Journal of Management World **2025**, 1: 788-795
DOI: 10.53935/jomw.v2024i4.802

The International Media Image of the China-Europe Railway Express: A Corpus-Based Analysis

Wenlong Song[1*], Bowen Hu[2], Yang Liu[3]

[1,3]Beijing International Studies University, (School of International Relations), Beijing, China; songwenlong@bisu.edu.cn (W.S.) 2396387848@qq.com (Y.L.).
[2]Beijing International Studies University, (School of English Studies) Beijing, China; 2023110264@stu.bisu.edu.cn (B.H.).

Abstract. The China-Europe Railway Express, also known as the China-Europe Freight Train, is a flagship initiative of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Since its inception in 2011, it has linked over 200 cities in China and Europe, establishing itself as a critical logistics channel. This study employs quantitative and qualitative analyses to examine seven years of news reports from China Daily, the Middle East News Agency (MENA), and PR Newswire. Using the LexisNexis news database and AntConc software, the study explores high-frequency keywords, collocations, and clusters within the corpus to identify reporting trends and biases. The findings reveal that Chinese media coverage significantly exceeds that of international outlets, which frequently contextualize the railway within the broader BRI framework, indicating limited global familiarity. Moreover, Chinese media focus on the railway's economic benefits, whereas foreign outlets highlight specific hub cities and development projects.The study recommends that Chinese media adopt a more targeted approach, emphasizing individual routes, specific cargo types, and localized benefits to enhance global understanding and support for both the BRI and the China-Europe Railway Express.

Keywords: Belt and Road Initiative, China-Europe Railway Express, Corpus-based analysis, International image, Media coverage.

1. INTRODUCTION

The China-Europe Railway Express, inaugurated in 2011 with the launch of the Yuxinou Railway (connecting Chongqing, Xinjiang, and Europe), gained official brand recognition in June 2016 (Xia, 2024). Operating within the framework of the BRI, it connects approximately 35 Chinese cities with 34 European counterparts (Hillman, 2018; Liu & Dunford, 2016), complementing traditional transport corridors (Chubarov, 2019). The initiative primarily targets Central Asia through three main corridors: the New Eurasian Land Bridge, the China-Central Asia-West Asia Corridor, and the China-Pakistan Corridor (Bird, 2020).

As a pivotal freight transport project, the China-Europe Railway Express has facilitated intercontinental logistics while showcasing significant advantages in cost, efficiency, and safety compared to air and sea freight. Its operations have fostered macroeconomic development in transit countries, spurred exports, and bolstered the capital goods sector (Guo, 2023). Over time, the railway has developed three primary corridors—west, central, and east—becoming a critical platform for international cooperation and a landmark achievement of the BRI (Chen, 2022). Monthly freight volumes have reached unprecedented levels, marking a 275% year-on-year increase as of July 2024 (Bian, 2024).

Despite these advancements, comprehensive evaluations of the China-Europe Railway Express's influence remain limited. As a material embodiment of the BRI, it carries both economic and symbolic significance. However, its transnational nature has elicited varied levels of media attention, reflecting distinct national perspectives on international logistics and economic collaboration. Examining these differences in media focus offers insights into global perceptions of this critical initiative and informs strategies for enhancing its international image.

This study aims to:1) Assess the extent of media attention on the China-Europe Railway Express across different countries. 2) Analyze the primary themes and focuses of related news reports.

By addressing these questions, this research seeks to enhance understanding of the global reception of the China-Europe Railway Express and provide actionable insights for its international promotion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Literature on the China-Europe Railway Express

Since its launch, the China-Europe Railway Express has drawn increasing scholarly attention across various disciplines, including economics, management, and political science. Recently, research has expanded into journalism, linguistics, and other related fields.

From a geological perspective, scholars have examined the regional competitive advantages, spatial configurations, and operational decisions of the railway, highlighting its critical role in transnational freight networks and its varied impacts on different regions (Chen, 2022). Economic studies further demonstrate that the railway significantly fosters regional development, particularly in China's central and western regions, showcasing its potential to drive high-quality regional economic growth.

