
Volume 15 Issue 1 2021

A content analysis of 2008 Beijing Olympics coverage in *The Australian* newspaper

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Abstract

This study examined the sentiment of articles published in *The Australian* newspaper in its coverage of the 2008 Beijing Olympic games. A total of 213 articles published over a span of six weeks (July 25-September 7, 2008) were content analysed. Firstly, the findings showed that Australian media negatively framed the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games with approximately twice as much negative as positive coverage. Secondly, the frequent topic of Australian media coverage related to the Chinese government and these articles too were mostly framed in a negative light. The research hypothesises that this may be due to Australian journalists' limited knowledge of essential Chinese historical and political issues. However, this study also found that Australian media affirmed the Beijing Olympics' success via many positive stories about the Beijing Olympic Organisation Committee.

Introduction

China is one of the world's most influential countries, with the largest population of 1.42 billion (World Population Review, 2019) and a flourishing economy. For many years, China has been building its 'soft power', a term that refers to 'an international player's non-coercive influence on others, its attractiveness in the world, and the power of its morality and model' (Pang, 2008). Historically, hosting the 2008 Beijing Olympics in the Chinese capital was a milestone in China's exploration of soft power (Pang, 2008). What's more, knowing that media coverage of such events can enhance the recognition of the host country (Brown et al., 2004), hosting such a large international event would mean having all eyes on China, and the Olympic Games would be a good opportunity for China to showcase its best via the world media.

However, a particularly popular word used by most Western journalists to describe the Chinese media is 'state-controlled' (Latham, 2010). Some say that in China, voices cannot be free, that the ruling Chinese Communist Party is strengthening its control over media, online speech, and city society associations, and this was especially the case in 2008 when the Chinese government continued its media restrictions (Freedom in the World, 2008). In this context, Chinese media always positively reported on the Games, and that is what the Chinese public at large read. In contrast, however, there was a significant amount of negative press coverage from journalists outside China. Thus, conducting an analysis of media coverage from outside China is necessary to get a more balanced understanding of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games from an outsider's point of view.

Australia and China have geographical proximity and are close neighbors. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Australia in 1972, trade between the two countries has become more frequent. Today, in terms of both imports and exports, China is the Australia's largest trade partner (Holmes, 2019). However, Australia is different from China, as Australia is a democracy with an egalitarian culture. Thus, based on these differences, media from both countries may view the same event (i.e., the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games) from different perspectives – hence the need to investigate the coverage.

This exploratory research project focused on a traditional newspaper media source to analyse how Australian media covered the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and to understand the sentiment reflected in Australian national newspaper coverage. *The Australian* is the country's largest nationally distributed newspaper that reports on

politics, economics, sports, etc. and is published in Australia from Monday to Saturday each week (*The Australian*, 2019). The nationwide influence and quality of *The Australian* make it a representative example of an Australian national newspaper for this study.

Rationale

This study has three merits. As mentioned, China is Australia's largest trading partner and Australia is China's sixth largest partner (Holmes, 2019): the relationship between the two countries is therefore crucial. In 1993, Australia won the bid to host the 2000 Olympics Games and China lost. Finally, while there is a large body of research from other countries about media coverage of the 2008 Beijing Olympics Games, there are few Australian studies. Thus, this project can fill the knowledge gap.

Literature review

The Olympics is one of the most important reporting sporting events for global media. There are many studies about media coverage of the Olympics and the 2008 Beijing Olympics in particular, from various angles. This review is divided into two parts in order to highlight the differences: namely research done on the Olympic Games held in other countries and research which specifically focuses on Beijing Olympic Games' coverage.

Other Olympics' coverage research

Many researchers studying media coverage of the Olympics, mainly focused on the gender of athletes, disability (the Paralympic Games), and the attitudes of other countries towards the host country and how this was represented (Tooey, 1997; Schantz & Gilbert, 2001; Vincent, Imwold, Masemann & Johnson, 2002; Hede, 2005; King, 2007; Killoran, 2017; Broucke and Regenmortel, 2017). Also, these studies investigated a range of different media forms including newspapers, television and the internet.

