| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Framing Winter Olympics: A Content Analysis of Sochi Winter Olympics (2014) and Beijing Winter Olympics (2022)

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| ABSTRACT

The frame analysis of Olympics-related news is quite popular, yet few studies do comparative studies of two Olympics hosted by ideologically similar countries. To fill this gap in the literature, this study examined the similarities and differences of an American news agency CNN's (Cable News Networks) coverages in the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics and 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. Under the theoretical framework of framing theory, a content analysis (N = 200) of news stories was conducted. The following four frames were measured: (a) sports frame, (b) human-interest frame. (c) morality frame, (d) political frame. Findings revealed that sports frame was mentioned the most frequently in both Olympics. Furthermore, Russia got more coverage in the human-interest frame and morality frame, while China got more publications in the political frame.

| KEYWORDS

Winter Olympics; Russia; China; Frame theory

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1. Introduction

Presently, mega-events play an important role in drawing media coverage (Zeng et al., 2011), and the Olympics is the thing that cannot be beaten. The information about events, athletes, and facilities is frequently broadcasted during the Olympics. Moreover, it's worth noting that media agencies do not convey all information slavishly; instead, they make a conscious selection of what to publish. By sifting information, Media agencies inform people in certain ways are further shape the audience's perceptions. Therefore, it is vital to investigate the media's framing power. This study aims to figure out the similarities and differences in media coverage of the two Olympic Games. In detail, the 2004 Sochi Olympic Winter Games and the 2022 Beijing Olympic Winter Games are the research objects, and America's Cable News Networks (CNN) are analyzed to examine news coverage. Therefore, this study's research question is: what are the similarities and differences in CNN's coverage of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics and 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics?

2. Literature Review

Numerous studies have addressed frame analysis of the Olympics. For instance, some studies zero in on the effects of media frame on a specific Olympics (Kim et al., 2015; Lee, 2019; Lee & Maguire, 2009; Xu et al., 2017); some studies investigate the means by which media frame the audience's perceptions on a specific Olympic Games (Becker, 2011; Boykoff & Yasuoka, 2013; English & Murray, 2021; Gutierrez & Bettine, 2020; Kastrinos et al., 2018). However, there have been significantly fewer studies employing comparative studies on the Olympics. What's more, most comparative studies have focused on different media coverage of one Olympics. For example, Min and Zhen (2010) examine different American media in presenting the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and conclude that most US media coverage emphasizes human rights, the environment, security, and other hot issues. Also, Bie and Billings (2013) compared Chinese and US newspaper coverage of a controversial athlete Ye Shiwen in the 2012 London Olympics, with the finding that US coverage showed more scepticism and Chinese coverage exhibited strong protection. However, most comparative studies have focused on one Olympic Games but lack the contrast between the two Olympics. Furthermore, although some studies provide valuable comparisons, the host countries in their discussions are quite different. For instance,

Dubinsky (2018) explores the media frames for Beijing 2008 Olympic Summer Games and London 2012 Olympic Summer Games, and the results show that Beijing used the 2008 Olympics as a demonstration of power, while London depicted it as an attractive global city. It is obvious that China and Britain share two sets of philosophies (e.g., communism and liberalism). Therefore, there is a gap in investigating the media's coverage of the Olympics hosted by two ideologically similar countries.

3. Methodology
This section should contain detailed information about the procedures and steps followed. It can be divided into subsections if several methods are described.

3.1 What is Frame Theory
According to Tuchman (1978), a frame "organizes everyday reality" (p. 193). Reese et al. (2001) further defined it more specifically that framing is "the way events and issues are organized and made sense of, especially by media, media professionals, and their audiences" (p. 7). The effect of frames on people's perception has been manifested in many studies (Gamson, 1992; Iyengar, 1991; Kim et al., 2010), and media holds a prominent role in the framing process (e.g., Kim et al., 2002, 2010). By selecting what to include and exclude from an event and emphasizing some ideas to promote salience (Entman, 1993; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Pan & Kosicki, 1993), the news media limits the meaning of a story and thereby shapes people's interpretations (Hallahan, 1999).