In public opinion research, studies explore how the China-Europe Railway Express, as a component of the BRI, elicits complex international reactions. Scholars have examined the imbalanced and politicized narratives in

* Correspondence: songwenlong@bisu.edu.cn

public discourse, identifying challenges in global communication about the railway (Wang, 2023). Research leveraging new media data has forecasted the railway's development trends, emphasizing the influence of public sentiment on its operational environment (Dong, 2023). Discourse analyses have further illuminated the media strategies behind reports on the railway, revealing the differing narrative approaches employed by Chinese and foreign media, which reflect distinct national priorities in their coverage of the project.

Most studies on the railway situate it within the broader context of the BRI, focusing on its strategic value in enhancing local competitiveness and its economic implications for countries along the route (Li et al., 2019; Zou & Feng, 2024). Regarding its future development, scholars such as Benard (2024) argue that the railway's expansion relies heavily on robust China-Europe trade relations and substantial policy and financial support under the BRI. However, challenges such as infrastructure limitations require attention to sustain long-term growth.

2.2. Literature on News Media Discourse

News media discourse has long been a mature academic field, with research employing qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods to investigate reporting trends.

The advent of new media has broadened the scope of media discourse studies, moving beyond traditional print media. Scholars have increasingly analyzed diverse platforms, theories, and methods. For example, Hu (2024) utilized text analysis tools to conduct a harmonious discourse analysis of China Daily's English-language reports on education and sustainable development, offering insights into China's efforts to shape its international image. Similarly, Li (2022) examined German media coverage of TikTok amid U.S. policy controversies, providing a nuanced perspective on international discourse.

Research on BRI-related media reports includes analyses of BBC coverage of China's policies and Russian television narratives surrounding the railway's operational characteristics and development (Apirakvanalee & Zhai, 2023; Jia & Zhu, 2023). Other studies focus on Chinese media strategies, such as CGTN's reporting on Xinjiang and the discourse practices of CCTV's Xinwen Lianbo (Alpermann & Malzer, 2024; Feng, 2013).

Regarding the China-Europe Railway Express specifically, many studies employ critical discourse analyses to explore sentiment biases in BRI-related reporting, particularly in countries along the railway's route, such as Afghanistan and Turkey (Hatef & Luqiu, 2018; Dagtas, 2019).

Methodologically, research extends beyond traditional discourse analyses. For instance, scholars in Kenya have used natural language processing and social media analysis to examine coverage of the railway's related projects (Sauer et al., 2023). Studies now include a wide range of media—from established outlets like China Daily and The New York Times to emerging platforms such as Weibo, TikTok, and Douyin.

Overall, existing literature emphasizes economic and public opinion analyses of the railway but lacks comprehensive studies comparing reporting differences among multiple media outlets. This research aims to address this gap by employing a self-built corpus to analyze linguistic features in reports from various countries, exploring their distinct reporting emphases and proposing strategies for enhancing international communication about the China-Europe Railway Express.

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

3.1. Methods and Tools

This study employs corpus-based methods to analyze news reports related to the China-Europe Railway Express, integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches. For corpus construction, the LexisNexis news database was selected as the primary source, and representative media outlets were chosen to collect relevant texts.

The analysis utilized AntConc (Version 4.2.4) as the main software tool, leveraging its features such as "Keywords," "Collocates," and "Clusters." The "Keywords" function identifies the frequency of words within the corpus, while the "Collocates" feature examines co-occurring terms within a specified range. The "Clusters" function detects sequences of words frequently appearing together with indexed terms. The results derived from these tools were further supplemented with qualitative analyses of the news corpus, combining textual examination with statistical outputs for a comprehensive interpretation.

3.2. Overview of Linguistic Material

The data for this study were sourced from the LexisNexis database using the full English term "China-Europe Railway Express" as the search keyword. The search was configured to "Run search as terms & connectors," and the results were filtered for English-language reports arranged chronologically.

