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„National image branding through mega-events with various presentations in media—taking 2008 Beijing Olympic Games as a case study“

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Abstrakt

Durch die Globalisierung sind Staaten heute exponierter als früher. Das Image, das ein Land von sich selbst zeichnet ist daher von größter Bedeutung. Das jeweilige Land zeichnet dabei selbst ein Bild von sich und spiegelt gleichzeitig auch die Wahrnehmung der anderen. Diese Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem Kern der nationalen Identität und dem nationalen Selbstbild. Es wird dabei ausgehend von diesen beiden Konzepten untersucht, wie diese bei Mega-Events vermarktet werden. Hierzu werden die Olympischen Spiele von 2008 als Beispiel herangezogen.

Weiterhin wird die Rolle von Städten bei Mega-Events in Augenschein genommen. Hier ist das die Rolle Pekings, wie sich die Stadt verändert hat und wie sich die Leistungen der Stadt auf das Bild Chinas in der Welt ausgewirkt haben. Untersucht wurden vor allem Artikel der New York Times und des Guardian im Hinblick auf das Chinabild, das die beiden Zeitungen zeichnen. Die Inhalte von Nachrichten haben die Vorstellung und die Haltung von anderen Ländern gegenüber China gezeigt.

Auch der Einfluss von Medien wird diskutiert. Mit den Olympischen Spielen von 2008 wollte die chinesische Regierung das Bild des eigenen Landes und die nationale Identität der Weltöffentlichkeit präsentieren. Die Spiele wurden in chinesischen und ausländischen Medien breit diskutiert. Diese Diskussion wird hier anhand der Berichte der "New York Times" und des "Guardian" nachgezeichnet.

Abschließend kann gesagt werden, dass obwohl in bestimmten Bereichen die Haltung anderer Länder gegenüber China immer noch kritisch ist, die Spiele aus der Sicht Chinas und des Auslands doch ein erfolgreiches Event waren das das Bild Chinas positiv beeinflusst hat.

Abstract

With the process of globalization, nations are exposed more in the world than before. The image presented in front of the rest of the world is therefore, of great importance as it is a 'story-teller' of a nation and a 'mirror' reflecting the perception of the other countries. In this paper, research has been conducted on the basis of the core of a nation, i.e. national identity and national image. Setting off from these two concepts, it is then elaborated how national identity and national image are branded through mega-events. The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games is taken as a case to study.

In addition, the role cities play in mega-events is also studied. In this case, it is how Beijing performed during the 2008 Olympics, how its performance is viewed by other countries and to what extent has its image helped to promote the national image. In order to answer these questions, study and analysis have been conducted through newspaper articles of The New York Time and the Guardian. Content of news have been analyzed to show the perception and attitude of foreign countries towards China. Theories and methods are chosen to support the analysis, including framing theory, branding theory, as well as textual analysis, content analysis, critical discourse analysis and a media model.

Furthermore, impact of media is also discussed. Chosen by the Chinese government to brand national image and clarify national identity, the performance of the Beijing Olympic Games was extensively reported by Chinese and foreign news agencies. How China take use of media to promote and re-brand its national image and how foreign news articles affect the perceptions and attitudes of world audience towards China are discussed and analyzed.

Finally, though attitude of foreign countries still remain critical towards China on certain issues, latest accomplishment of China has been admitted and praised by them. It can also be reflected from news articles that new aspects of China have caught the eyes of foreign countries. The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, in general, can be regarded as a successful event for national re-branding.

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Abbreviation

ANBI—Anholt Nation Brands Index

API—Air Pollution Index

APSE—Associated Press Sports Editors

BBC—British Broadcasting Corporation

BOCOG—The Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad

BOBICO—Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Bid Committee

EPB—Beijing Environmental Protection Bureau

CEO—Chief Executive Officer

CCP—Chinese Communist Party

CCTV—China Central Television

CDA—Critical Discourse Analysis

CNBC—Consumer News and Business Channel

CNN—Cable News Network

GDP—Gross Domestic Product

IOC—International Olympic Committee

NBA—National Basketball Association

NBI—National Bureau of Investigation

PM—Particulate Matter

PR—Public Relations

UNEP—United Nations Environment Programme

1. Introduction

In an era in which international interactions between nations are becoming increasingly frequent and various aspects of nations are exposed to the whole world because of the process of globalization, the image a nation presents to the rest of the world has begun to become a bigger role. As the superficial presentation of a nation, national image is, in essence, the identity of a nation. National identity is where national image is rooted and is the primary determinate of national image. With national identity at the core, national image is created accordingly by governments to promote unique and precious characteristics of their nations while bringing changes to old or wrong impressions that foreign nations and their people may hold.

