

# Media and the building of national image media essay



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This chapter sets out to explore relevant works previously proposed by scholars and four sub-sections are addressed. In the first place, it discusses the media and the Building of National Image. Secondly, by drawing upon literature about media coverage in the past Olympics, it examines the Media's Role in Olympics Report. Thirdly, the existing images of China in the British media will be discussed. This review also highlights how media coverage is biased according to political stance and their audience. For the purpose of providing the context of this study, works on Chinese human rights related to Beijing Olympics is presented.

National image is " an attitude or opinion people of one nation have toward the people and governments of other nations." (Lee, 2010) The attitude or opinion toward other nations is " an important variable for both government and business leaders."(ibid) From the business point of view, as Michael (2008) proposes, when consumers are relatively unfamiliar with a country's products, they use country image as a " halo" construct in product evaluations. The halo construct hypothesis implies that country image directly affects consumers' beliefs about product attributes and indirectly affects their overall evaluation of products through these beliefs. (Han Min, 1989) In this regard, a positive and favorable national image can be suggested to accelerate business success among foreign consumers, if other conditions remain the same. As for governments, public opinions or attitudes in other countries toward one's country are taken seriously consideration in the entire process of planning and executing foreign policies. å½å®¶å½çè±;æ~å½å®¶" è½å®¶žš>", æ~æ- å½çèµ,, ää, æœå®¶ è è 'µä¹ÿæ~æœèè,,†å¼±çš,, èµ,, äº, ä¹ÿæ~æ•Œå½å½å®¶çž†å...^æ"» å†»

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National Image is closely related to information dissemination. In the process of image building of the country, the first consideration should be building a political community: i. e. build a collective identity. Berger and Luckman (2007) argue that identity is an “ Individual” rather than “ Collective” phenomenon. Certainly individuals construct their own identity, but they do so in interaction with “ others”, drawing upon identities that are collectively shared. This involves constructing a sense of “ self” that draws upon the stories, memories, mythologies and beliefs of the collective identity. ¼^èž™ å ¶æ~ä» ŽåŽÿæ-†copyčš,, ã€, è-å, ®åž™ æ"¹ä, <å™ çã€,¼ %o

Journalists and the media industry devote to construct such collective identities by manufacturing stories, ideologies, beliefs and myths As Louw (2005: 97) puts it, the media has become the main storytelling vehicle; journalists have become the key players in myth making and identity building. Louw (ibid.) further observed that professional communicators are central to creating a sense of “ belonging” and “ identity” which underpins legitimate hegemonies.

Journalists are especially important sources of representations (stories, memories, myths and ideologies) from which mass publics construct their images of the world; their sense of collectivities and identities. Building

images is part of an intermeshed communicative process. Not surprisingly, those seeking to build image building must engage in perception management which means working with journalists to construct representations (manages) appropriate to the needs of the image builders.

According to Anholt (2008: 2), image change usually takes place over decades and generations, not months or years. The high international esteem in which Japan and Germany are held today dramatically changed in contrasts to their pariah status after the Second World War. This image change took place as consequence of a deliberate, long-term program of political reform, improved social stability, economic growth and, indispensably, a retreat into non-militarism. Interestingly, it was through the politically neutral medium of consumer products that both Japan and Germany were able to start the process of rebuilding international trust.

Modernists propose that nations are communicatively construed. They place great emphasis on the role played by the media and intelligence (such as journalists) in the formation of national image. As both Anderson (1983) expound, media representatives and stereo types become the raw material people use to create their sense of " self" and to construct images.

Louw (2005: 109) strongly believe that journalists (media) have an especially powerful influence in image building, because the news media lies at the heart of circulating political meanings. Journalists have therefore played a significant part in constructing national image by using the electronic media is the key embedding mechanism (but in early days it was the print media).

Specially, currently global media is very powerful in building image of the country due to their reach and prestige they have all over the world. As Louw(2005: 261) suggests in his work of the media and foreign relations studies, media's role is that the global media are replacing diplomats. Mowlana ( qtd. in Louw 261) argues that diplomatic profession is being undercut by the arrival of global television. In this regard, diplomats are traditionally engaged in intelligence gathering, negotiation, reporting and representation. He argues that when diplomatic channels are closed during crisis, the new global media can become alternative vehicles for exchanging information.

