

The British Identity Constructed by the British National Quality Newspapers in the London 2012 Olympics Opening Ceremony

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ABSTRACT

As globalization progresses, building a national image in international communication is indeed increasingly important. The Olympic Games, as the most international sports event, has a high authority in the consciousness of audiences. Therefore, the report on the London 2012 Olympics is not only conducive to strengthening the communication between countries and countries, but also a remarkable opportunity to establish a national image of the United Kingdom. This paper investigates how the British identity was constructed by the British national quality newspapers in the London 2012 Olympics Opening Ceremony. The news that reported the Opening Ceremony by the Guardian and the Daily Telegraph are analyzed, by discussing their similarities and differences in national image building. This paper mainly uses the content analysis method. Sampling analysis is used to study the different types and themes of news in these two influential newspapers. This paper discovers that cultural and social news might weight more in the construction of a national image. The two newspapers shared a focus on the preparation of the Opening Ceremony and the social influence of it. This paper reveals how critical the agenda-setting is for newspaper coverage when analyzing the news. These two newspapers were more inclined to publish a news report and rarely reported a message. It is also suggested that the attitude of The Telegraph is more positive, and that of the Guardian is more neutral, according to their news contents.

Keywords: newspapers, British identity, the London 2012 Olympics, agenda-setting

I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization, communication between countries is becoming more frequent than before. As international relations are getting more and more close, the significance of building a national image in international communication is getting prominent. A national image can reflect a country's comprehensive strength including political power, military strength, economic strength, and cultural strength. This shows that the information about the country will give the audience the impression in the medium of transmission, and then produce the national image. The Olympic Games, as the most international sports event, have a high authority in the consciousness of audiences. Therefore, the report on the London 2012 Olympics is not only conducive to strengthening the communication between countries, but also a remarkable opportunity to establish a national image of the United Kingdom. However, through the literature review, researches about the construction of the national image in the London 2012 Olympics Opening Ceremony can rarely be found. Therefore, this paper

analyzes the news reported about the Opening Ceremony in two British newspapers and discusses their similarities and differences in national image building.

National identity is a person who has a sense of belonging to one state or one nation (Farrington and Walker, 2009, cited in Thomas and Antony, 2015). There may be some problems due to the complexity of British history and the nation. At the same time, some researches about the change of the national image of the Olympic Games can reveal the key point of the national agenda.

This paper mainly uses the content analysis method. Sampling analysis studies the different types and themes of news in the two influential British newspapers. Differences in the content and subject of the two newspapers are addressed and analyzed, which leads to the conclusion that the agenda-setting could affect the position of the news.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *British national identity construction*

National identity is defined as an important and complex concept in the political system. As Parekh (2000) pointed out, national identity may be regarded as one kind of political communication which is too opaque to be understood by the individual. In other words, national identity is also a wide range of topics, which is quite different from personal identity, and it is more 'thick' (Farrington and Walker, 2009, cited in Thomas and Antony, 2015). It covers more profound areas and it closely relates to religions, beliefs, and the implications of countries to an individual including the sense of national pride. As one of the most significant factors in the construction of the political system, national identity construction becomes a valued field, especially British national identity construction that deserves special attention. The reason is that the United Kingdom has some complex history issues including integration and immigration even different ethnic categories (Thomas and Antony, 2015). National identity might not be perfectly addressed, because it has kept changing and developing. In the course of globalization, national identity becomes more prominent and more complicated. Therefore, national identity construction is facing enormous opportunities and challenges (Fang, 2014: pp.122-123). Past researches help to define national identity construction in different aspects. However, through diverse methodologies, national identity construction gets more comprehensive and attracts more attention. It is especially obvious that national identity construction was showed in British national newspaper coverage of the 2012 London Olympics Opening Ceremony. The researchers are interested in the relationship between British national newspaper coverage of the 2012 London Olympics Opening Ceremony and national identity construction. Understanding these existed studies about national identity construction, this research starts by determining the theme of British national newspaper coverage of the 2012 London Olympics. Specifically, this paper focuses on British national identity construction in British national newspaper coverage.