3.2 Content Analysis in Frame Theory
Generally, there are two possible approaches to content analysis in the news: inductive and deductive. A deductive approach involves predefined frames as variables to verify which frame occurs in some news. It requires a clear idea that frames can appear in news coverage because we cannot employ a new frame for content analysis. This approach is often used with large samples and can be replicated easily (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). On the other side, an inductive approach involves analyzing a news story with an open view. Researchers often look at the news stories firstly and give some possible frames that have been loosely defined. This approach can detect many possible frames, often based on small samples, and is hard to replicate (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Since my study contains a relatively small sample with concerns about the uncertainty of topics in each news coverage, therefore, it is determined to adopt an inductive approach in this study. And content analysis is one of the inductive approaches.

3.3 Data Collection
This study employed a qualitative method to analyze news publications related to the Winter Olympics, and the Cable News Networks (CNN) was chosen to represent American media because CNN is famous for providing comprehensive coverage and analysis of breaking news (CNN Press Room, 2021). Moreover, CNN is voted as one of the five-most-watched networks in all of cable in all dayparts and the 10-most-watched cable networks in 2021 among adults 25-54 (Katz, 2022). Its popularity indicates that it has a significant influence on the American audience. In light of the above two reasons, CNN was selected as the research object to see the different publications on Sochi Winter Olympic Games and Beijing Winter Olympic Games.

A search for the terms "Sochi Winter Olympics" and "2014 Winter Olympics" on CNN's official website yielded 1447 total news items. In the same way, 983 news items were generated for the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. The time frame was decided from the first day of the game till the last day of the game. That is 7 to 23 February 2014 and 2 to 20 February 2022. By limiting the duration of the news publication, the database shrank to 80 and 120 items for the Sochi Winter Olympics and Beijing Winter Olympics.

3.4 Coding Scheme
The definition of each frame is based on van Dijk's (1980) semantic macrostructures. In linguistic analysis, macro-structures refer to the overall meanings of discourse. And there are 3 main rules to refine an article. The first rule is a generalization. Specifically, we need to put same-meaning words together and use some general items (i.e., use pets instead of cats, dogs, and rabbits). The second rule is deletion, that is, deleting irrelevant information from a given textbase. The third rule is integration, which is integrating necessary components into one preposition. For example, here is a dinner scenario. When dinner starts, I wash my hands first, sit at the table, eat food, and maybe talk with my family. The integration rule is to combine all these steps (wash, eat, talk, etc.) in one general sentence: I eat dinner.

Through the application of van Dijk's (1980) theory, this study categorized the news articles into 4 frames: sports frame, human interest frame, morality frame, and political frame. First and foremost, everything related to sports, such as athletes, facilities, doping issues, and so on, was categorized in the sports frame. Moreover, the human interest frame refers to the individual's rights. Topics such as freedom, health, and safety were grouped in the human interest frame. Furthermore, the morality frame puts the discussions in the context of ethical prescriptions. For instance, the rightness or the wrongness of such behaviour would be divided into the morality frame. Last but not least, the political frame focuses on the host country's government itself as well as the host country's relationship with other countries. Moreover, some sub-frames were defined as well. Sub-frames were more specific

branches of the 4 frames. For instance, the sports frame could be divided into "athlete introduction", "facilities", "doping issue", and other criteria. However, it should be stressed that the sub-frames were not identical in both Olympics since the situations were different.

3.5 Data Analysis

This process contained two rounds. In the first round, the articles were analyzed based on the above 4 frames. If a frame appeared on an article, that article could get one mark, but if more than one frame appeared, that article could get more than one mark. In the second round, news items were analyzed according to sub-frames. Finally, all scores were added up and generated into percentages.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Sochi Winter Olympics Frame Analysis

