A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis on Constructing the Global Image of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Feiyang Qin

Faculty of English Language and Culture, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies

Guangzhou, China

E-mail: frank3189@163.com

Shujun Chen (Corresponding author)

Faculty of English Language and Culture, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies

Guangzhou, China

E-mail: chenshujun1030@foxmail.com

Abstract

The construction of Traditional Chinese Medicine's (TCM) international image relies heavily on the discursive practices in news reporting. This study, through in-depth discourse analysis, uncovers the cultural codes and value logic embedded in media narratives, providing insights into TCM's global communication. Using a corpus-assisted Harmonious Discourse Analysis (HDA) approach, this research applies Appraisal Theory's Attitude subsystem to analyze TCM-related texts from *China Daily*, revealing the constructed cultural image of TCM. Findings indicate that *China Daily*'s coverage highlights the TCM philosophy of "harmony between humans and nature," aligning with HDA's human-centered assumption and principles of conscience, proximity, and constraint. The discourse constructs TCM's multifaceted image as a cultural heritage guardian, scientific practitioner, global health contributor, ecological ethics advocate, and regulator in global systems.

Keywords: TCM image construction, Harmonious discourse analysis, Attitudinal resources, Appraisal theory, Corpus-assisted discourse analysis

1. Introduction

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is a medical system rooted in holistic principles and

syndrome differentiation, characterized by an integrative approach to health and healing. Its distinctive "One Health" perspective not only offers effective treatment strategies but also contributes valuable insights and practical experiences to global medical development.

During the global outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, when the pandemic posed severe challenges worldwide, TCM demonstrated notable therapeutic efficacy in the prevention and treatment of the disease (Duan et al., 2021). Its effectiveness and safety were recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO). In the years that followed, a range of TCM products—most notably Lianhua Qingwen capsules—gained trust in many countries, undergoing clinical trials and, in some cases, being included in provisional treatment guidelines. These developments reflect TCM's growing global visibility and its emergence as a source of Chinese medical wisdom on the international stage.

Unlike conventional Western medicine, TCM is grounded in a philosophy that emphasizes "human-centeredness" and "harmony between humans and nature," focusing on systemic balance and holistic regulation. This alternative paradigm offers a meaningful supplement to modern medical science, with both theoretical and practical significance. However, fundamental differences in worldview and epistemology between Chinese and Western medicine have also led to widespread misunderstanding and prejudice in global public discourse. The proliferation of inaccurate or misleading information about TCM poses significant challenges to its international communication.

Current scholarship on the international dissemination of TCM has largely focused on macro-level strategic frameworks, proposing constructive pathways for its global expansion. For example, Wang (2020), using a SWOT model, identified TCM's core strengths as cultural uniqueness and cost-effectiveness, while acknowledging obstacles such as lack of standardization and cultural discount. He recommended advancing internationalization through policy cooperation (e.g., TCM centers along the Belt and Road) and synergies among government, academia, and industry. Zhang (2017), drawing on Lasswell's 5W model, proposed a communication framework that addresses source, message, channel, audience, and effect, calling for culturally tailored dissemination strategies. Other scholars have approached the issue from the perspective of global health governance, suggesting that TCM could be incorporated into mainstream systems via the WHO's traditional medicine strategy, while also noting the challenges of insufficient scientific evidence and regulatory barriers.

While these studies offer valuable strategic insights, they often remain at a theoretical level and lack micro-level investigation into how language and discourse convey ideology and construct meaning.

Discourse is an ideologically driven form of expression, and TCM discourse serves as a vehicle for communicating the cultural values it embodies, shaping its public image. Harmonious Discourse Analysis (HDA), a discourse-analytical method rooted in ecological linguistics and informed by Confucian and Daoist thought, emphasizes harmony between humans and nature. This framework aligns closely with the core TCM philosophy of holistic balance and the concept of "unity of heaven and humanity." Although HDA emphasizes interpersonal harmony and provides useful tools for evaluating attitudes and behaviors, it

currently lacks a systematic analytical model for examining interpersonal meaning in discourse.