B. *Coverage of the 2012 Olympics Opening Ceremony in the British newspapers*

As a special event, the Olympics Opening Ceremony tends to become the object of the media's focus. The coverage of the Olympics Opening Ceremony can be found in each form of media. Many researchers have worked on this topic. Naka and Naomi (2010) used both the quantitative and qualitative analysis of television news coverage to study Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony, and they found that as a 'media event', Beijing Olympics did not change the

images of China on Japanese media. Their study uses the news category and Olympic news category as variables to analyze television news. It also discerns positive reports and negative reports from different television programs. The quantitative and qualitative analysis methods, so as some reference variables it provides help to strengthen the content analysis of the current paper. Zeng et al (2011) did research on TV coverage of the 2008 Beijing Olympics to explain the change of China's image. This study focuses on TV coverage by using a content model. It mainly counts positive, negative, and neutral reports of China, and this methodology also has great reference value for content analysis in the current paper. Thanks to its comprehensive demonstration, the analysis discussed in the current paper can follow a consolidated research process. The Olympics Opening Ceremony is regarded as a golden opportunity to show their national power (Thomas and Antony, 2015). 2012 London Olympics Opening Ceremony is no exception. These researches offered some specific content about media coverage of the Olympics Opening Ceremony, although they didn't concern about the 2012 London Olympics Opening Ceremony. The emphasis of this article is on the 2012 London Olympics Opening Ceremony. Through the Opening Ceremony of the 2012 Olympics, the United Kingdom showed the idea to the world. Taking the opportunity, British newspapers played their roles to report and comment on the Olympics Opening Ceremony from different perspectives and different aspects.

C. *Content analysis of national newspaper coverage of Olympics and agenda-setting theory*

Content analysis is a method that analyzing the texts by systematic and quantitative techniques (Krippendorf, 2013). This method has strict steps to infer valid results from content data. Comparing with other research methods, the content analysis uses a certain way to get variables from original messages and find information that is reflected by media content about society, polity, and culture. It needs a thorough analysis of relevant media content. This paper focuses on coverage from British national newspapers and analyzes different types of news coverage to represent British national identity construction in British national newspaper coverage.

Media agenda-setting is an important theory in the media system. With the agenda-setting theory, the media may affect the public's attitudes and view by different reporting styles because of the agenda-setting role of the media (Zeng et al, 2011). The media may report the Olympics Opening Ceremony in different ways to construct national identity. Thus, the news to be analyzed should be selected from British national newspapers to allow a more realistic reflection of how the media construct British national identity.

To accomplish the content analysis, the researchers also took the reference to some other past studies which used content analysis. Zhong and Zhou (2012) used computer-aided content analysis to study the impacts of weather U.S. newspaper coverage on the 2008 Beijing Olympics. O'Connor (2014) proposed the British newspaper coverage of swimmers at the London 2012 Olympics and found that the newspaper stories used different ways to describe swimmers from different countries. Yu (2009) used content analysis to examine Asian female athletes in the Olympics on news coverage. And the research shows that in some sports Asian female athletes are more likely to be reported.

Most of the aforementioned studies focus on Olympics athletes and some external factors of the Olympics. The Olympic Opening Ceremony is also an important part of the British national newspapers but it is rarely studied. Although the themes of these studies are different, these studies all used content analysis to complete their researches. From this aspect, they provided some integrated content analysis examples for the study. The methods, variables, tables, and analysis in these studies all gave the researchers some enlightenment for the media content analysis. Thus, based on the aforementioned studies, this paper explores British national quality newspaper coverage constructing British identity in the 2012 Olympics Opening Ceremony.

III. SAMPLE AND METHOD

To answer the research questions mentioned above, the researchers designed a content analysis of the London 2012 Olympics Opening Ceremony coverage in two prominent dailies in the United Kingdom: the Guardian and the Daily Telegraph. Both of them are the national quality newspapers, but hold different political standpoints and opinions of issues. It seems that the Guardian is one of the most famous daily newspapers in the world (Viscount, 1947: p.116). Engels (1993: p.109) notes that the Guardian is an organization of the middle class, which mainly represents the left political stance of the United Kingdom. In contrast, the Daily Telegraph holds the generally conservative political opinion (Viscount, 1947: p.28). The researchers searched the news articles of the Guardian and the Daily Telegraph from the Nexis database using the combination of the keywords "Olympic Opening Ceremony" appearing "in the headline", thanks to the specific and clear topic of the study. After this searching step, the researchers also added "search within results 'London'" to exclude unrelated news.

