

A Study on the Media Framework during Beijing Winter Olympic Games from a Comparative Perspective: Taking People's Daily Online and CNN as Examples

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Abstract. Upon the conclusion of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games, the media coverage of this sports event of worldwide prestige has piled up as countless. However, the coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics varies across countries, and it is up to different media to tailor and package the information to be delivered to the public according to their value standards, political tendencies, ideologies, etc. Based on a review of existing literature, this paper is devoted to the exploration of the underlying media framework of China and United States through a comparative study with a certain theoretical basis by taking their practices as examples to distinguish the choices made by these two countries on conducting both negative and positive reporting and their divergence in pursuing either the “universal solidarity” or conflicts and divisions.

1 Introduction: Reports on the Beijing winter Olympics by Chinese and US media

1.1 Introduction

The Winter Olympics column launched by People's Daily in 2022 is an exclusive reporting sector dedicated to the Beijing Winter Olympics, covering the opening and closing ceremonies, competition events, participants, Olympic venues and other topics. Under the concept of creating an online version, People's Daily pays close attention to the conversion of the written texts of People's Daily into online reports to free viewers from limited reading scenarios. Therefore, a collection of reports themed on the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics or related figures reports, readable in a single sit, and many with fabulous photos, is presented in this paper. Compared to most media reports, the reports from People's Daily Online are more focused and in line with the visual dwelling pattern of viewers: the content is more precise and concentrated on a key news spot or practice, making itself a reference for many media workers to conduct reports in recent years. Unlike U.S. media that is featured by unscrupulous pursuit of traffic, or most domestic news media focusing on factual matters, People's Daily's coverage of the Winter Olympics is characterized by its

more in-depth reporting of the same event. For viewers who want to know more about the athletes and events they are interested in, this type of coverage is more comprehensive and tailored to their taste, driving them to explore the stories behind the news.

The current series of reports on the Winter Olympic Games on the People's Daily Online has exceeded one million, so how many of them are focused on the opening ceremony? What are the characteristics of these reports in terms of content presentation? What are the implications for news media workers? How to carry out theoretical research based on the reports of People's Daily Online? The attention to the above questions is relatively scarce. To this end, based on a review of existing literature, this paper is devoted to the exploration of the underlying media framework of China and United States through a comparative study with a certain theoretical basis by taking their practices as examples to distinguish the choices made by these two countries on conducting both negative and positive reporting, so as to shed light on future media reporting works.

1.2 Theoretical Basis: The Framework Theory Perspective

The framework theory was proposed by psychologist and anthropologist Gregory Bateson, and later introduced and further developed by Entenmann in the studies of communication. According to Entman's theory, “‘framing’ includes ‘selection’ and ‘highlighting’... ..constructing

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reality rather than reflecting it when news is reported.” [1] In other words, different media would tailor and package the information to be delivered to the public according to their value standards, political tendencies, ideologies, etc., and the way the media choose to frame the facts is “framework”. This paper will take Chinese and American media as examples to analyze the media frameworks adopted by Chinese and US media in their coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics with corresponding cultural explanations.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Based on the News Report

