A Discourse-Historical Analysis of Microsoft's Identity Construction in Corporate Social Responsibility Reports

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Abstract: With the increase of the public's brand awareness, the display of corporate identity functions as a crucial tool to retain old customers and attract new ones. For this study, it digs into the discourse-historical construction of the corporate identity of Microsoft in letters to shareholders of Corporate Social Responsibility Reports (CSRR), investigating: 1) the key linguistic resources used in the texts at three different stages; 2) the discursive strategies formed by the choice of linguistic resources at each stage; 3) the similarities and differences of the identities constructed by the discursive strategies at the three stages. It turns out that Microsoft's development promotes the identity transfer of itself at different stages.

Keywords: *Discourse-historical analysis, Microsoft, identity construction, letters to shareholders of Corporate Social Responsibility Reports (CSRR), discursive strategies.*

Introduction

Research Orientation

The focus of this paper is placed on the discursive strategies with according linguistic devices adopted to construct identities by Microsoft in letters to shareholders of Corporate Social Responsibility Reports (CSRR) at different stages. In such attempt, it sets out to investigate: 1) the key linguistic resources used in the texts at three different stages; 2) the discursive strategies formed by the choice of linguistic resources at each stage; 3) the similarities and differences of the identities constructed by the discursive strategies at the three stages.

Rationale

Corporate identity serves as a way for enterprises to define and present themselves, summarizing all the semiotic resources adopted by the enterprises to communicate with the public about the ideal selves. The construction of corporate identities through historical-discourse approach answers the question of "who is the enterprise", which in addition to affecting the capability of one enterprises to acquire resources with social evaluation, impacts the commitment and engagement of employees in the enterprise, thereby influencing the profiting of the enterprises.

Therefore, for well-established international enterprises, how to construct positive identities in the process of the development as well as in the changing industry and global political and economic environment remains a task to be discussed. Since 2018, the international trade has been confronted with reconstruction. Combined with the conflicts between major countries, how to sustain or rebuild a global and regional free trade

network catering to the requirements of this era becomes a focus of Chinese opening up at present. With "Belt and Road" Initiative and "Go Global" strategy, enterprises are required by the spirit of the 19th National Congress to pursue win-win cooperation through competition and to develop to promote the social headway. In the meantime, rapid economic and social development of China has triggered an array of social responsibility issues attributed to the pursuit of certain corporations for short-term profits.

Therefore, corporate social responsibility has caught the eyes of many, especially in the academia. However, the unverifiability and randomness of the social responsibility information, combined with the lack of authorization from the third party, the quality of the corporate social responsibility reports has been questioned by investors.

The most important factor for this is that companies, by means of impression management in the corporate social responsibility reports, sugarcoat their identities, thereby winning the trust of stakeholders such as investors and customers [1]. Relevant studies have shown that there are certain manipulations of the report readability to conduct impression management, that is, to improve companies' public identities [2].

The aim of such actions is to not only gain the trust from stakeholders, but also publicize the good social image of companies to advertise. As the most widely read part, CEO's letters to shareholders are of vital importance, which have been seen as a promotional genre, designed to construct and convey a corporate image to stockholders, brokers, regulatory agencies, financial media and the investing public. In this way, the letters to shareholders exert profound effect on a company's competitive position. Microsoft, as the pioneer of the software development, with extensive products and services, is the biggest computer software provider in the world. Success

doesn't come without obstacles. From the very start of its establishment, it has undergone twists and turns, such as anti-monopoly lawsuit and economic crisis. However, with the dedication and efforts, as of 18:00, December 31th, 2019, the market capitalization of Microsoft exceeds one trillion, ranking the second after Apple's 1.3 trillion dollars and followed by Google, Amazon, Facebook and Alibaba.

The resilience and capability to stand against crisis is worth learning from. Thus, this study is designed to analyze the identities constructed in the letters to shareholders of Microsoft's corporate social responsibility report with the help of Wmatrix corpus tool in an attempt to unveil its identity construction strategies adopt to achieve the impression management at different stages of development.

Its theoretical and practical contributions are as follows. Methodologically, it fills up the gap of taking DHA approach to investigate the identity construction in CEO letters of corporate social responsibility reports. Practically, it provides a picture of how an American successful tech behemoth forms its identities at different development stages.

Structure of this Study

The present study is structured as follows. Chapter 2 showcases the previous studies on identity and the ones on identity and discourse. Chapter 3 pictures the analytical framework of this study, with relevant theories illustrated. Chapter 4 shows the research methodology, data collection, specific procedures, and the introduction to the main corpus tool adopted. Chapter 5 uncovers the main theme or topic of the Microsoft's letters to shareholders to better lead to linguistic devices adopted to form the discursive strategies in Microsoft's letters to shareholders at different stages are presented. Chapter 6 summarizes the discursive strategies for each stage's identity built, with

the influencing factors discussed. Chapter 7 serves as a conclusion part of the whole study, where limitations and implications for future study are also listed.

Literature Review

Previous Studies on Corporate Social Responsibility Reports

CSR reporting, as a genre, labeled as corporate social responsibility report, corporate citizenship report, and sustainability report, combines informative and promotional purposes, data and reputation-building [3]. The *Green Paper* released by the European Commission in July 2001 defines corporate social responsibility (CSR) as "a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis" [4].

Recent years have witnessed the increasing attention paid by scholars, corporate leaders, and policy makers to CSR. As the importance of CSR grew, there is more and more information provided by companies about their performance from social and environmental perspectives [5], which, traditionally, are included in annual reports [6]. On top of that, at present, companies tend to release well-organized CSR reports. CSR reports, normally, are published once a year and can be downloaded or viewed on the company's official website. They are voluntarily disclosed, as mentioned above so that the reports of this kind are not subject to specific legal requirements [7].

Therefore, when compared with annual reports which mainly target a certain readership of "experts", CSR reports cover a wider and more diverse range of stakeholders, such as customers, employees, investors, and regular citizens. Therefore, the messages conveyed by CSR reports are not only broader but also less prone to careful and systemic scrutiny [8].

CSR reports place the focus on providing an all-round factual description of one company's accomplishments and strategies adopted to improve the social as well as environmental sustainability. However, they, just like annual reports, can be considered as a hybrid genre with both informative and promotional purposes [9]. The difference lies in that by reporting the commitments and actions to achieve sustainable development, companies show their concern for environment and society, thereby promoting a green, socially responsible image [10].

Thus, it can be seen that CSR reports which are explicitly promotional, are closely related to the identity construction of companies. Critically, CSR reports have been considered as tools for social legitimation. The legitimacy theory argues that companies employ social and environmental disclosures for strategic reasons, while the ultimate aim is to influence the public perception of their organizational identity and legitimize their business activities and interests [11].

The development of companies shows that companies, if aiming to exist and operate continuously, are required to behave compatibly with the interests of the society. In this way, companies have been attaching greater importance to CSR reports for pursuing the promotional goal. Although identity has not been a research focus of previous studies on CSR reports, there are some scholars who have shed light on the identities built by companies in their CSR reports.

