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**LINGUISTIC DIMENSIONS OF INTERACTIVITY IN
COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION: A
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CORPORATE POSTS ON
TWITTER AND WEIBO**

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Ph.D

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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**Linguistic Dimensions of Interactivity in Computer-mediated
Communication: A Comparative Study of Corporate Posts on
Twitter and Weibo**

LI Chaoyuan

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2016

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Abstract

This study makes a linguistic contribution to the notion of interactivity in computer-mediated communication and the concern of building dialogic relationships in external corporation communication. As a key characteristic that distinguishes social media from traditional media, interactivity in computer-mediated communication has been primarily studied from technological and reception perspectives, with very few communicative and linguistic considerations. Positing that interactivity is also a textual characteristic of corporate or organizational discourse in social media, this study extends the line of research on text-based interactivity by revisiting and incorporating concepts from interactional linguistics.

Specifically, text-based interactivity is conceptualized as a tripartite construct which involves the following aspects or means of realization: 1) interactive linguistic features; 2) relational speech acts; and 3) topical intertextuality. Interactive linguistic features refer to the linguistic forms that emulate the “conversation ideal”, including (intimate) address forms, personal pronouns, and discourse particles, through which corporations speak to their social media followers with a conversational human voice. Relational speech acts are the specific types of speech acts that aim to fulfill interpersonal functions of the utterances such as sharing and expressing emotions rather than primarily transactional and one-way information disseminating purposes. Topical intertextuality is indicative of the diversity and scope of prior texts related to

certain topics that corporations assume as shared by their followers and incorporate in their own social media pages with various means of quoting. Such prior texts range from specific credited posts published by other users to the broader socio-cultural texts such as festivals, theme days, major events in the world, or viral memes on the Web.

Data of the study consists of posts published by the top 10 global brands (Interbrand 2015) on their Twitter (the leading English microblogging site) and Weibo (the leading Chinese microblogging site) pages over a three-month period. Findings show both similar and differential patterns in the global brands' means of building interactivity across the two social media platforms. First, the corporations employed a similar array of interactive linguistic features on the two social media platforms, though frequency of occurrence differed. While personal pronouns were the major means of constructing a conversational human voice on Twitter, corporate Weibo exhibited a high level of creativity in utilizing general address forms in Chinese social media and initiating a host of brand-specific address forms for self-appellation and for addressing brand followers as well as a higher frequency of discourse particles. Second, the study observed that there were more speech acts devoted to engaging stakeholders than to disclosing corporate information and promoting corporate accomplishments, which suggests that social media outlets such as Twitter and Weibo have become more of a prevalent tool and an interactive space for corporations to build solidarity and interaction with their followers. With regard to specific relational

speech acts across the two platforms, while there were more sharing and expressing acts on Twitter than on Weibo (i.e. corporate users are more likely to share non-advertising content and express emotions or attitudes towards people and events), there were more greeting and directing acts on Weibo than on Twitter. Finally, in terms of topical intertextuality, Twitter was the more active platform of the two that witnessed more retweeting posts originally composed by external authors such as customers, business partners, and media outlet; Twitter also hosted more interactive hashtagging practices by employing a greater number and variety of external hashtag topics that were of general public interest than internal ones that concern the corporations or their immediate communities only; in terms of utilizing sociocultural text such as the Olympic Games, corporations on their Twitter pages again showed more intertextual efforts to appropriate various discourse resources to engage and interact with their followers. It is also noteworthy that intertextual practices of the corporations demonstrate both their global and local identities, highlighting the interface and intersection of global and local discourses or discourse resources activated by the international sports event. Variations were also observed between technology brands and food & beverage brands. In interpreting the similarities and differences, established cultural dimensions were found to play a less important role compared with the trend of an emerging global virtual culture on the one hand and unique communicative practices on respective platforms on the other.

Keywords: interactivity; computer-mediated communication; brand posts; dialogic corporate communication

Publications arising from the thesis

Journal Articles:

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Li, C., & Wu, D. D. (2016). An analysis of relational acts in corporate social media discourse [跨国公司社交媒体话语中的关系言语行为分析]. *China ESP Research* [中国 ESP 研究], 8 (2): 30-40.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The 2009 “ENGAGEMENTdb Report” measured the social media engagement and financial performance of the “world’s most valuable brands”, revealing a direct and significant positive correlation between financial performance and the extent of social media engagement: the socially engaged brands were more financially successful. The latest news is that in 2014 Twitter narrowly surpassed Facebook to be the most frequently used new medium for corporate communication activities (Wright & Hinson, 2014). Global brands and their multinational corporations have always been among the most enthusiastic users of new communications technologies. Before the advent of social media, for global brands, it would suffice to have corporate presence on their official websites; however, the age of social media requires them not only to be “present”, but to actively engage with their key publics. For engagement, conversation, and relationship-building to take place, it requires much more than providing a range of technical interactive features on the social media platforms; rather, meaningful engagement has to rely on the true discourse between organizations and publics.

In view of the new opportunities and challenges in digital times, this study is concerned with the processes and products through which global brands leverage linguistic resources and strategies to initiate and engage in conversations with their publics to achieve interactivity. The borderless nature of social media and the global strategy of the top brands motivate them to localize their discourse practices when they reach out for target consumers from a different cultural community, which also

prompts the present study to compare intertextual practices of the same brands when they interact with audiences from different cultures on different social media platforms.

The study aims to identify, classify, and examine the linguistic features and speech acts as well as other discursive strategies used to build interactivity and relational connectedness by global brands on social media as a means of engaging their key publics in this digitalized and globalized world. The study at the same time compares the similarities and differences in corporate posts on English and Chinese social media platforms. The project expands the notion of “interactivity” in computer-mediated communication and bridges it with revisited notions of “speech acts” and “involvement” in linguistics, making a significant contribution to the theoretical and methodological development of interactional linguistics in their study of social media language. Furthermore, the study will contribute significant insights to disciplines such as socio-psychology and computational linguistics in their attempt to further understand and to formalize the process of organization-public relationship building and relational communication on social media, and to the corporations as well as the individuals who are concerned with building interactivity and engagement on social media across the United States and China.

Specifically, the objectives of the study are three-fold: 1) to expand the notion of “interactivity” in computer-mediated communication, esp. its linguistic or textual dimensions, and bridge it to the revisited notions of “speech acts” and “involvement” in linguistics for a better description and explanation of constructing relational

connectedness on social media; 2) to identify and classify the interactive linguistic features and speech acts as well as other discursive strategies used to build interactivity and relational connectedness by global brands on social media as a means of engaging their key publics; and 3) to examine the similarities and differences by corporate social media users in the US (e.g., on Twitter) versus those in mainland China (e.g., on Weibo).

Contribution and significance of the study consists in the following aspects: 1) contributing to the theoretical and methodological development of interactional linguistics in an attempt to describe and explain discursive practices on social media, including a better understanding of intertextuality – contact between texts – as a means of enabling contact and interaction between people; and 2) contributing insights to corporations and organizations that are concerned with building interactivity and engagement on social media across the US and China, with a further understanding dialogic corporate communication on social media via a comparison across Twitter and Weibo. In terms of cross-cultural comparison, the study attempts to go beyond the dichotomous perspective of cross-cultural studies so as to achieve a grounded understanding of discourse practices across cultural communities.

Besides Chapter 1 the introduction and Chapter 7 the conclusion, the thesis consists of five body chapters: while Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature from different disciplines and positions the study and Chapter 3 outlines the methods of research, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 each deal with the three linguistic dimensions of interactivity, namely, 1) interactive linguistic features; 2) relational speech acts; and 3) topical

intertextuality. Interactive linguistic features refer to rhetorical strategies that emulate the “conversation ideal”, including personal pronouns, (intimate) address forms, imperative verbs, questions or question & answer pairs, and exclamations, through which corporations speak to their social media followers with a conversational human voice. Relational speech acts are the specific types of speech acts that aim to fulfill more personalized communicative purposes such as sharing and expressing emotions rather than primarily transactional and one-way information disseminating purposes. Topical intertextuality is indicative of the diversity and scope of prior texts related to certain topics that corporations assume as shared by their followers and incorporate in their own social media pages with various means of quoting. Such prior texts range from specific credited posts published by other users to the broader socio-cultural texts such as festivals, theme days, major events in the real world, or viral memes on the Web.

The study is significant in that it contributes to research into interactivity in computer-mediated communication and in interactional linguistics by developing the concept into an overarching notion and framework situated in and incorporating discursive practices on social media and by highlighting its function in enabling human interactivity on social media. Meanwhile, the study advances dialogic corporate communication by devoting special attention to the ways how the rich and powerful global brands leverage linguistic and discursive resources and strategies in communicating dialogically with their publics, giving up their impersonal way of speaking for power-building and resorting to personalized talk for solidarity-building.

Finally, as a comparative study, instead of departing from the pre-assigned cultural categories (e.g., East/West, collectivism/individualism, etc.), the study is contextualized in the actual instances of social media discourse, so as to better understand the nature of virtual language and culture and the ideology behind its construction. The study will not only contribute to theoretical and methodological advancement of computer-mediated discourse analysis, but to provide important implications for corporate communication and cross-cultural communication in a digitalized context.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1 Interactivity in computer-mediated communication

2.1.1 The notion of interactivity

Social media go by many names, e.g., “new media”, “web 2.0”, “consumer-generated media”, “user-generated media”, or “the live web” (Hart, 2011: 113). As complained by many, “the term ‘New Media’ is old and misleading, since any latest technology is always new (Marvin, 1988): furthermore, it does not necessarily create new concepts, though it can highlight some” (Rafaeli & Ariel, 2007: 81). Rice (1984) was among the first to define new media as facilitating “interactivity among users or between users and information” (p. 35).

Interactivity is regarded as a key characteristic that distinguishes traditional and new media and arguably the most celebrated advantage of the latter (e.g., Pavlik, 1996; Rafaeli & Sudweeks, 1997; Chung & Zhao, 2004; Cho & Cheon, 2005; Kim & McMillan, 2008; McMillan, Hoy, Kim, & McMahan, 2008). In marketing literature, the notion of interactivity is essential to researching and enhancing organization-public engagement, relationship-building, and interaction with consumers online (McMillan & Hwang, 2002; Saffer, Sommerfeldt, & Taylor, 2013; Jo & Kim, 2003; Kelleher, 2009). In the realm of political communication, interactivity of the Internet is also viewed as an essential democratizing force in that new media enable citizens to interact with elites such as politicians and experts (Stromer-Galley, 2004). The list may also include celebrities, corporations and various

other types of organizations that are not within the immediate reach otherwise in people's everyday life.

Conceptualizations and definitions of interactivity over the past three decades seem to fall into two broad categories: the technology-oriented and the communication-oriented. Technology-oriented conceptions regard interactivity as a range of technological features or functions that enable communication between users, agents, the interface or the medium (e.g., Markus, 1990; Steuer, 1992; Ghose & Dou, 1998; Massey & Levy, 1999; McMillan, 2000; Coyle & Thorson, 2001; McMillan, 2002; Heeter, 2000; McMillan et al., 2008). Those that are communication-orientated view interactivity as a process-related variable in human communication featuring message relatedness in a dialogic loop, regardless of the medium (e.g., Rice, 1984; Williams, Rice, & Rogers, 1988; Rafaeli, 1988; 2004; Rogers, 1995; Jensen, 1998; Rafaeli & Ariel, 2007).

Due to the communicative orientation of the present study, this section reviews major arguments and empirical studies related to communication-oriented intertextuality and points out their strengths and weaknesses.

2.1.1.1 Technological vs. communicative interactivity

In contrast to scholars purporting the technological orientation of interactivity, Rafaeli (1988) is arguably the first to explicitly assert that “interactivity is not a medium

characteristic”, leaving the role of media and channels only in “set[ting] upper bounds, remov[ing] barriers or provid[ing] necessary conditions for interactivity levels” (pp. 119-120).

Rafaeli (1988) defines interaction as “an expression of the extent that in a given series of communication exchanges, any third (or later) transmission (or message) is related to the degree to which previous exchanges referred to an even earlier transmission” (p. 111). Perhaps a later definition is even clearer: interactivity is “the extent to which messages in a sequence relate to each other, and especially the extent to which later messages recount the relatedness of earlier messages” (Rafaeli & Sudweeks, 1997: 3).

While the “dominating, fierce debate” of the early days centered on “the viability and morality of mechanical intelligence” (a situation that does not seem to have changed much today), Rafaeli (1988) focused on interactivity as one of the “other qualities-of-interest of computers and the new technologies-based communication processes” (p. 110). The study of interactivity is “part of the evolution in the ontology and epistemology of new communication technologies in general, and computers as media in particular” (Rafaeli, 1988: 110). He explicitly contrasts the technological orientation and the communication orientation of interactivity (see Table 2.1 below).

Table 2.1 Trends in the Study of New Communication Technologies

<i>From the Study of . . .</i>		<i>To the Study of . . .</i>
What	complete interventions	modifiable properties (variables)
Who	experienced and extensive users, expert consumers, innovators	casual, average users, normal audiences
Wherefore	technologies' various and sundry qualities: complexity, consistency, conciseness, cost, and so on	qualities directly related to communication

(Rafaeli, 1988: 111)

Rafaeli values the right-hand column over the left one, contending that “interactivity is quintessentially a communication concept” (1988: 113), a “natural attribute of face-to-face conversation” which can also refer to mediated interaction between people (1988: 110), and “a process-related construct about communication” (Rafaeli & Sudweeks, 1997: 175). Interactivity for him is “not a medium characteristic”, though “media and channels may set upper bounds, remove barriers, or provide necessary conditions for interactivity levels” (1988: 119-120). He believes that the technological bearings of interactivity (those belonging to the left-hand column in Table 2.1) such as “user control”, “amount of user activity” or “artificial intelligence” are first-order notions which fail to capture the essence of interactivity:

Technical tit-for-tat reciprocity does not have an obvious reflection on the social relations involved. Even taken together, the technological improvements should not be mistaken as providing or even regulating interactivity....Rather than defining interactivity in human terms, technologically based explications do so in

terms of the hardware. They fail to capture the user- and content-oriented qualities that are (at least an intuitive) part of the appeal of interactivity....Those technological features are actually reactivity of media....In information theory terms, interactivity is all but noise; it relates all the other components of the information transfer model – sender, receiver, channel, and message. (p. 116)

Essentially distinguishing the two orientations requires “distinctions between passive and active, reactive and interactive, interaction and friendless” (p. 115-116). Although this distinction is echoed in much of the later scholarship on interactivity (as we will see in the sections to follow), the call for more in-depth research on communication-oriented interactivity has not reached very far and is still much needed today.

In addition, Rafaeli (1988) offers a continuum of interactive communication sequences: non-interactive, reactive (also termed “quasi-interactive”), and fully interactive. Technological features are non-interactive, since no human contingency interactivity is involved. Reactive interactivity takes place when B responds verbally to A who just sends him or her message, and B’s response has to be related to A’s message in some way. Since B reacts only when s/he receives A’s message rather than initiating a message, such interactivity is reactive. Fully interactivity occurs when A sends a message to B; B (who is now also a source) then responds with a message contingent with A’s message; and A (who is now both a receiver and then a sender

again) returns with a content-related response to B's message. This is perhaps the most explicit explication of a "dialogic loop" discussed also by Kent and Taylor (1998), to which we will return in later sections.

Other communication-oriented definitions of interactivity can be found in Williams et al. (1988) and Rogers (1995). Interactivity can refer to "the degree to which participants in a communication process can exchange roles and have control over their mutual discourse" (Rogers, 1995: 314). In a similar vein, Williams et al. (1988) contend that interactivity is "the degree to which participants in a communication process have control over, and can exchange roles in, their mutual discourse" (p. 10). The notion "mutual discourse" concurs with what Rafaeli calls "relatedness of sequential messages" (Rafaeli, 1988; Rafaeli & Sudweeks, 1997; Rafaeli & Ariel, 2007). This kind of interconnectedness among exchanged messages is also termed as third-order dependency in literature (e.g., Kioussis, 2002; Endre & Warnick, 2004; Warnick & Heineman, 2012).

Kioussis (2002), after grouping previous literature as communication-based vs. non communication-based, also adopts the communication-based perspective and defines interactivity as "the degree to which a communication technology can create a mediated environment in which participants can communicate both synchronously and asynchronously and participate in reciprocal message exchanges" (p. 372). He categorized interactivity by the site where they occur – in the technological structure

of the medium, in the communication context, or in the users' perceptions. The first category of interactivity, enabled by media channels, features the technological orientation discussed in the previous section, while the second and third focuses on interactivity. The second and third categories are communication-oriented interactivity, focusing on third order dependency and user perception respectively.

In Stromer-Galley's (2000) conception, human interaction, as opposed to media interaction, refers to "prolonged interaction between two or more people through the channel of a computer network" (p. 117). This conceptualization inherits Rafaeli (1988), where responsiveness is essential and communicators switch message sender and receiver roles freely when engaged in a dynamic exchange of messages. Stromer-Galley (2000) believes this kind of role-switching enables communicators to be on equal standings and "subvert hierarchical, linear structures of communication" (p. 117). This process during which "two or more people communicating with each other" and "messages consist of responses to prior messages in a contingent fashion", is referred to as interactivity-as-process in Stromer-Galley (2004: 391).

The right-column half of Sundar et al.'s (2003) model is contingency interactivity, which refers to "a process involving users, media, and messages, with an emphasis on how messages relate to one another" (p. 31). "Contingency" in this context means dependence or more specifically third-order dependency between messages exchanged, which clearly concurs with Rafaeli's (1988) idea of interconnectedness of

messages.

Apart from Rafaeli (1988), contingency interactivity or third-order dependency is also discussed by other communication scholars, esp. in the field of public relations. For instance, Roehm and Haugtvedt (1999) speak of verbal interactivity, which is “a higher-order form of interactivity that requires users to compose their own ideas in writing (or speech) and possibly engage in verbal dialogue” (p. 23). Galloway (2005) notes that effective public relations communication should evoke “stimulating feelings such as connectedness, involvement, appreciation, and meaningfulness” (p. 573). Bruning, Dials, and Shirka (2008) advocate that dialogue entails “the organization engage the public during communication”, where the engaging effect primarily relies on “personalizing organization-public interactions” (p. 5). Kelleher (2009) identifies facilitating contingency interactivity as “a key strategy in online communication leading to positive relational outcomes” (p. 175) and constructing a conversational human voice as an essential relational strategy (as also did in Kelleher & Miller, 2006).

From a perception orientation, Kelleher and Miller (2006) operationalize “conversational human voice” with the following items: “Invites people to conversation”, “Is open to dialogue”, “Uses conversation-style communication”, “Tries to communicate in a human voice”, “Tries to be interesting in communication”, “Uses a sense of humor in communication”, “Provides links to competitors”,

“Attempts to make communication enjoyable”, “Would admit a mistake”, “Provides prompt feedback addressing criticism with a direct but uncritical manner”, and “Treats me and others as human” (p. 413). This way of measuring perceived verbal interactivity is comparable to many studies related to social presence, i.e., the extent to which participants feel as if they are conversing directly with the organization/politician/celebrity (e.g., Lee, 2013).

Similarly, although Sohn (2011) points out that operationalizing semantic interactivity involves measuring “the quantity and quality of semantic cues available” (p. 1328), in a later study (Sohn & Choi, 2014), they instead developed a scale to measure perceived interactivity, where items for gauging semantic interactivity include “I would feel as if it could understand my needs”, “I would feel as if it could talk to me”, “I would feel as if it could listen to me”, and “I would feel as if it could recognize how I feel” (p. 864).

It can be observed that attractive as Rafaeli’s (1988) conception of interactivity is, there have been very few attempts to operationalize it from the initial speaker/addresser’s point of view. One of the few is Lee and Park (2013). The study focuses on message interactivity, operationalized on the basis of Rafaeli’s (1988) and Wise, Hamman, and Thorson (2006). Specifically, in Lee and Park’s (2013) experiment, message interactivity was manipulated by the number of responses from a company’s representative to viewers’ comments on the video in the web page. In the

low message interactivity conditions, the web page contained a corporate video that included general information about the company, and there were comments on the video written by viewers (a mix of negative, positive, and neutral comments), but none were replied by the company. In the high message interactivity conditions, everything else was the same as in the low message condition, except that there were responses to each and every comment posted by viewers, and the content of the responses was relevant to the initially posted comment. A company representative made responses to the comments, and they were identified with their ID (identical to the company's name) and statement (i.e., "thank you for your interest in XXXXX"). Results indicate that high contingent message interactivity projected higher organizational reputation and higher satisfaction on the part of the public.

Saffer et al. (2013), another public relations study, operationalized contingency interactivity as the number of replies an account had with its followers. Despite the simplicity of this operationalization, the study also found organization-public relationships were perceived to be of better quality by the participants assigned to the more interactive corporate account, thus confirming a positive correlation between an organization's level of Twitter interactivity and the quality of its organization-public relationship.

Finally, there is text-based interactivity studied by Warnick et al. (2005). Although the notion is more explicated and comprehensively studied in Warnick et al. (2005), it is

proposed and case studied in Endre and Warnick (2004). Sohn's (2011) conception of sensory and semantic interactivity is based on these two studies, which (maybe redundantly) emphasize the visual (sensory) and verbal (semantic) components of Warnick et al.'s (2005) notion of "text". Since text-based interactivity, a form of interactivity not studied in terms of participants' perception, is more of a recent development of the communication orientation and has a very different origin than the rest of interactivity forms in the right column of Table 2.1 that stem from Rafaeli (1988), it will be discussed in the separate section below.

2.1.1.2 Text-based interactivity

Just as Kelleher and Miller (2006) point out that traditional "corporate voices sound more like profit-driven machinery" (p. 398), scholars in political communication also criticized the impersonal and brochureware style of traditional campaign practices (Foot & Schneider, 2002; Endre & Warnick, 2004). While Foot and Schneider (2002) called for greater use of interactive website features such as interactive polls, alternate language versions, site specific search engines, Endre and Warnick (2004) go beyond the technological orientation of interactivity and take a different, rhetorical approach to interactivity.

Text-based interactivity is first proposed by Endre and Warnick (2004) as "a rhetorical construct that engages users through emulation of dialogue between web users and members of the campaign" (p. 326). In response to McMillan (2002), they argue that the construction of the text itself can foster interactivity and enhance user engagement

with the site. Such interactive textual features include direct address, use of one's first name, posting content on a website, etc. This kind of interactivity is said to be more conversational and can thus promote immediacy, personal presence, and multivocality. Rather than starting from afresh, text-based interactivity is still a form of Rafaeli's (1988) conception of contingency interactivity; after all, it is about message characteristics. The root of considering such interactive features of text as one form of interactivity lies in "the conversational ideal" (Schudson, 1978; Rafaeli, 1988), which holds that "better media somehow emulate the way in which humans conduct face-to-face conversations" (Rafaeli, 1988: 117). This also has an influence on Kelleher and Miller (2006) and Kelleher (2009) who identify "the conversational human voice" as a relationship-building strategy in corporate blogs.

The Institute for Politics Democracy and the Internet (IPDI), quoted by Endre and Warnick (2004), encourages candidates to "extend a welcome greeting" on their website, to treat users as respected visitors, to communicate directly, and to use humor (IPDI, 2002: 10). Advantages of such styles are evident: "when a campaign extends interactive features to the public, it signals a willingness to listen and learn from the people. That is a good image for a campaign to live up to" (IPDI, 2002: 25). These textual features are later incorporated as instances of text-based interactivity.

The IPDI is not the only one to advise so. Similarly, Garrett (2004) suggested that political blogs for campaigns write posts in a personal voice, update several times a

day, encourage comments, moderate comments, hyperlink to internal and external sources, hyperlink to other blogs, and call the readers into action. Trammel et al. (2006) also indicate that “there is an implicit identification of blogs being interactive – through technology such as hyperlinking and text that encouraged comments and called the readers into action” (p. 24).

For Warnick et al. (2005), text-based interactivity “consists of rhetorical techniques and features of the website text itself that communicate a sense of engaging presence to site visitors”. In more recent works, Warnick offers a more explicit definition of “text-based interactivity” as referring to “the presence of various stylistic devices, additional visual cues, and additional textual content on the site” (Warnick, 2007: 73; Warnick & Heineman, 2012: 55). In their empirical study of politician websites, Warnick et al. (2005) identify two aspects of the style of the site content: verbal style, such as the use of active rather than passive voice, first and second person rather than third person address, and embellishment; and visual display such as captioned photographs or quoted endorsements from third parties, and photographs showing the candidate in situ and talking with other people. In essence, such stylistic devices or rhetorical features of the site text communicate “a sense of engaging presence to site visitors” (Warnick, 2007: 73). Previous scholars on web style also emphasized integrating the verbal and visual text in order to engage and hold readers’ attention and keep them on the site (Farkas & Farkas, 2002; LaGrandeur, 2003). Results from Warnick et al. (2005) indicate that the candidate’s uses of language, expressive style,

modes of self presentation, and attentiveness to content did enhance users' reception of the message, recall of site content, and inclination to form a positive impression of the candidate, thus having a persuasive influence on users.

Endre and Warnick (2004) in their case study identify three characteristics of text-based interactivity that emulate real conversation: immediacy, personal presence, and multi-vocality. Immediacy refers to "a sense of connection and importance to users' lives, both spatially and temporally" (Endre & Warnick, 2004: 333). In operationalization, high-immediacy websites are those that emphasize candidates' identification with local culture, local issues of the district ("spatially") and that post up-to-date information ("temporally"), which functions to make the candidate look like someone within immediate reach of the constituency. Personal presence refers to "a candidate's efforts to make his or her own persona present to voters" (Endre & Warnick, 2004: 335). In operationalization, websites with high candidate presence feature the use of a conversational voice, using first and second person address; recent, captioned photos in situ at local festivals or party gatherings (vs. dated, generic photos), which provide website visitors with a conversation-like experience with the candidate. Finally, multi-vocality "relates to the extent to which the site might be heteroglossic in nature" (Endre & Warnick, 2004: 336), typically including voices, speakers, languages, speech styles, and rhetorical forms, which makes the website inviting to open deliberation and user engagement. Consequently, highly interactive websites hosts high levels and qualities of immediacy, personal presence, and

multi-vocality. Endre and Warnick (2004) also indicate that the three characteristics exist along a continuum, but there is no specification yet as to exactly how such qualitative characteristics can be gauged.

A carry-on study of text-based interactivity is Trammell, Williams, Postelnicu, and Landreville's (2006) study of politician blogs. Besides building on Warnick et al. (2005), their operationalization also draws on Kaid and Davidson's (1986) appeal strategies, such as "calling for change", "inviting participation", "emphasizing hope for the future", "yearning for the past", "traditional values such as religion or mention of morality", "using statistics and expert sources", and even "attacking the record of another politician or personal qualities of another politician" (Trammell et al., 2006: 32-36). Most of these indexes seem to be attending to the content rather than to the stylistic features of the blog text. Anyway it is yet another contribution to the study of communication-oriented interactivity which looks at the actual content of the message.

Although with a different label, O'Sullivan, Hunt, and Lippert (2004) deal with the same kind of practices: mediated immediacy. They identify two types of immediacy cues: linguistic and presentational. Linguistic cues include: use of pronouns (high: first and second person; low: third person), use of casual or slang words (high: informal, casual, and slang words; low: formal language), use of greetings and signoffs (high: greetings and signoffs; low: none), and use of punctuation (high:

exclamation marks, dashes, ellipses; low: none). Presentational cues consist of visual presentation (high: graphics, color, photos; low: none) and text formatting (high: use of bold-face, different-sized fonts, color, san-serif typeface; low: no text formatting, Times New Roman typeface) (O'Sullivan et al., 2004: 477). When the cues were manipulated for different conditions, the high-immediacy condition was a website that included color, graphics, the instructor's photo; an e-mail link to the instructor, a link to his personal homepage (including the instructor's photo, scholarly interests, information about his teaching and research, personal interests and family photos); using first- and second-person pronouns and informal, conversational, and friendly language (*ibid*: 475).

In summary, research into communication-oriented interactivity has a shorter history than that into technological interactivity, noticeably since and after Rafaeli (1988). Methodologically, while studies on technological interactivity are enthusiastic about content analysis of technical features of the medium per se, research on communication-oriented interactivity is dominated by experimental (e.g., Lee & Park, 2013) or quasi-experimental studies (Saffer et al., 2013) that manipulate different levels of contingency interactivity, case studies (Endre & Warnick, 2004), and interviews (e.g., Stromer-Galley, 2000). The relatively more qualitative methods are determined by research objectives in this field that often involve examining processes and characteristics of communication and its content and style.

2.1.2 Organization-public relationship building online

2.1.2.1 Organization-public relationship building strategies

What is OPR? The key function or fundamental goal of public relations is to build and maintain relationships between an organization and its publics (Ferguson, 1984; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Hon & Grunig, 1999), as “relationships should have always been the foundation of PR, and the New PR renaissance reinforces this solid foundation” (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009: 36). The notion of organization-public relationships (OPRs) has been defined differently, to mention just a few prominent proposals:

- 1) OPRs as “the state which exists between an organization and its key publics that provides economic, social, political and/or cultural well-being to all parties involved, and is characterized by mutual positive regard” (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998: 62);
- 2) OPRs as “the patterns of interaction, transaction, exchange, and linkage between an organization and its publics” (Broom, Casey, & Richey, 2000: 18); and
- 3) OPRs as “the degree that the organization and its publics trust one another, agree on one has rightful power to influence, experience satisfaction with each other, and commit oneself to one another” (Huang, 2001: 65).

While the first and third definitions are more concerned with the quality and outcomes of relationships, the second one attends to the patterns and processes of relating or interacting with the public. The value of different definitions does not lie in competing for a label of the “best” definition, but in collectively informing us the different aspects of OPRs as emphasized in each. Therefore, the three definitions

point to the multi-dimensional and dynamic characteristics of OPRs.

Research into OPRs mainly includes two strands: one on relationship indicators or outcomes/consequences and the other on relationship building strategies. Representative of the former strand is Hon and Grunig (1999), which identifies six relationship indicators based on interpersonal relationship theories: trust, control mutuality, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship, and communal relationship. These indicators have been widely adopted in public relations studies to measure the quality or outcomes of OPRs. Previous studies have been enthusiastic in developing scales for measuring these outcomes, although more recent ones have moved to scale application (Huang & Zhang, 2013). Social media have also been shown to affect the quality of OPRs (Saffer, Sommerfeldt, & Taylor, 2013). However, as measuring relationship outcomes mostly relies on public perceptions, it is equally important to look at how organizations proactively build and maintain OPRs.

Relational strategies

For the latter focusing on relational strategies, notions and elements from interpersonal communication seem to be an important source of fertilization. A key example is Grunig and Huang (2000), which adapts the five dimensions of strategies in maintaining relationships developed originally for romantic relationships by Stafford and Canary (1991), to maintaining relationships between companies and their stakeholders: positivity (making the relationship enjoyable for both parties; unconditionally constructive); openness (disclosing information, thoughts and feelings); assurances (of legitimacy of relationships); networking (with mutual friends

or allies of the public, e.g. environmentalists, unions, or community groups); and sharing tasks (e.g. reducing pollution, providing employment, making profits, and other tasks that are of mutual interest). Apart from these strategies for maintaining symmetrical strategies, Grunig and Huang (2000) also add strategies for conflict resolution, including integrative, symmetrical strategies (cooperation and win-win or no deal) and distributive, asymmetrical ones (avoiding, contending, compromising, and accommodating).

Ki and Hon (2006) applied these strategies to corporate websites of Fortune 500 companies and reported positivity as the most frequently used strategy. Following Ki and Hon (2006), Cho and Huh (2010) attempted to map features of corporate blogs to those relational strategies, with the following operationalization:

-positivity: presence of user-friendly navigation tools (e.g., RSS, hyperlink within posts, site search, archive, categories, calendar, tag); interactivity features; multi-media features (podcast, video, audio, animation);

-openness: presence of two-way communication features (e.g., comment and trackback functions);

-social networking: presence of blogroll (i.e. a list of external links on the main page of a blog) and the number of links on the blogroll;

-sharing tasks: frequency of postings in blogs (e.g., more than twice a day, about once a day/week/month, two or three times a week/month, more than one month) (Cho & Huh, 2008: 36/40).

It can be seen that Cho and Huh's (2008) approach, like many others, involves

counting the technical features or functions of corporate social media, without looking at what the blog posts actually say. Similar to McMillan et al.'s (2008), such content analysis focuses on counting of structural features of various media rather than the content of media discourse. There are studies that do take into consideration the meaning expressed by corporate social media posts. One major task of such studies to develop typologies of corporate posts.

It is necessary to move beyond the relationship maintenance strategies based on Stafford and Canary (1991) for two reasons: first, Stafford and Canary's (1991) is not exhaustive

Therefore, the present study opts to start from the discourse data of corporate social media to identify the speech acts that are actually used to build and maintain organization-public relationships. Such speech acts can be called relational acts.

Public engagement

A concept closely related to OPRs is **public engagement**. It can be viewed from two angles, depending on who the agent is: 1) what organizations do to enhance the engagement of the public in their discourse and activities (e.g., "public relations [as] a communication activity that helps organizations to engage multiple publics", Taylor & Kent, 2014: 384); and 2) what the public do to engage in the discourse and activities of an organization (e.g., "user engagement with [...] corporate SNS pages", Men & Tsai, 2013: 260). In the first sense, public engagement strategies are similar to OPR building strategies, while the second sense accentuates the activities of the public rather than the organization.

Here we briefly survey the models of measuring the public's engagement activities. A typology of three levels of engagement and activities has been proposed by Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit (2011) to classify user/public activities on corporate social media pages: 1) low-level engagement: content consumption (e.g., viewing or reading page content); 2) moderate-level engagement: contribution to page content (e.g., rating products or companies, taking part in wall post conversations); and 3) high-level engagement: content creation (e.g., creating and sharing user-generated content). Men and Tsai (2013) revised the tripartite typology into a distinction of users' proactive vs. reactive engagement activities, or contributing vs. consuming activities, and proved that the former type is more strongly associated with quality OPRs than the latter. Still other studies (e.g., Chen et al., 2015) evaluate consumer engagement in terms of the automatic statistics generated by the social media interface, i.e. the number of Likes, shares, and comments. These statistics are also used by studies on brand post popularity (e.g., Sabate et al., 2014).

These consuming or contributing actions by the public can be regarded as a means of conversation, as Kelleher (2015: 296) put it: "by definition, social media offer opportunities for individuals in organizations to engage in conversational communication with individuals in publics". However, scholars in dialogic public relations do not consider such "social media engagement" activities (e.g., "posting 140-character comments on Twitter, liking a post on Facebook, or posting comments on an organizational blog", Taylor & Kent, 2014: 389) as dialogic at all, or at best as "dialogic in the name only" (DINO, Kent & Theunissen, forthcoming). In their

research, social media, which were believed to be “the very best communication principles organizations have long aspired to or practiced” (Hart, 2011: 115), unfortunately are put in the same category of “mass mediated forms of communication” like all the other asynchronous, one-way tools – advertising, marketing, blogging (Taylor & Kent, 2014: 389).

The present study is concerned with engagement as what companies do to engage the public in their discourse and activities, following the definition of engagement by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) (2007): “the creation of experiences that allow companies to build deeper, more meaningful and sustainable interactions between the company and its customers or external stakeholders”.

Yang and Kang (2009) developed a four-dimension scale of measuring blog engagement: 1) contingency interactivity (the medium dimension); 2) (blog reader’s) self-organization connection (the cognitive dimension); 3) attitude towards the organization (the attitudinal dimension); and 4) word of mouth intention (the behavioral dimension). For instance, contingency interactivity was measured by the following four items: “1) how interested you were in reading the blog’s posts; 2) how comfortable you would feel if you were asked to interact with the blogger; 3) how connected you feel to the blogger’s ideas and thoughts; and 4) how likely you would be to link to the blogger’s post from your own website or blog if you have one” (Yang & Kang, 2009: 324). All the dimensions were measured with items inquiring readers’ perception of blogs after reading them, i.e. how engaging the readers think of the blogs, the scale is not concerned with the acts of readers; rather, it is another way of

gauging the ability or strategies of bloggers (companies) to induce positive impressions from the public or to engage the public, from the perspective of audience perception (e.g., 1) make the blog posts interesting; 2) make the readers feel comfortable when interacting with them; 3) make the readers feel connected to the feelings and thoughts in blogs, etc.).

Relational strategies online

Studies specialized in OPR building strategies on various social media platforms, e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and Weibo, have identified three prevalent relational strategies: self-disclosure, information dissemination, and engagement, though the naming varies (see **Table 2.2** below for a brief summary). For self-disclosure, indicators often include the company logo, links to the official corporate website, contact info, etc., which are relatively stable content placed in the profile section rather than in individual day-to-day posts/updates, so it is not included in Table 2.2.

Ki and Hon (2009) identified six relationship cultivation strategies: access, positivity, openness (i.e. disclosure, “an organization’s efforts to provide information about the nature of the organization and what it is doing”, p. 8), sharing of tasks, networking, and assurances (“any efforts by an organization to assure its strategic publics that they and their concerns are attended to”, p. 9). However, “positivity”, “openness”, and “assurances” sound more like principles (cf. those in Kent & Taylor, 1998/2002) of relational communication rather than specific relational strategies.

Table 2.2 Summary of organization-public relationship (OPR) building strategies on social media

Reference	Organization-public relationship building/cultivation strategies	
	“Hard”/One-way	“Soft”/Two-way
Waters et al. (2009)	1) Information dissemination a. News links; b. Photo posted; c. Video files; d. Audio files; e. Posted items; f. Discussion wall; g. Press releases; h. Campaign summaries	2) Involvement a. E-mail to organization; b. Phone number; c. Message board used; e. Calendar of events; f. Volunteer opportunities; g. Donate; h. Store
Waters & Lo (2012)	1) Information dissemination a. News links; b. Press releases; c. Campaign summaries; d. Photo posted; video files; audio files; e. Posted items; f. Discussion wall	2) Involvement a. Calendar of events; b. Volunteer opportunities; c. Donate; d. Store; e. Posted items; f. Discussion wall
Men & Tsai (2012)	1) Information dissemination a. News links; b. Photo posted; video files; c. Announcements and press releases; d. Campaign summaries	2) Interactivity and involvement a. Organizational contacts; b. Navigation; c. Commenting opportunity; d. Sharing to one’s own page; e. Action features for online participation; f. Response to user posts
Shin et al. (2015)	1) Information dissemination a. Product/service information; b. News/announcement about the company, events, promotions, new offerings; c. News about the industry; d. Employment opportunities; e. Link to FAQ/Q&A; f. Ads for the company or its products/services/events	2) Engagement a. Polling/voting; b. Open-ended question or sentence to stimulate dialogue; c. Survey; d. Idea solicitation; e. Contest/competition; f. Sweepstake; g. Coupon, bar code, QR code; h. Game; i. Registration/sign-up; j. Reply to consumers (@); k. Retweet consumer comments; l. Encourage consumers to retweet
Ki & Hon (2009)	-access -positivity	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -openness -sharing of tasks -networking -assurances 	
Yang & Lim (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -narrative structure -dialogical self -perceived credibility 	

It can be seen that the strategies listed above are primarily made up of contact info, access info, and technical features of corporate social media, without adequate attention to what is actually said by corporate posts on their social media pages. Therefore, it would be necessary to survey the stream of research on specific corporate social media posts.

2.1.2.2 Dialogic principles of public relations

For the purpose of the present study, two theories of public relations are particularly relevant to an interactive mode of organization-public communication: the two-way symmetrical model of ideal public relations (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) and the dialogic theory of public relations (Kent & Taylor, 1998).

Dialogue stands in contrast to monologue. As explained by Johannesen (2002), “the assumption is that some attitudes (characteristic of dialogue) are more fully human, humane, and facilitative of self-fulfillment than are other attitudes (characteristic of monologue)” (p. 56). This echoes the Bakhtinian dialogue or heteroglossia, by incorporating others’ voices.

Dialogue “values interpersonal interaction, and places an emphasis on meaning

making, understanding, cocreation of reality, and sympathetic/empathetic interactions” (Taylor & Kent, 2014: 389).

Grunig and Hunt (1984) identified four models of public relations: press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical communication. Among the four models, Grunig and Grunig (1992) argued that the two-way symmetrical model is the most desirable and ethical. In a thorough review of symmetrical communication, Karlberg (1996) traced the concept from Plato to Habermas, calling for more research into the true discourse between organizations and publics. In response to this call, Kent and Taylor (1998; 2002) developed a dialogic theory of public relations.

Based on the belief that understanding dialogic communication will contribute to the development of true organization-to-public discourse, Kent and Taylor (1998) describe the relationship between symmetrical communication and dialogic communication as one of process and product. While two-way symmetrical communication is recognized as a process, which aims to “provide a procedural means whereby an organization and its publics can communicate interactively”, dialogic communication is a product, referring to “a particular type of relational interaction – one in which a relationship exists” (Kent & Taylor, 1998: 323).

A dialogic theory of public relations, proposed by Kent and Taylor (2002) as “a

coherent discussion of the principles of dialogue”, consists of five “overarching tenets of dialogism”, or five “features of dialogue as an orientation” (pp. 24-25):

- Mutuality: the recognition of organization–public relationships;
- Propinquity: the temporality and spontaneity of interactions with publics;
- Empathy: the supportiveness and confirmation of public goals and interests;
- Risk: the willingness to interact with individuals and publics on their own terms; and
- Commitment: the extent to which an organization gives itself over to dialogue

This theory that attempts to operationalize the difficult yet significant concept of dialogue, unfortunately, is never semantically operationalized further. Rather, dialogic communication online is operationalized in terms of technical features of the electronic medium, be it the website, the blog, or the SNS page. Initially in Kent and Taylor (1998), dialogic communication is operationalized as five strategies: the dialogic loop, the usefulness of information, the generation of return visits, the ease of interface, and conservation of visitors. Further indexes of these strategies consist of various technical features of corporate websites, such as the sitemap, an email link to the company, etc. This influential theory has inspired a large number of empirical studies using the five features, many later ones attempting to adapt the indexes to SNSs (e.g., Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010; Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009; Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Waters & Lo, 2012). Although the object of these studies is claimed

to be “dialogic communication”, they actually align with a broader body of research that examines technological interactivity of digital media.

2.1.3 Previous studies of corporate self-presentation

2.1.3.1 A survey of corporate post typologies

Studies on specific types of corporate posts on social media will shed light on strategies for organization-public relationship (OPR) building, although some of them are not directly or explicitly linked to relationship building, in that a review of typologies of corporate posts or content can provide a basis on which the more relational content or post types can be highlighted.

Looking at types of corporate posts also means an initial survey of impression management strategies of corporations on social media. The relational and interpersonal approach also implies the increasing relevance of the concept of impression management to corporate communication. Rooted in social psychology, impression management is defined as “the process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them” (Leary & Kowalski, 1990: 34).

Affordances of social media have enabled corporations to selectively and strategically present the kind of information they disseminate for their own good. As argued by Edwards (2012), recognizing the transformations brought by digitalization and globalization, public relations should be viewed as “the flow of purposive

communication produced on behalf of individuals, formally constituted and informally constituted groups, through their continuous trans-actions with other social entities. It has social, cultural, political and economic effects at local, national and global levels” (Edwards, 2012: 21). Therefore, it is essential to look at the actual discourse of such “purposive communication”.

Before profiling the range of corporate posts identified in existing literature, it is worth noting that there are also studies devoted to **brand post popularity**, aiming at locating the factors that drive the influence, impact, or popularity of brand posts by testing the correlations between various constituent features of brand posts and the public responsiveness statistics automatically generated by the social media sites. It will be helpful to draw from these studies what kind of posts are the most popular. Sabate et al. (2014) seek to categorize content attributes of brand posts according to a soft criterion (i.e. “whether they are qualitative, based on semantic analysis”) and a hard criterion (i.e. “whether they are hints that are proved in a quantitative and empirical way”) (Sabate et al., 2014: 1002). Their study resorted to the hard criterion in order to avoid the drawbacks of subjective interpretation of the semantics of brand posts as required by the soft criterion, and selected two parameters under the hard criterion: 1) richness (“the vividness of the content of the post”, i.e. inclusion of images, videos, and links); and 2) time frame (“related to time and date of publication”, i.e. day of the week and time of posting) (*ibid.*: 1003). Their results suggest that inclusion of images and videos boosted the number of Likes, inclusion of

images and proper publication timing significantly influenced the number of comments, while using links was negatively correlated to the volume of responses. As can be seen from such brand post popularity studies, they are primarily concerned with structural, functional attributes of brand posts, making the line of research comparable to that on functional interactivity. However, a more in-depth review of brand posts should still focus on what the posts actually say.

A number of empirical studies have attempted to classify brand posts into different categories based on their content or purpose of communication. **Table 2.3** provides a brief summary of corporate post typologies. Along the lists, there emerges a broad tendency of a distinction between “hard” and “soft” posts, with the former referring to either promotional or informational posts that disseminate company, brand, or product related information, and the latter involving social topics.

Table 2.3 Summary of “hard” and “soft” corporate post types in literature

Reference	Typology of corporate posts	
	“Hard”	“Soft”
Dekay (2012)	1) direct marketing of products or services; 2) promotion of sponsored events; 4) informational announcements	3) surveys; 5) “fun” postings, usually in the form of questions related to recent or upcoming events
Men & Tsai (2012)	1) product specific; 2) promotion specific; 3) company specific	4) product-related educational or entertainment information; 5) solicitation of responses; 6) non-brand-related messages
Sung (2016)	1) Corporate news/information announcement/update; 2) Advertising;	5) Product related education/entertainment; 6) Greeting/Thanks/Chat;

	3) Sales promotion; 4) Product news/information announcement/update; 9) Customer Service/Feedback/Support	7) General information/Tip; 8) Solicitation of responses; 10) Sharing others' posting; a. Messages seeking publics' feedback/opinions/comments; b. Providing live chat opportunities; c. Seeking publics' specific action-based participation (e.g., video or photo upload); d. Triggering publics' general action (e.g., try, see, learn) e. Posting seasonal/holiday/weekend greetings; f. Messages about fans' daily life/personal life in an attempt to personalize
Ahuja & Medury (2010)	1) organizational; 2) promotional	3) relational
Muntinga et al. (2011)	1) information	2) entertainment; 3) remuneration (sweepstakes)
Wigley & Lewis (2012)	1) broadcast / statement	2) forward; 3) question; 4) engagement
Nah & Saxton (2012)	1) informational; 2) promotional	3) dialogic
Saxton & Waters (2014)	1) informational; 2) promotional	3) community-building
Kim & Hammick (2013)	1) exchange-relationship messages: promotional messages	2) communal-relationship messages: helpful tips

Previous studies have proven the effectiveness of the “soft” posts in OPR building. For instance, Dekay (2012) observed that fun posts on corporate Facebook pages generate the least negative feedback from the followers. Sung and Kim (2014) found that nonpromotional messages posted by organizations online are more likely to generate positive consumer attitudes.