Of the 80 news items, the sports frame had the predominant position (74%, n = 64), followed by the human interest frame (17%, n = 15), while the morality frame and political frame were broadcasted relatively less, which were 6% (n = 5) and 3% (n = 3), respectively (The total amount exceeded 80 cases since some items contained more than one frame). In the sports frame, publications about events were the majority (51%, n = 44), in which 48% (n = 21) contained American athletes' victory, 18% (n = 8) included US's failure; 14% (n = 6) mentioned Russia's triumph, and 20% (n = 9) talked about Russia's fails. Besides, the human interest frame was mainly centered on two topics: anti-gay policy (31.25%, n = 5) and security (50%, n = 8), and articles about the force toward an injured athlete and environmental pollution were talked in lower frequencies, which were in 6.25% (n = 1) and 12.5% (n = 2) separately. In the morality frame, 60% (n = 3) contained the protest of unfair judgment, and 40% (n = 2) mentioned that Sochi's Olympic venue was a disrespect to Circassians' ancestors since it was built on Circassians' burial site. Moreover, the political frame was divided into 3 parts equally: Russia and China (n =1), Russia and Ukraine (n = 1), and the Russian government's corruption (n =1).
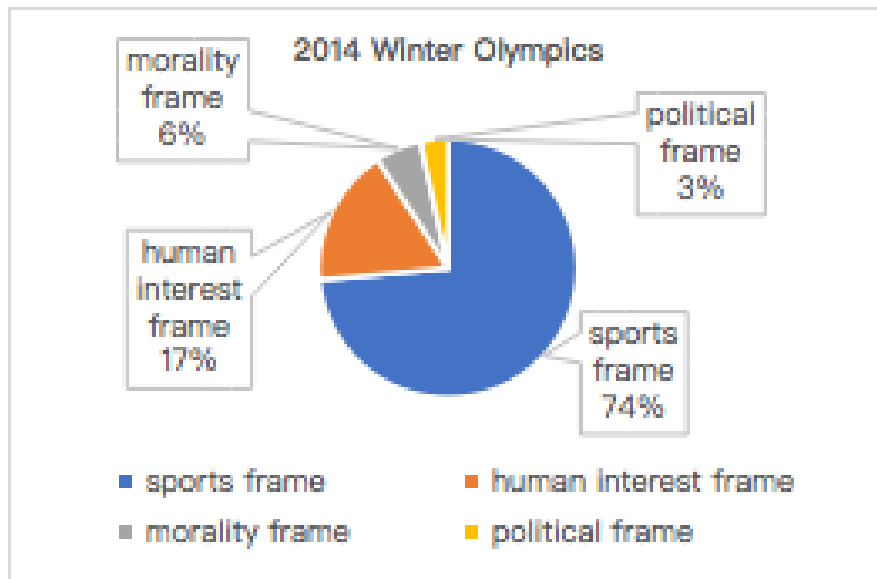

Figure 1: Sochi Winter Olympics Frame Analysis

4.2 Beijing Winter Olympics Frame Analysis

Of the 120 news items, 74% (n = 101) contained sports frame. Specifically, 42% (n = 60) gave introductions of athletes, 20% (n = 29) contained sports events, 18% talked about Russian athlete Kamila Valieva's doping issue, 4% mentioned facilities, 16% contained the others. Under the event frame, oppositely (compared to Russia), articles about China's victory took the majority (53%, n = 18), followed by America's victory (32%, n = 11). Athletes' failures were reported relatively less, which were 15% (n = 5) mentioned the USA's loss, and no publications about China's failure. Besides, 15% contained the human-interest frame, in which 38% (n = 11) talked about Covid-19 isolation, 30% (n = 9) contained accusations of the Chinese government's genocide against the Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities, 24% (n = 7) mentioned athletes' freedom of speech, and 2 news items implicated China's hostility towards LGBTQ people. Furthermore, the political frame ranked third (10%, n = 13), in which 56% (n = 10) contained other countries' (e.g., India, Japan, etc.)boycott to China while the rest (n = 8) mentioned Russia's solid friendship with China. Additionally, there was only one article that talked about unfair judgment in the morality frame (1%).
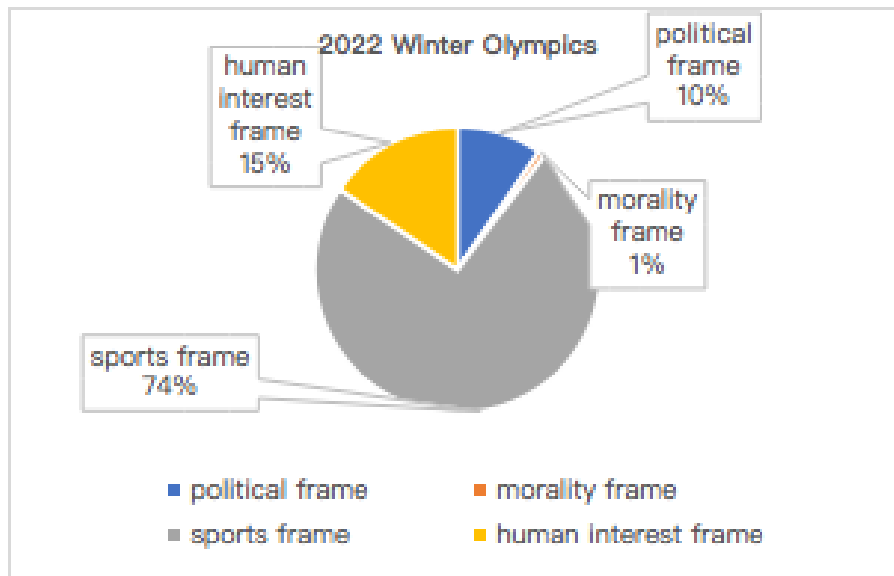
Figure 2: Beijing Winter Olympics Frame Analysis

