

News Reporting on Sun Yang and Horton: Framing Differences of Xinhua and Abc, Comparative Media Analysis and Nationalism

Gaohuan Chen

Master of Arts in Chinese Studies in the Chinese University of Hong Kong

ABSTRACT. *This study investigates different framing of Sun Yang and Mack Horton, and “drug cheat” based on media coverage in Xinhua News Agency and ABC. By analyzing 66 news articles from ABC and Xinhua News Agency, identifying five generic framing in reporting of Sun Yang and Mack Horton: conflict, human interest, economic consequence, morality and responsibility.*

KEYWORDS: *Generic framing; Framing differences; Soft power; Nationalism; Nation greatness; Governmental power; Intercultural communication*

There are several research results: Firstly, the analysis of framing differences reveals that ABC and Xinhua demonstrate different interpretations of soft power and nationalism. Chinese soft power is of significance for constructing nation greatness to be outstanding internationally so that the sharing of nationalism in Chinese community is more likely to protect positive image for Chinese nationality, while Australian mainstream media aims at representing soft power and nationalism as the tool for cultural communication between different countries. Furthermore, study of comparative media studies suggests that it has a long way to achieve high level of diversity and internationalism in Australian mainstream media industry, and the increasing connection between transnational content, domestic governmental power and public opinions possibly deconstruct initial interpretations of “dissimilar media system” (Zhao, 2012) for Chinese mainstream media system.

1. Introduction

Conflict issue “drug cheat” took place in Rio Olympics. Australian athlete Mack Horton expressed that Chinese swimmer Sun Yang took stimulants after he won the gold medal in the final of 400 metre free-style swimming. (Xinhua, 2016) And he did not want to compete with this kind of swimmers, urine tests of whom would be

positive. The statement “drug cheat” (ABC, 2016) from Mack Horton resulted in controversy all over the world, in spite that Sun Yang strove to prove he would not breach the regulations of FINA all the time.

The debates of “drug cheat” (ABC, 2016) seem to be diversified in different media coverage, and it results in different ways to establish the image of Sun Yang and Mack Horton. 27 pieces of news from ABC and 39 pieces of news from Xinhua news agency have been chosen as research sample. I will use textual analysis, quantitative analysis and parameter-based approach to make comparisons of different news framing in three periods (2012-2016, 2016 Rio Olympics and After Rio Olympics till now) between ABC and Xinhua News Agency based on news framing theory and comparative media studies. After in-depth studies of every reporting, t test will be used to define variations of news framing and attitudes to athletes.

2. Research Questions

I will study on these research questions:

RQ1 What are the different media frames used by media in China and Australia to report the conflict between Sun Yang and Mack Horton and how do they differ in their construction of the athletes’ images?

RQ2 What influence do the different media systems of China and Australia have on their media coverage of the same event?

RQ3 How do Australian and Chinese media coverage of the Olympics demonstrate their national approaches to soft power and reflect their specific forms of nationalism.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Sports Event and Soft Power

To gain competitive advantage, countries in conjunction with their own multinational firms strive to develop and implement creative nation branding strategies and to promote positive country brand images (Anholt, 1998; Paswan et al, 2002; Loo and Davies, 2006; Szondi, 2006; Greyser, 2008).

Previous research mostly focused on constructing soft power and nation image in relation to world-wide sports events. However, every country has different interpretations of soft power also the strategies of nation branding are different from others. It can extend to the research on construction of nation image and nation identities. Seldom scholarly arguments focus on the comparisons of soft power in different countries and they just mention the soft power in a broad vision statement.

3.2 Nationalism and Internationalism

In modern society, there exist different kinds of explanations of nationalism. One is long-isolation model that is the most original style of official nationalism, simply interpreting the nationality and identities as the whole of “imagined communities” (Benedict Anderson, 1983) in regardless of otherness not belonging to their nation. Another explanation of nationalism came into being based on consciousness of international society. Even the colonial nationalism is a kind of representation combining vernacular nationalism with capitalization. It is of significance to research on deconstruction of traditional form of “imagined communities” (Benedict Anderson, 1983) referring to every media practitioner with similar journalistic attitudes.