Since the end of the Beijing Winter Olympics, there is an absence of articles comparing the media frameworks of China and the U.S. taking the Beijing Winter Olympics as an example for the time being, but the coverage of the Winter Olympics by the U.S. media has drawn the attention of the domestic media, especially some inaccurate reports, which have all shed light on the present research. Earlier, many researchers have observed the differences between Chinese and American media frameworks and conducted studies on international hot spots as well as major ongoing events, such as the Sino-US trade war, the COVID-19 epidemic, and the World Health Assembly. Among them, the Sino-US trade war has received the most attention from researchers. In her master’s thesis, “A Comparative Study of China-US Trade War Coverage Frameworks between China Daily.com and New York Times.com”, Cao Ying argued that in the course of the Sino-US trade war, the two networks each have their own coverage frameworks, reflected mainly at three levels: high, medium and low, and each has its own strengths and weaknesses. [2] Lu Yizhou and Ma Deyong in “The Media Framework Effect and its Continuity - an Experimental Study on the Issue of China-US Economic and Trade Friction” devised four media framework scenarios: pro-China framework, pro-US framework, competition framework, and competition framework + free discussion, with which the changes in audiences’ attitudes toward the US and the trade war in different contexts were observed. [3] In “Media Framework Effects in Complex Public Opinion Issues: An Experimental Study of the U.S.-China Trade Dispute as a Case Study”, they conducted an empirical and comparative analysis of different media frameworks and their political consequences in the U.S.-China trade friction through surveys, experiments, and statistics with Chinese netizens as respondents. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 epidemic sweeping the world, Chinese and foreign measures to prevent the epidemic are distinctively different, and some scholars underpinned the different frameworks adopted by the Chinese and American media to report the COVID-19 epidemic. [4] In Yuanxin Wang and Dehuan Liu’s “Analysis of the LDA Thematic Model of Western Mainstream Media Coverage of the COVID Epidemic from the Perspective of Framework Theory - Taking New York Times and The Guardian as Examples”, the framework theory was employed with content analysis to study the content of

Chinese and US mainstream media coverage in terms of headlines and language features, and to summarize the respective framework characteristics. [5] In addition, other researchers have focused on the discrepancies between Chinese and US media when covering the Olympic events, and Sun Xiaosheng and Zhang Yining in “Comparison of Chinese and US Media Coverage of the Rio Olympic Games from the Perspective of Evaluation Theory - Taking the China Daily and the Washington Post as Examples” revealed the different positions of Chinese and US mainstream media about news coverage and their differences in leveraging attitudinal resources. [6]

In conclusion, Chinese and American media frame facts in different ways. The news framework of the media is a conscious act of constructing social reality and shaping public perceptions, and the production of news and the dissemination of information will affect the perceptions of their audiences, and there are great differences between China and the United States in terms of geopolitical, institutional, and cultural aspects, as well as the Chinese and American media stand on different positions to report on this Winter Olympics in Beijing.

2.2 Based on Existing Literature

Guo Qing et al. argued that international public opinion is a synthesis of the international community’s views on the organization and preparation of the Beijing Winter Olympics and related Chinese affairs, and suggested that (1) differences should be narrowed in the light of Olympic culture; (2) cross-cultural mindset should be adopted to communicate sports stories. [7] Zhang Lei et al. divided the significance of the Winter Olympics communication into two kinds - intrinsic and extrinsic, i.e., bringing ice and snow to the public and China to the world, and he also proposed that the culture of ice and snow can be distinct from intelligent mobile terminals, sports events-based educational promotion [8], Yang Zesheng et al. delved into the issue from the perspective of media professionals and suggested that the reporting should be based on Chinese elements with international vision; grounded on the scenes, but go deep behind the scenes; training professionals and introducing the three main parts as the inspiration of media coverage. [9] Du Heng et al., through the analysis of the Beijing Summer Olympics, proposed: (1) it is important and urgent to guide international public opinion on media response to the Beijing Winter Olympics. (2) theoretically, the concept and goal of public opinion guidance should be established; a new government-media model should be introduced; and the government’s international public opinion guidance should be innovated. (3) a brilliant, extraordinary and excellent Winter Olympic Games can strongly cancel out the prejudice and defamation of the West against our country. [10] Li Jinbao et al. analyzed by statistical methods in the form of questionnaires, divided the audience into five categories: need-driven, participatory, selective, opinion-based and segregated audiences to investigate media response measures in each category, such as facing up to the current situation of Winter Olympics communication; amplifying the leading role of superior projects; bridging the multiple