To address this gap, the present study integrates Appraisal Theory into HDA to analyze attitudinal meanings in media texts. By examining a large-scale corpus of TCM-related reports from *China Daily*, the study seeks to explore the following research questions:

1. What international image of TCM is constructed in *China Daily*'s news coverage?

2. How is this image constructed through language and discourse strategies?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Harmonious Discourse Analysis

Harmonious Discourse Analysis (HDA) is a discourse analytical approach developed within the Chinese cultural and linguistic context. It adopts a holistic, selective, and evolutionary perspective to analyze ecological discourse and language systems, with the aim of promoting harmony among people, between humans and other species, between humans and nature, and between language and ecology (Huang, 2018).

According to Huang (2018), HDA draws inspiration from the ecological philosophy embedded in Confucianism and Daoism. It is built upon one central assumption—human-centeredness—and three core principles: conscience, proximity, and constraint. The *human-centered assumption* emphasizes the foundational role of people and humanity's critical place within the broader ecological system. The *principle of conscience* refers to an individual's cognitive capacity, moral will, and emotional orientation. A conscientious individual is expected to demonstrate reverence for nature, a sense of environmental responsibility, empathy for the vulnerable, respect for life, and awe in the face of death. The *principle of proximity* focuses on the degree of closeness in relationships between humans and others, including nature. This closeness can be analyzed across multiple dimensions—spatial-temporal, cognitive, emotional, and socio-structural. It reflects how different cultures and societies understand, value, and engage with living beings, thereby revealing their ethical and value systems. The *principle of constraint* highlights the internal and external factors that regulate individual behavior. These constraints include inner moral consciousness, personal cultivation, and education, as well as external elements such as social norms, national laws, and international regulations.

2.2 Appraisal Theory

Appraisal Theory was introduced in the 1990s by linguist J.R. Martin as an extension of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). It addresses the semantic dimension of interpersonal meaning, which had previously been underrepresented in SFL, and focuses on how language conveys evaluation, emotion, and stance.

The appraisal framework consists of three primary systems: Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation, each with its own subsystems. The *Attitude* system is concerned with how speakers express feelings, make judgments, and appreciate phenomena. It includes three

subsystems: *Affect*: the expression of personal emotions (e.g., happiness, fear, anger); *Judgement*: the evaluation of people's behavior according to social norms (e.g., honest, immoral, competent); *Appreciation*: the evaluation of objects, processes, or events based on aesthetic or value-based criteria (e.g., beautiful, outdated, innovative).

The *Engagement* system explores the source of attitudinal positioning and how speakers align or disalign with alternative viewpoints. And the *Graduation* system involves the scaling or intensity of evaluative language—how strong or weak an attitude is expressed.

Among these, the Attitude system is the focus of this study. It provides a framework for analyzing the evaluative meaning embedded in discourse, especially how language users express their feelings, social judgments, and aesthetic assessments. This system enables the identification of ideological positioning and cultural values encoded in media texts.

2.3 Analytical Framework of the Study

This study adopts a corpus-assisted multidimensional analytical framework for examining news discourse, grounded in the theoretical foundations of Harmonious Discourse Analysis (HDA) and supported by relevant corpus linguistic techniques. The framework, illustrated in Figure 1, consists of four main components: corpus construction, description, interpretation, and evaluation.

