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Demon or Angel?

China's discrepant national images
in New York Times and China Daily

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Statement

I, Wang Xiaojie, hereby state that this thesis is my own and original work, apart from the sections where origins are clearly stated. All the materials in this thesis have never been used (partially or wholly) in fulfilling the requirements for any degree or qualification in this or other universities prior to this submission.

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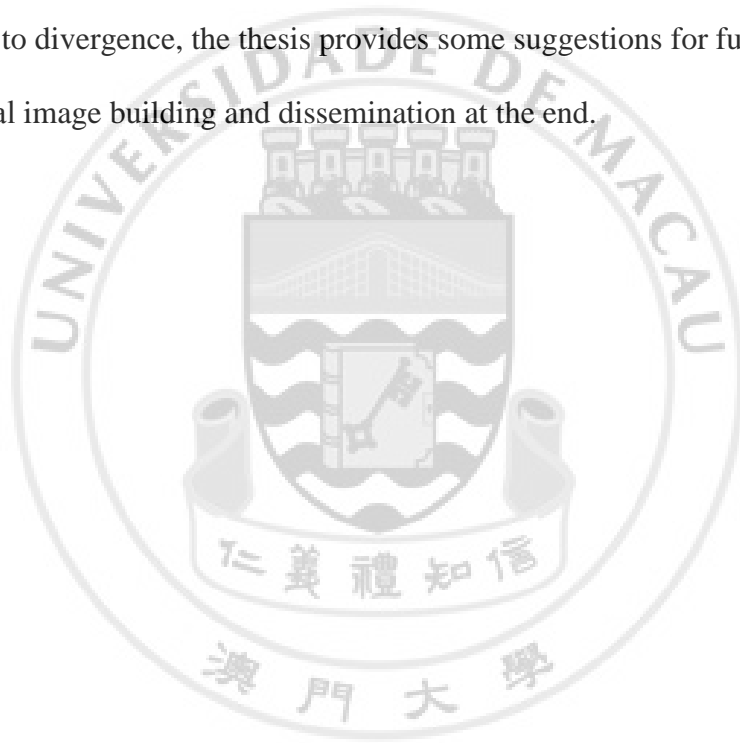
Abstract

We are in an image age, and more and more importance is attached to the building and dissemination of one country's national image. As a country with thousands years of history, culturally mysterious to the English speaking countries, ideologically distinct from main Western states, but meanwhile increasingly powerful and influential, China's national image has become more complicated, and deserves greater concerns.

This thesis intends to study how two countries' mainstream mass media build China's national image; what are the main differences between China's self image built by domestic mass media and its mirror image presented by foreign mass media; what are the discrepancies between the images build by the Chinese media and foreign media in diverse issue domains and the reasons behind such kind of differences, and what are the implications of the findings for China's future national image building and communication strategy. Every single piece of China-related news presented on *New York Times* (NYT) and *China Daily* (CD) during the Beijing Olympic Games and the following month of Xinjiang July 5th incident is the unit of analysis for this study.

The research results show that in both periods, compared with NYT, CD is more likely to present a kind of image of “depoliticization” and “desensitization”, and it always pays more attention to China's images of economy, culture, and sports. On the other hand, the NYT overall depicts China more negatively than CD, especially in terms of soft power which involves domestic politics, legal system and democracy, social condition, and diplomatic relations. With regard to these China's image domains which are most stigmatized by NYT, CD prefers a more neutral and balanced portrayal about China,

rather than just blind positive reporting as we used to think. While NYT delivers more neutral reports about certain areas (like culture, sports, economy, scientific achievement), CD's reporting in same areas tends to be more positive. As a result China's images on NYT and on CD are not as that bi-polarized as before. In fact, they are increasingly becoming similar to each other. Political, economic, ideological, and cultural factors and media's nature and constraints indeed play an important role in leading to these image differences between NYT and CD. On the basis of content analysis and discussion of factors leading to divergence, the thesis provides some suggestions for future strategy of China's national image building and dissemination at the end.



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