As for the time period of content analysis, the year 2012 is too broad, rather than added '2012' in the searching string, and the time period was narrowed down by choosing "custom date" from July 20, 2012, to August 03, 2012. The London 2012 Olympics

Opening Ceremony began in the late evening of July 27, 2012 (Oettler: 2015), the selected time period includes the previous week and the first week after the opening date. Such selection allows including the news articles about the prepared work of the Olympics before the starting date, while excludes useless searching in the second half period of the Olympics during which the news would focus on reporting the games.

If it would be a full-scale content analysis project, under the above searching conditions, it generated 169 news articles from the United Kingdom national quality newspapers, 24 from the Guardian, and 59 from the Daily Telegraph. The researchers would like to analyze all of these articles. It could be argued that the Daily Telegraph might pay more attention to the Opening Ceremony than the Guardian in terms of the size of the coverage. As for the pilot-analysis, after the researchers finished extensive reading, it seems that some articles only mentioned the London 2012 Olympics Opening Ceremony in passing, such as the advertisement and opinion pieces, so that these articles were removed from the analysis.

Finally, the researchers selected 20 papers of each, which comprised 40 news articles altogether as the pilot-test samples. The researchers tended to select an even number of samples from each newspaper to balance the comparison between their contents, such as the emphasis, the theme, the stance, the report object, and so on.

Every newspaper article is an analytical unit in the content analysis. Building on the analytic strategy used in past studies of Qing et al (2010: p.1593), there are two sections in the codebook. The first part is the basic information, which contains the name, the title, number words, the type and the source of the newspaper. The researchers analyzed the reporting strategy according to the number of words and the type of lexis. The source of news helped the researchers to trace the messages.

The second part of coding is all about the detailed news content, which includes the theme, the emphasis, the main objective, the stance, the first actor. According to the study from Shehata and Hopmann (1992: p.183), in order to capture the emphasis of the news articles, the content analysis is based on the most words corresponding to the issues in every article to judge what the news stresses. For example, if the article mentions the prepared work in 400 words and the Opening Ceremony ritual in 300 words, the article would be coded as emphasis on the Opening Ceremony ritual. As the research from Zeng et al (2011: p.324) suggests, the stance of the news articles studied in the current paper was coded by (1) positive, (2) negative (3) neutral, to analyze the tendency of the language of the news. The first three adjective words in the newspaper article were also recorded, to integrate emotion analysis into the final result.

IV. FINDING

According to the process of research, the researchers found 40 articles from 2 national newspapers to analyze: the Daily Telegraph and the Guardian. Then the researchers found and analyzed the relevant resources based on the codebook. Because of different emphases, the researchers made diverse graphs to show the outcomes of the research.

First, this study noticed that the theme and the emphasis content. From the results shown in “Fig. 1”, the majority of themes were social, cultural and political. To be more specific, for The Guardian, there were 12 articles to report social information. The second one was culture. However, the Daily Telegraph focused on other aspects. Meanwhile, there were no themes about the economy in these newspapers.

After that, there were 2 pie charts to show the emphasis on coverage. It can be clearly seen the difference content that people focus on. For the Daily Telegraph, they mainly paid attention to the prepared work of the Opening Ceremony, social influence and the 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony (“Fig. 2”). The proportion of prepared work and social influence were the same, being 40%. The content about the 2010

Olympic Opening Ceremony accounted for 20%. Meanwhile, when it comes to the Guardian (“Fig. 3”), the percentages did not have an obvious difference.

From another aspect to research the process, in terms of the coverage type, in the Daily Telegraph, 50% of articles were feature stories, which was the largest. Then 40% of articles were reports. Only 10% of articles were messages (“Fig. 7”). When it comes to the Guardian, the percentage of reports was 80%, which was the main way to show in the newspaper (“Fig. 8”).