For example, Fuoli [12], conducted a quantitative analysis to assess the social reports of BP and IKEA. The study showed how companies in different industries adopt discursive strategies to respond to certain challenges they face with the emphasis on different aspects of their corporate identities. Hart [13], from functional and cognitive perspectives, discussed the evaluative

language in Coca Cola, Nike, and Nestle's CSR reports disclosed in 2009. His results showed that companies exploit evaluative resources in corporate social reports to construct identities in line with the target audiences' values and expectations.

Bondi [14] examined the role of forward-looking statements in identity building and legitimizing in CSR reports. According to the study, references to the future exert an important effect in discursively constructing a positive corporate identity of organizations in that they are repeatedly adopted by companies to foreground their expertise and emphasize their commitment to ethical values.

Aiezza [3] conducted a corpus-assisted discourse analysis on CSR reports of energy companies. In this study, he tried to unveil how linguistic resources are purposefully used to construct discourses and propositions, and achieve the promotional goal. Verbal markers such as elements related to modality and authorial stance are investigated to dig into their contribution to the ethical image building.

Previous Studies on Identity

Identity, as a constant research focus in the fields in sociolinguistics, anthropological linguistics, discourse analysis, and social psychology [15], is an umbrella term used to describe "how we define ourselves, how others define us and how we represent ourselves to others" in the networks of social relations.

Identity, also known as persona in Latino and Ethos in Greek, is part of self-recognition of one individual, which stems from the individual's value to the group concerned and the members as well as his or her perception of the affective meaning. With the discursive turn of research on identity, an increasing number of scholars dig into the identity in terms of social constructionism, arguing that identity is not fixed, pre-set, and

one-directional, but constructed dynamically, actively, and online in the process of interaction. Viewed as a social and cultural phenomenon, with multiple dimensions, complexity and dynamics, identity intertwines with linguistic resources such as language in its construction closely [16].

Discourse, the form for essential social interaction, serves as not only an interest expression for the discourse entity, but also the main means to establish the identity of the entity, in which the identity, of which the continuous constructing and reconstructing affect the progress of the whole social activities is built stepwise [17]. "Writing as if all you have to offer are 'the fact' or 'the truth' is also a way of writing, a way of using language to enact an activity and an identity, too".

Therefore, writing can reflect the identity the author intends to establish to a certain degree. Identity-oriented research on business discourse, compared to the ones on academic discourse and other discourses, fall short. However, among the present studies, there is an increasing amount of attention has been paid to corporate discourse, such as company profiles and corporate annual reports. In the meantime, the majority of scholars in question have placed their focus on SFL.

Xu and Xia [18], with the interpersonal function in the systematical functional linguistics (SFL) as the analytical framework, took 40 business letters with negative information, 20 from practical business events are called as real letters; the other 20 from the business English letters writing textbooks are named textbook letters) as the data to analyze the linguistic strategies such as mode, modality, and appraisal resources involved.

It was pointed out that in spite of the negative information conveyed in the real letters and textbook letters, the linguistic strategies mentioned above are adopted in an

attempt to establish an equal, polite, positive, objective, authoritative, and dominant identity. In addition, their study made quantified comparison of the difference in the choice of personal pronouns, the distribution of semantic metaphors, the use of judgmental resources and appellation, as well as the effect on the individual identity construction in hope of providing reference to the business letter writing, textbook compilation, course teaching, and relative practices.

In addition, Yi [19], with the company overview of AT&T as an example, made an analysis of the identity construction in company overviews, which serves as a typical company publication genre. SFL was adopted to comprehend the self, vertical and horizontal identities built by corporations from ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. For one thing, the research on identity and discourse has been enriched. For another, the relative reference has been provided for the organization and interpretation of corporate discourse.

Besides, advertisements are also an important tool to help companies construct positive images. Xia and Fu [20], in an attempt to explore the effect of advertisements, which act as an information carrier that aims to promote commodity, service or philosophy to a specific group by stimulation and guidance on constructing identity, combined identity and gender to dig into the social identities established for female Chinese critically. They expected to offer new perspectives to the special genre, that is, advertisement, and therefore, ignite the correct public understanding of female social identity.

With regard to the reporting genre, Wu and Zhang [21] took the 2017 annual reports of Huawei and Apple as the research data and employed the three-dimensional discursive analytical framework, that is, combined the discourse-historical approach and discursive strategies, to investigate the means and

linguistic features of the strategies adopted by Chinese and American companies. With the exploration of four identity construction strategies including nomination (Ingroup / Outgroup), prediction (Confronting / Detouring), Perspectivism (Involving / Detaching) and intensification (Assertive / Negotiatory), the difference and characteristics of the identity construction strategies used by Chinese and American corporations were unearthed in an attempt to build a comparative research framework for such research, thereby offering referential foundation for the further studies.

Limitations of Previous Studies

Tracing back to the previous studies on CSR reports and identity, as mentioned above, we can see that

- There is increasing attention paid to companies' CSR reporting, showing the crucial role of CSR reporting plays in the linguistic academia. However, the research on the identity construction in CSR reports falls short to a certain extent compared to other .

- The previous studies on identities in business discourse mainly take pathways including SFL, self-mentions, the first person pronouns, and metaphor theories. However, little attention has paid to the discourse-historical approach to dig into the discursive strategies for identity construction just as mentioned by Wu & Zhang [21];

- The corporate discourse is closely related to identity construction in a certain way, while specific genres have been seemingly neglected, such as the letters to shareholders of one specific company.

Analytical Framework

Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

The study for which the DHA was first developed analyzed the presence of antisemitic stereotypical images in public

discourses in the former UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim's 1986 Austrian presidential campaign, who had made his National-Socialist past as a secret for a long period of time [22].

The research unveiled salient features of the DHA for the first time, which are: 1) interdisciplinary research with a special focus on historical embedding; 1) multiple tirangulation as a methodological principle combining varied perspectives on the research object by including different data, different theories, different methods, and different researches working together, that is, data triangulation, theory tirangulation, method tirangulation, and investigator tirangulation; 3) orientation towards the practical applications of the results.

The DHA was further utilized in an array of studies, including racist discrimination against Romanian migrants after the so-called Iron Curtain being drawn in 1989, as well as the discourse related to nation and national identity in Austria. The DHA is three-dimensional: (1) having identified the specific content or topic(s) of a specific discourse, (2) discursive strategies are investigated. Then (3), linguistic means (as types) and context-dependent linguistic realizations (as tokens) are examined [23].

When approaching these strategies in the discourse analyses, within the framework of methodology, we frequently orient ourselves to the following five questions:

- How are persons, objects, phenomena/events, processes and actions named and referred to linguistically?

- What characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena/events and processes?

- What arguments are employed in the discourse in question?

- From what perspective are these nominations, attributions and arguments expressed?

- Are the respective utterances articulated overtly, intensified or mitigated? [23]

The discursive strategies based on the above five questions are as follows.