After excluding duplicate and highly similar content, the dataset included 1,746 reports mentioning the China-Europe Railway Express, among which 1,673 were in English. These reports were drawn from over ten print and online media outlets, including China Daily, Asia News Monitor, and others such as the Thai News Service and Impact News Service.Table 1 presents a detailed breakdown of the data, highlighting the distribution of reports across different media outlets.

Table 1: Number of News Reports with the Keyword "China-Europe Railway Express"

Sources of News Reports	Number of Reports	Sources of News Reports	Number of Reports
China Daily (contain European Edition、Hong Kong Edition)	310	TendersInfo - News	52
Thai News Services	130	South China Morning Post	38
Impact News Service	129	WebNews - English	34
Asia News Monitor	125	Silkroute.news (English)	30
People's Daily Online - English	100	PR Newswire	22
States News Service	94	China Government News	18
BBC Monitoring International Reports	83	China Business News	18
Ministry of other countries' Affairs of the People's Republic of China	60	beijing review	16
Global Times (China Edition)	58	Pakistan Observer	12
Middle East News Agency (MENA Report, MENAFN)	55	Others (Number of reports less than 10)	280

Based on the analysis of the data, it is evident that the majority of reports originate from Chinese media outlets. In addition to Chinese publications, newspapers from Thailand, the Middle East, Pakistan, Europe, and the United States have also shown considerable interest in the "China-Europe Railway Express."

China Daily, a national English-language daily newspaper and one of China's six key state-run media outlets, plays a pivotal role in global reporting on China-related issues. It serves as a critical channel for China's external information dissemination and is the most frequently cited and reprinted Chinese media source by international outlets. The Middle East News Agency (MENA), established in 1956 with funding from two major Egyptian dailies and two publishing houses, was nationalized in 1960. With substantial financial and personnel support following nationalization, it rapidly developed into the leading news agency in the Arab world, recognized by UNESCO as the 11th-ranked news agency globally. PR Newswire, founded in New York in 1954, is a global, multilingual news agency and the oldest and largest press release distribution service for corporate and institutional communications. It has pioneered advancements in corporate news dissemination.

These three media outlets represent distinct regions—China, the United States, and the Middle East—enabling an objective comparison of domestic and international reporting on the China-Europe Railway Express. Other outlets, such as BBC Monitoring and Impact News Service, were excluded due to limitations such as reliance on copied or republished content, ambiguous sourcing, insufficient reporting volume, or overly brief articles.

After data screening, it was determined that China Daily published 136 reports comprising 106,313 tokens and 8,001 unique word types. MENA contributed 55 reports with 42,433 tokens and 5,127 types, while PR Newswire accounted for 22 reports containing 16,382 tokens and 3,175 types. The reports span from March 2017 to August 2024, covering a total of 7 years and 6 months.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Analysis of High-Frequency Words in News Media Reports

Using the "Keywords" function in AntConc, the high-frequency terms from news reports across the three selected media outlets (China Daily, MENA, and PR Newswire) were identified. Table 2 below presents the top 20 high-frequency words, excluding function words, for each media outlet.

Table 2: Top 20 High-Frequency Words in News Media Reports.

	China Daily		MENA		PR Newswire		
Rank	**Freq**	**Keyword**	**Freq**	**Keyword**	**Freq**	**Keyword**	**Rank**
1	1932	China	865	China	323	China	1
2	693	Development	378	Railway	104	Central	2
3	688	Countries	255	Development	97	Cooperation	3
4	616	Cooperation	225	Europe	90	Countries	4
5	590	Said	224	International	81	International	5
6	520	Europe	222	Cooperation	76	New	6
7	512	Trade	218	Countries	73	Road	7
8	487	International	196	New	73	Development	8
9	479	Railway	175	Road	70	Chinese	9
10	466	Global	156	Trade	65	Europe	10
11	380	New	134	Transportation	63	Global	11
12	373	Road	127	Express	62	Bri	12
13	338	Ecnomic	135	Trains	56	Logistics	13
14	335	Chinese	123	Belt	55	Xi	14
15	293	Freight	117	Xiamen	53	Aisa	15
16	288	Belt	105	Central	52	Port	16

