

# ***Comparing the Differences in Media Coverage of the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics in Different Countries***

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**Abstract:** The opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games, which was successfully opened at the National Stadium of China on 4 February 2022, attracted widespread attention from domestic and international media, and the media in various countries were curious about such a grand opening ceremony and covered it from several angles. In this paper, 18 media outlets from 13 countries were selected for the study, and the advantages and disadvantages were fully analyzed and discussed, using textual and content analysis as the research method and culture clash, epidemic and environmental issues as the research content. The study found a diversity in the number of articles and content of coverage in the foreign media, with coverage focusing on several areas. while the use of words and expressions in the news texts varies from country to country, from media to media, and even from article to article in the same media, differences in the way the same event is narrated lead to different emotional trends in their texts.

**Keywords:** news communication, culture, foreign media, Beijing Winter Olympic Games Opening Ceremony, traditional media

## **1. Introduction**

The Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, the 24th Winter Olympic Games, is an international sporting event hosted by China in the Beijing, Yanqing and Zhangjiakou regions, opening on 4 February 2022 and closing on 20 February 2022, a total of 17 days. At the same time, studying the foreign media's coverage of the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics in the context of the new crown epidemic, international politics and the world situation, allows for a more accurate determination of the media's attitude towards the Beijing Winter Olympics and an effective analysis of the impact the Beijing Winter Olympics has had in the region.

In order to better retrieve information, return to the text, and then more accurately analyse the different media reports, only traditional media websites with their own Chinese or English versions, including but not limited to newspapers, television stations, news agencies, etc., were used in this paper. This article covers a wide range of news media, including 18 media outlets in 13 countries in Asia (e.g. South Asia, Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia), Europe, North America, and Oceania.

Here are some introductions about those media outlets. The Times of India is an English-language daily newspaper that reflects the views of the Indian government and has a wide influence in South

Asia; Pakistan's International News is a high-circulation English-language daily newspaper in Pakistan; Thailand's Bangkok Post is the leading English-language newspaper in the Bangkok area of Thailand and has a high reference value; Singapore's Lianhe Zaobao is a well-known authoritative Chinese-language news website that has the largest scale and influence in Southeast Asia The Straits Times is an English-language newspaper website that covers general social news; Vietnam People's Daily is the largest circulation newspaper in Vietnam and the official newspaper of the Communist Party of Vietnam; Asahi Shimbun is one of the three major general news newspapers in Japan, and its website includes Japanese and English versions; JoongAng Ilbo is one of the three major newspapers in Korea, and enjoys the "most informative" status among Korean readers. Yonhap News Agency is the largest news agency in South Korea, with timely and informative news. The Times is the largest news agency in South Korea, with a very up-to-date and informative news agenda. The RIA Novosti is the only newspaper in Canada with a global reach, and its coverage and audiences are international. The Globe and Mail is Canada's only national and non-regional newspaper and is one of the most influential traditional media outlets in Canada; The New York Times was founded in the 19th century and is highly authoritative and credible. The Washington Post is the largest circulation newspaper in the United States, covering mainly domestic political news, but also international politics and international sports. The New Zealand Herald is the largest daily newspaper in New Zealand and has a large influence in the world. The Sydney Morning Herald is the earliest newspaper to be published in Australia.

This article will analyse the media coverage of the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics from three perspectives: culture clash, epidemic prevention and control, and environmental protection.

## 2. Literature Review

There are three main types of research on media coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics: research on domestic media, research on foreign media and comparative research on the coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics by two different domestic and foreign media, mostly on the coverage of sporting events or extensive coverage of the entire Beijing Winter Olympics.

