Corporate Apology Statements And Perceptions In Crisis Communication:
Unraveling Avowed And Ascribed Identities Of Cathay Pacific Airlines

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Abstract—**This study examines the construction of corporate identities (avowed and ascribed) through the analysis of apology statements issued by Cathay Pacific Airlines in response to a recent crisis together with the public feedback concerning the apology statements. The research aims to explore how linguistic strategies employed in apology statements contribute to the establishment of avowed and ascribed identities and their implications for public perception towards corporates in crisis. The data is collected from the Chinese popular social media platform Weibo, which serves as a valuable source of public feedback and insights into public sentiment. The analysis is conducted using a combination of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and Cohen, Olshtain & Rosenstein (1986) semantic formulas framework to identify the pragmatic strategies used by the airline company in crafting the apology statements. Findings reveal that Cathay Pacific Airlines primarily employed the apology strategy under the *Rebuild* category, focusing on explicit expressions of remorse without acknowledging their responsibility for the crisis. Public feedback, on the other hand, shapes the ascribed identity of the airline, highlighting issues such as discrimination and the need for genuine actions to address the crisis. A comparison of the avowed and ascribed identities reveals a discrepancy between the Cathay Pacific Airline's self-built identity and the perception of the public (ascribed identity).**

Keywords—*apology statements, crisis communication, Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), corporate identity construction*

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of internet communication technology has revolutionized information dissemination, making crises in the corporate world instantly accessible and widely known. As a result, effective crisis communication has become paramount for businesses to navigate through turbulent times and safeguard their reputation. Apology statements are a common crisis communication tool employed by organizations to address grievances and restore public trust. This research aims to explore the pragmatic strategies and appropriateness of apology statements in the context of organizational crises, focusing on the case of Cathay Pacific Airlines in 2023.

Organizational crises encompass various incidents, such as product harm and management scandals, leaving a lasting impact on the public's memory and potentially causing long-term harm to the organization. These crises typically arise from sudden and unexpected events that jeopardize the organization's operations and reputation (Coombs, 2007). During times of criticism or crisis, an organization's positive public image faces a significant threat, leading to a potential shift in how its actions and attributes are evaluated from positive to negative. In this context, an organization's legitimacy and favorable reputation are linked to its adherence to societal norms, leading stakeholders to perceive it as operating responsibly and having the right to continue (Allen & Caillouet, 1994). To safeguard its reputation, the organization engages in a complex discursive practice known as legitimation, essentially a form of self-defense. Legitimation aims to protect the organization from reputational harm by either sustaining its positive public image or restoring it. This process typically involves providing reasons, justifications, and acceptable motivations for actions that may face criticism from external parties (Breeze, 2012). Various communicative functions, such as explanation and justification, are drawn upon in this endeavor. It is worth noting that language and communication play a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of the crisis,

thereby influencing stakeholders' evaluation of the organization's conduct and behavior. Consequently, this evaluation can impact their future interactions with the organization (Coombs, 2007).

Cathay Pacific Airlines serves as the focal point of our investigation due to its prominent presence in the airline industry and the large amount of feedbacks it received during this heated crisis. In this research, the author will adopt a pragmatic identity perspective (avowed identity of Cathay Pacific Airlines through its own apology statements and ascribed identity through public feedback) incorporating Cohen, Olshtain and Rosenstein (1986) five apology speech act strategies (semantic formulas) and Coombs (2007) Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). The five apology strategies encompass various approaches that organizations may employ when crafting apology statements. SCCT, on the other hand, provides a comprehensive framework to analyze crisis types and recommend appropriate communication responses based on the level of crisis responsibility. By applying these linguistic and communication theories, we seek to analyze the apology statements released by Cathay Pacific Airlines during the specific crisis event. Through this analysis, we aim to outline and compare both of the avowed identity and ascribed identity of Cathay Pacific Airlines, thus assessing the adequacy and appropriateness of the apology strategies employed. In the meantime, the major concern among public's feedback and acceptance of the apology should as well be revealed.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