Table 1: Five Discursive Strategies

| Strategy	Objectives
Nomination	Discursive construction of social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions
Predication	Discursive qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions (positively or negatively)
Argumentation	Justification and questioning of claims of truth and normative rightness
Perspectivization	Positioning the speaker's or writer's point of view and expressing involvement or distance
Intensification or Mitigation	Modifying (intensifying or mitigating) the illocutionary force and thus the epistemic or deontic status of utterances

Proposed Framework
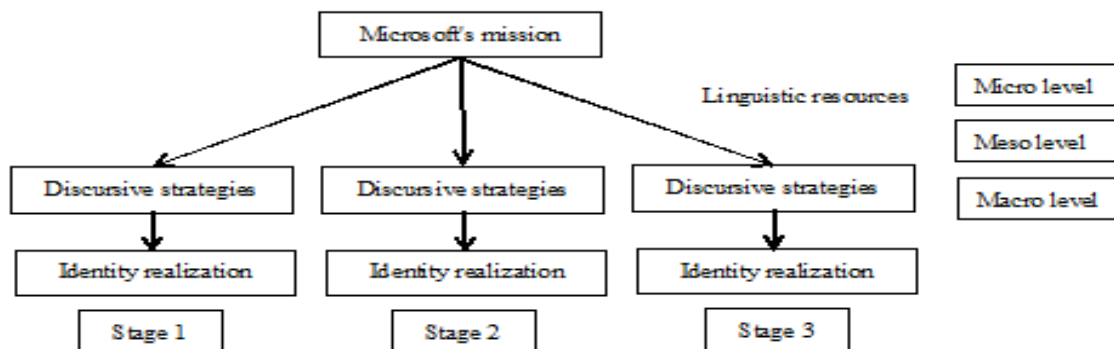
Figure 1: The Analytical Framework of this Study

Therefore, combined with the letters to shareholders in Microsoft's corporate social responsibility reports, the above-shown analytical framework is presented. That is to say, guided by the mission of microsoft, this study investigates the linguistic resources at the micro level, the discursive strategies realized at the meso level, and the identities constructed at the three stages at the macro level.

Method

Research questions

The Research Questions of the Study Presented are as Follows

- What are the key linguistic resources used in the Letters to Shareholders of Microsoft's CSRRs at the three stages respectively?

- What discursive strategies have been formed by the linguistic resources at each stage?

- What identities are realized by the discursive strategies employed at three stages? Are there any similarities or differences?

Corpus Data

The corpus investigated is composed of 15 letters to shareholders of Microsoft's CSRRs from 2003 to 2019 (there is no source of 2007 and 2008, named "COMIC". AmE06 and COIBM (Corpus of the letters of shareholders in IBM's CSRRs) are selected as reference corpora, in which AmE06 functions as a general corpus to illuminate the features of CSR reports while COIBM, as a specific corpus, is adopted to highlight the overriding features of Microsoft's CSR reports compared to its competitor. In combination of the results shown by the two comparisons, the themes or topics of Microsoft's CSR reports can be clearly observed.

The corpus information is as follows.

Table 2: The corpus information of COMIC and COIBM

	Comic	Coibm
N of letters	15	15
Year	2003-2019 (2007 and 2008 unavailable)	2002-2018
Length	15993	10124
Types	2446	2025
Tokens	16964	11737

Based on different authors, the COMIC is divided into three stages named MIC 1, MIC2, and MIC3 respectively, as shown in the following table.

Table 3: The description of different sections of COMIC corpus

	Mic 1	Mic2	Mic3
N of letters	4	5	6
Year	2003-2006	2009-2013	2014-2019
Author (s)	Steven A. Ballmer and Bill Gates	Steven A. Ballmer	Staya Nadella

All the above mentioned letters to shareholders are downloaded from the official websites of the relative companies, namely, Microsoft and IBM.

Corpus Tool

The corpus tool used for this study is Wmatrix 4.0 which is designed by Paul Rayson at Lancaster University. Wmatrix 4.0 is a software tool for corpus analysis and comparison, providing a web interface to the English UCREL Semantic Analysis System (USAS) and Constituent Likelihood Automatic Word-tagging System (CLAWS)

corpus annotation tools, and standard corpus linguistic methodologies including frequency lists and concordances. Meanwhile, it extends the keywords method to key grammatical categories as well as key semantic domains. Then, let's take a detailed look at how it functions. To start out, files can be uploaded into the tag wizard to create a folder for automatic part-of speech tagging and semantic tagging, as shown below.

Figure 2: Screenshot of Tag Wizard

Then, it enters the following interface. All the frequencies listed have already been

generated. On the right is the keyness analysis, where you can choose the reference corpus after uploading it as a folder.

Figure 3: Screenshot of the Main Function Interface

Research Procedures

This study combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to dig into the identities constructed in the letters to shareholders in Microsoft's corporate social responsibility reports with corpus tools used to better analyze the data.

There are steps involved in this study. For starter, in order to make better use of the corpus tool W-matrix 4, the corpora concerned are converted into corpus friendly version, that is, txt version. AmE06 and the letters of shareholders in IBM, it's major competitor's CSRRs, as the reference corpora, are imported into W-matrix 4 to conduct the keyness analysis with COMIC to better define the topics or themes of the texts (the concordance lines are manually examined to rule out irrelevant items). Secondly, the analyses of word

frequency, part of speech, and semantic tagset are run for the corpora in question, both as a whole and at the different stages separately to target the prominent linguistic resources. Then, with the stand-out features, this study analyzes the discursive strategies used for identity construction at different development stages of Microsoft to see if there are any differences and disentangles them from different angles.

Results and Discussion

The Main Topic of the Letter to Shareholders in CSR Reports of Microsoft

To dig into the themes of the topics of Microsoft's letters to shareholders in CSR reports, we first look at the keyness analysis of Microsoft with the general corpus AmE06 and its competitor IBM.

Table 4: Keyness Analysis of Microsoft

	MicA	Freq	LL	MicI	Freq	LL
1	Our	463	1832.73	Microsoft	83	81.41
2	We	386	834.53	Customers	92	81.08
3	Customers	92	573.53	Azure	59	57.87
4	Microsoft	83	561.88	With	186	42.74
5	Azure	59	485.93	Our	463	34.83
6	Cloud	64	457.62	Year	52	33.41

7	Technology	90	443.82	Cloud	64	33.20
8	AI	47	306.07	Fiscal	24	23.54
9	And	895	299.68	Devices	23	22.56
10	Business	74	258.33	365	23	22.56
11	To	680	201.04	Nonprofits	21	20.60
12	Employees	46	200.20	Every	63	20.43
13	Digital	33	196.71	Mission	27	19.75
14	Opportunities	45	190.81	Help	58	19.05
15	Data	58	182.66	Applications	18	17.66
16	Communities	38	172.72	Using	24	17.04
17	Every	63	170.11	People	80	16.30
18	365	23	166.91	Continue	27	15.72
19	Nonprofits	21	164.86	Software	16	15.69
20	World	79	164.16	Office	16	15.69

Note: MicA-Microsoft/AmE06; MicI-Microsoft/IBM

From the first comparison, that is with the general corpus, we can see what have been highlighted in the letters to shareholders in Microsoft's CSR reports are concerned with five aspects: a. solidarity (our and we); b. responsibility (customers, employees, communities, and world), c. technology (technology. AI, digital, and cloud, etc.); d. business (Microsoft and business); e. growth (opportunities).