Maybe the news stories related to athletes in Olympic Games is used to represent nation images. It is of significance to both people in China and Chinese immigrants overseas, even the citizens in Australia with different ethnic background. For immigrants, the explanation of nationalism in their mind is associated with identity construction outside the homeland. For the promotion of China image, news agency in China is intended to construct strong nationalism through news reportage. A number of ways in which the globalization and convergence of media and communication technologies, displacement of people, and an allegiance to a variegated sense of Chineseness have intersected to form a virtual global Chinese community. (Wanning Sun, 2002). While Chinese media do the propaganda work to deliver the message of highest-rating world sports events, it becomes “commodified nationalism” (Wanning Sun, 2002), referring to commercialization and politicalization of Chinese media. Apart from exploring its influence on branding of nation image, the research on transformation of “commodified nationalism” (Wanning Sun, 2002) will be considered.

4. Research Methodologies

The five generic news framing (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) are the focus of my framing analysis. To be specific, it contains conflict frame, human interest frame, economic consequence frame, morality frame and responsibility frame. And quantitative analysis will be applied for comparing the number of five generic news framing in different media coverage.

66 pieces of sample texts will be selected for framing analysis and then to quantify the results of framing analysis. Before the beginning of Rio Olympics, most of news coverage in ABC is framed according to human’s needs in order to inspire Australian citizens to be interested in national athletes, while most of news coverage frames Sun Yang as hero in China and inspires citizens’ interests. During Rio Olympics, Xinhua tends to raise up reader’s interest for this conflict issue and athletes, while ABC attaches more importance of analyzing moral and ethical aspects behind conflict issue. After the ending of Rio Olympics, ABC seldom publishes news coverage relevant to these two athletes. However, most of news coverage from Xinhua are intended for raising up people’s awareness of Sun Yang’s

achievement by human-interest news framing.

5. Discussion

5.1 Framing Difference

In spite that human interest frames is always applied in news coverage for these two media, they apply human interest frames to represent the images of national athletes differently. Xinhua always presents Sun Yang to be national hero in a more authoritative form while the representations of Mack Horton's image in ABC news coverage are more likely to make the audience understand him comprehensively, especially the application of statements from both official organization and online communities.

5.2 Soft Power

Compared with soft power equivalent to glamorous side of national image in China, Australian soft power is linked with objectivist view to be the demonstration of cultural and political reality in Australia.

5.3 Comparative Media Studies

After studying on remarkable differences between Chinese and Australian mainstream media, the concept of "dissimilar media system" (Zhao, 2012) can be deconstructed and new interpretations can be illustrated that transnational agenda, public opinions and internationalism will appear more frequently in Chinese media system so as to replace governmental censorship possibly. It comes into conclusion that communication power has been redistributed. The rising up of Chinese soft power has deconstructed cultural hegemony that is the process of De-Americanization and providing opportunities for cultural pluralization. And "Liberal model" (H&M, 2004) cannot be appropriate for describing the characteristics of every media system in western society. For instance, it is evident that ABC demonstrates numbers of stories relevant to national greatness consistent with governmental interest with small parts of commercial elements, whose operation system is not consistent with the characteristics of Liberal media model.

5.4 Nationalism and Internationalism

The uniqueness of nationalism in their mind is to make sense of belonging for homeland coexist with the desire for integrating into western society. Furthermore, the initial explanations of "commercial nationalism" (Wanning Sun, 2002) that refers to a form of politicized and commercial propaganda for Chinese nationalism within Chinese mainstream media should be transformed. The transforming

understandings of “commercial nationalism” (Wanning Sun, 2002) possibly leads to the alternation of state control on the representation of nationalism and provides the growing space for diversified narration that brings in transnational agendas for news coverage.

6. Conclusions and Further Developments

Overall, framing differences will lead to diverse interpretations of soft power and nationalism and provide opportunities for comparative media studies. In order to raise up human interest of audience, Xinhua represents Chinese soft power equivalent to athletes’ achievements and nation greatness, and then the construction of ideological culture like nationalism is still the pathway to be the protection of Chinese community within global village, in spite of the possibilities for combinations of transnational agendas and governmental censorship. ABC seems to aim at demonstrating more comprehensive understanding of native athletes that is the way to brand Australian soft power.

But, there exist some space for improvements. The research results cannot be applied to conclude the characteristics of all media forms in China and Australia. When it comes to further developments for studying on framing difference, the differences between media systems and branding nation image, other medium can be taken into consideration such as advertisement and social media posts relevant to Olympics.

About the author: Chen Gaohuan, born in January 1992, gender: female, native place: Fuzhou City, Fujian Province, education background: Master of Arts in Chinese Studies in the Chinese University of Hong Kong, research direction: new media and cultural creative industry

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