At its core, a crisis arises when an action is perceived as offensive, and blame is attributed to an individual or organization (Benoit, 1997). Responding to accusations becomes essential for protecting the reputation. However, crises are complex and require addressing diverse audiences with varying interests and aims. Research shows that appropriate crisis responses can help an organization's reputation recover faster (Coombs, 2016). Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) emphasizes strategic communication in

crisis situations. It classifies crises into three clusters based on responsibility levels. The victim cluster includes low-responsibility crises like natural disasters, rumors, and product tampering, where both the company and stakeholders can be seen as victims. The accidental cluster involves moderate-responsibility crises due to unintentional actions, such as technical breakdowns. The preventable cluster encompasses high-responsibility crises resulting from human error, inappropriate actions, or misdeeds, like management misconduct (Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

SCCT recommends specific crisis response strategies based on the cluster. For intentional crises, rebuild strategies like compensation and apology are suggested, indicating the organization's full acceptance of responsibility and seeking forgiveness. For accidental crises, diminish strategies may involve excusing or downplaying the perceived damage due to a lack of control. For victim crises, deny strategies, such as denying the crisis or blaming others, are often recommended (Coombs, 2006). SCCT also explores how crisis response strategies influence an organization's reputation. The appropriateness of a crisis response is crucial in stakeholder evaluations. Acceptability, sincerity, and effectiveness contribute to perceived appropriateness. Acceptability indicates stakeholders' contentment with the response, while perceived sincerity builds trust. Effectiveness, reducing reputational damage or enhancing stakeholder's purchase intentions, is pivotal in evaluating a crisis response (Choi & Chung, 2013; Ebesu Hubbard et al., 2013; Lwin et al., 2017).

B. Apology and corporate apology

Georgiadou (2023) asserts that within crisis communication literature, apologies have commonly been defined as straightforward expressions of remorse using performative verbs (e.g., "I'm sorry") to explicitly convey regret (e.g., Coombs & Holladay, 2008). However, the problem arises due to the lack of consensus among scholars on two main points: (1) whether an explicit expression of remorse is an essential component of an apology, and (2) the most effective components or strategies to intensify an apology (Bentley & Ma, 2020). From a linguistic perspective, an explicit expression of remorse is

not necessarily a fundamental element of an apology, as apology intensification can occur through various linguistic means and strategic combinations (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984).

Linguistics contributes significantly to apology studies in crisis communication by providing insights into how linguistic choices and intensification techniques impact the effectiveness of apologies. Through content analyses of real corporate apologies, researchers can observe how linguistic strategies are employed to formulate apologies and how they can be assessed. Moreover, linguistic perspectives help in understanding the importance of specific components, such as the offer of repair and promise of forbearance, in enhancing the appropriateness and effectiveness of an apology. Linguistics also sheds light on the role of language in constructing apologies, as evidenced by the "rebuild" strategy of compensation rarely occurring without an explicit expression of remorse in the form of "We're sorry" or "We apologize." Studies have revealed that victims respond more favorably to concrete recognitions of guilt, such as compensation, and stakeholders expect a combination of words and behaviors to rebuild relationships (e.g. Fehr & Gelfand, 2010). Therefore, linguistic analysis allows for a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of apologies in crisis communication, enabling organizations to effectively manage crises and repair their reputation. This explains the reason why the author intends to integrate five semantic formulas as apologetic framework into SCCT for further analysis.

C. *Ascribed identity and avowed identity*

As (Hall, 2018: 118) claims, the establishment of identity involves two primary pathways: avowal and ascription. While individuals have the ability to claim or associate themselves with various identities, these pathways shape the formation of their identity. Avowal occurs when individuals assert or declare specific identities to themselves, aligning their actions with their envisioned identities. This pathway reflects our efforts to conform to the expectations and norms associated with the identities we perceive as suitable for ourselves. On the other hand, ascription refers to the process in which others assign identities to individuals.

While individuals may hope for their avowed identities to be recognized and ascribed by others, this does not always occur. The ascription of identities by others can lead to unexpected outcomes, as cultural variations in the expectations associated with certain identities can result in individuals being assigned an identity they did not anticipate.