Compared with IBM, in addition to the above mentioned, Microsoft's focus is also placed on similar points, including a. solidarity (our); b. technology (Azure, Applications, software); c. responsibility (nonprofits, people, and customers); d. business (Microsoft and fiscal); and e. growth (continue).

The overlapping of the key words from the two comparisons, when connected together, use innovative technology to help people and customers, explicitly points to customer-oriented Microsoft's mission, that is, to empower every person and organization on the planet to achieve more. When it comes to the difference between the two, it can be seen that more over the typical features presented in the letters to shareholders, Microsoft pays more attention to its mission and sustainability, as shown in the table above. Moreover, the technical terms such as Azure, 365, office illuminate the corporate competitiveness of Microsoft over IBM, which are the distinct features of Microsoft, let alone its Microsoft's great contribution to the philanthropy and social responsibility.

The Linguistic Devices Adopted

Microsoft as an Independent Noun or as a Modifier

As shown in the above keyness analysis, we can see that the word "Microsoft" stands out, which indicates the significance of names. Names play a crucial part in the construction of any identity.

Therefore, an analysis of how the author(s) refer to Microsoft in the discourse serves as a vital tool to dig into the identity presented. Results suggest that Microsoft can be presented as a noun (for example, in Microsoft) while can be used as a pre-nominal modifier (for example, Microsoft employees, Microsoft 365, Microsoft teams, etc.) as well.

Table 5: Frequency of Microsoft as a Noun or Modifier

	MIC 1		MIC 2		MIC 3	
	Freq	RF	Freq	RF	Freq	RF
Noun	16	0.76	19	0.86	31	0.26
Modifier	0	0	11	0.50	40	0.34

Microsoft, as a noun in the discourse, tends to refer to the company as one single entity, which is, to a great degree, a metonymy for all stakeholders and corporate culture. The table above shows that at the first stage, there is no Microsoft as a modifier in the letters to shareholders by Ballmer and Gates.

At the same time, Ballmer, alone, attach high importance to the entity role of Microsoft plays in the discourse, showing his strong commitment to the solidarity of the company and stakeholders as a whole. As shown in the following examples, "Microsoft", as a integrated whole, presents a strong connection with "we", indicating the unity in this company. Meanwhile, it also acts as an indicator of the author's intention to promote the image of a consolidated group where the author is part of it.

- In this overview, you may discover things you never knew about <u>Microsoft</u> from how we create innovative new technologies to how we empower people who have disabilities, and from how we support and advance open technology standards to how we strengthen communities worldwide. (Microsoft 2003)

- Thank you for your interest in Microsoft. We welcome your thoughts and suggestions. (Microsoft 2012)

- Over the past year at Microsoft, we've challenged ourselves to rediscover what it is about the core of our company that really matters. (Microsoft 2015)

When it comes to Microsoft as a modifier, it is necessary to investigate the collocation of it.

Table 6: Collocation of Microsoft as a modifier

	Mic 2		Mic 3	
	Freq	RF	Freq	RF
1	YouthSpark	2	365	11
2	Office	2	Employees	5
3	(SQL) Azure	2	Philanthropies	5
4	Visual Studio	1	Teams	5
5	Account	1	Graph (s)	3

It is clear that all the collocations appear in the letters to shareholders by Ballmer focus on the applications of the company, orienting to the technological innovations while more than applications, Nadella connects Microsoft with employees, teams, and philanthropies, presenting a caring and responsible image of himself. Microsoft, since 2009, has been launching a conceptual video clip called "Future Vision" with the future improvements Microsoft had contemplated to achieve in collaboration with other corporations in the next decade. Starting from 2009, "Future Vision" serves as an important window for all to get a glimpse of Microsoft's brilliance in technological innovation, which explains the advent of collocations between "Microsoft" and technological terms such as SQL Azure. However, at the third stage, Nadella links "Microsoft" not only with technological terms, but also with humanitarian terms such as "philanthropies" and "employees" directly, as shown in the following examples. In this way, his inclusive stress on social responsibility and caring for employees are self-evident.

- Also in FY2010, we made it clear that Microsoft is "all in" when it comes to our commitment to cloud computing, which is Internet-based computing enabled through services such as Windows Azure, Microsoft

SQL Azure... (Microsoft 2010)

• We took further steps to spread economic opportunity to every corner of the planet this past year with Microsoft Philanthropies' three-year commitment to donate $1 billion in public cloud computing

for nonprofits around the world. (Microsoft 2016)

• It is a privilege to lead Microsoft employees around the world who work every day to earn our customers' trust and help them succeed. (Microsoft 2019)

Self-Mentions

Table 7: POS Keyness Analysis of Microsoft

	MicA				MicI			
	POS	Top Word	Freq	RF	POS	Top Word	Freq	RF
1	PPIS2	We	386	2.4	IW	With	186	1.16
2	APPGE	Our	463	2.9	APPGE	Our	463	2.9
3	CC	And	895	5.6	TO	To	463	2.9
4	NN2	Customers	92	0.58	NN	People	80	0.50
5	NN	People	80	0.50	VV1	Help	44	0.28
6	TO	To	463	2.9	MC	365	23	0.14
7	VV0	Work	19	0.12	NNU	1 Billion	6	0.04
8	VV1	Help	44	0.28	NN2	Customers	92	0.58
9	DAR	More	77	0.48	PPIS2	We	386	2.4
10	CSN	Than	75	0.47	NNT1	Year	52	0.33

Note: MicA-Microsoft/AmE06; MicI-Microsoft/IBM

From the above table, the plural forms of first-person pronouns, which fall into the category of self-mentions [24], are among the top ten POS list when the letters to shareholders of Microsoft are compared to AmE06 and IBM's letters to shareholders. Self-mentions, related directly to the author, point out the proposition interpretation from the author's perspective while severing the voices from others. The explicit references of the author in different forms show the variation of the authorial identities. When collocated with boosters, self-mentions help express personal opinions, boost the presence of the author in the text, and link the views and the origin. The discourse in this form sees the connection of self-mentions and cognitive verbs, signifying the author's public acknowledgement of individual responsibility and his or her own competent and authoritative image.

Table 8: Per-Thousand-Word Frequency of Plural and Singular Self-mentions

	MIC 1	MIC 2	MIC 3
We, Us, Our, Ourselves	61.868087	64.986027	51.603129
I, Me, My	0	3.528612	4.863716

The Per-thousand-word frequencies of the self-mentions in the letters to shareholders at three stages see the outnumbering of plural self-mentions used at the first and second stages by Ballmer and Gates, and Gates alone, over those at the third stage by Nadella, among which the ones adopted at the second stage ranks the first. In contrast, the singular forms of self-mentions at the third stage see the highest frequency while there is no singular one at the first stage. The first person pronouns form one the most commonly used discursive strategies for one company to individualize its discourse when it comes to publicizing, which contributes to narrowing the distance between the company and its

readers [11]. To refer oneself as "we" shows the writer's empathy, connecting him or her with readers, thereby boosting the persuasiveness and emotional appeal of the discourse. In the meantime, the plural forms of such words such as "our" and "us", bonding the company, its employees and other stakeholders together, illuminating the attention paid on employees and highlighting the cohesion of the company.

