

A Corpus-Based Comparative Study of Chinese and Western Media Image Construction of TCM-Related Personnel

Jiejing Pan¹

¹ School of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine, Guangzhou, China

Correspondence: Jiejing Pan, School of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine, Guangzhou, China. E-mail: panjiejing@gzucm.edu.cn

Received: July 31, 2024

Accepted: August 26, 2024

Online Published: August 27, 2024

doi: 10.5539/elt.v17n9p71

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v17n9p71>

Abstract

This study aims to explore the differences in image of personnel related to traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) between Chinese and Western mainstream media. Employing Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis (CDA) model and TCM Social Image Evaluation Index System, it analyzes the linguistic characteristics of high-frequency words and collocation with corpus methods. The findings reveal Chinese media's emphasis on the management role and Western media's focus on the alternative or marginalized status of TCM-related personnel. Chinese media portray TCM medical personnel as experienced and professionally excellent, while Western media tend to question their reliability, positioning them as supplementary to mainstream medicine. A certified, professional and reliable image of TCM health care personnel is painted by Chinese media, as opposed to the illegal practices among acupuncturists highlighted by Western media. Chinese media present TCM experts as integrated and top-notch professionals, whereas Western media may critique their viewpoints. TCM administrators are characterized by precision and authority in Chinese reports, contrasting with the negative depiction in Western media. Last but not least, Chinese patients are generally trustful to TCM more than their Western counterparts. The above differences are deeply rooted in the ideological stances of the media outlets.

Keywords: corpus, comparative study, media image, TCM-related personnel, high-frequency words, collocation

1. Introduction

In the context of globalization, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), as a treasure of Chinese civilization, is increasingly integrating into the global community. TCM-related personnel act as the direct disseminators, practitioners and recipients of TCM knowledge and culture, and public trust in TCM largely depends on their perception of TCM-related personnel. Consequently, the acceptance of TCM will be directly affected by the image and conduct of TCM-related personnel who play a crucial role in preserving and innovating traditional knowledge, educating the public, promoting TCM values, and harmonizing TCM with modern healthcare. The international image of these individuals, shaped by global mainstream media, thus significantly steers TCM communication worldwide. Therefore, this study utilizing corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis (CDA), particularly Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, along with TCM Social Image Evaluation Index System, aims to compare and analyze the image construction of TCM-related personnel in mainstream media from both China and the West. It seeks to uncover linguistic differences and ideological factors that contribute to these portrayals, providing a more nuanced perspective on the media image of TCM-related personnel.

To be specific, this study attempts to achieve the following three objectives. First, to compare the linguistic representations of Chinese and Western mainstream media reports on TCM-related personnel in recent years, focusing on the use of high-frequency words and collocation. Second, to compare the images of TCM-related personnel in Chinese and Western reports. Third, to make clear the current state of global perception facing TCM-related personnel, and explore the ideological drivers behind the divergent images and the implications for Chinese media, practitioners and government. Based on the above objectives, three research questions are raised.

(1) What are the linguistic characteristics of Chinese and Western media reports on TCM-related personnel in recent years in terms of high-frequency words and evaluative collocates?

(2) What overseas media images of TCM-related personnel have been constructed in Chinese and Western reports through the above linguistic characteristics?

(3) What are the ideological factors behind the different images? And what are the implications for Chinese media, practitioners and government?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Research on TCM News Reports

As a revered cultural emblem, TCM has consistently drawn media attention. In recent years, its burgeoning global influence has fostered diverse reporting trends. Research on TCM news reports typically concentrates on three aspects.

First, comparative studies of TCM news reports between Chinese and Western media have been conducted. For instance, Zhou et al. (2016) analyzed TCM reports from *People's Daily* Online and *The Guardian* from 2005 to 2014. The findings revealed divergent thematic emphases, with *People's Daily* highlighting TCM, acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine, in contrast to *The Guardian's* focus on acupuncture and herbal medicine, with less coverage of moxibustion and massage.

Second, research has examined the analytical and communicative strategies of international mainstream media regarding TCM. Chen (2021) investigated 1,024 reports on TCM from *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal* between 2016 and 2020, concluding that a multi-faceted narrative enhances TCM's communication effectiveness in the United States. Sun et al. (2023) analyzed TCM content in Singapore's English and Chinese online news, noting a predominance of positive sentiment, albeit with some English reports exhibiting lower relevance to TCM.

Third, CDA has been applied to analyze TCM reports of Western and Chinese media. Wang (2016) studied Western media discourse on TCM using WORDSMITH 6.0, exploring the focus of attention, development status and underlying ideologies. It's found that despite generally objective reporting, cultural differences and sensitivity to herbal toxicity led Western nations to stress research, testing and practitioner training, which marginalized TCM.

2.2 Research on TCM Media Image

TCM media image refers to the portrayal of TCM in news reporting. Scholars have recently explored both the domestic media image of TCM and its image during the COVID-19 epidemic.