Avowed identity and ascribed identity are extended from an individual level to the corporate one and are utilized in Lv and Zhan (2020) research. The concept of avowed identity refers to the identity that an individual or organization constructs for themselves, while ascribed identity refers to the identity that others attribute to them. In the case of Cathay Pacific Airlines, the research will examine how the company constructs its self-identity by the means of apogee statements and how it is perceived by the public, bringing about criticism and disapproval of the self-identity from the public. This also echoes with the previous researches (e.g. Spencer-Oatey, 2008) that conversation participants employ specific language strategies to construct interpersonal and identity relations, which elicit evaluations from one another regarding their speech acts. If a conversation participant denies, rejects, or disparages the identity being presented or constructed during the interaction, it may prompt the other party to perceive this behavior as impolite. Conversely, if the participant validates, accepts, or acknowledges the constructed identity, it is likely to be perceived as polite.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of Cathay Pacific Airlines' apology statements, we will conduct assessments from two perspectives: one based on the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and Olshtain and Rosenstein's (1986) semantic formulas framework, and the other one based on the public feedback towards the statements, in order to outline avowed identity and ascribed identity of this airline company respectively. In accordance with (Lv and Zhan (2020), 'Negative linkage occurs when identities diverge, leading to an impolite interpersonal evaluation in reflecting negative interpersonal emotion and disharmonious relationship. Positive linkage obtains in OCI (Online Corporate Identity) convergence, resulting in polite interpersonal evaluation in alleviating positive interpersonal emotion and harmonious relationship', the author selects this criterion for the overall

assessment of Cathay Pacific's apology statements during this crisis.

IV. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

A. Selected social media platform: Sina Weibo

Weibo, often referred to as "China's Twitter," is a prominent social media platform that offers a unique and advantageous environment for conducting research and gathering valuable data in the context of China's dynamic online landscape. As an influential platform for public discourse, social interaction, and content dissemination, Weibo presents several compelling reasons for its selection as a primary data source in research endeavors With millions of active users, Weibo serves as a digital space where individuals express their views, engage in conversations, and share information. This high level of user activity provides researchers with a rich and diverse pool of data, enabling them to analyze public attitudes, trends, and behavior.

Weibo's significance extends beyond its user-centric features. Its impact on public opinion and social movements in China has attracted scholarly attention and motivated research in diverse fields such as media studies, communication, and sociology. By selecting Weibo as a research platform, its active user base, data richness, network effects, and societal impact make it a compelling choice as a research platform. The platform's ability to capture real-time public sentiment, its multimedia capabilities, and its network structure provide researchers with valuable insights into online communication, public opinion, and social dynamics in the context of China's rapidly evolving digital landscape.

B. Data Collection

With the assistance of Octoparse, a multifaceted data parser, a sample of 10,000 Weibo comments from official Cathay Pacific Airlines' official account is compiled, which are diachronically collected from Weibo comment section since May 22, 2023, to the day of the final statement. The criteria of the posts to be selected

are the rankings of likes received and sub-comments attached below which indicate the popularity, affiliation as well as the recognition of the comments. Cathay Pacific Airlines' official Weibo account has posted five posts in a row (the first one on 22nd, second and third ones on 23rd, fourth and fifth ones on 25th), and each of these posts has received a large amount of feedback in the comment section. The author thus extracts public comments (2,000 from each post) to carry out the following research. For analytical part, corpus tool AntConc[Error! Reference source not found.] (Anthony, 2018) will be employed together with Jieba[3], an open-source Chinese text segmentation library in Python to break down Chinese text into individual words, which is an essential preprocessing step for further analysis. Then AntConc is utilized to identify word frequencies, generate concordance lines to see how words with frequency are used in context. This helps outline the main features of the ascribed identity of Cathay Pacific from the public feedback.

C. Ethical Considerations

Given the public nature of Weibo posts, they are accessible to virtually anyone with Internet access. To ensure ethical standards, the data used in this research was anonymized, preserving the privacy of individuals. Additionally, the posts selected for analysis contained non-sensitive data, minimizing any potential harm. As a result, the research is deemed non-invasive, and it can be concluded that no one will suffer moral harm from the utilization of the posts in the data collection process. In summary, the methodology employed a systematic approach to data collection and processing, focusing on Weibo comments related to Cathay Pacific Airlines during the crisis period. The use of AntConc in conjunction with Jieba facilitated efficient and comprehensive linguistic analyses, including word frequency and concordance, to gain valuable insights into the ascribed identity of the airline company as perceived by the public.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

A. *The story*

In May 2023, a social media (Xiaohongshu) user exposed an incident involving Cathay Pacific Airline, Flight CX987, from Chengdu to Hong Kong. The user reported that during the flight, cabin crew members used English to mock passengers, saying phrases such as "If you cannot speak blanket, you cannot have it" and "Carpet is on the floor" when some Chinese mainland passengers who don't speak English well asked for blankets with incorrect vocabulary. Similarly, there have been reports stating that when Chinese mainland passengers attempted to inquire about filling out immigration cards in English, they received impatient responses from Cathay Pacific staff. The complainant described the experience as "unpleasant, shocking, and heartbreaking" and demanded a public apology from the airline's crew to improve employees' manner training.