compartments of sports fans; and playing the advantages of all-media communication. [11] Huang He et al. conducted an analysis of the media agenda network existing in Western media Olympic coverage through the net agenda setting theory, and briefly examined the foreign communication countermeasures that China could carry out in terms of strategy, tactics, vision, path and pattern. [12] People's Daily's official website also launched a special section to cover the Beijing Winter Olympics, [13] which highlights with the opening ceremony as an example: the determination of China's flag bearer for the opening ceremony; the security force behind the Beijing Winter Olympics; Zhang Yimou's detailed explanation of the concept of the Winter Olympics; 95% of teenage actors/universities supporting the Winter Olympics; foreign audience's praise of the opening ceremony; the view that the lighting ceremony was designed as "unexpected but reasonable"; and the discussion related to the rehearsal, the silent contributor to the Winter Olympics, and the pilot film.

In summary, the focus of existing literature is on theoretical analysis of the public opinion of the international community on the Beijing Winter Olympic Games, with little emphasis on specific news coverage by domestic and overseas media. This paper will conduct a comparative analyze over the framework and agenda setting of the Chinese and US media based on their coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games.

3 Distinctive coverage of the Beijing winter Olympics by Chinese and US media

3.1 Positive Publicity and Negative Reporting

While the whole country is celebrating the arrival of Chinese New Year, the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games are about to kick off and Beijing will become the world's first "City of both Summer and Winter Olympics". Ahead of the opening of the Winter Olympics, Chinese media spotlighted the opening ceremony, such as the People's Daily's "Ice and Snow! The Pilot Film for the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics goes online" greatly raised people's expectation for the opening ceremony, and the 2022 Spring Festival Gala was featured by the festive atmosphere of the New Year with the program "Dating with Ice and Snow". What the media conveyed was a positive message. From the "Three Olympic Questions" a century ago to the "City of the Two Olympics" today, the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing carries the expectations of the whole nation. In the course of the Beijing Winter Olympics, Chinese athletes made breakthroughs one after another and finally reached a historical milestone of nine gold medals. During this period, the young athlete stars such as Gu Ailing and Su Yiming received a lot of attention from the media, labeled with the key words "a promising future", "hopeful" and "a new generation", which were all with positive connotations. People's Daily's report "Raise the national flag, play the national anthem! Gu Ailing Rises to the Top

of the Podium Again" and other online reports have all connected Gu Ailing to the country and the Chinese nation. In addition, Chinese media made continuous efforts to encourage and recognize all athletes whoever struggled, though failed in some cases, but showcased the spirit of the striving, and thus deserves to be recognized, for example, People's Daily's "Imperfect, yet gorgeous". These reports all serve as positive publicity with simple but piercing headlines and concise descriptions.

In contrast, the Beijing Winter Olympics were negatively reported by the US media. While the COVID-19 epidemic is sweeping across the globe, and it is China's epidemic prevention policy that made it possible for its people to live in a relatively safe environment, the strictness of which was evidenced in the Beijing Winter Olympics where athletes were protected tightly within the security line. However, given all these efforts, the U.S. media repeatedly speculated that the Beijing Winter Olympics were too strict and tried to attack the Games on the grounds of "human rights". Yet undoubtedly, the strict epidemic prevention measures of the Beijing Winter Olympics truly protected the safety of athletes and coaches. In addition, Gu Ailing's choice to represent China as a "second-generation immigrant" was hyped by Fox News as a "betrayal of the United States" and fabricated some missing events of athletes at the Beijing Winter Olympics in order to mock Gu Ailing for making that decision. The negative reports were unfounded and poorly received, as Aaron Blunck, a U.S. athlete who lived in the Olympic Village, publicly stated that he had seen various irresponsible reports about the Beijing Winter Olympics in the United States. "Those were actually false. In fact, everything was remarkable. Everyone, from the staff to the nucleic acid testers, to the accommodations, it was the best Winter Olympics we've ever attended." The consistent hype of these American media outlets only added to their declining credibility.