In terms of domestic portrayal, Cui (2021) conducted a content analysis of 27 major mainland Chinese newspapers from 2000 to 2020, revealing contradictory TCM media images, which oscillated between scientificity and professionalism, as well as pseudoscience and overpromotion. Zhu (2022) analyzed English TCM news reports on *China Daily's* website from 2018 to 2021, acknowledging the positive impact on TCM's global recognition, cultural manifestation and international image, but also identifying challenges, such as a single communication mode, a lack of audience awareness and talent gaps.

During the epidemic, there appeared studies contributing to an understanding of TCM media image construction and evolution in domestic and international contexts. Zhai (2021) examined the change of TCM image in *People's Daily*, noting a shift from honoring TCM masters to the frontline efforts of TCM practitioners. Ge & Tian (2022) analyzed *China Daily's* English reports on TCM during the pandemic, which found TCM an effective tool and a supportive ally in aiding other countries in fighting the epidemic.

2.3 Critique

Despite these contributions, research on TCM news reports and its media image remains underexplored, with only a small number of dissertations from a communication perspective. Current literature predominantly examines the overall image of TCM in Western media, neglecting a detailed examination of specific groups of TCM-related personnel. There is a notable absence of systematic comparison between Chinese and Western news reports, which creates a research gap for this study. Therefore, this study addresses this void by employing corpus methods to compare the images of TCM-related personnel constructed by Chinese and Western media, offering novel insights for TCM's global dissemination.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Fairclough's Three-dimensional Discourse Analysis Model

Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional discourse analysis model emphasizes that discourse analysis should combine micro linguistic features, discourse production and reception processes, and macro socio-cultural contexts to reveal the complex interactions between discourse, power, and ideology (Fairclough, 1992). It's based on the multidimensional nature of discourse, which views discourse as an organic whole of text, discourse

practice and social practice. These three dimensions are interwoven and mutually influential, collectively constituting the meaning construction process of discourse.

Textual dimension focuses on discourse's linguistic features, such as vocabulary, syntax and rhetoric. The choices made by discourse producers in these areas reveal their ideological stances and language strategies, and are critical to uncover the power dynamics and values embedded within the discourse. Discourse practice dimension concerns the lifecycle of discourse, namely, its production, dissemination and reception, serving as the conduit through which discourse fulfills its social function, with different discourse practice processes reflecting varied ideological demands. A thorough analysis should consider the institutional mechanisms to identify the underlying power structures and ideologies.

Social practice dimension examines the interplay between discourse and the broader socio-cultural context. Since discourse practice is not merely a reflection of societal values but also a shaper of social reality, influencing public perceptions and social order, CDA must situate discourse within this wider context to reveal the interactions between discourse, power and ideology.

3.2 TCM Social Image Evaluation Index System

In view of the limitations of existing TCM image studies, which often only present a certain aspect of TCM social image, and the absence of a comprehensive theoretical framework of TCM social image, Yin (2017) developed the TCM Social Image Evaluation Index System, which comprises 6 primary indicators: TCM cultural image, TCM science and technology image, TCM-related personnel image, TCM institution image, TCM product/service image, and TCM international image, along with 29 secondary indicators.

As depicted in Figure 1, TCM-related personnel image involves 7 secondary indicators. First, image of ancient Chinese medicine practitioners, which refers to the overall public perceptions of renowned historical physicians, such as Li Shizhen, Zhang Zhongjing, Hua Tuo, etc. Second, image of Chinese medicine medical service personnel, which pertains to the impression of Chinese medicine clinical staff in both public and private medical institutions and clinics. Third, image of Chinese medicine health care service personnel, which involves perceptions of practitioners providing Chinese medicine health care services in non-medical institutions, such as podiatrists, massagists and gua sha therapists, etc. Fourth, image of Chinese medicine college teachers and students, which refers to the public's view of educators and learners in TCM universities and colleges. Fifth, image of Chinese medicine enterprise personnel, which relates to the image of professionals engaged in the production, research and development, distribution and sales of TCM products. Sixth, image of Chinese medicine administrators, which concerns the overall perceptions of managers in TCM medical institutions, businesses and industry. Last but not least, image of Chinese medicine users/fans, which reflects the overall impression of TCM consumers, patients and enthusiasts.