In the same month, another social media post surfaced, claiming that on May 21st, a passenger on Cathay Pacific Airline Flight CX987 from Chengdu to Hong Kong experienced cabin crew members continuously complaining about passengers in both English and Cantonese. When the front-row passengers from China mainland attempted to use their limited English vocabulary, they were ridiculed. Additionally, surrounding passengers who tried to inquire about filling out immigration cards in English received impatient responses from the crew. With the whole stories being told from different perspectives, this incident quickly spread across social media platforms, leading to widespread discussions about similar behavior by Cathay Pacific Airline. The company thus faced an unprecedented public relations crisis as a result of this incident and started issuing apology statements on *Weibo*.

B. *Cathay Pacific Airline's apology statements analysis*

According to the social media conformation of the cause, the incident falls under the "High crisis responsibility" category in SCCT, classified as a "human-error accident" caused by the cabin crew's human error, resulting in an unpleasant experience for passengers from China mainland who don't have a good command of English. First two of Cathay Pacific Airlines' apology statements are analyzed as a pilot study. To assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of these statements, the author will analyze them using a combination of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and Olshtain & Rosenstein's (1986) semantic formulas framework.

1) Original version and the translation of the first apology statement:

我们已知悉有关旅客在国泰航班CX987上的不愉快经历，对此深表歉意。国泰航空一直以来致力于为旅客提供高品质的服务，对于此次事件高度重视。我们已经联系相关旅客进一步了解情况，并会进行严肃调查处理。在此，我们对于此事件给大家带来的困扰再次致以深深的歉意。
2023.5.22

"We have learned about the unpleasant experience of passengers on Cathay Pacific flight CX987, and we deeply apologize for this. Cathay Pacific Airlines has always been committed to providing high-quality service to our passengers, and we take this incident very seriously. We have already contacted the relevant passengers to further understand the situation, and we will conduct a thorough investigation and appropriate handling. Once again, we express our deep apologies for the inconvenience caused by this incident."

May 22, 2023

In terms of the apology strategies, the first statement does not employ Denial but uses Diminish strategy through Justification: "已知悉有关旅客在国泰航班 CX987 上的不愉快经历" (We have learned about the unpleasant experience of passengers on Cathay Pacific flight CX987). However, the statement lacks a specific explanation of the offensive behavior and does not admit the company's responsibility, nor does it offer any form of compensation or promise to prevent similar incidents in the future. The apology is limited to a superficial expression of remorse using the performative verb "深表歉意" (deeply apologize) and "再次致以深深的歉意" (apologize again deeply).Incorporating Olshtain & Rosenstein's semantic

formulas theory, the first statement mainly relies on Apology strategy, using performative verbs to convey the act of apologizing. However, it lacks the necessary components of explanation, responsibility acceptance, compensation, and promise to rebuild trust effectively.

2) Second Apology Statement and the translation:

就有关旅客在5月21日国泰航班CX987上的经历，引起大家的广泛关注，我们再次郑重道歉。我们高度重视此事件，已第一时间联系旅客，进一步了解情况。目前，我们已经暂停有关空中空服员的飞行任务，即时展开内部调查，并会于三日内公布处理结果。我们郑重承诺，对于任何有违规章制度，有悖职业操守的不当言行，一经确认，均会严肃处理。感谢社会各界的关注和反馈，我们会认真查找不足，不断改善国泰航空的服务品质。

吴洁文 航空服务董事

2023.5.23

"In regard to the incident involving passengers on Cathay Pacific flight CX987 on May 21, which has drawn widespread attention, we offer our sincere apologies once again. We attach great importance to this event and have promptly contacted the passengers to further understand the situation. Currently, we have suspended the involved flight attendant from duty and initiated an internal investigation, and the results will be announced within three days. We solemnly pledge that any actions or words that violate regulations and professional ethics will be dealt with severely. We appreciate the attention and feedback from all sectors of society, and we will earnestly identify shortcomings and continuously improve the quality of service at Cathay Pacific Airlines."