Gender representation in the Olympic Games

Firstly, in terms of gender research, most studies looked at newspapers, but some also analysed television and online coverage. In fact, when conducting a literature search using key words like 'media coverage' with 'Olympics', most studies were found to be about gender. These studies, mainly from Western countries like Britain, Australia, and United States, discussed the status of female and male athletes in Olympic Games media coverage, and found that male athletes dominated the media coverage. Toohey (1997) focused on television coverage of the 1980 (Moscow) and 1984 (Los Angeles) Olympic Games and found that media coverage of sport focused on males, with females receiving only about 33 percent and 28 percent of the coverage, respectively. King (2007) researched the British national newspaper coverage of female and male athletes performing at the Olympic Games since 1984 (Los Angeles, Seoul, Barcelona, Atlanta, Sydney) up until 2004 (Athens). While in track and field events, female athletes in recent years received relatively equal newspaper coverage, sports media coverage was largely dominated by male athletes.

However, other research concluded that 'male and female athletes competing in the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games received an equitable amount of coverage' (Vincent et al., 2002, p. 319). They also confirmed that female athletes received more newspaper coverage when competing in major international sporting events, especially the Olympics. Killoran (2017) compared the focus of media coverage content between male and female athletes during the 2016 Rio Olympic Games and found that articles emphasised male Olympians' performance and ability in competitions, while the coverage of female Olympians focused on their personal family lives and emotions rather than their sporting achievements or performance.

Coverage of athletes with disabilities

There were also some studies undertaken on the Paralympic Games that discussed the level of attention to athletes with disabilities in different countries' media coverage. Schantz and Gilbert (2001) analysed German and French newspaper coverage of the 1996 Atlanta Paralympic Games. They selected eight (8) of their national newspapers including 104 articles and concluded that disable athletes' performances were of little importance to the media coverage, and that the newspaper coverage misunderstood the Paralympics idea. In most newspaper reports, athletes with disability were marginalised.

Research into media and audiences' attitudes towards the host country

Large sporting events provide a distinct chance to seize 'the spotlight' and facilitate a unique image of the host country to a global audience (Hiller, 2006). Thus, there were also studies which focused on media attitudes and representation towards the host country in which media framing played an important role (see Hede, 2005; Broucke & Regenmortel, 2017). Different countries had differing attitudes towards the host country. For example, Broucke and Regenmortel's (2017) analysis of Belgian and Dutch newspaper coverage of the 2016 Rio Olympics, indicated that media coverage mainly focused on topics such as economics, environment, infrastructure, health, safety, public service, politics, and social issues, and they received the largest share of negative press. This devastatingly negative media attention resulted in negatively influencing Brazil's image as

the host of the 2016 Olympics. Conversely, Hede (2005) focused on the 2004 Athens Olympic Games and offered insights into the effectiveness of television broadcasts of the Athens Olympics resulting in cultivating positive attitudes towards Greece.

The Beijing Olympics' coverage research

Without doubt, the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games was the largest international event in China's modern history, and an unprecedented showcase of modern China to the world (Qing et al., 2010). China did much preparation in advance of hosting the Games and made a significant effort to make a good impression on international visitors and athletes. For example, Hays (2008) noted that Beijing spent US \$9 billion to guarantee that the public transportation could meet the requirements. They also built many new hotels including more than a dozen super deluxe hotels, one of which had 2800 rooms. Also, there were 22 new stadiums built, 72 stadiums, areas and training facilities built and renovated for athletes' training and practicing, and one Olympic village, at the cost of nearly US \$1.65 billion (Hays, 2008). Approximately 10,942 athletes took part in the Beijing Olympic Games from all over the world (Olympic, 2008) and the event attracted about 6.52 million tourists, including 382,000 from abroad (Xinhua News Agency, 2008).

As one might expect, there have been plenty of media studies conducted about this particular Olympic Games, but most of these studies have still focused on the gender of athletes (see Amara, 2012; Tang & Cooper, 2012). Apart from the comparison of the differing amount of coverage of male and female athletes, Amara (2012) discussed the different international media coverage of the veiled women athletes' participation in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. This research investigated the status of Muslim women and the Arab and Muslim world's attitudes towards China, Asian culture, and the Olympics. In this research, Amara (2012) noted that some of the Arab press emphasised the role of China as a bridge between Western and Eastern civilisations and mentioned that for some people, wearing a veil in competition was a personal preference, while for others, especially Western Asian people from Iran, it was imposed by national ideology or male domination.