17	278	Express	103	Other Countries'	50	Belt	17
18	265	Initiative	103	Economic	46	Railway	18
19	251	Investment	101	Laos	44	Kazakhstan	19
20	246	BRI	98	Xi	41	Baise	20

The high-frequency words reveal several key insights into the reporting priorities of the three media outlets. Across all sources, terms such as "China," "Europe," "development," "countries," "cooperation," and "trade" appear frequently. This reflects shared thematic focuses on economic collaboration, trade, and the overarching Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

However, differences in emphasis are evident. Reports from China Daily highlight the global economic value of the China-Europe Railway Express, emphasizing its role in the broader BRI framework without focusing on specific routes or cities. In contrast, MENA's coverage concentrates on the impact of the railway in specific regions, such as its integration with sea-rail intermodal transportation in Xiamen and its connections to countries like Laos. PR Newswire, meanwhile, frequently references specific freight routes, particularly between Kazakhstan and Baise, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, indicating a focus on trade links between Central Asia, ASEAN, and Guangxi.

4.2. Analysis of Collocates

The keyword "cooperation" emerges as a significant term in reports from all three outlets, reflecting the railway's role in fostering international trade and collaboration. Table 3 provides a breakdown of collocates associated with "cooperation," showing the frequency and context of co-occurring words.

Table 3: Frequency Table of Collocates of the Word "Cooperation".

	China Daily		MENA		PR Newswire	
Rank	**Collocate**	**FreqLR**	**Collocate**	**FreqLR**	**Collocate**	**FreqLR**
1	International	88	International	33	Belt	15
2	Road	87	Belt	29	Road	15
3	Belt	64	Win	20	Financial	9
4	Economic	62	Strengthen	15	Economic	8
5	Trade	60	Deepen	12	Areas	7
6	Bri	55	Expand	12	Forum	5
7	Strengthen	23	Forum	11	Benefits	4
8	Mutual	20	Shanghai	10	Mutually	4
9	Platform	18	Mechanism	9	Beneficial	4
10	Agricultural	18	Areas	8	Documents	2

The collocate data reveals varied reporting priorities. Reports in China Daily frequently pair "cooperation" with terms such as "economic," "trade," and "platform," emphasizing the railway's role in fostering interconnected trade networks. MENA highlights the strategic benefits of cooperation, using terms like "deepen," "expand," and "win," and frequently references the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In contrast, PR Newswire's coverage aligns "cooperation" with financial and trade aspects, reflecting the railway's role in advancing economic connectivity within the BRI framework.

4.3. Analysis of Clusters

In the reports analyzed, terms related to investment, such as "investment" itself, are highly frequent, particularly in China Daily. This indicates that China Daily places considerable emphasis on investment aspects related to the China-Europe Railway Express. To further understand the usage context of "investment," a cluster analysis was conducted to examine word combinations appearing two or three units before "investment." Table 4 presents the most frequently occurring clusters.

Table 4: Frequency Table of Word Clusters Including the Word "Investment"

Rank	**Cluster**	**Freq**	**Rank**	**Cluster**	**Freq**
1	Other countries' investment	60	11	Nonfinancial direct investment	6
2	Direct investment	25	12	Two way investment	5
3	Trade and investment	24	13	Global investment	5
4	Infrastructure investment	11	14	Attracting other countries' investment	4
5	Bilateral investment	11	15	Channel other countries' investment	4
6	Chinese investment	11	16	China electricity investment	3
7	Trade investment	8	17	Diversify the investment	3
8	Asian infrastructure investment	8	18	Global other countries' investment	3
9	Total other countries' investment	7	19	Guide other countries' investment	3
10	Agreement on investment	7	20	Incentivize other countries' investment	3

The analysis highlights several recurring patterns. Clusters such as "other countries' investment" appear with

the highest frequency, emphasizing the railway's role in attracting foreign investments. Other common clusters, including "direct investment," "trade and investment," and "infrastructure investment," underscore the economic interconnectedness facilitated by the railway.