Jie-wen Wu, Director of Airline Services

May 23, 2023

Similar to the first statement, the second statement also falls under the "human-error accidents" crisis type according to SCCT, attributing the responsibility to the airline's employees. Regarding apology strategies, the second statement continues to use Diminish strategy through Justification: "有关旅客在 5 月 21 日国泰航班 CX987 上的经历" (the experience of passengers on Cathay Pacific flight CX987 on May 21). The statement once again lacks a detailed explanation of the offensive behavior, does not explicitly accept responsibility, and does not provide compensation or a promise to prevent future occurrences. The apology is again confined to a general expression of remorse using phrases like "再次郑重道歉" (apologize again solemnly). In the framework of semantic formulas, the second statement predominantly relies on the Apology strategy, emphasizing the act of apologizing using performative verbs. However, it overlooks crucial components like explanation, responsibility acceptance, compensation, and commitment to improve, hindering its effectiveness in rebuilding trust and addressing public concerns.

In conclusion, both of Cathay Pacific Airlines' apology statements show deficiencies in terms of crisis response strategies and semantic formulas. They mainly focus on the use of performative verbs to express remorse without adequately addressing the specific offensive behavior, accepting responsibility, offering compensation, or promising to prevent future incidents. As a result, the statements appear superficial and lacking in genuine accountability, potentially impacting their effectiveness in restoring public trust and addressing the crisis appropriately. To improve future crisis communication, the airline should consider incorporating a more comprehensive approach that addresses the different components of an effective apology to better resonate with their stakeholders and demonstrate genuine commitment to resolving the issue at hand. Main findings: Cathay Pacific did not initially accept responsibility for the crisis, relied on justifications that were easily refuted, and then failed to propose corrective actions while expressing only regrets for the public pride it had hurt, its apology statements were inconsistent with public expectations and, as a result, lacked empathetic feedback, resulting in a deviated ascribed identity.

C. *Avowed identity constructed in apology statements*

Avowed identity is taken from a social constructivism perspective in this research. From a linguistic perspective, pragmatics plays a crucial role in the construction of avowed identity in apology statements issued by Cathay Pacific Airlines. Pragmatics is concerned with how meaning is conveyed in context, and it helps us understand how speakers use language to achieve specific communicative goals and to shape their social identity. In the case of the two apology statements from Cathay Pacific Airlines, the linguistic choices made reflect the airline's

avowed identity, presenting a carefully crafted image to the public. (1) Use of Performative Verb: In both apology statements, Cathay Pacific Airlines employs performative verbs to express remorse and extend apologies. The use of phrases like "we deeply apologize" and "we sincerely apologize" establishes a sense of responsibility and ownership of the actions that led to the incident. These performative verbs not only acknowledge the mistake but also convey a commitment to rectify the situation, contributing to the avowed identity of an accountable and conscientious airline. (2) Expression of Regret: Both statements express regret for the unpleasant experiences of the passengers on flight CX987. By using phrases like "deeply sorry" and "sincere apologies," the airline shows empathy and concern for the passengers' well-being. This expression of regret aligns with the avowed identity of Cathay Pacific Airlines as a company that prioritizes customer satisfaction and values the passenger experience. (3) Commitment to Investigation and Improvement: In both statements, Cathay Pacific Airlines emphasizes its commitment to addressing the issue at hand. The promise to conduct a "serious investigation" and to "identify shortcomings" demonstrates the airline's avowed identity as one that takes customer feedback seriously and is dedicated to continuous improvement. (4) Reference to Past Good Works: In the first apology statement, Cathay Pacific Airlines uses bolstering strategy by reminding stakeholders of its past organizational good works, stating its dedication to providing high-quality service. This reference to past positive actions further reinforces the airline's avowed identity as a reputable and customer-oriented company.

Overall, from a linguistic perspective, the apology statements from Cathay Pacific Airlines strategically employ language to construct an avowed identity that emphasizes accountability, empathy, and a commitment to customer satisfaction and improvement. The choice of performative verbs, expressions of regret,

promises of investigation and improvement, and references to past good works all contribute to shaping the airline's desired public image and identity (avowed identity in this research). Through these linguistic strategies, Cathay Pacific Airlines aims to present itself as a responsible, caring, and trustworthy airline in the eyes of the public, even during crisis.