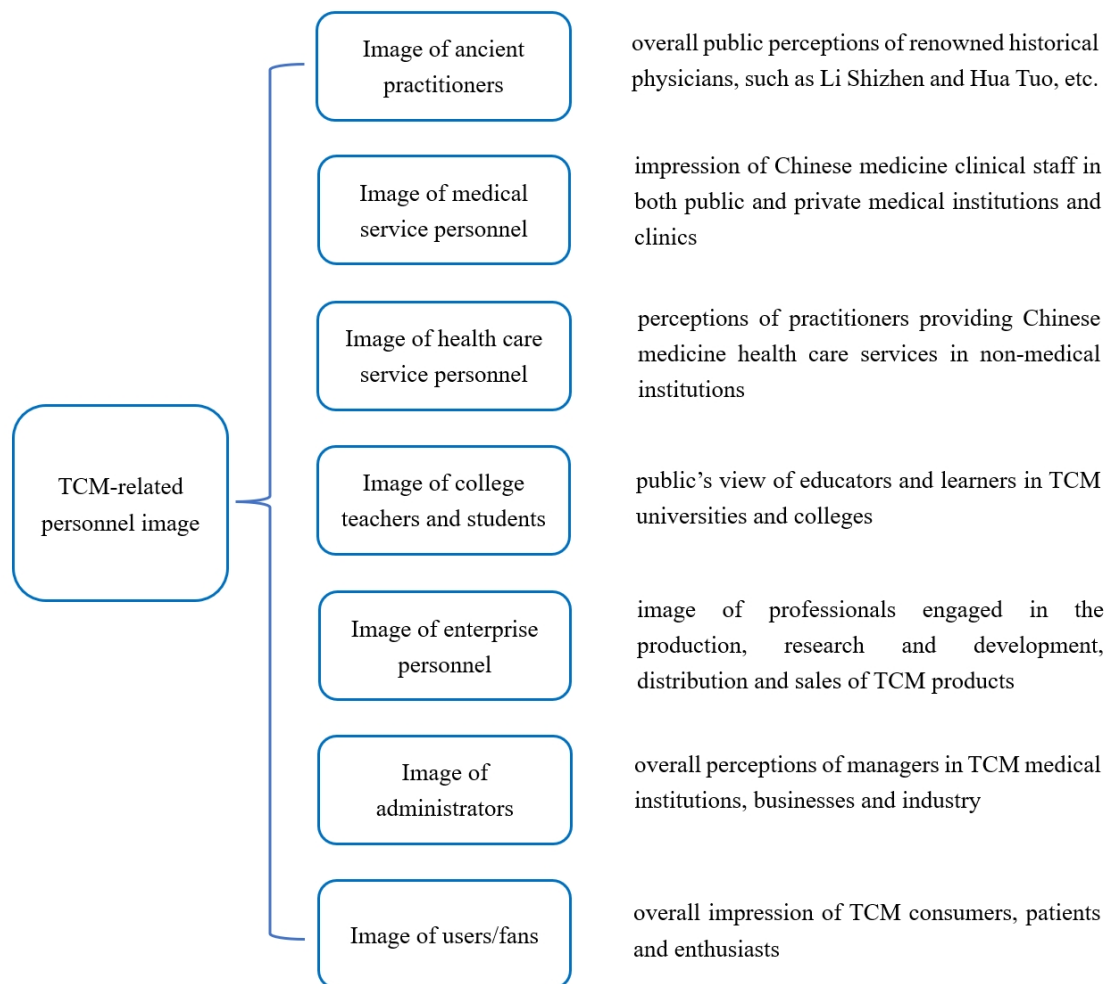


Figure 1. Secondary indicators of TCM-related personnel image

4. Research Design

4.1 Corpus Building

The data for this study were obtained from the Lexis Nexis database, encompassing English-language news reports on TCM from both Chinese and Western media outlets. The selection of media sources was guided by two principles. First, the sources are recognized mainstream within their linguistic spheres, with a broad audience reach and substantial social influence. Second, a consistent timeframe was applied to both Chinese and Western corpora to ensure comparability. The Chinese corpus was derived from the authoritative *China Daily*, while the Western corpus included data mainly from mainstream American and British media, which is justified by two reasons. First, the strong economic and technological prowess, advanced media industry and diverse cultural background of the United States and the United Kingdom confer significant influence in international public opinion and cultural communication, and a leading position in the Western media landscape. Second, as far as the data collected are concerned, the scale and timing of TCM coverage in mainstream American and British media were found to be comparable to those in *China Daily*, fulfilling the necessary criteria for constructing a comparable corpus. Therefore, for the sake of operability, the Western media in this study was narrowed to mainstream media from the United States and the United Kingdom only, including *The New York Times*, *USA Today* and *Associated Press* for the former, and *The Independent*, *The Times* and *The Guardian* for the latter.

“Chinese medicine*”, “TCM*”, “Chinese medicinal*”, “Chinese herb*”, “acupuncture”, “moxibustion”, “gua sha”, “scraping”, “tuina”, “massage” and “cupping” were used as search terms to retrieve relevant news reports from the above media. The data collection spanned from January 1st, 2020, to December 31st, 2023, with a minimum length of 500 words and search term frequency of 5 times.

The data were meticulously cleaned with duplicate texts removed, resulting in a Chinese media corpus containing 124 reports, and a Western media corpus 96 reports. And the “Corpus of Reports on TCM by Chinese Media” and the “Corpus of Reports on TCM by Western Media” (hereinafter referred to as “CRTCM” and “CRTWM”) were built, respectively. The basic information of the two corpora is demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Basic information of CRTCM & CRTWM

Corpus	Media	No. of files	Type	Token
CRTCM	<i>China Daily</i>	124	9522	113942
	<i>The New York Times</i>	21	5358	25208
CRTWM	American <i>USA Today</i>	5	2507	9094
	<i>Associated Press</i>	3	1098	3014
	British <i>The Independent</i>	26	4945	24806
	<i>The times</i>	21	4387	21084
	<i>The Guardian</i>	20	4647	19866
	Subtotal	96	12323	103072

4.2 Research Methods

This study adopts a dual analytical approach – quantitative and qualitative – to explore media’s portrayal of TCM-related personnel.