Table 9: Distribution of Self-Mentions

		Mic 1		Mic 2		Mic 3	
		Freq	RF	Freq	RF	Freq	RF
1	We	75	3.57	68	3.08	275	2.35
2	Our	74	3.52	88	3.99	305	2.61
3	Us	3	0.14	5	0.23	23	0.20
4	Ourselves	-	-	-	-	6	0.05
5	I	-	-	8	0.36	40	0.34
6	My	-	-	-	-	3	0.03
7	Me	-	-	-	-	2	0.02

Collocation of "we"

From the above table, we can see that "we" and "our" are the most frequently used self-mentions by the authors. Thus, let's start with the collocation of "we". What is worth noting is the combination of "we" and specific boosters. At the second stage, the collocation of the booster "believe" and the self-mention "we" occupies one third of the sentences with boosters involved, among which two thirds are all the combination of "we" and two boosters "always" and "believe", as shown in the following examples.

- We have always believed that technology creates opportunities for people and organizations to achieve their dreams. (Microsoft 2011)

- We have always believed that technology creates opportunities for people and organizations to realize their full potential. (Microsoft 2012)

When collocated with self-mentions, boosters enhance the personal faith of the author, which in turn improves the authorial presence in the text to explicitly connect the author with the strong opinion expressed.

The author, in this way, commits his or her personal responsibility overtly and establish his or her identity correspondent to the individual competence and authority [24]. The CEO or chairman of one company employs "believe" to evaluate the company's achievement, summarize its goals and vision. Moreover, the above two examples are both shown in the very beginning of the letters to shareholders (as the first sentence), and share the same sentence structure.

The tone of the proposition is enhanced at the outset to publicize the company's value (our mission is to empower every person and organization on the planet to achieve more), presenting an identity that is persevering and true to the company's original aspiration, which is non-existent in the letters to shareholders at the other two stages. When it comes to the third stage, in addition to several presences of sentence structures like "we believe" used by Ballmer, another collocation "we must" accounts for 20 percentage point among boosters used, topping the list.

- I believe we must continue to dedicate ourselves to the challenges humankind faces, the role technology can play, and the unique contributions Microsoft can make. (Microsoft 2016)

- To achieve our mission, we must reflect the diverse perspectives and experiences of our customers around the world. We must have a deep sense of their unmet and unarticulated needs. (Microsoft 2018)

- At the same time, we must also guard against the unintended consequences of AI. We believe there is an important discussion to be convened about how these new technologies should be used. (Microsoft 2019)

The speaker or author makes use of "must", acting as part of cognitive modality, to make inferences from the evidence observed in the external environment, thereby making determinant judgments and one and only possible conclusion, which severs the negotiation with readers.

At the same time, we can see that besides multiple "we must"s adopted in a row, Nadella combines "we must" with "we believe", pinpointing the company's next action plan or strategy from the perspective of unity.

Therefore, the firmness to his proposition is reinforced, indicating his commitment to future mission and the confidence to develop Microsoft in a well-organized way. At this time, the image of a leader who is proactive and authoritative is self-evident to all the readers.

Collocation of "our"

Then, let us take a look at the collocation of "our". It turns out that the most frequent collocations of "our" at each stage, respectively, are "business" (10), "citizenship" (14), and "customers" (46), as shown in the following examples. Such collocations reflect the difference in the focus of the company, the author in particular, paid on the texts, as well as the identities underlying.

- It is grounded in six core values that are the foundation of our business, and expresses our conviction that it takes more than great products to make a great company. (Microsoft 2003)

- I'm confident that in this coming year we will continue to create value for our business as well as the communities and people we touch through our citizenship activities. (Microsoft 2012)

- Our sense of purpose lies in our customers' success. (Microsoft 2017)

- We are grounded in creating local economic opportunity in every community, helping to unlock the power of technology to address our customers' most pressing challenges. (Microsoft 2018)

"Business" is continuously stressed in the letters to shareholders at the first stage, which unveils a development-focused and progressive identity. "Citizenship", closely related to corporate social responsibility, explicitly points to the author's intention to immerse the company as part of the society, sharing woes and weals.

In spite of other collocations such as "employees", "business", and "mission", the third stage attaches the highest importance to linking "our" and "customers", showing the company's strong responsibility for customers in the process of development.

What's more, Nadella, more than relating to "our customers' success", caring about their concerns, such as the "most pressing challenges". In this way, a customer-oriented identity is expressed in an explicit way.

Topoi of Law and Numbers

Table 10: Distribution of topoi of law and numbers

			MIC1	MIC2	MIC2
	Topos	Device	Freq	Freq	Freq
1	Law	Law	4	2	0

		Regulation	0	0	4
		Total	4	2	4
2	Number	Cardinal number	4	13	96

The topos of law or topos of right can be condensed in the conditional: if a law or an otherwise codified norm prescribes or forbids a specific politico-administrative action, the action has to be performed or omitted [25].

That is to say, the topos of law or right indicates whether the acts involved are accepted or prohibited by the law or whether the acts fall into the widely accepted norm and accordingly one should do something to obey them or against them. The topoi of law imparts the promise of strict management criterion and implies its reliable results of annual reports.

There is no doubt that the business plan and production have gained the overall permission. The company makes progress under the requirement of laws and regulations. From the discourse, readers can make judgment on whether the detailed illustrations or explanations involved are precise or not based on the law-related description. As a result, whether the writer or the presenter is a reliable reporter can be observed in a clear-cut way.

- We work with law enforcement officials to help protect people's privacy online, to help prevent consumer fraud and identity theft, and to help protect the safety of children online. (Microsoft 2004)

- In the middle of FY 2010, we arrived at a resolution of a number of long-standing competition law issues with the European Commission. (Microsoft 2010)

- We also enhanced our transparency practices by releasing our first report of law enforcement requests for Microsoft account user data. (Microsoft 2013)

- And, as we make advancements in AI, we are asking ourselves tough questions-like not only what computers can do, but what should they do. That's why we are investing in tools for detecting and addressing bias in AI systems and advocating for thoughtful government regulation. (Microsoft 2018)

- It's why we were early supporters of the European Union General Data Protection Regulation (GDRR), and why we were the first company to expand GDRR's core rights to all our customers around the world. (Microsoft 2019)

From the frequency analysis of the topos of law adopted in the letters of the three stages, there is no difference shown. However, digging into the collocation and the context the devices are employed just as shown as above, we can find that 1) at the first stage, the topos of law is mainly focused on the

cooperation with law enforcement; 2) the focus of the topos of law is placed on the improvement of law-related issues at the second stage; 3) the third stage strives to promote the law and regulation construction within and outside the company to in an attempt to better serve the customers and the society as a whole.

In a comparison, it is easy to see that the first stage attempts to construct a legal entity that is willing to obey the law to protect the privacy of users while expanding its business; at the second stage, Microsoft clarifies the lawsuit issues engaged previously and shows more endeavors made to highlight its ethical identity; while the third stage stresses the responsibility for the general public,showing a reliable global citizen identity.