3.2 "Universal Solidarity" versus Conflicts and Division

The Winter Olympics was supposed to be an event for countries around the world to put aside conflicts and compete in friendship. The Beijing Winter Olympics adheres to the concept of universal solidarity and a friendly and inclusive attitude. Chinese media also reported with the principle of speaking well about Chinese story and conveying Chinese voice. The "Folded Willow Sends Love, This is China's Romance to the World!", "I've eaten about 200 dumplings since the Winter Olympics", "Last night, the 'welcoming pine' lit up the starry galaxy", all these reports contain the concept of "harmony" and the expectation of "harmony". During the Beijing Winter Olympic Games, the diet of athletes from different countries in the Olympic Village appeared frequently on the "hot search" list, with some enjoying dumplings and others obsessed with sesame balls. Chinese media paid close attention to the everyday routine of athletes, showing the warmth of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games in their daily lives and conveying the beautiful vision of "universal solidarity". Athletes of

different skin colors and languages competed on the same arena with great vigor and enthusiasm, building friendship in the pursuit of excellence and realizing ideals in fairness and justice. The epidemic has separated people and distanced countries from each other, but sports can bring people closer together, as the Beijing Winter Olympics lighted people's hearts with ice and snow in the festive atmosphere of new year, and dispersed division with tolerance and openness.

The U.S. media has never given up on creating conflict and division. Before the Beijing Winter Olympics, the U.S. media, represented by CNN, reported that the Biden administration would announce its decision on not designating government officials to the Beijing Winter Olympics, citing "human rights issues" in China. It also disseminated rumors of "genocide" and "forced labor" in Xinjiang to discredit China and compromise its international image. In the course of the Beijing Winter Olympics, CNN smears China from various angles such as artificial snowfall and site selection. "Fake it when there is no snow", "Snow and ice manufacturing companies have gone to the extreme", "This is dangerous!" The headline was particularly negative, claiming that "the artificial snow-making technology used at the Beijing Winter Olympics will not only consume 'a lot of energy', but some elite athletes claim it will make the event 'far from safe'". In addition, CNN "checked the satellite photos and official maps" which showed how "the ski center in Beijing's Yanqing district was built on the ruins of a national nature reserve", implying that the Chinese side contradicted the "Green Olympics" principle. After the closing of the Beijing Winter Olympics, CNN published a report titled "2022 Beijing Winter Olympics Divides the World, but Represents a Success for China," claiming that the Winter Olympics was a "deeply polarizing event" for the world. It even claimed that "China is taking advantage of the Winter Olympics to confuse the public and dodge criticism of the so-called 'human rights issues' from the international community", which was truly a distortion of facts. When it comes to Gu Ailing's representation of China, CNN barely showed its narrow-mindedness, as Gu Ailing is a "second-generation immigrant" who is eligible to apply for Chinese citizenship, and such comments that Gu Ailing betrayed the U.S. only brought to light the hypocrisy of "freedom" that the U.S. has been preaching. The above study of the media framework of China and the United States in the coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics shows that the media in the two countries hold different positions and value standards, but the Olympic Games is a stage to put aside political conflicts for friendly exchanges, and sports are designed to unite people together. The "reality" constructed by the American media certainly has its own value stance, but it goes against the spirit of sports.

4 People's Daily's Agenda Setting on the Beijing Winter Olympic Games

Huang He et al. argued that the best response to Western media is to fully understand their ways and patterns of constructing Olympic issues, and that there is a great

difference in the way Western media report on the Olympic Games in non-Western countries. [12] Traditional U.S. media coverage overemphasizes its own values as a way of evaluating the outside world, focusing on the political and humanistic information of the country hosting the Olympics, rather than reflecting a true picture of the performance of the host country.

4.1 Focus on the Needs of the Audience for a Better Access to Information

The live streaming of the Winter Olympics is just one of the many communication efforts. In fact, viewers often have a curiosity about the work of the Winter Olympics and develop a desire to learn more about the Games. To this end, mainstream websites such as People's Daily Online provide real-time updates from different angles and perspectives to meet the needs of different viewers. The so-called "real-time update" means that the public is served with timely text reports on specific projects.