Corpus construction involves data collection through web scraping, noise reduction, and manual screening based on the research objectives. *Description* refers to the semantic analysis of the textual data at both macro and micro levels. At the macro level, it identifies key themes and topics within the discourse on TCM; at the micro level, it examines specific linguistic strategies and devices, particularly the evaluative stances encoded by the speaker or writer. *Interpretation* builds upon the descriptive analysis, focusing on how discourse participants utilize these linguistic resources to construct thematic values and representational meanings—thus shaping the mediated image of TCM (Liu, 2023). *Evaluation* draws upon the principles of HDA, integrating the philosophical tenet of "harmony between humans and nature" from traditional Chinese medicine to uncover the ideological underpinnings and value orientations reflected in linguistic choices. This final stage refines and deepens the multidimensional construction of TCM's cultural image (Zhu, 2024).
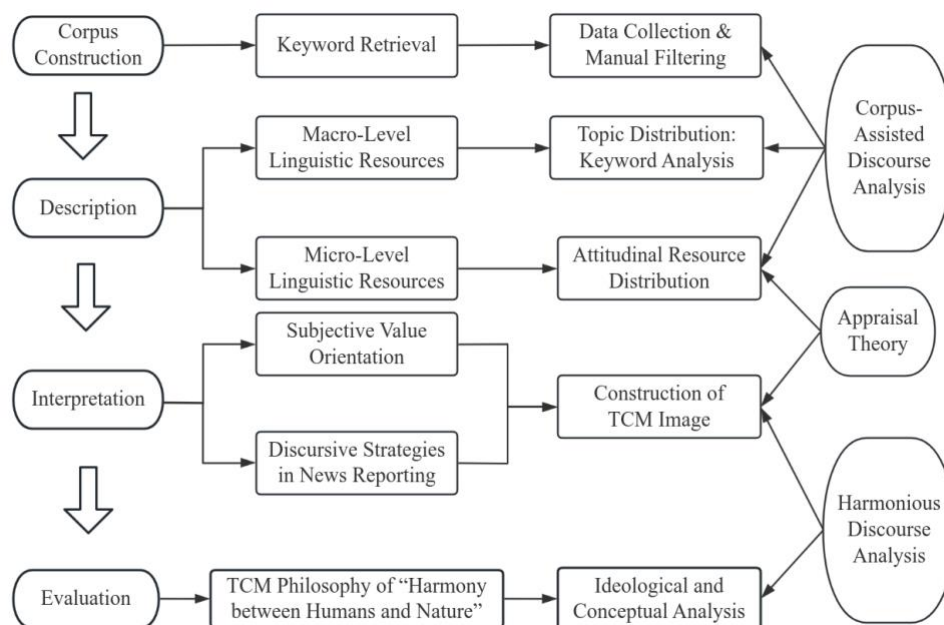
Figure 1. A Corpus-Assisted Multidimensional Analytical Framework for the Construction of TCM's Image in News Discourse

3. Corpus Collection and Research Methods

China Daily serves as a key platform through which China engages with the world and international audiences gain insight into China. It is also a preferred English-language news outlet for domestic English learners and enthusiasts, media professionals, foreign diplomats, representatives of international organizations, multinational executives based in China, and international visitors. As an official external communication medium, *China Daily* plays a vital role in conveying China's voice and narrating China's stories. This study selects TCM-related discourse from *China Daily* as the primary research material.

The study adopts a corpus-assisted discourse analysis approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods. Using Python-based web scraping tools, relevant articles were retrieved from the English-language website of *China Daily* (https://www.chinadaily.com.cn). The keyword search was restricted to specific TCM-related terms, including: "Traditional Chinese Medicine," "Chinese medicine," "Traditional medicine," and its abbreviation "TCM"; as well as associated terms such as "Yin and Yang," "Chinese herbal medicine/Chinese herbs," "Cupping," "Tui Na/Chinese medical massage," "Qi," "Tai Chi," "Acupuncture," and "Moxibustion." The search timeframe was defined as December 1, 2019 to December 1, 2024, taking the onset of COVID-19 as the starting point. After initial retrieval and manual filtering, a total of 287 relevant articles were identified, comprising 144,648 words.

The corpus was analyzed using AntConc, a concordance tool for keyword extraction and

thematic analysis, to reveal the overarching thematic structure of TCM discourse in the media. Based on content relevance, each article was assigned a weighted score. The 70 most relevant articles were then selected to form a smaller core corpus for in-depth analysis.