The topos of numbers may be subsumed under the conclusion rule: if the numbers prove a specific topos, a specific action should be performed or not be carried out. This topos can become fallacious if it is related to incorrectly presumed majorities which are not verified empirically [25].

Numbers, in general, are highly associated with precise and detailed statistics of one certain company. As shown in (22), at the first stage, Ballmer and Gates show their enthusiasm to cooperate with external stakeholders to benefit customers as well as local economies, presenting a proactive business explorer.

- Everywhere we do business; we work to help strengthen local economies - through products that help to increase customer productivity and competitiveness, and our business model that creates opportunities for nearly 700,000 partners worldwide. (Microsoft 2004)

- This year alone, we equipped 75,000 people with software to grow their small business

    through our BizSpark program. We also reached 23 million people through the Community Technology Skills Program. (Microsoft 2011)

- And, through our Technology for Good program, we provided more than 62,000 nonprofits in more than 100 countries with affordable access to technology to better serve their communities. (Microsoft 2012)

- Since 2016 we have donated more than $1 billion in cloud services to more than 90,000 nonprofits and university researchers - achieving our $1 billion milestone a year early - and announced a new plan to more

than triple the number of nonprofits we'll reach to 300,000 over the next three years. (Microsoft 2017)

- We know it's only a start, but we are encouraged by what's been achieved, including partnering with the government of France to mobilize more than 60 countries, 350 companies, and 130 international and nongovernmental organizations to join The Paris Peace Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace. (Microsoft 2019)

The second stage highlights Microsoft's dedication to serving the society to support small businesses and communities, depicting a responsible society carer identity. Take a look at the third stage; the letters to shareholders in the reports encompass the most topoi of numbers, showing Microsoft's confidence to present the detailed data to the general public.

In the meantime, investigating the collocation of the numbers employed, we can see that they are all social responsibility-related, showing Microsoft's strong support for the development of the society and the security of the whole cyberspace as indicated in (24) and (25).

Semantic Focus

Table 11: Semantic Tagset Distribution

MIC 1			MIC 2			MIC 3		
Semantic Tagset		Freq	Semantic Tagset		Freq	Semantic Tagset		Freq
Z5	Grammatical bin	620	Z5	Grammatical bin	648	Z5	Grammatical bin	3393
Z8	Pronouns	236	Z8	Pronouns	225	Z8	Pronouns	990
A1.1.1	General actions / making	54	A1.1.1.	General actions / making	58	Z99	Unmatched	399
S8+	Helping	48	S8+	Helping	47	A1.1.1.	General actions / making	220

I2.1	Business: Generally	45	Z99	Unmatched	45	S8+	Helping	202
S5+	Belonging to a group	41	I2.1	Business: Generally	44	A3+	Existing	183
Z99	Unmatched	36	Q2.2	Speech acts	34	N1	Numbers	158
S2	People	34	M6	Location and direction	33	M6	Location and direction	148
I3.1	Work and employment: Generally	33	S5+	Belonging to a group	33	T3-	Time: New and young	147
A3+	Existing	32	Z3	Other proper names	31	S5+	Belonging to a group	141

After running the USAS Tag, the semantic focus of each stage can be clearly observed. Prominent are the ones at the first stage and the third stage. When comparing the three of them, we can see that Ballmer and Gates, at the first stage, attaches importance to work and employment, the specific distribution is as follows. They are all work-related, such as job, workers, and workforce, showing the ambition of Microsoft to make further headway.

Table 12: The Distribution of Semantic Tagset I3.1

job	I3.1	1	0.05	Concordance
role	I3.1	1	0.05	Concordance
roles	I3.1	1	0.05	Concordance
work_environment	I3.1	1	0.05	Concordance
worked	I3.1	1	0.05	Concordance
workers	I3.1	1	0.05	Concordance
workforce	I3.1	1	0.05	Concordance
works	I3.1	1	0.05	Concordance
employment	I3.1	2	0.10	Concordance
working	I3.1	6	0.29	Concordance
employees	I3.1	7	0.33	Concordance
work	I3.1	10	0.48	Concordance

When it comes to the third stage, the numbers and words related to young and new rank higher. Arrays of numbers listed which are linked to financial growth mostly serve as an indicator of Microsoft's confidence in its operation. Meanwhile, look at the specific distribution of "time: young and new" words, they are all positive and point to Microsoft's concentration on and advantage of innovation.

Table 13: The Distribution of Semantic Tagset T3

cutting-edge	T3-	1	0.01	Concordance
innovated	T3-	1	0.01	Concordance
innovations	T3-	1	0.01	Concordance
fresh	T3-	2	0.02	Concordance
innovative	T3-	3	0.03	Concordance
advanced	T3-	5	0.04	Concordance
modern	T3-	5	0.04	Concordance
renewable	T3-	5	0.04	Concordance
young	T3-	6	0.05	Concordance
youth	T3-	6	0.05	Concordance
innovate	T3-	9	0.08	Concordance
innovation	T3-	9	0.08	Concordance
innovating	T3-	10	0.09	Concordance
new	T3-	84	0.72	Concordance

Attitude-Relative Adjectives

Adjectives are intertwined with attitude markers, which showcase the personal evaluation of the author about the things discussed, who, more than expressing his or her own opinion and attitude towards the proposition of assumption, explicating the emotion in hope of persuading readers to share them. The way how the author uses the markers of this sort presents his or her affect, or emotional attitude, instead of cognitive attitude. In this way, the distinct evaluation, either positive or negative, of the proposition embedded in the texts by the author shows itself. Such evaluation of the author's individual attitudes involved and highlighted is much more common in humanities and social sciences, exerting a great influence on bonding the authorial identity construction with the academia [24]. Therefore, we dig into the top adjectives related to the attitudes of authors. The following table presents the attitude-relative adjectives with the highest frequencies.

Table 14: Top Adjective Related to attitude

	MIC 1	MIC 2	MIC 3
1	New	New	New
2	Innovative	Important	Intelligent
3	Good	Responsible	Inclusive
4	Great	Significant	Proud
5	Positive	Standing	Active
6	Successful	Young	Comprehensive
7	Easy	Affordable	Diverse
8	Important	Bold	Important
9	Lasting	Critical	Pressing

From the above table, we can see that the adjective attitude markers adopted at the three stages share similarities in differences. To start out, the majority of the attitude markers are with positive semantic prosody, among which "new" ranks the first in the letters to shareholders at all the three stages, serving as an indicator to the importance attached by Microsoft, as a tech company, to innovation and sustainable development. What's more, when it comes to other attitude markers, there, also, are some differences.

At the first stage, "successful" stands out among other adjectives. Take a look at the collocation of "successful", we can find that it, just like "our" (see Section 5.2.2), is closely related to "business", implying Microsoft's strong pursuit of growth at this stage.