From another perspective, Tang and Cooper's (2012) US-based research looked at the way male and female audiences watched the Olympics content on various media platforms (the web/internet, new media, television, cable channels, NBC broadcast platform, etc.). This study showed that women and men spent equal time watching the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games on different media platforms. The study concluded that:

Web Olympics viewers for female were those who are more familiar with new technologies, but for male were more likely to be sports fans interested in Olympic content (Tang & Cooper, 2012, p. 87).

Moreover, other developed countries also conducted studies about how the Games were reported in their national (domestic market) media. Studies conducted in the US, Japan, Britain, and other European countries, showed the change in media audience attitudes towards China as a result of the Olympics' media coverage, including both positive and negative impact (see Qing et al., 2010; Gries, Crowson, & Sandel, 2010; Zeng, Go, & Kolmer, 2011). For example, more positive attitudinal changes were reported among the Japanese viewing public (Qing et al., 2010), but a US survey revealed negative audience attitudes towards China from the beginning of the Beijing Olympics (Gries et al., 2010). Both these studies gathered data via an online survey within a specific period using a first and second survey. For the Japanese survey, there were 624 respondents divided evenly between women and men, including six generational groups. For the US survey, 2,584 members of a middle-American state university community finished the first online survey while only 1,135 (44%) members completed the second survey.

Additionally, Zeng et al. (2011) indicated that the media presentation of China's image was not directly improved by the 2008 Beijing Olympics event, a result which differs from previous studies. However, they also emphasised that the 2008 Beijing Olympics had indeed inspired China and its public among the international media, and that this was sufficient to convey a more clearly defined Chinese TV image to international audiences than was available previously.

All the studies mentioned were conducted in a range of Western and Eastern countries, but it has been difficult to find any research on Australian media's sentiment about the Beijing Olympics. Knowing that China is Australia's largest trading partner (Holmes, 2019), filling this gap was deemed important. Additionally, most literature on the media coverage of the Beijing Olympics concentrated on television and the internet (e.g., Amara, 2012; Tang & Cooper, 2012; Zeng et al., 2011, etc.), and it is increasingly rare to find studies that focus on traditional newspaper coverage. This situation is different from research on past Olympics' media coverage.

The newspaper has been one of the most important traditional media platforms in Australia. There are some data showing that in terms of *The Australian*, in 2008, the circulation in metropolitan or national dailies from Monday to Friday was 136,000 and on Saturday was 301,000. The readership of *The Australian* in metropolitan or national dailies from Monday to Friday was 471,000 and on Saturday is 872,000. Although Chen and Colapinto (2010) noted that the Beijing Olympics marked the first time that the internet and new media provided footage of this event along with traditional media like newspaper/television/radio, newspaper coverage was still mainstream so research in relation to the newspaper coverage of the Beijing Olympics is still important and this project will fill some gaps existing in the Australian research.

Theoretical frameworks

Research has shown that media organisations influence the angle of media coverage, and this is called media framing. Eastman and Billings (1999) said that what audiences of media see is not the Olympics itself, but the carefully produced events by the media organisation. Media framing refers to 'process of selecting and highlighting some aspects of perceived reality and enhancing salience of an interpretation and evaluation of that reality' (Entman, 2003, p. 26). Editors and journalists report news deploying framing devices through specific views and perspectives. Also, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) have stated that cultural resonance can affect the process of media framing. In a word, while media framing influences public opinion both at societal and individual level, media framing and framing devices are equally influenced by cultural and societal background of a content producer (Fairley, 2018).

Media is powerful because the public read media to make sense of the world. Sometimes, governments control their local media. In terms of the Beijing Olympics 2008, while the Chinese media covered the event positively, other countries' media coverage was not universally positive. The impact of international media coverage during the period of the Beijing Olympics potentially affected international/outsider audience opinion of China more broadly.

Methodology

Sampling

This study used a case study approach to focus on a contemporary situation that does not require control of behavioural events (Yin, 2008). In past research, some studies have used the case study approach to discuss the mega-event staging (Schantz & Gilbert, 2001; Zeng et al., 2011). This project focused on *The Australian* newspaper to investigate Australian media coverage of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and included coverage during distinct three times phases including the period of before, during, and after the Beijing Olympics 2008: a period of one and a half months from July 25 through September 7, 2008.