This refined corpus was subjected to Harmonious Discourse Analysis, combining qualitative interpretation and quantitative evaluation. The qualitative component draws on the Attitude subsystem of Martin's Appraisal Theory, identifying evaluative expressions (words and phrases conveying emotion or judgment) in accordance with English syntactic rules and lexical patterns. The quantitative component employs both AntConc and UAM Corpus Tool, using the Attitude system as the analytical framework. Attitudinal markers in the selected texts were manually annotated, and the software was then used to perform automatic statistical analysis.

4. Findings

4.1 Keyword Analysis

Keywords are terms that appear with statistically significant frequency when a target corpus is compared against a reference corpus. Their extraction provides intuitive insight into the thematic tendencies and linguistic features of the texts under study. Using the Keyword List function in AntConc, this research compared the constructed TCM corpus against the NOW Corpus (2019–2024) as the reference corpus. Functional words such as a, the, of were excluded. Keywords were ranked based on keyness scores, and the top 20 high-frequency keywords were identified, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Top 20 Keywords in TCM-Related Coverage in *China Daily*

Rank	Keyword	Freq	Keyness
1	medicine	1558	+13 874.742
2	Chinese	1840	+13 317.577
3	traditional	1034	+6792.573
4	acupuncture	484	+6197.911
5	China	915	+4000.737
6	treatment	657	+3493.627
7	patients	621	+3060.616
8	medical	534	+2081.627

9	herbal	172	+1712.337
10	province	295	+1459.705
11	moxibustion	100	+1349.132
12	hospital	394	+1335.053
13	updated	266	+1205.520
14	health	562	+1114.887
15	diseases	170	+872.455
16	western	234	+870.475
17	symptoms	190	+832.947
18	Covid	442	+810.452
19	cooperation	143	+805.753
20	epidemic	118	+744.597

These high-frequency keywords reflect a multi-layered narrative structure that constructs a value-laden discourse network. Based on keyword clustering, TCM-related coverage in *China Daily* can be categorized into four thematic types: cultural identity and philosophical systems, clinical treatment and medical practice, public health and international cooperation, and institutional regulation and system evolution (see Table 2).

Cultural-symbolic keywords (e.g., *Chinese*, *traditional*) emphasize TCM's civilizational roots and embed the philosophy of harmony between humans and nature into the deep structure of identity construction. This narrative not only reinforces cultural subjectivity but also creates ethical openings for intercultural dialogue—offering a moral anchor rooted in reverence for nature and life. Practice-based keywords (e.g., *acupuncture*, *patients*) center around therapeutic efficacy. The semantic proximity between words like treatment and symptoms transforms abstract theory into patient-centered health narratives, fostering trust through evidence-based discourse and underscoring a human-centered healing logic. Public-oriented keywords (e.g., *Covid*, *cooperation*) situate TCM within global crisis-response contexts, highlighting its functional role in cross-border health governance. Terms like health and epidemic reflect both its pandemic performance and its negotiation of global norms. Institutional keywords (e.g., *medical*, *updated*, *China*) suggest the ongoing evolution of

governance frameworks. These terms signal China's regulatory presence and commitment to upgrading systems, bridging traditional knowledge with modern scientific validation.

This layered discourse structure integrates cultural continuity with scientific rationality and public accountability, subtly delineating a path for the integration of traditional medicine into modern governance. It exemplifies how linguistic practice negotiates tensions between diverse values and achieves dynamic equilibrium in international communication.

Table 2. Thematic Classification of TCM Discourse in *China Daily*

No.	Type	Examples Keywords
1	Cultural Identity & Philosophical Framework	*Chinese, traditional, herbal, medicine, western*
2	Clinical Treatment & Practical Application	*acupuncture, moxibustion, treatment, patients, symptoms, diseases, hospital*
3	Public Health & International Cooperation	*Covid-19, epidemic, cooperation, province, health*
4	Institutional Regulation & System Evolution	*medical, updated, China*

4.2 Attitudinal Resource Analysis

Drawing on the Attitude subsystem of Appraisal Theory, this study uses UAM Corpus Tool to analyze and annotate attitudinal resources in a selected set of 70 TCM-related news articles (totaling 33,526 words). The distribution of attitudinal resources is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Overall Distribution of Attitudinal Resources