- It's about our customers, who do amazing things with the tools we provide, and our partners, who use our products and platforms to build their own successful businesses. (Microsoft 2004)

- Not only do they work hard every day to make Microsoft a successful business, they also contribute their time, expertise, and personal resources to many of our citizenship efforts. (Microsoft 2005)

At the second stage, as shown in the above table, the prominent word is "bold". In the following examples, "bold" is connected with Microsoft's initiative to provide education, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth. In addition, it reiterates the bold movement in the past year in the next letter to shareholder, showing Microsoft's perseverance in committing itself to the welfare of the society, especially the development of younger generation.

- To help close this gap and ensure a prosperous future, we are launching Microsoft YouthSpark, a bold initiative to connect hundreds of millions of youth with opportunities for education, employment

and entrepreneurship. (2012)

- This past year, we took the first big, bold steps forward in our transformation to a devices and services company. (2013)

The "proud" at the third stage directly expresses the author's opinion or attitude, mostly used to show the pride in the company's growth and the employees' performance. Nine in ten of the collocations of "proud" are with the "progress" or

Table 15: Collocations of "Pressing"

"achievements" Microsoft has made, which are in tandem with the high frequency of semantic tagset "numbers", indicating the author's confidence in the company.

- And while we're proud of what we've accomplished, we're even more excited about the opportunities that lie ahead for our company and, in partnership with others, for the global community. (2016)

- We're proud of our progress this year, and we are eager to make even more progress in the year ahead. (2017)

-

- I'm proud of our progress, and I'm proud of the more than 100,000 Microsoft employees around the world who are focused on our customers' success in this new era. (2018)

Besides, compared with the other two stages, there is a high-frequency word with negative prosody that is, "pressing", as shown in the following examples. All the "pressing"'s involved are collocated with "challenge" or "issue", showing the urgency and seriousness of the obstacles ahead for customers or Microsoft.

Whether or not a company is willing to face the challenges and admit the adversity serves as an indicator to a sincere, candid, and enterprising identity, making its intention to be a "change-maker" to dedicate itself in "diverse" fields to leading the cutting-edge technology and leverage the innovation to guide other corporations and individuals to settle problems.


```
6 occurrences.
enable humanity to solve our most   pressing   issues , from climate change to cu
ogy to address our customers most   pressing   challenges . Our platforms and too
hms to address some of their most   pressing   challenges . Data and AI Our custo
e-makers to address societys most   pressing   challenges with new programs like
 where its needed most to address   pressing   and preventable health issues like
rness it to address societys most   pressing   challenges . Its why this year we
```

- We're deeply committed to leading in these areas and bringing them together in ways that enable humanity to solve our most pressing issues, from climate change to curing cancer to creating economic opportunity for all. (2017)

- We first unveiled our vision for quantum last year, and we are already seeing customers apply our quantum-inspired algorithms to address some of their most pressing challenges.

- We've been inspired by what AI can do in the hands of change-makers who harness it to address society's most pressing challenges. (2019)

Intertextuality

Intertextuality, coming to exist in the 1960s, as a basic feature of the discourse, refers to the segment from external resources including other people's speech or other discourse in one discourse. Simply speaking,

there are voices from the other or other people, which are with different functions, from a wide range of resources, and in diverse forms [27].

Credibility is obviously most easily gained on the strength of company successes, and, in such circumstances, CEOs may be able to draw on external sources to underline the authority of their assertions [24].

After searching for the appearance of intertextuality, such as entering "say", "says", "said", "write", "wrote", "according to" and other relevant key words to sort out concordances, one comes to the surface as shown below.

- In the novel The Flame Trees of Thika set among these same foot-hills, Elspeth Huxley writes that when the present stung her, she sought her antidote in the future. (Microsoft 2015)

When taking a look at the context, the intertextuality appears when Nadella is talking about the benefits of the innovation of Microsoft's technology brought to underdeveloped Nanyuki which is located in Kenya, the country concerned in the novel mentioned.

The novel depicts the experience of Elspeth Huxley's travel to Thika, Kenya. They, as pioneers, built a house of grass, fought against the ordeal, and discovered the world of African residents. The adventure, in the meantime, taught her to believe in the power to change the future and never give up despite all the adversity.

The quote adopted by Elspeth Huxley, exerts its functions from two angles. For one thing, Nadella refers to Microsoft as the pioneer who brings both low-cost innovative devices and hope for future to Kenya. For another, it shows that

Microsoft, standing with all the stakeholders and the international community, believes in the further development of such poverty-stranded country and is willing to offer its hand to support them, which points to the focus in the letters of shareholders at the third stage, "philanthropy" again. Such direct quote also falls into the category of evidentials, which occur to lend support for the author's view or his or her role in the thriving company, though not widely found in the genre of CEO letters.

Here attributions to sources with positive appraisals or evaluations can be integrated with highly charged expressions to enhance an emphatic endorsement of the performances of the company in question [24].

What's more, borrowing the words from the novel of famous writer helps Microsoft better bond with readers, not only scaling up the authority and objectivity of the proposition, but also showing Microsoft's intention to think in the society's shoes.

The Identities Constructed at Three Stages

From the above-discussed, we can infer that the identities built by the author(s) at different stages are clear-cut and different: the first stage (Ballmer and Gates): dedicated business explorer; the second stage (Ballmer): responsible society carer; the third stage (Nadella): determinant future change-maker.

The potential reasons are listed as follows. To start out, the letters analyzed in this study are extracted from Microsoft's CSSRs, which means that they are highly related to Microsoft's conduct of corporate social responsibility. On top of that, the key linguistic devices adopted reconfirm this proposition. Therefore, it is of necessity to combine the development stage with the CSR pyramid.
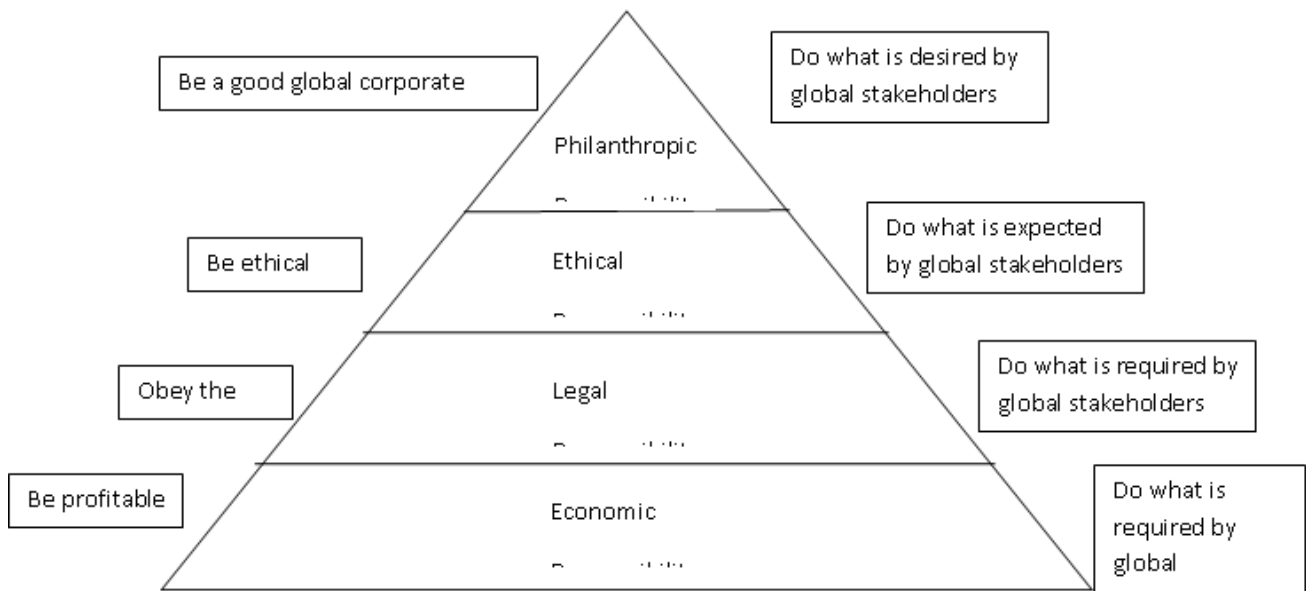
Figure 4: Carroll's Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility [26]