2.1.3.2 The conversational human voice in corporate discourse

Previous literature has identified three major corporate communication strategies: the corporate ability (CA) approach, the corporate social responsibility (CSR) approach, and the hybrid approach involving both (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Kim, 2011; Kim & Rader, 2010). CA content portrays a company as a competent entity, a provider of quality products and services, or a leader of the field or industry, while CSR information shows the kindness and caring side of a company, esp. in issues such as environmental protection, public health, education, and community welfare. However, both CA and CSR information concerns more about the deeds than the words of a company, and in recent years there has been increasing awareness of the importance of conveying humanness and warmth in enhancing organization-public relationships, which is more embodied in the way a company talks to the public (e.g., Malone & Fiske, 2013). In this context, conveying a conversational human voice is regarded as an important means of conveying such humanness and warmth.

First proposed by Searls & Weinberger (2000), the conversational human voice (CHV) is seen as a new manner of corporate talk distinct from traditional corporate communication, as including “characteristics of communication that otherwise might not be associated with traditional corporate communication ... communicating with a sense of humor, admitting mistakes, treating others as human, and providing links to competitors” (Kelleher & Miller, 2006: 399). This kind of style has also been noted by

Doostdar (2004) in stating that “blogs in general adopt a much more informal and personal tone than what is customary in a newspaper, in part because of a perceived immediacy and intimacy in the relationship between the blogger and his or her visitors” (p. 654). A formal definition of CHV came much later in Kelleher (2009) as “an engaging and natural style of organizational communication as perceived by an organization’s publics based on interactions between individuals in the organization and individuals in publics” (p. 177). The CHV thus adds a dynamic, human touch to corporate communication, which is particularly encouraged by online participatory media such as Twitter, though it also exists in other corporate genres such as websites and TV commercials with varying degrees.

There has been compelling, though well yet to increase, evidence of the power of CHV. Previous research has confirmed the advantage of blogs over traditional media in conveying CHV (Kelleher & Miller, 2006). Results from Kelleher and Miller (2006) established a significant positive correlation between CHV and communication outcomes including trust, satisfaction, control mutuality, and commitment in relationships. In their study, the concept of CHV was operationalized as 11 items: it invites people to conversation; is open to dialogue; uses conversation-style communication; tries to communicate in a human voice; tries to be interesting in communication; provides links to competitors; uses a sense of humor in communication; attempts to make communication enjoyable; would admit a mistake; provides prompt feedback addressing criticism in a direct but uncritical manner; and

treats me and others as being human (Kelleher & Miller, 2006: 413).

Sweetser and Metzgar (2007) suggested that corporate blogs contributed to effective crisis communication of a company and the public by conveying a conversational human voice. Park and Lee (2013) contrasted the effectiveness of corporate social media pages with a human presence vs. those with a corporate presence. The human-presence pages, where there was a higher level of CHV, were found to have led to higher ratings of user satisfaction. The human presence was operationalized from a text-design perspective as: including a list of employees' first names in the page, exhibiting a personal touch through the use of their names in posts. In this way, companies on social media were constructed not just "a remote corporation that only produces and sells", but represented by 'real people' behind the scene that genuinely want to achieve customer satisfaction and meet the needs of the consumer". However, methodologically, the "personal touch" was not operationalized in specific terms or indicators. The use of CHV was operationalized as "evoking the perception that publics are conversing with a real person rather than with an anonymous company".

With a longitudinal survey involving close to 2000 respondents, Dijkmans et al. (2015) investigated the relation between consumers' exposure to an international airline's social media activities, perceived level of conversational human voice and perception of corporate reputation. The results confirmed the positive correlation between the level of exposure to corporate social media and positive perception of corporate reputation, which was mediated by the conversational human voice in corporate social

media.

Yang and Lim (2009) identified four blog characteristics that are conducive to organization-public relationships (esp. trust as a relational outcome): salience of narrative structure, dialogical self, blogger credibility, and (contingency) interactivity. The first two are particularly related to the structuring of the blog discourse and can be regarded as strategies adopted by the blogger to relate to the public. Narrative structure, or narrative construction of blogs, is manifested in four aspects: 1) the informal and personal tone used in blogs; 2) the way bloggers “frame their experiences in the form of stories, not as advocacy pronouncements or official statements, ... mak[ing] their experiences more accessible to [...] site visitors through the mode of storytelling”, where “a discernible human character’s voice” is “the center of a narrative” (Yang & Lim, 2009: 344); 3) strategic and goal-oriented (rather than random) selection and presentation of acts organized over time as a means of coherence; and 4) the seeking of imagined significant audiences in that it enables the blogger to “put [her]self in their places and anticipate how they are likely to interpret and respond, [...] which] is the basis of effective blog-mediated communication” (*ibid.*: 344). This is very similar to the concept of conversational human voice. Here most relevant to the focus of the present study in terms of interdiscursivity is that the transformation of genres is made explicit by preferring stories over pronouncements or statements. Originally a notion from social psychology (Josselson, 1995), a blogger’s dialogical self “allows for the existence of a dialogical thread or the

narrative construction of meaning through relational communications” and is “created in the process of ongoing interactions with others” (*ibid.*: 345). Linking the dialogical self with two-way symmetrical public relations (Grunig, 2001), Yang and Lim (2009) speak of the dialogical self in opposition to the persuasive self, which employs an invitational rhetoric in communicating with blog readers that aims for the “recognition of each individual’s inherent uniqueness” and “mutual understanding and appreciation of different viewpoints” rather than persuasion, coercion, or gaining control over others (*ibid.*: 345). Narrative structure and dialogical self are predictors of contingency interactivity in Yang and Lim’s (2009) model, i.e. salient narrative structure and high dialogical self result in greater interactivity of blogs. Operationally, a blog post in salient narrative structure is one that portrays well-defined personal life events, measured by four items: “1) showing personal engagement; 2) demonstrating the blogger’s feeling/thinking; 3) having a well-defined beginning, middle, and ending of a story; and 4) talking about specific, particular events, rather than delivering news or general knowledge” (*ibid.*: 351). A blog post by high dialogical self is one that well utilizes the invitational rhetoric, measured by seven items: 1) making an effort to respond to comments; 2) attending to others perspectives or opinions; 3) without being arrogant; 4) without being authoritative; 5) without seeking control over others; 6) being aware of the audience; and 7) not trying to teach others. Their results indicate that positive relational outcomes of blog-mediated public relations could be achieved by the dialogic voice of an organizational blogger and that this connection between dialogical self and relational trust was mediated by

contingency interactivity.

Recalling the prominence of narrative structure, dialogical self, and a human voice in the previous section, it becomes evident that CHV is one outcome or means of brand personification or humanization, making the literature on brand personification strategies relevant to CHV.

Brand personification strategies are techniques used to “depict brands as living people able to communicate with consumers via interpersonal conversations” (Chen et al., 2015: 3). Chen et al. (2015) outlined a range of brand personification strategies employed in the textual and graphic content on corporate Facebook pages, summarized in **Table 2.4**.

Table 2.4 Brand personification strategies identified by Chen et al. (2015)

In graphic content: Images of humans or humanized characters	In textual content: Text messages with personal pronouns or imperative verbs
Anthropomorphism (Celebrity endorsers or human characters embodied with characteristics)	Personal pronouns (first-/second-/third person, i.e. I, my, me, myself, we, us; you, your, yours, yourself; s/he, his/her, him/her, him/herself, they, them, their)
Zoomorphism (Animals endowed with humanlike characteristics and act like persons)	Imperative verbs (e.g., come, join, have, enjoy, share)
Teramorphism (Objects incarnated by humanlike characteristics and act like persons)	

Their findings showed anthropomorphism as the most prevalent graphic

personification strategy, followed by zoomorphism and then teramorphism, and second-person pronouns the most prevalent textual strategy, followed by third-person pronouns, while there was no indication that brands were more likely to use imperative verbs. In terms of the effects of the personification strategies, graphic strategies were found not significant in influencing consumer engagement (measured by the number of Likes, shares, and comments), whereas among textual strategies, the use of personal pronouns and imperative verbs both significantly enhanced consumer engagement.

Men and Tsai (2015) studied correlations between corporate character and public engagement. Corporate character is defined as the key to “how a stakeholder distinguishes an organization, expressed in terms of human characteristics” (Davies et al., 2004: 127). The corporate character scale from Davies et al. (2004), consisting of five traits (i.e. agreeableness, enterprise, competence, chic, and ruthlessness), was adopted to categorize different corporate characters, but only the first three traits were chosen for testing their influence on engagement, probably for the fact that they were positive. However, operationally, the corporate characters were determined by brand social media pages followers’ perceptions, rather than the actual content of brand posts.

It can be seen that existing studies have mostly tackled CHV from the perception perspective (the same way as the Kelleher 2009 definition does) by considering CHV

as the independent variable and measuring its impact on corporate communication outcomes or more macro dimensions such as corporate reputation, whereas the occasional consideration of CHV from a text-design perspective has been limited to the use of personal names in the page or in posts. The question of what constitutes a conversational human voice remains.

2.2 Cross-cultural studies of social media communication

2.2.1 Message characteristics of social media communication

Quite a number of studies have attempted to delineate cultural variations of message characteristics in the new media sphere. A typical example is Park et al. (2014). Relying on Gudykunst's cultural variability in communication (CVC) framework and culture-specific facial expressions of emotion, the authors examined cross-cultural variations of the use of 34,231 emoticons. Also drawing on Hofstede's national culture scores and national indicators across 78 countries, they found that people from individualistic cultures tended to use horizontal and mouth-oriented emoticons like :), while those in collectivistic cultures preferred vertical and eye-oriented emoticons like ^_^ . Hasler and Friedman (2012) observed that Asian avatar dyads in a virtual world interact at larger distances than their European counterparts, which was believed to be consistent with their differential socio-cultural expectations in the physical world.

Strategies of online self-presentation have been one of the research foci. For instance, Rui and Stefanone (2013) compared self-presentation strategies across Singapore and

the US and found American users presented more text-based posts while Singaporean users preferred more photos. Cooley and Smith (2013) studied the head-body ratio of 716 profile pictures and user-provided information on Facebook (USA) versus VKontakte (Russian equivalent of Facebook). Applying the social psychology theory of face-ism to measure the head-body ratio of men and women, the study revealed significant differences in the mean face-ism indexes between men and women of the two countries. In addition, Barker and Ota (2011) compared American young women versus Japanese young women in their use of Facebook versus Mixi and found that the American women are more prone to public expressions of connection with peer group via their Facebook photographs, whereas Japanese women are much more likely to communicate closeness via Mixi diaries.

Besides work on self-presentation strategies by individuals, a large amount of work has been devoted to strategic presentation and image management by the different corporations online. For instance, Tsai and Men (2012) employed content analysis to identify cultural orientations in communication appeals of the corporate pages on leading SNSs in China (Renren) and USA (Facebook). It was found that value appeals such as interdependence, popularity, high social status, luxury, emotions, and symbolic association are more common in collectivist, high-context societies such as in China; whereas individuality and hedonism are more frequently used in an individualistic society like the USA. Furthermore, Khan et al. (2014) examined how government agencies used Twitter in Korea versus in USA and found some

differences in Twitter strategies between the two governments: Korean ministries are more likely to engage in collective collaboration and retweet common content to reinforce their collective agendas regardless of their main administrative functions, US government departments are more individualistic, likely to retweet the messages that specifically fit the purpose of each department. In addition, Ma (2013) compared the microblogging contents by consumers in sharing brand information and entertaining messages on Twitter versus Weibo (China's hybrid form of Facebook and Twitter) and found that cultural values play a significant role in moderating the types of content being shared on the SNSs. Nonetheless, Waters and Lo (2012) investigated Facebook profiles of 225 nonprofit organizations in the US, China, and Turkey and concluded that organizational uses of SNSs are only minimally affected by traditional cultural values, pointing to emerging global virtual cultures. Wu and Li (2015) also showed a similar array of emotional branding strategies adopted by leading global brands across Twitter and Weibo.

We can observe that most of the methods used for examining message characteristics of new media-mediated communication here involve quantitative content analysis or qualitative thematic analysis. Nonetheless, there are a few studies using or combining the content analysis with qualitative interviews. For instance, Cho and Park (2013) used semi-structured focus interviews comparing SNS use in Asia and the West and discovered that cultural differences have considerable influence on SNS users' communication style as well as attitudes towards SNSs.

2.2.2 Interaction and relationship on social media

With the affordance of new media technologies in supporting interpersonal messaging capacities emerges, increasing attention has also been paid to the process of interaction and relational management (e.g., Chambers, 2013). Many studies in this area confirmed the significant influence of national cultures to interaction and relationships. Cho and Lee (2008) examined virtual intercultural collaboration among students from the United States and Singapore. It was found that collaboration online is constrained by preexisting social networks and cultural boundaries in their respective countries: students are more willing to collaborate and share information with virtual partners who are members of their in-groups and share their cultural values. Seo et al. (2008) also found differences in online interaction across collectivist and individualistic cultures. Choi et al. (2012) surveyed SNS users of USA, China and Korea in terms of their engagement on SNSs and found that their social interactions within SNSs are still bound by their respective cultural orientations.

In comparing the influence of self-disclosure on relationship development in Korea, Japan, and the US, Yum and Hara (2006) found self-disclosure and trust positively related for US participants, negatively related for Korean participants and a nonfactor for the Japanese. Cho and Park (2013), in examining the nature of SNS social relationships and attitudes toward self-disclosure via SNS, also found Korean participants were likely to have a relatively small number of close friends on SNSs,

whereas U.S. participants tended to be more inclusive of acquaintances, friends, close friends, and family members. Meanwhile, American participants were more willing than Koreans to disclose personal information. It is cautioned that when participants from high-context and low-context cultures are interacting, there should be more attention to face concerns to prevent misunderstanding.

Nonetheless, we can observe that Yum and Hara (2006) and Cho and Park (2013) also found that the effect of self-disclosure on relationship quality is rather similar across cultures. All participants reported greater self-disclosure as associated with greater love, liking, and commitment. A possible reason they gave is that participants in the studies were young college students “who had been educated in democratic and egalitarian beliefs and values” and that “regardless of culture, young people have similar expectations about communication and the quality of close relationships they choose to form and continue” (Yum and Hara, 2006:140). It is noteworthy that recent studies have increasingly attempted to break away pre-assigned cultural categories and adopted a developmental perspective. For instance, Clothier (2005) duly pointed out that a hybridized cultural identity can emerge from being inducted into a virtual community composed of diverse people and cultural influences that border and overlap each other, which Clothier called it a hybrid virtual culture. Chen and Dai (2012) also argued that virtual communities challenge pre-existing cultural identities because of asymmetrical power relationships that are inherent in these communities, and the power advantage of Western culture still transfers to the cyberspace as well,

shaping the development of new cultural identities in virtual communities.

Parallel to interpersonal communication researches, researches regarding online organizational communication across cultures have also flourished. Men and Tsai (2012) compared how companies in China versus in the US use popular social network sites (SNSs) to facilitate dialogues with the publics, through a content analysis of 50 corporate pages with 500 corporate posts and 500 user posts from each. It was found that companies in both countries recognize the importance of SNSs in relationship building and employ appropriate online strategies such as disclosure, information dissemination, and involvement, but specific tactics differ. Cultural differences in the types of corporate posts and public posts on SNSs indicated that culture plays a significant role in shaping the dialogue between organizations and their publics in different countries. Also comparing China and the US, Chu and Choi (2011) studied electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in SNSs, by examining social relationship variables (social capital, tie strength, trust, and interpersonal influence) as potential predictors of eWOM communication online. Chinese consumers were found to engage in a greater level of information giving, information seeking, and pass-along behavior on SNSs than did their American counterparts. The results confirmed respective cultural orientations of horizontal and vertical collectivism vs. individualism, pointing to the significant influence of national culture on eWOM behavior.

For practitioners and scholars of public relations, social media have become “a continuation of the very best communication principles organizations have long aspired to or practiced” that “complements, expands, and enriches organizational communication” (Hart, 2011: 115). Via surveys and content analysis, scholars in the fields of communication and public relations have enthusiastically devised and validated various measures and scales of investigating interactivity, relational strategies and outcomes on the social media platforms (e.g., Cho and Huh, 2010; Rybalko and Seltzer, 2010; Smith 2010; Yin et al., 2015).

2.3 Previous studies of linguistic involvement on social media

2.3.1 Positive face strategies

Face is a notion that has been widely used for understanding the process of human interaction, although the conceptualization and analysis of face vary among different language and communication scholars. Scholars from anthropology, sociology and socio-psychology (e.g., Goffman, 1955, 1967; Huang, 1987; Ting-Toomey, 1990) tend to arrive simply at various conceptualizations of face, but linguists endeavor further to specify the speech acts, language features and/or strategies that have been used to achieve face.

Sociologist Goffman (1955; 1967) was one of the first academic attempts in Western scholarship, who defines face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken” Goffman (1967: 5). Further

to Goffman (1955, 1967), linguists Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) pointed out that face is something that is emotionally invested, can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction. They defined two universal types of face: positive face and negative face, with the former referring to a person's desire for approval and being appreciated by others, while the latter referring to a person's desire for independence and autonomy of action. They also pointed out that face and politeness are closely linked, with face as a driving force for politeness, and as a result, speakers should adopt politeness strategies to mitigate potential threats to others' positive face need or negative face need.

Furthermore, Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) provided a detailed mechanism for engaging facework with a list of possible linguistic features and strategies appealing to people's respective need for positive face versus for negative face. For example, according to Brown and Levinson, the linguistic strategies that address the positive face need of the hearer include taking notice and complimenting the hearer's admirable qualities or possessions, using colloquialisms or slang to convey in-group membership, using first-name or in-group name to show familiarity, using inclusive forms ("we"/ "let's") to include both parties in the activity, etc.; whereas the linguistic strategies that address the negative face need of the hearer include using hedges (words or phrases that diminish the force of a speech act), using subjunctive to express pessimism about the hearer's ability or willingness to comply, using formal

word choices to indicate seriousness and social distance, and avoiding personal pronouns like “I” and “you”, etc.

The positive vs. negative face needs are rephrased as involvement and independence needs by Scollon and Scollon (1995/2001), who argue that people have the need to be involved with each other and to show each other involvement in interactions. “The involvement aspect of face is concerned with the person’s right and need to be considered a normal, contributing, or supporting member of society” (Scollon & Scollon, 1995/2001: 46) and involvement can be called “solidarity politeness” (Scollon et al., 2012). Based on Brown and Levinson’s (1978/1987) positive politeness strategies by, Scollon and Scollon (1995/2001) further classified the linguistic acts or strategies of involvement as including attending to hearer, exaggerating interest, approval, sympathy with hearer, claiming in-group membership with hearer, claiming common point of view, opinions, attitudes, knowledge, empathy, being optimistic, indicating to hearer that his/her wants are taking into account, assuming or asserting reciprocity, using given names and nicknames, being voluble, and using hearer’s language or dialect.

Research on social media by interactional sociolinguists naturally involves face consideration and analysis. For instance, West and Trester (2013) collected Facebook interaction stretches of 20 American users and examined how they attended each other’s face needs. It was concluded that positive face strategies were prominent in

Facebook interactions. Their study also compared the users' authentic Facebook data and fake (humor) data in a *Wall Street Journal* report to highlight users' attention to face. Lillqvist and Louhiala-Salminen (2013) also observed the prevalence of positive politeness strategies in Finnish corporations' interaction with their customers on Facebook. Wu and Li (2015) have identified a range of features and strategies that have contributed to building attachments and emotional bonds between the corporations and their stakeholders on Twitter and Weibo, which include small talk, intimate address forms, colloquialism, humor, and other positive politeness strategies.

Research by Chinese scholars on face and politeness used to emphasize the maxims of respect and modesty (see Tsou & You, 2007), and stress the principles of power and hierarchy (see Chen, 2004; Gu, 1990). However, the study by Feng and Wu (2015) of leading Chinese brands on Weibo and that by Li and Wu (2015) of leading global brands on Weibo both indicated that face communication by corporations interacting with the Chinese public on the SNS are no longer subject to the concern of power and hierarchy, with minimum respect and modesty behavior involved; instead, corporations are more concerned with building solidarity with the public, employing extensive positive politeness strategies on the Chinese SNS.

There is also increasing literature on impoliteness. For example, Kádár, Haugh, and Chang (2013) looked into impoliteness and face threats in Mainland Chinese and Taiwan online forums. They found that Mainland and Taiwan participants differed in

their ways of expressing conflicts in discussions regarding cross-straits issues: while Taiwan participants used swear words to insulate themselves from Mainland participants, the latter tended to use pan-China identity discourse to encompass Taiwan participants' discourse, linking themselves with the other party. Shum and Lee (2013) studied disagreement and (im)politeness in two Hong Kong online forums and found eleven strategies of expressing disagreement, most of which were direct rather than using mitigation markers but were rated as appropriate by the forum visitors.

This line of research indicates that e-politeness (politeness in the Internet context) is a complex phenomenon and that both analysts and users should raise their awareness of its intricacies since it has significant influence on communication online (Graham, 2007). Meanwhile, the studies reviewed above have addressed, in one way or another, this question: are the various models in the past built for offline face and politeness still applicable to and sufficiently effective in explaining politeness in the new media context? As pointed out by Bou-Franch and Blitvich (2014), previous models of face and politeness which are mostly designed for local, synchronous, and dyad interactions, cannot illuminate interpretations for social, diachronic, and large-scale discussions in the context of new media. Further research integrating interdisciplinary insights to establish new models specialized for the new media context is called for.

2.3.2 Interactive features in textual dimensions

Linguistic involvement was first proposed by Chafe (1982; 1985) to refer to the

linguistic features which reflect the fact that speaker and listener typically interact with one another while reader and writer typically do not. According to Chafe (1982; 1985) typical spoken discourse is characterized largely by involvement between the interlocutors, which is represented in the use of features such as first-person pronouns, colloquial expressions, emphatic particles, and hedges.

Biber (1988; 2016) extended the research on linguistic involvement in his framework of multi-dimensional analysis (MDA), which aimed to investigate register variation (across the range of spoken and written registers) in a language. Six textual dimensions to distinguish different registers were proposed, among which two are particularly relevant to the present study: Dimension 1 (Informational vs. Involved Production) and Dimension 2 (Narrative vs. Non-narrative Concerns). In specific terms, interactive discourse, or text with an involved focus, is characterized by linguistic features such as: first- and second-person pronouns, private verbs (e.g., think, love), emphatics (e.g., *really*, *so completely different*), WH questions, causative subordination, hedges (e.g., *sort of*), discourse particles (e.g., *anyway*, *well*), contractions (e.g., *I'd*, *it's*), non-phrasal *and*, *be* as main verb, pro-verb *do*, and pronoun *it*, as well as the prevalent use of the present tense (even when the topic is about past events) in order to emphasize the immediacy of the interaction (Biber, 1988: 131). In Dimension 2, typical narrative features included past tense and perfect aspect verbs, third-person pronouns, public verbs, present participial clauses, and synthetic negation (Biber, 1988: 135).

Wu (1998) and Wu and Chung (2006) applied the notion of involvement in the study of Chinese advertising, and found the cluster of linguistic features used to engage Chinese consumers also included features of vernacular expressions, exclamation, questions, phonological repetition, lexical repetition, and syntactic repetition, etc. Moreover, Wu and Hui (2000) contrasted the entertainment news discourses between Hong Kong and mainland China and found differential feature sets being used for involvement across the two regions. Identification of such interactive linguistic features clearly echo the notion of text-based interactivity reviewed earlier, e.g., stylistic devices or rhetorical features of the site text communicate “a sense of engaging presence” to the site visitors (Warnick, 2007: 73).

Herring and Paolillo (2006) examined linguistic characteristics of sub-genres of weblogs by male and female blog authors and found significant correlations between linguistic features and author gender. Schwartz et al. (2013), a big data study, with a sample of 0.7 billion Facebook messages of 75,000 volunteers, found significant correlations between linguistic features of the messages and personality, gender, and age. Bergs (2009) investigated the influence of mobile text message use upon users’ offline behavior and reported explicit correlations between the two, with many commonalities between older and more recent media.

Studies have also explored correlations between gender and processes of interaction,

concluding that male and female users differed significantly in the extent of participation and speech styles: males sent more and longer messages and also received more replies than females did; male speech was more aggressive and absolute, involving more self-compliment and less politeness, whereas female speech showed more hesitation and mitigation, expressing more personal feelings, politeness, and agreement (see Herring, 1996; 2003; Huffaker & Calvert, 2005). These findings more or less corroborate with gender differences in face-to-face communication (Coates, 1993; Panyametheekul & Herring, 2007). Among them, Panyametheekul and Herring (2007), which probed the influence of gender on turn allocation in chat rooms, can be seen as integrating variationist and interactional sociolinguistics: whereas turn allocation is a central notion in conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974) and an important interactional feature, the quantitative, correlational analysis is typical of variationist sociolinguistics. Based on 917 chat room messages of 52 participants, the study found that in computer-mediated communication, Thai women showed greater involvement and received more replies than their male counterparts, which demonstrated that Thai women gained more power in CMC. This finding was different from the situation in English-speaking countries and from offline stereotypes of subordination of Thai women.

Androutsopoulos (2006) distinguishes three “waves” or phases of sociolinguistic research into computer-mediated communication. In the first wave, internet language is seen as “distinct, homogeneous, and indecipherable to ‘outsiders’”

(Androutsopoulos, 2006: 420). Such uniqueness of the language is believed to have resulted from the medium characteristics of new media, which is typical of “technological determinism”. In the second wave, discursive practices on the internet are regarded as the result of interactions of technological, social, and contextual factors. The third wave is concerned with the role of linguistic variation in communication, interaction, and social identity formation in new media, typical of social constructivism. Apparently, much more work is needed to systematically investigate what and how the linguistic resources and variability have been and can be utilized to enhance involvement as they are embedded to construct the socially situated discourses on social media. One of the research objectives of the present study, therefore, is to integrate similar concerns, notions, and findings in the two disciplines – communication and linguistics – in the course of more systematic analysis of interactivity in social media discourse. Such work is particularly wanted in the context of the Chinese social media, as the number of Chinese netizens was estimated to reach 6 billion (Barbozajan, 2014) but the efforts and advances in researching interaction on social media by far have been primarily confined to languages other than Chinese.

Powerless speech style

Another area of linguistic research that may shed light on involvement is power of style (POS). Two styles are distinguished: the powerful and the powerless, as described by Bradac and Mulac (1984):

Specifically, persons using the powerless style exhibited a relatively large number of hedges (“I sort of did.”), intensifiers (“We really did.”), hesitations (“I ... uh ... like this.”), deictic phrases (“That man over there ...”), tag questions (“It is, isn’t it?”) or declarative sentences with rising intonation and polite forms (“Yes sir ...”). Conversely, persons using the powerful style exhibited a relatively small number of these forms; their speech was generally fluent, terse and direct. (p. 307)

Similarly, according to Hosman (1989: 383), “prototypically” powerless messages were characterized by hedges, hesitations, intensifiers, as well as polite forms and “meaningless particles” (e.g., “oh, well”, “you know”). O’Barr’s (1982) experiment found that speakers with the powerful speech style were evaluated more favorably in terms of competence and attractiveness than those with the powerless speech style. Later studies found similar results in other aspects, e.g., social power, sociability, credibility, and intelligence (see Sparks, Areni, & Cox, 1998).

However, in the social media arena where power leveling takes place, when the powerful subjects, such as corporations, government agencies, and celebrities, are more concerned with solidarity building and involvement rather than power consolidation, preferences are probably different from those in courtrooms and other face-to-face communication settings, and the powerless speech style may come into

play.

It is important to note that among the features of the powerless speech style, hedges and discourse particles are also found in interactive / involvement features, but hesitations, intensifiers, and polite forms are not. Meanwhile, recalling positive vs. negative face strategies, we find that hedges and polite forms are typical negative face strategies.

2.3.3 Speech acts on social media

The notion of speech act was first proposed by Austin (1962) to refer to an utterance that has performative function in language and communication. Over the years, the term has been utilized to describe and understand the messages and their meanings in human interaction. Austin (1962) suggested that speech act can be analyzed at three levels: a locutionary act (the literal meaning of the utterance), an illocutionary act (the intension of the speaker of the utterance), and a perlocutionary act (the effect of the utterance on the hearer). Searle (1975) further refined Austin's idea of illocutionary act and classified illocutionary speech acts in terms of assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. Assertives refer to speech acts that commit the speaker to the truth of the proposition of the utterance; directives refer to speech acts that are used by the speaker to get the hearer to do something; commissives refer to speech acts that commit the speaker herself to future actions; expressives are speech acts where the speaker expresses her emotions, inner states, or

attitudes towards people or events; and declaratives are speech acts that are aimed at bringing about changes in reality.

In recent years, Searle's (1975) framework has been applied to understand interpersonal meaning and act on social media platforms. For example, Hassell and Christensen (1996) compared speech acts in three media – email, face-to-face, and telephone –and concluded that assertives are the most common speech act across all three modes of communication, while imperatives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives are more common in email and telephone communication than in face-to-face contexts, and expressives are more common in email than in face-to-face communication. Concerning SNSs, Carr et al. (2012) examined the use of speech acts on Facebook status messages and found that the messages are mostly frequently constructed with expressive acts, followed by assertives. Also examining Facebook status updates, Ilyas and Khushi (2012) concluded with the frequency ranking of expressives, assertives, imperatives, and commissives.

Most of these studies are concerned with social media data of individuals, and there is an apparent lack of attention to corporate social media. Meanwhile, results of these studies seem to be reduced to counting and ranking the most popular speech acts on social media, without looking at the actual components of the speech acts in Searle's (1975) framework. Recognizing these limitations and recalling organization-public relationship building strategies as reviewed previously, Li and Wu (2016) have

operationalized the relational strategies into specific relational speech acts that are no longer strictly confined to Searle's (1975) typology. **Table 2.5** below summarizes the relational acts identified by Li and Wu (2016), based on their case study of Chinese microblogs of Google and Starbucks.

Table 2.5 Relational strategies and relational acts on corporate microblogs

Relational strategies	Relational speech acts	
Disclosure of information	Disclosing brand history and corporate developments	
	Disseminating corporate values	
Promoting organizational accomplishments	Promoting new products and/or product features	
	Reporting various activities and events the company is involved in	
	Relaying positive experience from customers	
Stakeholder engagement	Expressing	Greetings (daily, festival, theme day)
		Expressing thanks or congratulations to the public
		Expressing the company's attitudes or feelings
	Sharing	Sharing entertainment content
		Sharing life philosophy
		Sharing practical tips
	Directing	Stating rules of activities
		Requesting or encouraging public support or feedback

We can observe that while the criteria for classifying speech acts can be different depending upon the specific objectives of the researchers, the notion of speech act is highly significant and can be further explored in our future understanding of human interaction and cross-cultural communication online. Li and Wu's (2016) framework will be a useful point of departure for the present study, yet there are possibilities of more relational speech acts due to the nature of their study as a case study.

2.3.4 Intertextuality in social media discourse

Intertextuality in traditional media

Feng and Wu (2007) contrasted the nature of generic intertextuality of advertisements in the leading Chinese newspaper *People's Daily* in 1980 and 2000. While ads were typical commercial public discourse, those in 1980 were found to contain more political discourse and those in 2000 had moved closer to the private domain and thus featuring more private discourse. Meanwhile, the linguistic style of ads also changed: those in 1980 predominantly used the informative style, the majority of the 2000 ads showed a combination of informative and involving styles. Such changes in the generic intertextuality of ads were interpreted in light of China's changing macro-socioeconomic structures and ideologies that progressively moved from state-planned to market-based economy and from pan-politicalization to consumerism.

Different from studies concerning forms or types of intertextuality, Shukrun-Nagar (2009) examined the quotation markers in televised electoral discourse by classifying them into three types: source markers (references and qualifiers to identify sources), speech markers (lexical or graphical markers to denote quotations), and circumstance markers (contextual information such as time, place, participants, and background), and their value in reinforcing the reliability of quotations (p. 459).

Feng and Wignell (2011) identified two types of intertextual voices in TV advertisements: character voice and discursive voice, and demonstrated different

means of endorsing the advertised product by different voices. While character voice endorsed the advertised product through lexico-grammar, intonation, facial expressions, discursive voice provided contextualization and intertextual discourse structure for the product.

Lazar (2012) defines “media interdiscursivity” as “the mixing of discourses involving the media in some form” (p. 113). Her study shows how a fictional character from the media, Phua Chu Kang, with his informal register and speech style and use of Singlish, is appropriated to two national campaigns in the domain of social governance and thus how the mixing of media and governance discourses serves the purpose of furthering government goals of nation building.

Intertextuality in emails

As one of the earliest and most widespread electronic means of interpersonal communication, email is a typical intertextual practice that constantly refers to prior and future messages, with its intertextual nature reinforced by functions such as “reply” and “forward”.

An early generic study of emails, Herring (1996) offers a three-phase description of email texts: 1) “link to previous discourse”; 2) “contentful message”; and 3) “link to the following discourse” (p. 84).

Gimenez (2006) found some emerging generic textual features, i.e. “the increasing use of the carbon copy (CC) facility, the legend ‘original message’ as part of the body of texts, which serves to mark off ‘new message’ from ‘previous message’, and ‘RE’ for reference and ‘FW’ for forwarded in the subject line” (p. 160). These features show that embedded emails enable group members in different locations to participate in the decision-making process and so have the effect of sharing accountability for the outcomes of the decision (p. 161).

Based on business email data from Nordic speakers of English as a lingua franca, Kankaanranta (2006) identified three forms of intertextuality: 1) when the current text refers to “previous and subsequent communicative events”; 2) the juxtaposition of features of spoken and written discourses; and 3) the forwarding function provided by the technical interface of emailing (pp. 45-46). Warren (2013) is another prominent study of intertextuality in email discourse, as previously reviewed. Other studies have focused on academic e-mails or emails with specific speech acts such as request emails.

By comparing academic email discussion messages with the discussion section of a scholarly journal, literature review sections of academic papers and book reviews which were all academic discourse, Gruber (2000) highlighted the unique textual features of email messages, including frequency of interpersonal and textual themes and marked themes. The distinctiveness of such email messages was explained as

genre mixing with oral genres in terms of interdiscursivity.

Ho (2011) examined intertextuality in professional English teachers' request emails and found the intertextual element, i.e. "indirectly represented discourse" such as "As argued in the Panel meeting ...", "he suggested ...", and "Some of my students have asked me about ..." (p. 2540), served the pragmatic functions to divert resentment and to convince the reader to comply with the requested act. Two types of interdiscursive elements were also identified: the mixing of institutional, professional, and personal discourses that was to emphasize to the reader the role of the author, and the mixing of formal and informal registers that helped the author to manage rapport with the reader.

Intertextuality in blogs

Blogs have attracted millions of users thanks to its capacity to allow users to be media owners themselves or run their own media while at the same time being able to see readers' feedback. Although no longer as popular as they were during the first decade of this century, blogs have been one of the most studied social media discourses.

An influential study of corporate blogs is Kelleher and Miller (2006). Although not using the term intertextuality or interdiscursivity explicitly, their study explored the significance of "a conversational human voice" in corporate blogs from the perspective of audience perception. If viewed from an intertextual perspective, the

“conversational human voice” can be regarded as resulting from the practice of incorporating conversational features in corporate blogs.

Strategies of mixing organizational and interpersonal discourses, or of infusing conversational features in organizational blogs, apparently echo efforts of achieving “text-based interactivity”.

Intertextuality in social media discourse

Although not studied in the name of intertextuality, many practices or functions of content-sharing on social media platforms are clearly intertextual actions, such as retweeting. Retweeting or reposting is comparable to the emailing practice of forwarding. In addition to these studies on individual intertextual functions of the interface, there are several studies that are more language and discourse focused, to be reviewed below.

Lam (2013) performed a corpus-based multimodal move analysis of Internet group buying deals. The rhetorical structure, or generic characteristics, of the new genre was found to incorporate a total of 13 move types, which consisted 5 discourse types, i.e. regulatory discourse, instructional discourse, informative discourse, promotional discourse, and social discourse, manifested through an “interplay between interdiscursivity, hypertextuality and multimodality” (Lam, 2013: 26). These interdiscursive elements were realized with different linguistic and multimodal

resources, combined to perform various communicative functions, conveying different social voices and constructing different degrees of social distance, with regulatory discourse expressing a distant institutional voice and social discourse an intimate personal voice.

West and Trester (2013) collected Facebook interaction stretches of 20 American users and examined how they attended to each other's face needs. The notion of intertextuality was also employed to show how it contributed to shaping main activities on Facebook, especially in that "both the poster and the ontetial respondents seem to be expected to do some intertextual work to tie texts together on the site" (West & Trester, 2013: 134). Such intertextual efforts included contributing comments in playful or casual tones that were similar to the original post, copying the language of the original post, and bringing in external cultural texts to extend the interaction, which made up much of the main discursive practices on Facebook.

Georgakopoulou (2014) applied small stories research to analyzing the circulation and transpositions of two news stories related to the Greek crisis on social media. Results indicated that narrative stancetaking and rescripting or resemiotization of the original incident "created opportunities for multi-temporal and multi-spatial co-authoring scenarios" (Georgakopoulou, 2014: 533), as a form of grassroots political engagement.

Based on video data from the *It Gets Better* project, a successful pro-LGBT campaign, Jones (2015) argues that much of its success lies in the narrators' strategic practice of generic intertextuality, which involves appropriating, adapting, and mixing three canonical narrative genres: the exemplum, the testimony, and the confession. Mixing the genres enables the narrators to claim "textual authority" and creatively and strategically construct different identities for themselves with respect to different listeners, in the process of telling different stories to different target listeners. In specific terms, by appropriating the genre of exempla, narrators – who tell stories and interpret the meaning of the stories to their listeners – position themselves as the knower, the teacher or mentor, while constructing their listeners as students or disciples. The testimony genre positions narrators and hearers as fellow victims that can easily empathize with each other, and hearers are also constructed as judges to reflect and acknowledge the injustices. Finally, the confession genre constructs the storyteller as being willing and able to disclosing the innermost self and the audience as built on honesty and tolerance, who together build an inclusive society. "Textual authority" claimed by the storytellers from the three canonical genres helped them move beyond agonizing to confront perpetrators of antigay violence.

The following arguments in Jones (2015) echo those about different genres correlating with different subject positions (Fairclough, 2003):

Different genres do not just represent different structural arrangements of

linguistic features; they represent different kinds of relationships between storytellers and their audiences, and different ways they are called upon to be accountable to one another. What is strategic, then, about the mixing of genres, is that it provides opportunities for storytellers to form new kinds of relationships with their listeners through manipulating the “moral positions” and participation statuses they make available to them. (Jones, 2015: 324)

However, this does not imply undermining the importance of structural features of those genres. From the perspective of interactional sociolinguistics, such linguistic features are no longer pre-assigned categories, but are better regarded as resources available to the speaker or writer that not only invoke but discursively construct different identities and roles of the interactants.

For the present study, identification and analysis of linguistic features are important in two ways: first, it is crucial to identify the linguistic features that characterize corporate posts as an emerging genre and the subgenres that constitute corporate posts; second, it is of greater value to investigate how corporations enact or cue different identities of themselves and thus different relationships with their followers on social media.

2.3.5 Niche of the present study

Text-based interactivity or the range of interactive linguistic features in corporate

blogs has been limited to micro-strategies such as the use of personal pronouns (esp. first- and second- person), the use of humor and greetings, and the use of personal photos. This profiling is neither comprehensive nor systematic. Therefore, the niche of the present study can be specified as follows.

First, the present study aims to systematically reveal the interactive linguistic features in corporate social media with intertextual lens which views this phenomenon as the colonization of interpersonal discourse to corporate discourse or the interdiscursivity between the two discourses.

Second, research into intertextuality in social media discourse is apparently unbalanced, especially in that while the momentum of social media use has transferred to newer applications such as Twitter and Weibo, the scholarship has been dominated by research on email discourse. The present study thus contributes to the yet-to-be-populated domain of corporate social media pages.

Third, current research on intertextuality on social media (except in email) is mostly qualitative and does not provide a more or less generalizable pattern for social media discourse. With the prevalence of intertextuality in corporate social media pages, the present study aims to endeavor a quantitative component in uncovering the patterns of intertextuality in social media discourse.

Fourth, as can be seen from the literature review above, cross-cultural studies of social media at the discourse level are rare, and comparative studies of intertextuality are rarer. By examining the English and Chinese pages of the same group of global brands, the present study addresses the similarities and differences of their practices on the two social media platforms in the light of cross-cultural communication.

Finally, the significance of intertextuality has been dealt with in terms of conveying participant and organizational identities and ideologies (Tekin, 2008), but seldom has it been related to dialogic communication and engagement between organizations and the public. Posited at the intersection between intertextuality and dialogic public relations or the affinity between intertextuality (interconnectedness between texts) and interactivity (interconnectedness between people), the present study aims to highlight the role of intertextuality as a means of enabling and enhancing dialogic corporate communication.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Defining interactivity and research questions

Interactivity for this study refers to the range of text-based, rhetorical means by which corporations seek interaction and develop relationships with their publics on social media. Interactivity is conceptualized as a tripartite construct which can involve the means of realization from micro interactive linguistic features to macro topical resource utilization.

Specifically, the study addresses four research questions as follows:

RQ1: What are the interactive linguistic features used for involving the audience by the global brands on Twitter versus on Weibo?

RQ2: What prevalent speech acts are performed by the global brands to initiate and promote interaction with their followers on Twitter and Weibo?

RQ3: What are the topical resources utilized by the global brands to engage the publics on social media?

RQ4: What are the commonalities and differences in the interactivity-motivated discursive practices by the global brands in the US (i.e. on Twitter) versus in China (i.e. on Weibo)?

3.2 Data

Sampling the brands

For sampling which brands were to be analyzed, the study started with the latest issuance of Interbrand's Best Global Brands 2015 (Interbrand, 2016), the list shown in

Appendix 1. Previous studies (e.g., Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010) favored the Fortune 500 list, dominated by rich companies in fields such as energy and banking. Although it is also useful to study how such brands behave on social media, compared with easy-to-see brands such as Google, Coca Cola, Amazon.com, and General Electric whose products and services are within immediate reach of most individuals and households, the energy and banking industries may not have a very strong interest in (or need for) connecting with individual customers, who are also most active social media users. Therefore, the present study prefers the list of World's Best Brands, which gives more weight to the influence and power of the brands rather than the sheer volume of wealth of companies.

The top 10 brands from the Interbrand's list were Apple, Google, Coca Cola, Microsoft, IBM, Toyota, Samsung, General Electric, McDonald's, and Amazon.com. Among them, Apple was the only brand without its official accounts on Twitter and Weibo at the time of writing, while accounts of the other nine on both platforms were very active. Considering the comparative perspective of the study across the Chinese and American social media platforms, it enhances comparability of data to rule out non-American brands; therefore, the Japanese brand Toyota and the Korean Samsung were excluded. In the pool of the rest seven brands, except Coca Cola and McDonald's, all the other five were high-tech brands (Google, Microsoft, IBM, Intel and General Electric). In order to have a balanced representation of both high-tech and more traditional brands, the sample of brands was expanded to include three other food & beverage brands (Pepsi, Starbucks, and KFC), which produced the final

sample of brands to be studied: five high-tech brands and five traditional brands (See **Table 3.1**).

Selection of social media platforms and the time span

All posts from the official pages of the ten brands on two social media platforms – Twitter and Weibo – over a three-month period (1 June – 31 August 2016) were manually collected and saved for analysis. Twitter is the world’s leading microblogging site, attracting around 320 million active users daily as of September 2015 (Twitter, 2015), whereas Weibo is a twitter-like service based in China and with its Chinese-language interface, hosting more than 500 million users by the end of 2012 (*Global Times*, September 5, 2013), making itself the leading social networking service in China. Similar architecture of the two platforms has invited many studies using comparative data from them. While posts from Twitter are better known as “tweets”, the term “post” refers to status messages issued on both Twitter and Weibo.

Caution was taken in searching official accounts of the brands on social media, for there were sometimes confusing naming practices. Fortunately both Twitter and Weibo marked official corporate accounts with special icons and colors: on Twitter, verified corporate accounts are prefixed with a white tick inside a blue icon, and Weibo similarly marks the verified corporate accounts with a white tick inside an orange/yellow icon. Only verified accounts were chosen, most of which also had in their signatures “official Twitter/Weibo account of (brand name)”. Sometimes there was more than one verified account for one brand. For example, when searching Intel on Twitter, there appeared five verified accounts of the brand: “Intel”, “Intel Official

News”, “Intel Gaming”, “Intel Security Home”, and “Intel Software”, all with the brand logo and the blue check for verified accounts. In such cases, the account with the bare brand name (e.g., “Intel”) was chosen. Links to the Twitter and Weibo pages of the brands are provided in **Appendix 2**. It should be noted at this stage that such brand pages were not sites for customer service or technical support and brands rarely replied to followers’ comments to posts on these pages. For inquiries concerning customer service or technical support, it is often compulsory for companies to respond to them, which has given rise to other specialized accounts to deal with the matters. However, during the data analysis process, there was an unfortunate data crash that affected Sections 6.1 and 6.2 which later had to rely on data collected during the period of February 2016 for illustration purposes.

Data profile

From the brands’ Twitter pages, altogether 2,088 tweets were extracted, consisting of 30,429 words, while on Weibo 1,882 brands posts were collected, comprising 158,495 Chinese characters. The total number of words or characters divided by the number of posts did not end up with exactly 140 characters per post (the limit of the length of a post imposed by the platform design), for during the process of data saving, much interface information in the form of text which was not part of the main body of the posts was also counted by the word processor. **Table 3.1** presents the data profile.

Table 3.1 Data profile

N.	Brand	Twitter		Weibo	
		Posts	Words	Posts	Words
1	Google	265	4,003	79	7,186
2	Microsoft	125	1,761	191	14,331

3	IBM	556	7,927	52	6,213
4	GE	161	2,579	50	3,531
5	Intel	272	4,419	207	15,515
6	Coca Cola	111	1,463	148	13,389
7	McDonalds	103	1,340	451	32,536
8	Pepsi	222	2,956	114	14,870
9	Starbucks	138	1,819	204	14,610
10	KFC	135	2,162	386	36,764
	Total	2,088	30,429	1,882	158,945

3.3 Framework and method of analysis

Interactivity as a tripartite construct is postulated as taking place at three levels at least: 1) the micro level: interactive linguistic features; 2) the mezzo level: relational speech acts; and 3) the macro level: topical intertextuality. Conception and analysis of the three dimensions of interactivity progressively move from the formal dimension of linguistic features, to the functional dimension of speech acts, and to the sociocultural dimension of topical intertextuality.

The framework of analysis is presented in Figure 3.1.