Attitudinal Subsystem	Appreciation	Judgement	Affect
Frequency	640	609	413
Percentage (N=1662)	38.51%	36.64%	24.85%

The overall pattern—*Appreciation > Judgement > Affect*—indicates that journalists predominantly employ appreciative language rather than emotional expressions when reporting on TCM. This helps maintain objectivity, enhance rhetorical credibility, and avoid the distortion that overt emotionality can introduce into news discourse. A closer look reveals that valuation-based resources are most prominent within the Appreciation category (59.85%), with most examples carrying positive connotations (e.g., *support*, *prefer*, *like*). This demonstrates a consistently affirmative portrayal of TCM, suggesting widespread recognition of its natural therapeutic properties and holistic effectiveness both domestically and internationally.

4.2.1 Distribution of Affect Resources

Affect refers to the speaker or writer's emotional responses toward people, events, or phenomena, encompassing both positive and negative emotions. According to White, affect can be realized through verbs, adverbs, adjectives, or nominalized expressions. Martin and White (2005) categorize affect into four dimensions: Un/happiness (e.g., *dislike*, *love*); In/security (e.g., *fear*, *trust*); Dis/satisfaction (e.g., *ennui*, *curiosity*); Dis/inclination (e.g., *tremble*, *demand*). The distribution of these affect dimensions in the TCM corpus is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of Affect Resources in *China Daily*'s TCM Discourse

Affect Category	Subtype	Frequency	Percentage	Total Proportion
In/security	Insecurity	72	17.44%	33.91%
	Security	68	16.47%	
Dis/inclination	Inclination	117	28.33%	29.54%
	Disinclination	5	1.21%	
Dis/satisfaction	Satisfaction	88	21.31%	23.97%
	Dissatisfaction	11	2.66%	
Un/happiness	Happiness	49	11.86%	12.58%
	Unhappiness	3	0.72%	
Total		413	100%	

Among the four dimensions, *In/security* is the most frequently invoked, reflecting the dominant themes in pandemic-related reporting. Notably, *insecurity* expressions slightly outnumber *security* ones, most of which occurred between 2020 and 2022—during the peak of COVID-19. On one hand, this highlights the gravity of the crisis; on the other, it underscores the role of TCM as a reliable crisis-response tool. This pattern reveals TCM's discursive function in establishing a "safety net", reinforcing a "people-centered" governance philosophy, and aligning with HDA's *human-centered assumption*. In particular, security discourse operates on two levels: At the micro level, it emphasizes safe clinical practices and pharmacological regulation. At the macro level, it addresses public health system robustness. Together, they mirror the traditional Chinese medical tenet of "*treating illness before it arises*", while resonating with the systemic requirements of modern health governance—jointly constructing a double-layered safety framework for public health.

The second most frequent category, Dis/inclination, skews strongly toward positive willingness. This reflects both practical and cultural acceptance of TCM: Practically, TCM's advantages—simplicity, accessibility, effectiveness, and affordability—have increased user willingness. Culturally, the Confucian ideal of "*great doctors embody sincerity*" has gained cross-cultural resonance.

This trajectory from technological acceptance to cultural internalization illustrates how TCM contributes uniquely to the construction of a global community of health for all. It also reflects the effectiveness of *China's Healthy China 2030* strategy in enhancing grassroots and international recognition. The examples are demonstrated as follows:

Example 1:

"Traditional medicine is recognized as a formal part of the country's healthcare system and is regulated by the Medicines Control Authority of Zimbabwe, the state body responsible for ensuring that medical treatments used by the public are safe" [affect: +security].

In this example, Zimbabwe formally integrates traditional medicine into its national healthcare system, subject to legal regulation. By institutionalizing safety assurance through modern governance, abstract ethical commitments to the right to life are translated into verifiable pharmaceutical parameters. This affirms the *human-centered principle* of Harmonious Discourse Analysis (HDA): public safety as a foundation of policy legitimacy.

