
A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis of Japanese Television News Coverage during the London Olympics Period: A Comparison with the Beijing Olympic Period

Abstract ID: EASM-2015-68/R1 - (556)

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Date submitted: 2015-03-18

Date accepted: 2015-04-08

Type: Scientific

Keywords: Olympic Games, Television News, Sport Media, Journalism, Japanese Media, Quantitative Analysis, Qualitative Analysis

Category: 10: Sport Media and Journalism

Synopsis:

The objective of this research project is to test the following hypothesis: 'A television audience's image of an Olympic Games host country will influence global news frames inherent in a nation's television news programming'. Our group carried out quantitative and qualitative research on Japanese television news coverage during the 2012 London Olympics and the 2008 Beijing Olympics. And, We consider global news frames inherent in Japanese television news programming by a comparison of the results of our two studies.

Abstract:

A Content Analysis of Japanese Television News Coverage during the London Olympics Period: A Comparison with the Beijing Olympics Period.

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Background

Olympic coverage has attracted attention in numerous genres of media studies, for example, stereotyping (Duncan and Messer 1998), biased coverage (Tuggle, Huffman and Rosengard 2002), and media events (Dayan and Katz 1992). These studies revealed that Olympic coverage influences host countries' images. Our group carried out a content analysis on Japanese television news coverage during the 2012 London Olympics. We also carried out similar research on the 2008 Beijing Olympics, reporting the findings of that study at

EASM2010. Japanese images of the two host countries are disparate – highly favourable in the case of the United Kingdom, but extremely unfavourable in the case of China (Pew Research Center 2008). We believe that a comparison of the results of our two studies can reveal new findings about global news frames inherent in Japanese television news programming.

Objectives

The research question of this project is “Will a television audience’s image of an Olympic Games host country influence global news frames inherent in a nation’s television news programming?”

Methods

For this research, we analyzed the television news content of five Tokyo-based Japanese network news programs (Krippendorff 1980). The scope of our analysis was the entirety of these programs’ news coverage on 24 July to 16 August 2012. Well-trained coders coded these data to news story origin location (North America, Europe, Asia, etc.); story category (Sports, Politics, Society, etc.); and the presence or absence of reference to the United Kingdom, among other criteria. In addition, we analyzed the video and narration on news coverage around the opening ceremonies and added discourse analysis. We also compared results of this analysis with analysis results from our earlier study on the 2008 Beijing Olympics (Naka and Kobayashi 2010).

Results

During the Beijing Olympics period under study in our research, there were 1,657 news stories consisting of 266,401 seconds of coverage. News stories about China comprised 38.4% of this total. Of this China-related news total, 79.1% of that coverage was devoted to sports stories, while 15.3% was devoted to social interest stories. In the case of the London Olympics, there were 1,372 news stories consisting of 224,480 seconds of coverage during the period of the study. News stories about the United Kingdom comprised 33.1% of this total. Of this United Kingdom-related news total, 98.4% of coverage was devoted to sports stories, with the next largest news category being social interest stories comprising 1.0% of coverage.

News coverage around the time of the opening of the Beijing Olympics framed the Games against the background of The Great Wall of China as the realization of a ‘Chinese dream’ and an achievement on the part of the Chinese as an ethnic group. In addition, there was frequent coverage regarding the visits of Chinese politicians and world leaders to the venue. In the case of the London Olympics, Japanese reporters against the background of Big Ben framed the Games there in terms of economic redevelopment and rejuvenation opportunities, focusing on their ‘commercial’ aspects. There was also frequent coverage of British popular culture celebrities. Those keywords were reflective of commonly held Japanese stereotypes regarding the two countries.

Conclusion

These results suggest, firstly, a strong ‘infotainment’ aspect in Japanese news program coverage of host countries. Secondly, it would appear that differences in Japanese audiences’ respective interest in the two host countries influence shifts in news trends. Japanese audiences are highly concerned with Chinese

news stories in terms of implications for Japanese national interests, and coverage frequently features stories about Japanese citizens getting caught up in various incidents in China. In contrast, Japanese audiences are much less concerned with coverage of British news stories, which tend to be framed in terms of the complex interplay of interests from a global perspective. Third, news frames are different by host countries.

Results of the news text analysis carried out for our research revealed the existence of 'national frames' and 'city frames'. Beijing Games coverage was informed by a 'national frame' emphasizing imagery such as Chinese leader Hu Jintao and symbols identified with Chinese national identity, whereas in London Games coverage there was no such emphasis on the United Kingdom as a nation. In contrast, the 'city frame' informing London Games coverage emphasized the culture of the city as symbolized in the reactions of its citizens, whereas Beijing Games coverage paid almost no attention to the host city itself.

Our group intends to further strengthen the results of our study by continuing research on the upcoming 2016 Rio de Janeiro and 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

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