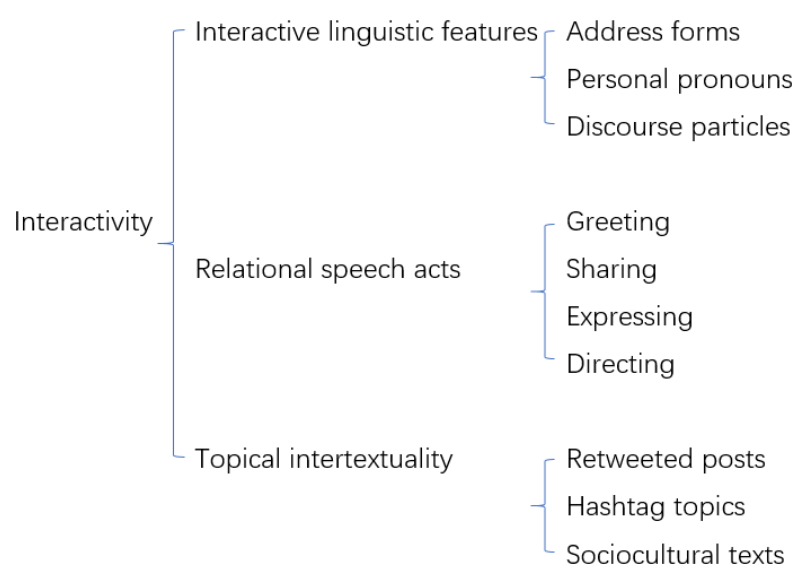


Figure 3.1 Framework of analysis

The study adopts an interactional discourse analysis approach where specific methods of corpus-assisted word analysis, speech act analysis, and intertextuality analysis are combined to uncover intricacies and mechanisms of constructing interactivity between corporations and their followers on social media. The following section explicates each element in the framework of analysis and particular methods and procedures used to analyze each of the three dimensions of interactivity.

Interactive linguistic features refer to the linguistic forms that resemble the features used in daily interaction (see also Holmes, 1995). For the present study, three types of such features will be examined: address forms, personal pronouns, and discourse particles.

The use of address forms, or terms of address, personal pronouns, and discourse particles have been considered as being subject to the dimensions of power and solidarity and as important indicators of formality. In existing literature, the use of first- and second-person pronouns is considered as interactive strategies or features in computer-mediated communication and occasionally the use of third-person pronouns is also considered to bear an interactive intention at least, if not direct interaction. Therefore, the present study examines how first-person, second-person, and third-person pronouns behave in corporate social media discourse to contribute to contribute to interactivity between corporations and their followers.

In extracting address forms, personal pronouns, and discourse particles, the study draws upon two corpus linguistic tools for the two corpora respectively: AntConc for

the English (Twitter) data set and CorpusWordParser for the Chinese (Weibo) data set. AntConc (Anthony, 2014) is a freeware, multiplatform tool for corpus linguistic research, whose Word List tool is used by the present study to parse, count, and present all the words in the corpus, listed by frequency. Its Concordance tool, which shows search results in a “KeyWord In Context)” format, is also used to investigate possible distinctions in the collocation of personal pronouns. CorpusWordParser (Xiao, 2014), a corpus analysis tool that performs similar functions as AntConc for Chinese linguistic data, is used to process the Chinese data from Weibo for this study.

Relational speech acts refer to the types of speech acts that initiate and promote interaction among people and the framework of analysis by Wu & Lin (2017) has been adapted for the present study. Instead of focusing only on the “individual self” and the speaker’s intension in the speech act classification by Searle (1975), Wu and Lin (2017) redefined speech acts in terms of “relational acts” which serve to represent the “social self” of the interactants and manifest the interpersonal functions of the utterances. For the present study, the following types of relational acts have been identified: greeting, sharing, expressing, and directing.

Table 3.2 displays the coding scheme of relational speech acts, detailing the specific types of speech acts that are typically devoted to constructing interaction with the audience in the sample, their respective definitions and illustrations. The scheme excludes sub-types of speech acts that aim to disseminate corporate information and to promote assets instead of aiming at building relationships and enabling interaction with their followers on social media. Based on the following coding scheme and

treating the post as the unit of analysis, each post is discerned in terms of its primary intention of the text designer or the primary function it intends to fulfill within the particular context and coded as one of the relational speech act in the scheme.

Table 3.2 Coding scheme for relational speech acts in corporate social media posts

Speech acts	Definitions	Illustrations
Greeting	Posts that extend greetings or good wishes to the public	
General	Posts that extend general greetings or wishes to the public, e.g., daily, weekend, end/beginning of month or season	“A busy week is coming to an end. Remember to Refresh yourself.”
Festival	Posts that extend greetings or wishes to the public on festive occasions, e.g., New Year, 4 th July	“Happy Fourth of July!”
Theme day	Posts that extend greetings or wishes to the public on theme days, e.g., World Environment Day, Mother’s Day	“Sending some love to our neighbors in the North! Happy Canada Day.”
Directing	Posts in which the company issues requests or directions for its social media followers to take some action	
Soliciting feedback	Posts that aim at soliciting feedback from followers	“If you could copy + paste anything in the world, what would you like to duplicate most?”
Requesting action	Posts that request followers to take actions such as helping spread the word or participating in events, activities or games, or winning gifts or sweepstakes with certain rules	“Your bright ideas can make the globe a better place. #GoogleScience Fair is back! Get started”
Expressing	Posts that express the company’s emotion or attitude / opinion towards people or events	
Emotion	Posts that express the company’s emotion, such as congratulations, thanks, and concern or care for individuals or groups	“Our hearts are with the Orlando victims, their families and the LGBT community. #LoveIsLove”

Attitude / opinion	Posts that express the company's stance, opinion, or attitude towards individuals, groups, or events	"Being inclusive isn't something we do, it's something we stand for."
Sharing	Posts that share light-hearted information or stories with the public, including three sub-types	
Entertaining content	Posts that share entertaining or fun content with the public	"Relax your eyes with some greenness on this lazy afternoon. Wouldn't it be cute to play football in such a field?"
Practical tips	Posts that share practice tips or recommendations to do things in a better or easier way	"How to make an instant butterscotch latte at home: http://sbux.co/1TxeGCV "
Life philosophy	Posts that share beliefs or philosophy of life, mostly chicken-soup content	"Be unique. Your new crush will take notice. #BackToSchool"

Topical intertextuality refers to prior texts or topics recontextualized by the corporations to engage the publics (see Fairclough, 1992 and Bhatia, 2004 for definitions and types of intertextuality). Three types of discursive resources appropriated by the corporations are identified: retweeted (quoted) posts published by other users, hashtag topics, and sociocultural texts on social media. Such forms of intertextuality are subsumed under the umbrella term of "topical intertextuality" because they are primarily aimed at establishing a topical connection with other texts and thus other users of social media in order to create interaction on the common ground of shared topics and interests. They may involve both of but are different from the two forms of intertextuality identified in previous literature – textual / manifest intertextuality that "borrows" or incorporates words or stretches of texts from other sources and generic / constitutive intertextuality that borrows structures or generic

features of other texts. While retweeted posts are a typical form of manifest intertextuality, hashtag topics, which explicitly indicate which topics or events the posts draw from or intend to connect with, although also incorporating specific words of the topics or events, are less representative of the form of manifest intertextuality than of the function of topical intertextuality. This dimension of interactivity moves beyond the corporate social media page and links corporate discourse to the greater matrix of sociocultural text that comprises any text ranging from discourse of other social media users, trending topics, major events, to theme days or festivals, among others.

Retweeted posts refer to posts originally composed by other users by forwarded or re-published by corporate users and thus incorporated in corporate social media pages. They are distinguished into two types: posts originally composed by internal authors and those by external authors. Internal authors refer to the corporations, their employees, CEOs, or sub-brands or branches, whereas external authors range from business partners, competitors, to customers, media outlets, and other users that are not affiliated to the corporation. It is assumed that the more often a corporate user retweets posts by external authors, the higher its level of interactivity is, compared to users that do not retweet posts by any other user or by internal users only.

Hashtag topics are also categorized into two groups: internal topics and external topics. Internal hashtag topics refers to those hashtag topics that are created by the corporate user itself, often brand-specific, and is mainly circulated and used within its own social media page, whereas external hashtag topics refer to those that are created

by other users and are not brand-specific, but are often topics of general, public interest or concern. Likewise, it is assumed that the more often a corporate user uses external hashtag topics, the higher its level of interactivity is, compared to users that do not use hashtag topics or use internal hashtag topics only.

Sociocultural texts refer to textual resources in a broad sense, which range from specific written texts or lines such as poems, lyrics, quotes by famous personalities or audiovisual texts comprising other semiotic resources, to broader texts that do not have physical forms but are nonetheless part of shared schemata by members of society or communities and may or may not be moment-targeting such as theme days, major events, and festivals. Such texts or discourses as incorporated in corporate social media discourse are identified and investigated to demonstrate the scope and variety of sociocultural texts and the means by which they are appropriated as intertextual, topical resources by corporations to enable interaction with their followers, on the basis of the Bakhtinian belief that “behind this contact [of texts] is a contact of personalities and not of things” (Bakhtin, 1986:162).

Chapter 4 Interactive linguistic features in corporate social media

This chapter identifies the main interactive linguistic features used in corporate social media discourse, namely, address forms (Section 4.1), personal pronouns (Section 4.2), and discourse particles (Section 4.3), and examines their patterns of use in the context while in the process endeavoring a comparative analysis across Twitter and Weibo as well as between technology brands and food & beverage brands.

4.1 Address forms

Besides second-person pronouns, there are both general address forms popular on social media used by corporations to refer to their followers and address forms that are created by corporations and are specific to their brand community. As **Table 4.1a** shows, on corporate Twitter, half of the brands, regardless of brand category, occasionally use “fans” to address their followers, a term popular in the social media sphere. Moreover, Google and IBM have created their own address forms by adding the suffix “-er” to their brand names to refer to their followers – Googler and IBMer – which are presumably inclusive as to incorporate both the brand owners / corporations and their followers, for all those who are interested in or affiliated or related to the two companies or brands in one way or another, be them employees or customers, can be labeled “(brand name)-ers” and regarded part of the brand community. They play an important role in signaling group or community membership and enhancing in-group commonality. However, both the variety and frequency of such address forms are limited on corporate Twitter.

Table 4.1a Address forms on corporate Twitter

	Ggle	Msft	IBM	GE	Intel	Coca	McD	Pepsi	Stbks	KFC
fans	7		1		1			1		1
Googlers	1									
IBMer			4							

In contrast, corporate Weibo shows a very different picture, with a much greater variety and frequency of general and brand-specific address forms in place. In face-to-face communication, the choice of an address term is often governed by a number of factors, including the consideration of power and solidarity (see Brown & Gilman, 1962). Gu (1990: 249) indicated that the choice of an address term in Chinese depends on the consideration of multiple variables: (1) kin or non-kin, (2) politically superior or inferior, (3) professionally prestigious or non-prestigious, (4) interpersonally familiar or unfamiliar, solidary or non-solidary, (5) male or female, (6) old or young, (7) on a formal or informal occasion, (8) family members or non-relatives, and (9) in public or at home. This wide array of variables suggests that the system of address forms in Chinese in contexts other than social media is highly complex and particularly indicative of power and social hierarchy.

However, as **Table 4.1b** shows, besides “fans”, there are a dozen more general address forms on corporate Weibo. The address forms can be categorized into four types: 1) kinship terms, such as 妹 (sister), 哥 (bro), 叔 (uncle), and 蜀黍 (uncle, in a joking tone), which are sometimes used by corporations to address their followers and sometimes to address themselves; 2) friendship-related terms, such as 小伙伴 (little folks / pals), 朋友们 (friends), 同学 (classmate) and 童鞋 (classmate, in a joking tone), which construct an imagined commonality between the two parties as if

they had been to the same school or neighborhood or construct the followers as young students as a compliment to their youth; 3) social media context-specific terms, including 小编 (little editor, used by social media representatives to refer to themselves, as they are page content editors) and 粉丝 (fans); and 4) endearment terms, such as 宝宝 (baby) and 宝贝 (babe).

It can be seen that most of this lexicon are intimate address forms, which are conventionally used interpersonally between people who are very familiar, close or in intimate relationships, and take place in the private domain. Interestingly, motivated by the need of corporations to build interactivity on social media, these casual and intimate forms of address have found their way to corporate social media.

Table 4.1b General address forms on corporate Weibo

	Ggle	Msft	IBM	GE	Intel	Coca	McD	Pepsi	Stbks	KFC
小伙伴 (little folks)		3			6	6	32	5	4	50
伙伴 (folks)		32	2		3	7			6	
朋友 (friends)	2	6			5		6	9	6	7
妹 (sister/girl)	2						4			
叔 (uncle)		17								
蜀黍 (uncle)							4			
同学 (classmate)		15			2	2		8		4
哥 (bro)				1			1	58		
同志 (comrade)				3						
童鞋 (classmate)					2	2		5		8
小编 (little editor)						4				
宝 (baby)							14			33
宝宝 (babe)								18		11
宝贝 (baby)										1
粉丝 (fans)								7		10

Comparable to the case of “Googlers” and “IBMer” on corporate Twitter, there are

unique address forms created by the brands and later also adopted by their followers on corporate Weibo, as summarized in **Table 4.1c**. Unlike the case of most studies on address forms where the focus is on how one addresses others, Table 4.1c demonstrates that there are more address forms designed by the corporations for self-appellation than to address followers. Out of the ten brands, five did not have brand-specific terms to address their followers, while only two did not have brand-specific terms for self-appellation.

Table 4.1c Brand community-specific address forms on corporate Weibo

	Brand	Self-appellation	Addressing followers
1	Google 谷歌		
2	Microsoft 微软		软粉 (Soft fans)
3	IBM	IBM 先生 (Mr. IBM)	IBM 极客 (IBM geeks)
4	Intel 英特尔	英叔 (Uncle Ying/In); 小 IN (Little IN)	英粉 (Ying/In fans)
5	GE 通用电气	哥; 哥家 (Bro; Bro's; Bro GE's)	
6	Coca Cola 可口可乐	小可 (Little Co); 可哥 (Brother Co)	
7	McDonald's 麦当劳	麦麦; 麦麦家 (Maimai / Wheat; Maimai's / Wheat's)	麦粒 (Maili / Wheat Grains)
8	Pepsi 百事可乐	百事君 (Baishi/Pepsi Jun)	
9	Starbucks 星巴克	小星 (Little Star)	星粉 (Star fans)
10	KFC 肯德基	K 记 (K's)	

For example, self-appellation forms include 麦麦 (家) (“Maimai/Wheat”, McDonald's), 哥 (“Brother”, GE), 小可 (“Little Co”, Coca Cola), etc. Brand followers are called 星粉 (“star fans”, Samsung's followers), 英粉 (“Intel fans”,

Intel’s followers), or 麦粒(们) (“wheat grain”, McDonald’s followers). It is also worth noting that the brands assign a specific gender to themselves. While technology brands consider themselves masculine and use self-appellation forms such as “Mr. IBM”, “Uncle In(tel)” (“In” short for “Intel”), and “Bro” (“GE” happens to be a homophone of *ge* (哥), the Chinese character for “brother”), food & beverage brands tend to label themselves as feminine and use self-appellation forms that either contain the prefix 小 (Little) as in 小可 (Little Co, Coca Cola) and 小星 (Little Star, Starbucks) or use repetition in their names as in 麦麦 (“*Mai-mai*” for McDonald’s, repetition of the first character of the brand name in Chinese 麦当劳(*Mai-dang-lao*)), which creates a “playing-cute” style.

Such creative, brand-specific address terms, which stand out as an effective positive politeness strategy, play an important role in personalizing the brands, enhancing solidarity of the brand communities and constructing interaction between the brands and the followers.

4.2 Personal pronouns in corporate social media

4.2.1 Personal pronouns on corporate Twitter

Table 4.1 Personal pronouns on corporate Twitter

	Ggle	Msft	IBM	GE	Intel	Coca	McDs	Pepsi	Stbks	KFC
Brand name	13	24	145	25	39	5	1	36	9	17
First-person										
Our	25	9	39	45	13	9	13	9	16	2
We	32	13	28	27	47	13	14	26	6	7
us	2	3	4		18	7	2	10		
I		3	1		3	2	1	3	9	35
my	1	3	1	2		2	1	5	12	32

me		2				2	1		6	18
ours								1		
ourselves	1		2							1
mine										1
Second-person										
your	27	11	16	4	13	11	10	34	18	18
you	36	9	42	14	38	23	15	59	15	27
yours	4					1		1		1
yourself	3					1		3	1	
Third-person										
their	12	2	10	9	4	1	1	2	1	4
it	17	4	28	5	23	10		43	5	22
they	6	4	4	2	1	2				6
those	8				1	2		3		1
them	6						3		1	1
he	5	5	1		1	1	3	2		3
she	5	1					1			1
his	3	10	3	1		2		2		4
her	1	3	3		1		1	3		
its	5	6	8	10	3	1		8		2
him		1				1				

According to Table 4.1, there are four personal pronouns that are used by all the ten sampled brands: “our”, “your”, “we” and “you”. In addition, the first-person pronoun “I” as a possible reference to the company or the corporate social media representative will also be examined. This section will therefore analyze in detail how the five pronouns are used to refer to different parties (either the companies or their followers or both) and to relate to the followers in corporate social media.

First-person plural possessive pronoun (“Our”)

As Table 4.1 shows, “our” stands out as the most commonly used first-person pronoun and is used by every brand in the sample. The five technology brands – Google,

Microsoft, IBM, GE and Intel – use “our” more than the five food & beverage brands – Coca Cola, McDonald’s, Pepsi, Starbucks, and KFC.

However, it is important to note that not all instances of “our” share the same reference or meaning. Therefore, it is useful to look into the collocations of “our” and find out what “possessions” are presented by the companies, which will then provide a clue for what “our” refers to in contexts and points to the identity the company intends to construct with specific posts on social media. I first take Google as an example, all the 25 occurrences of “our” extracted and shown in Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1 Concordance lines of “our” in Google Twitter

1	today! A year in the life of our faster, better router \xA1\xFA https://goo.
2	\xA1\xAFve got a new trick up our sleeve. Play solitaire on Google Search \xA1\x
3	\xA1\xAFre a dog company. Happy #NationalDogDay from our \xA1\xB0Dooglers \xA1\xB1 around the
4	field? http://g.co/altmedatable Congrats to our #GoogleScienceFair finalists for their innovat
5	n![@google thinks these 16 teenagers could change our world for the better. http://smithmag.co/69
6	time! Drive your blueberry to victory in our #GoogleDoodle crazy golf game \xA1\xFA http://
7	of a jam. A sweet victory for our top seed! Roll tape.\xA1\xB1 \xA1\x
8	:/g.co/fruit And now, over to our sports correspondent Peter O\xA1\xAFPelee for
9	. Tag yours and we\xA1\xAFll share our favorites each week. Your vote matters. Find
10	Actually, TLC, we do want scrubs (in our emoji). #WorldEmojiDay [A doctor, chef, astro
11	6 from their fricass\xA8\xA6e. #WorldEmojiDay Our emoji are graduating to include the teachers
12	are graduating to include the teachers inspiring our next generation of leaders. #WorldEmojiDay And
13	birthday @NatAndLo! http://g.co/go/NLbday [Our YouTube channel turns 1 today. So we threw
14	radiant. Tag yours and we'll share our favorites each week. Wishing inventor, dreamer
15	:/goo.gl/RuaKcl #LoveHasNoLabels #WeAreAmerica] Our #GoogleDoodle salutes @NASAJuno as it reaches
16	.gl/GjOQwl Hats off to one of our favorite inventors. "Willy Wonka & the Chocola
17	.gl/MhHOAI for free calling to Turkey[Our thoughts are with Turkey today. Offering free
18	& emergency info to help people stay connected.] Our thoughts are with Turkey today. Offering free
19	and we\xA1\xAFll continue to share our favorites. The Expeditions app is now availabl
20	everyone With #prideforeveryone, we stand proud in our support of the LGBTQ community \xA1\xFA
21	\xA1\xFA http://g.co/go/pride2016 Our #prideforeveryone Cardboard gives people world
22	http://g.co/prideforeveryone \xA1\xAD #TBT: Our #GoogleDoodle game from Alan Turing's 100th
23	h for your favorite yoga pose. #AndroidAdventures Our #GoogleDoodle just got sweeter for tonight\xA1
24	along as we celebrate all week with our favorite wacky phrases] Happy birthday Karl La
25	data \xA1\xFA http://www.google.com Our hearts are with the Orlando victims, their
26	easy to remember. Have a go at our P@ssW0rd Puzzle...].@NatAndLo went behind

(Note: Table 4.1 shows 25 instances of “our” in Google Twitter, while Figure 4.1

shows 26 instances. This is because in Figure 4.1, line 18 re-sends line 17, which is considered one instance of “our”.)

In Figure 4.1, while in most cases “our” refers to Google the company or the brand, associated with its products, services, activities (e.g., “our router / sleeve / link / Fair” in lines 1, 2, 3 and 4) and employers (e.g., “our sports correspondent Peter” in line 8), there are several instances of inclusive “our” that refer to the general public, e.g., “our world” (line 5), “our next generation of leaders” (line 12).

In fact, even within the instances of company/brand reference, there is a distinction between Google the business entity and Google the group of people working for the business entity. For example, compared to the typical business tone in “our router / sleeve” (lines 1 and 2), the following instances of “our” is imbued with more humanity: “our thoughts are with Turkey” (line 18), “our support of the LGBTQ community” (line 20), and “our hearts are with the Orlando victims” (line 25).

Concordance lines of Twitter posts by Starbucks, the food & beverage brand that uses most “our” in its social media posts, then is analyzed to contrast with Google to see whether there is any difference or similarity between the two in terms of “our” reference.

Figure 4.2 Concordance lines of “our” in Starbucks Twitter

1 all-nighters and 8AM exams. Learn how [our](#) baristas are inspiring new coffee creations. A
 2 is done Thank you, Angel, for keeping [our](#) customers & partners safe. We're in
 3 to report that all partners & customers from [our](#) store in Kokomo, IN are safe. Our
 4 our store in Kokomo, IN are safe. [Our](#) thoughts are with all those affected. Our
 5 . Our thoughts are with all those affected. [Our](#) goal: support coffee communities around the wo
 6 art, part science. Learn how we roast [our](#) coffee. Amaretto + Kahlua + ice cream + cold b
 7 top. 10 things you might not know about [our](#) #NitroColdBrew. 4 items, 8 dollars. Now includ
 8 brew-y. #SmoresBar #ColdBrew [Order with [our](#) app, leap the line, and summer on.]
 9 n.] Hibiscus, apple, berry, and . Introducing [our](#) new Berry Sangria Iced Tea! #Teavana #BerrySan
 10 edTea You invented a rainbow. You inspired [our](#) heart. #RainbowDrinks Looking for a go-to
 11 Looking for a go-to summer drink? [Our](#) baristas share their five favorites. Vanilla S
 12 ilk. Congrats 2016 grads! Proud to support [our](#) full and part-time US partners with
 13 at 3 pm, all summer long. We infuse [our](#) small-batch Cold Brew with pure nitrogen.
 14 Starbucks] With notes of chocolate and citrus, [our](#) #ColdBrew is best paired with sunny summer
 15 investment than investing in the youth of [our](#) country. We're sharing our coffee research &
 16 youth of our country. We're sharing [our](#) coffee research & best practices with coffee f

Among all the “our” instances of Starbucks shown in Figure 4.2, similar to Google Twitter, the majority of “our” occurrences are exclusive reference of the company, while “our thoughts” (line 4) and “our heart” (line 10) are exclusive reference of people working at Starbucks, and “our country” (line 15) stands out the only case of inclusive reference.

“Our” as used for inclusive reference and non product-related exclusive reference emphasizing the group of people working at the business entities is significant in two ways. First, it explicitly humanizes the companies and shows interest, concern or compassion, thus revealing their stances on wider social incidents or issues and undermining the money-making tone and ultimately contributing to a greater level of interactivity between the companies and their social media followers. Second, by aligning with the community, the city, the country, and even the world and the planet, the use of “our” enables the companies to present themselves as being more actively engaged in the area of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Second-person possessive pronoun (“Your”)

“Your” is used by all the sampled brands on Twitter. Second-person pronouns are considered more interactive than first-person ones, as they explicitly refer to followers of corporate social media pages and convey the companies’ intention to relate to them. Unlike “our” which is distinguished between inclusive and exclusive references, reference of “your” is more definite, i.e. to the recipients of the Twitter message / post, but it may not be the case that all instances of “your” refers to the entire block of followers. It is also of importance to look into what “possessions” of the followers the brands care about or are interested in relating to. Figure 4.3 below shows all occurrences of “your” in Google Twitter.

Figure 4.3 Concordance lines of “your” in Google Twitter

```
1      8r Soar over an active volcano in your journey through #HiddenWorlds \xA1\xFA http/
2      1\xAFs roots are in fortune telling. Try your luck w/ solitaire in Search \xA1\xFA
3      50 in the #GoogleDoodle Fruit Games. What's your highest score? http://g.co/fruit BMX
4      Thiago Braz da Silva wins gold. #Olympics Your voice matters. Introducing a new state-by-
5      //goo.gl/8cusLW #GoogleTranslate Tee time! Drive your blueberry to victory in our #GoogleDoodle cra
6      . #Olympics "Calling all young artists to share your imagination with the world. The #Doodle4Googl
7      test begins September 14! Doodle 4 Google - Share Your Imagination " During the last week, searches
8      1 ruins the moment. Free up space on your phone with @GooglePhotos. #PhotosForLife As t
9      riding near me.\xA1\xB1 #EquestrianEventing Can your lemon squeeze past the ice, or will
10     id you mean: Rossella Fiamingo...? #Olympics Ride your grape to victory in a spidery rodeo!
11     counts & schedules this summer on the #GoogleApp. Your most searched question about the #Olympics: w
12     Ortus. Felix natalis, Maria! Let Google be your guide on the #RoadToRio \xA1\xFA https://
13     1\xAFre Team @Marvel or Team @DCComics, make your comics pop with Bubble Zoom on Android \
14     : a new place to review and control your Information. http://goo.gl/Qw34qv Voting
15     \xA1\xAFll share our favorites each week. Your vote matters. Find state-by-state information
16     men have green thumbs, not just . #WorldEmojiDay Your C++ code deserves an A+ emoji. #WorldEmojiDay
17     oducing #AndroidNougat. Thank you, world, for all your sweet name ideas! #AndroidNReveal] You don\xA
18     to learn how to use them in your classroom. http://goo.gl/iFm6sw #ISTE2016]
19     ://g.co/prideforeveryone \xA1\xAD [Celebrate with your city. #PrideForEveryone] [Google now wants to
```

20 on #InternationalYogaDay? Now you can search for **your** favorite yoga pose. #AndroidAdventures Our #G
 21 makes it easier to find out if **your** home is a fit for solar. We\
 22 lives \xA1\xFA <http://goo.gl/bMuqNt> **Your** Lady Social Media Manager suggests you read
 23 & try it for a shortcut to manage **your** account data \xA1\xFA <http://www.google>.
 24 can overlay digital objects on top of **your** surroundings, like adding furniture to a spac
 25 Tango-enabled device is here to make **your** phone even smarter. <https://goo.gl/9qSX3>
 26 this year. <https://goo.gl/3kxrxy> Lost **your** phone? We can help you find it
 27 can help you find it and secure **your** account and data. Check it out: <https://>

There can be distinctions between general and specific references as well as between concrete and abstract “possessions”.

Among concrete possessions, there are ones that are product-related and non-product-related. Possessions such as “your phone” (line 8), “your comics” (line 13), “your information” (line 14), “your code” (line 16) and “your account and data” (line 27) are typical product-related ones, while “your city” (line 18), “your home” (line 21) and “your favorite yoga pose” (line 20) are non-product-related. There are several special instances that seem to be non-product-related but in fact related to a game promoted by the company, e.g., “your blueberry” (line 5), “your lemon” (line 9) and “your grape” (line 10). Instances of abstract possessions include “your luck” (line 2), “your voice” (line 4), “your vote” (line 15), “your ideas” (line 17), etc.

The type of possession speaks volumes to the identity of corporate social media followers that are constructed by the brands. The default type of concrete, product-related possessions constructs the followers as consumers or potential consumers of the company’s products and services and as, more likely, a homogenous group of money-carrying people, whereas the abstract possessions such as “voice”, “vote” and “imagination” construct the followers as more individualized, creative members of a community of shared interests.

To compare with Google the technology brand, this section also analyzes Starbucks in

terms of “your” reference and associated possessions. Figure 4.4 presents all instances of “your” in Starbucks Twitter.

Figure 4.4 Concordance lines of “your” in Starbucks Twitter

1	baristas are inspiring new coffee creations. All your burning questions, finally answered. @TheReal
2	Frappuccino after 2pm when you bring in your same-day receipt. #TreatReceipt is back! (US
3	safe. We\xA1\xAfre in awe of your courage. #Kokomo http://sbux.co/Indiana [Whe
4	courage. #Kokomo http://sbux.co/Indiana [When your colleague brings you a @Starbucks Cold Brew]
5	ric train station home. #WhereInTheWorld Bring in your same day receipt after 2PM to get
6	a banana and a honey packet with your PB&J #BistroBox to add a layer
7	to add a layer of nostalgia to your sandwich. From despair to hope\xA1\xAAhow
8	are coconut. Order in the app, tap your drink, scroll to \xA1\xB0milk\xA1\
9	\xA1\xB0milk\xA1\xB1 & customize to your mood.] [Thank you to everyone who tweeted
10	simple and sweet way to spice up your iced coffee. #Recipe #CinnamonCoffee [Never u
11	ever and a complete stranger pays for your latte at Starbucks] [With all these acts
12	life thus far.] Because adding gelato to your #ColdBrew is always a good idea. #Recipe
13	summer starting at 3pm. Row row row your boat, eating all the cheese. #PicnicDay #Bist
14	icnicDay #BistroBox Add this #IcedCaramelLatte to your recipe box. Your taste buds will thank
15	Add this #IcedCaramelLatte to your recipe box. Your taste buds will thank you later. Verismo #
16	enjoy cold coffee. Make sure to give your Vanilla Sweet Cream Cold Brew lots of
17	Sumatra coffee A hint of cocoa On your birthday, your wish is on us. #BirthdayReward
18	A hint of cocoa On your birthday, your wish is on us. #BirthdayReward #StarbucksRewa

The first eye-catching difference between Starbucks “your” associations and those of Google is that the concrete, product-related possessions indicated in “your” associations in Google Twitter are objects or devices subject to Google products and services rather than Google products themselves, whereas in Starbucks Twitter, they are mostly Starbucks products, e.g., “your sandwich” (line 7), “your drink” (line 8), “your iced coffee” (line 10), “your latte” (line 11), “your Cold Brew” (line 12) and “your Vanilla Sweet Cream Cold Brew” (line 16). In most cases, the time of publishing the Twitter post does not coincide with the time consumers have bought Starbucks products, but Starbucks Twitter proactively calls them “your” products to create an impression that the products are already “yours” or already belong to the

consumers, which makes purchasing almost a natural or irresistible act.

In Figure 4.4, “your recipe box” (line 14) and “your taste buds” (line 15) are concrete, personal possessions, but are related to experience with Starbucks and are employed to enhance a positive image of the products or the brand. The three abstract possessions, “your mood” (line 9), “your birthday” (line 17) and “your wish” (line 18) are all employed to create a personal bond between followers and specific Starbucks rewards.

The only non-product-related possession that is not employed for encouraging immediate product purchase behavior is “your courage” (line 3), which is also targeted at a definite reference. It is extracted from a post that expresses thanks to a Starbucks employee during an incident:

[Extract 4.1]

Thank you, Angel, for keeping our customers & partners safe. We’re in awe of **your courage**. #Kokomo <http://sbux.co/Indiana> (Starbucks Twitter, 25 AUG 2016)

First-person singular subjective personal pronoun (“I”)

In analyzing corporate Facebook messages, Lillqvist and Louhiala-Salminen (2014) pointed out the “complexity of the work of corporate Facebook representatives, who need to align their individual impression management with that of the organization” (p. 3) and that the use of “I” signals the corporate social media representative’s individual identity. This section examines the use of the first-person pronoun “I” by

the ten brands.

As Table 4.1 shows, food & beverage brands as a whole use significantly more “I”s than technology brands; Google and GE do not use “I” even once in their Twitter posts. All instances of “I” in technology brands’ Twitter are presented in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5 Concordance lines of “I” in technology brands’ Twitter

Microsoft:

Learn from Microsoft employee, Lauren Tran. [I talked to @panos_panay about the history
in New York. I\xA1\xAFm glad I can take my project with @Microsoft everywhere
ke my project with @Microsoft everywhere I go #M12] Our CEO sat down with

IBM:

Carolina. What is blockchain and why do I need it? #IBMBlockchain data scientist explains:

Intel:

your reply here? Hi Rabs, How may I assist you?-AT Hi @diggadugger. We're
are sorry to hear that @divox. May I know if the site you are trying
#NBAFinals Hi, @agent6372, unfortunately, I was not able to find a processor

The three instances of “I” in Microsoft Twitter are all within posts authored by other Twitter users but quoted or re-posted by Microsoft and they represent the original authors’ voice. In IBM Twitter, “I” occurs in the title of an expert talk “What is blockchain and why do I need it”, where “I” can either refer to the expert speaker himself or a typical user with a potential need of blockchain. In Intel Twitter, all three instances of “I” are used in typical customer-service discourse, which signals the

identity of individual Intel customer service representatives.

Occurrences of “I” in Starbucks Twitter are captured by Figure 4.6 to make a comparative case.

Figure 4.6 Concordance lines of “I” in Starbucks Twitter

1	how to make them. You ing what I'm ing? #StarbucksDate #Teavana Brewing coffee i
2	iness Also known as jam #Megpies #Haiku [I think I love the berry sangria tea
3	known as jam #Megpies #Haiku [I think I love the berry sangria tea from Starbucks
4	erry sangria tea from Starbucks more than I've ever loved anyone in my life]
5	granita it's Friday. #SunsetMenu [This week I\xA1\xAFm a Guest DJ at @Starbucks
6	is honestly one of the best things I've ever had from starbucks] #IcedMocha: Bittersw
7	coconut milk mocha macchiato at Starbucks I am speechless] A simple and sweet way
8] [With all these acts of violence lately I decided to pay for the car behind
9	cream cold brew just TOUCHED MY SOUL, I actually screamed in happiness] Happy *3rst* of
10	perfect and tears of joy fell when I had my first sip. Starbucks slaayyyyyyed today.]

(Note: Figure 4.6 shows 10 occurrences of “I”, different from Table 4.1 which shows 9. This is because lines 2 and 3 are considered as one instance.)

All the 9 occurrences of “I” are within the posts that are authored by other, individual Twitter users but are quoted or retweeted by Starbucks Twitter. They therefore do not represent the voice of Starbucks, nor that of Starbucks’ Twitter representative.

First-person plural subjective personal pronoun (“We”)

Besides using the brand name, it is also very common for companies to refer to themselves as “we”. Similar to “our”, “we” reference can be distinguished between the inclusive and the exclusive. As can be seen from Table 4.1, technology brands as a whole are more frequent users of “we” than food & beverage brands. Figure 4.7 presents all instances of “we” in Google Twitter.

Figure 4.7 Concordance lines of “we” in Google Twitter

1 ey got @GoogleMaps\xA1\xAF attention, so we brought them a Trekker and more 360 cameras\
 2 on @GoogleArts: http://g.co/chinesecrafts We\xA1\xAFve got a new trick up
 3 ! http://g.co/go/womenssuffrage \xA1\xAD We\xA1\xAFre a dog company. Happy #NationalDogDay
 4 (and into orbit) on this day in 1960. We hear some aces scored a 50 in the #
 5 more \xA1\xFA https://goo.gl/mKgFOi *We cannot be held responsible for any loss
 6 FA https://goo.gl/EbtVR6 #BeyondTheMap We\xA1\xAFre going #BeyondTheMap to share some
 7 xA1\xFA https://goo.gl/kFKadm Tomorrow, we\xA1\xAFre snapping with the squad. (Suicide
 8 only 0.001% of them appear on a map. We want to change that. #RioWithGoogle As the
 9 , data in Google Maps works for you. We keep it private and safe. https://goo.
 10 1\xFA http://play.google.com/bubblezoom We\xA1\xAFre geeking out at #sdcc with
 11 bee\xA1\xAFs knees. Tag yours and we\xA1\xAFll share our favorites each week.
 12 birthday, Madiba! #MandelaDay Every day we put data to work for you. We
 13 we put data to work for you. We keep it private and safe, and put
 14 emoji to represent women in the boardroom? We\xA1\xAFre in business. #WorldEmojiDay For those
 15 rldEmojiDay For those ladies about to rock, we salute you. #WorldEmojiDay When a girl wants
 16 y it in emoji. #WorldEmojiDay Actually, TLC, we do want scrubs (in our emoji). #WorldEmojiDay
 17 ou. https://goo.gl/jl2OtD #WorldEmojiDay] We\xA1\xAFre celebrating #WorldEmojiDay with over
 18 And for those in and around Nice, we\xA1\xAFve published a Google Now card
 19 de deserves an A+ emoji. #WorldEmojiDay We've also worked with Unicode to approve

 20 men are more than . This #WorldEmojiDay, we're working to fix that. https://goo.
 21 lay [Our YouTube channel turns 1 today. So we threw ourselves a video party to celebrate.
 22 on Instagram is radiant. Tag yours and we'll share our favorites each week. Wishing
 23 xA1\xAFs lives mattered. Black lives matter. We need racial justice now. [@JohnCena\xA1\xAFs
 24 a jigsaw puzzle party. Tag yours and we\xA1\xAFll continue to share our favorites.
 25 #prideforeveryone With #prideforeveryone, we stand proud in our support of the
 26 -ada63defcb70#.qq0g8eig2 \xA1\xAD] We asked Googlers to share what #prideforeveryone
 27 know no boundaries. That\xA1\xAFs why we created #prideforeveryone \xA1\xFA http://g.co/
 28 e #StrawberryMoon. http://goo.gl/y6jHQA We\xA1\xAFre cereal-sly into this week\
 29 your home is a fit for solar. We\xA1\xAFve partnered with @sierraclub to raise
 30 #PalindromeWeek is here! Follow along as we celebrate all week with our favorite wacky
 31 ris Day. #NationalDonutDay? Donut mind if we do. https://goo.gl/ayVCcL [Strong passwords
 32 . https://goo.gl/3kxrsv Lost your phone? We can help you find it and secure

Most instances of “we” in Google Twitter refer to Google the company primarily as CSR. Within these instances of exclusive reference, similar to “our”, there can be a distinction between “we” as exclusive reference to the default identity of the company as provider of products and services and “we” as exclusive reference but non product-related. For example, while instances such as “we keep it private and safe”

(line 9), “we’ve worked with Unicode” (line 19) and “we can help you find it and secure” (line 32) construct Google as the product & service provider, others such as “we stand proud in our support” (line 25) are more likely to refer to the group of people working at Google. The only inclusive reference occurs in “We need racial justice now” (line 23), where “we” refers to Google the company together with the general public, calling for racial justice in response to an incident of lost black lives.

For comparative purposes, the following part looks into the use of “we” by Pepsi, the most frequent food & beverage brand user. Pepsi’s “we” occurrences are captured by Figure 4.8.

Figure 4.8 Concordance lines of “we” in Pepsi Twitter

1	was hot and crispy, just the way we like it! [If you\xA1\xAfre wondering
2	1\xAfre doing it wrong. You know what we love? Being able to #SayItWithPepsi with Twitte
3	s are getting all shook up! #SayItWithPepsi We don\xA1\xAft sweat, we condensate Nothing
4	o! #SayItWithPepsi We don\xA1\xAft sweat, we condensate Nothing can tune your fork quite
5	gh of: feathers and confetti #SayItWithPepsi We\xA1\xAfre throwing some hardball qs to
6	://CrystalPepsi.net Don\xA1\xAft be shy, we know you want to #SayItWithPepsi. : @letitia40
7	Thanks for showing us love, @AJCalloway. We’ve got to do this again. #SayItWithPepsi[.@
8	Have fun!!#ad] Happy #WorldEmojiDay # ! We\xA1\xAfre celebrating Pepsimoji-style w/ our
9	this movie about, anyway? #SayItWithPepsi We\xA1\xAfre all suckers for a good
10	loaded-home-run feeling! #SayitWithPepsi We want to see how you #SayItWithPepsi, so
11	iss it like these guys. #SayItWithPepsi #ASG We’re knocking it out of the park #
12	@tunein. http://tunein.com/pepsiblockparty We\xA1\xAfre got some special guests performing
13	doubles as a matchmaker #SayItWithPepsi We’ll be online just as soon as
14	this bogus dial-up connects. Stay tuned, we travel The #CrystalPepsi Trail tomorrow! No mat
15	Fernandez for making it in the #ASG. We can’t wait! #ThrilloftheGame We love a
16	the #ASG. We can’t wait! #ThrilloftheGame We love a cold treat on a hot
17	cold Pepsi and cool those jets! #Hot We love America so much we’re seeing
18	jets! #Hot We love America so much we’re seeing fireworks! Happy 4th! Let the
19	If they\xA1\xAfre spinnin\xA1\xAF, we\xA1\xAfre dancin\xA1\xAF #SayItWithPepsi It’

20 are born out of the fire. #UncleDrew We love tennis! But not like tennis love,
 21 next level fun at @Sasquatch, but glad we got to take a #DayOff with @brookswheelan
 22 g the party! I can definitely #SayitwithPepsi] We got that summertime radness #PepsiParty TFW yo
 23 else fails, dance! #SayItWithPepsi YEEHAW! We wrangled us a real life Times Square
 24 e stars walking it! #SayItWithPepsi @pepsi] We're not even halfway through the show
 25 the show and it's already historic. We're all winners tonight. #CMTawards On
 26 's #CMTawards are going to be electrifying. We can't wait! Smile. Pose. Smile. Pose.

For Pepsi, although all “we” occurrences are exclusive reference, the majority of them are not explicitly product-related, but related to various games, shows and fun activities that may involve celebration where the company’s product (the drink) may add to the atmosphere of happiness and enjoyment. Different from verbs such as “work”, “create”, “bring” and “help” following “we” in Google Twitter, verbs in Pepsi are more personalized and emotional, e.g., “like”, “love”, “want”, “can’t wait”, etc. Such verbs create heightened humanization of the brand and thus greater interactivity between the brand and its followers. The level of humanization is so high that it is difficult to tell whether the author of posts such as “**We** love America so much **we**’re seeing fireworks!” (line 17) is a business organization or an ordinary individual Twitter user.

Second-person personal pronoun (“You”)

As shown in Table 4.1, “you” is arguably the most frequently used second-person pronoun. Microsoft and Starbucks are two exceptions that use slightly more “your”s than “you”s, while all the other eight brands use more “you”s. A closer look at concordance lines of “you” will lead to a better understanding of “you” reference as being general or specific. Figures 4.9 and 4.10 present all instances of “you” in

Google Twitter and Starbucks Twitter respectively.

Figure 4.9 Concordance lines of “you” in Google Twitter

1	ted by putting 360 cameras on sheep. Have you herd? #StreetView is coming to the Faroe
2	cucumber farm. Pretty cool, no matter how you slice it! https://goo.gl/SzDjMS OnHub
3	ite food is carrots. #NationalDogDay When you just can't face another email.
4	b helps Google Photos organize albums for you, instantly. http://privacy.google.com Snowboa
5	n, GDP, search interest: what happens when you level the Olympic playing field? http://g .
6	n, GDP, search interest: what happens when you level the Olympic playing field? http://g .
7	#Fiji Google Search uses data to find you the right answers. Learn more \xA1\xFA
8	lemon squeeze past the ice, or will you be a sour loser? http://g.co/
9	after Rossella wins silver in fencing. Did you mean: Rossella Fiamingo...? #Olympics Ride you
10	sponsible for any loss of productivity while you're going bananas. #sorrynotsorry Summr
11	day, data in Google Maps works for you. We keep it private and safe. https://
12	\xA1\xFA Vegas this Friday and Saturday. You don't want to miss this epic #
13	://g.co/sheets/art #R29collabs Whether you're Team @Marvel or Team @DCComics,
14	-to guide on registering to vote where you are \xA1\xFA https://goo.gl/jyVuJY
15	day we put data to work for you. We keep it private and safe, and
16	keep it private and safe, and put you in control: https://goo.gl/qrs5ML
17	those ladies about to rock, we salute you. #WorldEmojiDay When a girl wants to be
18	#WorldEmojiDay [A doctor, chef, astronaut - you got it! Create something that reflects you.
19	- you got it! Create something that reflects you. https://goo.gl/jl2OtD #WorldEmojiDay] We\
20	people typically spend at a location before you head out the door. #GoogleApp Happy birthday @
21	ourselves a video party to celebrate. AND YOU'RE INVITED! \xA1\xFA https://goo.gl/
22	y?! Today \xA1\xFA #GoogleDoodle wishes you a very happy #CanadaDay! https://goo.gl/
23	y earthquake for timely information to help you stay safe \xA1\xFA https://goo.gl/
24	oday! [Introducing #AndroidNougat. Thank you, world, for all your sweet name ideas! #
25	your sweet name ideas! #AndroidNReveal] You don't want to miss this. #
26	1 \xA1\xFA http://g.co/projectbloks Be who you are. Love who you love. Experience Pride
27	/projectbloks Be who you are. Love who you love. Experience Pride in 360 degrees \xA1\xFA
28	e namaste on #InternationalYogaDay? Now you can search for your favorite yoga pose. #
29	ore, including how Project Sunroof can save you \$\$\$ \xA1\xFA http://g.co/sunroof #SolarforSol
30	o raise awareness about solar & encourage you to go #SolarforSolstice. On the longest day
31	stice. https://goo.gl/2ZvgUc Feeling yucky? You can now search for symptoms to see
32	://goo.gl/H2kFNE Find out when you show up in search results \xA1\xFA sign
33	Your Lady Social Media Manager suggests you read this article about Google's #LadyDay \
34	, get inspired to explore the world around you. https://goo.gl/nSQbNQ History in a
35	smarter. https://goo.gl/9qSX3B Can you name any of the other species considered
36	/3kxrxy Lost your phone? We can help you find it and secure your account and

In Google Twitter, most instances of “you” are general reference to the body of followers of Google Twitter. There are two exceptions with specific references, as

signaled by the context: “those ladies about to rock, we salute **you**” (line 17) where “you” refer to the “ladies about to rock” or actually American women athletes at the Olympic Games; and “thank **you**, world, for all your sweet name ideas” (line 24) where “you” refer to the “world”, which seems to be all-encompassing, but in fact to those who did contribute name ideas.