The study on the coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics by domestic media provides effective research ideas. In "A Study of Agenda Setting in News Reporting under the Perspective of New Mainstream Media", Shao Qianzhi takes the new mainstream media and the three agenda settings as the theoretical basis, compares the coverage of the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics on different platforms of the People's Daily, studies and analyses their spatial and temporal characteristics, platform characteristics, emotional trends and content themes, summarizes the similarities and differences between the articles posted on WeChat, Weibo and Jieyin platforms of the People's Daily, and finally points out that the People's Daily has stepped out of the traditional media model and advanced with the times with the support of communication technology and mobile devices, showing the rise of the new mainstream media [1]. In "A Study of Mainstream Foreign Media's Coverage of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games", Shi Xiaoyu uses content analysis to study the coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games by China's mainstream foreign media, China National Television (CGTN), from six perspectives: frame, length, genre, source, tone, and headline, and affirms CGTN's rich content and objective narrative from the other's perspective, pointing out that it has played a positive role in building China's national image in international public opinion [2]. In "Talking about the characteristics of sports news reporting in the era of media convergence", Fu Jia selected the series of reports published on the Beijing Winter Olympic Games from February 11 to February 21, 2022 as a research sample to study the characteristics of sports news reporting in terms of planning, content and effect, and to analyse the shortcomings in the content of the reports [3].

Studies on international media coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics include Wang Yuhan and Lei Mingyang's "A study of mainstream Korean media coverage during the Beijing Winter Olympics", which focuses on the similarities in coverage topics between the Joongang Daily and Yonhap News Agency on the Beijing Winter Olympics, and the differences between the two in terms of coverage types, content and attitudes, revealing the political stance of the Joongang Daily in its sports news coverage, affirming Yonhap's relatively objective and fair presentation, and emphasizing the importance of rational naturalized media communication paths [4]. Niu Huiqing and Duan Jiayi in "A Study on the Construction of China's Image by Russian Newspaper during the Beijing Winter Olympics" take the definition of national image as the research idea, and interpret the construction of China's national image by Russian newspapers in their coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics from three aspects: political image, social image and cultural image respectively [5]. Du Jianyong and Su Ming, "Exploring the Practical Path of China's International Communication from the Perspective of Foreign Media Coverage", take several foreign media reports on the Beijing Winter Olympic Games as the research object, sort out the country distribution, institutional distribution and news topic characteristics of foreign media reports, analyze the content of the reports from the political, economic and cultural perspectives respectively, and make suggestions for the position, direction and communication path of China's international communication [6]. In their article "A Study of Agenda Setting and China's Image Construction in Foreign Media's Olympic Discourse: An Example of CNN and RT's Beijing Winter Olympic Games Coverage", Lu Danyun and Xiong Kepei take CNN and Russia Today's Beijing Winter Olympic Games coverage as the corpus and analyse it from three perspectives: politics, epidemic prevention and control, and sports. In the article, CNN and Russia Today's coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games is used as a corpus to analyze the political, epidemic control and sports perspectives, and to expose the strategies used by the two media to reshape China's image in the Olympic discourse [7].

Studies comparing the content of domestic and foreign media reports include Chang Xiaojing's "Discourse Presentation of Beijing Winter Olympics Coverage and National Image in the Context of International Communication", which uses content analysis, comparative research and discourse analysis as research methods to study the relevant reports on the Beijing Winter Olympics. By comparing the macro, meso and micro differences in the presentation of the New York Times and People's Daily's coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics, it finds that there are similarities and differences between the two reporting frameworks, and makes suggestions for Chinese and foreign publicity reports from three levels: theory, content and strategy [8]. In "A comparative analysis of Chinese and American media coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games and materiality", Liu Yicun and Liu Shaohua compare the coverage of Chinese athlete Gu Ailing's gold medal at the Beijing Winter Olympic Games in China Daily and the New York Times through the theoretical framework of the system of language and materiality, and conduct a profound analysis of material, relational, psychological, verbal, behavioural and existential processes, revealing that the Western subjective ideology that exists in the media in news reporting [9]. Li Dan, Wang Ding and Wang Dan use content analysis and critical discourse analysis to examine the themes and strategies of the US mainstream media in their coverage of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. The causes of their negative coverage are analysed and compared with China's coverage strategies in international sporting events to provide a reference basis for subsequent communication strategies for the country's image [10].

The opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics not only embodied the sporting spirit of "300 million people on ice and snow", but also presented China's excellent culture and art in a highly anticipated performance. In this paper, the author used content analysis and textual analysis as the main research methods to analyse the cultural and political content and emotional trends in the

coverage of the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games, and to draw up findings and discuss the pros and cons.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Content Analysis**

The analysis is based on quantitative research, through the collection of a large number of news texts for systematic collation and analysis, and the use of the “micro-word cloud sentiment analysis tool” to analyse the codebook data, including the number of news items, the keywords and sentiment orientation of news headlines, the length of news texts and the proportion of content allocated to each part, the similarities and differences in expressions, etc., using scientific The data will be used to describe or explain the characteristics and nature of the content in different countries, media and reports, and to identify differences and trend effects.

