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## **A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis of Japanese Television News Coverage of the Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony**

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### **Background**

China is currently strengthening its global economic and political status. And the Beijing Olympics held in 2008 also showed that China is a global sports power, as well.

However, the news coverage of the Olympics does not only simply report the results of sporting events, but it also reflects various relations between a country holding the Olympics and the countries reporting on the Games.

With an awareness and from the perspective of this and related issues, this study demonstrates how the Olympics held in China – a major East Asian power – were reported in TV news coverage in Japan, a fellow East Asian power.

### **Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to examine the stereotype of China in Japanese TV news coverage by a content analysis of the Beijing Olympics in Japanese TV news coverage.

This study has great significance to show that the news coverage of big sporting events like the Olympic Games is drastically influenced by various problems (cultural differences, history, etc.) between the host country and the country reporting the event.

### **Methods**

For this study we selected weekday TV news content from the following five network news programmes in Tokyo, Japan.

The news content was quantitatively analyzed by measuring the total hours of news coverage by location and story category. The monitoring period spanned a total of 26 days from August 4 2008 to August 29 2008. Qualitatively, a textual analysis was conducted on the transcripts of the live coverage of the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony.

### **Results**

Beijing Olympics-related coverage accounted for 107,554 seconds out of a total of 275,541 seconds of all news coverage in the period was considered 39.0% of the total TV news airtime in the period. Most of the “China” coverage regarded “Sport”, with a total of 82,378 seconds or 78.4% of the total. All Chinese sports stories during the period were related to the Beijing Olympics.

The top news on August 8 consisted of live reports from China about the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony and the Japan-China summit. In all the programmes the opening ceremony was reported both as the top news and sports news story. Reporters commented on representations of ancient Chinese culture and history in the opening ceremony using terms like “magnificent”, “powerful” and “colourful” repeatedly to describe what was happening. As part of their leading stories, the programmes aired the opinions of passers-by interviewed on the streets about what they expected of the Olympic games and what they thought about Chinese President Hu Jintao. But opening ceremony flag-bearer Yao Ming Who was the only Chinese athlete who received any Japanese coverage on this day’s news programmes. Furthermore, the strict security measures of the Chinese military and police at the opening ceremony were also mentioned.

## **Conclusion**

Beijing Olympics-related coverage accounted for the highest share of China news during the study period. In the first half of 2008, Japanese TV news coverage of China focused on negative reportage such as “Tibetan unrest”, “Sichuan Earthquake”, and “poisonous jiaozi“. However, this kind of news fell by the wayside as soon as the Beijing Olympics began, with subsequent China coverage focusing overwhelmingly on Beijing Olympics-related news. Other China coverage was marginal in comparison. The news programmes paid particular attention to the world's top athletes’ and Japanese athletes' performances and tended to avoid negative news items such as Tibetan unrest, etc. We may, therefore, reasonably conclude that the Beijing Olympics qualifies as a bona fide “media event” in Japan.

Televised news on August 8 was dominated by positive coverage of the opening ceremony. However, three negative aspects of the opening ceremony eventually came to the fore and ended up tarnishing its image somewhat. The Japanese media gave extensive negative coverage of these news items like the first half of 2008. In the first half of 2008, China coverage in Japanese TV news programmes focused on negative messages about Chinese injustice, lack of official transparency, and shoddiness in food and building safety. It can be said that those news items show the stereotypes about China in Japanese TV news coverage. The Japanese media largely refrained from reporting negative news about the Olympic Games as a festival, but when incidents happened, media reports quickly turned negative again.

TV is the most important media source for Japanese audiences of news and information about China. We hope that in the future Japanese TV news can offer a more diverse range of images of China and the Chinese to its audience.