4.3 Beijing and Sochi Comparison

The results indicated that CNN's reports for both Olympics focused on sports mainly (74% in China and 73.56% in Russia). But the event publications under the sports frame were much different. CNN spent a large number of pages talking about Russia's failure in games (20.45%) while using no ink on China's loss (0%). Moreover, in the comparison of host countries to America, the result showed that publications about China's triumph reached a surprising number (53%), which was almost 2 times more than the USA's in the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. Oppositely, articles about US's triumph were roughly 4 times more than Russia's in the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. Besides, the human interest frame ranked second in both countries (15% in China and 17.24% in Russia). Topics in this frame were centred on people's freedom, safety, and LGBTQ issues. Besides, CNN used 10% of articles reporting the political frame in China, while only 3.45% in Russia. Despite their friendship being mentioned in both Olympics, CNN used more articles depicting other countries' boycotts towards China. Last but not least, the percentage of the morality frames that appeared in the Beijing Olympics and Sochi Olympics were 1% and 5.75%, which were relatively low compared to other frames.
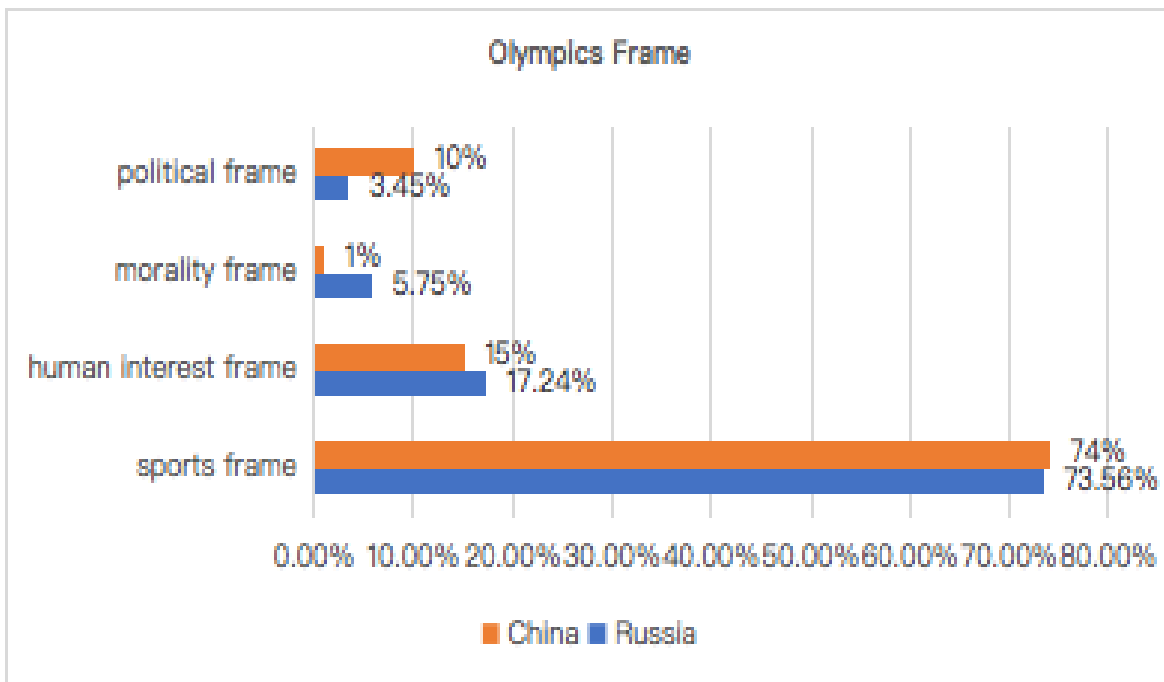