The Beijing Olympic Games were held over nearly two weeks from August 8 to August 24 2008, so the sampling time frame included two weeks prior to two weeks after the closing ceremony. During this timeframe, there were 213 articles which focused on results, competition or were not included, as this project looked at the sentiment analysis of newspaper articles. In the end, 45 articles written by journalists and five articles written by the public including 26 letters to the editor, were included in the dataset to allow a manageable sample size in this exploratory study.

Data Analysis

Krippendorff (2013, p. 24) explained that 'content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful things) to the background of their use'. This project used FACTIVA databases to collect news articles of *The Australian* about the 2008 Beijing Olympics 2008 between July 25-September 7, 2008. Content analysis uses both quantitative and qualitative method. According to Drisko and Maschi (2015, p. 1) 'basic content analysis is defined by its use of quantitative analytic methods and typical use of existing documents', and it can help 'summarise or describe data or behaviour effectively' by inductive approaches to coding (Drisko & Maschi, 2015, p. 2). Mayring (2010) argues that qualitative content analysis can not only address the content, but also deal with the core ideas and themes existed in texts as primary content. After coding data, this project used qualitative methods to analyse how the language what words mean to achieve aims of this study.

There are three kinds of content analysis. Firstly, conventional content analysis has coding categories that come directly from the text data. Secondly, the directed approach analysis starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial codes. Thirdly, a summative content analysis encompassed counting and comparisons, most often of keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In this research, the author directly coded the data from *The Australian's* articles and followed Schantz & Gilbert (2001) and Zeng et al.'s (2011) coding guidelines to develop a standardised coding sheet. Schantz and Gilbert (2001) focused on news factors (including frequency, presentation, size, negativity, etc.) and rhetorical aspects. Settings included 'very important', 'important', and 'not important' codes for gender balance in media coverage to monitor the extent of coverage about women. Zeng et al.'s (2011) study created categories including 'crime/domestic security', 'domestic policy', 'foreign affairs', 'business', 'sports', and 'other' topics to research the breadth of China's international televised image and these were adopted for this study (see Figure 3). This study also focused on factors including topics like 'government, politics, China's diplomacy, Beijing Olympics Organisation, Chinese Olympics teams, security, environment, economy and culture, and coded these for 'positive', 'negative' and 'neutral' attitude sentiment towards 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. For example, 'good effect', 'opportunities', 'safe' and so on were coded as 'positive', 'failed', 'issues' and so were coded as 'negative', and neither positive nor negative referred to as 'neutral'.

Initially, all 45 journalists' articles and 26 letters to the editor were downloaded, read and coded for their themes and sentiment frames: positive, negative and neutral. As additional themes were discovered, new sentiment codes were added including Chinese government, politics, economics, Beijing Olympic Organisation. Samples of text were color-coded according to their sentiment (see example in Table 1). This way, positive, negative or neutral sentiments, were able to be distinguished by words and colour.

Sentiment	Example
Positive	China muscles in on steroid industry
Negative	Olympic ticket scam defrauds thousands
Neutral	Terror strike puts China on alert

Table 1: Example of article color-coding

Some articles, for example, mentioned Chinese air pollution, which is obviously negative. One article used the term 'hide' to imply China's attitude towards its past and present record on human rights, in which the word 'hide' illustrates the journalist's negative attitudes towards China. Also, some articles used praise words to describe to show their positive attitudes. Where the author combined neutral and hybrid sentiment, these were articles coded 'neutral'. Lastly, the total number of articles for each topic were counted and coded for their sentiment. These results were then tabulated to make ten tables over the three coverage time phases.

Findings & Results

Based on the articles selected from *The Australian*, there were two different types: articles written by journalists, and letters to the editor. A breakdown of the number of articles in the different phases can be found in Table 2.