For example, the audience would like to take a look at the behind-the-scenes preparation of the opening ceremony, and the report "Behind the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games is the silent dedication of these universities" [14] explains to us how the universities have participated in the event with professors leading students to participate in scientific and technological innovations in the opening ceremony performance. On one side, there are experts from different disciplines who contribute to the screen presentation in terms of culture and science and technology for the opening ceremony, and on the other side, there are students from the universities who participate in the performance; the professors are more capable than the students in generating greater social benefits and are more dedicated to the opening ceremony, but the report does not rub off the students' contribution however. As another example, the audience wondered how director Zhang Yimou, the conductor behind the opening ceremony, perceived the opening ceremony, and the report "Zhang Yimou gives full marks to the opening ceremony presentation"[15] shared his views: more cordial, more relaxing, and more minimalistic, when taking the comparison with the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympic Games into account.

It is evident that People's Daily pays great attention to the needs of different audiences on the Winter Olympic Games series, associating the reports with people or events related to the Winter Olympic Games. These real-time updated news are comprehensive and well prevent one-sided media reports by delivering intuitive and concise stories of memorable moments in the Winter Olympic Games. Meanwhile, a connection was established between the key paper reports in People's Daily and its rolling reports online, promoting viewers to gain a more in-depth understanding of the news events. In real cases of news reporting, a reasonable migration and utilization of this kind of reporting model can be made to help viewers have a deeper understanding of the news event, provide viewers with the access to first-hand information about the news event (e.g., live photos of the winning moments,

animation of difficult action clips), and promote the formation of the reporting system. It is noteworthy that, unlike the U.S. reporting approach of gaining exposure by fabricating facts, People's Daily uses more declarative sentences in its headlines, which is more attractive to viewers and generates a stronger sense of cohesion and patriotism.

4.2 Help viewers to understand Olympic events through simulated scenarios

Coverage that is complex, boring and abstract often makes it difficult for viewers to relate to the Winter Olympics events, which is a dilemma common in news coverage. If the viewers sitting in front of the TV can be immersed in a specific scene and placed in a specific competition site, the competition scene on the screen could be as vivid as to strengthen the viewers' understanding of the sports event. For example, viewers may consider curling to be less spectator-friendly than alpine skiing, and in the report "What the curlers are shouting" [16] the athletes' shouting "hahaha" was mimicked, which is actually the communication word in curling, "hurry", that is used for requiring intensified friction of the curling brush against the ice so as to give the curler a speed boost.

These reports are like microfilms that portray in depth the whole picture of the Winter Olympic Games by reproducing the performance of the athletes. What the implication this brings for media professionals is that a similar simulation could be introduced into the agenda setting process, leading viewers to put themselves into the games as they read the reports. This is important for enhancing the audience's enthusiasm for the Winter Olympics. Second, attention should be paid to the history and stories behind the Winter Olympics. For example, the story "The network security force behind the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics" [17] describes how security personnel stationed at the main media center to ensure a safe watching experience for the world.

4.3 Make the Winter Olympics penetrate into millions of households

Despite the brevity of the rolling news on the Winter Olympic Games, the concept of "from the field to the audience, from the audience to the world" is deeply embedded. For example, prior to the introduction of short track speed skater Wu Dajing, the main body of the report started from topics familiar and interesting to the audience, such as the report "Four memorable moments in the mind of Wu Dajing" [18], which introduced the short track team winning the gold medal in the mixed relay; Ren Ziwei winning the gold medal in the men's 1000m; the women's team winning the bronze medal in the women's 3000m relay; and the scene where Fan Kexin kissed the ice race. The report ends with "I hope that the team will hold the momentum to fight shoulder by shoulder with me, by which it is expected to raise the audience's confidence in the Chinese short track skating team.

