

Have a second look at “Made in China”

The changing Chinese brand image in international newspapers

ABSTRACT

This study uses quantitative content analysis and critical discourse analysis to identify how governmental policies are reflected in international Chinese newspapers. We aim to identify policy-driven changes, especially resulting from the recent 10-year strategic plan “Made in China 2025”. This goal is situated within a broader PhD project that investigates the changing brand image of “Made in China” in major international English-language newspapers in the past twelve years.

RESEARCH QUESTION

To what extent are recent policy changes of the Chinese government reflected in international Chinese newspaper articles concerning the brand “Made in China”?

METHOD

- Identify 52 policy keywords from the 2006, 2011 and 2015 Five-Year Plans and the 10-year “Made in China 2025” Plan documents.
- Count policy keywords in 5304 news articles from 2006-2018 in 8 international Chinese newspapers containing the phrase “Made in China”, which were retrieved from LexisNexis.
- Perform quantitative corpus analysis.
- Perform Critical Discourse Analysis based on quantitative results.

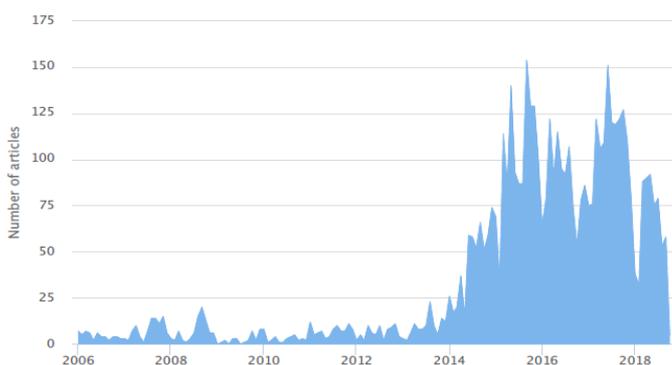
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Referenced documents & Main points	Keywords
Period 1 (Jan 2006 - Dec 2010)	
11th Five-Year Plan To mitigate the deleterious effects on the reputation and image of Chinese products (e.g. toxic paints, food contamination, product recalls) the government instructs industries to enhance the standards of management and production.	<i>product quality, product*, quali*, food safety, reputation*, supervision*, enterprise*, countr*, people, responsibilit*, image*, goods</i>
Period 2 (Jan 2011 - Nov 2014)	
12th Five-Year Plan To build reliable brand identities and transform “Made in China” into <i>created in China</i> with self-dependent (originally Chinese) innovation.	<i>industry*, creat* in China, state council, action plan, plan*, transform*, brand*, intellectual property, government work report, government*, “three step*”, strateg*, international market*, chinese market*, entrepreneur*, innovation*, reform*, high-end, informatization, industrialization, upgrad*, rejuvenation, go* global, standard*, econom*</i>
Period 3 (Dec 2014 - Sept 2018)	
13th Five-Year Plan & Made in China 2025 To emphasize <i>green development</i> and promote a series of plans like <i>Internet plus</i> and <i>Road and Belt</i> to accelerate industrial upgrading and become a <i>manufacturing power</i> .	<i>Innovation-driven, manufactur*, manufactur* power, green*, opening up, revitalization, five-year plan*, belt and road, internet, internet plus, Germany’s Industry 4.0, consum*, demonstration, US/USA/America/American, polic*</i>

(Note: Italics mark keywords; * = Multiple character wildcard)

Medium	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Total number of articles	Total number of words	Mean length per article
China Daily	-	425	3218	3643	3019624	829
South China Morning post	297	199	288	784	583067	744
Global Times (China)	-	35	351	386	288117	752
Xinhua Financial News	-	-	235	235	137220	584
Shenzhen Daily	-	67	165	232	105638	465
The China Post	-	1	10	11	5953	541
ET Net	-	2	7	9	852	170
ETCN	-	4	-	4	2437	609
Total	297	733	4274	5304	4142908	587