Thus, it is beneficial to analyze how the media work to cultivate the images toward other countries. Especially developing countries are often portrayed in a stereotypical manner, frequently emphasizing violent conflict and crisis (qtd. in Herbert: 2001: 44), for example, found that developing countries are depicted as somewhat more prone to internal conflict and crisis; more often the location for armed confrontation; more often the recipients of disaster relief or economic and military aid; and more likely to be a place where criminal activities originate.

Generally, it is very important to get the hearts and minds of foreign media and it needs to gear to their interest. Actually, what constitutes international news is determined by the political, economic social and cultural importance of the news to another country. Western nations have the advantage in global information flow: they control the leading news agencies that supply news around the world. However, global journalists often tend to rely on a narrow and inappropriate stereotype of local people and culture. They need <https://assignbuster.com/media-and-the-building-of-national-image-media-essay/>



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 çš,, ä¼¼ † ä, š(å|, ä, %æ~ÿã€ † ç´†åº¼) ã€, The Olympics offer nations the  
 great opportunity to demonstrate their economic, political or social  
 supremacy over other nations.

However, the Olympics have never been just sports –  
 it not only showcases the cultural resources of the host country but also has  
 profound implications for their international relations and domestic interests  
 (Hargreaves, 1992). The International Olympic Committee would like to keep  
 politics out of the Olympic Games. While surveying the history of the  
 Olympic Games, we may observe that the themes embedded in the modern  
 games, be it during the rise of Nazi Germany, the Middle East conflict,  
 the Cold War or the host states' own political rehabilitation,  
 have always been carried far beyond the original Olympic spirit (Delisle,  
 2008: 17).

Looking back to past Olympics, the view of sport has been as an aid to  
 dominate the politics which have been intrinsic to international sporting  
 progress because sport is safe in this way. Actually, sport has little political  
 content in it and it is as a form of inter-cultural activities. However, the  
 Olympic Games are hard to simplify, because the Olympics always attracts  
 the interest and mass media, consequently, Media have become major  
 players in a grand to define the Olympics.

## 2. 3 The existing images of China in British media

For well over a century, mainstream British media have been guided by the  
 professional norm of providing objective news coverage. However, such a  
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perspective -which holds to the possibility of covering from no perspective at all - has begun to decline in much critical literature on journalistic practice (i. e. Hall, 1974; Hartley, 1993). Not only has the standpoint of non-biased coverage been turned down as untenable (Hackett, 1984) but scholarship on social perception has emphasized the inevitability of bias in basic cognitive and perceptual mechanisms (Vallone et al., 1985). However, the notion of bias “ still remains a trump card in the public sphere, offering the backbone of an oft-repeated and impassioned plea for and against certain views on the world that infiltrate the reportage of wide-ranging events.”(Barbie, 2002)

The bias may exist in person's race, colour, creed, illegitimacy, gender or sexual orientation or different nationalities. Galtung and Ruge (1965) firstly introduce the thesis that foreign journalism biases are more obvious and typical. Numerous further hypotheses are then deduced from the theory and their social implications been debated. Most of the hypotheses assert that the developed world is consistently biased against the Third world and developing countries. For long, western media is criticized in the rest of the world (e. g. Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe) as being pro-Western with regard to multifarious political, cultural and economic issues. As Edward W. Said (1997: 25) point out:

“ The general basis of Orientalists thought is an imaginative and yet drastically polarized geography dividing the world into two unequal parts, the larger, ' different' one called the Orient, the other, also known as our world, called the Occidental or the West.”



Therefore, when reporting news of the undeveloped or non-democratic countries, the newspapers are unavoidably setting the West and Orient opposed. Nowadays, there is such a diversity of interests, values and prejudices in the West that normally the media should not be expected to develop a strong and sustained bias against any nation or group of nations or any religion; indeed against nations like India, China, etc.; apparently, there is no such bias in the Western media. However, there are still imbalances reporting of their assumed Orient.

In this sense, the inevitable of media biases also exist in the ways the British media coverage of China due to the fundamental differences in terms of their political structures, economic systems and cultural frameworks.

Researchers have labeled the persons who are involved in the news selection process “ gatekeepers” of information because they are in the position of either letting information pass through the system or stopping its progress. The performance of the gatekeeping function results in what some scholars have called “ agenda setting” for the society. As Marc Stanon (2007) proposes, affected by the “ gatekeepers”, the British media’s presentations of China continue to be accordant with an earlier perceived stereotypical view of the ex-colonies. Marc stanon further notes that the western media don’t present China as being strong and male but being fine, exquisite and female, in need of support and guidance of the strong male west.