	Before the Olympics		After the Olympics
Journalists' articles	22	17	6
Letters to the editor	9	17	0

Table 2: The number of articles and letters in each different phase

Prior to the Olympics: 25 July to 7 August 2008

Articles written by journalists

Prior to the commencement of the Beijing Olympic Games, there were 22 articles written by journalists in *The Australian*. The coding revealed that of these, there were nine (9) different topics reported including government, politics, China's diplomacy, Beijing Olympics Organisation, Chinese Olympics teams, security, environment, economy and culture, and distinguished their different reported attitudes (see Table 3). Table 3 illustrates that in this phase, the most two frequently reported topics were related to government (14) and politics (11). For Chinese government, *The Australian* published six (6) positive articles and eight (8) negative articles. In this selection, most positive articles related to positive change of Chinese government such as its security awareness, while negative articles related to China's human rights problems. For politics, *The Australian* reported two (2) positive articles, seven (7) negative articles and two (2) neutral articles where most articles still related to human rights and issues related to Tibet.

Article topics	Total	Positive	Negative<	Neutral
Government	14	6	8	0
Politics	11	2	7	2
China's diplomatic	1	1	0	0
Beijing Olympics Organisation	3	1	2	0

Chinese Olympics teams	1	0	0	1
Security	3	1	2	0
Environment	3	0	3	0
Economy	1	1	0	0
Culture	1	1	0	0

Table 3: The number of different attitudes for each reporting topic

Moreover, Table 4 shows that there were only five (5) positive articles and only ten (10) negative articles, as well as seven (7) neutral or both positive and negative articles, which involved different topics.

In terms of positive only articles, Evans (2008, July 30) for example, used the word 'tight' to positively describe the security arrangements. Further, he reported on August 8 that Beijing's new airport would be closed for five hours with no arrivals or departures to ensure the security during the Olympics opening ceremony which was to be attended by many international leaders. In addition, he reported that street security had strengthened fivefold, with many volunteers, old party members and additional 300,000 surveillance cameras being mounted on the streets. In a word, this showed that the Chinese government tried its best to ensure maximum security.

In terms of negative only articles, Callick (2008, July 29) for example reported that although the Chinese government took many measures to clear the smog to be environmentally friendly in the lead-up to the Olympics, the environmental crisis including air pollution and smog still existed. When arriving in Beijing, Australian athletes and the Australia Olympic Committee indicated their anxiety in relation to China's environmental problems.

The number of single attitude articles	Number
Positive only articles	5
Negative only articles	10
Neutral or both positive and negative articles	7
Total	22

Table 4: Letters to the editor

Before the Beijing Olympic Games, there were nine (9) letters to the editor published in *The Australian*, involving four (4) topics: government, politics, environment and Beijing Olympics Organisation. All letters were negative and Table 5 shows that the majority focused on the Chinese government. In these letters, the key words were 'freedoms', 'free or internet access', 'Chinese government censorship' and 'human rights'. For example, Marshall (2008, August 1) said the Chinese government was in the process of censoring the foreign media covering the Olympic Games to hide its past and present record on human rights, especially in relation to problems in Tibet. Also, he thought the Olympic Games had been sacrificed by a manipulative Chinese government at the expense of human rights (LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, 2008).

Topic<	Negative
Government	7
Politics	1

Environment	1
Beijing Olympics Organisation	2

Table 5: Number of articles with negative attitudes for each topic

During the Olympics: 8 August to 24 August 2008

Articles written by journalists

During the Beijing Olympic Games, there were 17 articles written by journalists in *The Australian*, covering eight (8) topics including government, politics, Beijing Olympics Organisation, Chinese Olympics teams, security, technology, economy and media (see Table 6), the most two popular topics related to the government (8) and the Beijing Olympics Organisation (6). In terms of articles in *The Australian* that talked about the Chinese government, five (5) were positive, two (2) were negative and one (1) was neutral. For the Beijing Olympics Organisation, four (4) were positive, one (1) was negative and one (1) was neutral and mainly reported on the organisation of the opening ceremony.