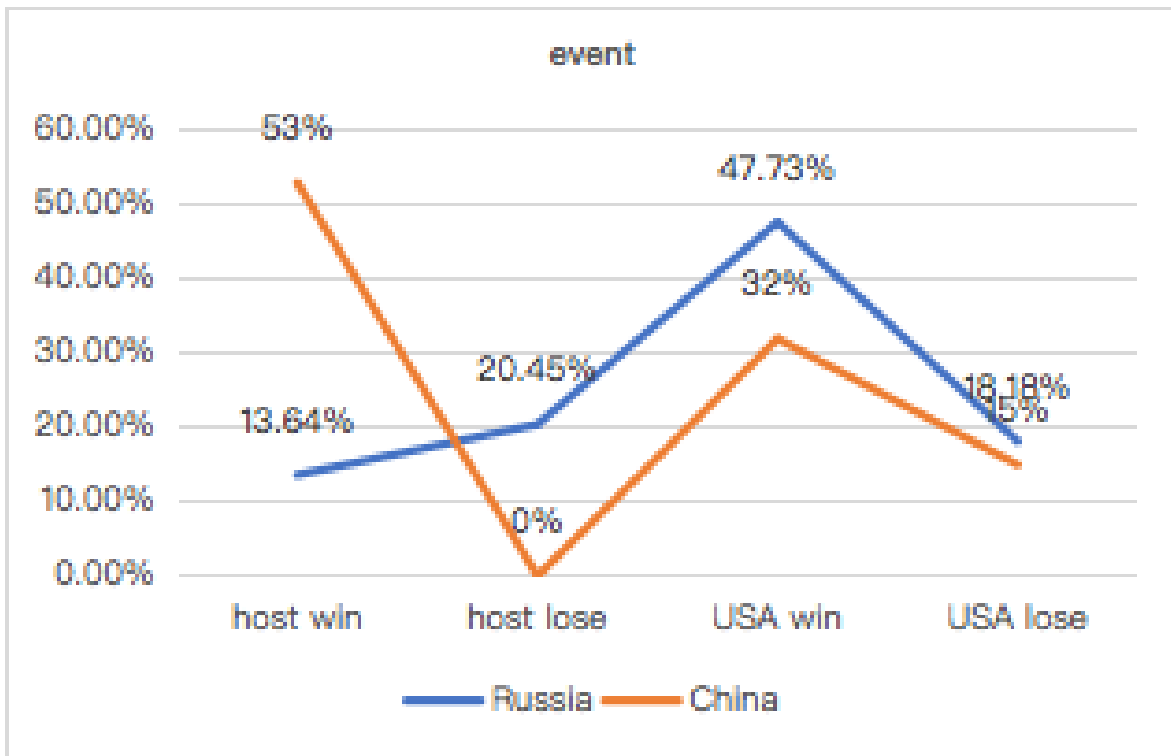**Figure 3:** Beijing and Sochi Comparison (reports)

Figure 4: Beijing and Sochi Comparison (event)

5. Conclusion

This study analyses frames employed by the CNN news agency in Sochi Olympics and Beijing Olympics and reveals several key findings. First, the sports frame is the major frame in both Olympics. CNN is glad to present both Olympic Games' athletes, results, and facilities. However, that does not mean the sport is a transcendence of ideologies and national interests. As one of the American media agencies, CNN's heavy loads of news about American athletes' triumphs can fuel nationalist sentiments among citizens and further enhance the unity of a country. Also, it's unbalanced reporting of the USA's victory vs. the USA's failure can manifest America's powerful position in the world. Second, results indicated that the human-interest frame was the second prevalent item in both Winter Olympic Games. No matter in the protest of Russia's anti-gay policy or in the declaration of China's genocide towards Uyghurs, CNN blamed Russia and China from the human-interest angle. And the fundamentality to this is the difference in political ideologies. Political ideology, as defined by Erikson and Tedin (2003), is "a set of beliefs about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved" (p. 64). The reasons why they have different political ideologies vary. For instance, Pei (2014) explained that China adheres to Confucian order, which is "prescribed codes of ritual behaviour" (p. 144), rather than individual rights. As for Russia's persecution of the LGBTQ community, Russian officials also explained later that these laws were against the propaganda of so-called "untraditional sex", not the LGBTQ people themselves (Orttung & Zhemukhov, 2017). However, that news did not appear on CNN pages. Therefore, that result indicated that CNN seized every opportunity to magnify human rights and further blame China or Russia. No matter what the truth is, if something has even 1% relation to human rights, that event could be employed by CNN media. Indeed, human interest was utilized as a cut-in point for CNN's criticism by selecting what they needed, and consequently leading news users to a hostile attitude towards Russia and China. That is the effect of frame theory (Hoewe & Peacock, 2020). Overall, as indicated by Sugden and Tomlinson (2011), the modern Olympics has been used by the media as a global sovereign state apparatus consistently from 2014 to 2022.