With mention to the stance of coverage, although they met the same situation: the majority of articles did not have adjective words to emphasize the themes (“Fig. 4”). However, this study found that the Daily Telegraph was different from the Guardian when they reported the London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony. The percentage of positive articles was 50%, which was the same as the percentage of neutral articles in the Daily Telegraph (“Fig. 5”). In contrast, in the Guardian, 90% of articles were neutral (“Fig. 6”). What’s more, it can be seen from “Table I”, the Daily Telegraph depended on the internal news agency to report the news. The Guardian relied on the internal agency and other ways to report this topic. In sum, the articles can reflect the attitudes of newspapers.

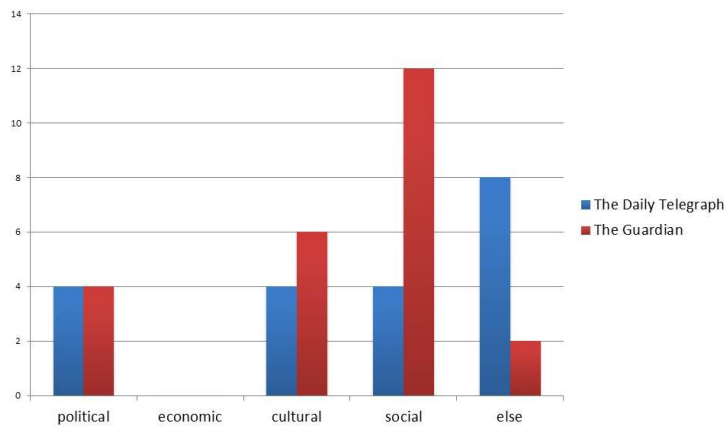


Fig. 1. The theme of coverage.

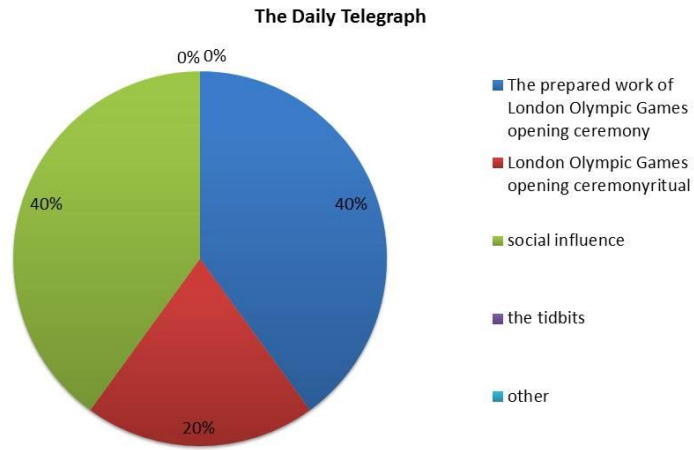


Fig. 2. The emphasis of coverage.

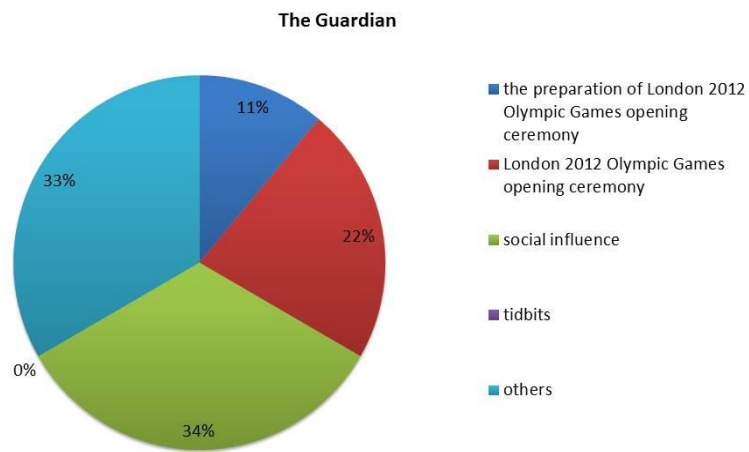


Fig. 3. The emphasis of coverage.