Article topics	Total	Positive	Negative	Neutral>
Government	8	5	2	1
Beijing Olympics Organisation	6	4	1	1
Politics	3	0	2	1
Chinese Olympics teams	3	3	0	0
Security	1	0	1	0
Technology	1	1	0	0
Economy	1	1	0	0
Media	1	0	1	0

Table 6: The number of different attitudes for each reporting topic

From Table 7, we see nine (9) positive only articles, four (4) negative only articles and four (4) neutral or both positive and negative articles reported in *The Australian* during this phase. An example of positive only articles included Korporaal and Jeffery's report (2008) which said that the Beijing Olympics were the best games ever for drug detection. Slot (2008) reported that aiming at hosting the Beijing Olympic Games:

... the Chinese government think-tank isolated the five medal-rich sports in which the Chinese were historically weak – athletics, swimming, rowing, canoeing and sailing – counted the medals available (119) and set a program for chasing them.

This article praised the Chinese government's 'Project 119' explaining that obviously, Chinese rowing athletes made good progress.

In terms of negative only articles, Callick (2008, August 9) reported that the Chinese media relegated the Olympics to a secondary role because the Chinese media paid more attention to the global political significance afforded by hosting the Olympics. Additionally, this article reported that many Chinese mainstream newspapers like *The People's Daily*, *Xinhua News Agency*, and *The China Daily* reported and praised the Beijing Olympic Games. In summary, a majority of Chinese media presented a positive attitude toward China and the Games in its reporting. For example, it reported that the ruling Communist Party had said hosting the Olympic Games

would see China's image soar. It also reported that the prosperity of China and the world were inseparable, and emphasised China's status as Eastern civilisation's envoy. Most Chinese articles about the Beijing Olympics were positively framed.

Sentiment	Number
Positive only articles	9
Negative only articles	4
Neutral or both positive and negative articles	4
Total	17

Table 7: The number of single attitude articles

Letters to the editor

During the Beijing Olympic Games, there were 17 letters written to the editor published in *The Australian*, around five (5) main topics including government, politics, environment, Beijing Olympics Organisation and security (see Table 8) with Chinese government, environmental issues and Beijing Olympics Organisation being three (3) of the most frequent. All letters relating to the environment were negative. Also, seven (7) of eight (8) letters related to the Chinese government were also negative. In these letters, Australians felt that the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony was successful while they criticised the Chinese government for human rights and Chinese air pollution (smog) issues.

Topic	Total	Positive	Negative
Government	8	1	7
Environment	6	0	6
Beijing Olympics Organisation	5	3	2
Politics	2	1	1
Security	1	1	0

Table 8: Number of different attitudes for each topic

In the 17 letters written by the public during this period, five (5) were positive and twelve (12) were negative (see Table 9): twice as many negative as positive letters.

In terms of positive letters, the main topic discussed related to opening ceremony and the role of Beijing Olympics Organisation and included three (3) letters which praised the opening ceremony (see Table 9). For example, Venn (11 August) wrote that undoubtedly, the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games' opening ceremony exceeded all expectations worldwide and praised the architectural marvel of the Bird's Nest stadium (LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, 2008).

In terms of negative letters, they mainly focused on the Chinese government and Chinese environmental issues, as well as two (2) articles on Beijing Olympics Organisation and one (1) on politics (see Table 9). For example, Tran (August 15) wrote that the Chinese communist regime had always been founded on deception and lies. They argued as an example, that during the opening ceremony, Chinese authorities replaced the real singer, Yang Peiyi, with another more attractive girl. The writer also argued that the Chinese used computer generated images to improve fireworks for the television audience (LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, 2008).

Sentiment	Number
Positive letters	5
Negative letters	12
Total	17

Table 9: The Number of One-way Attitude Letter

After the Olympics: 24 August to 7 September 2008

From 24 August to 7 September, following the closing ceremony, you would expect that the attention to Beijing and China would be less, and so there were only six (6) articles written by journalists in *The Australian*. Table 10 shows the five (5) main topics that were found, including government, Beijing Olympics Organisation, security, economy and media. The Chinese government was still a main topic for journalists to report with three (3) articles written by journalists.

Topic	Total	Positive	Negative
Government	3	1	2
Beijing Olympics Organisation	2	1	1
Security	1	0	1
Economy	1	0	1
Media	1	0	1

Table 10: The number of different attitudes for each reporting topic

Moreover, Table 11 shows that there are two (2) positive only articles and four (4) negative only articles. In terms of positive only articles, for example, Hall and Callick (26 August) reported that 'Olympic sites to become part of Beijing routine'. Their article noted that Beijing had succeeded in building sustainable venues and stadiums for the Olympic Games and that the Chinese government had built eight temporary venues and six stadiums that had been converted into universities, to ensure continued use. They affirmed the Chinese government's success in building venues.