Furthermore, clusters like "Asian infrastructure investment" and "agreement on investment" point to specific policy frameworks supporting the railway's operations, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Reports often associate these clusters with China's efforts to foster regional economic integration under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The findings reflect China Daily's focus on the railway's potential to drive economic growth and enhance global investment dynamics. Reports often highlight how the railway facilitates the inflow of non-financial direct investments, supports infrastructure development, and encourages bilateral trade agreements. For example, infrastructure investments are linked to the establishment of logistics hubs, improved trade corridors, and enhanced connectivity in regions along the route.

This emphasis aligns with broader narratives in China Daily that position the railway as a cornerstone of China's strategic ambitions under the BRI. By showcasing the railway's economic contributions and investment potential, the outlet aims to reinforce its role as a facilitator of regional and global trade cooperation.

4.4. Analysis of News Text

The analysis of news texts reveals distinct reporting patterns across China Daily, MENA, and PR Newswire. Each outlet reflects unique perspectives on the China-Europe Railway Express, shaped by regional interests and priorities.

As a leading Chinese English-language newspaper, China Daily emphasizes the China-Europe Railway Express's role in fostering economic growth and global connectivity. Reports often underscore themes of mutual benefit and win-win cooperation, aligning with the broader narrative of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). For example, a report titled "Following a Peaceful Development Path" highlights:

"The trend now is the pursuit of peace, development, cooperation, and win-win results. The old path of colonialism and hegemony leads to a dead end, and those who follow it will pay a heavy price. The path of peaceful development is the right one for the world to follow."

The frequent use of terms such as "cooperation" and "peace" reflects a strategic emphasis on promoting the railway as a symbol of China's peaceful rise and its commitment to global collaboration. Reports highlight the railway's economic contributions, including increased trade volumes and enhanced investment opportunities for countries along the route. However, the focus remains on macro-level narratives, with limited coverage of specific routes, cities, or cargo types.

MENA's reporting primarily focuses on the railway's regional impact, particularly in facilitating trade between China, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. A notable emphasis is placed on the China-Laos Railway, which is frequently mentioned in conjunction with the China-Europe Railway Express. For instance, reports highlight milestones such as the railway's anniversary and its integration with the Thai route, emphasizing its role as a critical logistics channel between China and ASEAN countries. One report states:

"The China-Laos Railway has built a convenient international logistics channel between China and ASEAN."

This perspective reflects MENA's interest in the railway's capacity to drive regional economic integration and enhance trade in agricultural and sideline products. The agency's focus on specific routes and regions contrasts with China Daily's broader thematic approach, providing a more localized view of the railway's benefits.

PR Newswire's reports center on specific freight routes and their contributions to regional trade and economic development. A recurring theme is the "Baise Yihao," a full cold-chain railway service transporting fruits and vegetables from Baise, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, to destinations in ASEAN. Reports highlight the service's role in boosting Baise's economic profile and integrating it into broader regional supply chains. One report notes:

"Baise will actively integrate into the 'Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area—Beibu Gulf Economic Zone—ASEAN' cross-regional and cross-border industrial chain supply chain and build a new pattern of higher-level opening up and cooperation."

This focus reflects PR Newswire's interest in highlighting tangible economic outcomes, such as the development of regional hubs and the expansion of cross-border supply chains. Unlike China Daily and MENA, PR Newswire provides detailed accounts of specific projects and their localized impacts, presenting a nuanced view of the railway's operational dynamics.