Figure 4.10 Concordance lines of “you” in Starbucks Twitter

1	or any grande Frappuccino after 2pm when you bring in your same-day receipt. #TreatReceipt
2	make sense once lunch is done Thank you , Angel, for keeping our customers & partners s
3	ux.co/Indiana [When your colleague brings you a @Starbucks Cold Brew] Upside-down flower
4	ice cubes. Learn how to make them. You ing what I'm ing? #StarbucksDate #Teavana
5	pti.fi/2aO54GO #TonyxStarbucks #Tony90] You . Winning #StarbucksForLife. Join #StarbucksRew
6	A1\xB1 & customize to your mood.] [Thank you to everyone who tweeted about the iced
7	nonCoffee [Never underestimate how much you can get to know someone over a
8	+ a shot of espresso on top. 10 things you might not know about our #NitroColdBrew. 4 ite
9	the future of coffee. #HaciendaAlsacia [When you 're having the worst Monday ever and
10	coffee industry from planting to harvesting. [You have 2 lives: the one before trying Starbucks
11	GreenTeaLemonade #PassionTangolcedTea You invented a rainbow. You inspired our heart.
12	ssionTangolcedTea You invented a rainbow. You inspired our heart. #RainbowDrinks Lookin
13	wait Slow steeped and smooth, just for you To make every day great The Pride
14	recipe box. Your taste buds will thank you later. Verismo #IcedCaramelMacchiato Recipe:
15	Glorious and green for the greatest father you 've ever seen #FathersDay #StarbucksCard [fall

Similar to Google Twitter, Starbucks Twitter uses “you” to primarily refer to the body of its followers, with only one exception of specific reference in “Thank **you**, Angel, for...” where “you” refers to a Starbucks employee named Angel.

4.2.2 Personal pronouns on corporate Weibo

Table 4.2 Personal pronouns on corporate Weibo

	Ggle	Msft	IBM	GE	Intel	Coca	McD	Pepsi	Stbks	KFC
Brand name	123	136	153	32	144	148	379	274	139	244
First-person										
我们 we	12	22	10	17	33	61	33	13	32	56
我 I	7	8	22	14	25	18	83	42	6	156
咱 we (colloquial)				1						
wuli (we; our)								14		
Second-person										
你 you (singular)	27	121	23	15	251	145	666	104	172	347
您 vous			1	2	2				1	7
你们 you (plural)				5	10	12	16	17		46
大家 all	7	4		3	8	18	11	13	6	25
各位 everyone					18		1	4		
Third-person										
它 it	12	4		3	8	7	4	19	37	11
TA (he / she)	20		1		3	1	24	12	31	12
他们 they	6		6	5	10	12	8			20
他 he		7			15	8	8	19		27
它们 they (it-plural)					2	5	6			
她们 they (she-plural)					2		2			
她 she					2			5		9

According to Table 4.2, there are only two personal pronouns that are used by all the ten sampled brands: “我们” (pronounced *wo-men*, meaning “we”) and “我” (pronounced *wo*, meaning “I”), both of which are first-person, compared with the two first-person and two second-person pronouns used by all the ten brands on corporate Twitter. One of the reasons why second-person pronouns are not used by all the brands is that they resort to other means of appellation, including general and brand-specific address forms in social media, which will be examined in the section to follow. Since corporate Weibo is primarily considered as a solidarity-building

platform, it is surprising to find “您” (pronounced *ning*, meaning “you/vous”), the honorific form of “you” (pronounced *ni*, meaning “you/tu”).

This part will analyze the five personal pronouns on corporate Weibo: “我们” (we), “我” (I), “你” (you, singular) and “您” (you/vous). In addition, there are two pronouns – “wuli” and “TA” in Table 4.2 that are non-Chinese characters but have nonetheless found their way to Chinese social media discourse in recent years, which are worthy of more detailed analysis.

First-person plural subjective personal pronoun (“我们” (we))

As can be seen from Table 4.2, food & beverage brands as a whole use more “我们” (we) than technology brands. This part will compare the use of “我们” (we) in Google Weibo vs Starbucks Weibo, representing technology brands and food & beverage brands respectively. Instances of “我们” (we) in Google Weibo and Starbucks Weibo are shown in Figures 4.11 and 4.12.

Figure 4.11 Concordance lines of “我们” (we) in Google Weibo

```

1  的/u 代码/n 。/w 今天/nt ,/w 跟随/v 我们/r 一起/d 开启/v Google/ws 产品/n 之/u 旅/n ,/w
2  ,水果/n 运动会/n 的/u 第/h 十/m 天/nt 我们/r 换个/v 角度/n ,/w 来看/v 看/v 运动员/n 背后/nl 永远
3  何/r 顺应/v 潮流/n 抓住/v 机遇/n ?/w 我们/r 开启/v Google/ws 数字/n 营销/v 大/a 课堂/n ,/w
4  #/w Google/ws 全球/n 汇/v #/w 根据/p 我们/r 的/u 提示/v 来/vd 猜/v 猜/v 这是/r 哪/r
5  ws 全球/n 汇/v #/w 感谢/v 世界/n 为/p 我们/r 提供/v 了/u 那么/r 多/a 点子/n 。/w 现在/nt ,/w
6  访谈/v 第三/m 期中/nt ,/w 就/d 让/p 我们/r 来/vd 听/v 听/v Zenjoy/ws 的/u 移动/v 出海/v
7  访谈/v 第二/m 期中/nt ,/w 就/d 让/p 我们/r 一/m 起来/vd 听/v 听/v Kika/ws 的/u 出海/v
8  /m 问题/n 。/w 现在/nt ,/w 就/d 让/p 我们/r 走近/v Megenta/ws ,/w 一同/d 探索/v 机器/n 学习/
9  /r 特定/a 的/u 日子/nt 里/nd ,/w 让/p 我们/r 对/a 爸爸/n 说/v 声/n 节日/nt 快乐/a !/w 感谢/
10  节日/nt 快乐/a !/w 感谢/v 父亲/n 对/a 我们/r 人生/n 的/u 指引/v 和/c 无时无刻/i 陪伴/v 、/w 支持/
11  夏季/nt 奥运会/j 的/u 临近/v ,/w 让/p 我们/r 提前/v 来一场/ns “/w 里/nd 约/v 游/v ”/w 吧/u
12  /u !/w O/ws 奥运/j 开始/v 前/nd ,/w 我们/r 去/v 里/nd 约/v 看/v 一/m 看/v #/w Google/

```

Figure 4.12 Concordance lines of “我们” (we) in Starbucks Weibo

1 /v)/w 各位/r 星/n 粉/n , /w 今天/nt 我们/r 为/p 大家/n 新鲜/a 带来/v 星/n 巴/v 克/v
2 号/d 到来/v 的/u 新/a 学期/nt , /w 让/p 我们/r 回归/v 咖啡/n , /w 来/vd 认识/v 两/m 位/q 新/
3 宠/n ？/w 世界/n 那么/r 大/a , /w 我们/r 都/d 追求/v “/w 想/v 走/v 就/d 走/v 的/
4 目/i 。/w 夏天/nt 不/d 散场/v , /w 让/p 我们/r 再/d 约/v 一/m 杯/n 星/n 冰/n 乐/v , /
5 APP/ws 进入/v 聚/v 划算/v 频道/n , /w 我们/r 为/p 星/n 粉/n 准备/v 了/u 甄选/v 的/u
6 /i 。/w 不如/v 趁着/p 这/r 热浪/n , /w 我们/r 再/d 约/v 一/m 杯/n 星/n 冰/n 乐/v 。/
7 在/p 网上/nl 预约/v 兑换/v 月饼/n , /w 我们/r 还有/v 更多/d 好/a 礼/n 。/w [/w 从/p 今天/nt
8 /n 品/v 过/vd 七夕/nt #/w 咖啡/n 让/p 我们/r 在/p 一起/d , /w 爱/v 让/p 我们/r 不/d 分开/
9 让/p 我们/r 在/p 一起/d , /w 爱/v 让/p 我们/r 不/d 分开/v 。/w 亲爱的/n , /w 七夕/nt 快乐/a ~/w
10 同学/n 好友/n 下午/nt 茶/n , /w 假装/v 我们/r 还有/v 暑假/n 。/w 即日/nt 起/v 至/v 8/m 月/nt
11 买/v 任意/d 手工/n 调制/v 饮品/n , /w 我们/r 就/d 送/v 你/r 升级/v 版/n 法式/n 香酥/a
12 买/v 任意/d 手工/n 调制/v 饮品/n , /w 我们/r 就/d 送/v 你/r 升级/v 版/n 法式/n 香酥/a
13 艺术家/n 们/k 灵感/n 的/u 源泉/n 。/w 我们/r 从/p 星/n 冰/n 乐/v 中/nd 汲取/v 灵感/n , /
14 有/v 多/a 款/n 全新/a 的/u 美味/n , /w 我们/r 还/d 准备/v 请/v 你/r 吃/v 可/vu 颂/v 。/
15 下/v 这/r 张/nhf 卡/n , /w 别/d 错过/v 我们/r 宝贵/a 的/u 传统/n 文化/n 。/w 你/r 有/v 多久/
16 没有/v , /w 那/r 就/d 快/a 来/vd 参与/v 我们/r 的/u 摇/v 一/m 摇/v 活动/v , /w 有/v 机会/
17 构思/n 妙/a 想/v , /w 也/d 来/vd 告诉/v 我们/r 吧/u 。/w O/ws 夏日/nt 花样/n 变/v 变/v 变/
18 /d 搞定/v 科技/n 越来越/d 发达/a , /w 我们/r 的/u 生活/n 节奏/n 也/d 越来越/d 快/a 。/w 星/
19 里偷闲/i 的/u 下午/nt 茶/n 时间/n , /w 我们/r 给/p 你/r 买/v 三/m 送/v 一/m 的/u
20 /vu 爱上/v 这样/r 的/u 生活方式/n 。/w 我们/r 推荐/v : /w 中/nd 杯/n 拿/v 铁/n /w 卡/n
21 号/r 象征/v 着/u 永/d 华/ns 富贵/a 。/w 我们/r 在/p 这/r 张京绣/nh 款/n 星/n 享/x 卡上/nl
22 目/nt , /w 美妙/a 的/u 暑假/n 在/p 向/p 我们/r 招手/v 。/w 约上/v 小伙伴/n 们/k 和/c 星/n 冰/
23 妹/v 体验/v 星/n 巴/v 克/v , /w 让/p 我们/r 给/p 你/r 买/v 三/m 享/x 一/m 的/u
24 有/v 几/m 次/q 20/m 岁/nt ? /w 当/p 我们/r 渐渐/d 长大/v , /w 我们/r 的/u 父母/n 、 /w 爷爷/n
25 nt ? /w 当/p 我们/r 渐渐/d 长大/v , /w 我们/r 的/u 父母/n 、 /w 爷爷/n 奶奶/n 也/d 在/p 慢慢/
26 n 快乐/a #/w 从/p 爸爸/n 身上/nl , /w 我们/r 获取/v 了/u 太多/a 一/w 一/w 相貌/n 、 /w 价值观/n
27 致敬/v 父爱/n 的/u 日子/nt 里/nd , /w 我们/r 为/p 你/r 准备/v 了/u 六/m 个/q 字/n
28 业/v 旅行/v 也/d 别/d 忘/v 了/u 带上/v 我们/r 。/w 星/n 巴/v 克/v 旅行/v 伙伴/n 水瓶/n , /w
29 给/p 旅行/v 增添/v 色彩/n 和/c 属于/v 我们/r 的/u 回忆/v 。/w 千秋/nt 盛花/nh , /w 万灵/nh 载
30 也是/vl 一/m 张/nhf 邀请函/n , /w 让/p 我们/r 离/v 中国/ns 传统/n 手工艺/n 之/u 美/a 更/d
31 个/r 都/d 不能/vu 少/a 。/w 而/c 不管/c 我们/r 已经/d 毕业/v 了/u 多久/nt , /w 毕业/v 季/nt 总/
32 /u 多久/nt , /w 毕业/v 季/nt 总/d 让/p 我们/r 感怀/v 青春/n 。/w 给/p 当年/nt 的/u 青春/n 伙伴/

In Google Weibo, “我们” (we) as used in “让我们” (let us) in lines 6, 7, 8 and 11 are typical inclusive reference to include both Google and its followers, inviting followers to some activity. In line 9, although also in the form of “让我们” (let us) and with inclusive reference, “我们” deviates from the default corporate identity of a business entity and becomes more humanized as it calls for followers to pay respect for fathers on Fathers’ Day: “让我们对爸爸说一声节日快乐” (let us say Happy Fathers’ Day to daddy). Instances of exclusive reference occur in “跟随我们” (follow us; line 1), “我们开启” (we open; line 3), “根据我们提示” (follow our instructions; line 4), and “感

谢世界为我们提供了那么多点子”(thank you for giving us so many ideas; line 5).

First-person singular subjective personal pronoun (“我” (I))

Similar to the case of “我们” (we), as demonstrated in Table 4.2, food & beverage brands tend to use more “我” (I) than technology brands. This part compares the use of “我” (I) in Google Weibo vs Starbucks Weibo, representing technology brands and food & beverage brands respectively. Instances of “我” (I) in Google Weibo and Starbucks Weibo are shown in Figures 4.13 and 4.14.

Figure 4.13 Concordance lines of “我” (I) in Google Weibo

```
1 家人/n 的/u 支持/v 鼓励/v 就/d 没有/v 我/r 的/u 今天/nt , /w TA/ws 们/k 是/vl 我/r 力量/
2 我/r 的/u 今天/nt , /w TA/ws 们/k 是/vl 我/r 力量/n 的/u 全部/n ./w ./w ./w 展开/v 全文/n c
3 是/vl : /w "/w 坚持/v 锻炼/v 呗/u , /w 我/r 每天/r 都会/vu 游到/v 整个/a 泳池/n 的/u 水/n
4 "/w "/w 这种/r 沙发/n 适合/v 放/v 在/p 我/r 的/u 公寓/n 吗/u ?/w "/w 这些/r 问题/n 你/r
5 e/ws 全球/n 汇/v #/w 大家/n 好/a , /w 我/r 是/vl Android/ws N/ws , /w 你/r 也/d 可以/vu
6 d/ws N/ws , /w 你/r 也/d 可以/vu 叫/v 我/r "/w Nougat/ws 牛/n 轧/v 糖/n "/w 。 /w 我/r
7 /w Nougat/ws 牛/n 轧/v 糖/n "/w 。 /w 我/r 很/d 喜欢/v 自己/r 的/u 这个/r 新/a 名字/n , /
```

Figure 4.14 Concordance lines of “我” (I) in Starbucks Weibo

```
1 士/n 、 /w 巧克力/n 、 /w 咖啡/n ; /w 我/r 、 /w 你/r 、 /w 她/r .../w .../w 一个/r 有/v 阳光/n
2 A/ws 的/u 月饼/n 了/u 吗/u ?/w 给/p 我/r 一/m 根/n 脆/a 吸/v 棒/n , /w 给/p 我/
3 /r 一/m 根/n 脆/a 吸/v 棒/n , /w 给/p 我/r 一/m 杯/n #/w 黑白/n 双/q 重奏/n 摩/v 卡/
4 奏/n 摩/v 卡/n 星/n 冰/n 乐/v #/w , /w 我/r 就/d 能/vu 支起/v 一个/r 夏天/nt 的/u 快乐/a 。 /
5 , /w 你/r 的/u 双重/a 夏/nhf 莓/x , /w 我/r 的/u 香/a 芒/n 巴/v 菲/a , /w 开心/a 聊/
6 only/ws sunshine/ws .../w ./w 你/r 让/p 我/r 的/u 阴天/n 放晴/v 。 /w 这/r 句/n 话/n 如果说/
```

Of the seven instances of “我” in Google Weibo, only the one in line 4 (Figure 4.13) refers to the voice of a product user since it is embedded in a simulated question “这种沙发适合放在我的公寓吗?” (Does this sofa fit in my apartment?) that users can now ask the smart product and get response, while the remaining instances of “我” are

all references to the brand-related elements, either in the voice of personified products (lines 5, 6, and 7) or that of humanized characters in games developed by the corporation (lines 1, 2, and 3). Dramatically different from the case of Google, none of the five instances of “我” in Starbucks Weibo refer to the corporation; instead, the first-person pronoun is used to create a string of direct speech by consumers or followers that is reported by Starbucks Weibo, which then leaves the impression that Starbucks knows the followers so well that it speaks their mind. In particular, as in line 6 (Figure 4.14), by stating that “if it is difficult for you to say it loud ‘you are my sunshine’, why not show it with this star cup”, Starbucks disguises itself into some romantic adviser who knows well the shyness of a secret admirer and advises him or her to show the feelings with a brand item.

Second-person singular pronoun (“你” (you))

Second-person singular pronoun “你” (you) is a common interactive linguistic feature employed by organizations to address their audience in digital media to enable the discourse practice that the organizations are talking to their audience directly. It is predictably the most frequently used personal pronoun by technology and food & beverage brands alike. Figures 4.15 and 4.16 display instances of “你” in Google Weibo and Starbucks Weibo as representatives of the two types of brands respectively.

Figure 4.15 Concordance lines of “你” (you, singular) in Google Weibo

1 可/vu 再生能源/n 的/u 愿/vu 景/n 。/w 你/r 知道/v 这/r 架/n 飞机/n 飞过/v 了/u 多少/d
 2 ,/w 这/r 两/m 周/nt 追/v 比赛/v 的/u 你/r 是否/d 也/d 跟着/v Google/ws 一起/d 感受/v 了/u
 3 v ?/w 一/m 篇/q 文章/n 打包/v 告诉/v 你/r Google/ws 如何/r 认真/a 玩转/v 奥运/j Doodle/ws
 4 裁判员/n 都/d 快/a 跟/c 不/d 上/nd 。/w 你/r 知道/v 今天/nt 的/u 水果/n 运动员/n 来自/v 哪个/r
 5 /w 千万/d 别/d 走开/v !/w 待/v 会/vu 你/r 就/d 能/vu 看见/v 胖乎乎/a 桔子/n 君/x 也/d
 6 ,/w 还有/v 哪些/r 热/a 搜/v 正/a 合/v 你/r 的/u 心意/n ,/w 或/d 能/vu 带给/v 你/r 灵感/
 7 r/r 的/u 心意/n ,/w 或/d 能/vu 带给/v 你/r 灵感/n 呢/u ?/w 敬请/v 期待/v Google/ws ./w .
 8 /a 而/c 动人/a 的/u 神话/n 故事/n ,/w 你/r 与/c 良人/n 又/d 打算/v 如何/r 共度/v 今宵/nt ?/
 9 奥运会/j 开幕式/n ,/w 有/v 没有/v 给/p 你/r 留下/v 深刻/a 印象/n 呢/u ?/w Doodle/ws 水果/n
 10 s 数字/n 营销/v 第二/m 课/n ,/w 教/v 你/r 如何/r 从/p 移动/v 搜索/v 中/nd 精/a 准/v
 11 5/m 奥运/j 在即/v ,/w Google/ws 带/n 你/r 探索/v 里/nd 约/v 精彩/a #/w Google/ws 在/p
 12 v 。/w O/ws 说/v 走/v 就/d 走/v ?/w 你/r 的/u 出国/v 游/v 还/d 差/a 这/r 几个/r “/
 13 w “/w #/w Google/ws 全球/n 汇/v #/w 你/r 知道/v 吗/u ?/w 刷/v 爆/v 朋友/n 圈/n 的/
 14 am/ws Labs/ws 是/vl 真的/a 要/vu 带/n 你/r 造/v 梦/n 了/u 。/w 它/r 正/a 尝试/v 提供/
 15 的/u 公寓/n 吗/u ?/w “/w 这些/r 问题/n 你/r 的/u 手机/n 现在/nt 能/vu 回答/v 么/k ?/w 利用/
 16 r 的/u 吧/u 。/w O/ws 人工智能/n 没/d 你/r 想/v 得/u 那么/r 可怕/a #/w Google/ws 全球/n
 17 ,/w 我/r 是/vl Android/ws N/ws ,/w 你/r 也/d 可以/vu 叫/v 我/r “/w Nougat/ws 牛/n 轧/
 18 y/ws 全球/n 汇/v #/w 想/v 要/vu 开发/v 你/r 自己/r 的/u Android/ws 应用/v ?/w Android/ws
 19 r 。/w OPlay/ws with/ws Google/ws ./w 你/r 还/d 缺/v 一个/r Playbook/ws #/w 大/a 爱/v
 20 a 而/c 有趣/a 的/u 夏天/nt 模式/n 。/w 你/r 又/d 准备/v 如何/r 利用/v 这/r 一/m 年中/nt
 21 可/vu 互动/v 的/u 实体/n 像素/n 变成/v 你/r 的/u 画笔/n !/w O/ws 玩/v 起来/vd !/w 交互式/n
 22 元/v 起来/vd !/w 交互式/n 屏幕/n 让/p 你/r 的/u 创作/v 更/d 出彩/v !/w #/w 大/a 爱/v
 23 震撼/v 景象/n ?/w 让/p Google/ws 带/n 你/r 一起/d 去/v 探索/v 。/w O/ws 在/p 国际/n 空间站/
 24 学/n 应用/v Science/ws Journal/ws 把/p 你/r 的/u 手机/n 变成/v 你/r 的/u “/w 随身/v 实验室/
 25 ournal/ws 把/p 你/r 的/u 手机/n 变成/v 你/r 的/u “/w 随身/v 实验室/n “/w !/w O/ws 把/p 世
 26 室/n “/w !/w O/ws 把/p 世界/n 变成/v 你/r 的/u 实验室/n #/w Google/ws 全球/n 汇/v #/w
 27 快乐/a !/w O/ws 今天/nt ,/w 也是/vl 你/r 的/u 节日/nt

Figure 4.16 Concordance lines of “你” (you, singular) in Starbucks Weibo

1 /n 纳/v (/w TEAVANA/ws)/w 带给/v 你/r 的/u 第一/m 份/q 见面礼/n 是/vl 两/m 款/n
 2 开/v 全文/n c/ws 中秋/nt 期间/nt ,/w 你/r 期待/v 什么/r ?/w 想必/d ,/w 很多/a 杯子/n 控/v
 3 、/w 沐/x 着/u 月光/n 来/vd 了/u 。/w 你/r 被/p 哪/r 一/m 款/n 圈/n 粉/n 了/u ?/
 4 ,/w 给/p 钟爱/v 风味/n 拿/v 铁/n 的/u 你/r ,/w 新/a 的/u 惊/v 艳/a 。/w 听说/v ,/w 你/
 5 新/a 的/u 惊/v 艳/a 。/w 听说/v ,/w 你/r 默默/a 观察/v 了/u TA/ws 许久/nt ?/w 知道/v TA/
 6 /v 。/w 让/p TA/ws 知道/v ,/w 一切/r 你/r 都/d 懂/v 即将/d 到来/v 的/u 新/a 学期/nt ,/
 7 v 拿/v 铁/n 的/u 一口/d 恬/x 美/a ,/w 你/r 想好/v 约上/v 谁/r 了/u 吗/u ?/w 这/r 一/
 8 维/ns 赛/v 博/a 农场/n ,/w 谁/r 是/vl 你/r 的/u 新宠/n ?/w 世界/n 那么/r 大/a ,/w 我们/r
 9 v 互相/d 思念/v 的/u 人们/n ,/w 想/v 你/r ,/w 相聚/v 。/w L/ws 星/n 巴/v 克/v 品牌/n
 10 口味/n 的/u 高颜/nh 值/v 月饼/n 。/w 你/r 的/u 用心/a ,/w TA/ws 一/m 定会/vu 看到/v 。/w
 11 nt 旅行/v 款/n 星/n 享/x 卡/n #/w ,/w 你/r 有/v 没有/v 什么/r 忍不住/v 想起/v ?/w 双/q 尾/
 12 和/c 中秋/nt 星/n 礼/n 卡/n ,/w 让/p 你/r 的/u 思念/v 带/n 着/u 这/r 份/q 心意/n
 13 中国/ns 古典/a 文化/n 的/u 交融/v 。/w 你/r 心动/v 了/u 吗/u ?/w 他/r 喜欢/v 在/p 上午/
 14 业/v 篇/q 今年/nt 中秋/nt ,/w 回到/v 你/r 最/d 爱/v 的/u 赏月/v 地/u ,/w 与/c 想念/
 15 聚/v 中秋/nt #/w 这个/r 中秋/nt ,/w 你/r 会/vu 用/v 哪/r 句/n 话/n 和/c TA/ws
 16 进入/v 聚/v 划算/v 频道/n ,/w 选出/v 你/r 中意/v 的/u 两/m 张/nhf 电子/n 星/n 礼/n
 17 /nhf 电子/n 星/n 礼/n 卡/n ,/w 送出/v 你/r 的/u 相聚/v 宣言/n !/w —/w >/w —/w >/w O/w
 18 v 巧克力/n 、/w 咖啡/n ;/w 我/r 、/w 你/r 、/w 她/r .../w .../w 一个/r 有/v 阳光/n 、/w 有/v
 19 情/n 当然/d 能/vu 轻松/a 搞定/v 。/w 你/r 喜欢/v 的/u 星/n 巴/v 克/v 咖啡/n 、/w 茶/

20 点/n 化身/n 月饼/n 馅/n 儿/n , /w 让/p 你/r 把/p 的/u 团圆/v 带/n 回家/v , /w 过/vd 一个/
 21 洋/n 里/nd , /w 哪/r 一款会/ns 成为/v 你/r 握/v 在/p 手中/nl 的/u 小/a 美好/a 呢/u ? /
 22 , /w 去/v 哪里/r 赏月/v 呢/u ? /w 给/p 你/r 推荐/v 一个/r “/w 人/n 少/a 景/n 美/a ”/w
 23 /n , /w 条纹/n 指甲/n .../w .../w 如果/c 你/r 是/vl 条纹/n 控/v , /w 可/vu 别/d 忘/v 了/
 24 尚/n 的/u 魅力/n , /w 却/d 足以/d 让/p 你/r 与众不同/i , /w 充满/v 个性/n 。 /w Vivienne/ws Ta
 25 v 吧/u ~ /w 周末/nt 下午/nt , /w 给/p 你/r 一个/r 约/v TA/ws 出去/v 的/u 理由/n —/w —/w
 26 /n 经典/n 马克/n 杯/n 上/nd , /w 为/p 你/r 呈现/v 时尚/n 、 /w 限量/v 、 /w 中西/j 结合/v 的/u
 27 w 对/a 抹/v 茶/n 毫无/v 抵抗力/n 的/u 你/r , /w 也/d —/m 定会/vu 沦陷/v 在/p 它/r 的/
 28 冰/n 乐/v 里/nd , /w 让/p 它/r 带给/v 你/r 全新/a 的/u “/w 夏日/nt 么/k 么/k 茶/n ”/w ; /
 29 纹/n 咖啡杯/n 星/n 享/x 卡/n , /w 给/p 你/r 的卡/n 包/n 加点/v 特效/n 。 /w 下/nd 一个/r 月亮/
 30 时候/n , /w 就是/r 中秋节/nt 了/u , /w 你/r 已经/d 准备/v 好/a 送/v TA/ws 的/u 月饼/n
 31 一切/r 皆有/v 可能/vu , /w 最/d 希望/v 你/r 的/u 皮肤/n 晒/v 成/v 什么/r 色/n ? /w 拿/
 32 v 今天/nt 早餐/n 选/v 哪个/r ? /w 送/v 你/r 眼中/nl 永远/d 充满/v 童心/n 的/u TA/ws #/w 咖啡/
 33 , /w TA/ws —/m 定会/vu 中意/v 。 /w 你/r 知道/v 享誉/v 世界/n 的/u 赛/v 博/a 农场/n
 34 的/u 赛/v 博/a 农场/n 吗/u ? /w 现在/nt 你/r 可以/vu 在/p 星/n 巴/v 克/v 臻/x 选/v
 35 醇/n 度/n 适中/a , /w 懂/v 咖啡/n 的/u 你/r 可/vu 不容/v 错过/v 哦/e 。 /w 周五/nt 总是/d 如此/
 36 咖啡/n 控/v , /w 甜品/n 控/v .../w .../w 你/r 的/u 身边/nl 是不是/v 也/d 有/v 一个/r “/w 星/
 37 加/v 脆/a 的/u 美妙/a 口感/n 。 /w 为/p 你/r 推荐/v 来自/v 巴西/ns 皇后/n 庄园/n 的/u 黄波/nh
 38 艺术/n , /w 又是/vl 时尚/n 先锋/n 的/u 你/r , /w 一定/d 听说/v 过/vd “/w 欧/nhf 普/a 艺术/n

As demonstrated in Table 4.2, although together with first-person pronouns (singular and plural), the second-person singular pronoun “你” is one of the three personal pronouns used by all brands in their Weibo discourse, it is used far more frequently than first-person pronouns. Furthermore, there is a marked difference in its use by food & beverage brands and by technology brands, with all food & beverage brands registering over 100 instances of use but only two out of the five technology brands reaching 100 plus instances. There are altogether 172 instances of “你” (you, singular) in Starbucks Weibo; Figure 4.16 captures only the first 32.

With no exception, all instances of “你” in Google Weibo and Starbucks Weibo are general references to the body of followers instead of specified individual users. Adding to the interactivity created by the mere use of “你”, the corporations further build up solidarity with their followers by placing modifiers in front of the pronoun, which functions to claim as much common ground or discourse as they can infer, esp.

the kind of activity and discourse that may have connection with the brand or the products. For instance, in line 2 (Figure 4.15), Google refers to its followers as “这两周追比赛的你” (literal translation: the two-week-Games-watching you), suggesting that Google knows them well so that it infers the followers have been watching the Olympic Games, which then not only creates a connection between the brand and the followers but also a potential need for them to use the brand product.

Such modifier-adding practices is even more common in Starbucks Weibo discourse, such as “给钟爱风味拿铁的你” (literal translation: to the flavored-latte-loving you, line 4, Figure 4.16), “对抹茶毫无抵抗力的你” (literal translation: the mocha-addicted you, line 27), “懂咖啡的你” (the coffee-savvy you, line 35), and “热爱艺术又是时尚先锋的你” (the art-loving-and-fashion-avant-garde you, line 38). However, slightly different from the modifying practice by the technology brand, the above instances of the food & beverage brand discourse involve not only the imagined or inferred common ground or interest with the followers, but also explicit compliments to the followers, both of which consolidate interactivity of the corporate discourse and connection between the followers and the brand.

Honorific second-person pronoun (“您” (you/vous))

Although it is widely known that a major gap between historical and contemporary Chinese linguistic politeness is the loss of honorifics, esp. honorific forms of address (see e.g., Pan & Kádár, 2011), it is noteworthy that the use of the honorific form of the second-person singular pronoun “您” (vous) in contemporary has also significantly

declined, compared to the use of the form in other genres of corporate discourse such as that in public signs, corporate websites, press releases, annual reports or genres in formal settings.

It is of equal importance to note that, despite the significant decline of the honorific form and the emerging trend that corporate social media have increasingly become a venue of solidarity building instead of power differentiation, as Table 4.2 indicates, the honorific form has not disappeared from the corporate social media sphere; in other words, the honorific form is maintained in some particular circumstances. Since the instances of “您” (vous) are not many (13 in total), the following part will examine them one by one to uncover the intricacies of its behavior.

GE: 2

[Extract 4.2]

这里是里约#无人机周#转播第一天，从巴西的 GE 智慧之家——巴西研发中心为您转播…… (GE Weibo, 1 AUG 2016)

Translation: This is Day 1 of Rio #Drone Week# broadcasting. Broadcasting for **you** from GE smart home in Brazil – Brazil R&D Centre...

[Extract 4.3]

明天！就在明天！我们的 GE 数字创新坊即将正式登场！……邀您见证，数字工业的新时代…… (GE Weibo, 19 JUL 2016)

Tomorrow! Our GE digital innovative workshop will be launched! ... Invite **you** to witness the new epoch of the digital industry...

IBM: 1

[Extract 4.4]

#IBM 新闻直通车#...现在拿起手机便可“走进”活动现场，更有美女主播在发布会现场流动直播，让您近距离感受 Watson for Oncology 的超级智慧 (IBM Weibo, 11 AUG 2016)

Translation: #IBM News Express# ...With your cell phone you can now walk into the event venue where the beautiful presenter will also livestream the release event to allow **you** to experience in person the super wisdom of Watson for Oncology.

Intel: 2

[Extract 4.5]

定期刷新您的设备可以降低总成本，你有多久没有更新设备了？#极客茶聊#(Intel Weibo, 10 JUL 2016)

Translation: Refresh **your** device regularly will reduce costs. When was the last time you refreshed the device? #Geek Tea Chat#

[Extract 4.6]

……一晃十年过去，英特尔携手#电影魔兽#精彩登场，邀请您看#IMAX3D 魔兽#! …… (Intel Weibo, 3 JUNE 2016)

Translation: Ten years has passed in a flash. Intel together with #The Warcraft Film# presents the best and invites **you** to watch #IMAX3D Warcraft#!

Starbucks: 1

[Extract 4.7]

您的星冰乐特约创意好友——脆吸棒已上线。这根可以吃的吸管，去年风靡美国，条纹威化搭配黑巧克力涂层，吸一吸，嚼一嚼，让每一口星冰乐都乐上加乐。(Starbucks Weibo, 6 JUL 2016)

Translation: **Your** friend creative Frappuccino cookie straw is now online – is now online. This edible straw, first introduced in the US last year, is wafer biscuit rolled and lined with a rich chocolate ganache that gives more fun to your drinking and munching.

KFC: 7

[Extract 4.8]

#老师您值得肯定#你突然出现在小窗边时总能吓得我一秒“装”读书……
(KFC Weibo, 26 AUG 2016)

Translation: #Teacher **you** deserve recognition# When I saw you waling by the window, I instantly pretended to reading...

[Extract 4.9]

你的传播力往往超乎你的想象，……随手做公益，传播大使，我们在找你哦！[捐一元今年9岁了，……9岁的“捐一元”已送出3000万份营养餐，邀您来...] (KFC Weibo, 3 AUG 2016)

Translation: Your influence is beyond your imagination.... Do charity at your fingertips. We are looking for you, communication ambassadors!
[Juanyiyuan Fund is 9 years old this year. It has given out 30 million free meals. Invite **you** to join...]

[Extract 4.10]

给力鹿店长，邀**您**赢福利~还不快快紧跟小鹿…… (KFC Weibo, 4 JUL 2016)

Translation: Fantastic shop manager Lu invites **you** to win rewards~ Hurry up and follow him...

[Extract 4.11]

……肯德基将在现场盛装等待**您**的到来，欢迎有意加盟人士届时莅临…… (KFC Weibo, 30 JUN 2016)

Translation: KFC will be expecting **you** on the site. Welcome those who are interested...

[Extract 4.12]

欢迎大家乘坐上校牌“时光基”穿越到未来，现在由 K 记智能机器人服务员为**您**服务，它有木有萌化你的心？……(KFC Weibo, 24 JUN 2016)

Translation: Welcome onboard the Caption “Time KFC” capsule and fly to the future. Now the KFC smart robot waiter will serve **you**. Does the cute one make your heart melt?...

[Extract 4.13]

#鹿晗#明星餐之鹿店长指南：☆老北京鸡肉卷篇☆有型有款才够 Style，选对味儿才够 feel **您**说呢？... (KFC Weibo, 20 JUN 2016)

#Lu Han# Guide from the superstar Lu: “old Beijing-style chicken roll” With good looks come true Style. Good choice of flavors will deliver true feel. What do **you** think? ...

[Extract 4.14]

万里长城那么长,不吃怎么有力量? …… K记饭桶全国开饭4天倒计时,
北京的饭友们, 馋了吗您? …… (KFC Weibo, 9 JUN 2016)

Translation: Long is the Great Wall, how to climb it without eating? Four
days' countdown to the opening of KFC special bucket offer! Foodies in
Beijing, are **you** craving? ...

In the two GE Weibo posts involving “您”, both are general reference to followers of corporate Weibo. The first post is marking Day 1 of GE’s smart broadcasting system for the Olympic Games, the honorific form as in “为您转播” (broadcasting for you) enhances the formality of tone and thus the importance of the occasion as well as the innovative service that can be enjoyed by followers. In the second post, the honorific form occurs in an invitation “邀您见证” (inviting you to witness), which is in compliance to the convention of formal discourse in Chinese invitations and fits the formal occasion of launching GE’s new digital workshop that is to be witnessed. The case of “让您感受” (allowing you to experience) by the IBM post also involves invitation. In the Starbucks post, the use of “您的好友...已上线” (your friend ... is now online) is in fact a parody of the system message of an earlier Chinese instant messaging application (Tencent QQ) that notifies the user of the online/offline status of a contact, which is an instance of the conventional use of the honorific form.

In the second Intel post involving “您”, similar to the second GE post, the honorific form is used in an invitation “邀请您看” (inviting you to watch), while in the first post the honorific form as used in a recommendation “刷新您的设备” (refreshing

your device) enables the brand to place the brand itself in a modest position and genuinely consider the interest of its followers who are also its product owners, thus enhancing the acceptability of the recommendation.

Among the seven instances of “您” in KFC Weibo, the first one as used in “老师您值得肯定” (Teacher, you deserve recognition) is specific reference to teachers, which pays respect to teachers as it is posted (on 26 AUG) near the national Teachers’ Day (1 SEP). The second, third and fourth instances of “您” all occur within invitations and follow the convention of formal Chinese invitation discourse. The sixth is similar to GE’s second post where the honorific form is used to fit the formality of the launching of KFC’s smart robot waiter, but it is immediately followed by “它有木有萌化你的心” (whether the cute one makes your heart melt), for the robot is a cute one and goes better with the solidarity form of “you”. It is also possible that the honorific form here in “为您服务” (to serve you) is an imitation of conventional service encounter discourse from a waiter to a customer where the latter is always addressed with the honorific form.

It should be pointed out that not all instances of “您” above embody the honorific form. In the last two Weibo posts of KFC, “您” is representative of Beijing dialect and is the equivalent of “you” the colloquial form. Clues for Beijing dialect in the 20 JUN Weibo post include the presence of “鹿晗” (Lu Han), the young Chinese superstar who was born in Beijing (thus speaking Beijing dialect as his mother tongue) and endorses the KFC brand, and “old-Beijing style chicken roll”, the KFC product being promoted in the post. The use of Beijing dialect highlights such connection between

the product and the endorser and will add to the interactivity between the brand and the followers, esp. those who are fans of Lu Han and of Beijing food. Similarly, “您” as used in the 9 JUN Weibo post is an instance of Beijing dialect, prompted by the presence of the preceding address of “北京的饭友们” (foodies in Beijing). However, it is different from the previous post in that this instance is specific reference to potential consumers of the KFC special offer in Beijing.

Therefore, out of the 13 instances of “您” (vous), excluding the several instances by KFC that are not the honorific form proper (but Beijing dialect instead), it then follows that the technology brands (3 out of 5) are slightly more likely to use the honorific form than the food & beverage brands (2 out of 5). Furthermore, despite the significant decline of the honorific form in corporate social media discourse in general, it is reserved for particular circumstances, including: 1) for particular speech acts, esp. invitations; and 2) for referring to traditionally respected groups of people such as teachers. Additionally, the brand type may be a factor in play. In the above listed cases, occasionally the use of the honorific form is no different from the conventional use; however, although not part of the data set of the present study, Weibo discourse of luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton and BMW is still full of the honorific form, presumably because the positioning of those brands dictates that they present and construct qualities such as prestige, privilege, and distinction that their customers are treated (first and foremost in the way they are addressed) in such manners accordingly.

Coined Chinese pronouns in English letters: “wuli” and “TA”

There are two “foreign” pronouns in Table 4.2, written in English letters that are neither Chinese nor English. The first one, “wuli”, originates from the Korean language and functions as a variation of “我们(的)” (meaning “we” or “our”). “Wuli” is a loan word from the Korean language and results from transliteration of the Korean word “우리”. It is common to address one’s close peers, romantic partners or favorite stars with “wuli + name”. When borrowed into the Chinese language, it is primarily used to address stars to indicate fondness and closeness. The only brand that uses “wuli” is Pepsi, with 14 occurrences, as shown in Figure 4.17.

Figure 4.17 Concordance lines of “wuli” in Pepsi Weibo

1	网页链接 #宇宙最强勇士邓超#新鲜出炉! wuli超哥@邓超 如此深情地表白百事君~可不要告诉娘娘哦~
2	百事就兑了#有了百事才能一切百事可乐! wuli超哥@邓超 才能帅的那么完美~ #看跑男喝百事就兑了#
3	链接 #看跑男喝百事就兑了##团结伐木累# wuli超哥@邓超 作为跑男的大家长总是在家族遇到困难时挺
4	看跑男喝百事就兑了##学霸父子超厉害#, wuli超哥@邓超 是个博学多才的学霸这点大家都知道! 你以
5	正妖娆地等着你哦~ #看跑男喝百事就兑了# wuli超哥@邓超 说好的安静地当个美男子, 怎么摇身一变成
1	危机? R家族全员变身天线宝宝被困外星! 可怜 wuli超哥@邓超 身陷困境! 听说会有神秘男神出现拯救跑男伐木累! :
2	危机? R家族全员变身天线宝宝被困外星! 可怜 wuli超哥@邓超 身陷困境! 听说会有神秘男神出现拯救跑男伐木累! :
1	来到了辽阔的大草原, 最炫草原风有木有! 百事君也跟着 w u l i 超哥@邓超 策马奔腾!
2	来到了辽阔的大草原, 最炫草原风有木有! 百事君也跟着 w u l i 超哥@邓超 策马奔腾!
1	官之战来袭, 全员争当宇宙最强勇士!!! 百事君跟 wuli哥@邓超 已经准备好了! .
2	官之战来袭, 全员争当宇宙最强勇士!!! 百事君跟 wuli哥@邓超 已经准备好了! .
1	极限”! // @李若瑗_II: #看跑男喝百事就兑了# wuli超超fighting ?查看图片 [本周 #奔跑吧兄弟 #收官
1	就兑了#跑男出大事啦! 好一场相爱相杀! 但是 Wuli学霸超 并没有在怕! 炒米们快来猜猜超哥@邓超·
1	表示受不了啦! 排队跳进冰柜简直萌Cry~~ 原来夏天最令人羡慕的是 Wuli冰镇百事可乐 , 待在冰柜里不要太爽哦!

Among the 14 occurrences of “wuli”, the first 13 are used in the expression “wuli + Brother Chao / Brother” to address Deng Chao, a popular Chinese actor who endorses Pepsi the brand. At the time of posting, the actor was participating in a reality show

Running Men, which prompted Pepsi to publish posts to wish him good luck and employed his popularity to enhance interaction with Pepsi followers who may also be his fans. The last instance occurs in “wuli iced Pepsi” to show love for their own product and thus evoking followers’ love for it as well.

The second, “TA”, is a third-person gender-neutral personal pronoun that appears in Chinese pinyin, equivalent to either the feminine pronoun “她” (pronounced *ta*, meaning “she / her”) or the masculine pronoun “他” (pronounced *ta*, meaning “he / him”), which happen to be homophones. “TA” sometimes occurs in variations of “ta” or “Ta”. Selected instances of “TA” are presented in Figure 4.18.