D. Public feedback analysis

In this section, wordlist of high frequency will be generated in AntConc in order to capture the main opinions of the public towards Cathay Pacific's apology statements as well as the ascribed identity constructed in the public discourse. Table 1 presents the top 10 words in the wordlist of frequency.

TABLE I.   TOP 10 WORDS IN WEIBO PUBLIC FEEDBACK CORPORA

Weibo public feedback sample corpora	
Word	Frequency
1	国泰 (Cathay Pacific)	894
2	香港 (Hong Kong)	724
3	不是 (not/no)	696
4	歧视 (discrimination)	537
5	道歉 (apology)	509
6	中文 (Chinese)	487
7	特供 (specially prepared)	468
8	普通话 (Mandarin)	436
9	乘客 (passengers)	395
10	智力 (intelligence)	259

The top 10 words of high frequency in Weibo public feedback about Cathay Pacific Airlines appear to reflect key themes and sentiments related to the airline's recent crisis. The words "国泰" (Cathay Pacific) and "香港" (Hong Kong) state the name of this airline and its identity as a company based in Hong Kong. The word "不是" (not) may indicate that some comments are negating certain aspects or claims made by the airline, and there might be possibilities targeting the avowed identity presented by Cathay Pacific. The word "歧视" (discrimination) suggests that the issue of discrimination might be a significant concern raised by the public in response to the crisis. "道歉" (apology) is expected to be a frequent term, considering that it directly relates to the central topic of the airline's apology statements. The

presence of "中文"(Chinese language) and "普通话" (Mandarin) may indicate discussions about language-related matters, possibly in relation to the airline's communication during the crisis. The term "特供" (specially supplied) may refer to specific provisions or services offered by the airline, which could be relevant to the crisis situation. "乘客" (passenger) is a word likely used in comments related to the experiences of passengers on Cathay Pacific flights. Lastly, the word "智力" (intelligence) appearing in the top 10 may suggest discussions related to intelligence or the perceived intelligence of the airline's responses.

Generally, the frequent occurrence of these words in Weibo public feedback provides appear to be potentially negative such as 歧视 (discrimination) and 智力 (intelligence). Further analysis of the context and co-occurrence of these words would be valuable in understanding the overall sentiment and tone of the public's responses, which makes detailed analysis of specific public comments necessary. In this pilot study, the author aims to select several comments containing all of the ten words listed in the table for the purpose of gaining comprehensive results.

(1) 这一事件的责任显然不能仅推给几名涉事员工，应该反省的是管理制度和 公司文化。也不是一次两次了，好几年都是这样根本没改变过，道歉没用下次还敢。(The responsibility for this incident clearly cannot be solely attributed to a few involved employees; instead, it should be a reflection on the management system and company culture. This has happened not just once or twice, but for several years without any real change. Apologies are useless if the same mistakes are made again next time.)

(2) 之前你们歧视的那么多乘客都一一联系了吗？就联系了这么一位？摆样子 给谁看啊？(Have you contacted all the passengers who have been discriminated against before? Only reaching out to one passenger, is this just for show?)

(3) 作为中国人，我为同胞被歧视而愤怒，这种道歉我不接受，除非你们相关歧视人员以及领导一起开视频跪下，用标准的普通话说一句"对不起"和"我是中国香港人"。(As a Chinese person, I am angry about my fellow countrymen being discriminated against. I do not accept this kind of apology unless the individuals responsible for the discrimination and the company leaders apologize in a video, kneeling down, and speak standard Mandarin saying "I'm sorry" and "I am from Hong Kong, China.")

(4) 特地上推看了,白黑人种乘客遇到的问题都在官推回复呢，天天在用就不敢 发在推上,内地特供!(I specially checked the official account's Twitter replies, and issues encountered by passengers of different races are responded to. But when it comes to those from mainland China, they dare not reply publicly on Twitter; it's a special issue prepared for the mainland media!)