Another remarkable feature is the special focus on the peripherals of the Winter Olympics. This is reflected in

two aspects.

First, by taking into account the perceptions of foreign audiences about the opening ceremony, it meets the audience's preference chain from domestic to foreign affairs and helps to understand the quality of the Beijing Winter Olympics in all aspects. For example, the report "The focus of the Russian mainstream media on the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics and the Russian audience's admiration" [19] describes the focus of the Russian media on the opening ceremony and the Russian netizens' wishes for the success of the Beijing Winter Olympics.

The author not only states in concise language the technological elements and modernity of the opening ceremony, but also proclaims the spirit of innovation and dedication to the country of the university professors and research institutes. These reports can be used as materials, interspersed with reports of people's deeds, or refined and transferred to cases for the publicity of universities and the country. This is helpful for raising the patriotic consciousness of contemporary youth, cultivating their correct values, and shaping ideal, capable and responsible characteristics.

In addition, the report "Xinjiang elements shine in the opening ceremony" [20] mentions that the cross-country skier from Altay, Xinjiang, had her mother in tears when she placed the torch into the big snowflake on the main torch stand, igniting the fire of enthusiasm among the cadres and masses of Xinjiang. This also expresses a core idea: the people of Xinjiang are an inseparable part of China. It also indicates to us how powerful the media coverage is in depositing national unity, for example, while benefiting the audience, it is also constantly coalescing the close relationship between us and our compatriots of all ethnic groups. The values of journalists conveyed in these reports are exactly what are currently in short, therefore the resources behind news media should be exploited wisely and prudently.

The value behind the rolling news coverage of People's Daily is not only reflected in its diverse connotations, unique and clever conceptions, and clear and exquisite on-site photos, but also in the fact that it derives a new way of media, which can be observed in the content section on the People's Daily website. In addition to the opening ceremony of People's Daily Online, there are comment sector set for viewers to exchange opinions on the news and generate a collision of thoughts through the National Progress Forum, as well as a photo and video sector, providing abundant first-hand photos and videos of the Winter Olympic Games. These sections open another window for viewers to understand the hot news of the Winter Olympics in all aspects and expand their scope of the news. More crucially, People's Daily Online provides a platform to create personal accounts, allowing individuals to discuss related reports and read the parts where they find themselves satisfied. Currently, People's Daily has over 600,000 rolling news reports on the opening ceremony, and more and more news media workers are still adding to this volume.

5 Conclusion

Through the comparison between Chinese and US media based on Beijing Winter Olympics coverage, this paper draws on the framework theory to identify the similarities and differences between Chinese and US media in structuring the factual hierarchy in their coverage, as well as summarizing the existing literature on the agenda network of Western media, giving a review to the literature on agenda setting for domestic media coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics, and initiating a discussion on the different Chinese and US media coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics and the agenda setting of People's Daily Online. As the different frameworks for media coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics in China and the United States have become the object of comparison for researchers, through the analysis of literature, it has been found that the domestic media responded to the U.S. coverage through a process from "U.S. coverage - Chinese response" to "Chinese preparation - U.S. coverage - Chinese response", and although considerable results have been obtained through this research practice, certain limitations should be addressed. In general, the response is mostly grounded on empirical theories, such as the analysis of the significance of the communication of this Winter Olympics, the media or means that are available, etc. There are relatively few research and empirical studies, and it is still worth examining whether the research methods have observed scientific principles. It is not advisable to judge the response of our media to U.S. media coverage solely on the basis of experience, but rather on the scientific evidence to assess its performance. Therefore, the diversity and scientific nature of the research approach is what needs to be addressed, and a more extensive research approach should be adopted to evaluate the differences in Chinese and American media coverage beyond just the Winter Olympics to make our coverage more discursive in the world, which requires research efforts to develop appropriate framework theories and agenda setting based on the reality of the Chinese society.

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