Figure 4.18 Concordance lines of “TA” on corporate Weibo (selected)

Coca Cola: 1

1 /w 和/c 你/r 一起/d 过节/v 的/u 那个/r TA/ws 吧/u !/w 截止/v 7/m 月/nt 4/m 日/nt 下午/n

McDonald’s: 24

1 v 到/v 你/r 的/u 微/a 博/a ,/w 帮助/v TA/ws 们/k 拿/v 大奖/n ~/w 选送/v 10/m 元/q 餐券/n
 2 体验/v !/w 转发/v 为/p 你/r 爱/v 的/u TA/ws 站队/v ~/w 恭喜/v 8/m 月/nt 13/m 日/nt 参与
 3 r 想/v 约/v 谁/r ?/w 快/a 大胆/a @/w TA/ws 出来/vd ~/w [/w 喜欢/v TA/ws 就/d 圈住/v TA
 4 !/a @/w TA/ws 出来/vd ~/w [/w 喜欢/v TA/ws 就/d 圈住/v TA/ws ,/w #/w 七夕/nt #/w 带/n
 5 来/vd ~/w [/w 喜欢/v TA/ws 就/d 圈住/v TA/ws ,/w #/w 七夕/nt #/w 带/n TA/ws 来/vd 麦/n
 6 住/v TA/ws ,/w #/w 七夕/nt #/w 带/n TA/ws 来/vd 麦/n 麦/n ,/w 在/p 活动/v 餐厅/n 购买/
 7 /vu 转发/v @/w 出/vd 你/r 喜欢/v 的/u TA/ws 就/d 有可能/v 获得/v 麦/n 麦/n 送出/v 的/u 100/
 8 EFRIENDS/ws _/w CHINA/ws]/w 喜欢/v TA/ws 就/d 圈住/v TA/ws ,/w #/w 七夕/nt #/w 带/n
 9 HINA/ws]/w 喜欢/v TA/ws 就/d 圈住/v TA/ws ,/w #/w 七夕/nt #/w 带/n TA/ws 来/vd 麦/n
 10 住/v TA/ws ,/w #/w 七夕/nt #/w 带/n TA/ws 来/vd 麦/n 麦/n ,/w 在/p 活动/v 餐厅/n 购买/
 11 /vu 转发/v @/w 出/vd 你/r 喜欢/v 的/u TA/ws 就/d 有可能/v 获得/v 麦/n 麦/n 送出/v 的/u 100/
 12 w .../w 快/a 来说/v 说/v 你/r 和/c @/w TA/ws 的/u 选择/v 是/vl _/w _/w _/w _/w
 13 w 没/d 你/r 不行/v !/w #/w 快/a @/w TA/ws 一/m 起来/vd 尝新/v [/w 又/d 来/vd 安利一/nh 波
 14 究所/n #/w ,/w 你/r 有/v 好奇/a ,/w TA/ws 来/vd 答题/v ~/w 据说/v 喜欢/v 原味/n 的/u ,/
 15 v 到/v 你/r 的/u 微/a 博/a ,/w 帮助/v TA/ws 们/k 拿/v 大奖/n ~/w 选送/v 10/m 元/q 餐券/n
 16 r Hello/ws Kitty/ws 并/c 晒/v 出/vd 和/c TA/ws 的/u 合影/n ,/w 就/d 有/v 机会/n 获得/v 全套/
 17 影/n ,/w 说出/v 从/p 左/nd 到/v 右/nd TA/ws 们/k 依次/d 是/vl _/w _/w _/w _/w 。/w
 18 有/v 大/a 明星/n 助阵/v ,/w 猜/v 猜/v TA/ws 是/vl _/w _/w _/w _/w ?/w 超人/a 气/v
 19 s 你/r 是不是/v 也/d 有/v 这样/r 一个/r TA/ws l/w l/w 赶快/d @/w 出来/vd 吧/u ~/w 还有/v

20 /n 泡/n 世界/n 来/vd 了/u !/w 还有/v TA/ws 的/u 六/m 位/q 明星/n 小伙伴/n —/w —/w 美/a
 21 泡/n 泡/n 世界/n ,/w 快/a 来/vd 和/c TA/ws 们/k say/ws hello/ws ~/w 想/v 在/p 麦/n
 22 ello/ws ~/w 想/v 在/p 麦/n 麦/n 见到/v TA/ws 们/k ?/w 6/m 月/nt 29/m 日/nd 哦/e !/w
 23 时刻/d 没/d 谁/r 不行/v ?/w @/w 出/vd TA/ws 一起/d 晒/v 【/w 碰杯/v 照/p 】/w 即/d 有/v
 24 a 利/a 奥/a 脆皮/n 甜/a 筒/x ,/w 约/v TA/ws 一起/d #/w 第二/m 个/q 半价/n #/w 吧/u !/w

Pepsi: 12

1 罐/n 横空/v 出世/v ,/w 还/d 不/d 和/c TA/ws 一起/d 萌/v 起来/vd 。/w 即日/nt 起/v 加入/v #/
 2 罐/n 横空/v 出世/v ,/w 还/d 不/d 和/c TA/ws 一起/d 萌/v 起来/vd 。/w 即日/nt 起/v 加入/v #/
 3 n 分享/v 至/v 微/a 博/a ,/w 并/c @/w TA/ws 和/c @/w 百/m 事/n 中国/ns 。/w 牢牢/a 抓住/v
 4 /w 你/r 是否/d 也/d 曾/d 许诺/v 一个/r TA/ws ,/w 要/vu 一起/d 去/v 迪/x 士/n 尼/x 度假区/
 5 事/n 促销/v 装/v 黄盖/nh 与/c 你/r 和/c TA/ws 的/u 合照/n ,/w 添加/v 话题/n #/w 揭/v 盖/n
 6 罐/n 横空/v 出世/v ,/w 还/d 不/d 和/c TA/ws 一起/d 萌/v 起来/vd 。/w 即日/nt 起/v 加入/v #/
 7 /w 你/r 是否/d 也/d 曾/d 许诺/v 一个/r TA/ws ,/w 要/vu 一起/d 去/v 迪/x 士/n 尼/x 度假区/
 8 事/n 促销/v 装/v 黄盖/nh 与/c 你/r 和/c TA/ws 的/u 合照/n ,/w 添加/v 话题/n #/w 揭/v 盖/n
 9 /w 你/r 是否/d 也/d 曾/d 许诺/v 一个/r TA/ws ,/w 要/vu 一起/d 去/v 迪/x 士/n 尼/x 度假区/
 10 事/n 促销/v 装/v 黄盖/nh 与/c 你/r 和/c TA/ws 的/u 合照/n ,/w 添加/v 话题/n #/w 揭/v 盖/n
 11 赢/v 的/u 超/v 哥/n @/w 邓超/nh 和/c TA/ws 更/d 搭/v 哦/e :/w O/ws 网页/n 链接/v #/w
 12 / 超级/a 王牌/n 卧底/v #/w 还/d 需要/v Ta/ws !/w 快/a 跟着/v 超/v 哥/n 一起/d #/w 看/v

Starbucks: 31

1 昨天/nt 习惯/v 和/c TA/ws 说/v 晚安/v ,/w 不如/v 今天/nt 再/d 约/v 个/
 2 w 吧/u 。/w 来/vd 星/n 巴/v 克/v 与/c TA/ws 分享/v #/w 枣/n 安/a 麦芬/nh #/w ,/w 甜蜜/a
 3 w 听说/v ,/w 你/r 默默/a 观察/v 了/u TA/ws 许久/nt ?/w 知道/v TA/ws 爱/v 喝/v 焦/a 糖/
 4 观察/v 了/u TA/ws 许久/nt ?/w 知道/v TA/ws 爱/v 喝/v 焦/a 糖/n 玛/x 奇/a 朵/q ,/
 5 v 焦/a 糖/n 玛/x 奇/a 朵/q ,/w 知道/v TA/ws 爱吃/v 抹/v 茶味/n 蛋糕/n .../w 这个/r 中秋/nt ,/
 6 星/n 巴/v 克/v 月饼/n 吧/u ,/w 满足/a TA/ws 的/u 所有/a 喜欢/v 。/w 让/p TA/ws 知道/v ,/w
 7 /a TA/ws 的/u 所有/a 喜欢/v 。/w 让/p TA/ws 知道/v ,/w 一切/r 你/r 都/d 懂/v 即将/d 到来/
 8 /w 中秋/nt 送礼/v ,/w 还/d 在/p 猜/v TA/ws 的/u 心思/n ?/w 打开/v 星/n 巴/v 克/v 月饼/
 9 直/v 月饼/n 。/w 你/r 的/u 用心/a ,/w TA/ws 一/m 定会/vu 看到/v 。/w 这个/r 夏天/nt ,/w 有
 10 i 。/w 想/v 为/p 身/n 在/p 异地/n 的/u TA/ws 送上/v 一/m 份/q 祝福/v ,/w 打开/v 聚/v 划算/
 11 /w 你/r 会/vu 用/v 哪/r 句/n 话/n 和/c TA/ws 求/v 相聚/v ?/w 8/m 月/nt 24/m 日/nt -/w
 12 v 自己/r 的/u 时尚/n 。/w 想/v 温暖/a TA/ws 的/u 胃/n ,/w 可/vu 别/d 只/d 知道/v “/w
 13 暖心/v 又/d 暖/a 胃/n ,/w 快/a 艾特/nh TA/ws 一起/d 去/v 品尝/v 吧/u ~/w 周末/nt 下午/nt ,
 14 天/nt 下午/nt ,/w 给/p 你/r 一个/r 约/v TA/ws 出去/v 的/u 理由/n —/w —/w 即日/nt 起/v 至/v
 15 点/q 及/v 以上/nd 的/u 蛋糕/n ,/w 和/c TA/ws 一起/d 过/vd 一个/r 甜蜜/a 的/u 午后/nt 吧/u ~/
 16 了/u ,/w 你/r 已经/d 准备/v 好/a 送/v TA/ws 的/u 月饼/n 了/u 吗/u ?/w 给/p 我/r 一/
 17 你/r 眼中/nl 永远/d 充满/v 童心/n 的/u TA/ws #/w 咖啡/n 相聚/v 马克/n 对/a 杯/n #/w ,/w
 18 nt 送礼/v ,/w 是不是/v 还/d 在/p 猜/v TA/ws 的/u 心头/nl 好/a ?/w #/w 星/n 巴/v 克/v
 19 满满/a 真心/n 都/d 在/p 里面/nd ,/w TA/ws 一/m 定会/vu 中意/v 。/w 你/r 知道/v 享誉/v 世界
 20 “/w 星/n 巴/v 克/v 控/v ”/w ,/w 送/v TA/ws #/w 星/n 巴/v 克/v 月饼/n 礼盒/n #/w ,/w 满
 21 /v 克/v 月饼/n 礼盒/n #/w ,/w 满足/a TA/ws 的/u 各种/r 控/v 。/w 如何/r 在/p #/w 焙/v
 22 的/u 组合/v 优惠/a ,/w 给/p 你/r 的/u TA/ws 一个/r 甜蜜/a 的/u 七夕/nt 。/w (/w 江浙/ns 沪/
 23 爱的/n ,/w 七夕/nt 快乐/a ~/w 给/p TA/ws 的/u 七夕/nt 礼物/n 准备/v 好了/e 吗/u ?/w 那么/
 24 卡/n 。/w 把/p 这/r 份/q 礼物/n 送给/v TA/ws ,/w 满满/a 的/u 心意/n 都/d 在/p 其中/nd 。/w
 25 l/n ,/w 要/vu 特别/d ,/w 也要/r 懂/v TA/ws 的/u 心意/n 。/w #/w 星/n 巴/v 克/v 月饼/n #
 26 v 挑战/v ,/w 用/v 脆/a 吸/v 棒/n 和/c TA/ws 一起/d 享受/v 星/n 冰/n 乐/v 是/vl 种/v
 27 /v 月饼/n 能/vu 成为/v 一/m 份/q 懂/v TA/ws 且/c 打动/v TA/ws 的/u 礼物/n 。/w 夏天/nt 是
 28 为/v 一/m 份/q 懂/v TA/ws 且/c 打动/v TA/ws 的/u 礼物/n 。/w 夏天/nt 是/vl 懂/v 远方/nl
 29 巴/n 吧/u 。/w 想/v 让/p 心爱/a 的/u TA/ws 不经意/a 晒/v 出/vd 你们/r 的/u 恩爱/a ?/w 把/
 30 lle/ws it/ws 自创/v 杯/n 吧/u ,/w 让/p TA/ws 把/p 你/r 的/u 爱意/n 随身/v 携带/v 。/w 要/
 31 如果说/i 不/d 出口/n ,/w 不如/v 送/v TA/ws 这个/r 星/n 杯/n 表/n 心意/n 吧/u 。/w 即使/

“TA” primarily occurs in the singular form and refers by brands to refer to the romantic partner of corporate social media followers as used in expressions such as “那个 TA” (that person / the one; Coca Cola, line 1), “你爱的 TA” (the one you love; McDonald’s, line 2), “喜欢 TA” (like him / her; McDonald’s, line 4), “约 TA” (date him / her; McDonald’s, line 24), “你的 TA” (yours; Starbucks, line 22), and “心爱的 TA” (the one you love most; Starbucks, line 29). The only exception that refers to objects (thus TA as a neuter pronoun) and appears in the plural form is observed in McDonald’s Weibo:

[Extract 4.15]

……@LINEFRIENDS_CHINA 和麦粒们的运动照来啦! 快来为你喜欢的照片投票+分享到你的微博, 帮助 **TA 们** 拿大奖…… (McDonald’s Weibo, 22 AUG 2016)

Translation: ...Here come the sports photos of @LINEFRIENDS_CHINA with Wheat Grains! Hurry up and vote for your favorite photos and share them to your Weibo page to help **them** win prizes....

This extract is the post in line 2 of McDonald’s Weibo in Figure 4.12. It can be inferred from the context of the above extract that “TA 们” (“them”) refers to the photos. Similar instances can be found in lines 17, 21 and 22 of McDonald’s Weibo. The fact that McDonald’s is the only brand that uses the plural form of “TA” provides evidence to the emerging convention that “TA” is primarily used as a third-person singular personal pronoun.

The emergence of “TA” in Chinese social media discourse can be attributed to growing awareness of gender equality and the convenience of using one gender-neutral pronoun to include both genders without running the risk of using sexist language. The linguistic asset of two homophones has facilitated the ease of use. The reason that Starbucks is the leading user of “TA” could be that in China coffee as an imported drink is often associated with romance and drinking coffee thus as a romantic ritual or activity. However, similar to “wuli”, “TA” did not enter the Chinese language until recent years thanks to the increasing popularity of social media, and has not (probably will not) gained formal recognition or found their way to formal discourse. Even within the corpus of the present study, as shown in Table 4.2, they are used primarily by food & beverage brands: “wuli” appears in Pepsi Weibo only; two technology brands (Microsoft and GE) do not use “TA” at all, IBM uses once, Intel uses three times, Google stands out with 20 occurrences, while “TA” is used by all the five food & beverage brands.

4.3 Discourse particles

Discourse particles mainly occur in spoken discourse and are considered as an important indicator of informality and orality. A major group in the family of discourse particles are sentence final particles (SFPs), which are “small elements occurring at the end of an utterance or a sentence... [that] do not possess a referential or denotative meaning, but are mainly used to express speaker’s emotive nuance [in] specific contexts” (He, 2016: 1). Other members consist of interjections such as “oh”,

“yes”, and “um” as categorized by the POS tool of the software W-matrix (Rayson, 2003), Regardless of where members of the family occur in an utterance, they share this defining characteristic with SFPs.

4.3.1 Discourse particles on corporate Twitter

Table 4.3 Discourse particles on corporate Twitter

	Ggle	Msft	IBM	GE	Intel	Coca	McDs	Ppsi	Stbks	KFC
Pow	1									
bravo	1									
No	1						1	1		1
Wow	1					1		1	1	
Hi				1	11		1	1	1	
Ar					1					
cheers						2				
Hey						2				
Yo						1				
yeah						1				
golly								1		
oh								1	2	
aye								1		
d-oof								1		
yes								1		
bye									1	
yum									1	
um										1

As shown in Table 4.3, food & beverage brands use a wider range discourse particles than technology brands: out of the 19 items, only 6 are found in the discourse of technology brands while the remaining 13 are contributed by food & beverage brands. There appears to be greater disparity within the technology brands, with Google registering 4 items whereas Microsoft and IBM none at all; in contrast, the food &

beverage brand Pepsi takes the lead in discourse particle use, with 8 items. “Hi” stands out as the most shared item by four brands from the two brand categories. With the exception of “hi” which occurs 11 times in Intel discourse, other items occur only in very low frequency. It is also evident that almost all items express positive emotions such as surprise, delight, and friendliness of the corporate speaker.

The overall low frequency of discourse particles probably attests to the fact that although highly oralized, corporate discourse on Twitter is delivered in the written form, which has gone through deliberation and editing that maintain some features of naturalness but filter those of dysfluencies.

4.3.2 Discourse particles on corporate Weibo

Table 4.4 Discourse particles on corporate Weibo

	Ggle	Msft	IBM	GE	Intel	Coca	McD	Pepsi	Stbks	KFC
吧 ba	11	11	4	5	31	36	60	41	50	64
吗 ma	7	20		3	20	27	53	7	33	37
哦 o	1	14			16	9	115	19	15	56
啦 la	5	6			11	14	59	23	6	49
呢 ne	7			7	8	8	5	13		20
啊 a	1			2			24	7		7
噢 ao		6								9
哒 da		1					27	4		9
哈 ha				1						
哈哈 haha				1			20			3
～							30	13		
呀 ya							12			4
哟 yo							9	4		17
嘛 ma							6			
咯 lo							6			
哇 wa							5			4
呦 you							4			
嗨 hai							2	4		11
哎 ai							1			1

咯咯 gege							1			
嘿嘿 heihei							1			

Tables 4.3 and 4.4 bear striking similarities and differences. An apparent similarity is that the range of discourse particles identified on Twitter and Weibo is almost the same: 19 on Twitter and 20 on Weibo. A striking difference between is that frequencies of discourse particles in the latter are much higher, esp. those of the first five items. Similar to the case of corporate Twitter, food & beverage brands as a whole are more enthusiastic in using discourse particles than technology brands. McDonald's takes the lead not only in the range or variety of words but also in the number of such words. It is followed by KFC closely. Among technology brands, Intel is the most prominent user, followed by Google, Microsoft and GE. IBM uses only one particle “吧” (ba), with four occurrences. Within the first five high-frequency items, the tendency remains that food & beverage brands are more active users than technology brands: the frequency of items used by the first brand type can double (e.g., “吧” and “吗”) or triple (e.g., “哦” and “呢”) that by that of the second brand type.

Although “吧” (*ba*) in spoken Chinese can index different tones and emotions of the utterance, in the data of the study, it is primarily used in association with the speech act of imperatives, particularly invitations, recommendations, and requests, regardless of brand type. The following extracts illustrate the association.

[Extract 4.16]

Invitations:

一起拭目以待吧！ (Google Weibo, 9 AUG 2016)

Translation: Let's look forward to it!

先跟着 Google 去看看里约吧！ (Google Weibo, 1 AUG 2016)

Translation: First come with Google for a tour in Rio!

[Extract 4.17]

Recommendations:

来块巧克力补充能量吧~ (Microsoft Weibo, 29 AUG 2016)

Translation: Energize yourself with a chocolate bar~

把甜蜜的话写上星巴克 doodle it 自创杯吧 (Starbucks Weibo, 5 JUNE 2016)

Translation: Write your sweet words on the Starbucks doodle it Cup.

[Extract 4.18]

Requests:

预祝周末愉快, 顺便说说你的一道拿手好菜吧~ (Microsoft Weibo, 3 JUNE 2016)

Translation: Wish you a happy weekend, and tell us about your best dish~

跟我们一起保护自然环境吧~ (Coca Cola Weibo, 31 AUG 2016)

Translation: Protect the environment with us~

Another prominent discourse particle is “哦” (wo), which functions to contribute to constructing a playing-cute style of discourse by the corporations, for instance:

[Extract 4.19]

答对就有机会获得 20 元餐券哦~ (McDonald's Weibo, 31 AUG 2016)

Translation: If you give the right answer to the question, you'll be eligible to
a 20-yuan coupon!

优秀奖小编准备了礼物哦! (Intel Weibo, 22 AUG 2016)

Translation: The kind little editor has prepared a gift for you!

Chapter 5 Relational speech acts in corporate social media

There are several major categories of speech acts that brands perform on social media to maintain and promote relationships with their followers. The first two categories of speech acts seem to be typically one-way dissemination of information, but the linguistic means that are used to realize the acts are highly interactive. Therefore, in a broad sense, the three categories of acts are all relational, as disclosure often makes the first step toward two-way communication, which displays the corporation's willingness and openness to interact with its followers on social media. In a narrow sense, relational speech acts are restricted to the third category only, which shows an explicit intention to initiate and / or sustain an interaction. The three sections in this chapter elucidate the three categories of relational speech acts on corporate social media, with an emphasis on the third category of explicitly relational, interactive speech acts.

Table 5.1 Types of relational speech acts on corporate social media (TT=Twitter; WB=Weibo)

	Google		Microsoft		IBM		GE		Intel		Coca Cola		McDonald's		Pepsi		Starbucks		KFC	
	TT	WB	T	WB	TT	WB	T	WB	T	WB	T	WB	TT	WB	T	WB	TT	WB	T	WB
Disclosing corporate information																				
Corporate history			1		6	1	3		1			6							1	1
Corporate inside			1	4	8	2								1					1	
Corporate news			14	30	169	34	34	2	22	8		1	1	1	6	4	1		3	12
Promoting corporate accomplishments																				
Product news	50	24	11	38	36	6	26	1	46	27	8	3	15	22	13	8	58	58	18	58
Side product news			3	3	8	1	7		3	3	1	1	3	11	1		13	86		9
R&D initiatives	1	2	1		5	2	3												1	
CSR campaigns	8	1	3	1	11				4	4		13	2				1	3	4	19
Media publicity				3	17							1		1				1	4	3
Engaging with stakeholders																				
<i>Sharing</i>																				
Fun/Entertaining content	112	28	5	15	46	2	55	37	85	48	28	6	1	4	73	33			16	19
Practical tips	16	5	2	11	6		1	2	4	12	1	4		2	7	1	9	25		1
Life philosophy/chicken soup			1	4	8	1					4	13	4				2		4	8
<i>Expressing</i>																				
Congratulations	3		2		4		1		1		8	2	4	3	8		1		1	
Thanks	1	2			5						2	3					2			1
Concern	4			3	1				22		4	4	1	1	2	3	1			11
Attitude / opinion	4	3	5	1	1						14	1	24	27	6	2	2	1		1
<i>Greetings</i>																				

Daily	2			5				2			2	16	1		1	1	1			15						
Weekend				11				1		2					1											
Seasonal	1		2	4				3					8	1		9										
Theme day	26		5				2					5	3					2	1	1						
Festival	1						2					1		2			4	4		2			4	1	6	
Directing																										
Survey/Soliciting feedback	3			6	29	3		4	5	6		54	6	12	5		104	18	4	4		5	2	15		
Requesting spread of the word	3						1		1		6	3	3	1		20	5	10				5		13		
Offering gifts/sweepstakes				11			1		1		1		23			6		11	16	1			1		26	
Inviting to activities	5		6	9	8	5		1	5	1	8		12	3	9	18		40	25	4	8		16	3	40	
Giving rules for activities/games				1												5		1							11	
Retweeting	26		0	61	7	211		1	19	1	66		0	22	32	13		207	34	28	33		3	69	44	

5.1 Disclosing corporate information

Corporate social media pages are directly managed by corporations themselves, without the mediation or intervention of traditional media, which enables corporations to have greater control over the content they publish on social media and use social media platforms to be a timely, if not real-time for all events, channel for corporate news and updates. Before the advent of social media, corporate websites are the major self-managed platform on which messages about corporate news are released. Thanks to the lack of 140-character limit of the content on a webpage and people's expectation of a typical webpage, corporations can make corporate news messages published on corporate websites as long and detailed as they like. Now with the presence of corporate social media, corporate websites still perform their function of news release but are less frequently updated compared to the frequency of corporate social media. Moreover, corporate social media have gradually become a gateway which provides links to updates or content published in various other forms of corporate media including corporate websites and (re)directs stakeholders to corporate news they are interested in.

Corporate news

Blogs originated from the genre of diary in which people log / record important (or trivial) happenings in life. Microblogs, blogs in miniature, still assume some logging purposes. For corporations, an important category of content they disclose is corporate news. Except Google, all other sampled brands publish corporate news posts on the two platforms.

IBM is one of the sampled brands to use its Weibo page for frequent updates of corporate news. A hashtag #IBM 新闻直通车# (IBM News Express) was created to mark posts about corporate news, which is comparable to a column or label in corporate websites under which corporate news messages are published. About 90% of IBM's Weibo posts are marked with this hashtag, suggesting that IBM's Weibo page has become specialized as a gateway to corporate news.

[Extract 5.1]

#IBM 新闻直通车#IBM 日前宣布，与 Workday 公司达成为期数年的战略合作伙伴关系。Workday 是金融和人力资源领域领先的企业级云应用供应商。未来，IBM 云计算将成为 Workday 开发和测试环境的坚实基础，为 Workday 提供更高效能、灵活性以及覆盖全球的业务能力。(IBM Weibo, August 18)

Translation: # IBM News Express # IBM has announced its strategic partnership with Workday in the next few years. Workday is a leading supplier of corporate cloud applications in finance and human resources. In the future, IBM cloud computing will serve as the solid basis for Workday's R&D and testing environments, thus providing Workday with more efficient and flexible performance with wider international coverage.

[Extract 5.2]

在近日举行的微软合作伙伴大会上，Facebook CIO Tim Campos 宣布全公司 13,000 员工已经开始使用微软 Office 365 服务，原因在于 Office 365 成熟且全面的功能，能够满足安全标准与全球部署的要求，支持主流移动平台，而且有大量生产力和强大功能。除了邮箱和日历、Word、Excel、PowerPoint，

Facebook 也将使用... (Microsoft Weibo, July 13)

Translation: At the Microsoft Partnership Conference, Facebook CIO Tim Campos announced that all the 13,000 employees at their company have started using Microsoft Office 365 services, based on the consideration that the mature and comprehensive performance of Office 365 satisfies requirements of security standards and global deployment, supports mainstream mobile platforms. Besides email boxes and calendars, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Facebook will also use others...

The speech acts involved in the above corporate news posts on Weibo are primarily statements or assertives, indicating what happened in what place at what time in the form of verbs and adverbials (e.g., “IBM recently announced” and “At the ... conference”), which read similar to typical news reporting discourse, with a formal and impersonal style.

From Table 5.1, it can be seen that technology brands are more likely to publish corporate news on social media than food & beverage brands, and they are more likely to do so on Twitter than on Weibo. Different from corporate news on Weibo, posts of the same category on Twitter sound more personal and interactive, as the following posts demonstrate: the posts often begin with personal pronouns and the grand speech act of disclosing corporate news incorporates sub-acts of expression emotions.

[Extract 5.3]

Today GE’s Global Headquarters officially **moved** to Boston. **We’re happy** to be

here! (GE Twitter, August 22)

We're bringing our biotech business to Beantown. (GE Twitter, August 8)

Our brilliant factory in Canada will be the blueprint for manufacturing once it's completed in 2018. (GE Twitter, August 29)

We had just as much **fun** BTS at #redbullxfighters as we did at the event. Check out these shots featuring #Intel tech (Intel Twitter, June 29)

The Games are over, but **we loved** bringing #Intel tech to #XGames Austin this year! (Intel Twitter, June 7)

Corporate history

If it well fits the dynamic nature of Web 2.0 to publish corporate news on corporate social media and that corporate news makes up the majority of the category “corporate information”, it is less likely that corporate social media are also scattered with more stable corporate information such as corporate / brand history.

On corporate websites, it has been a convention to devote a column / section / label to corporate / brand history and that part of information does not get updated much. On corporate social media pages, information related to corporate history does appear in times of important dates or anniversaries.

[Extract 5.4]

ICYMI: Colonel Sanders took on the Puppies Cluckers Chicken in an epic KFC x @WWE Sando Slam ... #SummerSlam (KFC Twitter, August 24)

#活久见的可口可乐博物馆# 将品牌标识植入到桌面日历中，是 20 世纪 50 年代的一个主流推广手段，而可口可乐就曾经将品牌植入到了桌面日历中，

并在办公室中广泛使用。时至今日，即使方式千变万化，但可口可乐仍然在每天陪伴着你，与你分享每一个时刻。(KFC Weibo, August 24)

Translation: #Coca Cola Museum I've Never Seen Before# Placing brand logos in desktop calendars was a popular marketing means in the 1950s. Coca Cola did it as well and gained popularity on office desks. Today, despite the many changes, Coca Cola is always there for you, sharing your moments.

[Extract 5.5]

105 years old this month and still reinventing ourselves. Check out the IBM of today: ... (IBM Twitter, June 24)

In 1965, Jacques Cousteau used the IBM 1050 to report findings from his underwater habitat ... (IBM Twitter, July 5)

The term "THINK" is an inseparable part of IBM's 105-year-old culture. Learn more: ... (IBM Twitter, July 17)

Corporate inside

Similar to corporate history, details of a corporation's workplace, such as a grand view from an office and a farm on which raw material is harvested, which are formerly known only to employees are also published on corporate social media. Microsoft is one of the sampled brands that disclose such insider's information on its Weibo page. A hashtag #你不知道的微软# (The Microsoft You Don't Know / Things You Don't Know about Microsoft) was created to mark this kind of posts.

[Extract 5.6]

#你不知道的微软#微软自拍目前已支持 31 种不同语言，并具备自然美颜、

智能降噪、曝光增强三大功能。... (Microsoft Weibo, June 30)

Translation: # The Microsoft You Don't Know # Microsoft selfie at present can support 31 different languages and three powerful features of whitening, brightening, and noise reduction.

[Extract 5.7]

#商业慧眼#过去几年中，我公司大约雇佣了 1,250 名设计师，构建了全球性的设计工作室网络并且一直在开展员工培训（包括工程师），旨在将 design thinking 融入到公司所开展的几乎每一项工作中。这就是在转型中的 IBM，更懂你。(IBM Weibo, August 1)

Translation: #Sharp Business Eyes# Over the past few years, we have hired about 1,250 designers and established a global design studio network that offers continuous employee training (including engineers), aiming at integrating Design Thinking into almost every task undertaken by our company. This is the IBM in transition, the IBM that knows you better.

[Extract 5.8]

如果告诉你，把一颗马铃薯，变成根根身材匀称的薯条只要一瞬间，你信吗？
戳↓大图看真相~来#汉堡研究所# 网页链接还能知道更多蜜汁答案哦~
(McDonald's Weibo, August 29)

Translation: If I tell you that it only takes a flash moment to transform a potato into even-cut French fries, would you believe it? Click on the big picture to see the truth. Come to our #Hamburger Research Institute# Click the link to our webpage for more inside information.

Different from its Weibo posts about corporate inside information, IBM's Twitter posts are more oriented to employee's life at work or the working environment, which proves to be more personalized or more related to life rather than business, as the following extracts exemplify. Since such posts are in a very small number, it is unrealistic to compare across product categories, though it seems technology brands tend to publish more information of this type on their social media pages.

[Extract 5.9]

Our employee #LGBT group is about being who you are. #HelloPride (Microsoft Twitter, June 30)

[Extract 5.10]

Great [Emoji Photo] taken by an IBMer from the terrace at our offices in NYC. #WorldPhotoDay (IBM Twitter, August 19)

IBMers at work inside our new agile work environment in Raleigh, North Carolina. (IBM Twitter, July 28)

Meet some of the amazing #WomenatIBM and see what they're working on. #WomeninTech...(IBM Twitter, July 15)

A peek inside one of the agile workspaces at IBM Studio Madrid. #IBMStudios (IBM Twitter, June 23)

At work at our #IBMStudios in Boeblingen, Germany. (IBM Twitter, June 16)

Disclosing such information further demonstrates the corporation's willingness open itself up to the public and wish to be better understood by the latter, and, with a less explicit communicative purpose of self-praise, ultimately leads to the goal of

establishing a positive image for itself.

5.2 Promoting corporate accomplishments

The essence of acts of promoting consists in explicitly stating the positive aspects or benefits that can be provided by a company, including launching new products or updating existing products, side products, corporate social responsibility campaigns or activities, and occasions when the company or its products and activities are mentioned by other media (i.e. media publicity).

Launching new products or updating existing products is an important category of corporate accomplishments. Brands therefore take advantage of their social media pages to publish product news. The reason for separating corporate news and product news is that corporate news resembles reporting or disclosing discourse and acts while product news is more comparable to promotional discourse or conventional advertising discourse.

[Extract 5.11]

#Google 全球汇# Daydream Labs 是真的要带你造梦了。它正尝试提供单个的 3D 动画小部件，用户只需拖一拖、拽一拽，将这些“小玩具”再组合设计，即可打造出专属自己的“小剧场”。(Google Weibo, July 19)

Translation: #Google Global# Daydream Labs will really take you to create your dreams. It is trying to provide individual 3D animation widgets, which users can drag and re-combine to make their own “mini-theatres”.

[Extract 5.12]

#Google 全球汇# 今天，Google 推出支持 Android 设备的 Playbook for Developers 移动应用，帮助开发者了解应用程序开发、发布、互动、增长、收益等最新资讯，促进业务增长。(Google Weibo, June 22)

Translation: #Google Global# Today, Google launched the mobile application Playbook for Developers compatible to Android devices. The app can help developers understand information on app development, launch, interaction, growth and benefits, and ultimately boost business growth.

[Extract 5.13]

可口可乐家族迎来新成员——泰国进口 100%椰子水 ZICO，让你轻松 2 步，就能打开夏天的味道。ZICO 椰子水是泰国新鲜椰青榨成的 100%非浓缩椰子水，它将在这个夏天与肯德基宅急送一起，带你开启夏日度假心情。... (Coca Cola Weibo, July 25)

Translation: Coca Cola family welcomes a new member – 100% coconut drink ZICO imported from Thailand. With 2 simple steps you can open the sweet smell of summer. ZICO is 100% fresh, original coconut juice. It partners with KFC delivery this summer to add to the fun of your holiday....

[Extract 5.14]

We've got a new trick up our sleeve. Play solitaire on Google Search → (Google Twitter, August 30)

Google Duo is now available worldwide! Get it on Android or iPhone → (Google Twitter, August 11)

Different choices. Great Coca-Cola taste. Find yours. (Coca Cola Twitter, August

23)

Try Coke Life™! Great Coca-Cola taste, sweetened with cane sugar and Stevia leaf extract. (Coca Cola Twitter, August 15)

5.3 Engaging with stakeholders

The two types of speech acts in sections 5.2 and 5.1 are considered interactive or relational in that they demonstrate a good will to disclose information or updates related to themselves and the willingness to interact with their followers on social media. However, despite the interactive linguistic features they include, they are not explicitly directed at the followers and intended to disseminate information in a one-way manner. Meanwhile, they are primarily related to the company or its products and generate from the default identity of the company as a business entity. In contrast, relational speech acts in this section are more interactive in the sense that they are less related to the business identity of the brands and are more emblematic of the humanized brands. In other words, they play a more important role in diversifying corporate social media discourse and thus corporate identities.

5.3.1 Sharing

The act of sharing attaches considerable importance to the information value in the message being sent. The sharing act does not necessarily expect any ensuring action on the part of the message recipient either as reciprocation or obligation. Sharing acts are different from expressing acts (see section 5.3.2 below) in that the latter are more focused on the message sender who feels the need to express certain emotions or

attitudes, though expressing acts may also take into consideration responses or reactions of the message recipient, whereas sharing acts are more concerned with the value the message sender provides to the recipient in the hope that the recipient will find the message useful or pleasant. The information value in sharing acts can be either material or emotional. For instance, sharing practical tips such as how to better protect one's email accounts or how to cook a dish with a better recipe provides more material benefits, while sharing entertaining content such as jokes and cartoons or ideas about life philosophy proffers positive feelings or emotions ranging from happiness, warmth, mutual understanding, peace, to inspiration, strength, confidence and optimism.

Brands typically share three types of content on their social media: fun or entertaining content, practical tips, and life philosophy or chicken soup content. The rest of this section looks into each of the three types.

Fun/Entertaining content

Technology brands share more entertaining content than food & beverage brands on both Twitter and Weibo. Among the technology brands, Microsoft stands out as the only one that does not seem to be enthusiastic in sharing entertaining content. Among food & beverage brands, Starbucks is the only one that does not share any such content whereas Pepsi stands out as the most enthusiastic sharer. Across the two platforms, Twitter contains more entertaining content than Weibo. Google, IBM, Coca Cola and Pepsi share much more entertaining content on Twitter than on Weibo, GE Intel and KFC are more balanced sharers across the two platforms, while Microsoft

posts more entertaining content on Weibo than on Twitter.

[Extract 5.15]

慵懒的下午，来点绿色养眼一下。在这样的球场打球是不是更具萌感？

(Microsoft Weibo, August 8)

Translation: Relax your eyes with some greenness on this lazy afternoon.

Wouldn't it be cute to play football in such a field?

[Extract 5.16]

据说每一个宠物达人都有过这样的瞬间……(Microsoft Weibo, June 29)

Translation: It's said that every pet master has experienced such moments...

[Extract 5.17]

#Google 在里约奥运#今天运动会是跳水运动员梅子姑娘的主场，长相甜美的TA 也是发得一手好糖。只见梅子姑娘技巧娴熟的一跃，就优雅地跳入水中。不过这次的速干毛巾的质量好像好过头了，梅子姑娘刚上岸就变成了纤细甜蜜的梅干儿！(Google Weibo, August 16)

Translation: #Google at Rio Olympics# Today's games set the stage for the diving athlete Plum Girl. The beautiful girl dived with grace. But the towel seems to be too good that after it dries the plum as if it looks like being preserved!

Some fun content derives from misunderstanding people generally hold for the company, or the company's self-ridicule.

[Extract 5.18]

#商业慧眼#你以为在 IBM 工作还只是卖电脑？Nonono，我们已经是 IT 界的滑板鞋，时尚时尚最时尚；你以为在 IBM 工作就是坐在格子间里默默写邮

件？图样图森破！你以为自己入职后只是一颗小螺丝钉，每天只能默默运转？

看看那些吐露真相的 IBMer 都“吐槽”了些什么？(IBM Weibo, July 21)

Translation: #Sharp Business Eyes# You thought working at IBM is all about selling computers? No no no, we are the fashion-fashion-top fashion member in the IT industry; you thought working at IBM is all about sitting in the cube and writing emails? Too young too simple! You thought working at IBM is like turning like a small screw that can be easily replaced any time? Look at what “complaints” IBMers reveal about their work experience.

In the above post, IBM identifies several popular misunderstandings about what it is like to work at IBM. Incorporation of popular internet discourse memes further adds to the fun of the content, e.g., “图样图森破” (pronounced *tu yang tu sen po*) as the transliteration of the English phrase “too young too simple”, and a line from a pop song “fashion fashion top fashion”. Two instances of code-mixing, “No no no” and “IBMer” demonstrate and consolidate the intercultural identity of IBM the multinational corporation, on top of contributing to the fun style of the post.

Practical tips

Brands sometimes also share practical tips that can improve people’s life experience in one way or another; such tips are not necessarily related to the company’s brands, but seem to be out of genuine care and consideration for the message recipient. Technology brands tend to share more practical tips than food & beverage brands. There are also cases in which companies share with its followers practical or useful tips in using their products or in the domain of their life more or less related to the

product category. The following Starbucks posts share with the followers some practical tips of keeping the best flavor of green tea and making latte at home. Expressions such as “tea tip” and “how to” clearly indicate the type of directive acts performed by the posts. The coffee-making steps are far more complicated to be fully explained in a short post, which gives rise to the need of a hyperlink that leads to a video clip demonstrating more detailed information. In fact the colon in the post is of some directive function, equivalent to saying “Click the link to see (how to make ... at home)”.

[Extract 5.19]

Tea Tip: To protect the delicately smoky-sweet flavor of your #GreenTea, remove the tea sachet after 2-3 minutes. (Starbucks Twitter, Feb 25)

[Extract 5.20]

How to make an instant butterscotch latte at home: <http://sbux.co/1TxeGCV>
(Starbucks Twitter, Feb 24)

[Extract 5.21]

Lost your phone? We can help you find it and secure your account and data. Check it out. (Google Twitter, June 1)

[Extract 5.22]

#ProTip: pick up a banana and a honey packet with your PB&J #BistroBox to add a layer of nostalgia to your sandwich. (Starbucks Twitter, July 29)

[Extract 5.23]

这些提升效率的快捷键组合，你都 get 到了吗？(Microsoft Weibo, July 7)

Translation: Have you got all the tips of using these efficiency-boosting key combinations?

[Extract 5.24]

生活中,你可以使用 Excel 让一切井井有条,多姿多彩~ (Microsoft Weibo, July 12)

Translation: You can use Excel to manage your life in an orderly and colorful fashion.

Life philosophy/chicken soup

They are not related to products or services of the brands, but instead feature “soft” content such as “chicken soup” (i.e. content containing warm, touching, or inspirational lines or life stories). Food & beverage brands share more of such content than technology brands. The following extracts demonstrate its posts of life philosophy or chicken soup on both platforms.

[Extract 5.25]

Be unique. Your new crush will take notice. #BackToSchool (Coca Cola Twitter, August 26)

[Extract 5.26]

Stay gold. Even after the sun goes down. #THATSGOLD (Coca Cola Twitter, August 8)

[Extract 5.27]

你站在窗边看风景,殊不知,风景已经爬满了你的窗~ (Microsoft Weibo, July 14)

Translation: You are enjoying the good view by the window, without knowing that you make a good view on your window as well.

There are also cases when chicken soup content takes the form of short stories.

[Extract 5.28]

#新科技新体验#有这样一位深爱着自己女儿的 IBM 资深的云架构工程师，在今年的儿童节，决定用自己最擅长的编程技能，结合 IBM 最先进的认知技术，开发出一个机器人作为女儿贴心玩伴。从此他不必担心他的爱会因为繁忙的工作而在女儿的成长过程中再缺席... (IBM Weibo, June 3)

Translation: #New Tech New Experience# A loving father, who is also a cloud framework engineer with IBM, decides to make a robot pal for his daughter by doing something he's good at: programming integrated with IBM's most advanced cognitive technology. In this way he no longer needs to worry about having to spend too little time with her...

5.3.2 Expressing

Most corporate expressive acts are those that are related to particular events, including acts of extending recognition and gratitude to people who participated in and supported their sponsored or hosted events, congratulating the winners, or expressing the company's own opinion or attitude towards issues of public interest such as LGBT rights. The following two extracts both express thanks to relevant parties.

[Extract 5.29]

Thanks to everyone who joined us in LA for the hiring fair. More than 1,000 new jobs offered! <http://...> #HireOpportunityYouth (Starbucks Twitter, Feb 19)

[Extract 5.30]

We'd like to thank the Academy (...for 3D-printing this year's #Oscars from the original 1929 statue). (Google Twitter, Feb 28)

Attitude

Posts expressing attitudes are highly personalized and can be very interactive. The following posts serve to express the attitudes of brands towards issues, incidents or values, such as racism, inclusiveness, gender equality or same-sex marriage, and public security.

[Extract 5.31]

#AltonSterling and #PhilandoCastile's lives mattered. Black lives matter. We need racial justice now. (Google Twitter, July 7)

Being inclusive isn't something we do, it's something we stand for. (Microsoft Twitter, July 18)

We join the millions mourning in Baton Rouge, Falcon Heights, and Dallas and we stand with those committed to change around the world. (Microsoft Twitter, July 8)

The Pride flag—flying proud, over the Starbucks Support Center in Seattle. #LoveWins (Starbucks Twitter, June 21)

Brands are more likely to express attitudes on Twitter than on Weibo. With Google as

the exception, technology brands are less likely to express attitudes on social media than food & beverage brands. Although there are also attitude-expressing posts on Weibo, they are about attitudes towards very different issues, usually those of greater personal interest rather than wider social values, and are more promotional. For instance, the following post by Starbucks expresses the brand's attitude towards fashion, compounded by another directive act of encouraging followers to consume Starbucks and Vivienne Tam together.

[Extract 5.32]

追求时尚的态度，并不一定会被理解，但是时尚的魅力，却足以让你与众不同，充满个性。Vivienne Tam+Starbucks，这一次，做自己的时尚。(Starbucks Weibo, August 22)

Translation: Your attitude towards chasing the fashion may not be understood by others, but the charm of fashion will definitely make you different and unique.

Vivienne Tam+Starbucks, this time, be your own fashion.

In general, brands on Twitter seem to be more aware of social issues and more active in expressing their attitudes towards such issues than they are on Weibo, which may have to do with the different extent to which the public and the business circle are involved in social and even political affairs.

Congratulations

Acts of expressing congratulations and thanks often involve mentioning specific

individuals that are intended to be recipients, as demonstrated in the following extracts.

[Extract 5.33]

Incredible swim @Nathangadrian for bronze. Congratulations! #Rio2016 (Coca Cola Twitter, August 18)

GOLD!!! Congrats on your second 100M Freestyle Relay win @Nathangadrian & #TeamUSA! #THATSGOLD #Rio2016 (Coca Cola Twitter, August 8)

Thanks

[Extract 5.34]

Thanks @arabadzhiev1! (Microsoft Twitter, June 15)

Thanks for your support @Adil_Abdul_Aziz! (Microsoft Twitter, June 15)

[Extract 5.35]

#Google 全球汇# 大家好,我是 Android N,你也可以叫我“Nougat 牛轧糖 ”。

我很喜欢自己的这个新名字,谢谢大家。(Google Twitter, July 1)

Translation: #Google Global# Hi All, I'm Android N. You may also call me “Nougat”. Thank you all for giving me this new name; I really love it.

Concern

[Extract 5.36]

And for those in and around Nice, we've published a Google Now card with critical info from French authorities. (Google Twitter, July 15)

Free calls to France via Hangouts, Google Voice & Project Fi → ... #NiceAttack (Google Twitter, July 15)

[Extract 5.37]

Our thoughts are with Turkey today. Offering free calls to Turkey & emergency info to help people stay connected. (Google Twitter, June 29)

Our hearts are with the Orlando victims, their families and the LGBT community. #LoveIsLove (Google Twitter, June 12)

[Extract 5.38]

We're relieved to report that all partners & customers from our store in Kokomo, IN are safe. **Our thoughts are with** all those affected. (Starbucks Twitter, August 24)

The act of expressing concern in the above extracts is performed by expressions such as “our thoughts / hearts are with...”. Although the first two extracts also express concern for victims in the incidents, they are simultaneously indicative of the practical actions the company has taken to help ease the difficulties, which then proffers another layer of the speech act performed by the extracts – promoting CSR deeds.

5.3.3 Greeting

Brands on social media extend all kinds of greetings, which makes up a significant part of phatic communication. As indicated earlier, phatic communication refers to small talk, including routine utterances which are seemingly purposeless but contribute significantly to relational communication by building “convivial gregariousness” and binding the addressee to the addresser using “a tie of some social sentiment or other” (Malinowski, 1923, p. 315). We can observe that many tweets by

the corporations are purely relational tweets with hashtags manifesting ritualized small talk. For instance, Coca Cola sends “good morning” tweets almost every day. If the “good morning” tweets says the two words “good morning” every day, it would become boring; therefore, Coca Cola resorts to sharing chicken-soup content (i.e. content containing warm, touching, or inspirational lines or life stories) in its morning tweets while marking these tweets with a hashtag “Coca Cola. Good morning”. The hashtag not only serves to topicalize, and thus ritualize the phatic communication of “Good morning”, but also makes explicit the purpose of its chicken-soup content and thus the tweet. This design grants dual functions of the tweet: the phatic “good morning” function and the thematic “chicken-soup”.

Greetings are moment-targeting acts and can range from daily greetings in the morning (good morning) or at night (good night), weekend greetings (esp. on Friday afternoon), monthly greetings (at the beginning of a month), seasonal greetings (at the beginning of a new season or on the day of a solar term) greetings on theme days and certainly on festivals.

Daily greetings

[Extract 5.39]

#可口可乐.晨安# “天空没有翅膀的痕迹，而我已飞过。”（I leave no trace of wings in the air , but I am glad I have had my flight.）——泰戈尔。放胆去飞，与梦共驰骋。早安！（Coca Cola Weibo, June 16）

Translation: #Coca Cola Good Morning# “I leave no trace of wings in the air , but I am glad I have had my flight.” ---- by Tagore. Be free to chase your dream and

fly with it! Good morning!

#可口可乐.晨安# “没有你，良辰美景可与谁人说？(Without you, who would I admire all the beautiful things with?)”——《天使爱美丽》。愿你成为 Emily 一样勇敢追求爱和梦想的幸运儿，早安！(Coca Cola Weibo, June 14)

Translation: “Without you, who would I admire all the beautiful things with?” ---- from *Amelia from Montmartre*. Hope you can become a lucky guy like Emily to have the courage to pursue love and dream. Good morning!

[Extract 5.40]

#微笑周一#新一周的开始，背起行囊，去实现未完成的梦想~ (Microsoft Weibo, July 4)

Translation: #Smile on Monday# Good morning. Another week begins. Get your backpack and go after your dream.

[Extract 5.41]

困倦的下午，来块巧克力补充能量吧~ (Microsoft Weibo, August 29)

Translation: On a sleep afternoon, grab some chocolate for more energy~

Weekend greetings

[Extract 5.42]

We've got that #FridayFeeling (IBM Twitter, 19 AUG 2016)

#周五微思考#结束了忙碌的一周，记得让自己 Refresh 一下~ (Microsoft Weibo, June 24)

Translation: #Friday Micro(soft) Thoughts# A busy week is coming to an end. Remember to Refresh yourself.

#周五微思考#很多时候，我们享受的是最后一秒的坚持。周末即将来临，赶快运动起来~ (Microsoft Weibo, August 26)

Translation: #Friday Micro(soft) Thoughts# Very often, what we enjoy is perseverance till the last second. The weekend is coming. Get ready for sports and workout!

Monthly greetings

[Extract 5.43]

July already?! (Google Twitter, July 1)

[Extract 5.44]

希望你看到的第一个词可以在即将到来的9月中梦想成真 (Coca Cola Weibo, August 31)

Translation: Hope the first word you see here will make your dream come true in the upcoming September.

Seasonal greetings

The 24 solar terms in Chinese calendar, listed by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage, have found their way in corporate social media discourse. On the days of these solar terms, many brands publish posts that extend special greetings on social media, esp. on Weibo, since the tradition is more popular in Chinese culture, though some more important terms such as winter/summer solstice and spring/autumn equinox are also observed in other countries.

[Extract 5.45]

Solar term: Summer solstice (夏至)

#大爱 Doodle# “夏至到，鹿角解，蝉始鸣...” 在 Doodle 的世界里，岩石家族和小松鼠开了一个玩笑，为它开启新奇而有趣的夏天模式。你又准备如何利用这一年中最漫长的白天，迎接接下来的炎炎夏日呢？ (Google Weibo, June 16)

Translation: “On Summer Solstice, deer antlers begin to grow, cicadas start to sing...” In the Doodle world today, the rock family plays a joke with the little squirrel, bringing to it a novel and interesting summer. How do you plan to spend the longest daytime today and get ready for the hot days that follow?