The quantitative analysis is grounded in corpus linguistics, utilizing software to extract and examine textual elements from media corpora. AntConc 4.2.4, a corpus processing tool, is employed to analyze both Chinese and Western media corpora, which is celebrated for its adaptability and ease of use in performing tasks such as vocabulary generation, keyword identification, collocation analysis, and syntactic examination. This facilitates a systematic investigation into lexical choices that are either shared or unique to the two corpora.

Conversely, the qualitative analysis is conducted through CDA to unravel the social and ideological motivations behind observed language patterns. This method transcends surface-level linguistic variations, seeking to understand the underlying causes for these disparities. Specifically, by examining the prevalence of high-frequency words and evaluative collocates, this study intends to reveal the ideologies that influence media depictions of TCM-related personnel.

The integration of corpus linguistics with CDA is essential for grasping the multifaceted nature of TCM’s representation in media and its implications for global healthcare dialogues. This comprehensive approach offers a holistic examination of how media construct the image of TCM-related personnel, which not only uncovers the ideological drivers at play but also provides profound insights into the cultural and international dimensions of TCM’s worldwide outreach and communication endeavors.

5. Findings and Discussions

5.1 Linguistic Characteristics of CRTCM & CRTWM

5.1.1 Linguistic Characteristics in High-frequency Words

The strategic repetition of certain content words in a text has the power to evoke specific images of the subject matter in the minds of readers or audiences. Consequently, their attitude towards the speaker or the subject would be inherently affected by high-frequency words (Hu & Tian, 2018). For the quantitative analysis, the frequency of lexical items was examined using AntConc 4.2.4, generating the high-frequency wordlists in CRTCM and CRTWM. Table 2 below displays the high-frequency words concerning TCM-related personnel in the two corpora.

Table 2. High-frequency words concerning TCM-related personnel

Secondary Indicator	CRTCM			Secondary Indicator	CRTWM			
	Rank	Type	Freq.		Rank	Type	Freq.	
TCM medical personnel image	1	doctors	124	Image of medical service personnel	1	Dr.	148	
	2	practitioners	72		2	doctors	54	
	3	doctor	71		3	doctor	31	
	4	practitioner	14		4	practitioners	26	
TCM health care personnel image	1	acupuncturist	12		5	practitioner	13	
TCM enterprise personnel image	1	team	128	Image of health care service personnel	6	physician	12	
	2	experts	106		1	therapist	45	
	3	expert	52		2	therapists	40	
	4	teams	41		3	dermatologist	15	
	5	professionals	36		4	physiotherapist	13	
TCM administrators' image	1	Zhang	150	Image of enterprise personnel administrators	5	acupuncturist	11	
	2	director	63		1	experts	46	
	3	Liu	56		2	researchers	37	
	4	authorities	48		3	professor	24	
	5	Li	44		4	expert	17	
	6	Wang	43		1	authorities	32	
	7	Xu	31		1	patients	104	
	8	Boli	29		Image of users/fans	2	patient	29
	9	Yu	28			3	clients	21
	10	Guo	25			4	babies	19
	11	Chen	25					
	12	Tong	23					
	13	Yang	22					
	14	Huang	20					
TCM users/fans image	1	patients	467	/				
	2	patient	83					
	3	consumers	28					
	4	foreigners	13					

5.1.2 Linguistic Characteristics in Collocation

Word collocation studies the typical co-occurring behavior of lexical items, and the results of collocation extraction are defined by the span length. Jones & Sinclair (1974) conducted foundational research that demonstrated the distribution of collocates within a span of -4 to +4 is significantly influenced by grammatical structures. Beyond this range, the node word's influence on its surrounding context diminishes. Moreover, MI (Mutual Information) value, derived from information theory, serves as a metric for quantifying the strength of collocation between a node word and its collocates, and a higher MI value indicates a stronger collocational bond (Hunston, 2002). In this study, a span length of four words to the left and right of the search term was adopted, with MI value as the primary measure of collocation strength.

First, the high-frequency words that overlap in the two corpora were screened out. Then, for each secondary indicator of TCM-related personnel image, one representative high-frequency word was selected as the search term. Based on the ranking in both corpora, “doctors” was selected for “medical personnel image” category, “acupuncturist” for “health care personnel image” category, “experts” for “enterprise personnel image” category, “authorities” for “administrators’ image” category and “patients” for “users/fans” category. After all the collocates of each search term were extracted, only the evaluative adjectives and adverbs with a co-occurrence frequency higher than 2 were retained. The top 5 adjective and adverb collocates of “doctors” in CRTCM and CRTWM are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The top 5 adjective and adverb collocates of “doctors”

Search term	Rank	Freq.	CRTCM		Freq.	CRTWM	
			MI	Collocate		MI	Collocate
doctors	1	2	5.857	seasoned	2	5.091	trained
	2	5	5.857	famous	3	4.529	Western
	3	2	4.687	rapidly	2	2.489	medical
	4	3	4.12	experienced	3	2.074	traditional
	5	2	3.465	best	5	1.769	Chinese