#### **3.2. Textual Analysis**

Combining quantitative and qualitative research, this study returns to the news texts, reviewing, evaluating and summarising them, and describing them specifically in terms of their cultural and political content. Through the study of news texts from different media, the reasons why these differences arise are further analysed and objective conclusions are drawn.

### **4. Results**

#### **4.1. News Text Collection**

For the Chinese version of the website, the search term “Beijing Winter Olympic Games opening ceremony” included 116 search results from the website of Singapore’s United Daily News, 30 search results from Yonhap News Agency, 4 search results from the Chinese version of Korea’s JoongAng Daily, 1 search result from the Chinese version of Vietnam’s Vietnam People’s Daily, and 207 articles from the website of Russia’s satellite There were 207 relevant articles on the website of the Russian satellite news agency.

For the English version of the website, the search term “Opening Ceremony of Beijing Winter Olympics” showed 61 results on the website of the Bangkok Post in Thailand, 495 results on the website of the Times of India, 59 results on the website of the International News in Pakistan, and 59 results on the website of the Straits Times in Singapore. The Times of India website shows 495 results, Pakistan’s International News shows 59 results, Singapore’s Straits Times shows 81 results, Japan’s Asahi Shimbun shows 51 results, South Korea’s JoongAng Daily shows 5 results, The Times of England shows 214 results, Canada’s Globe and Mail shows 315 results, CNN shows 105 results, and the New York Times shows 1,573 results. official website with a total of 1573 results, the official website of the US Washington Post with a total of 5 contents, the official website of the New Zealand Herald with 48 search results, and the Sydney Morning Herald with a total of 1 result.

#### **4.2. Brief Context Analysis**

From the perspective of the number of news, the number of relevant articles published on the websites of Vietnam People’s Daily, Sydney Morning Herald and South Korea’s Central Daily News is very small, less than 5; Yonhap News Agency, Thailand’s Bangkok Post, Singapore’s Straits Times, Japan’s Asahi Shimbun and New Zealand Herald publish less than 100 articles; Singapore’s United Morning Post, Britain’s The Times, Canada’s The Globe and Mail, Russia’s satellite news agency, The Times of India, CNN and other media published a more moderate number of articles, in the range

of 100-500; the official website of the New York Times of the United States published an extremely large number of articles, even more than 1,500.

In terms of news headlines, the media in the UK, the US, Canada, Australia and India showed more negative terms, including “controversial”, “fear”, “shadow”, “boycott”, etc.; the headlines in Japan, Singapore and other countries are more neutral, mostly stating relevant facts or directly displaying the views of other countries’ media, such as “Chinese President Xi Jinping announces the opening of the Beijing Winter Olympics ” “South Korean media expresses dissatisfaction with ‘Korean Uniform Controversy’”, etc.; media from countries that are diplomatic friends with China, such as Russia and Pakistan, publish headlines that contain more words such as “ successful” and other words indicating positive feelings. In addition, some of the media coverage is somewhat focused, for example, the headlines in the South Korean media are mostly related to the ‘Hanbok’ controversy, the headlines in the Times of India focus on the prevention and control of the epidemic in the Beijing Winter Olympics, and the British and American media focus more on political issues.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Culture Clash

Among the news reports on the cultural aspects of the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics, the controversy over the “Korean costume” is more prominent in the Korean media. According to statistics, the official website of the Korean news agency Yonhap has only 30 articles on the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics, and 10 articles on the controversy over the “Korean costume”. The Chinese version of JoongAng Daily has only 4 search results on the “Opening Ceremony of Beijing Winter Olympics” and 2 on the Korean costume controversy, while the English version has 5 search results on the “Opening Ceremony of Beijing Winter Olympics” and 3 on the Korean costume controversy. It can be seen that the Korean media’s coverage of the controversy over the “Korean costume” has taken up almost half of their coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics.