[Extract 5.46]

Solar term: End of heat (处暑)

#可口可乐.晨安# 今天是处暑节气，意味着我们终于进入到了气象意义的秋天。处暑具有白天热，早晚凉，昼夜温差大，降水少，空气湿度低等特点，因此大家要注意增减衣物，避免身体不适。同时，本日宜饮用可口可乐产品，保准让你秋高“汽”爽！ (Coca Cola Weibo, August 23)

Translation: #Coca Cola Good Morning# Today is End of Heat. It means we are entering the real autumn. This special day features the morning-evening temperature difference and dry air, so do remember to dress properly to keep well.

A Coca Cola drink on this day will definitely make you feel cool!

Theme day greetings

Theme days are neither public holidays nor festivals; they may be officially or unofficially set. Regardless of their origin and type, theme days are important indicators of cultures. For instance, “national” as in National Dog Day and National

Donut Day is spoken of the United States rather than China or any other country, as China does not share the same pet culture or food culture as the US. By the same token, “national” in National Workout Day (“全民健身日”) is concerned with China only, for it is officially set by the Chinese government. The fact of a greater number of theme days on Twitter / in the US than on Weibo / in China speaks to the tendency that America seems to be more fun-loving at least on corporate social media.

Some theme days, such as World Earth Day, officially set by international organizations such as the United States and aimed at raising people’s awareness of issues like environmental protection and resource conservation, are internationally celebrated and often marked on both social media platforms. Some theme days are aimed at paying respect for important people in our lives, examples including Father’s Day, Grandparents’ Day, etc. Some other theme days do not have such an official status but are increasingly popular on the internet and among young people, e.g., National Donut Day, International Kissing Day, National Dog Day, National Best Friends’ Day, to name just a few. Still other theme days are more recent and immediately related to internet life, e.g., World Emoji Day, Internet Security Day, etc. Corporate social media have increasingly become an important arena where all kinds of theme days are marked, celebrated, and at the same time employed by corporations to interact with their followers. This section will compare the greetings they send on this day by focusing on the sub-acts that comprise the overarching speech act of extending a theme day greeting.

Regardless of the particular type of the days, publishing posts on such theme days can

appeal to the universal values or to interests of particular groups of people that happen to be an important component of the clientele, in either serious or casual manners, with or without specific connections to the brand or its products, will contribute to fostering interactivity between the company and its followers, since it draws on a common socio-cultural text.

Father's Day

Father's Day in 2016 fell on June 19. The following brands published posts related to this Day on Twitter and Weibo.

[Extract 5.47]

His repetitive jokes. His unique dancing. Tell us what you like about dad. Better yet, tell him. #FathersDay (Coca Cola Twitter, June 19)

[Extract 5.48]

#大爱 Doodle# 在今天这个特定的日子里，让我们对爸爸说声节日快乐！感谢父亲对我们人生的指引和无时无刻陪伴、支持！父亲节快乐！（Google Weibo, June 19)

Translation: #Love Doodle# On this special day, let's wish father happiness!

Thank father for giving us guidance, accompaniment and support. Happy Father's Day!

Coca Cola's Twitter post highlights typical fun moments or things about fathers and performs a directive act of inviting or encouraging followers to share dad stories with others and to let fathers know that they are loved. In contrast, Google's Weibo post is more of a formulaic greeting and less specially tailored for Father's Day; the line can

be used for Mother's Day or Grandparents' Day by replacing the word "father".

Starbucks published posts related to Father's Day on both platforms several days before the date.

[Extract 5.49]

Glorious and green for the greatest father you've ever seen #FathersDay
#StarbucksCard (Starbucks Twitter, June 7)

还有 3 天就是父亲节了, 你已经准备好心意了吗? (Starbucks Weibo, June 16)

Translation: Just three days to go before Father's Day. Do you have your gift ready?

In Starbucks' Twitter post, although "the greatest father you've ever seen" is the key phrase for the greeting act, despite the missing subject being modified by "glorious and green" in the body line itself, the hashtagged "Starbucks Card" makes it explicit that the post is more about promoting the company's side product than extending a theme day greeting. Similarly, in its Weibo post, although it highlights the fact that people look forward to the special day, the question performs an indirect recommendation in prompting followers to buy or at least consider buying Starbucks' products (probably cards) as gifts for fathers.

World Emoji Day

As a popular and important component of social media discourse or web-borne discourse in general, emoji is now celebrated with World Emoji Day (July 17). IBM sends a very simple greeting of "Happy + (Day)" on the day.

[Extract 5.50]

Happy #WorldEmojiDay! (IBM Twitter, July 17)

Google, as a dynamic leader in the digital age, is enthusiastic about the celebration and publishes nine posts hashtagged with the theme day, including three posts on the day before and one post on the day after. None of the four posts published on the day contain the simple, typical greeting phrase of “Happy + (Day)”.

[Extract 5.51]

For those ladies about to rock, we salute you. #WorldEmojiDay (Google Twitter, July 17)

When a girl wants to be a scientist, she should be able to say it in emoji.
#WorldEmojiDay (Google Twitter, July 17)

Actually, TLC, we do want scrubs (in our emoji). #WorldEmojiDay (Google Twitter, July 17)

We’re celebrating #WorldEmojiDay with over 300 new emoji to help better represent women. (Google Twitter, July 17)

What a feeling #WorldEmojiDay (Google Twitter, July 17)

Although one of the four posts contains “celebrating”, its subject indicated by the personal pronoun refers to Google the company rather than the inclusive form of both the company and its followers, which makes it more of an act that promotes its product (300 new emoji) and its value (better representation of women or gender equality). There does not seem to be a decipherable connection between World Emoji Day and “ladies about to rock” (probably referring to women scientists or participants in a science event).

Pepsi is the only sampled brand that mentions World Emoji Day on Weibo. However, it is not a typical greeting, but more of an act promoting the brand's emoji-related product and related activities.

[Extract 5.52]

一个表情胜过千言万语，EMOJI 已经以不可阻挡之势攻占全球。在#世界 EMOJI 日#这样的重大日子，百事倾情巨献超级网红 EMOJI 的年度大片。....

(Pepsi Weibo, July 17)

Translation: One emoji is more than a thousand words. EMOJI has taken the world by storm. On this big day #World Emoji Day#, Pepsi presents this year's big movie about EMOJI....

Less-known theme day greetings

Google takes the lead in issuing greetings on all kinds of less-known theme days, from National Dog Day to National Lazy Day, from World Emoji Day to National Donut Day, etc. The very fact of knowing the large number of theme days in the first place speaks to Google's primary service as a search engine that "knows everything".

National Dog Day

[Extract 5.53]

We're a dog company. Happy #NationalDogDay from our "Dooglers" around the world! (Google Twitter, August 26)

[Extract 5.54]

Lazy boys (& girls) go for gold—searches for easiest Olympic sport spike 1450%
#Olympics #NationalLazyDay #1daylate (Google Twitter, August 12)

[Extract 5.55]

#NationalDonutDay? Donut mind if we do. (Google Twitter, June 3)

On National Donut Day, Google's Twitter post is a word play involving a clever use of the phonetic similarity between "Donut" and "Don't", making Donut into a verb as use in "Donut mind". The word play, the humor and "relax" attitude in "Don't mind" and the fun nature of the theme day itself "National Donut Day" connect together to build a causal connection between the brand and its social media followers, thus enhancing interactivity between the two parties.

Other companies are much less likely to engage in so many theme days. Among all the theme days mentioned in Google Twitter and Weibo, only several ones are repeated in other brands' social media pages, e.g., National Dog Day, World Emoji Day, and National Donut Day.

For other brands, in many cases where such theme days are mentioned, they are more or less related to the product category of the brand or the immediate interest of the public. For instance, Coca Cola Twitter published a post hashtagging National Watermelon Day, in linking the fruit with the company's drink product.

[Extract 5.56]

Any way you slice it, #NationalWatermelonDay goes well with Coke. (Coca Cola Twitter, August 3)

However, such theme days are foreign to the Chinese social media platform. On Weibo, only several theme days are repeated (probably translated from Twitter).

Similarly, there are theme days specific to the Weibo platform that are not observed

on Twitter. Typically they are theme days set by the Chinese government or competent authorities. For instance,

[Extract 5.57]

#可口可乐.晨安# 今天是**全民健身日**，也是多项奥运赛事比拼的日子，跟随奥运的激情，让我们一起用实际行动为奥运健儿们加油！#此刻是金#

Translation: #Coca Cola Good Morning# Today is National Workout Day and a day of many Olympic events. Follow the Olympic passion and cheer for the athletes! #This is gold#

International Kissing Day

[Extract 5.58]

#可口可乐·晨安# 今天将会是甜蜜的一天，因为今天是**#国际接吻日#**！心理学家也曾研究表明，星期三是一周中约会成功率最高的一天。你……准备好了吗？ @ 和你一起过节的那个 TA 吧！(Coca Cola Weibo, July 6)

Translation: #Coca Cola. Good Morning# Today will be a sweet day because it is **#International Kissing Day#**! Psychological research has proven that Wednesday is the day with the highest rates of successful dating. Are you...ready? Mention that him or her you want to spend this day with!

Coca Cola integrates the theme day greeting on International Kissing Day into its routine Good Morning post as shown in the extract above. Primarily a speech act of greeting, the post integrates several sub-acts: sharing an interesting finding by psychologists, promoting or asking the message recipient to get ready for the special day, and encouraging / directing the message recipient to mention their romantic

partner. Without any brand or product related information, the post stands as a friend-to-friend message that encourages people to show love to their significant other, effectively interacting with the brand's followers.

On the same day, Coca Cola Twitter also published a post hashtagging the theme day.

[Extract 5.59]

You do you. We won't judge. Happy #InternationalKissingDay (Coca Cola Twitter, July 6)

Instead of sending a greeting or encouraging people to act as it does on Weibo, Coca Cola's post on Twitter for this theme day implies that people can enjoy the freedom of kissing whoever s/he loves, regardless of gender. It is therefore more like expressing its attitude towards love or advocating equality for same-sex love.

Festival greetings

Chinese Valentine's Day

[Extract 5.60]

#大爱 Doodle# “金风玉露一相逢，便胜却人间无数。”七夕佳节到，Google 推出牛郎织女鹊桥相会 Doodle，继续传颂那古老而动人的神话故事，你与良人又打算如何共度今宵？愿天下有情人终成眷属！（Google Weibo, August 19）

Translation: #Love Doodle# Today is July 7 in the Chinese lunar calendar, Chinese Valentine's Day. Today's Doodle portrays the ancient Chinese love story of Niu-lang and Zhi-nv. How will you spend this evening with your love? Wish all will eventually get married with their true love!

Fourth of July

[Extract 5.61]

Happy Fourth of July! #GoogleDoodle (Google Twitter, July 4)

5.3.4 Directing

Corporations use directives to solicit feedback or request actions from followers. On their social media pages companies often post activity-related information such as steps for registration and rules of activities. The first extract below sends out an invitation that calls for followers to participate in their Science Fair, while “Get started” and the hyperlink at the end of the post indicate that followers can click the link for more details of the activity and to start their registration online. The Emoji symbol “Earth” used in the post also adds to the liveliness of the post and the activity. The other extract uses a simple imperative structure to help the followers participate and benefit from the special offer.

[Extract 5.62]

Your bright ideas can make the [Emoji Globe] a better place. #GoogleScience Fair is back! Get started → <http://googlesciencefair.com> (Google Twitter, Feb 23)

[Extract 5.63]

Bring your morning receipt back after 11am on the same day to get a lunch item for \$4, now through 3/6. (US Only) (Starbucks Twitter, Feb 25)

Survey / Soliciting feedback

[Extract 5.64]

你更偏爱哪一种书写方式? (Microsoft Weibo, June 13)

Translation: What's your favorite means of writing?

如果万物皆可复制粘贴，你最想复制什么？(Microsoft Weibo, July 5)

Translation: If you could copy + paste everything in the world, what would you like to duplicate most?

你曾经用相机记录过怎样的夏天？(Microsoft Weibo, July 22)

Translation: What kind summer have you ever recorded with your camera?

你见过最美的晚霞是什么样？(Microsoft Weibo, July 29)

Translation: What the most beautiful evening clouds you've ever seen look like?

[Extract 5.65]

欧洲杯、冰啤酒与聊得来的好朋友是这个夏天的必备元素。欧洲杯在如火如荼地举行，说说你最看好哪支队伍？(Microsoft Weibo, June 22)

Translation: The Euro Cup, cold beer and best friends are what you need for this summer. Which team at the Euro Cup do you think it the most promising?

Giving rules for activities/games

[Extract 5.66]

玩了太多“烧脑”游戏，这次你可以选择《动物连线》这款游戏放松一下。

《动物连线》规则非常简单，玩家需要将图上两个一样的动物连在一起，并且连线经过的所有路径要填满整个棋盘且路线不能交叉。玩家需要考虑清楚动物之间连线的关系，甚至用直觉就能够过关。(Microsoft Weibo, June 15)

Translation: Having played too many brain-racking games, this time you can choose to play a simple game Linking Animals to relax. The rules are very simple: just link two identical animals in the map while making sure that the routes

should spread throughout the map without intersecting with each other.

Sometimes players can even go by their intuition.

Inviting to participate in activities or games

[Extract 5.67]

#科技尝鲜派#基于 Windows 10 年度更新的 Xbox One 预览计划现已开始啦~
预览版系统将会分批向测试用户推送，本次更新的细节包括更紧凑的游戏库
界面、好友游戏截屏和录屏及群聊功能进一步增强，**快来试试吧~** (Microsoft
Weibo, June 14)

Translation: #New Tech New Experience# Here comes the Xbox One system for
preview based on the annual update of Windows 10. The system will be sent to
trial users in phases. Details of this update include more compact game bank
interfaces, game screenshots of contacts and enhanced group chatting features.

Hurry up for a try!

[Extract 5.68]

#Google 全球汇#谁说数据中心就注定乏味无趣？它也可以很有艺术范！快来看
看看 Google 是怎么让数据中心成为城市新风景的。这年头，明明可以靠实
力的数据中心也来拼颜值了。(Google Weibo, August 29)

Translation: #Google Global# Who says a data centre is bound to be boring? It
can be very artistic! Come check out how Google makes its data centre part of the
grand view of a city. These days, those who can thrive on their hard power also
come up to compete for good looks.

[Extract 5.69]

Help empower athletes around the world. Donate @coletivo2016 & support Brazil's future athletes. #SupportBrazil (Microsoft Twitter, August 18)

[Extract 5.70]

We're joining the @WhiteHouse to aid refugees by empowering nonprofits with tech, volunteers, & funding. Join us. (Microsoft Twitter, June 30)

[Extract 5.71]

Read how international fencer, @natalievie, uses @Skype in unexpected ways. (Microsoft Twitter, August 25)

Directive speech acts of technology brands tend to show the following features: future-oriented discourse; cool; more mental verbs; more specific verbs (开发); more work-related (学习); global-focused; more rational; and more polite. In contrast, food & beverage brands assume discursive characteristics such as: present & past-oriented discourse; lively; more activity verbs; more general verbs (看, 来, 去); more enjoyment-related (享受); local-focused; more emotional (exclamation marks); and more informal. Brand posts on Weibo typically use the following strategies to perform imperatives.

Strategy 1: (我们)一起(来) + verb: Let's + verb + together

Calling for participation

Coca Cola Weibo:

-一起来回顾今年圣火在伊瓜苏绽放的全过程 (Let's review the scenes of the Olympic Flame in Iguazu this year together)

- 一起来看看大家与可口可乐家族擦出来哪些火花吧 (Let's look at the exciting moments between fans and the Coca Cola family together)
- 一起轻松开挂吧 (Let's relax and have fun together)
- 下次一起呀 (Let's do this together next year)
- 与小伙伴们一起来个夏季大冒险吧 (Let's go for a summer adventure with pals together)
- 与小编一起回忆一下 (Let's review it together)
- 我们一起期待下一次的精彩 (Let's look forward to the highlights next time together)
- 我们一起祝福她火炬传递稳稳地成功吧 (Let's wish her a good trip with the torch together)

Strategy 2: 不要 + verb: Don't/Never + verb as encouragement

Coca Cola Weibo:

- 不为外界所动摇 (Don't be distracted by the outside world)
- 不为梦想放弃 (Don't give up your dreams)
- 不做第二个谁 (Don't be the second somebody)
- 不放弃 (Don't give up)
- 不要担心受伤 (Don't worry about being hurt)
- 不要畏惧他人的看法 (Don't be afraid of what others' opinion)

Strategy 3: 为你+ verb: verb + for you/sb. as offer or calling for participation

Coca Cola Weibo:

- 为你奉上解暑秘籍 (Provide you with the best recipe for summer diet)

- 为你弹奏所有情歌的句子 (Play all love songs for you)
- 为你静止 (Be still for you)
- 为中国队加油 (Cheer for Team China)
- 为救灾第一线的小伙伴们点赞 (Thumb up for those working on disaster relief)
- 为明天继续加油 (Cheer for tomorrow)

Strategy 4: strong imperative

Coca Cola Weibo:

- 二话不说快来报道 (Don't hesitate to report)
- 怎能不点赞 (How could I refrain from liking)

Strategy 5: 享受 enjoy

Coca Cola Weibo:

- 享受旅途带给你的惬意 (Enjoy the pleasant trip)
- 享受每一秒 (Enjoy every second)

Strategy 6: 准备 get ready for/be prepared as calling for participation

Coca Cola Weibo:

- 准备 party (Get ready for party!)
- 准备好了吗 (Are you ready?)
- 准备开启舒适的周末模式吧 (Get ready for the weekend mode)

Strategy 7: 来/去+verb: go + verb

Coca Cola Weibo:

- 去放大每一个金色时刻 (Go amplify every moment of gold)
- 去爱吧 (Go love)

来+verb: come + verb as offer and invitation

Coca Cola Weibo:

-来回顾一夏可口可乐的摄影大片吧 (Come review the summer film of Coca Cola)

-来看看上周正式开业的福州太古可口可乐吧 (Come take a look at the new Fuzhou Coca Cola bar)

-来看看这些曾经的创意瓶 (Come check out these old bottles of creativity)

Strategy 8: brand name as verb

Brand-related verb:

Coca Cola Weibo:

-一路和你可口可乐 (To Coca Cola with you all along the way)

-可乐而不为，可乐而为之 (Do only what you like to do because of Coke / delight)

Product-related verb:

Coca Cola Weibo:

-开启人生的每一个难忘时刻 (Open up every memorable moment in life)

-开启你的收获之旅 (Open up your trip of harvest)

-开启你的橙味夏日 (Open up your orange-flavored summer days)

-开启可乐假期 (Open up the Coke / delightful holiday)

Strategy 9: 快/赶紧/赶快/抓紧+verb: hurry up + verb as calling for participation

Coca Cola Weibo:

-快准备好最 in 拍照姿势来和火炬合影吧 (Hurry up and get ready to pose for a picture with the torch)

-快快来参加吧 (Hurry up and join us)

-快抓紧最后的机会吧 (Hurry up and grab the final chance)

-快来认识一下这位有趣的设计师吧 (Hurry up and meet this interesting designer)

慢慢+verb: take your time to + verb as wishing

Coca Cola Weibo:

-慢慢享用 (Take your time to enjoy)

-慢慢信任 (Take your time to trust)

Strategy 10: 戳大图 + verb: click on the big image to + verb

Offering more information

Coca Cola Weibo:

-戳大图查看入围作品名单吧 (Click the big image to check out the winning works)

-戳大图清凉一夏吧 (Click the big image to enjoy a cool summer)

Strategy 11: 期待+object: look forward to

Extending invitation and calling for participation

Coca Cola Weibo:

-期待下次 (Look forward to the next time)

-期待今晚的你们 (Look forward to seeing you tonight)

-期待明天再次看到你惊喜的表情 (Look forward to your happy face again tomorrow)

Strategy 12: specific verbs about social media-related actions

KFC Weibo:

-转发 (Retweet) 13

-回复 (Reply / Comment) 12

-兑换 (exchange / redeem) 12

-赞 (Like) 7

-关注 (follow) 6

McDonalds Weibo:

-猜 (guess) 18

-领 (get / claim) 9

-举手 (hands up) 7

-抢 (grab) 5

Strategy 13: formal and polite imperative forms: 请, 敬请 as invitation

McDonalds Weibo:

-敬请 (please) 2

-请问 (may I ask) 2

Microsoft Weibo:

-请 (please) 23

To sum up, as Table 5.2 (Table 5.1 in brief; by platform instead of by brand) indicates, across Twitter and Weibo, there are more corporate speech acts devoted to constructing interpersonal interaction (68% on Twitter and 71% on Weibo), than to promoting corporate accomplishments (32% on Twitter and 29% on Weibo). This shows that social media have become a prevalent tool for constructing interaction between corporations and their followers rather than for corporate self-presentation or information dissemination only.

Table 5.2 Summary of speech acts by global brands across Twitter and Weibo

Speech acts	Twitter		Weibo	
	N.	%	N.	%
Disclosing corporate information	275	13%	107	6%
Promoting corporate accomplishments	385	18%	413	23%
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>660</i>	<i>32%</i>	<i>520</i>	<i>29%</i>
Engaging with stakeholders				
Greetings	66	3%	97	5%
Directing	186	9%	517	29%
Expressing	134	6%	69	4%
Sharing	490	23%	281	16%
Retweeting	554	27%	323	18%
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>1430</i>	<i>68%</i>	<i>1287</i>	<i>71%</i>
Total	2090	100%	1807	100%

Meanwhile, across Twitter and Weibo, there are more speech acts for promoting corporate accomplishments than for disclosing corporate information as well as a greater disparity between the two types of acts on Weibo (23% vs. 6%) than on Twitter (18% vs. 13%). This reveals that Weibo is slightly more used as an advertising tool than Twitter, while Twitter is less explicit as an advertising space than Weibo.

Within the speech acts devoted to engaging with stakeholders, there are more sharing, expressing, and retweeting acts on Twitter than on Weibo. Corporate users are more likely to share non-advertising content and express emotions or attitudes towards people and events, which evidences that corporate users are more humanized and share a wider range of mutual discourse with followers on Twitter than on Weibo. Retweeting, which involves directly interacting with fellow social media users by quoting their posts, is a more explicit indicator of interpersonal interaction. Twitter is

the more active platform of the two that allows more retweeting to take place. In addition, there are more greeting and directing acts on Weibo than on Twitter. The greater number of greeting acts on Weibo can be associated with a stronger phatic culture of communication in Chinese culture. The greater number of directing acts on Weibo can be attributed to a more utilitarian mentality of corporate users of the Chinese social media platform that they actively solicit and expect specific actions to be taken on the part of the followers. Such actions are mostly related to spreading the word for corporations and participating in corporate-sponsored activities in order to promote corporate influence.

Chapter 6 Topical intertextuality in corporate social media

Topical intertextuality is indicative of the diversity and scope of prior texts related to certain topics that corporations assume as shared by their followers and incorporate in their own social media pages with various means of quoting. Such prior texts range from specific credited posts published by other users to the broader socio-cultural texts such as festivals, theme days, and major events in the real world. This chapter delineates three main types of topical intertextuality: hashtagged topics, retweeted posts, and socio-cultural texts.

6.1 Hashtag topics

6.1.1 Overview

Marking or not marking a topic with a hashtag is nothing but a strategic choice, for it is related to the corporate ideology on which topics or themes are to be foregrounded. The marking devices can be very subtle. In the following instance,

Happy Valentine's Day! #GoogleDoodle (Google Twitter, 14 Feb 2016)

While “Valentine’s Day” is a topic of public interest, Google did not mark it as a salient topic with a hashtag; instead, the product “Google Doodle” is hashtagged and used to bring attention to “#GoogleDoodle” as a special column-like function on Google’s Twitter page. In contrast, in another tweet,

It's #SaferInternetDay. Get 2GB free Drive storage when you take your Security

Checkup today <https://goo.gl/VHd7TF> (Google Twitter, 9 Feb 2016)

“Safer Internet Day” is marked with a hashtag, for the theme of the Day is immediately related to the industry the brand (Google) belongs to. In another scenario,

during the Super Bowl season, Google repeatedly used hashtags for both its product/service “Google Trends” and “Super Bowl” (SB for short) the event and topic of considerable public interest, thus tying the two together in order to win more attract more attention and interest, by means of not only making the two items co-appear, but finding a place for the product in the popular event. For example,

@KeyAndPeele are #SB50’s most-searched commentators. #GoogleTrends
(Google Twitter, 7 Feb 2016)

From February 7 to 8, Google had over ten tweets with the two marked topics, while there was only one tweet hashtagging “Chinese New Year” (which fell on February 8, 2016).

It might be explained as that the English-speaking followers of Google’s Twitter page, primarily Americans, were more enthusiastic about the flagship sports event (the Super Bowl) than about St. Valentine’s Day, which motivated Google to mark both topics as salient, for the brand could not afford to downplay the significance of the Super Bowl the way it did for St. Valentine’s Day and for the opportunity brought by the Super Bowl to attract more attention from followers.

It can be seen from these three cases that although more than one topic can be addressed by one post, the brand is highly conscious of maximizing brand visibility on social media. The present study makes a distinction between internal and external topics that are marked with a hashtag in corporate posts: internal hashtag topics are those that are related to the products, services, events, activities, or information specifically about the company or the brand, i.e. topics that are initiated by the brand,

whereas external ones are those that are of general public interest and popular on the platform within a period of time, such as theme days, festivals, entertainment topics, etc., i.e. topics that are initiated by the public rather than the brand.

This distinction is significant in that the nature of the topic, internal or external, is an important predictor of the level of interactivity designed or invested in the corporate post: if a post contains an external hashtagged topic, it can be assumed that it proactively goes beyond an interest in itself and reaches out for more interaction with the followers on topics that are of greater interest to them. In contrast, if a company posts more internal hashtag topics, it indicates a more self-oriented tendency and less motivation for greater interaction with its followers on social media. In other words, the more external topics hashtagged, the more interactive the corporate posts are. Table 6.1 demonstrates the numbers and ratio of external vs. internal hashtag topics of the ten brands.

Table 6.1 Number and percentage of external vs. internal hashtag topics

	Google	Microsoft	IBM	GE	Intel	Coca Cola	McDonalds	Pepsi	Starbucks	KFC
Weibo										
Internal										
#	79	63	52	26	121	84	410	96	103	377
External										
#	0	0	0	0	1	22	44	49	3	75
Total #	79	63	52	26	122	106	454	145	106	452
Twitter										
Internal										
#	48	11	283	41	281	19	44	143	111	21
External										
#	176	14	97	13	19	136	62	80	7	6

Total #	224	25	380	54	300	155	106	223	118	27
<hr/>										
Weibo										
Internal										
#	100%	100%	100%	100%	99%	79%	90%	66%	97%	83%
External										
#	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	21%	10%	34%	3%	17%
Total #	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Twitter										
Internal										
#	21%	44%	74%	76%	94%	12%	42%	64%	94%	78%
External										
#	79%	56%	26%	24%	6%	88%	58%	36%	6%	22%
Total #	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

In Table 6.1, Microsoft, McDonald's, and KFC were the only three brands to use more hashtag topics in their Weibo posts than in Twitter posts. Among the other seven brands, IBM and KFC showed the biggest gap in the use of hashtag topics across Twitter and Weibo: while on one platform both brands used around 400 hashtag topics (380; 452), on the other platform they use less than 60 (52; 27). Starbucks is the most balanced in using hashtag topics across Twitter and Weibo: 106 vs. 118.

With regard to the percentage or ration of external vs. internal hashtag topics, the distribution of internal and external hashtag topics was more balanced on Twitter than that on Weibo. On corporate Weibo, there is the extreme case that four (the first four technology brands) out of the ten brands did not utilize any external hashtag topics at all, and for the remaining six brands, the percentage of their internal hashtag topics far exceeded that of external ones, with the most active user of external hashtag topics registering only 33%. In contrast, on corporate Twitter, four brands (Google, Microsoft, Coca Cola, and McDonald's) used more external hashtag topics than

internal ones, the percentages of their external topics reaching 79%, 56%, 88%, and 58% respectively.

The striking contrast in the dominance of external vs. internal hashtag topics on Twitter vs. Weibo points to the tendency that corporate posts on Weibo were more inward-looking or self-contained than their Twitter counterparts. In other words, with respect to the part of interactivity embodied and realized by hashtag topics, corporate Twitter discourse was more interactive than its Weibo counterpart.

6.1.2 Types of internal and external hashtag topics

Brands also vary greatly in the type of internal and external hashtag topics used in their posts. Take Google and KFC for example, shown in Tables 6.2 and 6.3.

Table 6.2a Google's hashtag topics on Twitter

Internal # topics	Science event	Google Science Fair	1
	Cultural feature	Google Art 5	1
	Product	Google Translate	1
		Doodle4Google	2
		Google Doodle	4
		ok Google	1
		Google Trends	20
	Sub-total	30	
External # topics	Popular culture	Oscars	1
		The Oscars	1
	History	BHM	3
		Black History Month	5
		Black History	1
		Rosa Parks	1
	Sports	SB50	20
		Super Bowl Commercials	1
		Formation	1
		Puppy Bowl	1
		TBT	3
		Deadpool	1

	Politics	Iowa Caucus	1
	Industry	ConnectHome	1
	Days	Safer Internet Day	2
		Chinese New Year	1
		Ground Hog Day	2
	Other	monkey view	2
	Sub-total	48	
Total	Internal	30	38%
	External	48	62%
	Total	78	100%

Table 6.2b Google's hashtag topics on Weibo

Internal # topics	Product	大爱 Doodle (Love Doodle)	5
		Google 全球汇 (Google Global)	11
		数字营销 (Digital marketing)	1
External # topics			0
Total	Internal	17	100%
	External	0	0
	Total	17	100%

Table 6.3a KFC's hashtag topics on Twitter

Internal # topics	Products	Nashville Hot	2
		Nashville Hot Tenders	1
External # topics	Events	greatness	1
		100KCams	1
		Daytona500	2
	Days	Friday Feeling	1
		Nashvillepresidentsday	3
		Happy Valentine's Day	1
		World Radio Day	1
		White TShirt Day	1
	Sports	SB50	1
		Super Bowl	1
		ran NFL	1
Total	Internal	3	18%
	External	14	82%
	Total	17	100%

Table 6.3b KFC's hashtag topics on Weibo

Internal	Product	一人一桶	5
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		(One bucket per person)	
		最牛肯德基宅急送 (The best KFC courier)	1
		肯德基 WOW 会员 (KFC WOW member)	8
		好运桶桶来 (Good luck comes with every bucket)	3
		肯德基猴王当道 (The KFC Monkey King)	1
		肯德基×春晚 红包来拜年 (KFC*Gala Red envelope)	2
		肯德基红包来拜年 (KFC red envelope)	1
		肯德基随机立减 (KFC Sale)	1
	Corporate features	K 记印象 (K's impression)	1
		K 记剧场 (K's cinema)	1
External	Popular culture	奥斯卡 (The Oscars)	1
		圣斗士星矢 (Saint Seiya)	1
		火影忍者 (Naruto)	1
		格莱美 (The Grammys)	1
	Days	高考倒计时一百天 (100 Days countdown for the college entrance exam)	1
		四六级成绩查询 (Release of CET4/6 results)	1
		雨水 (Rainfall)	1
		马上开学 (Start school soon)	1
		NBA 全明星周末 (NBA All-star weekend)	1
		情人节 (Valentine's Day)	1
		春晚 (Spring Festival Gala)	1
		立春	1

		(Beginning of spring)	
		小年 (Lunar Dec 23)	1
		双鱼座 (Pisces)	4
	Events	大学选课 (Subject registration in college)	1
		大圣带你回家 (Monkey King brings you home)	1
		肯说我爱你 (Willing to say I love you)	2
		春运 (Spring Festival rush)	1
		今年的我这样放鞭炮 (I set off firecrackers this way this year)	1
Total	Internal topics	24	49%
	External topics	25	51%
	Total	49	100%

Google's Twitter posts make use of 30 internal hashtag topics and 48 external ones. Among the 30 internal topics, one is about its annual science event – Google Science Fair, another one “Google Art 5” is about its cultural project Google Art Institute celebrating its 5th anniversary, and the rest 28 are all about its products. The hashtag for the product “Google Trends” is repeated for 20 times, largely due to the fact that Internet users are keen on real-time searches and the product releases searching trends data regularly and can tell people about the topics people are most interested in at a given moment or period of time. Two hashtags “Doodle 4 Google” (Doodle for Google) and “Google Doodle” are both devoted to the product Doodle, which Google creates and updates every day, usually highlighting a special theme of the day, e.g., a portrait of some leading or special figure in a field who were born or died on that day, a sketch of some iconic element of a festival, etc. The product is popular among

Google's customers mainly for its creative artistic values, but from the company's perspective, there is an important branding purpose invested as well: Google constructs itself as a knowledgeable, caring, and creative brand through Doodle images. The topic "ok Google" imitates users' question-asking tone, such as in "OK, Google, where's the smallest island in the world?". It therefore becomes symbolic of Google's search engine product.

Table 6.2a also shows that Google's Twitter posts draw upon a wide range of external topics, from popular culture to politics, which are not related to its products or projects. The hashtag "SB50" is the most repeated topic, occurring 20 times. SB is short for the Super Bowl, the flagship football game in the US, which is bound to attract overwhelming interest and attention and inspires brands to interact with their followers on social media by posting messages related to this popular event and topic. Another prominent topic in the Google Twitter set is black history, as February is set as the Black History Month, with three synonymous hashtags – BHM (short for Black History Month), Black History, and Black History Month, as well as one closely related hashtag "Rosa Parks". Still another type of external hashtag topics are various "Days", some of which are established festivals such as the Chinese New Year, some are less well-known but more fun days such as the Ground Hog Day, and others are more serious theme days with an advocacy objective such as the Safer Internet Day.

Internal hashtag topics used in Google's Weibo posts, as shown in **Table 6.2b**, are very limited. "Google 全球汇" (Google Global) is the most frequent one (11 occurrences), followed by "大爱 Doodle" (Love Doodle) (5 occurrences), and the

unique “数字营销” (Digital marketing), all of which are concerned with Google’s products and services. The absence of external hashtag topics in Google Weibo further restricts the interactivity of the posts. In particular, while Chinese New Year was also celebrated in the month, the missing of a festival greeting post seems to be striking.

As indicated in **Table 6.3a**, on Twitter KFC used 3 internal hashtag topics: “Nashville Hot” repeated twice and “Nashville Hot Tenders” occurred once, both related to the theme product of KFC – Nashville Hot Chicken. The effectiveness of the popularity of the product and the topics can be attributed to the link KFC builds with Presidents’ Day, a national holiday in the US which fell on February 13 in 2016, which is also among the brand’s external hashtag topics. Other external ones include several theme days and festivals, e.g., White T-Shirt Day, St. Valentine’s Day, World Radio Day, and the sports event Super Bowl, in different forms such as “SB50” and “NFL”.

KFC appears very active on Weibo, as shown in **Table 6.3b**. Among the 24 internal hashtag topics, many are about KFC’s feature products such as its buckets, whereas others are promotions related to and during the Chinese New Year / Spring Festival. For instance, the topic “KFC*Gala | Red envelope” recommends consuming KFC products while watching the Spring Festival Gala, an entertainment tradition on Chinese New Year Eve, and announces that KFC would send out red envelopes to its followers as New Year gifts. The number of external hashtag topics on KFC’s Weibo is almost the same as that of internal ones. The 25 topics range from popular culture to theme days. It is noteworthy that besides theme days, there are also several important dates related to students’ life: e.g., “高考倒计时一百天” (100 Days

countdown for the college entrance exam), “四六级成绩查询” (Release of CET4/6 results), and “大学选课” (Subject registration in college), reflecting the fact that college and high school students constitute a big part of KFC’s consumers and KFC’s efforts to reach out to interact with its followers about student life issues and on these important days.

6.1.3 Comparing internal hashtag topics on Twitter vs. Weibo

Table 6.4a shows the list of internal hashtag topics on Twitter.

Table 6.4a Internal hashtag topics on Twitter

	Product	Donation	Sponsored events		Technology	
Google	Google Translate	1	Google Fair	Science	1	
	Doodle4Google	2				
	Google Doodle	4				
	ok Google	1				
	Google Trends	20				
	Google Art 5	1				
Microsoft	IoT	1	WhyIGive	1		
	Kinect	1				
	datacenter	1				
	Project Natick	1				
IBM	IBM	1	Cognitive Era		18	RDAC 1
	IBMPatents	1				Blockchain 4
	IBMCloud	2				robotsreact 14
	IBMSecurity	1				AI 4
	Watson Health	3				hybrid cloud 2
	IBM Research	9				Swift 1
	IBMiX	5				cloud 1
	Braille	1				THINKTable 1
	Watson Health	3				Cognitive Computing 1
	IBM Think	1				
	IBM Interconnect	2				
	IBM IoT	1				
	IBMz	2				
	IBMPWLC	1				
	IBM Banking	1				
	IBM Sports	2				
	IBMiX	1				
	IBM Design	1				
GE	Predix	1				

	Industrial Internet	1
	GE9X	1
	avgeek	1
	aviation	1
	bigdata	1
Amazon	Pay With Amazon	1
	Prime Pet	8
	Amazon Launchpad	1
	Unicorns	1
	Amazon Prime	3
	AmazonLaunchpad	1
	SharkTank	1
Coca Cola	CokeMini	24
McDonalds	All Day Breakfast	40
	McPick2	1
	French Fry	1
	biscuits	1
	buttermilk	1
	whatsforbreakfast	1
	egg	1
	eggmc muffin	1
	mcdonalds	1
	omgbiscuits	1
	ineedthis	1
	realbeef	1
	BenAndBreakfast	1
	mcmuffin	1
	BigMac	1
	Cheeseburger Pick up Lines	1
	Bigger Menu	1
Pepsi	Pepsi Beyond The Dream	4
	The Recipe	5
	Pepsi Half time	98
Starbucks	Citrus Green Tea Latte	1

	Komodo Dragon Blend	1	
	Maple Walnut Muffin	1	
	Latte Macchiato	1	
	Gold Coast Blend	1	
	Now Brewing	1	
	Mobile Order And Pay	1	
	Classic Chai	1	
	Latte Macchiato	1	
	Flat White	1	
	Hot Cocoa	1	
	Kcups	1	
	Iced Green Tea Latte	1	
	Spicy Chorizo Breakfast Sandwich	1	
	Iced Tea	1	
	Starbucks Card	2	
	eGift	1	
	Starbucks Date	2	
KFC	Nashville Hot	2	
	Nashville Hot Tenders	1	
Total		82	303

It can be seen from Table 4a that the vast majority of internal hashtag topics on Twitter are about products: among the 94 different internal topics, 82 (i.e. 87%) are about products. Out of the remaining 12, 9 are about technologies (all from IBM), 2 about corporate sponsored science events, and 1 about donation (from Microsoft “Why I give”). Therefore, product and corporate social responsibility (CSR) content constitutes main corporate internal information released on Twitter.

Table 6.4b shows the list of internal hashtag topics on Weibo.

Table 6.4b Internal hashtag topics on Weibo

	Product		Corporate disclosure		Small talk	
Google	大爱 Doodle (Love Doodle)	5				
	Google 全球汇 (Google Global)	11				
	数字营销 (Digital Marketing)	1				
Microsoft	微软创新科技 (Microsoft Innovative Technology)	2	微软趣数据 (Microsoft Fun Facts)	6	微笑周一 (Smile Monday)	3
	科技尝鲜派 (Fresh Tasters of Technology)	4	你不知道的微软 (The Microsoft You Don't Know)	5	周五微思考 (Micro Thought Friday)	3
					极客语录 (Geek Remarks)	2
IBM	新科技新体验 (New Tech New Experience)	3	IBM 新闻直通车 (IBM News Express)	11		
GE		0				
Amazon	Z 有奖 (Z Bonus)	5			Z 问候 (Z Greetings)	46
	亚马逊欧莱雅助你收割男神 (Amazon L'Oreal Helps You Get His Heart)	4			Z 阅读 (Z Readings)	15
	Z 大牌 (Z Big Brands)	5				
	Z 预告 (Z Forecast)	9				
	Z 优惠 (Z Sales)	2				
	小 Z 海外购 (Z Overseas Shopping)	1				
	亚马逊，不只是爱过 (Amazon, More Than Having Loved)	13				
	猴年买猴货 (Buying Good Goods in the Good Monkey Year)	10				
	亚马逊潘多拉珠宝上新 (New Arrivals of Amazon Pandora Jewels)	1				

	亚马逊潘多拉 (Amazon Pandor)	2	
	超级镇店之宝 (The Best of the Shop)	8	
	亚马逊生鲜馆 (The Amazon Fresh Food Parlour)	2	
	亚马逊开学季(Amazon School Season)	15	
	亚马逊开工季(Amazon Back-to-work Season)	4	
	Kindle 大促 (Kindle Sales)	1	
Coca Cola	李晨可口可乐怡泉+C (Li Chen Coca Cola + C)	1	可口可乐&美食 (Coca Cola & Fancy Food)
	Taste The Feeling	6	可口可乐.晨安 (Coca Cola.Good Morning)
McDonald's	McCafé 麦咖啡 (McCafe Coffee)	3	麦麦星历 (Maimai's Zodiac Calendar)
	桃花拿铁 (Peach Blossom Latte)	1	
	我要桃花 (I Want Peach Blossom)	20	
	那么大鸡排 (So Big A Chicken Leg)	9	
	我创我味来 (I Create My Own Taste)	2	
	Fryday	6	
	未来智慧概念餐厅 (Future Smart Restaurant)	1	
	麦咖啡用吻买单 (Pay with Kiss)	5	
Pepsi	百事全球超级球星 (Pepsi Super Star)	2	
	乐猴王纪念罐 (Pepsi Monkey King Cans)	2	
	把乐带回家 (Bring Pepsi Coke Home)	5	
	六小龄童乐猴王 (The Pepsi Monkey King)	1	
Starbucks	第三杯我们请 (The 3rd Cup Our Treat)	1	
	让周末很有聊, 第3杯星巴克请 (Enjoy the Weekend, Starbucks' Treat for the 3rd Cup)	1	

	第三杯星巴克请 (The 3rd Cup Starbucks' Treat)	1		
	您的好友樱花杯已上线 (Your Friend Cherry Blossom Cup Came Online)	1		
	层出心意玛奇朵 (The Lovely Macchiato)	1		
	福满栗香最后一天 (Last Day of Chestnut Flavor)	1		
	第 N 个有福满栗香玛奇朵陪伴的冬天 (The N-th Winter with the Company of Chestnut Macchiato)	1		
	给我一杯情人节 (Give Me A Cup of Valentine's Day)	1		
	星巴克新年贺卡(Starbucks New Year Card)	6		
	真爱粉摩卡(Pink Mocca the True Love)	1		
	可爱你星冰乐(Love You Frappuccino)	1		
	浓情黑巧克力挞(Deep Love Chocolate Tart)	1		
	法式闪电泡芙(French Flash Puff)	1		
	情侣星享卡(Couple Star Card)	1		
KFC	一人一桶(One bucket per person)	5	K 记印象 (K's impression)	1
	最牛肯德基宅急送(The best KFC courier)	1	K 记剧场 (K's cinema)	1
	肯德基 WOW 会员(KFC WOW member)	8		
	好运桶桶来 (Good luck comes with every bucket)	3		
	肯德基猴王当道(The KFC Monkey King)	1		
	肯德基×春晚 红包来拜年 (KFC*Gala Red envelope)	2		
	肯德基红包来拜年(KFC red envelope)	1		
	肯德基随机立减(KFC Sale)	1		
Total		57	213	

As with the brands' Twitter posts, the internal hashtag topics in their Weibo posts are also dominated by product topics, altogether 57 different ones, compared with 82 on Twitter. Comparing the categories in Tables 4a and 4b, we can find two major differences. First, on Twitter, besides product topics, CSR topics constitute a small category, while on Weibo no CSR topics are found. Although CSR has not yet become a major non-product category, it maintains an existence on Twitter but is missing on Weibo. For instance, one hashtagged CSR post on Twitter reads:

[Extract 6.1]

Microsoft colleagues devote time and energy to support local arts scene and thousands of other causes. #WhyIGive (Microsoft Twitter, Feb 11)

It might point to the situation that in the US corporations are more aware of their CSR duties and more engaged in CSR activities, while in China the same corporations are primarily concerned with their products and less enthusiastic about CSR issues. Second, there are two non-product hashtag categories on Weibo that do not have counterparts on Twitter. One is “corporate disclosure”, represented by hashtags such as “微软趣数据” (Microsoft Fun Facts), “你不知道的微软” (The Microsoft You Don't Know), and “IBM 新闻直通车” (IBM News Express). Posts with such topics are concerned with corporate news or facts, exemplified by the following two extracts.

[Extract 6.2]

#你不知道的微软#微软邀请 9 位科幻小说家访问微软研究院后, 创作的科幻小说名字是? 知道答案的请速速抢答, 不知道的快 Bing 一下噢~ (Microsoft

Weibo, Feb 2)

Translation: # The Microsoft You Don't Know # After Microsoft invited 9 science fiction authors visited the Microsoft Research, which science fiction work did they create? Shout out the answer if you know it; if you don't know, go Bing for it~

[Extract 6.3]

#IBM 新闻直通车#IBM 和 VMware 公司近日宣布建立战略合作伙伴关系，并将携手推广和销售针对混合云部署业务的新产品，以帮助企业更好享有云计算的系统速度和经济效益。(Microsoft Weibo, Feb 25)

Translation: #IBM News Express# IBM and VMware have announced the establishment of their strategic partnership and will jointly promote and sell new hybrid cloud-focused products so as to help enterprises better enjoy the speed and economic benefits of cloud computing.

The other category is “corporate small talk”, represented by the topics in the last column of Table 4b. They are not related to products or services of the brands, but instead feature “soft” content such as “chicken soup” (i.e. content containing warm, touching, or inspirational lines or life stories) that serve social or phatic purposes. Many of them involve word play with the brand name and the topic. For instance, two topics by Microsoft, “微笑周一” (Smile Monday) and “周五微思考” (Micro Thought Friday), both begin with the Chinese character “微” (pronounced *Wei*, meaning “micro”) and aim to represent the brand name in Chinese “微软” (*Wei-ruan*, meaning “Microsoft”); in the meantime, they form a coherent phrase with other characters in the topic, e.g., “微笑” (smile) and “微思考” (micro thoughts / bits of thoughts).