Number of articles per month

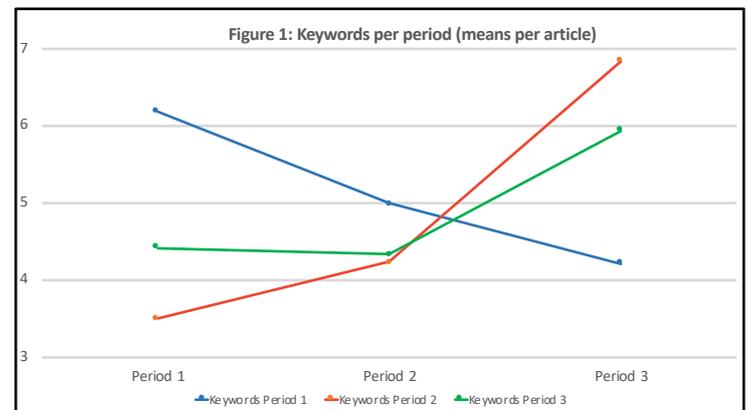


PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

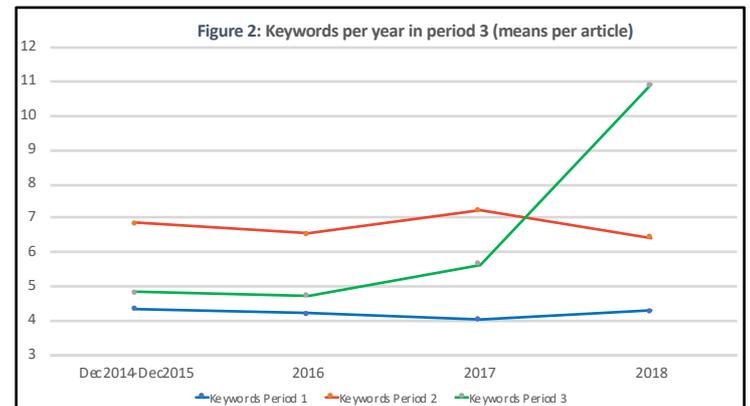
- Alignment:** Most policy keywords from Period 1 and Period 3 were typically used in their respective periods (see Figure 1). Yet, many policy keywords from Period 2 are most frequent in Period 3.

Closer analysis of Period 3 (summarized in Figure 2) shows that keywords like *state council, (action) plan*, and *work report* rise in frequency immediately following the introduction of the 10-year strategic plan in late 2014. Other Period 2 keywords, like *strateg**, *innovation*, *high-end*, *upgrade*, peak in 2017, apparently as a result of successful developments in Chinese high-speed rail, FAST, and the space station that year.

- Delay:** The Period 1 keyword *people* rises to its highest frequency in Period 2 before dropping remarkably in Period 3, when it is replaced by more individually-oriented policy keywords like *entrepreneur*, reflecting the policy change initiated with the introduction of the “Made in China 2025” plan.
- Non-linear pattern:** Period 3 policy keywords, for example, *consum** and *US/USA/America/American* have their peak usage in international Chinese newspapers in Period 1 with lowest frequencies in Period 2.



The number of policy keywords from Period 1 demonstrates a steady drop in the following periods after its peak usage, while the ones from Periods 2 and 3 experience a remarkable increase in number in Period 3 after the proposal of “Made in China 2025”.



Period 3 is noteworthy as it witnesses the launch of “Made in China 2025”. This line graph shows that Period 3 keywords only gain in frequency in the fourth year, 2018. Keywords from Period 2 persist at a relatively high level with a minor peak in 2017, while Period 1 keywords remain low throughout Period 3.

CONCLUSION

Our preliminary findings indicate that the language in international Chinese newspapers reflects the policy changes outlined in government documents. Period 2 and 2017 in Period 3 are two major turning points which lead to an increasing appearance of a variety of policy keywords from Period 2 and 3.

In the next phase of our research, the results of this study will be compared to major non-Chinese English-language newspapers, which we hypothesize will show more influences from global world-economic developments. **Taken together, these analyses will provide unique insights on the changing international image of the brand “Made in China” and how it is influenced by policy changes of the Chinese government.**

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