The comparative analysis reveals significant differences in reporting focus across the three outlets. China Daily prioritizes macroeconomic narratives, emphasizing the railway's global significance and alignment with China's strategic goals under the BRI. MENA offers a regional perspective, focusing on specific routes and their role in enhancing trade within the Middle East and Southeast Asia. PR Newswire, in contrast, highlights localized impacts, with detailed accounts of specific projects and their contributions to regional economic development.

These distinctions underscore the varied perceptions and priorities associated with the China-Europe Railway Express, reflecting the complex interplay of regional interests and global narratives surrounding this pivotal initiative.

5. DISCUSSION

The analysis of news reports on the China-Europe Railway Express reveals significant disparities in reporting focus and volume between Chinese and foreign media. While Chinese outlets dominate in terms of coverage, international media remain less engaged, often contextualizing the railway within the broader Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) narrative. These variations suggest that the global understanding and recognition of the China-Europe Railway Express are still at an initial stage.

5.1. Causes of Differences in Image Shaping and Reporting Emphases

The differences in reporting focus and the resulting media image of the China-Europe Railway Express can be attributed to the following three factors:

a) The Nature of the China-Europe Railway Express

As a freight railway project, the China-Europe Railway Express primarily facilitates the transportation of goods such as electronics, textiles, and agricultural products. These goods, while essential, are relatively common and less likely to attract widespread media attention. Additionally, the geographical scope of the railway is concentrated in Central Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Europe, limiting its direct relevance to audiences outside these regions.

Moreover, as an integral part of the BRI, the railway is frequently subsumed under broader discussions of the initiative. International media often view the railway as a component of the BRI rather than an independent project, resulting in limited detailed coverage.

b) The International Environment and Public Opinion

The international image of the China-Europe Railway Express is shaped by varying geopolitical perspectives and public opinion. While China, as the initiating country, presents the railway as a symbol of cooperation and mutual benefit, media in some countries along the route perceive it through a more critical lens.

Countries and regions that are skeptical of the BRI tend to extend this skepticism to the railway, shaping their reporting accordingly. This reflects deeper ideological and strategic differences that influence international public opinion about China's role in global infrastructure development.

c) Limitations of China's External Communication

Chinese media often emphasize the macroeconomic benefits of the railway, promoting it as a unified concept without detailed narratives about specific routes, cities, or cargo types. This generalized approach, while effective in presenting an overarching vision, may lead to a lack of clarity among international audiences.

Furthermore, the frequent association of the railway with the BRI in Chinese media can create confusion, as many international readers may struggle to distinguish between the two. The absence of targeted, localized reporting further exacerbates the cognitive barrier, limiting global engagement and understanding.

5.2. Feasible Measures and Countermeasures

Based on the identified causes, the following measures are proposed to enhance the international media image of the China-Europe Railway Express:

a) Expanding the Scope of Publicity and Reporting

Efforts should begin with focused promotion in transit and destination countries, targeting local media and audiences. Highlighting specific routes, products, and tangible benefits can foster a deeper understanding among stakeholders directly impacted by the railway.

Once awareness is established in these regions, promotional efforts can be expanded globally. Emphasizing the railway's role in enhancing economic integration and fostering collaboration among international organizations like ASEAN and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) can further strengthen its global image.

b) Providing Correct Public Opinion Guidance

Chinese media should adopt a balanced narrative that underscores the mutual benefits of the China-Europe Railway Express. This includes emphasizing its role in boosting trade, creating economic opportunities, and fostering peaceful development.

At the same time, efforts should be made to address negative perceptions and counteract misinformation. By actively engaging with critical perspectives and presenting evidence-based responses, Chinese media can mitigate skepticism and foster a more nuanced understanding of the railway's contributions.

c) Developing Targeted Publicity Strategies

Customized communication strategies should be developed for different routes, hub cities, and cargo types. For instance, promotional efforts for the "Baise Yihao" cold-chain service, which transports agricultural products between China and ASEAN, should focus on its specific economic and logistical benefits. Similarly, the "Chang'an" service from Xi'an to Central Asia could highlight its role in facilitating regional trade.