Others show an explicit temporal feature, usually linked to week days, weekends, or specific parts of the day such as morning or evening. For example, “周五微思考” (Micro Thought Friday) of Microsoft is related to Friday, as Friday marks the end of the working week and provides time for relaxation and quiet thinking; similarly, “微笑周一” (Smile Monday) often appears in posts published on Monday, for many commuters suffer from the “Monday syndrome” and Microsoft posts on this day encourage them to cheer up and smile. McDonald’s regularly sends out fun zodiac luck tips with the hashtag “麦麦星历” (Maimai's Zodiac Calendar), and Coca Cola also publishes “Good morning” posts almost every morning, with the hashtagged topic “可口可乐.晨安” (Coca Cola.Good Morning). See examples of such temporally themed hashtag topics and posts in the following extracts.

[Extract 6.4]

#微笑周一#上午好，试试和身边的人说一句：“You look great!”

Translation: #Smile Monday# Good morning. Try to say “You look great!” to people around you. (Microsoft Weibo, Feb 22)

[Extract 6.5]

#周五微思考#不要害怕放弃优秀，而是要努力成就卓越。周末愉快~

Translation: # Micro Thought Friday# Don’t be afraid to give up being good, but try hard to achieve excellence. Have a nice weekend~ (Microsoft Weibo, Feb 26)

[Extract 6.6]

#麦麦星历#双鱼宝宝就是一个大写的小公举，脑洞总惊的你无言以对，又会被 TA 的浪漫宠溺。你喜欢和 TA 一起吃麦当劳吗？来说说看~

Translation: # Maimai's Zodiac Calendar #Pisces babies are typical Princesses,

capitalized! You are always speechless when you are with her, but are also spoiled by her romantic feelings. Do you enjoy eating McDonald's with her? Tell us about it.

[Extract 6.7]

#可口可乐.晨安# 在钢筋水泥的森林中奋斗，只为在未来某一天开拓出一片可以自由翱翔的蓝天。(Coca Cola Weibo, Feb 17)

Translation: #Coca Cola.Good Morning# Struggling in the jungle of concrete and steel, we bear everything to fight for a blue sky where we can fly freely one day.

The hashtags not only serve to topicalize, and thus ritualize the phatic communication such as “Good morning”, “Have a nice weekend”, or “Have a good Monday”, but also makes explicit the purpose of its chicken-soup content and thus the post. This design grants dual functions to the posts: the phatic “good morning” function and the thematic “chicken-soup”.

6.1.4 Comparing external hashtag topics on Twitter vs. Weibo

Table 6.5a shows the range of external hashtag topics on Twitter.

Table 6.5a External hashtag topics on Twitter

	Popular culture		History		Sports		Politics		Industry	
Google	Oscars	1	BHM	3	SB50	20	Iowa Caucus	1	ConnectHome	1
	The Oscars	1	Black History Month	5	Super Commercials	1				
			Black History	1	Formation	1				
			Rosa Parks	1	Puppy Bowl	1				
					TBT	3				
					Deadpool	1				
Microsoft					NFL	2				
					SB50	1				
					Super Bowl	1				
IBM	Oscars	25							ICYMI	12
GE									AD	1
									mwc16	1
									MWC14	1
									Fueling2016	3
									Periscope	6
Amazon					BaldwinBowl	53				
Coca Cola					SB50	1				
McDonalds	GRAMMYs	2			SB50	9				
	living the dream	1								
Pepsi	Beyond The Dream	3			SB50	29				
	Best New Artist	1								
Starbucks										
KFC					SB50	1				
					Super Bowl	1				
					ran NFL	1				

Table 6.5a External hashtag topics on Twitter (cont'd)

Days	Event	CSR	Fun
------	-------	-----	-----

Google	Safer Internet Day	2						
	Chinese New Year	1						
	Ground Hog Day	2						
	monkey view	2						
Microsoft			Precision Medicine	1	Women STEM autism	In	1	
							1	
IBM	Friday Feeling	1	Incident Response	1	Women STEM	In	1	
	ValentinesDay	1						
	Pancake Day	1						
	Heart Month	11						
GE			impossible	13			Brilliant BBQ	3
							Emoji Science	1
							CandyCrush	1
							Start Your Own Story	4
Amazon	Mondays	4	This Week On Fire	1			Lunch	1
	Caturday	6	My Sweetheart	30			Fun Fact	1
	Wednesday Wisdom	2						
	National Toast Day	8						
	Tongue Out Tuesday	8						
	Drink Wine Day	1						
	Random Acts of Kindness Day	1						
	Monday Motivation	3						
	Valentines Day	11						
	Friday Feeling	2						
	Free Same Day	3						
	Wine Wednesday	1						
	National Pizza Day	10						
Coca Cola	Happy Birthday Leaplings	1	YOLO	1				
	Stand Up To Bullying Day	1	YOLOEFY	1				
	Taste The Feeling	6	Love Has No Labels	1				
	GRAMMYs	5	NYFW	5				
	Valentines Day	1	opulence	1				
	First Taste Fridays	1	Fashion	1				
	SuperBowlSunday	1	modfashion	1				

	GroundhogDay	1	fashion	1		
	HappyGroundhogDay	1	NoPymParticlesNeeded	1		
			HiddenMarvelMini6Pack	1		
			TeamCap	1		
			GreaseLive	2		
McDonalds	Leap Day	6	making a difference	1		
	friday	1	wildcaught	1		
	DAYTONA500	2			Reasons Why I Do Not Have A Valentine	1
	Random Acts Of Kindness Day	1				
	valentine	1				
	Valentines weekend	1				
	National Weather persons Day	1				
	groundhogday	8				
Pepsi	leapday	1	spon	2	Keep Swimming Left	1
	Black History Month	10	AD	2	puppy monkey baby	1
	Pepsi Pass	3	Find Your Magic	1	Fizzamous	3
	National Tortilla Chip Day	2	Up For Grabs	1	Add Pizzazz	1
	Valentines Day	1	Spring Training	1	Walken Closet	1
	ski day	1	squadgoals	1		
	Super Bowl Sunday	1				
Starbucks	Groundhog Day	1				
KFC	Friday Feeling	1				
	Nashvillepresidentsday	3				
	Happy Valentines Day	1				
	World Radio Day	1				
	White TShirt Day	1				

The main themes of external hashtag topics of the brands on Twitter cover popular culture, sports, theme days, CSR, external projects, etc. The flagship sports event Super Bowl 50 stands out as the most widely adopted hashtag, with variations such as SB 50, Super Bowl, NFL, etc. The Oscars and the Grammy's are less popular.

Another noteworthy phenomenon is that various theme days have become a powerful hinge to link the brands and their followers. There are altogether 28 theme days hashtagged by brand posts on Twitter (shown in **Table 6.6**).

Table 6.6 Theme days hashtagged by brand posts on Twitter

Chinese New Year
Valentine's Day
Pancake Day
National Toast Day
National Pizza Day
National Weather persons Day
National Tortilla Chip Day
Nashville Presidents' Day
Drink Wine Day
World Radio Day
White TShirt Day
ski day
Leap Day
Mondays
Friday
Caturday
Tongue Out Tuesday
Wine Wednesday
Super Bowl Sunday
Valentines weekend
Super Bowl Sunday
Heart Month
Black History Month
Safer Internet Day
Ground Hog Day
Random Acts of Kindness Day
Stand Up To Bullying Day
Free Same Day

Among them are traditional festivals and well-known days such as Chinese New Year and St. Valentine's Day, industry-related theme days such as Safer Internet Day (as in Google's posts), special calendar days such as Leap Day, and less known food-related

days including Pancake Day, National Pizza Day, National Tortilla Chip Day, which are mainly used by retailer brands such as Amazon and McDonald's. There are also theme days that call for general good and kindness, e.g., "Random Acts of Kindness Day" and "Stand Up To Bullying Day".

Table 6.5b shows the range of external hashtag topics on Weibo.

Table 6.5b External hashtag topics on Weibo

	Popular culture	Life philosophy	Days	Events
Google	0 猜猜小李子今年能不能拿奥斯卡			
Microsoft	1 (Guess whether Leonardo can win the Oscars this year)	Do Things	Great 1	
IBM				好好造句, IBM Watson 请你看电影 (Make sentences to win free movie tickets from IBM) 1 认知商业七日谈 (Cognitive Era 7 Days) 3
GE	0			
Amazon	1 奥斯卡(The Oscars)		今天是四年一遇的日子 (Leap Day Once In Four Years) 正月十五元宵节 (Chinese Lantern Festival) 中学开学季 (School Season for Highschoolers) 幼儿园开学季 (School Season for Kindergarten Kids) 小学开学季 (School Season for Pupils) 大学开学季 (School Season for College Students) 更智能开工季 (A Smarter Back-to-work Season) 更健康开工季 (A More Healthy Back-to-work Season) 更美艳开工季 (A Prettier Back-to-work Season)	1 3 17 8 8 7 5 8 5

				更帅气开工季 (A More Handsome Back-to-work Season)	5
				更精明开工季 (A More Clever Back-to-work Season)	2
Coca Cola	奥斯卡(The Oscars)	1		元宵节 (Chinese Lantern Festival)	1
				放松星期五(Relax Friday)	1
				情人节快乐 (Happy Valentine's Day)	1
				雨水(Rainfall)	1
McDonalds	奥斯卡(The Oscars)	2	拿下今天 (Conquer today)	你就是我的新年 (You Are My New Year)	19
	格 莱 美 (The Grammy's)	1			
Pepsi				美人超生快 (Happy Birthday to Deng Chao)	1
Starbucks		0			
KFC	奥斯卡(The Oscars)	1		高考倒计时一百天 (100 Days countdown for the college entrance exam)	1
	圣斗士星矢 (Saint Seiya)	1		四六级成绩查询 (Release of CET4/6 results)	1
	火影忍者(Naruto)	1		雨水(Rainfall)	1
	格 莱 美 (The Grammy's)	1		马上开学(Start school soon)	1
				NBA 全明星周末 (NBA All-star weekend)	1
				情人节(Valentine's Day)	1
				春晚(Spring Festival Gala)	1
				立春(Beginning of spring)	1
				小年(Lunar Dec 23)	1
				双鱼座(Pisces)	4
				肯说我爱你 (Willing to say I love you)	2

春运(Spring Festival rush)	1
今年的我这样放鞭炮 (I set off firecrackers this way this year)	1
大学选课 (Subject registration in college)	1
大圣带你回家 (Monkey King brings you home)	1

Compared with those in Twitter posts, themes of external hashtag topics on Weibo are much less diversified. Three brands, Google, IBM, and Starbucks, did not mark any external topics in their Weibo posts. No sports, history, politics, or CSR hashtag topics are identified in Weibo posts. Popular culture topics are restricted to the Oscars and the Grammy's, which is shared by Twitter posts. Across Twitter and Weibo, food & beverage brands are more enthusiastic in using external hashtag topics, esp. those related to theme days, in their posts, compared with technology brands. It probably has to do with a greater need felt by the food & beverage brands to be more casual and build greater solidarity with their followers. Also similar to Twitter data is the predominance of theme days as external hashtag topics. However, on Weibo, the theme days are mostly traditional festivals (e.g., Chinese New Year, Chinese Lantern Festival), solar terms (e.g., Rainfall, Beginning of spring), and important dates for students and office workers (e.g., dates of exams, subject registration, releasing exam results), in contrast to less-known and more casual theme days on Twitter (e.g., Pancake Day, Ski Day, Pizza Day), or industry-specific theme days (e.g., Safer Internet Day, Radio Day).

A group of topics unique to Weibo posts are about life philosophy, e.g., Microsoft's "Do Great Things" and McDonald's "拿下今天" (Conquer today). Below are two posts with such hashtagged topics.

[Extract 6.8]

桃“李”不言，下自成蹊。坚持理想，你也可以 #DoGreatThings#，祝贺小李子！祝贺微软小冰神预测！@小冰 @微软小娜 (Microsoft Weibo, Feb 29)

Translation: A man of true worth, like a lovely plum (*li*) tree, attracts admiration without speaking for himself. Hold fast to your dreams and you can also #

DoGreatThings #. Congrats to Leonardo! Congrats to Microsoft Xiaobing for her magic prediction! @Xiaobing @Microsoft Cortana

[Extract 6.9]

据说，最好的起床方式是被一碗喷香诱人的鸡粥唤醒↓↓↓#拿下今天#，软糯谷物鸡肉麦鲜粥+黄金馒头，天天超值早餐 6 元起。猫宁，小吃货。

(McDonald's Weibo, Feb 26)

Translation: It is said that the best way of getting up is to be waken up by delicious chicken soup!!! #Conquer today#, cereal chicken soup + golden buns, the breakfast set starting from 6 yuan every day. Good morning, little foodie.

It is interesting to observe that, despite the non-advertising nature of the hashtag topics, the posts are not necessarily non-advertisements. In the first post, the life-philosophy topic #Do Great Things# is not only used to congratulate Leonardo for winning the Oscars, to encourage Microsoft followers to persevere and realize their dreams as Leonardo did, but more importantly to compliment the Microsoft artificial intelligence product Xiaobing for its predicting ability. The advertising nature of the second post is even more explicit: the topic “Conquer today”, contextualized by the brand and the post, turns out to be the label of one of KFC’s breakfast products, though it also performs the phatic function of wishing the followers good strength to live the day. This phatic function is bolstered by the sentence-final transliteration of “猫宁” (pronounced as *mao-ning*, literally meaning “cat-peaceful”), the playful way of saying “good morning”. Both “Do Great Things” and “猫宁” require some English proficiency on the part of the brand followers, which reflects the increasing popularity and proficiency of the foreign language in China.

6.2 Retweeted posts

6.2.1 Overview

Brands not only compose original posts, but also retweet or re-post posts that are created by other social media users. The practice of retweeting involves re-publishing a post composed by another user or the same user on an earlier occasion. It is comparable to quoting in offline speaking or writing and the forwarding function in emailing. Previous studies (e.g., Leech, 1983; Carr et al., 2012) have treated quoting or retweeting as a separate type of speech act. The present study will follow that line of thinking and examine the retweeting practices by the sampled brands on social media in the next chapter, where the speech act of retweeting will be considered as a form of intertextuality, since it explicitly draws on other voices or texts.

As in the case of internal vs. external hashtag topics, this study also distinguishes between internal and external authors whose posts are retweeted by the brands. Internal retweeted authors include the brand itself (in retweeting an earlier post so as to save the users' effort in scrolling down to retrieve it), the company's sub-accounts such as accounts of its sub-brands, subsidiaries, overseas offices, feature products and campaigns, or the company's CEO, management and employees. In contrast, external authors are those who are not affiliated to the company, including business partners, other institutions, media, celebrities, customers, etc.

Affiliation of retweeted authors can be regarded as an important indicator of the level of interactivity of a corporate social media page. When a company retweets posts by external authors, it shows that the company is more aware of reaching out to proactively connect with people and organizations beyond the company itself, which is indicative of greater interactivity initiated by the company. On the contrary, if a company retweets posts by internal authors only, it is more likely that the company is

more self-interested and therefore marks a relatively lower level of interactivity. It can be assumed that when companies retweet posts by other authors, the more external authors they quote, the more interactive the company page is.

Table 6.7 below shows the numbers and ratio of external vs. internal retweeted (RT) authors of the ten brands.

Table 6.7 Number and percentage of external vs. internal RT authors

	Google	Microsoft	IBM	GE	Amazon	Coca Cola	McDonalds	Pepsi	Starbucks	KFC
Twitter										
Internal RT authors	13 (62%)	8 (50%)	36 (69%)	5 (50%)	3 (10%)	0	16 (84%)	0	4 (36%)	0
External RT authors	8 (38%)	8 (50%)	16 (31%)	5 (50%)	28 (90%)	1	3 (16%)	54	7 (64%)	21
Ratio	1.625	1	2.25	1	0.11	0	5.33	0	0.57	0
Total	21	16	52	10	31	1	29	54	11	21
Weibo										
Internal RT authors	0	3	0	0	18 (51%)	1 (50%)	0	0	1 (12.5%)	1 (12.5%)
External RT authors	0	0	0	0	17 (49%)	1 (50%)	28	0	0	7 (87.5%)
Ratio	0	0	0	0	1.06	1	0	0	0	0.14
Total	0	3	0	0	35	2	28	0	1	8

As can be seen from **Table 6.7**, while all the brands retweet posts by other authors of either kind on Twitter, on Weibo there are four brands – Google, IBM, GE, and Pepsi – do not retweet any posts. Furthermore, on Twitter, all the brands retweeted at least one post by external authors, though there are cases when brands do not retweet posts by internal authors. For instance, Pepsi, Amazon, and KFC take the lead in retweeting posts by external authors with 54, 28, and 21 such posts respectively, Coca Cola, Pepsi and KFC do not retweet any post by internal authors. Besides the three brands retweeting exclusively externally authored posts, two other brands – Amazon and Starbucks – retweet more posts by external authors than those by internal ones (28 vs. 3 and 7 vs. 4 respectively). Google, IBM, and McDonald’s retweet more posts by internal authors than those by external ones (13 vs. 8, 36 vs. 16, and 16 vs. 3

respectively). Microsoft and GE are the most balanced in retweeting posts by each type of authors (8 vs. 8 and 5 vs. 5). Pepsi and IBM are the two most active retweeters on Twitter, with Pepsi retweeting 54 posts (all externally authored) and IBM retweeting 52 (36 internal and 16 external, more balanced).

On Weibo, in contrast, less than half (four out of ten) of the brands on Weibo retweet externally authored posts. Two brands – Microsoft and Starbucks – retweet Weibo posts by internal authors only. Among the four brands retweeting externally authored posts, McDonalds takes the lead in retweeting such posts (altogether 28) and is the only brand on Weibo that exclusively retweets externally authored posts. Among the three brands that retweet posts by both internal and external authors, KFC is the only one that retweets more external than internal ones, while Amazon and Coca Cola are more balanced (18 vs. 17 and 1 vs. 1 respectively).

Several overall patterns become evident. First, retweeting is more active on Twitter than on Weibo. In other words, Twitter is the more interactive platform than Weibo in terms of retweeting. Second, the position of externally authored posts is more important than that of internally authored ones. On Twitter, five brands (Amazon, Coca Cola, Starbucks, KFC) retweet more externally authored posts than internally authored ones, in contrast to three brands (Google, IBM, McDonald's) that retweet more internally authored ones than externally authored ones. On Weibo, more externally authored posts are retweeted as well. Finally, technology brands are less active retweeters than food & beverage brands on both social media platforms. Google, IBM, and GE stand out as the less active retweeters on both Twitter and Weibo: not only are they zero-retweeters on Weibo, they retweet more internally authored posts than externally authored ones. Among all the four brands that retweet externally authored posts on Weibo, three are food & beverage brands (McDonald's,

Coca Cola, KFC); the other one is Amazon, which is in fact an interface brand in that it is an e-shopping site that provides all kinds of goods.

6.2.2 Types of internal and external retweeted authors

This section provides more detailed analysis of the composition of the authors whose posts are retweeted by the brands on Twitter and Weibo, beyond the general distinction of internal and external authors (“internal RT authors” and “external RT authors” hereafter). First, information on internal RT authors is provided in Table 6.8a.

Table 6.8a Internal RT authors on Twitter

	Products / Services	Projects		Subsidiaries / Sub-offices	Columns
Google	Google Maps	1	Art 1	Google UK 1	Google For Education 2
	Google Docs	1			Google4Entrepreneurs 1
	Google Politics	2			
	Google Fiber	1			
	Google Trends	2			
	Gmail	1			
Microsoft	Microsoft HoloLens	1		Microsoft Research 3	Microsoft News 1
					Microsoft Careers 1
	Surface	1			Microsoft in Health 1
IBM	IBM Watson	17		IBM Research 6	IBM Security 1
	IBM Cloud	2			
	IBM Analytics	2			
	IBM Interactive Exp	3			
	IBM Bluemix	3			
	IBM Banking	1			
	IBM IoT	1			
Amazon	Amazon Echo	2			
	Amazon Music	1			
Coca Cola		0			
McDonald's	McDonald's Mobile	1		Utah McDonald's	2
				mcdonalds_cincy	1
				NW FL McDonald's	2
				McDonalds_NWOH	1
				McD's of Central AR	3
				McDonald's Colorado	2
				McDonald's Philly	1
				McDGreaterSA	1

				McDonald's of NEO	1
				McDonald's Chicago	1
Pepsi		0	0		
Starbucks	Frappuccino		1	Starbucks Rewards	2
				StarbucksDeals	1
KFC		0	0		

Altogether there are 42 different internal authors whose posts are retweeted by the brands they are affiliated to. Although all internal RT authors in the Twitter set are sub-accounts of the brands' social media accounts, they can be divided into four types: products / services, projects, subsidiaries / sub-offices, and columns. From Table 3a, we can see that most internal RT authors fall into two categories: products / services, and subsidiaries / sub-offices. Google and IBM are the most active in retweeting posts from product sub-accounts, while McDonald's is the most enthusiastic in quoting from sub-accounts of its subsidiaries in, e.g., Cincinnati (mcdonalds_cincy) and Philadelphia (McDonald's Philly).

The fact that a company creates separate social media accounts or pages for their feature products or services can be deemed as evidence of the brand's awareness in providing more specialized information and service with greater granularity or delicacy. Accounts of such feature products / services also publish posts regularly, but when their posts are retweeted by the main account of the brand, certain evaluation is performed by the main account as the latter considers the former "worth retweeting" and recognizes their information value. The retweeting practice thus elevates the status or discourse order of the sub-accounts and their posts by incorporating them into the main account's page so that they are disseminated among more followers. Similarly, by creating separate social media accounts or pages for their subsidiaries or branches, a company aims to provide more localized products / services to consumers in those specific locations. As in the case of retweeting posts from product sub-accounts, the retweeted subsidiaries' posts gain extra information value at least in that they gain special attention and interest of the main account and their information is deemed worth being noted by more followers.

The last category of internal RT authors on Twitter consists of "columns", which are

comparable to some hashtag topics in that they are thematically organized. For instance, one Microsoft’s internal RT author is “Microsoft News”, while on Weibo one of IBM’s internal hashtagged topic is “IBM 新闻直通车” (IBM News Express). Other instances of such internal RT authors include “Microsoft Careers”, “Google4Entrepreneurs” (i.e. “Google for Entrepreneurs”), etc. that are targeted at particular interest groups, e.g., job seekers and entrepreneurs. In a similar vein, when certain news and job ads from sub-accounts are retweeted by the main account of a brand, such information is regarded as more newsworthy or more important than other posts sub-accounts and granted more information value and a higher discourse order.

Table 6.8b Internal RT authors on Weibo

	Self	Subsidiaries / Sub-offices	
Google	0		0
Microsoft	Microsoft	1 微软研发(Microsoft R&D)	1
		微软亚洲研究院(Microsoft Research Asia)	1
IBM	0		0
GE	0		0
Amazon	Amazon	2 亚马逊客服(Amazon Customer Service)	16
Coca Cola	Coca Cola	1	0
McDonald's	0		0
Pepsi	0		0
Starbucks	Starbucks	1	0
KFC	KFC	1	0

As summarized in Table 6.8b, internal RT authors on Weibo are very limited. Brands only retweet two types of internal posts: those (earlier posts) from their own account and from their sub-offices. Half of the brands do not quote either type of internal authors. The rest five brands – Microsoft, Amazon, Coca Cola, Starbucks, and KFC – re-publish their earlier posts once or twice. Among these five, except Microsoft and Amazon, the other three do not retweet internal authors other than themselves. Microsoft retweets posts created by its research offices or branches, while Amazon

frequently retweets posts from its sub-account specialized in customer service. In contrast with the brands' retweeting practice on Twitter, they do not retweet posts from sub-accounts devoted to feature products or projects, although it is unknown whether they have created such sub-accounts in the first place. The "columns" RT author category on Twitter is also missing on Weibo. On the whole, retweeting posts created by internal authors takes place much less often and is more restricted on Weibo than on Twitter.

Table 6.9a External RT authors on Twitter

	Individuals		Media		Business partners			Individuals		Business partners	
Google	Kevin Poulsen	1	NYT	1	MadeWithCode	1	Pepsi	Jidenna	2	AJ Calloway	1
	Demis Hassabis	1			Fast Company	1		MattForte22	1	GIPHY	1
					BoxHQ	1		Monyetta Shaw	1	VH1 Save The Music	1
					The Verge	1		KennyBurns	1	Kia Motors America	1
Microsoft	Scott Kelly	1			Backchannel	1		Will Packer	1	NFL	1
	Farhad Manjoo	1			The Information	2		Janelle Monáe, Cindi	7	Slurpee	3
	Satya Nadella	1			Co.Design	1		Coldplay	10		
					GeekWire	1		kerry washington	1		
IBM	Jennifer Harris	1			Seattle Seahawks	1		backstreetboys	1		
	Starwarsgirl75	1			The Drum	2		he Late Late Show	1		
	Mr. Sinister Bot	1			Mashable	1		Melissa Polinar	1		
	Lord Overbot	1			ApplicationDevTrends	1		Ashlee Keating	1		
	Carrie Fisher	1			XPRIZE	1		Chris Stylez	1		
					Tech Crunch	1		Good Morning America	2		
					CES	1		Mountain Dew	1		
					Adweek	1		Carla Ferrell	1		
					Bizwomen	1		Mike Ryan	1		
					Cool Hunting	1		J.D. Martinez	1		
GE	Jeff Immelt	1			TechTree.com	1		Madonna	2		
	Jerome Bettis	1			ecomagination	2		La Toya Jackson	1		
Amazon	Meredith Kovarik	1	CBS	1	LNG	1		Tyler Lockett	1		
	Philip DeFranco	1						Matt Ryan	1		
	Fred Cunha	1						Zach Ertz	1		
	Ray Utarnachitt	1						Betty Cantrell	1		
	Quinn Rufener	1						Donald Faison	1		
								Derrick Brooks	1		

Dana Rodriguez	1			Starbucks	Kelly Ann Wilson	1
Mego @ Cloud 9	1				Patrick Shanley	1
Ben Heyman	1				Christine Tran	1
Melissa Agelson	1				Kaitlyn Lopez	1
Tia Dugan	1				Leslie Moore	1
Vicky K	1				Brooke Ritter	1
sheena little	1				Gabbie Matous	1
nikki bankert	1			KFC	Mizz Wen	2
Jonathan Herne	1				Joey Lancaster	1
Hailey	2				Michael Waltrip	1
Amber	1				No. 16 Biffle Team	1
Earl Michael	1				coastieslove	1
voiletwishes	1				Roush Fenway Racing	1
Alyssa	1				Colonel Sanders	2
Aaron Ellis	1				Josh Estep	1
NavyMarineMom	1				Jon Bruce	1
ZX6Chic	1				Kendall R. Williams	1
Sly Talos	1				John Waltz	1
AlecBaldwin	1				David Dornberger	1
Missy Elliott	1				Jeff Wysaski	1
Spotify	1				A Human Being	1
TmarTn	1				Jim Gaffigan	1
Coca Cola		Marvel Entertainment	1		Brett Siegel	1
McDonald's		ReadingIsFundamental	1		David Bailey	1
		365Black	2		Stylz & Roman	1
					Dan Ryckert	1

External RT authors on Twitter consist of two major groups: individuals and business partners. Occasionally there are also media organizations, e.g., The New York Times whose post is retweeted by Google and CBS Television retweeted by Amazon.

Table 6.9b External RT authors on Weibo

	Individuals		Business partners		Media	
Google		0				
Microsoft		0				
IBM		0				
GE		0				
Amazon	穿着拖鞋满街逛	1	康夫 CONFU	1	羊城晚报 (Yangcheng Evening News)	1
	苏大夫不愿做文明的旅人	1	生活大爆炸 TBBT	1	天天美食推荐 (Food Recommendations)	1
	若禅-ZY	1	求是设计会 (Qishi Design Club)	1	华闻周刊(The Chinese Weekly)	1
	刘旭程	1	美国舌英语 (American Tongue English)	1	美妆第一线(Cosmetics)	1
	Amy_Chua	1			环球网(Global Times.com)	1
	我淘过我 Z 到	1			环球资讯广播 (CRI News Radio)	1
Coca Cola	李晨	1			199IT-互联网数据中心 (Internet Data Centre)	1
McDonald's	云居遥	1			Narcissefee	2
	宁泽涛	1				
	小蚕知夏	1				
	Sharkfollowbee	1				
	冤冤相报变胖了_	1				
	老杨杨杨 Bec	1				
	蘑菇小象就是我	1				
	魅夜之爱	1				
	RUIC 小食糖	1				
	淘气屋的大掌柜	1				
	鸢一	1				
	小诺在大连	1				
	黄小伊是远目君	1				
	Barnett 先森	1				
	西木和甜瓜	1				
	白吃面面的幸福生活	1				
	Yuko-Chan	1				
	NUL_BEL_STX	1				
	_史迪秦	1				
	柠檬鹿 HL2_0 、	1				
	倪娃娃哇哇哇	1				
	董 BomBom	1				
	火星人在吃肉肉	1				
	沙安沙安	1				
	巴黎海岛的梦	1				
	江城柚子	1				
Pepsi		0				
Starbucks		0				
KFC	花样作死	1			东方卫视番茄台(Dragon TV)	1
	姚晨	1				
	bi-bi-bo-bi-	1				

肖骁 Mix	1
范湉湉 Vila	1
追风少年刘全有	1

Similar to the Twitter picture, external RT authors on Weibo also cover three categories, with “individuals” taking the lead, esp. for food & beverage brands. A striking difference between the two platforms is observed in the weight of business partners. While on Twitter, business partners stand as a major category of external RT authors, on Weibo, Amazon is the only brand that retweets posts from business partners. Amazon is also the most active brand in retweeting posts from media organizations.

Apparently, retweeting, the most salient means of intertextuality enabled by the architecture social media, is not the only way to quote speech by other authors. It is a typical example of direct quotation, realized electronically. Conventional means of marking direct quotation such as using quotation marks and other means such as paraphrasing and summarizing can also be found on social media. A separate section will be devoted to such conventional means of manifest intertextuality or reported speech on social media.

Retweeting can be regarded as a prominent form of manifest intertextuality in that it explicitly quotes entire posts from other authors; meanwhile, at that stage it is not considered a form of generic intertextuality for the reason that the quoting post and the quoted post are both social media posts and do not differ in terms of the genre type. However, retweeting is a means of generic intertextuality because when viewed dynamically as recontextualization it embodies significant transformations of the text type of the individual posts that are reposted.

A major case in point is the retweeting of a consumer's post by a company: individual (rather than corporate) users often share their positive experience with brands on social media and such posts on their own pages are self-motivated, social discourse or small talk with their friends, but when such posts are retweeted by the company of the brand in question in the corporate social media page, they acquire the corporate voice and specifically become the "consumer testimony" as part of the corporate discourse. The inclusion of consumers' voices in this way appears to be more effective than having a "consumers' testimony" section in the website or a brochure, for the social

media posts are self-motivated while the conventional consumers' testimony can be produced upon corporate requests or interviews.

Another case is the retweeting of traditional media (newspapers, magazines, TV channels) by a company: the informational discourse is transformed into promoting discourse for the company.

[Extract 6.10]

On Feb 26, Google co-hosts an art exhibition, which generates several consecutive posts providing real-time reporting of the event:

-a) Today in SF, we're co-hosting an exhibit on the art of neural networks:

<http://...>

-b) These artworks were created by Deep Dream, a visualization technique based on a neural network

-c) Neural networks are one method for machine learning...

-d) And they can be a tool for artists to create strange and wonderful works.

In post a), the earliest one, the temporal and spatial marker "Today in SF" and the present progressive tense used are typical features of reporting discourse, which indicates that Google constructs itself as a self-media agency that broadcasts its activities directly to its followers on social media.

The subsequent three posts are representative of expounding discourse, with post b) introducing the network which forms the basis of the Deep Dream technology, post c)

explaining that such network is a means of machine learning, and post d) adding the function of the network. Expounding discourse is realized by features such as apposition (“Deep Dream, a visualization technique”), definition (“Neutral networks are...”), past participle modifiers (“a technique based on...”), etc.

6.2.3 Generic intertextuality enabled by retweeting

As profiled in Section 5.1, an apparent way of mixing different discourse types is alternating, illustrated by cases in which some advertising posts are followed or preceded by corporate news or social posts where these different types of posts are only sequentially or temporally related without bringing in contact various features of advertisements or news reports within one single post. This can be regarded as generic intertextuality beyond the social media post level or at the social media page level. However, within one post, it is also common to see the alternating, embedding, and mixing of different discourse types, and it is more meaningful to uncover the mechanisms of integrating features of different discourse types within posts. This section will delineate three forms of genre mixing: the incorporation of conversational features, reporting features, and promotional elements in social media discourse.

It starts with a detailed account of the conversationalization of advertising posts and corporate news posts, in addition to the case that corporate social posts are themselves part of the conversational matrix.

Fairclough (2003: 35) indicates that one widespread form of interdiscursivity is the “conversationalization of various genres”. This tendency is particularly explicit in

corporate social media discourse. Although it is now almost a common belief that computer-mediated discourse manifests the hybridization of speaking and writing (e.g., Soffer, 2012), there has been a lack of detailed, systematic accounts of interactive linguistic features in corporate social media discourse. As reviewed previously, analysis of interactive linguistic features in corporate web discourse has mostly been limited to the use of personal pronouns (first-, second-, and third-). It is therefore the task of this section to explicate a more comprehensive array of interactive linguistic features in corporate posts, aiming to extend beyond the level of orthography and lexis. In Fairclough's (1992; 2003) and Bhatia's (2004) terms, this conversationalization is the colonization of one discourse type (conversation) of other ones (advertisements and news reports in this study). Table 6.10 represents the means of conversationalization in corporate social media discourse.

Table 6.10 Generic intertextuality in corporate social media

Generic intertextuality	Type	Genres	Operationalization
	Alternating (Page-level)	Casual conversation (CC)	Social posts
		Advertising (AD)	Advertising posts
		News reporting (NS)	Corporate news posts
	Mixing (Post-level)	CC + AD	Conversational features in advertising posts
		CC + NS	Conversational features in news posts

In previous sections, retweeting is regarded as the speech act of quoting and a prominent form of manifest intertextuality in that it explicitly quotes entire posts from other authors; meanwhile, at that stage it is not considered a form of generic intertextuality for the reason that the quoting post and the quoted post are both social

media posts and do not differ in terms of the genre type. However, in this section, retweeting is also established as a means of generic intertextuality because when viewed dynamically as recontextualization it embodies significant transformations of the text type of the individual posts that are reposted.

A major case in point is the retweeting of a consumer's post by a company: individual (rather than corporate) users often share their positive experience with brands in social media and such posts on their own pages are self-motivated, social discourse or small talk with their friends, but when such posts are retweeted by the company of the brand in question in the corporate social media page, they acquire the corporate voice and specifically become the "consumer testimony" as part of the corporate discourse. The inclusion of consumers' voices in this way appears to be more effective than having a "consumers' testimony" section in the website or a brochure, for the social media posts are self-motivated while the conventional consumers' testimony can be produced upon corporate requests or interviews.

Another case is the retweeting of traditional media (newspapers, magazines, TV channels) by a company: the informational discourse is transformed into promoting discourse for the company. This section surveys the types of posts retweeted by companies, which involves either social discourse transformed into promoting discourse (consumers) or informational discourse transformed into promoting discourse (media).

Of course generic intertextuality also takes place without retweeting, as illustrated by the following two cases. On the day when Google co-hosted an art exhibition, the

brand published several posts to report the event as follows:

[Extract 6.11]

- Today in SF, we're co-hosting an exhibit on the art of neural networks.
- These artworks were created by Deep Dream, a visualization technique based on a neural network
- Neural networks are one method for machine learning.
- And they can be a tool for artists to create strange and wonderful works.

The adverbial “Today in SF” at the beginning of the first post and the present continuous tense in “we’re co-hosting” are typical features of reporting discourse, which suggest that Google constructs itself as the (social) media owner that reports brand-related events to brand followers. However, the three posts following it belong to expounding discourse: the second post explains the work is created by a visualization technique named Deep Dream that is based on the neural network; the third post further indicates that that kind of network is a means of machine learning; and the fourth post explicates the function or purpose the network can serve. Apposition in “Deep Dream, a visualization technique”, past participle modifier in “a technique based on...” and the definitional structure in “Neural networks are...” are indicative of expounding discourse, while the fourth post can also be interpreted as bearing some promotional feature. In fact, if the four posts are read together as a paragraph, it makes a coherent stretch of text. It can be assumed that if there had not

been social media, this brand-related event would have been written into a longer piece of text such as a news message or a blog entry published in the corporate website or blog. In contrast, corporate social media are dominated by fragmented text, significantly reducing the processing burden of message recipients, thus helping the information to be better consumed and circulated. The mixing of reporting, expounding and promoting discourse in the sequence of the four posts above proffers Google with an identity of an open and knowledgeable brand willing to communicate and share information with its followers.

Targeting the Oscars, Google published the following posts:

[Extract 6.12]

- Which nominees are winning #TheOscars race on search? Follow along with @GoogleTrends: <https://goo.gl/rWVriI>
- We'd like to thank the Academy (...for 3D-printing this year's #Oscars from the original 1929 statue).

The first post features promoting discourse, creating a need for Google service by raising a question: with the moment of announcing the nominees approaching, people must be eager to know the winning names. The post then uses an imperative to recommend an option to satisfy the need, which is to use the company's service Google Trends. The second post is an instance of sharing discourse, sharing a piece of less-known knowledge and expressing thanks to the Academy. By mixing promoting

and sharing discourse, Google presents itself as a knowledgeable and amiable brand that is willing to share knowledge and interested in shared topics with followers.

Another form of generic intertextuality takes place when the same information is represented in different genres across Twitter and Weibo, as the following two cases demonstrate.

Case 1: Google Translate

Twitter: From Amharic to Xhosa, introducing #GoogleTranslate in 13 new languages—now 100+ in all! [Feb 18]

Weibo: #Google 全球汇# 今天, Google Translate 新增 13 种语言, 支持的语种种类突破 100 大关, 覆盖了 99% 的线上人口。打破语言障碍, 世界比你想象的更小! 详情请见: O 从阿姆哈拉语到班图语, GoogleTranslate 新增 13 种语言, 支持语种总数突破 100 大关! [Feb 18]

Translation: Today, Google Translate adds 13 new languages, now supporting 100+ languages in all, covering 99% of the online population. With language barriers melting, the world is even smaller than you've imagined! For details, please see – “From Amharic to Xhosa, introducing Google Translate in 13 new languages – now 100+ in all!”

The Twitter post is an advertisement about Google's product, whereas the Weibo post, with its explicit temporal adverbial “Today”, reads more like a piece of news about Google's accomplishment.

Case 2: Google Cultural Institute

Twitter: The Google Cultural Institute is officially 5 years old today. HBD,

@GoogleArt! #GoogleArt5 <http://g.co/culturalinstitute> ... [Feb 1]

Weibo: #Google 全球汇# 感受美好，体验文明，敬畏历史。Google 文化学院用 5 年的时间提供了 1000 余家文化机构的在线浏览体验，用现代科技开辟一条通向艺术和文化的道路。这是时代的胜利。-- 5 年，1000 家博物馆，我们让艺术流于指尖 [Feb 2]

Translation: Feel the beauty, experience the civilization, and revere our history. The Google Cultural Institute has spent 5 years delivering online visiting experiences of 1000+ cultural institutions, creating a path with modern science and technology towards art and culture. This is the victory of our times. – “Five years, 1000 museums, we make art flow at your finger tips”.

The Twitter post is a piece of news about Google’s accomplishment, while the Weibo post is an advertisement about new features of the product.

Retweeting can enable generic intertextuality to a greater extent. When Google’s sub-account Gmail revealed on social media that the number of its users has reached 1 billion, Google the brand account retweeted Gmail’s post with a line of comment:

[Extract 6.13]

1 billion users!? You go @Gmail!

RT [Thanks a billion for helping us make Gmail better and better!]

The Gmail post uses “Thanks a billion” instead of the conventional “Thanks a million” as an apt way to announce the news, and the line “1 billion users!? You go @Gmail!”

added by Google when retweeting the Gmail post highlights or explicates the connection between “Thanks a billion” and “1 billion users”. The compound punctuation marks “!?” express Google’s surprise and delight in hearing the news from Gmail. “You go Gmail!” resembles what a parent says to congratulate the child when the latter does a good job in something. In this way Google’s retweeting brings together promoting and expressing discourse in generic intertextuality, which serves to personalize the brand to a great extent and promote interactivity between the brand and its followers.

Although it is common for brands to include in their advertising texts compliments or testimonials from customers, on social media, retweeting the original positive-toned posts composed by consumers not only strengthens the credibility of the testimonials, but also enables direct conversation between the brand and customers. For instance, Starbucks often retweets posts originally published by consumers who had positive experience with Starbucks:

[Extract 6.14]

Starbucks retweeted the following posts by individual consumers:

-A good latte can change your whole day. @Starbucks (by Kelly Ann Wilson)

-@Starbucks I don't know what angels eat for breakfast, but I wouldn't be surprised if it was your new chorizo and egg sandwich (by Patrick Shanley)

-THE SMOKED BUTTERSCOTCH LATTE IS REALLY GOOD. I REPEAT, THE SMOKED BUTTERSCOTCH LATTE IS PERFECTION. @Starbucks (by

Kaitlyn Lopez)

-THE MOLTEN CHOCOLATE LATTE FROM STARBUCKS JUST SAVED
MY LIFE (by Brooke Ritter)

-I've found my soulmate and it's the molten chocolate latte from @Starbucks (by
Gabbie Matous)

The first consumer reveals that a latte can make her feel better for the day; the second praises Starbucks' new sandwich as "angel's breakfast"; the third not only uses all block letters to show the volume of his strong emotion or compliment, but also uses "I repeat" to repeat the compliment, with a slight variation from "really good" to "perfection"; the fourth pays compliment in the form of exaggeration in saying that Starbucks latte "saved his life" with all block letters to show emphasis; and the fifth regards Starbucks latte as her "true love", targeting St. Valentine's Day.

This process of recontextualization, i.e. transferring stretches of discourse from consumers' social media pages to corporate social media pages, brings forth a change in the genre of consumers' posts: while their posts are sharing discourse on their own social media pages (i.e. sharing their pleasant experience at Starbucks as one of their highlights or memorable moments of the day), after they are retweeted by the brands and incorporated in the corporate social media pages or embedded in the corporate social media pages, they become part of corporate social media discourse or the brands' promoting discourse, to be more specific.

6.3 Sociocultural text

In the age of globalization, mobility and interconnectivity in all spheres of human life that of discourse, manifested in “flows of representations, narratives, and discourses” (Fairclough, 2006, p. 2). What used to be “sedentary” or “territorialized” patterns of language use are complemented by “translocal” or “deterritorialized” forms of language use, and the combination of both often accounts for unexpected sociolinguistic effects (Blommaert, 2010). Geographical borders are no longer adequate to account for changes in language and culture, as communities are increasingly defined by the culture, values, and patterns of language use their members share and identify with. One prime example is the myriad of discourse practice revolving around the global event of the Olympics Games. From the range of hashtag topics in the previous section, it can be observed that corporations on social media frequently draw upon topics and texts of public interest to produce their own discourse. Such topics and texts include festivals, theme days, trending topics, major events, and so on. This section conducts a case study of the 2016 Olympic Games to investigate how the corporations draw upon this sociocultural text of the Olympics to create and promote interactivity of their social media discourse or engage in interaction with their followers.

Google:

Google is the most enthusiastic brand to incorporate the Olympics text into its own discourse, with 79 posts on Twitter containing content related to the Olympics. On

some days the Google Twitter page published as many as six posts related to the Olympics. Google skillfully established links between its products (Google Search in particular) and the Games, by publishing updates about people's searching behavior in response to events or targeting moments. Such searching behavior and trends themselves have become interesting facts worth sharing to satisfy people's curiosity about what other people are doing and searching as a form of reaction and participation in the event in the role of spectators. Such interesting behavior could be evoked by a unique sport, athlete or seemingly insignificant item in the Games. For instance,

[Extract 6.15]

Searches for neon yellow running shoes in the US spike 600% as Galen Rupp bags bronze in the men' s #marathon. (Google Twitter, 21 AUG 2016)

As #RhythmicGymnastics continues, searches for hula hoop twirl past searches for soccer balls. (Google Twitter, 20 AUG 2016)

Pow! People who are searching for Olympic #boxing are also searching for boxing classes. #Olympics (Google Twitter, 20 AUG 2016)

Searches for Bolt race to an all-time high. He' s officially the most searched track athlete ever. #Athletics (Google Twitter, 20 AUG 2016)

People who searched for Magneto also searched for the superhero of the Olympics, #AshtonEaton, and his cooling hood. (Google Twitter, 19 AUG 2016)

The top question about the #Olympics — When do the games end? (Google Twitter, 19 AUG 2016)

#Racewalking spikes 160% above jogging in search as people discover a new way to break a sweat. #Olympics (Google Twitter, 19 AUG 2016)

After winning the 200m gold medal, #ElaineThompson becomes the top search trend in Jamaica. #Olympics (Google Twitter, 18 AUG 2016)

During Olympic Golf, people flock to search and ask what a birdie is. #Golf #Olympics (Google Twitter, 17 AUG 2016)

Searches for “Why is fencing called fencing?” up 4900% and the world learns it’s shorthand for “defense.” #EnGarde (Google Twitter, 14 AUG 2016)

New tricks! Searches ramp up as skateboarding is added to the #Olympics in Tokyo 2020 (Google Twitter, 5 AUG 2016)

Google Weibo also appropriates the Games text, but with a much lower frequency. On Google Weibo, there are altogether 23 posts related to the Games. However, instead of the majority of these posts are about the Fruit Games, a game created by Google. During the Games dates, only the following three posts are not about the Fruit Games:

[Extract 6.16]

#Google 在里约奥运# 这一年里高尔夫居然成了“网红”? 世界各大体育赛事谁最受欢迎? 随着 YouTube 奥运报告的出炉和 YouTube 广告大赏的

推出，快来一起，在这场体育盛事中，感受来自数据的震撼与光影的感动。(Google Weibo, 12 AUG 2016)

Translation: #Google at the Rio Games# In this year's Games, golf has become popular? Which is the most popular sport? Enjoy moving and surprising moments offered by our data and video along on YouTube.

#Google 在里约奥运#“如果颁奖台都是一样高，那冠军该站在哪个位置呢？”“如火如荼的体操到底怎么计分？”懒洋洋的男孩女孩们都跟着全民奥运一起不安分起来，纷纷搜索哪项奥运项目才是最简单的，看来是都有一个奥运梦。(Google Weibo, 12 AUG 2016)

Translation: #Google at the Rio Games# “If the podiums are of the same height, where should the champion stand?” “How is gymnastics scored?” Lazy boys and girls also got excited in searching the easiest sport. It seems everyone has a dream of Olympics.

#Google 在里约奥运# “跳水运动员上岸时拿到的毛巾为什么总那么迷你？”；“皮划艇和独木舟有什么不同？”。奥运继续，观众们大开脑洞的搜索也不断，这不，菲尔普斯还把两千多年前的古奥运传奇给送上了搜索榜单！（Google Weibo, 11 AUG 2016）

Translation: #Google at the Rio Games# “Why are the towels given to the diving athletes after the game so small?” “What's the difference between a kayak and a canoe?” As the Games are in full swing, so is the spectators' searching: see, Phelps has also brought an ancient Olympic legend to top search!