It is clear that the identity built at the first caters to the requirement of global capitalism, that is, to focus on the business in an attempt to become a more successful enterprise. As known to most people, the early 2000s, an array of lawsuits against Microsoft took a great toll on this tech giant. In addition to the under-performed products it had launched and the evolutionary turn it had taken, Microsoft has seemed to be trapped in a plight.

The letters at the first stage witnessed the very voice Ballmer took over the CEO of Microsoft, who faced tremendous pressure from the outside world as well as stakeholders, especially investors. Therefore, the focus was placed on "business" at this stage.

However, things went south from the beginning of 2006. The transformation to mobile devices led by Ballmer underwent myriads of difficulties. Microsoft, more than being seriously threatened by Google and Apple, was troubled by failed products, such as Zune MP3, Windows Vista, and Windows Phone. Under this circumstances, the market capitalization of Apple and Amazon, all surpassed that of Microsoft.

In combination of the article Microsoft is Dead issued by Paul Graham, a well-known venture investor, the second stage witnessed the unprecedented trough of Microsoft. The CEO's ethos as a commanding authority figure may not always be an appropriate one, particularly in years when the company has performed poorly [24].

CEO has to be more circumspect, and reconsider his or her contribution to a genre which tends towards an 'overly positive emphasis' [28] and an 'inevitably optimistic tone' [28]. Ballmer, releasing the statement on his own, tended to show more responsibility to the society thereafter, not only building a good image for him, but also wining investors and customers by doing good with the company's bold innovation, elevating the identity to the level of the ethical one.

After Nadella's take-over, Microsoft's shares moved up and to the right, having been performing greater than S&P 500. It, in addition, even topped the market capitalization rank at the end of 2018. The removal of unsatisfactory businesses such as Windows Phone saw the expansion of Microsoft to cloud technology and other fields.

Microsoft has been diversifying its arms to plan for a better future since then. It, in the meantime, established a philanthropic department in 2015 in hope of contributing more to the world. With investors' support and trust, Microsoft is creating an image that remains true to its mission to bring innovations to every people and organization to achieve more. This is more of what is the world desires. From the above, we can see that the identity transformation is also symbolic of Microsoft's development both in business and corporate social responsibility.

Conclusions

The connection between the linguistic devices, discursive strategies and identities constructed by Microsoft at different stages are listed as follows.

Table 15: Identity, discursive strategies, and linguistic devices

	Identity	Discursive strategy	linguistic device
MIC 1	Dedicated business explorer	Nomination strategy	The collocation of "our" with "business", "efforts", and "progress" indicates the focus of the identity constructed.
		Predication strategy	1. The evaluative attributions of certain objects such as "great" and "successful" are centered on "the success of business". 2. The prominent semantic tagset showcases Microsoft's ambition, at this stage, to make further headway.
		Argumentation strategy	1. The topos of law is mainly focused on the cooperation with law enforcement to develop future businesses. 2. The collocation of the tops of numbers shows Microsoft's enthusiasm to cooperate with external stakeholders to benefit customers as well as local economies, presenting a proactive business explorer.
MIC 2	Responsible society carer	Nomination strategy	The high-frequency collocation of "our" with "citizenship" indicates the focus of the identity constructed.
		Predication strategy	The evaluative attributions of certain objects such as "bold" and "responsible" shed lights on the image of Microsoft the author tends to build.
		Argumentation strategy	1. The focus of the topos of law is placed on the improvement of law-related issues, showing its responsibility for the previous conflicts and future internal law construction. 2. The collocation of numbers highlights Microsoft's dedication to serving the society to support small businesses and communities.
		Mitigation and intensification strategy	The collocation of "we" with boosters like "believe" and "always", and the following objects indicates Microsoft's commitment to its mission and helps establish a confident identity.
MIC 3	Determinant	Nomination	1. "Microsoft", used as a modifier, collocates with

future change-maker	strategy	"philanthropy" to show the company's attention. 2. The high-frequency collocation of "our" with "customers" indicates the focus placed on Microsoft's customers.	
	Predication strategy	The evaluative attributions of certain objects such as "inclusive", "proud", and "active" shows the great vision for future, the strong sense of pride, and the positive image Microsoft intends to make.	
	Argumentation strategy	1. The collocation of the topos of law shows Microsoft's law and regulation construction within and outside the company to in an attempt to better serve the customers and the society as a whole. 2. The frequency of numbers indicates Microsoft's confidence to present the detailed data to the general public while the social responsibility-related collocation presents Microsoft's strong support for the development of the society and the security of the whole cyberspace.	
	Perspectiveness strategy	The intertextuality achieved by the quote from Elspeth Huxley's *The Flame Trees of Khika*, not only enhancing its authority but also presenting Microsoft's dedication for future philanthropy.	
	Mitigation and intensification strategy	The collocation of "we" with the booster "must" and the objects behind presents the determinant pursuit of Microsoft for future dedication to helping the society.	

The transition in identities constructed at three stages represents the transformation in Microsoft's development and corporate social responsibility. However, we can see from the above that Nadella, with the most diversified discursive strategies, greatly enhances Microsoft's positive image in his letters to shareholders.

Implications and Limitations

From academic perspective, the present study can enrich the existing identity construction theory with the three-dimensional analytical framework designed. In the meantime, it integrates the linguistic and intercultural expertise in the discussion part, shedding light on the exploration of research approach to corporate identity construction. Practically speaking, it can provide certain reference for Chinese enterprises to realize the construction of positive identities in the time of turbulent global economy by guiding them to build a discourse system in accordance with the international trend. In this way, enterprises can manage their identities in an effective way to make breakthroughs in the global arena. For another, this study is conducive to the agility of students in Management and Business English to the linguistic resources and discourse strategies for identity construction. Therefore, the students involved can better understand the corporate culture and its operational strategy, thereby boosting the awareness of discourse strategy and enhancing the capability of intercultural interaction.

On the ground of the unavailability of the corporate social responsibility reports of Microsoft at the very beginning of its establishment, only 15 letters are taken to form the corpus analyzed, that is, the ones from 2003 to 2019. Founded in 1975, having undergone some tough moments, Microsoft

would have been more lessons for Chinese tech companies to learn from.

Acknowledgment

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