Based on this claim, the first hypothesis made for this paper is that city image is a more concrete and outstanding way of presenting a nation, though not so straightforward as national image, which yet also has strong impact on building up and branding the national image. A further explanation to this hypothesis is that cities often serve as epitomes of their country and have more direct contact with foreign countries and people, compared to the nation itself. Therefore, it can be said that for most people, attitudes towards a certain country are largely based on their knowledge and impressions of certain outstanding cities within that country.

Under these circumstances, city image matters a lot to nations. More attention should be paid towards the development and branding of city images. In addition, cities which obtain wider recognition around the world have a bigger role to play in terms of how city image boosts national image. These cities, defined usually as global cities¹, have greater influence and advantage over other cities. Based on these assumptions, the second hypothesis is made that Beijing is trying to become a global city so as to promote the national image of China. Looking through the development of Beijing in recent decades, the most eye-catching happenings are, without doubt, the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Therefore, in this paper, this mega-event is interpreted as the

¹ Sassen, S.: The Global City : New York, London, Tokyo. Princeton, NJ u.a. : Princeton Univ. Press 2. ed., 2001.

primary channel through which the Chinese government chose to assist Beijing in becoming a global city and in turn, facilitate branding of the city image and improvement of the national image.

After choosing the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games as a case of mega-event to study how city image is promoted through mega-events and how it benefits the branding of national image, it is still necessary to show the effectiveness of mega-events in this aspect. In this paper, news reports from major news agencies over the world (i.e. the Guardian of Britain and The New York Times of the United States) are collected from the year before the mega-event to the year after (i.e. 2007-2009 for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games) and used as materials to analyze. The analysis has two focuses. The first focus is placed on taking a closer look at how foreign news reports described and commented on the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games in China. The discourses in news content and the attitudes revealed from the articles will be studied. Meanwhile, the key points and perspective of news articles will also be compared with the original goals behind holding the mega-event as well as the branding strategies of China in order to identify common points and differences in interpreting the mega-events. It will then reveal how the image presented by China through mega-events is perceived by foreign countries from which their attitudes towards China's national image can also be interpreted. The second focus is more about how Chinese reporters react to foreign media content and how they regard the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. As national image and national identity is often stressed when talking about international relations, it remains in close relation to the people of the nation. At last, opinions of scholars will be listed as a supplement to the analysis.

The hypotheses of this paper are as follows:

- a. City image is a more concrete and outstanding way of presenting a nation which has strong impact on the building up and branding of national image.

- b. After Beijing becomes a global city, it will be more beneficial and advantageous for it to promote the national image of China.
- c. The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games are a channel that the Chinese government chose to help Beijing become a global city and in turn, facilitates the branding of city images resulting in the improvement of national image.
- d. Foreign media have different interpretation of the performance of China for and during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games as Chinese government wished.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 National identity

2.1.1 Definition

Tracing back in time, early philosophers used to define national identity as “a community of people obeying the same laws and institutions within a given territory” which had an emphasis on “common institutions,” “a single case of rights and duties for all members of the community,” and a “definite social space with which the members identify and to which they feel they belong”² based on the Western experience. According to Smith, “a national identity is seen as multi-dimensional”³ with certain essential features namely “an historic territory, or homeland; common myths and historical memories; a common, mass public culture; common legal rights and duties for all members; a common economy with territorial mobility for all members”⁴. Starting from this definition which involves factors that are essential to the existence of national identity, other conceptualizations of this concept, however, have various focuses. Based on literature used for this paper, these focuses include various factors that determine the definition of the concept ‘national identity’, the function of national identity, and the development of the concept ‘national identity’.

To start, the most commonly-used factor when defining national identity is the geographical scale. Geographically speaking, it is impossible to shape an identity without bounding it to a certain scale of territory. When defining national identity, it refers to the identity of people of a ‘nation’ based on their geographical area—‘state’⁵. Therefore, the ideology of nationalist territory is essential to the conception of national identity while territory of a nation also plays a crucial

² Smith, A. D.: National Identity. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991, p. 9.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Smith, National Identity, p.14.

⁵ Kaplan, David H. and Herb, Guntram H.: How Geography Shapes National Identities. In: National Identities, 13:4. UK: Taylor & Francis, 2011, p.349.

role in further categorizing identities within a nation. From the geographic core to the peripheries, identities can vary and manifest differently. Furthermore, regional identity can also differ from national identity at some points while sharing some common aspects. It is stated that regions may even compete with identities of their own and seek to redefine their relationship with the central government when facing huge cultural distinctions⁶. In some cases, even landscapes can exert influence on national identity as the view of landscape “would evoke a geographical area, each region a narrative, thus triggering national pride, melancholy or aesthetic appreciation”⁷. In recent literature, however, a different argument emerges and claims that definition of national identity may no longer be restricted by boundaries of nations and may go beyond these bounded spaces (i.e. nations). Groups like diaspora populations may be scattered across space while still sticking to their national identity. It is even stated that national identities in recent decades can be created in “cyber-space, populating various websites and blogs”⁸.