Firstly, national and cultural identity. In terms of performers and costumes, the Korean newspaper JoongAng Daily referred to ‘Korean women in Korean costumes and the Singaporean newspaper The Straits Times wrote on its website that ‘a Chinese performer wore a Korean traditional costume at the opening ceremony. The Korean public saw this as a form of cultural appropriation by Beijing”; and in Singapore’s Union-Tribune: “A performer in traditional Korean costume appeared as a representative of China’s ethnic minority in the national flag passing session, causing a backlash in South Korea”, where the words used were the term used here is “Korean traditional costume” and not “Korean costume”. Both of these organisations identified the performers as ‘Korean’, and the Korean media even took the initiative to acknowledge that ‘Koreans know the history of Korean migration to China’, but took issue with the Korean costume. This shows that it is particularly important to strengthen the world’s cultural identity with China on the basis of national identity. Even if there is a national identity, it does not prevent cultural appropriation and theft. It is also clear that there are principled differences in how different media in the same country report the news.

Secondly, culture clashes and anti-Chinese sentiment. As the article states, “As China’s cultural project further develops, anti-Chinese sentiment among Korean citizens has increased.” In an article published by CNN, “This is not the first time a culture war has occurred between the two countries.” South Korea’s JoongAng Ilbo referred to the “Korean uniforms” that appeared at international events such as the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing as having gone virtually unchallenged, but now this “seemingly insignificant issue” is being fiercely confronted by both sides because of growing anti-Chinese sentiment in South Korea. This “seemingly trivial issue” is now the subject of a heated confrontation between the two sides due to the growing anti-Chinese sentiment in Korea, which in turn is due to the “Chinese origin theory” that the Korean side has been struggling with. The article,



which states that “South Koreans clearly see the narrow-mindedness of China, which claims to be a great power”, is not only a mockery of the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics, but also a reflection of the general anti-Chinese sentiment of the Korean public.

Once again, the series of articles in the Korean media also reflect a clash of cultures and political doubts. In the case of the ‘Korean costume’ controversy, South Korean Culture Minister Hwang Hee was also heavily criticised by the South Korean media for ‘neglecting his duties’ by not filing a formal lawsuit on the matter, with an article in the Korean newspaper JoongAng Daily stating that ‘Minister Hwang Hee Minister Hwang Hee’s statement that ‘there is no real benefit to be gained by stirring up a dispute’ is a very irresponsible statement for the head of the relevant ministry”. According to the South Korean media, “it is the government’s duty to leave China speechless”. In addition, the Moon Jae-in administration’s low profile towards China, which touts “China as a mountain”, has sparked more resentment and continued anti-China sentiment among citizens”, as commented in an article in the British newspaper The Times titled “Leader’s wife dragged into Korea’s election of unlikeable”. The Times also commented on the incident in an article entitled “Leader’s wife dragged into election by people he doesn’t like”.

Thus, the major cultural clashes that emerged from the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics revealed deep-rooted cultural tensions between China and South Korea, which extended to other areas such as politics. At the same time, the difference in news language regarding the controversial ‘Korean costume’ at the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics also reveals the difference in news coverage between the two different media in Singapore.

## 5.2. The Epidemic

During the opening ceremony, there were also aspects of the media’s attitude towards the epidemic and the Chinese government’s epidemic prevention policy that are worth discussing.

Firstly, some media outlets complained about the epidemic prevention policy during the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics, repeatedly referring to the “Olympic torch being spread in the shadow of covid-19” and criticising its lack of Olympic spirit. The Times of India was one of the most vocal in this regard, noting in its article that “China, where Covid-19 will emerge by the end of 2019, is pursuing a zero Covid policy across the country and doing the same at the Olympics, trapping all participants in a ‘closed loop’”. The Times of India even ran several separate articles criticising the move to shorten the length and scale of the torch relay at the Beijing Winter Olympics due to epidemic prevention and control.