Localized narratives that resonate with the interests and priorities of specific regions can enhance the railway's relevance and appeal, ultimately strengthening its global presence.

6. CONCLUSION

Since its launch, the China-Europe Railway Express has become a significant pillar of the Belt and Road

Initiative (BRI), serving as a vital logistics channel linking China with Europe and other regions along its routes. Demonstrating clear advantages in cost, timeliness, and safety over traditional air and sea freight options, the railway has played an instrumental role in driving regional economic development, facilitating trade, and promoting international cooperation. Despite these contributions, this study reveals that its global media image and international recognition remain uneven and require strategic enhancement.

Through a corpus-based analysis of news reports from China Daily, the Middle East News Agency (MENA), and PR Newswire, this research explores how reporting focus, volume, and narrative orientation vary significantly between Chinese and foreign media. Chinese outlets, particularly China Daily, emphasize the macroeconomic contributions of the railway, portraying it as a cornerstone of China's strategic ambitions under the BRI. These reports highlight its global economic value but often lack the granularity necessary to resonate with international audiences, such as detailed accounts of specific routes, hub cities, or tangible regional benefits. In contrast, foreign media, including MENA and PR Newswire, focus on localized aspects, such as specific freight routes or the direct impact of the railway on regional economies. For example, MENA frequently discusses the China-Laos Railway's role in facilitating trade with ASEAN countries, while PR Newswire emphasizes projects like the "Baise Yihao" cold-chain service and its contributions to agricultural trade in Guangxi.

These differences in reporting are influenced by several factors. First, the nature of the China-Europe Railway Express itself shapes its reception and portrayal. As a freight railway project, it primarily serves regions along its routes and industries tied to logistics, often making it less relevant to broader global audiences. Additionally, its close association with the BRI frequently leads to its inclusion in discussions of China's broader strategic initiatives, overshadowing its independent significance. Second, international public opinion and geopolitical considerations further complicate its media image. The varying perspectives of countries along the route and beyond are influenced by their attitudes toward the BRI, which in turn shape their interpretations of the railway's role and impact. Lastly, China's current communication strategies focus predominantly on the railway's overarching economic benefits, often emphasizing general narratives over localized details. This approach risks creating ambiguity among international audiences, limiting the project's visibility and understanding.

To address these challenges, it is essential to broaden the scope of publicity efforts. The promotion of the railway should begin by targeting transit and destination countries, emphasizing specific routes, cargo types, and the tangible benefits these provide to local communities and economies. Once awareness and recognition are established in these regions, efforts can be expanded globally, highlighting the railway's role in fostering economic integration and international collaboration. Equally important is the need to present accurate and balanced narratives. Chinese media should emphasize the mutual benefits and win-win outcomes of the railway, addressing misconceptions and countering negative portrayals with evidence-based communication. Furthermore, tailored strategies should be developed to cater to diverse regional interests. For instance, the contributions of the "Baise Yihao" service to ASEAN trade or the "Chang'an" freight route to Central Asian connectivity can serve as localized success stories, enhancing the railway's appeal and relevance.

Although this study provides valuable insights into the international media image of the China-Europe Railway Express, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The selection of media outlets and the sample size constrain the breadth of the findings. Future research could include a wider range of media sources and employ advanced quantitative tools to capture a more comprehensive view of media narratives. Additionally, incorporating interdisciplinary perspectives from communication studies, political science, and international relations could enrich the analysis and deepen understanding of the complex interplay between media coverage and public perception.

In conclusion, the China-Europe Railway Express is not only a transformative force in global logistics and trade but also a symbolic achievement under the BRI. By refining its communication strategies and addressing gaps in international narratives, China can strengthen the railway's global image, foster deeper international cooperation, and cement its role as a cornerstone of regional and global connectivity.

Acknowledgements:

This article was funded by the Young Academic Excellence Program 2022 (QNYC22A006) and the Postgraduate research projects ("A corpus-based comparative analysis of news reports on 'China-Europe Railway Express'") of the Beijing International Studies University (BISU).

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