Also, there are some differences in each Olympics. The Sochi Olympics was perceived as an official declaration of Russia's rehabilitation into the world (Grix & Kramareva, 2017). However, CNN seemed to not agree with it. Through an exceeded number of reports about the Russian team's failure in the sports frame, and the broadcasting of the Russian government's corruption scandal, CNN challenged Russia's re-emergence. Moreover, compared to China, Russia got more publications in the morality frame and human-interest frame, which were mainly concentrated on the following topics: 1) the suppression of the LGBTQ community; 2) incomplete security protection; 3) unsolved conflict with Circassians. These frames/topics reflected Russia's internal problems to some extent. For example, it was Russia's police who didn't serve well to prevent terror threats; it was the Russian government itself who may have corruption, and the conflict with Circassians was based on its historical issue. All these disadvantages stemmed from Russia's absence of its inner institutional change. And CNN magnified this point through the application of frame theory.

Therefore, Russia, in CNN's frame, was like an ambitious wolf who failed to enhance its soft power. And that depiction fits into many journalists' statements (Grix & Kramareva, 2017; Müller, 2014; Persson & Petersson, 2014; Rutland, 2012).

Although the amounts of articles under the sports frame were quite similar in both Olympics, the specific reports of events are different. Russia, as mentioned above, got more athlete fails than victories. On the contrary, a huge volume of articles talked about China's achievements, which even exceeded America's. What's more, surprisingly, there is no one paper that talks about Chinese athletes failing. These results indicated that China is rising inevitably. In recent decades, there has been prevalent news coverage about 'the China threat' (Yang & Liu, 2012). Basically, this statement claims China is a revolutionary power that is threatening the United States' global structure (Xia, 2018). And CNN seemed to accept this idea as well. By framing China's achievement during the Olympics intensively, CNN presented a country that is powerful and potentially threatening.

Besides, there were heavy loads of news items about the Beijing Winter Olympics in the political frame. The main focuses are the following two: 1) China's solid relationship with Russia; 2) other countries' diplomatic boycotts. Actually, there were more than 20 countries, such as Russia, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, whose leaders attended the 2022 Winter Olympic opening ceremony (Al Jazeera, 2022). However, CNN only spoke about Russia's attendance and other countries' boycotts. On the one hand, Russia and China's alliance aroused America's red alarm. CNN wanted to inform its users that China and Russia's collaboration may challenge the existing balance of global power (Nast, 2022). On the other hand, witnessing the possible danger, it was necessary for the United Stated to counter any Chinese actions (Pei, 2014). And the media plays a significant role in this process. By informing some countries diplomatic boycotts but sealing other countries' attendances, CNN depicted China as a worldly unwelcomed country.

6. Conclusion and suggestions

Plenty of journalists have discussed Olympics-related news coverage. However, there is a gap in the comparative framing analysis of two Olympics hosted by ideologically similar countries. This study is trying to make some contributions to fill this gap, and the results showed several findings. Firstly, the sports frame scored the higher percentage in both Olympics, which means that sport is an existence relatively beyond ideological prejudices. However, that is 'relatively' but not 'totally'. By digging into the sports frame, we could find out that the numbers in reporting each country's triumph/fail were vastly different. And this result indicated that the media was a tool to either assert a nation's global power status or express its own attitude towards a country, even under the sports frame. Secondly, both Olympics contained a lot of human-interest-related publications, and this may be due to the different philosophies in America or Russia/China. Thirdly, Russia got more articles in the morality and human-interest frames than China. And the statements under these frames were mainly focusing on Russia's inner problems. Some people implied that the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics was Russia's re-emergence on the world stage. But unfortunately, America seemed to deny that claim. Besides, China got more news items in the political frame than Russia, which specifically focused on other countries' diplomatic boycotts. The reason is that by neglecting the leaders who attend to China and showing leaders who boycott, CNN could thereby suppress China's rise to some extent. However, this study has some limitations as well. First, the time frame was limited during the Olympics, and the publications before or after the Olympics may be valuable as well. Moreover, this study only investigates one American media coverage. Other news agencies may have different opinions. Future studies could explore this topic with a wider time length and could involve more news agencies.

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