Using the sentiment trends of different media as a criterion for research, a progression of sentiment can be observed in different media regarding the epidemic control measures in the opening ceremony. Some media outlets blamed the Beijing Winter Olympics’ epidemic prevention policy for negatively affecting athletes from various countries, using more negative language in their comments. For example, the Bangkok Post: “For athletes competing in the Beijing Winter Olympics, a positive Covid test is one of their worst nightmares, and it could start with a knock on the door in the middle of the night.” Several athletes were cited as having been disqualified or losing out on places because of positive tests to support this view. Some media outlets were more neutral in comparison, such as Singapore’s Straits Times, which claimed in a story published on the opening day in Beijing that “the crowds themselves have dwindled, with organisers deciding last month not to sell tickets to Olympic events in an effort to curb the spread of Covid-19. Throughout the Games, a “closed loop” separated participants and others from the Chinese public”, stating objective facts without stating its own attitude. There is also the Japanese newspaper Asahi Shimbun, which, through statements such as “the Beijing Games, the second Olympics broadcast by NBC during the coronavirus pandemic” and “to refine its strategy based on what it learned last summer”, provides a direct evaluation of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games. the strengths and weaknesses of the epidemic prevention policy, but

rather indirectly praised the success of the Tokyo Olympics, which Japan had hosted the previous year. At the same time, some media outlets expressed a more positive attitude towards the opening of the Beijing Winter Olympics. The New Zealand Herald referred to “the extremely stringent requirements for entry into China for the Winter Games as Games organisers strive to ensure a safe and secure Olympic environment” and said that “this is a challenge for every country, including New Zealand”, noting that in the It is a challenge for every country, including New Zealand”, noting the difficulties faced by countries in the context of covid-19, while acknowledging the success of the Beijing Winter Olympics in preventing and controlling the epidemic. Other media outlets have been very positive, such as the Singaporean newspaper The Straits Times, which noted that “the Beijing Winter Olympics are being hosted by a more prosperous, powerful, confident and confrontational China under Xi Jinping’s leadership”.

Thus, from The Times of India to The Straits Times, there is an upward trend in the sentiment of the media from one country to another, from critical to positive, from negative to positive, depending on the expression and the focus.

### 5.3. Environmental Issues

Environmental issues were also a controversial topic in all the news coverage of the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics.

Some media outlets expressed negative views on the use of “artificial snow” for the Beijing Winter Olympics. The Times of India mentioned that “the games will be held in three areas. Apart from central Beijing, the other two areas are outside the capital and will rely on artificial snow to cover the otherwise brown slopes. Environmentalists have expressed concern.” The Bangkok Post similarly questioned “But China’s claims that the Games will be a “green Olympics” have been disputed by some experts because they are being held in one of the driest parts of the country and are almost entirely made of artificial snow.” In fact, the use of artificial snow is a compulsory means of running the Winter Games due to climate issues such as global warming, as was the case for the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

Other media outlets took note of the environmentally friendly concept promoted by the Beijing Winter Olympics during the opening ceremony. In an article, the Russian news agency RIA Novosti noted that “unlike the previous main torch, which was lit in a blaze, this year’s Winter Games have adopted a subversive ‘micro-fire’ scheme”, and borrowed from opening ceremony director Zhang Yimou to explain and promote this different approach to the public. The opening ceremony director Zhang Yimou’s comments were used to explain and promote this different way of lighting the torch.

This shows that if the media are aiming for emotive language in their reporting, they need to be more thoughtful in their choice of content. This can be clearly seen in the above controversy over the environmental aspects of the Beijing Winter Olympics.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper uses documentary analysis, textual analysis and content analysis as research methods to study in depth the coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics by different media in different regions and countries. In terms of content, it covers a wide range of factors such as culture, epidemic and environment; in terms of emotion, there are significant differences in the discourse between media from different countries and different media from the same country on the same event, such as the difference in discourse between the United Morning Post and the Straits Times in Singapore when reporting the controversy over the “Korean Uniform”. The majority of the media were more positive, but there were still a few countries where some media were negative and critical, or even extremely negative, such as the progressive change in sentiment of the media in different countries when

discussing the epidemic, and the different focus on environmental issues leading to different reporting attitudes. In addition, due to language issues, a large number of media reports from different countries have not been analysed in this paper, such as *Le Figaro*, the largest circulation daily newspaper in France, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the largest circulation national daily newspaper in Germany, *Pravda*, the famous Russian media newspaper, and the official website of Qatar's Al Jazeera, etc. This paper is only a reference.

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