Example 2:

"In the wake of the novel coronavirus outbreak, TCM as an industry appears to have found added significance… more and more people look for immunity-boosting health supplements and safe [affect: +security] *and effective drugs…"*

Here, the discourse blends clinical statistics (e.g., a 90% efficacy rate) with traditional concepts (e.g., *Fuzheng Quxie*, or "supporting vital qi to dispel pathogenic factors") to highlight TCM's human-centered approach to pandemic response. It demonstrates both individual therapeutic efficacy and collective health governance.

Both Zimbabwe and China's frameworks (e.g., medical traceability systems, real-time

clinical data uploads) reflect the dual subject/object role of the human in medical discourse: as both the evaluated subject (patient outcomes) and the regulated object (treatment protocols). This dialectic echoes the HDA principle of *"human-centered constraint"*, illustrating the transformation of traditional medicine into evidence-based practice grounded in ethical and institutional legitimacy.

Example 3:

"Traditional Chinese medicine should also pay attention [affect: +inclination] to inheritance, innovation, and development…"

This shows China's efforts to respond to public concerns about health scams by promoting institutional integration, sustainable resource use, and innovation rooted in tradition. It reflects the ecological ethics embedded in the *conscience principle* of HDA and aligns with the TCM notion of "*taking from nature in accordance with the Way.*"

Examples 4 & 5:

"We will deepen the cooperation [affect: +inclination] *with Western medical treatment…"*
"There is room to incorporate TCM [affect: +inclination] *within Zimbabwe's traditional medicine practices…"*

These examples emphasize a cooperative rather than competitive framing between TCM and Western medicine. They reflect the *proximity principle* by aligning discourses of mutual recognition, with TCM framed as a complementary rather than conflicting medical system.

4.2.2 Distribution of Judgement Resources

The Judgement system evaluates human behavior through a social lens and is divided into two subsystems: social sanction (propriety and veracity) and social esteem (normality, capacity, tenacity) (Martin & White, 2008). Table 5 summarizes their distribution in the TCM news discourse:

Table 5. Distribution of Judgement Resources in *China Daily*

Judgement Category	Subtype	Frequency	Percentage	Total Proportion
social sanction	propriety	274	45.00%	75.87%
	veracity	188	30.87%	
social esteem	capacity	65	10.68%	24.13%
	normality	59	9.69%	
	tenacity	23	3.78%	
Total		609	100%	

The dominance of social sanction, particularly propriety, reflects a governance-centered narrative. For instance, repeated references to the *TCM Law* and terms like *GAP certification* represent efforts to translate traditional ethics into legal standards, reinforcing regulatory legitimacy. This also marks a discursive shift: from earlier moral critiques (e.g., lack of medical ethics) to a technical governance model (e.g., traceability platforms), resonating with HDA's *constraint principle*—regulation through both institutional norms and ethical consciousness.

Example 6:

"Used properly, TCM doesn't have any side effects... TCM redresses the natural imbalance" [judgement: +normality].

This statement links TCM's therapeutic claims with modern safety standards. It positions TCM as a non-toxic, natural remedy, aligning with ethical expectations for health security and echoing the *conscience principle*.

Example 7:

"In January 2017, for example, the TCM Law took effect…" [judgement: +normality].

The implementation of the TCM Law signals the integration of TCM into standardized medical governance, including rules for wild herb harvesting, practitioner licensing, and institutional accountability. This exemplifies constraint through law, converting traditional practices into regulated modern actions.

4.2.3 Appreciation Resources

According to Martin, Appreciation evaluates abstract entities (e.g., policies, practices, technologies) and includes three subsystems: reaction, composition, and valuation. Table 6 shows the breakdown:

Table 6. Distribution of Appreciation Resources in *China Daily*

Appreciation Category	Subtype	Frequency	Percentage	Total proportion
valuation	active	318	49.69%	59.85%
	negative	65	10.16%	
reaction	active	135	21.09%	24.21%
	nagative	20	3.12%	
composition	complex	52	8.13%	15.94%
	balance	50	7.81%	
Total		640	100%	

Valuation resources dominate, and are overwhelmingly positive, indicating a persuasive stance. The language constructs TCM as scientifically credible, globally relevant, and culturally valuable.