The top 5 adjective and adverb collocates of “acupuncturist” in CRTCM and CRTWM are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The top 5 adjective and adverb collocates of “acupuncturist”

Search term	Rank	Freq.	CRTCM		Freq.	CRTWM	
			MI	Collocate		MI	Collocate
acupuncturist	1	3	8.628	licensed	3	8.846	unlicensed
	2	2	6.406	private	3	8.676	charged
	3	2	5.628	master	3	7.676	licensed
	4	2	5.569	professional	2	4.948	never
	5	2	0.263	Chinese	2	3.935	Chinese

The top 5 adjective and adverb collocates of “experts” in CRTCM and CRTWM are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. The top 5 adjective and adverb collocates of “experts”

Search term	Rank	Freq.	CRTCM		Freq.	CRTWM	
			MI	Collocate		MI	Collocate
experts	1	4	6.091	consisting	2	2.388	TCM
	2	3	4.152	senior	4	2.284	some
	3	4	3.363	top	3	2.13	all
	4	13	1.98	medical	2	0.835	more
	5	5	0.719	traditional	2	0.679	Chinese

The top 5 adjective and adverb collocates of “authorities” in CRTCM and CRTWM are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. The top 5 adjective and adverb collocates of “authorities”

Search term	Rank	Freq.	CRTCM		Freq.	CRTWM	
			MI	Collocate		MI	Collocate
authorities	1	2	7.643	pinpointed	2	4.846	Xinjiang’s
	2	3	5.421	relevant	2	3.981	Wuhan’s
	3	4	4.836	provincial	2	3.609	Beijing’s
	4	6	3.943	central	4	2.202	Chinese
	5	6	3.791	local	2	1.636	local

The top 5 adjective and adverb collocates of “patients” in CRTCM and CRTWM are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. The top 5 adjective and adverb collocates of “patients”

Search term	Rank	Freq.	CRTCM		Freq.	CRTWM	
			MI	Collocate		MI	Collocate
patients	1	4	4.613	seriously	3	5.96	advanced
	2	7	4.158	suspected	3	4.96	critical
	3	4	3.935	waiting	3	4.737	fever
	4	10	3.734	recovered	3	4.638	treated
	5	22	3.537	mild	6	3.006	chronic

5.2 Construction of TCM-Related Personnel Image

5.2.1 High-frequency Word Analysis

For a clearer picture of the distributions of high-frequency words concerning TCM-related personnel in CRTCM and CRTWM, the proportions of each personnel type are calculated and displayed in Figure 2 below.

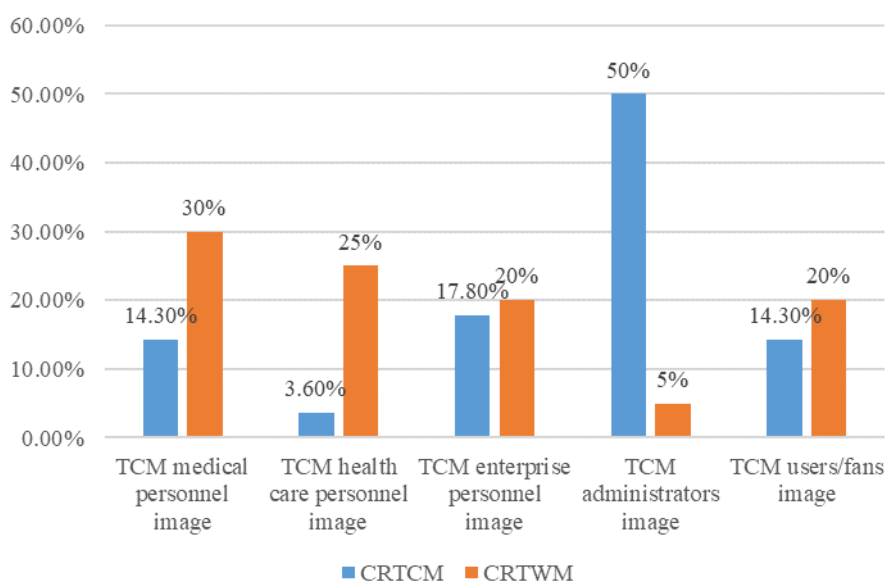


Figure 2. Distribution of high-frequency words concerning TCM-related personnel

Figure 2 illustrates the largest distribution gap in high-frequency words related to TCM administrators and health care personnel in CRTCM and CRTWM. In CRTCM, high-frequency words related to TCM administrators dominate, constituting a significant 50%, contrasting sharply with the minimal 5% in CRTWM. Conversely, high-frequency words concerning TCM health care personnel are least prevalent in CRTCM, at 3.6%, while they account for a substantial 25% in CRTWM, closely trailing the 30% attributed to TCM medical personnel, which is the most frequent category. The distribution differences across other personnel categories are notably less significant.

