; transitional markers also have interpersonal functions because they can show politeness; self-mention is used in conjunction with intensified language to give a decisive, confident and optimistic impression, etc. Therefore, in order to reduce the misunderstanding between Chinese and American e-commerce companies and better promote the cooperation reached, Chinese companies should strengthen the use of meta-discourse.

In addition, there are also some differences between Chinese and U.S. e-commerce companies when comparing purely from the perspective of the three-layer model of organizational culture. First, there are differences in the surface culture of e-commerce companies in China and the United States. Surface culture refers to the most intuitive and superficial symbols and expressions of a company. In the e-commerce enterprises in China and the United States, the surface culture of the two companies shows obvious differences. For example, in the publicity advertising of enterprises, Chinese and American enterprises have different ways and means of publicity. Chinese enterprises focus more on showing their strength and scale, while American enterprises focus more on highlighting their brand and image. Second, there are also differences in the mid-level culture between Chinese and American e-commerce companies. Middle-level culture refers to the core values, cultural beliefs and codes of conduct of the enterprise. The differences in the middle-level culture between Chinese and U.S. e-commerce companies are mainly in the attitude toward employees. For example, Chinese companies focus more on employee loyalty and sense of belonging, while American companies focus more on employee autonomy and creativity. Finally, there are also differences in the grassroots culture of e-commerce companies in China and the United States. Grassroots culture refers to the daily behavior and interaction of the enterprise. The differences in grassroots culture between Chinese and U.S. e-commerce companies are mainly in the way the companies are managed and organized.

In conclusion, the use of meta-discourse has a great impact on the shaping of corporate culture. Cross-border e-commerce enterprises, which face the world, must cater to the language habits of most customers and be able to better organize the discourse with meta-discourse. In this way, they can avoid ambiguities and disputes, thus create a good corporate image and eventually lead to transactions.

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