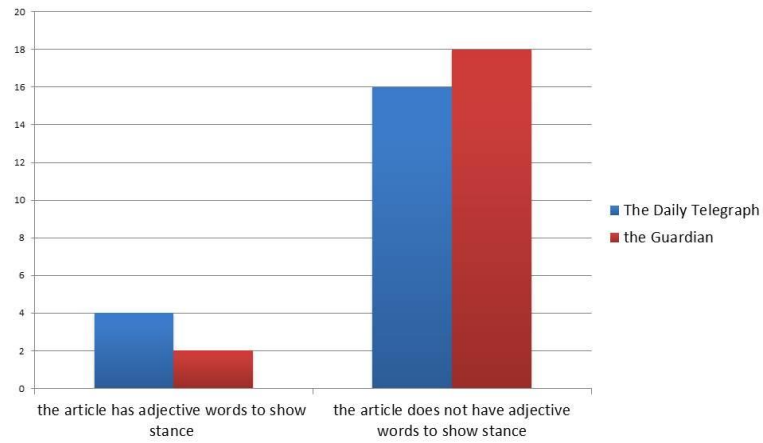


Fig. 4. The stance of coverage about adjective words.

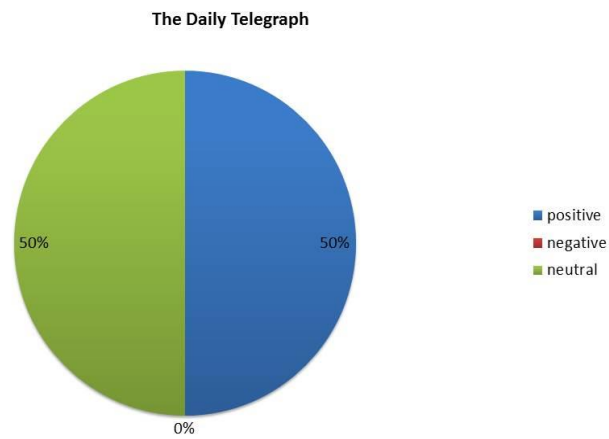


Fig. 5. The stance of coverage.

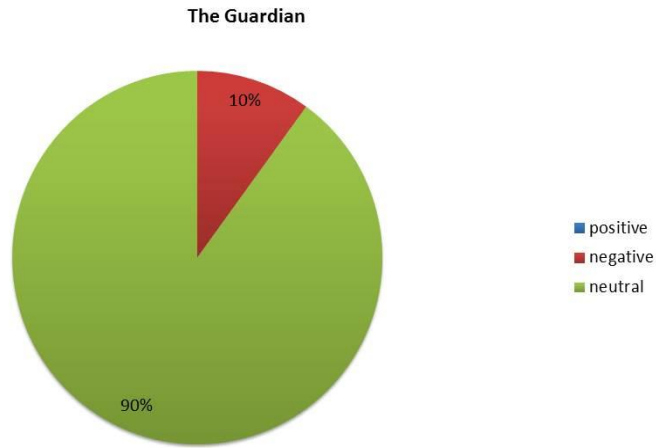


Fig. 6. The stance of coverage.

TABLE I. THE SOURCE OF COVERAGE

	The Daily Telegraph	The Guardian
Internal news	20	16
British News Agency	0	0
Foreign News Agency	0	0
other	0	4

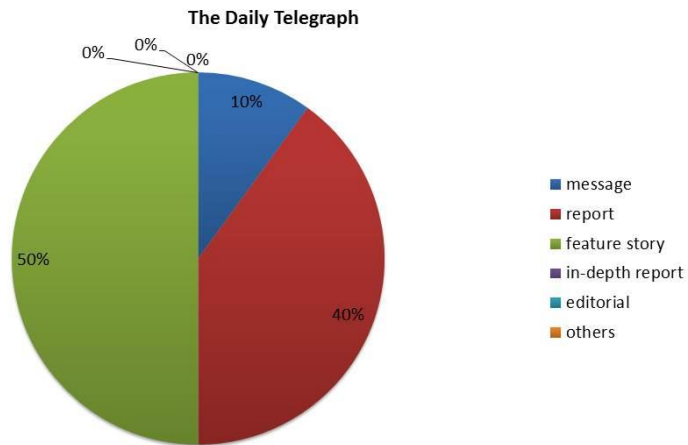


Fig. 7. The type of coverage.