To be specific, in both Chinese and Western media, the high-frequency words concerning TCM-related personnel exhibit a high level of diversity, professionalism and academic nature, showing TCM-related personnel’s important roles in clinical practice, academic research and education. In CRTCM, there appear a large number of specific surnames such as “Zhang”, “Liu”, “Li” and “Wang”, etc. which are attributed to citations from administrators of TCM institutions at all levels. This indicates an emphasis of Chinese media on their management roles. In addition, words like “team”, “teams” and “foreigners” reveal the importance of teamwork among TCM practitioners and the internationalization of TCM consumers. In CRTWM, the significantly higher frequencies of “therapists”, “physiotherapist” and “acupuncturist” etc. suggest an alternative or marginalized role of TCM health care personnel to mainstream medicine. In TCM users/fans category, “babies” stands out, indicating specific groups-targeted TCM services in Western countries. Besides, the terms “researchers” and “professor” indicate an emphasis on scientific research and academic contributions of TCM practitioners.

5.2.2 Collocation Analysis

(1) Analysis of Collocates of “doctors”

According to the top 5 adjective and adverb collocates of “doctors” in CRTCM and CRTWM, both Chinese and Western media value the professional skills of doctors. In CRTCM, the reputation and fame, experience along with professional skills of doctors seem to be more important. In general, these terms construct an image of doctors that is experienced, professionally excellent, and quick to respond, emphasizing the professional skills and reputation of TCM medical personnel, as shown in Example (1) to (5) below.

- 1) They have experience in helping child patients, and many of the *seasoned* **doctors** took part in COVID-19 pandemic treatment in 2020. (*China Daily*, Jan. 17th, 2022)
- 2) On March 17, a special zone-*Famous* TCM **Doctors**-was established on GCPC. The zone integrated previous services offered on Huatuo Cloud’s international TCM epidemic prevention and control platform, and joined efforts with over 2,500 TCM experts from home and abroad, to provide services to people during the special period. (*China Daily*, Apr. 23th, 2020)
- 3) “Its advantage lies in that TCM **doctors** can *rapidly* put forward a treatment plan based on a number of factors, such as the patient’s clinical symptoms and other outward signs, the geographical and weather patterns. (*China Daily*, Apr. 18th, 2020)
- 4) Huang Feihua, vice-president of Tongde Hospital of Zhejiang Province, which is also a national TCM research institute, said the three preparations, developed by a group of *experienced* **doctors** in Chinese medicine, are made for patients at different stages of disease and are now being used in the treatment of people infected with the novel coronavirus. (*China Daily*, Mar. 24th, 2020)
- 5) Severe cases were treated by the *best* **doctors** using the most advanced equipment, and critical supplies were pooled to save lives at all costs. (*China Daily*, Jun. 8th, 2020)

In contrast, the West emphasizes training, education and professional background of doctors. What’s worth mentioning, however, is that “Western”, “traditional” and “Chinese” indicate that Western media tend to draw comparisons between Chinese and Western doctors, which may suggest a supplementary status and even denial of or attack against TCM doctors. To put simply, the Western image of doctors’ highlights education and training, while also acknowledging the value of traditional medicine. The Western context for describing doctors might focus more on their medical background and professional training. Following Example (6) and (7) provide support for this.

- 6) Since there were not enough *trained* **doctors** to treat China’s masses, he ordered the “complete unification” of healthcare, a synthesis of Chinese and Western medicine: “This ‘One Medicine’ will possess a basis in modern natural sciences, will have absorbed the ancient and the new, the Chinese and foreign.” (*The Times*, Jun. 6th, 2020)
- 7) Most *Western* **doctors** regard traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) as...a hodge-podge of unverified theories, undetectable phenomena and folk wisdom. (*The Times*, Jun. 6th, 2020)

(2) Analysis of Collocates of “acupuncturist”

“licensed” and “Chinese” shared by CRTCM and CRTWM suggest that both Chinese and Western media value the qualifications of acupuncturists, and consider acupuncture a medical practice guided by TCM theories. In CRTCM, “master” and “professional” means that emphasis is put on the experience and professionalism of acupuncturists, while “private” indicates that in China, acupuncture services are usually provided by private clinics or individuals, which renders Chinese acupuncture individualized, time-honored and thus reliable. In short, the collocates of “acupuncturist” in CRTCM construct an image of acupuncturists who are certified, professional, experienced and reliable, as illustrated by Example (8) to (11) below.

- 8) Doctor Jean Menges, a *licensed* **acupuncturist** and herbalist at NY Healing Inc, said: “In Western medicine, it’s about getting a drug (for a particular virus) and lowering the inflammation response. But in Chinese medicine, it’s about what we can do to get rid of the virus and how we can support the body’s ability to do what it needs to do.” (*China Daily*, Jul. 6th, 2020)
- 9) Frank Griffo, a US citizen living in Petaluma, California, with his wife and two children, has been an **acupuncturist** with his own *private* practice since 2005. (*China Daily*, Nov. 1st, 2022)
- 10) Sometime later, I started a new position at a university in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong. Again one of my students told me about a TCM doctor who treated many diseases successfully. This doctor was a *master*

acupuncturist. (*China Daily*, Feb. 20th, 2021)

11) “If the treatment is performed by a licensed **acupuncturist** who has received *professional* training, there will be no side effects,” Su said. (*China Daily*, Sep. 2nd, 2021)

Obviously, Western media pay more attention to the issue of illegal practices of acupuncturists, which shows a negative stereotyping, as shown in Example (12) and (13) below.