Example 8:

"Promising data suggests that TCM is beneficial [appreciation: +valuation] *in reducing the risk of progression…"*

Here, WHO's endorsement functions as an institutional *proximity* anchor. Embedding traditional principles like "*preventive treatment of disease*" within WHO's evidence-based framework creates a value alignment across cultures.

Example 9:

"TCM has played a significant role [appreciation: +valuation]*… proven by a large number of recovered patients…"*

This narrative pairs macroscopic statistical authority (e.g., WHO data) with microscopic personal testimony (e.g., recovered patients). Together, they form a dual-validation discourse, where TCM's holistic philosophy is materialized as tangible therapeutic warmth, transcending cultural boundaries.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Harmonious Discourse in TCM Media Narratives

In contemporary China, "harmony" has become a defining concept in national development, emphasizing coherence and balance across diverse relationships. This notion aligns closely with the holistic regulatory philosophy inherent in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). The construction of a harmonious discourse surrounding TCM's international image is essentially a discursive negotiation between traditional wisdom and modern values, achieved through deliberate linguistic strategies.

The frequent appearance of *security/insecurity* affective resources in TCM coverage reflects the transformation of traditional medical ethics—such as the reverence for human life—into verifiable safety standards. Policy discourse, such as the inclusion of "Three Prescriptions and Three Medicines" in public medical insurance, responds to public health demands and reinforces the human-centered orientation of TCM narratives.

Simultaneously, these narratives strategically reduce "cultural discount" by translating traditional concepts into technical terms, thereby fostering cross-cultural proximity—exemplifying the principle of closeness. Reports linking TCM to wildlife conservation and sustainable harvesting practices further reflect ecological responsibility, elevating classical ideas like "taking from nature with restraint" (*qu zhi you du*) into practical action aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This conversion of cultural symbolism into ecological policy resonates with the principle of conscience in Harmonious Discourse Analysis (HDA).

Moreover, traditional moral values are increasingly codified into legal frameworks, indicating a paradigm shift from moral discipline to institutional regulation—a clear application of the principle of constraint. Therefore, *China Daily*'s TCM discourse reflects a harmonious narrative architecture anchored in the assumption of "people first", structured by the three core principles of conscience, closeness, and constraint, thereby producing a globally adaptive and culturally grounded discourse system.

5.2 The Discursive Construction of TCM's Image

Within the HDA framework, TCM's international image emerges as a multi-dimensional construct, shaped by the interplay of linguistic strategy and value-laden narrative. This image maintains cultural subjectivity while achieving global communicability.

As a guardian of cultural heritage, TCM reinforces its identity through high-frequency terms like traditional and *Yin-Yang*. Practices such as master-apprentice lineage and intangible heritage preservation continue millennia-old traditions. At the same time, concepts like "*harmony between humans and nature*" are recoded into scientific metaphors such as "*energy flow*" and "*ecosystem stability*", preserving cultural integrity while addressing global concerns around biodiversity through practices like sustainable harvesting.

As a practitioner of scientific rationality, TCM's legitimacy is bolstered by WHO-endorsed clinical data and innovations like AI-assisted diagnostics. The high proportion of Appreciation resources (38.51%), especially positive valuation terms such as *support* and *effective*, counters stereotypes of "empiricism," translating TCM's holistic thinking into "body-mind-environment" therapeutic logics aligned with evidence-based medicine. The emphasis on integrative approaches avoids cultural antagonism, reflecting the principle of closeness.

As a contributor to global health, TCM played a critical role in COVID-19 responses by offering low-cost solutions that alleviated medical resource shortages. High-frequency terms like *cooperation* and *epidemic* construct TCM as a risk mitigator, particularly in post-acute care, where it complements biomedical approaches. This aligns with the emerging whole-cycle treatment models in global health systems.