According to Clare J. (1998), China is portrayed by British media as a country with corrupt leaders and violates populations and is unable to govern themselves with stable democratic government. Some works present that <https://assignbuster.com/media-and-the-building-of-national-image-media-essay/>

China is perceived by the West especially British media as a stereotype of a constant nation full of turmoil or violent conflict. It seems that stories from China are not seen as relevant to the viewer in the West and so will tend to be only included if they conform to Galtung and Ruge's (1973) theory of negativity.

## 2. 4 The China human right issue in the progress of 2008 Beijing Olympics

Started from Beijing making its two Olympic bids in 1991 and 2001, China was criticized from all over the world because of the poor human rights records. The Chinese government has been criticized for lack of human rights for a long time.

According to the China human rights reports in 2007, which are released by Amnesty International, Congressional-Executive Commission and Human Rights Watch, they all indicated not only the human rights record within China remained poor but it even regresses in recent years. Above all, China political and social situation are in certain confusion, such as the property gap, trafficking in women and children, and the restriction of labor rights. Second, in the respect of political rights, Chinese people have no rights to change the government. Moreover, people will be harassed or imprisoned if they are someone is perceived as threatening to government authority or the Party; he/she will be harassed or imprisoned. Third, in the respect for civil liberties, the Chinese authority has increased restriction on freedom of speech and the press, ban of politically sensitive books, periodicals and films blocked access to an overseas web site and jammed overseas broadcasts, such as VOA, BBC, and RFA. 31

From past to now, the Chinese government did make some positive developments on human rights to improve its international image on human rights issue under the pressure of the public and press. China changes its attitude toward human rights step by step, especially after China got the ticket to hold the Olympics. The Chinese government took a more open mind to talk about the human rights issue, informed the citizen about the Sichuan Earthquake and liberalized press regulations applied to foreign journalists. The Chinese government revised the "Regulations of the People's Republic of China on News Covering Activities of the Permanent Offices of Foreign News Agencies and Foreign Journalists" and enacted on Oct 17, 2008.

Both the Chinese authorities and officials of International Olympic Games pledged that the Beijing Olympic Games would be a catalyst for the improvement of human rights in China. Liu Jing-ming, the Vice President of the Beijing Olympic Bid Committee expressed, "by allowing Beijing to host the Games it will help the development of human rights. And Liu Qi, the former Beijing Mayor and the current president of Organizing Committee for the Beijing Olympic Game, argued "it will help promote all economic and social projects and will also benefit the further development of our human rights cause. Also Jacques Rogge, the president of IOC, indicated "we are convinced that the Olympic Games will improve the human rights record in China." (Liu, 2008)

(Liu, 2008) <http://www.amnesty.org.au/china/comments/10987>

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However, even though China loosen the restrictions for foreign journalists, they are still not allowed to travel to the restricted region of Tibet and other areas without getting special permission of local authorities. Moreover, this new regulation haven't extended to Chinese own journalists. Since riots broke out in Tibet in March this year, the Chinese Government has been facing many criticisms from the whole world. During this period, information tightly controlled and the foreign journalists had not been allowed into Lhasa. This incident has aroused great concern about the human rights issue within China. Media again have focused attention on China and the communist government. Many organizations and groups, such as the International Human Right Group and the Reporters without Borders and the International Human Rights Group, deemed that China didn't obey the commitments for ameliorating human rights situations. Many people, like pro-Tibet activists, human rights lobbyists, groups which criticize on China's relationship with Sudan and the war in Darfur put pressure on Chinese communist government and asked the international society to boycott the Beijing Olympic during the Olympics torch relay around the world.

The human right and press freedom are sensitive subjects in China under its socialist regime. As an authoritarian state, it controls the citizen tightly. By ensuring that it will improve the situations of human rights and loosen the press freedom, China commanded the favorable impression of the international society. For the Chinese government and its people, 2008 Olympic represents a "coming out party" asserting national identity and display the achievements to the world audience and improve its diplomatic relations with other countries. Nevertheless, with China's notorious human

rights record and its dubious position on some international issues, the the Olympics provide an opportunity to display a counter-narrative to those who disagree with China's socialist ideology or are unsatisfied with the government's policy. It is worth to explore the West media 's coverage of china human right in the context of 2008 Beijing Olympics, to look for if hosting the Olympic Games could helps China promote its human rights development and enhance China's international prestige.