12) *Unlicensed Acupuncturist Is Charged* After a Patient’s Lungs Collapse. (*The New York Times*, Sep. 18th, 2023)

13) Lin administrated 17 treatments to Jiang over the next several months even though he is not a *licensed acupuncturist* and has *never* even applied for a New York state license to practice acupuncture, Katz said. (*Associated Press*, Sep. 19th, 2023)

(3) Analysis of Collocates of “experts”

It can be inferred from the adjective and adverb collocates of “experts” in CRTCM and CRTWM that both Chinese and Western media consider TCM experts to be well equipped with traditional Chinese medical knowledge and experience. With “senior” and “top”, CRTCM emphasizes the seniority and outstanding status of TCM experts, while “consisting” may indicate their multidisciplinary and professional background. Generally speaking, these terms portray TCM experts as composed of integrated, experienced, top-notch medical professionals with a profound background in TCM, as illustrated in Example (14) to (16) below.

14) The Hospital Authority has since invited three *senior* Chinese medicine **experts** to the SAR through the Greater Bay Area Healthcare Talents Visiting Programmes, which have successfully trained more than 30 local Chinese medicine practitioners at seven public hospitals. (*China Daily*, Nov. 3rd, 2023)

15) Lam painted an optimistic picture of the city’s pandemic situation, saying that the TCM team, comprising *top experts* from Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province, will guide treatment by Hong Kong medical workers. (*China Daily*, Mar. 25th, 2022)

16) For those with serious underlying medical conditions, who accounted for more than 80 percent of all severe cases, case-by-case treatment was prescribed after consultation with a multidisciplinary team *consisting* of **experts** on infection, respiratory diseases, heart and kidney diseases, and intensive care. (*China Daily*, Jun. 8th, 2020)

Similar to the collocates of “doctors”, “Chinese” in CRTWM may indicate that Western media tend to draw comparisons between Chinese and Western experts, which possibly suggests a criticism of the viewpoints of Chinese TCM experts, as illustrated in Example (17) below.

17) Experts from WHO found in their report wildlife farming played a crucial role in introducing the coronavirus to humans. While *Chinese experts* claimed that the report’s findings vindicate Beijing’s decision to ban trade of wild animals for human consumption, the WHO report found wildlife farms are still allowed to legally operate for the purpose of fulfilling demands from traditional Chinese medicine and fur trade. (*The Independent*, May. 31st, 2021)

(4) Analysis of Collocates of “authorities”

In CRTCM, “provincial”, “central” and “local” covering authorities at all levels highlight the organizational structure and operational mechanism of the Chinese government in TCM governance, which reflects a governance model that combines centralized and unified leadership with tiered responsibility. These terms clearly depict a TCM administrators image featuring central authority, local compliance, coordinated unity and efficient operation. In addition, “pinpointed”, though doesn’t modify “authorities” directly, ranks 1st and reflects the government’s precision, authority, scientific nature, professionalism and sense of responsibility in dealing with public health issues. Following Example (18) and (19) can provide further support.

18) Yao Xiaoqing, president of Tianjin Yao Xiaoqing, president of Tianjin Chase Sun Pharmaceutical Co, the producer of the Xuebijing injection, one of the three traditional Chinese medicines *pinpointed* by government **authorities** to treat the coronavirus pneumonias, said it “has undergone 10 years of difficult component-based studies in line with rigorous Western medicine research standards, and convinced Western counterparts by its effects and results”. (*China Daily*, Mar. 8th, 2020)

19) Under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping at its core, China has put in place an efficient system under which the *central authorities* exercise overall command, while *local authorities* and all sectors follow the leadership and instructions of the central authorities, perform their respective duties, and

cooperate with each other. (*China Daily*, Jun. 8th, 2020)

In CRTWM, “Xinjiang’s”, “Wuhan’s”, “Beijing’s” and “local” clearly show a focus on specific regional and local-level institutions, especially the actions of these authorities during the COVID-19 epidemic. Again, though these adjectives don’t modify the node word in a direct manner, “Chinese”, for example, may indicate that Western media tend to be targeted at the Chinese government, depicting its measures negatively, as illustrated in Example (20) below.

20) During his stay in the facility he also witnessed firsthand the ruthlessly utilitarian approach the *Chinese authorities* took to disease prevention. (*The Independent*, Apr. 8th, 2020)

(5) Analysis of Collocates of “patients”

The collocates of “patients” in CRTCM and CRTWM show that both Chinese and Western patients are likely to choose TCM treatment, serious or mild cases. However, in China, TCM covers suspected COVID-19 cases, seriously ill patients and recovering patients, which reflects the trust and reliance on TCM products and treatments, as shown in Example (21) to (23).