In an example of a negative only article, a journalist condemned the Beijing Olympic Games as, 'a disaster for free expression in China' (28 August). This brief showed that there were at least 22 foreign journalists attacked, arrested or otherwise obstructed by the Chinese government during the Beijing Olympic Games (*The Australian*, 2008), indicating their attitude towards the Chinese government and its censorship of freedom of speech.

Sentiment	Number
Positive only articles	2
Negative only articles	4
Total	6

Table 11: The number of single attitude articles

Conclusion

Based on the content analysis of *The Australian's* coverage, this research examined the sentiment found in a case study of Australian media reporting on the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. However, the study has its limitations. Ideally, a coding sheet and resulting analysis should involve at least two people ensure increased rigor and validity: this study only involved one researcher worked as part of a postgraduate coursework requirement. In terms of the analysis and findings, results are discussed and summarised below.

As seen in the above tables, in total, there were 21 articles with positive coverage including journalists' articles and letters to the editor, 41 articles with negative coverage, and 11 neutral and articles including both positive and negative coverage. This data shows that articles with negative coverage were approximately double the number of those deemed to be positive. Thus, it is easier to find that, unlike internal research in China during the Olympic Games, Australian media was biased against China from many aspects. This could be because Australian media is reporting from outside China without the nationalistic and ethnic feelings towards the event and its significance. Negative reports towards foreign countries may also be more popular with the local Australian audience.

In terms of topic selection, articles mainly focused on the Chinese government in all three time periods with 25 articles and 15 letters. *The Australian* journalists reported issues about the Chinese government with 12 positive articles, 12 negative articles and one (1) neutral article. Surprisingly, among the letters to the editor, only one (1) was found that showed a positive attitude to the Chinese government, the remaining 14 letters were all negative. This finding shows that there was a mostly negative sentiment towards the Chinese government around issues such as human rights, the Communist regime and limitations on personal freedom. Apart from these issues, journalists reported on Chinese political issues such as Tibet and Tiananmen Square negatively way in nine (9) negative articles.

In relation to the performance of the Beijing Olympic Organisation, there was more positive than negative coverage. *The Australian* affirmed the success of the Beijing Olympics, mainly in relation to the stadiums and venues, the opening ceremony, drug tests and security. The most negative coverage related to China's environmental problems with negative coverage in 10 articles that focused on China's severe smog and air pollution problems. All these articles were written before the Olympics opening ceremony. Additionally, seven (7) letters to the editor also criticised China's environmental problems.

The research in *The Australian* indicated overall approval of the Beijing Olympic Organisation including its infrastructure, health, safety, public service and so on, and this is different from other studies about other Olympic Games organisation. For example, Broucke and Regenmortel (2017) said that Belgian and Dutch newspaper coverage included the largest share of negative press coverage of the 2016 Rio Olympics, focusing on infrastructure, health, safety, public service and the internal environment, negatively influencing Brazil's image as the 2016 Olympics host nation internationally. On the contrary, the 2008 Beijing Olympics organisation was applauded. Both of these studies, however, show negative attitudes towards the host government and their politics, which may be politically motivated. In terms of the relationship between Australia and China, although until recently they have maintained good trading relations, they have a lot of differences in other aspects including culture, history, policy and so on. As far as the country's development is concerned, they are competitors.

The analysis of *The Australian* found that the sentiment of the reporting focused on many negative aspects in relation to China and its government during the 2008 Beijing Olympics. This finding fills a research gap given that other studies mostly focused on gender analysis in their reporting of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. While it is undeniable that the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and its host country had problems such as the environmental issues, many articles about Chinese human rights issues, freedom limitations and the Communist regime were not objective or complete. An example would be the reporting around political issues in Tibet as Australian media lacks a genuine understanding of the China/Tibetan history and relationship. China is a multi-ethnic country and Tibet has always been an inseparable part of China and as early as the dynasties, Tibet was politically affiliated with China. Overall, the research concludes that Australian media showed bias against China and its government in many aspects during the 2008 Beijing Olympics although affirming the achievement of this Olympics.

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