As an advocate of ecological ethics, TCM's branding as a "*green therapy*" highlights its alignment with natural law. Legal instruments such as the TCM Law regulate endangered species via GACP standards, translating classical ethics into modern sustainability norms—an integration of conscience and constraint principles.

As an institutional actor in global governance, TCM's inclusion in Hong Kong's public health system and reference to the EU directive on traditional herbal medicine exemplifies its legal and normative convergence with international frameworks. The high proportion of judgement resources marked by propriety (45%) reinforces both legal and ethical legitimacy.
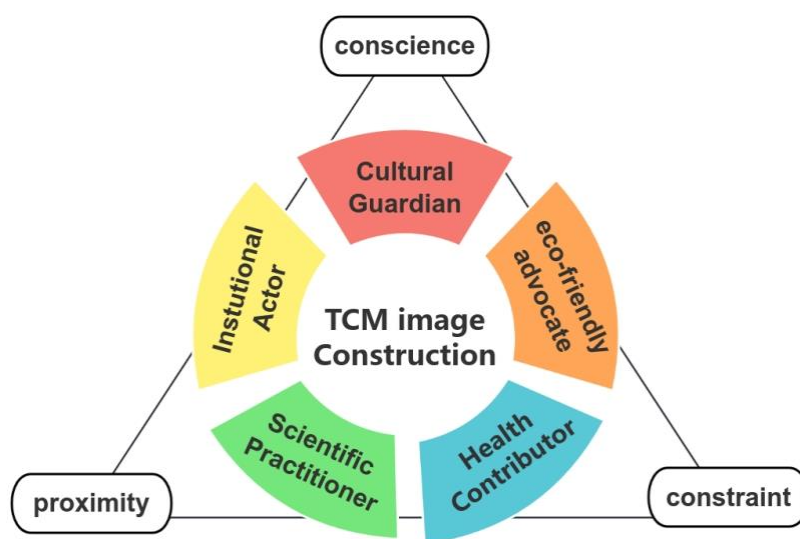
Figure 2. Harmonious Construction of TCM's International Image

These various identity roles do not exist in isolation. Rather, they are interwoven through a discursive matrix shaped by the three principles of HDA—conscience, closeness, and constraint. Through linguistic anchoring, scientific validation, ecological ethics, global responsibility, and regulatory alignment, TCM becomes more than a cultural legacy—it emerges as a vital component of global health governance, offering a "Chinese solution" to pressing planetary challenges.

In conclusion, empirical analysis of *China Daily* demonstrates that TCM's discursive image is not merely a projection of a medical system, but a form of cultural soft power. In the digital era, TCM's global communication must be rooted in language, bridged through science, and grounded in ethics. Only then can the philosophy of "*harmony between humans and nature*" attain universal resonance, contributing Chinese wisdom to the future of global health governance.

Despite the comprehensive corpus-assisted approach adopted in this study, several limitations merit acknowledgment. First, the data source is limited to *China Daily*, which, although representative of official discourse, may not capture the full spectrum of media representations or alternative narratives surrounding Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). The inclusion of other international media sources could offer a more diverse perspective and enable comparative analysis across cultural contexts. Second, while the study integrates Appraisal Theory with Harmonious Discourse Analysis to examine evaluative language, it primarily focuses on attitudinal resources. Future research could incorporate engagement and graduation systems to explore dialogic positioning and intensity modulation, thereby enriching the interpersonal dimension of discourse analysis.

Moreover, this study emphasizes textual analysis without direct audience reception data. Future investigations could adopt a multimodal or reception-based approach to examine how international audiences perceive and respond to TCM discourse. This could provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of discursive strategies and their role in shaping cross-cultural understanding. Lastly, as TCM continues to evolve amid globalization and digital transformation, longitudinal studies tracking changes in its media portrayal over time could offer valuable reflections on the dynamics of cultural image construction in shifting geopolitical contexts.

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