21) To treat *seriously* ill **patients**, local governments and hospitals tried every means to acquire and reallocate ECMO equipment. (*China Daily*, Jun. 8th, 2020)

22) In Zhejiang, about 95 percent of the novel coronavirus **patients** and 92% of *suspected* cases received treatment that integrated TCM with Western medicine. (*China Daily*, Mar. 26th, 2020)

23) Yu Yanhong, Party chief and deputy head of the administration, said among more than 50,000 **patients recovered** and discharged from hospitals, the majority of them were treated with traditional Chinese medicine, proving a combined use of TCM and Western medicine was effective. (*China Daily*, Mar. 6th, 2020)

By contrast, in Western countries, only minor illnesses such as fever, chronic diseases and advanced cancers are treated with TCM, while patients with critical conditions mostly seek modern medical treatments, as shown in Example (24) and (25).

24) North Korea’s main Rodong Sinmun newspaper has recently published a slew of articles praising herbal medicine and acupuncture for curing *fever patients* and reducing the aftereffects of COVID-19 illnesses, including abnormal pains, heart and kidney problems, nausea and coughing. (*The Independent*, Jul. 25th, 2022)

25) As a medical student in North Korea, Lee Gwang-jin said he treated his fevers and other minor ailments with traditional herbal medicine. But bad illness could mean trouble because hospitals in his rural hometown lacked the ambulances, beds, even the electricity at times needed to treat *critical* or emergency **patients**. (*The Independent*, Jul. 25th, 2022)

5.3 Ideological Analysis

A comparative analysis reveals a stark contrast in the portrayal of TCM-related personnel by Chinese and Western media outlets, which is indicative of their distinct ideological stances. Chinese media, drawing from a foundation of cultural confidence, emphasize the intrinsic value and tangible successes of TCM, thereby crafting an affirmative image of TCM-related personnel. In contrast, most Western countries, due to the predominance of experimental science-based modern medicine, may lack sufficient understanding of TCM. Consequently, Western media might depict TCM-related personnel with possible stereotyping, contradiction and sometimes skepticism.

This ideological divergence significantly impacts the global perception of TCM. To foster the internationalization of TCM knowledge and culture, it’s imperative to enhance medical and cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world, which would facilitate a broader recognition and appreciation of TCM. Furthermore, optimizing the global dissemination strategy for TCM is crucial. While maintaining cultural confidence, TCM-related personnel shoulder the responsibility of proactively addressing worldwide concerns and constructing a scientific, responsible and inclusive image. This will not only enhance the credibility of TCM on the international stage, but also contribute to its acceptance and integration into global healthcare practices.

6. Conclusion

This study, through a comparison of language use, reveals differences in the portrayal of TCM-related personnel between Chinese and Western mainstream media. In a nutshell, an analysis of high-frequency words reveals an emphasis of Chinese media on the management role of TCM-related personnel, and a focus of Western media on an alternative or marginalized role of TCM health care personnel, as well as scientific research and academic contributions of TCM practitioners. For a visual presentation, the differences in the image of TCM-related

personnel from the perspective of collocation analysis are summarized in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Images of TCM-related personnel from the perspective of collocation analysis

Secondary indicator	CRTCM	CRTWM
TCM medical personnel	experienced, professionally excellent and quick to respond, with professional skills and reputation	a supplementary status and even denial of or attack against TCM medical personnel
TCM health care personnel	certified, professional, individualized and reliable	a negative stereotyping due to illegal practices of acupuncturists
TCM experts	composed of integrated, experienced, top-notch medical professionals with a profound background in TCM	criticisms of the viewpoints of Chinese TCM experts
TCM administrators	precision, authority, scientific nature, professionalism and sense of responsibility	the measures taken by TCM administrators negatively depicted
TCM users/fans	generally trustful to TCM products and treatments	relatively narrow audience scope

This study holds theoretical significance as it provides a comprehensive theoretical perspective and operational framework with Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model and TCM Social Image Evaluation Index System combined. Practically, it highlights the importance of shaping a professionally scientific, administratively responsible, and culturally confident image of TCM-related personnel on the international stage, which contributes to the international promotion of TCM. The findings can be employed to create targeted public relations strategies that address the stereotypes and misconceptions of TCM-related personnel, which could involve crafting narratives that emphasize the scientific basis and cultural significance of TCM. The contrasting images of TCM-related personnel in Chinese and Western media suggest a need for cross-cultural communication initiatives, such as exchange programs, joint research projects and collaborative events, to foster mutual understanding and respect between TCM and Western medicine.

Despite insightful research findings, this study acknowledges several limitations. Firstly, reports were gathered from the year 2020 to 2023, which necessitates broadening the time span in subsequent inquiries. Secondly, the scope of Western media is restricted as it primarily consists of American and British ones. Future research is encouraged to include additional sources from other Western countries, which will contribute to a more holistic and nuanced understanding of the Western perspective.

7. Funding

Supported by the 2021 Youth Project of Guangdong Province's "14th Five-Year Plan" for Philosophy and Social Sciences: Research on the Overseas Media Image and Value of Traditional Chinese Medicine during COVID-19 Epidemic (Grant No. GD21YWY06) and the 2023 Co-constructed Project of Guangzhou's "14th Five-Year Plan" for Philosophy and Social Sciences Development: Research on the Image of Guangzhou Enterprises in Social Responsibility Discourse and its International Communication in the Epidemic Era (Grant No. 2023GZGJ236).

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