Except the first extract in the group, the remaining posts are all about searching trends. However, they are very different from the types of posts on Google Twitter. First, on Google Twitter, one post shows on searching item or fact, while on Google Weibo, one post collects several searching questions; second, on Google Twitter, the reported searching questions or items often contain specific information such as proper names and terms and also the reason why they are in trending lists, whereas on Google Weibo the reporting searching items tend to be less specific. Second, the use of hashtag topics on Google Twitter is much varied, including not only external hashtag topics such as #Olympics and internal ones such as #RioWithGoogle, but also external topics pertinent to specific events, sports, and individual athletes such as #RaceWalking and #ElaineThompson, while on Weibo the brand used only one hashtag topic, the internal topic #Google 在里约奥运# (#Google at the Rio Games#).

Intertextual practice of Google on the two platforms before the Games kicked off share much in common when Google offers itself as a guide to explore the city of Rio by providing the links and applications to its followers, in the same way across Twitter and Weibo, as illustrated by the following extracts:

[Extract 6.17]

Nearing the games, searches for the #Olympics outpace those for Pikachu.

#RoadtoRio (Google Twitter, 2 AUG 2016)

We' re going #BeyondTheMap to share some colorful stories from Rio' s favelas → <http://g.co/beyondthemap> (Google Twitter, 2 AUG 2016)

Let Google be your guide on the #RoadToRio → <https://goo.gl/kFKadm> (Google Twitter, 1 AUG 2016)

Favelas are integral to life in Rio, yet only 0.001% of them appear on a map.

We want to change that. #RioWithGoogle (Google Twitter, 29 JUL 2016)

As the world' s eyes turn to Rio, explore the Marvelous City from every angle #RioWithGoogle (Google Twitter, 29 JUL 2016)

[Extract 6.18]

#Google 在里约奥运#奥运季将来临, 先跟着 Google 去看看里约吧, 或许新闻外的故事更精彩! Beyond the Map, Rio de Janeiro ... (Google Weibo, 1 AUG 2016)

Translation: #Google at the Rio Games# With the Games nearing, join Google to tour Rio, and you may find better stories beyond the news! Beyond the Map, Rio de Janeiro ...

#Google 在里约奥运#里约奥运在即, Google 产品为全球观众助力, 比赛日程、场馆信息、里约文化尽在掌握! (Google Weibo, 2 AUG 2016)

Translation: #Google at the Rio Games# The Games are about to start, Google products are ready to serve spectators all over the world with the schedule, venue information, and Rio culture!

Offering or sharing the useful applications and interesting searching behavior facts about the Games, Google assumes a shared interest and pretext between the international event, its followers, and the brand itself, presents itself to be a humanized, helpful and fun-loving character. In so doing, Google initiates and sustains interaction with its followers centering around the topic of the Games and on the common ground of this event as shared sociocultural text.

Microsoft:

Compared with Google, Microsoft discourse engages with the Games text to a much lesser degree, with only two posts related to the event on both platforms. On Twitter, Microsoft shares the story of an Olympic flame lighter and promotes his positive spirit in one post and calls its followers to support aspiring, sports-loving children in the other post, which consists of corporate social responsibility discourse. In contrast, the Olympic-themed posts on Weibo both promote the brand's search engine product Bing by explicating how the product can be of service to users during the Games season.

[Extract 6.19]

He's overcome setbacks and lit the Olympic Flame. Now he brings positivity and education to underprivileged youth. (Microsoft Twitter, 16 AUG 2016)

Be a superhero this summer by supporting tomorrow's athletes. Learn more:

<http://msft.it/rio2016> (Microsoft Twitter, 4 AUG 2016)

[Extract 6.20]

让 Bing 助你更好地了解奥运盛况！近日，我们首次将必应预测技术运用到奥运会收视时间表中，这项名为“Events to Watch”的新功能每天都会更新，为观众推荐当天最值得收看的赛事。并且对于冷门队伍、新世界纪录以及紧急事件的对策，时间表也会实时优化。(Microsoft Weibo, 9 AUG 2016)

Translation: Let Bing help you with what you want to know about the Games!

Recently we have for the first time applied Bing prediction technologies to the timetable of the Olympics. This new feature named “Events to Watch” is updated on a daily basis to recommend to the user his or her favorite events to watch of the day. The timetable is also timely optimized in response to dark-horse teams, new world records or emergencies.

#微笑周一#激动人心的赛事正在上演，别忘了用 Bing 查看更多奥运盛况
~ (Microsoft Weibo, 8 AUG 2016)

Translation: #Smile Monday# Exciting events are going on; don't forget to know more about the Games with Bing~

IBM:

IBM relates its discourse to the Games by showing how its cognitive technologies or products are applied to sports. The brand published one post related to the Games on the two platforms respectively, and both posts were published after the Games dates.

While its Twitter post mentions the USA Cycling Women's team and how they used its technology, its Weibo post promotes how its technology can facilitate the training of athletes.

[Extract 6.21]

@USACycling Women's Team Pursuit use cognitive insights to find new levels of performance (IBM Twitter, 30 AUG 2016)

[Extract 6.22]

#IBM 新闻直通车#顶级赛事的金牌或许是每个运动员的最高人生理想，而实现梦想不只是需要努力，高科技的“加持”早已让他们的训练事半功倍。利用技术去剖析打造世界一流运动员的魔法究竟是什么？认知 + 体育科学给你答案。(IBM Weibo, 22 AUG 2016)

Translation: #IBM News Express# Winning a gold medal at the top-class events might be the ultimate dream of every athlete, but hard work is not the only thing needed to realize their dream; technology has long been in the service of their training. What is the magic of using technology to train world-class athletes? Cognition + Sports Science will tell you the story.

GE:

GE's intertextual practices relating to the Games across the two platforms are rather different. While only one post is published on its Twitter page, there are as many as 21 posts on Weibo targeting at the Games. All posts on both platforms contain

information on their products, technologies, and how they serve the communities. In contrast to the only post on Twitter, all the posts on Weibo contain at least one hashtag topic, though internal, to specify and highlight GE's contribution to and involvement in the Games, esp. the frequently used topic #16 Things We Do for the Rio Games# suggests that there can be a series of posts promoting GE's activities. The Twitter post positions GE as an American company, while the Weibo posts exhibit more international elements and concern of the brand and even attention to the Chinese team or events as part of its localization of corporate discourse on Weibo.

[Extract 6.23]

Over a thousand light bulbs helped light Team USA's way to their 1,000th Gold Medal. Congratulations USA! (GE Twitter, 15 AUG 2016)

While cheering for and congratulating Team USA, this Twitter post also promotes the lighting for the event provided by GE, which makes lighting itself part of the grand Olympics text that the brand can draw upon; since it is also GE's product discourse, the intersection between the brand discourse and the sociocultural text provides interaction between the brand and the world. Likewise, GE posts on Weibo also employ the lighting text, as the following extracts show.

[Extract 6.24]

#机智问答# GE 为里约做的事，在后奥运时代会有怎样的影响？赛场内，

运用先进的 GE 技术，在后奥运时代，继续帮助运动员提升竞技水平，让他们为我们带来更精彩的比赛。赛场外，GE 支援的核磁共振、CT 扫描仪、X 光机等也将继续留在里约，为当地医疗事业尽一份力。(GE Weibo, 23 AUG 2016)

Translation: #Smart GE Q&A# For all the things GE has done for Rio, what impact will they have in the post-Olympics Brazil? In the venues, advanced GE technologies will continue to help with athletes' training to boost their competitiveness and performance at future events. Beyond the venues, GE's MRI, CT, and X-ray equipment will stay in Rio to contribute to the local healthcare communities.

#为里约奥运做的 16 件事# 无论是博尔特还是国乒，GE 能做的，就是用科技继续帮他们维护赛场统治力。(GE Weibo, 18 AUG 2016)

Translation: #16 Things We Do for the Rio Games# Whether it's for Bolt or the Chinese ping-pong teams, what GE can do is to help them hold the throne.

[Extract 6.25]

#为里约奥运做的 16 件事# 当看到奥运五环被点亮的那一刻，我的内心也燃了起来。(GE Weibo, 14 AUG 2016)

Translation: #16 Things We Do for the Rio Games# The moment when I saw the lighting of the Olympic rings, my heart was also lit up.

#为里约奥运做的 16 件事# 话说，idol 们的光辉本来就已经掩盖不住了，哥家的灯还给他们加瓦数。(GE Weibo, 13 AUG 2016)

Translation: #16 Things We Do for the Rio Games# The idols are already shining brightly by themselves, and Bro GE's bulbs are still adding more watts to their brightness.

#为里约奥运做的 16 件事#今晚，最怕看孙杨 1500 米自由泳比赛时，手将碰壁的那一霎没电了…… (GE Weibo, 12 AUG 2016)

Translation: #16 Things We Do for the Rio Games# Tonight, one thing we should do everything to prevent is that there is a blackout in the swimming venue when SUN Yang's hand touches the edge of the pool...

Furthermore, GE links the lighting text with other prior texts during the Games dates, as in the following posts:

[Extract 6.26]

#为里约奥运做的 16 件事#为了让你们看到比赛中最精彩的一面，我已经用了洪荒之力。(GE Weibo, 8 AUG 2016)

Translation: #16 Things We Do for the Rio Games# In order to bring you the best moments of the Games into light for you to see, I have used the primordial powers.

#为里约奥运做的 16 件事#今天流行粉色？要是把奥运村的灯光也都变成粉色，会不会多点浪漫氛围呢？(GE Weibo, 9 AUG 2016)

Translation: #16 Things We Do for the Rio Games# Pink is the popular color today? If all lighting in the Olympic Village is turned pink, will it be more

romantic?

The first extract above borrows the line “I have used the primordial powers”, which was initially uttered by the famous Chinese swimmer FU Yuanhui during an interview after her performance. Since the line featuring humor and exaggerations was accompanied with Fu’s dramatic facial expressions and thus dramatically different from the usually serious, formal way of talk of athletes in similar contexts, it quickly became viral. For the last post above, the “romantic” element was in place because the publishing date 9 AUG 2016 (i.e. 15 JULY according to the Chinese lunar calendar) was Chinese Valentine’s Day, and this post therefore not only draws upon the Games text, but also the text of the romantic day. In so doing, the multiplicity of prior texts contributes to connections between varied sources and styles of discourses, presumes a wider range of shared discourse between the brand and the followers and thus promotes interaction between the two parties.

Intel:

Intel is the only technology brand in the sample that did not publish any post on Twitter related to the Games. Similar to IBM and Microsoft, Intel published only two posts on Weibo about the Games, and both posts involve promotion of its product and technology.

[Extract 6.27]

奥运会没有棒球？看 MLB 啊！英特尔与 MLB 合作转播，为观众带来前所未有的超凡体验！……28 个摄像机，无缝的 3D 球场渲染，精确快速的数据处理和渲染技术，这一切都源自强大的英特尔技术。(Intel Weibo, 24 AUG 2016)

Translation: No baseball in the Olympics? Watch MLB! Intel, partnered with MLB, brings to you the superb experience of the game.... 28 cameras, seamless 3D rendering, precise and rapid data processing and rendering... Everything is made possible by powerful Intel technologies.

【怎样高格调的看场竞技比赛？】今年热情四射的奥运赛场上没有了棒球比赛，先别遗憾！因为英特尔为所有棒球迷献上了一场前所未有的美国职业棒球大联盟（MLB）全明星赛！而这，可不是一场简简单单的棒球比赛，里面可暗藏玄机，想要得到一手消息，快戳下面文章！（Intel Weibo, 16 AUG 2016)

Translation: [How to be a stylistic spectator?] No baseball for this year's Olympics; not a shame! Intel brings to baseball fans an unprecedented All-Star MLB! This is not a simple, ordinary baseball event; there can be magic in it. Click the link below to know more.

Out of the five food & beverage brands, two brands (Pepsi and Starbucks) did not reference the Olympic text on both Twitter and Weibo, and KFC did not have any Olympic post on Twitter, whereas the remaining two brands (Coca Cola and McDonald's) are exceptionally active in engaging with the Olympic text. Coca Cola

published 51 posts on Twitter and 30 on Weibo.

Coca Cola:

Throughout the Games dates, Coca Cola uses expressive speech acts to show thanks, memories, congratulations, and hopes, with zero product presence in such corporate discourse, which is very rare. There is only one post that makes explicit the brand's support for the event:

[Extract 6.28]

#ThankYouRio for showing us that gold moments last forever. Proud to support the Olympic Games. #Rio2016 #THATSGOLD (Coca Cola Twitter, 22 AUG 2016)

During the Games, Coca Cola follows the events closely and congratulates individual athletes or teams on their performances.

[Extract 6.29]

Chasing life and the podium side by side: #THATSGOLD. Congratulations to the Eatons! #Rio2016 (Coca Cola Twitter, 19 AUG 2016)

Olympic record? World ' s greatest athlete (again)? Amazing accomplishment @AshtonJEaton! #THATSGOLD #Rio2016 (Coca Cola Twitter, 19 AUG 2016)

Day 1 of Decathlon – done. @AshtonJEaton – killin’ it.

#THATSGOLD #Rio2016 (Coca Cola Twitter, 19 AUG 2016)

@Nathangadrian: Swimmer. Olympian. Avid video gamer. #Rio2016 is about to get a little more rad. #THATSGOLD (Coca Cola Twitter, 14 AUG 2016)

New challenge, no problem. Here’s to @Nathangadrian taking over the 50M Freestyle. #THATSGOLD #Rio2016 (Coca Cola Twitter, 12 AUG 2016)

From one legend to another. Incredible job by Simone Biles! @NastiaLiukin #NastiaSays #TeamUSA #THATSGOLD (Coca Cola Twitter, 11 AUG 2016)

Similar to GE, Coca Cola also presents itself as an American brand, with the recurring hashtag topic #TeamUSA and the reference of “our team”.

[Extract 6.30]

One of the greatest floor performances we've ever seen. Wow. #TeamUSA #THATSGOLD (Coca Cola Twitter, 16 AUG 2016)

Love watching #TeamUSA perform on the highest stage. @NastiaLiukin #NastiaSays #THATSGOLD #Rio2016 (Coca Cola Twitter, 14 AUG 2016)

Teamwork makes the dream work. Way to bring it @Nathangadrian and #TeamUSA! #THATSGOLD #Rio2016 (Coca Cola Twitter, 14 AUG 2016)

Great effort on an amazing journey @alexmorgan13 and #USWNT. You’re always our team. #USAvSWE #Rio2016 (Coca Cola Twitter, 12 AUG 2016)

Squad Gold. Congratulations #TeamUSA! #Rio2016 #THATSGOLD

(Coca Cola Twitter, 9 AUG 2016)

Ready for #Rio2016 to begin? #TeamUSA is! #THATSGOLD (Coca Cola

Twitter, 6 AUG 2016)

The hashtag topic #That's Gold stands out as a strong intertextual device throughout the posts spanning over the Games, establishing intertextuality between at least the Olympic gold medals, the Olympic torch, the color of the sunset, the valued Olympic spirit, and the precious moments during the Games, through creating puns and metaphors, as in the following extracts:

[Extract 6.31]

Gold moments were overflowing in #Rio2016 . More on the way in #Tokyo2020! #ClosingCeremony #THATSGOLD (Coca Cola Twitter, 22 AUG 2016)

Stay gold. Even after the sun goes down. #THATSGOLD (Coca Cola Twitter, 8 AUG 2016)

Lending a hand when a competitor falls: #THATSGOLD. Inspired by those who bring the #OlympicSpirit to life. #Rio2016 (Coca Cola Twitter, 19 AUG 2016)

Who do you think the final torchbearer will be in #Rio2016 tonight? #THATSGOLD (Coca Cola Twitter, 5 AUG 2016)

Behold the gold! Shoutout to @kelsmontagueart for bringing #THATSGOLD to the corner of Waterbury & Scholes in NYC.(Coca Cola Twitter, 5 AUG 2016)

One Brooklyn building just got a little more gold. Tomorrow, we'll show you how. #THATSGOLD (Coca Cola Twitter, 5 AUG 2016)

When it comes to gold, winning is just the beginning. What makes you feel gold? #Rio2016 #THATSGOLD (Coca Cola Twitter, 4 AUG 2016)

The meme “gold” is also reproduced in Coca Cola’s Weibo discourse, echoing its English counterpart. In the following extracts, “金色时刻” and “此刻是金” are translations of “golden moment” and “That’s Gold” respectively.

[Extract 6.32]

接力, 不是 4 个人的 100 米, 而是整个队伍的 400 米。期待今晚的你们, 用实力, 去放大每一个金色时刻。(Coca Cola Weibo, 18 AUG 2016)

Translation: Relay is not the 100m for four individuals, but the 400m of the team. Look forward to your power tonight to magnify every gold moment.

This summer, we love SUN! 恭喜孙杨获得 200 米自由泳冠军, 为中国代表团再添金! 不为外界所动摇, 从心出发, 用实力说话! #此刻是金#

Translation: This summer, we love SUN! Congratulations to Sun Yang for winning the 200m free style, adding one more gold to Team China! Stay unbothered by what others say; listen to your heart and show your power!

#That's Gold#

The last extract above, as in the case of GE for Chinese ping-pong team, evidences the brand's attention to the Chinese athlete and the localization of its corporate discourse. In addition to the same intertextual links enabled by “gold”, “SUN” simultaneously as the athlete's surname in Chinese pinyin and as the celestial object that gives out golden rays strengthens the links with the athlete.

Coca Cola's usual “Good morning” posts during the Games dates also echo the Olympics and sports. For instance,

[Extract 6.33]

#可口可乐.晨安# 体育的魅力从不局限于为他人喝彩，更在于点燃自己的开怀时刻。(Coca Cola Weibo, 17 AUG 2016)

Translation: #Coca Cola. Good morning# The charm of sports is never restricted to cheering for others; it is more about igniting your own moments of excitement.

Compared with Coca Cola's Twitter discourse during the Games, there is a much stronger product presence and more marketing or advertising discourse in its Weibo posts. In particular, the most frequently used hashtag topic in this range is #滴滴纯悦, 满满信任# (Every drop of Chun Yue, Full of trust; note: Chun Yue, or Pure Joy, is a

sub-brand of Coca Cola's Ice Dew drinking water), which is about its sub-brand and product. In many posts, the content is not necessarily related to the product, but the product-related hashtag topic is still used. For example,

[Extract 6.34]

#滴滴纯悦 满满信任# 踏上赛场的你是勇敢的，奋力拼搏的你是不可小视的。年轻，代表着未来更强的可塑性，继续加油！(Coca Cola Weibo, 11 AUG 2016)

Translation: # Every drop of Chun Yue, Full of trust# In the competition venue, you are the brave and powerful one. Being young means there is more for you in the future. Carry on!

Coca Cola on Weibo also engages with the Olympic text by means of Emoji memes.

[Extract 6.35]

在如火如荼的 2016 里约奥运赛场，除了火热的比赛，我们的奥运健儿也为大家奉献了一批精彩的表情包。而赛场外，一位可口可乐的忠实粉丝也通过自己的方式制作了一套可口可乐表情包，表达了对奥运会的祝福。光看还不过瘾，跟着教程把表情添加到微信表情包里吧！详细教程请戳链接 (Coca Cola Weibo, 15 AUG 2016)

Translation: With the 2016 Rio Games in full swing, our athletes not only excel in their performance, but also give us a host of brilliant facial

expressions that people are keen in turning into Emoji memes on their smart phones. One Coca Cola fan celebrates the Games with DIY Emoji memes. Check them out by clicking the link.

行走的表情包新鲜出炉！期待明天再次看到你惊喜的表情 (Coca Cola Weibo, 8 AUG 2016)

Translation: New Emoji memes are out! Look forward to seeing your facial expressions of surprise and delight tomorrow!

As it does on Twitter, Coca Cola also mentions and congratulates individual athletes in its Weibo posts, as illustrated by the following extracts:

[Extract 6.36]

恭喜@徐嘉余 获得男子 100 米仰泳的亚军！优异的成绩离不开平时付出的一点点一滴，相信你在下一个项目上也会像今天一样，绽放属于你自己的光芒！#滴滴纯悦 满满信任# (Coca Cola Weibo, 9 AUG 2016)

Translation: Congratulations to @Xu Jiayu on winning the gold for men's 100m backstroke! Your excellence comes from your hard work every day. We believe you will shine like today at the next event! # Every drop of Chun Yue, Full of trust#

恭喜拥有洪荒之力的傅园慧夺得女子 100 米仰泳的季军！我们知道你为了这块奖牌付出了多少！#滴滴纯悦 满满信任# (Coca Cola Weibo, 9 AUG 2016)

Translation: Congratulations to Fu Yuanhui, the girl with primordial powers, on winning the bronze for women's 100m backstroke! We know what you have put in for this medal! # Every drop of Chun Yue, Full of trust#

Before the launch of the Games, there are also Q&A interactions initiated by Coca Cola on Weibo with its followers, regarding fun facts or less well-known information about the Games. For instance,

[Extract 6.37]

#奥运倒计时 2 天#奥运考一考：你知道本届奥运会的吉祥物叫什么，代表着什么吗？ (Coca Cola Weibo, 4 AUG 2016)

Translation: #Countdown to Olympics - 2 Days# Quiz for the Olympics: Do you know what the mascot of the upcoming Games is called and what it stands for?

答案：vinicius（维尼休斯），代表了巴西的动物，其中有猫的灵性、猴子的敏捷以及鸟儿的高雅 (Coca Cola Weibo, 4 AUG 2016)

Translation: Key: vinicius. It represents Brazilian animals, integrating sharpness of the cat, agility of the monkey, and elegance of the bird.

KFC:

There were six Olympic themed posts on the KFC Weibo page but none on its Twitter page. Among the six Weibo posts, three are promotional posts with explicit

production information while the other three consist of expressive and sharing acts. The three non-promotional posts either congratulate and or cheer for Chinese teams or athletes, one of which involves a word play with “volleyball” (排球) and “eliminate” (排除) to congratulate the Chinese Women’s Volleyball team on winning a gold by eliminating all obstacles.

[Extract 6.38]

#红色鼓励由你传递# “排”除一切阻力，只为这一刻！[奥运金牌] (KFC Weibo, 21 AUG 2016)

Translation: #Your turn to pass on the red cheer# “Eliminate” all obstacles just for this moment! [Emoji Gold Medal]

A post promoting KFC products references the Games text by assuming that Chinese spectators were staying late to watch the games and might need KFC food to recharge themselves and by parodying the Chinese swimmer Fu Yuanhui’s line to call on spectators to cheer for athletes.

[Extract 6.39]

熬夜看比赛，感觉身体被掏空？吃饱了才能激发洪荒之力为选手们呐喊助威！肯德基宅急送贴心新增 615 家餐厅将送餐时间延长至 23 点，妈妈再也不用担心我饿着肚子看比赛啦！快来订餐吧！（10 AUG 2016）

Translation: Stay up to watch the Games and feel drained? Feed yourself well

so that your primordial powers can be gathered to cheer for the athletes! KFC has extended delivery services hours to 23:00 in another 615 restaurants. Your mom won't have to worry about you watching the Games hungry! Come and put your orders!

McDonald's:

McDonald's is active in referencing the Olympics text, with 23 posts on Twitter and 73 posts on Weibo relating to the Games. One major program through which McDonald's engages with the Games is its kid ambassador program, marked with the hashtag topic #FriendsWin, which is promoted on both Twitter and Weibo.

[Extract 6.40]

100 kids. 207 nations. The @Rio2016 #OpeningCeremony is better with friends! #FriendsWin (McDonald's Twitter, 5 AUG 2016)

#Rio2016 begins tonight but our kid ambassadors from @RMHC have been having the time of their lives! #FriendsWin (McDonald's Twitter, 5 AUG 2016)

The #OpeningCeremony may be over, but #Rio2016 is just starting! Congrats to our Olympics kids! #FriendsWin (McDonald's Twitter, 6 AUG 2016)

Ja' Kerria was at her brother's side at @RMHC. Watch as J' son learns he is going to #Rio2016 with her! #FriendsWin (McDonald's Twitter, 4 AUG 2016)

Hana got the surprise of a lifetime. She's headed to #Rio2016 as an ambassador of friendship from @RMHC! #FriendsWin (McDonald's Twitter, 2 AUG 2016)

[Extract]

奥运，#没你不行！#快来认识麦当劳#奥运助威小冠军#张梓琪，8岁来自秦皇岛，出生在游泳世家的她，已经开始专业游泳训练。郭晶晶希望她能带着游泳的梦想，认识更多朋友！#FriendsWin# (McDonald's Weibo, 2 AUG 2016)

Translation: Olympics #can't go without you!# Meet the McDonald's #Kid Ambassador# Zhang Ziqi, an eight-year-old girl from a swimming family in Qinhuangdao who started professional swimming training. Former Chinese Olympic diving champion Ms. Guo Jingjing hopes the little girl can get to know more friends with a shared dream of swimming! #FriendsWin#

奥运，#没你不行！#今天五位麦当劳#奥运助威小冠军#出发去里约啦！两位@深圳卫视极速前进 嘉宾@刘翔 和@郭晶晶 送选的体校少年，和三位麦当劳中国雇员子女，将一起站上里约奥运开幕式。快来看看谁的笑容最开心？#FriendsWin# (McDonald's Weibo, 2 AUG 2016)

Translation: Olympics #can't go without you!# Today five McDonald's #Kid Ambassadors# set off to Rio! Two sports school students recommended by @Shenzhen TV - The Amazing Race guest @Liu Xiang and @Guo Jingjing and three children of McDonald's China employees will attend the opening ceremony of the Games in Rio. Check out who smiles best. #FriendsWin#

Different from the case of Coca Cola Twitter, McDonald's product presence is higher on Twitter. Such posts are very concise and only occasionally specific names of the products are mentioned. For example,

[Extract 6.41]

Ignite your taste buds. #Rio2016 (McDonald's Twitter, 6 AUG 2016)

En garde. #deliciousduel #Rio2016 (McDonald's Twitter, 13 AUG 2016)

Score points with the judges. New Chicken McNuggets made with 100% white meat chicken. #Rio2016 (McDonald's Twitter, 20 AUG 2016)

On McDonald's Weibo, its usual weekend /Friday greetings hashtagged with #Fryday also feature the Olympic or sports theme during the Games dates.

[Extract 6.42]

#Fryday# 晚上可以尽情看比赛了。这届奥运会欢乐多，清流泥石流你喜欢谁？ (McDonald's Weibo, 12 AUG 2016)

Translation: #Fryday# Tonight we can watch the Games to our heart's content. There are so many fun moments and fun athletes at this year's Games. Whose style is your favorite?

#里约奥运会#倒计时 1 周！如果办一场“薯”于你的奥运，你最希望有哪个项目？ #Fryday# (McDonald's Weibo, 29 JUL 2016)

Translation: #Rio Olympics# Countdown – 1 Week! If there is to be an Olympics for you, which event do you want to see most? #Friday#

Another strategy McDonald's employs to reference the Games and interacts with its followers is a sweepstake activity targeting at medal moments of the Games. McDonald's states the game rules and encourages participation in one post, announces the winning participants in another, and sometimes comments on the rewards in still another one to pave the way for the next round. By way of this activity, the brand leverages those spectators who follow the Games closely and intensify interaction with them centering around both the Games and the brand products. It works as follows:

[Extract 6.43]

夺金时刻，#没你不行！# 任一奥运奖牌决出时，微信或微博@麦当劳 + 运动名称 + #没你不行！#500 元餐券和 LINE FRIENDS 玩具等着你！
(McDonald's Weibo, 11 AUG 2016)

Translation: Gold-winning moments #can't go without you!# Whenever a new Olympic gold medal is won, use your Weibo or WeChat account to send “@McDonald's + Name of the sport + #can't go without you!#” to McDonald's, and you'll have the chance to get a 500-yuan coupon + full set LINE FRIENDS!

恭喜 8 月 11 日参与奖牌互动的 5 位麦粒获得 500 元餐券+全套 LINE

FRIENDS 玩具，获奖的麦粒分别为 @username1 @ username2 @ username3 @username4 @ username5，详情以麦当劳官方微博、微信私信信息为准。(McDonald's Weibo, 12 AUG 2016)

Translation: Congratulations to the five “wheat grains” who have won the 500-yuan coupon + full set LINE FRIENDS! They are @username1 @ username2 @ username3 @username4 @ username5. More details will be notified via private messaging on McDonald's Weibo and WeChat accounts.

Compared with Twitter discourse of Coca Cola and KFC, it can be seen that McDonald's product presence on Weibo is the highest among all brands. Unlike the way technology brands associate their products with the Games by showing what they can do for the Games, McDonald's builds the association by developing and rolling out Olympics-themed burger products, which essentially promotes the consumption of the Olympics text literally in the form of featured burger products and makes a prime case of the colonization of consumerism.

[Extract 6.44]

五洲风味，为奥运在麦当劳集合，#没你不行！#鲜嫩可口的【美洲风味三文鱼汉堡】、新鲜爽弹的【大洋洲风味炸虾棒】、清新时尚的【欧洲风味果酱酸奶冰淇淋】、还有唤醒全场活力的【亚洲风味果味奇乐酷】和【非洲风味烟熏风味鸡翅】！讲真，你会为谁转身？(McDonald's Weibo, 27 JUL 2016)

Translation: Tastes and flavors from the five continents gather at McDonald's for the Olympics, #can't go without you!# The [American Sandwich Burger], the [Oceanian Fried Shrimp], the [European Jam Yogurt Ice Cream], the [Asian Fruit Flavored Cool Drink] and the [African Smoked Chicken Wings]! Seriously, which one is your choice?

没有去巴西里约，也能在麦当劳体验巴西风情。#McCafé麦咖啡#全新推出，【白巧克力风味巴西莓雪冰】。带你用舌尖感受舞动的巴西！一起为奥运喝彩！#没你不行！# (McDonald's Weibo, 30 JUL 2016)

Translation: You can experience Brazil without having to go to Brazil. #McCafé# rolls out [White Chocolate Brazilian Berry Iced Drink] to let you feel the dancing Brazil with your tongue! Cheer for the Olympics! #can't go without you!#

As Yang (2016) contends, “global sporting events like the Olympics and the World Cup [...] are moments of global simultaneity that enable viewers to imagine a community bigger than the national one” (p. 6), but “watching the Olympics hardly weakens audience members’ sense of national belonging; more often than not, it produces moments of both nationalistic feelings and cosmopolitan dreams” (Yang, 2016: 6), as evidenced, in the present study, by the global brands headquartered in the US actively claims their USA identity by cheering for and congratulating the USA teams and athletes at the Olympic Games on the US-based, international social media platform Twitter while doing the same thing for Chinese teams and athletes at the

Olympics at the China-based, Chinese social media platform Weibo as part of its discourse localization process. The Olympic Games as a grand sociocultural text provides opportunities and resources for the brands to interact with their followers on social media by way of engaging, referencing, appropriating, and linking various discourse elements between the sociocultural text, the company, and the followers.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

7.1 Summary of findings

With data from posts published by the top 10 global brands (Interbrand, 2015) on their Twitter (the leading English microblogging site) and Weibo (the leading Chinese microblogging site) pages over a three-month period, the study explores the notion of interactivity from a rhetorical and linguistic perspective by identifying and analyzing three linguistic dimensions of interactivity – interactive linguistic features, relational speech acts, and topical intertextuality, thus establishing a meaningful complement to the dominant technological orientation of interactivity research.

The study finds that corporations on social media employed a range of interactive linguistic features to construct a conversational human voice or to humanize / personalize themselves so that their discourse did not sound like profit-driven machinery talk and thus conducive to organization-public interaction. Such interactive linguistic features include address forms, personal pronouns, and discourse particles. As to address forms, compared with corporate Twitter, corporate Weibo exhibited a high level of creativity in utilizing general address forms in Chinese social media and initiating a host of brand-specific address forms for self-appellation and for addressing brand followers, which contributes to constructing and reinforcing the identity and solidarity of brand communities. In terms of discourse particles, although the brands showed a similar number of items on Twitter and Weibo, their occurrences were of rather low frequency on Twitter but of much higher frequency on Weibo.

First- and second-person pronouns also constitute a major means of humanization by technology and food & beverage brands alike. Among all the personal pronouns, behavior of the honorific form of the second-person pronoun 您(you / vous) in Chinese involves a unique paradox and presumably the tension between power and solidarity building and transition from traditional to social media corporate discourse or rather the co-existence and multifaceted-ness of corporate identity construction. Against the background of the gap between historical and contemporary Chinese linguistic politeness indexed by the loss of honorific terms, the corporate social media discourse has seen, on the one hand, a further decline – instead of total disappearance – of the use the honorific form, and, on the other hand, the conservation of its place in certain types of speech acts, esp. invitations. In addition, the study observes that there exist two newly coined personal pronouns in Chinese, *wuli* and TA / ta written in non-Chinese characters, which have not quite found their way to discourse in non-computer-mediated contexts but are used in corporate social media discourse as informal and intimate references in order to promote interactivity. In terms of interactive linguistic features, corporate discourse on Twitter relies more on personal pronouns to build and enhance its interactivity, whereas corporate discourse on Weibo puts more weight on address forms and discourse particles.

With the finding that there were more speech acts devoted to engaging stakeholders than to disclosing corporate information and promoting corporate accomplishments, this study has proven that Twitter and Weibo, the leading social media platforms in

the US and China respectively, have become more of a prevalent tool for constructing interaction between corporations and their followers rather than for corporate self-presentation or information dissemination only, or more of an interactive space where corporations construct solidarity and interaction with their followers than of a broadcasting space, which is not mutually exclusive to the broadcasting role but allows the latter to function on a more timely basis. This finding points to a more compelling differentiation of the function of corporate social media for solidarity and interactivity building in the toolkit available to corporations, thus extending the conclusion of Wright and Hinson (2014) that social media have become a leading public relations tool and that Twitter has surpassed Facebook to be the most used social media tool by PR practitioners. Across Twitter and Weibo, there were more speech acts for promoting corporate accomplishments than for disclosing corporate information as well as a greater disparity between these two types of acts on Weibo than on Twitter, which shows Weibo contains more promotional and advertising content than Twitter. In terms of more specific speech acts engaging with stakeholders, there were more sharing and expressing acts on Twitter than on Weibo. On Twitter, corporate users were more likely to share non-advertising content and express emotions or attitudes towards people and events, which evidences that corporate users assume to share a wider range of mutual discourse with followers on Twitter than on Weibo. In contrast, there were more greeting and directing acts on Weibo than on Twitter. The greater number of greeting acts on Weibo can be associated with a stronger phatic culture of communication in Chinese communities, while the greater

number of directing acts on Weibo can be attributed to a more utilitarian mentality of corporate Weibo users.

Topical intertextuality as another means of realizing interactivity enables corporate social media users to appropriate discourse resources within and beyond their own pages or to actively incorporate discourse from other sources into their own pages so as to make their discourse more visible to a wider audience and reach out for more interaction with greater depth and on more targeted topics and followers. Among the three types of topical intertextuality identified in the study, the practice of retweeting by quoting another user's post is a prominent form interacting with that specific user, as opposed to the use of personal pronouns and address forms are targeted at the general body of followers instead of individual members of the group. Twitter was the more active platform of the two that witnessed more retweeting take place, for the corporations on Twitter not only retweet more often, but within the retweeted posts, the number and variety of those originally composed by external authors such as customers, business partners, and media outlets far exceeded that of those by internal authors such as corporate sub-accounts / sub-brands and CEOs. The hashtagging practice shows the same tendency in that corporations on Twitter employ a greater number and variety of external hashtag topics that are of general public interest than internal ones that concern the corporations or their immediate communities only. In terms of utilizing sociocultural text such as the Olympic Games, on the whole Twitter witnessed more intertextual efforts of the corporations to engage and interact with

their followers, with technology brands promoting the contribution of their products and services to the Games and food & beverage brands (except Coca Cola and McDonald's) showing much less interest in the event; in contrast, on Weibo, the event tended to be used by food & beverage brands (esp. Coca Cola and McDonald's) to promote consumption of their products. It is also noteworthy that intertextual practices of the corporations demonstrate both their global and local identities, highlighting the interface and intersection of global and local discourses or discourse resources activated by the international sports event.

The results corroborate with recent findings from studies of other genres of corporate discourse. For instance, Ngai and Singh (2017) examined the communication style of corporate leaders' messages of the Global 500 corporations, and concluded that Chinese corporations appeared to be more instrumental (vs. affective), elaborate (vs. succinct) and competitive (vs. harmonious) than their US counterparts. The results seem to be truly refreshing as previously traits like "instrumental" and "competitive" have been considered typically "American" whereas "harmonious" typically "Chinese". If this represents a recent or an emerging trend of change or variation in Chinese corporate discourse, it obviously has an impact upon Chinese-language corporate discourse in social media. As a consequence, American corporations, as shown in the present study, are active in localizing their discourse in Chinese social media to accommodate this trend, or at least appropriating discourse resources involved in this trend to expand and enrich their discourse repertoire. Although it is

over-simplistic to argue that the trend in Chinese corporate discourse is the result of globalization or Americanization in particular, as Sifianou (2013) contends, it is more reasonable to view it as a variation rather than change in discourse, as globalization, as well as change, is an ongoing process rather than an end product. One outcome of such globalization is that it does bring forth and accelerates circulation and appropriation of discourse resources across linguistic and cultural borders, making more heterogeneous discourse resources or elements available to the producers and consumers of discourse.

As summarized above, findings of the study show both similar and differential patterns in the global brands' means of building interactivity across the two social media platforms, and variations were also observed between technology brands and food & beverage brands. For such similarities and differences, established cultural dimensions seem to play a less important role compared to the trend of an emerging global virtual culture on the one hand and unique communicative practices on respective platforms on the other.

The present study is expected to contribute to the linguistic, rhetorical, and discursive research into social media and the emerging research on intercultural new media studies by examining the discursive practices of the global brands in terms of the linguistic dimensions of interactivity in computer-mediated communication on Twitter versus Weibo. The study has departed from the dichotomous perspective with the

pre-assigned cultural categories and to examine the actual instances of social media discourse, so as to better understand the nature of virtual language and culture and the ideology behind its construction, and to provide implications for dialogic public relations and corporate communication.

7.2 Limitations and directions for future research

There are several limitations to this study. First, despite the sizeable of ten global brands and social media data for a period of three months, it equals to a cluster case study, largely qualitative, and has not made full use of big data tools or techniques, which might be expected to generate some broader patterns of social media language and discourse. Second, the text-based nature of the study has steered into an overwhelming focus on linguistic data at the cost of analyzing other forms of semiotic or multimodal discourse resources. Third, the corporate self-presentation orientation of the study and more “button” speech than qualitative feedback from followers prevents it from examining the qualitative responses from brand followers on social media. These limitations point to some avenues for future research.

In the realm of sociolinguistic research into new media, variationist and interactional sociolinguistics has generated both generated emerging literature over the past two decades. Variationist sociolinguistics, regarding new media language as an emerging variety of language, is interested in describing phonetic, lexical, grammatical, orthographical, and stylistic characteristics of this variety and exploring correlations

between linguistic forms and contextual factors such as users' gender, age, and race. In contrast, interactional sociolinguistics contextualizes new media discursive practices in specific sociocultural contexts for a comprehensive and fine-stroked description, aiming to demonstrate how language users actively employ various discursive resources to achieve their communicative goals and address key issues such as speech acts, face and politeness, and identity construction. As noted by previous researchers (e.g., Cappella, 1987; Duck & Pittman, 1993), the interdependence between people that constitutes a personal or social relationship derives in significant ways from their language use, and in digital contexts, where many social cues are "filtered out", language use becomes even more central to relational connectedness. Therefore, future studies of intercultural new media communication can further utilize the resources offered by sociolinguistics, e.g., utilizing the approach of the variationist sociolinguistics to overcome the limitations of thematic or content analysis with a detailed linguistic feature analysis with systematic quantification, or, utilizing the approach of the interactional sociolinguistics for its fine-grained analysis of the linguistic mechanisms of human interaction.

The advent of new media has dramatically changed our discursive practices. Users rely on new media to share information and feelings, to construct and present identities, to build and maintain social relationships and form speech communities, which all point to the linguistic nature of new media and the significance of

sociolinguistics in researching new media discourse. Although in this paper the section on interactional sociolinguistics is longer than that on variationist sociolinguistics, it should not be taken as evidence for the authors' preference for or the popularity of the interactional paradigm.

With further development of social and interactive functions of new media, interactional sociolinguistics seems to have a more immediate relationship with the field. Influenced by anthropology, interactional sociolinguistic research of new media discourse is undoubtedly comprehensive, detailed, and in-depth, focusing on specific discursive practices of language users and aiming to reveal fine details of such practices. To some extent, such research is more like a collection of case studies of particular users and user groups. Such studies undoubtedly have contributed to enriching research findings and perspectives, but tend to be less powerful in advancing theoretical and methodological development of the area.

More research is needed for new media discourse in Chinese (and other non-English languages). Studies reviewed in this paper are mostly about the English language, while those on Chinese are descriptions of characteristics of "internet Chinese". Research into correlations between internet Chinese characteristics and contextual variables and interactional sociolinguistic studies of Chinese discourse in new media are still rare.

In order to better describe, interpret, and predict patterns and developments of human speech communication in digital times, we have to particularly strengthen cooperation and integration across multiple disciplines. Interdisciplinary cooperation can take the form of drawing on and integrating research methods from other areas, such as large-scale quantitative research in variationist sociolinguistics that can profile distinctive features of a certain language variety and epitomize linguistic features and patterns of language use by a certain group. Interactional sociolinguistic research can absorb large-scale sampling and statistics popular with variationist sociolinguistics. Accessibility and richness of new media data can serve as ideal data sources for multimodal research.

Meanwhile, multimodality in new media discourse should be further studied. Although there has been growing literature on linguistic characteristics of new media language, very few studies addressed multimodality. Almost every message or stretch of discourse in social media is multimodal, e.g., Facebook and Twitter messages mostly contain images, emoticons, and other forms of multimedia. Research into multimodality has also started to move from qualitative interpretation of individual texts to empirical research based on multimodal corpora or larger samples (Feng et al., 2014).

Interdisciplinary cooperation can also occur at the level of theories and perspectives. Interactional sociolinguistics should further integrate theoretical notions and progress

in social psychology, so as to better interpret discursive practices in new media. Finally, sociolinguistic and computer scientists can work together in automatic recognition and production of speech acts, contributing to further development of artificial intelligence.

Appendix 1 Interbrand's Best Global Brands 2015 (Interbrand, 2016)

01  +43% 170,276 \$m	02  +12% 120,314 \$m	03  -4% 78,423 \$m	04  +11% 67,670 \$m	05  -10% 65,095 \$m	26  +8% 18,768 \$m	27  +4% 16,541 \$m	28  +8% 15,267 \$m	29  +2% 14,723 \$m	30  +16% 14,031 \$m
06  +16% 49,048 \$m	07  0% 45,297 \$m	08  -7% 42,267 \$m	09  -8% 39,809 \$m	10  +29% 37,948 \$m	31  +7% 13,943 \$m	32  -3% 13,940 \$m	33  +10% 13,749 \$m	34  -6% 12,637 \$m	35  -9% 12,545 \$m
11  +9% 37,212 \$m	12  +7% 36,711 \$m	13  +13% 36,514 \$m	14  +4% 35,415 \$m	15  -3% 29,854 \$m	36  +7% 12,257 \$m	37  -11% 11,656 \$m	38  +6% 11,578 \$m	39  +9% 11,293 \$m	40  -4% 11,278 \$m
16  +5% 27,283 \$m	17  +16% 23,070 \$m	18  -3% 23,056 \$m	19  +6% 22,975 \$m	20  -1% 22,250 \$m	41  +22% 10,944 \$m	42  +9% 10,800 \$m	43  +6% 10,798 \$m	44  +5% 10,328 \$m	45  +12% 9,784 \$m
21  +5% 22,222 \$m	22  -3% 22,218 \$m	23  +54% 22,029 \$m	24  +3% 19,622 \$m	25  -3% 18,922 \$m	46  +9% 9,526 \$m	47  -8% 9,400 \$m	48  +14% 9,254 \$m	49  +10% 9,082 \$m	50  -14% 8,882 \$m

51  +5% 8,632 \$m	52  +7% 8,588 \$m	53  -1% 8,553 \$m	54  +10% 8,498 \$m	55  +3% 8,464 \$m	76  +17% 5,551 \$m	77  +7% 5,533 \$m	78  -12% 5,530 \$m	79  +14% 5,460 \$m	80  +6% 5,391 \$m
56  +12% 8,055 \$m	57  +6% 7,924 \$m	58  -5% 7,702 \$m	59  +17% 7,243 \$m	60  +12% 7,083 \$m	81  -5% 5,365 \$m	82  New 5,262 \$m	83  +2% 5,208 \$m	84  +6% 5,161 \$m	85  +2% 5,133 \$m
61  +15% 6,870 \$m	62  -8% 6,811 \$m	63  -12% 6,583 \$m	64  +6% 6,509 \$m	65  +2% 6,436 \$m	86  +16% 5,130 \$m	87  +14% 5,109 \$m	88  +15% 4,852 \$m	89  +14% 4,822 \$m	90  -7% 4,763 \$m
66  +6% 6,306 \$m	67  +16% 6,266 \$m	68  +17% 6,257 \$m	69  +4% 6,222 \$m	70  +13% 6,097 \$m	91  -7% 4,629 \$m	92  -6% 4,540 \$m	93  +2% 4,456 \$m	94  -4% 4,407 \$m	95  -7% 4,330 \$m
71  -9% 6,033 \$m	72  -12% 5,976 \$m	73  +5% 5,873 \$m	74  +5% 5,666 \$m	75  -7% 5,639 \$m	96  +3% 4,270 \$m	97  New 4,251 \$m	98  New 4,243 \$m	99  New 4,131 \$m	100  New 4,114 \$m

Appendix 2 Links to the Twitter and Weibo pages of the 10 sampled brands

Brand	Address of Twitter page	Address of Weibo page
1. Google	http://twitter.com/google	http://www.weibo.com/googlev
2. Microsoft	http://twitter.com/microsoft	http://www.weibo.com/msftchina
3. IBM	http://twitter.com/ibm	http://www.weibo.com/ibm100
4. GE	http://twitter.com/generalelectric	http://www.weibo.com/geinchina
5. Intel	http://twitter.com/intel	http://www.weibo.com/intel
6. Coca Cola	http://twitter.com/cocacola	http://www.weibo.com/cokechina
7. McDonalds	http://twitter.com/mcdonalds	http://www.weibo.com/mcdonaldsworlds
8. Pepsi	http://twitter.com/pepsi	http://www.weibo.com/pepsico
9. Starbucks	http://twitter.com/starbucks	http://www.weibo.com/starbucks
10. KFC	http://twitter.com/kfc	http://www.weibo.com/kfcchina

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