In the first comment selected, the commenter criticizes the airline's responsibility for the incident, stating that it cannot be solely attributed to a few employees. The identity constructed here is that of a concerned and observant individual who believes that the airline needs to reflect on its management system and company culture. The comment suggests that the airline has a history of similar incidents, indicating a lack of improvement and accountability. The identity feature of untrustworthy due to its repeated mistakes is thus presented. The identity constructed in the second statement is of a skeptical and critical individual who questions the airline's sincerity in addressing past discrimination cases. The commenter states that the airline is just putting on a show by reaching out to one passenger, while neglecting others who have faced discrimination. This suggests a perception of insincerity and hypocrisy on the part of Cathay Pacific, leading to a negative ascribed identity of being hypocritic and negligent. The third statement reflects the identity of an angry and proud Chinese mainland citizen who takes offense at the discrimination faced by their fellow countrymen imposed by Cathay Pacific's crew members. The commenter sets a specific condition for accepting the airline's apology, emphasizing the importance of the responsible individuals and company leaders showing genuine remorse by kneeling and speaking in standard Mandarin.

E. *Ascribed identity constructed*

Though containing a certain amount of impoliteness through speech act of requesting, this statement provides a ascribed identity for Cathay Pacific as an insincere apologizer after committing wrongdoings. Finally in the fourth statement, the identity constructed is that of an observant individual who points out discrepancies in how the airline responds to passengers of different passengers from different backgrounds. The commenter perceives a special treatment for passengers from mainland China, where the mainland passengers do not receive same replies service from Cathay Pacific, as the services provided for foreign passengers on Twitter. This suggests a sense of discrimination against customers from mainland China and favoritism towards the international passengers. This ascribed identity reflects a perception of unequal treatment and a lack of equality in the company.

Overall, by showing impoliteness in the comments, the public demonstrates disagreement with Cathay Pacific Airlines, meanwhile rejecting the avowed identity constructed via the company's apology statements. While doing so, ascribed identities are constructed by the public discourse, leading to an impolite interpersonal evaluation in reflecting negative interpersonal emotion.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The avowed identity and ascribed identity of Cathay Pacific Airlines can be compared in terms of how the company presents itself through its apology statements (avowed identity) and how the public perceives and attributes characteristics to the company based on those statements (ascribed identity). A detailed comparison is presented:

Avowed Identity (Presented by Cathay Pacific Airlines in Apology Statements):

1. Responsibility and Accountability: In its apology statements, Cathay Pacific expresses a willingness to take responsibility for the incident and acknowledges the unpleasant experiences of passengers. The company avows to conduct a serious investigation and addresses the issue with sincerity.

2. Commitment to Quality Service: The airline emphasizes its dedication to providing high-quality services to passengers, presenting itself as a reliable and customer-centric organization.

3. Past Good Works: Cathay Pacific highlights its commitment to serving passengers well and reminds stakeholders of its positive track record in service provision.

4. Timely Response: The company avows to address the incident promptly, indicating a sense of urgency in dealing with the situation.

Ascribed Identity (Perceived by the Public based on the public feedback):

1. Insufficient Accountability: Some members of the public perceive the avowed identity of taking responsibility as insufficient, and they attribute the company's actions to mere words without concrete actions. They question the company's actual commitment to accountability and improvement.

2. Lack of Transparency: The public perceives a lack of transparency in the airline's response, especially when it comes to past discrimination cases. They ascribe a sense of insincerity and favoritism in the company's handling of such cases.

3. Repeated Incidents: Based on the apology statements and references to past incidents, the public constructs an identity of a company that has had a history of similar issues. This ascribed identity raises concerns about the company's ability to learn from past mistakes and implement lasting changes.

4. Inadequate Apology: Some individuals perceive the avowed identity of apologizing as inadequate, demanding more concrete actions, such as public apologies in video form, to show true remorse and acceptance of responsibility.

5. National and Cultural Sensitivity: The public ascribes identity to the company in terms of cultural sensitivity, particularly when it comes to passengers from mainland China. Some perceive differential treatment, leading to an identity of unequal service provision based on ethnicity.

In general, the comparison between the avowed identity and the ascribed identity of Cathay Pacific Airlines reveals that the public perceptions may not align entirely with company's presentation of itself in apology statements. The public attributes additional characteristics to the company, such as insincerity, lack of transparency, and concerns about past incidents. These ascribed identities reflect the public's interpretation of the apology statements and have implications for the company's reputation and relationship with its stakeholders. To bridge the gap between avowed and ascribed identities, Cathay Pacific Airlines may need to take further actions to address public concerns, demonstrate accountability, and improve its communication strategies in crisis situations.

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