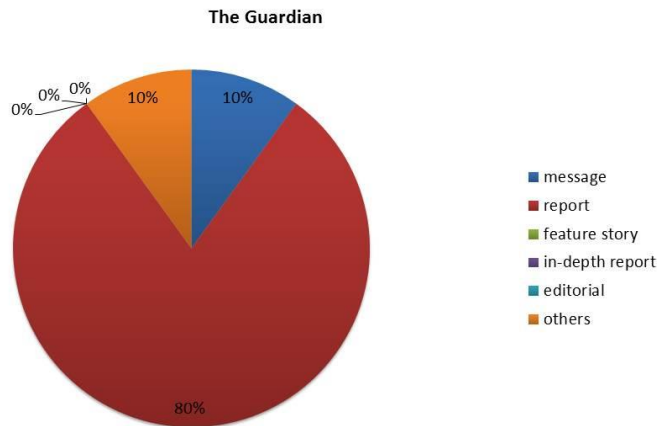


Fig. 8. The type of coverage.

V. ANALYSIS

The study showed that national newspapers would like to make use of media content to show the cultural and social situation rather than economic. The reason is that the United Kingdom has a rich and long history. It is undeniable that the Opening Ceremony is a good opportunity to present the culture of the country (Thomas and Antony, 2015). From the agenda-setting theory, the researchers know media content leads to that the audience has different ideas about the same thing (Zeng et al, 2011). When the newspaper reported the contents of the London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony, it provided opportunities for audiences to know the United Kingdom. Obviously, it proves that the agenda-setting theory can be used in the research. Therefore national newspapers caught the opportunities, and more than half of the content is about culture and society. By these articles, it can play a crucial role in national identity construction for the audience.

Moreover, the Daily Telegraph and the Guardian were different about the stance of coverage. When they faced the London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony, the topic is the same but the content and attitudes are the opposite. The reason is that the exogenous factors and internal factors led to the phenomenon that newspapers use different attitudes to cover, like a political party. Using weather as an example, in American, there were 4 newspapers to reports bad weather, but they had different attitudes to reflect it owing to the exogenous factors and internal factors (Zhong and Zhou, 2012). In fact, the reason can interpret the phenomenon that journalists mainly write messages and reports. Because of the exogenous

reasons and internal reasons, the journalists choose the type of coverage.

VI. CONCLUSION

Overall, this report aims to discuss the establishment of the national image of the United Kingdom in the London Olympic Games Opening Ceremony, and analyzes the news types and content of The Telegraph and The Guardian.

This report discovered that cultural and social news might be more likely to influence the construction of the national image. First of all, the sampling analysis shows that these two newspapers reported the news with more contents relevant to culture and society. That is because the Olympic Games are the most attractive sports event in the world, the Opening Ceremony may be more emphasis on cultural exchanges between countries. There is also a common point that these two newspapers put the focus on the preparation of the Opening Ceremony and the social influence of the Opening Ceremony. The researchers realized the importance of the agenda-setting for the newspaper coverage from analyzing the news. Meanwhile, the newspaper organizations use the influence of the Olympic Games to report some news that can attract the audience. It can be believed that it not only reflects the agenda of the governments but also shows the audience such news theme needs. Therefore, to a certain extent, it can be considered that this kind of news is beneficial to the construction of the national image. Finally, these two newspapers are more inclined to publish a news report, and rarely reported message. That is because that the special form of newspaper media. People may

be more willing to learn about the text content rather than the simple message.

However, because of the different political backgrounds that these two newspapers supported, the different positions of the newspaper led to the different attitudes between the two newspapers. News content to the attitude of The Telegraph is more positive, and the Guardian is more neutral.

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