Though national identity remains in its evolvement of conceptualization, there are still some parts of it that are already profoundly discussed and well-acknowledged. Lots of scholars agree upon the statement made by Smith, which divided the functions of national identity into ‘external’ and ‘internal’. The external function was sub-divided into three aspects, namely territorial, economic and political functions. Territorial function stresses the importance of a definite social space that members cling to. This is almost the same claim that mentioned before when speaking of geographical scale. Other than that, this function should also be able to help place the members living on it in a certain historical time and space⁹. Economically speaking, national identity provides the “rationale for ideals of national autarchy”¹⁰ as it defines who is a

⁶ Kaplan and Herb, *How Geography Shapes National Identities*, p.353.

⁷ Hayrynen, M.: *The Kaleidoscopic View: The Finnish National Landscape Imagery*. In: *National Identities*, 2. UK: Taylor & Francis, 2000, p.16.

⁸ Kaplan and Herb, *How Geography Shapes National Identities*, p.349.

⁹ Smith, *National Identity*, p.16.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

member of this territory, how far this territory reaches, and the relationship between the members and the territory. All these conditions create and help to provide a guarantee for nations to have control over resources within their territory, including manpower. Lastly, the political function of national identity plays a role in “legitimation of common legal rights and duties of legal institutions”¹¹, which shapes and demonstrates the core values of a nation and essential customs built largely by the people.

Apart from external function, national identity also has its internal functions. Firstly, government nowadays often use mass education systems to develop national devotion in its citizens. In addition, the bond between individuals and society is established through the spreading and promoting of shared values, symbols and traditions. Finally, an internal-oriented national identity can help citizens of a nation define and position themselves in the world with the help of the unique culture they shared¹².

The division between external and internal function of national identity is supported and further elaborated by Kowert (1998), who claims that these two faces of national identity are inseparable. Internal function refers to domestic coherence while external function serves as a distinctiveness to set apart from others. He claims that it is different perspectives on national identity that leads to this division. Internal national identity can function only with the premise that the nation-state is a fully coherent entity that is fully acknowledged by its members. It is also important to see how such “cohesion manifests itself in loyalty to the nation-state”¹³. External national identity, in comparison, distinguishes one nation-state from others in terms of various focuses, goals, preferences and etc. This definition remains till recent as “a negotiation among forces both internal and external to the nation in question”¹⁴. However, Rusciano (2003) made a further

¹¹ Smith, National Identity, p.16.

¹² Ibid, p.17.

¹³ Kowert, Paul A.: National Identity: Inside and Out. In: Security Studies, 8:2-3. UK: Taylor & Francis, 1998, p.4.

¹⁴ Rusciano, Frank L.: The Construction of National Identity—A 23-Nation Study. In: Political Research Quarterly, Vol. 56, No. 3. UK: Sage Publications, 2003, p.361.

argument pointing out that the external force which affects how a nation is perceived by the others plays a significant role in the process of conceptualization of national identity.

Speaking of the consensual perception of other countries, it is necessary first to clarify between it and the image presented by the country itself. Rusciano has, based on global opinion theory, described them as a nation's "Fremdbild"(foreign image) and its "Selbstbild"(self image)¹⁵ which indicate the image a nation's people hold for their country or "the nation's national consciousness"¹⁶ and the perception the other countries and their people have for the nation respectively.

Another important theory can be used to elaborate on this, that is the concept of 'self' and 'the other'. Broadly speaking, it enables national identity to categorize people into members of the nation and foreigners with its double-edged character by "defining who is not a national and through differentiating the ingroup from others"¹⁷. An additional example can be that admitting the existence of a nation is in turn also a recognition of 'the other' nations. Thus it can be said that national identity only becomes meaningful when it has a reference, namely the other nations. In other words, national consciousness plays role both in arousing self-awareness of ingroup and in generating an awareness of others through which nations can differentiate themselves¹⁸.

The function of the "self" and "the other" theory is also stressed in the definition of national identity given by Park and Tae (2016) that "established identity can represent an individual and distinguish them from others, leading to a differentiated uniqueness"¹⁹. Distinguishing "self"

¹⁵ Rusciano, The Construction of National Identity—A 23-Nation Study, p.361.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Triandafyllidou, A.: National Identity and the 'Other'. In: Ethnic and Racial Studies, 21:4. UK: Taylor & Francis, 1998, p.593.

¹⁸ Triandafyllidou, National Identity and the 'Other', p.594 and p.599.

¹⁹ Park, Myung-Sook and Tae, Hyae-Syn: Arts Style and National Identity Reflected in the Olympics Opening Ceremonies: A Comparison of the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2012 London Olympics. In Quest, 68:2. UK: Taylor & Francis, 2016, p.172.

from “the other” first has a significant role to play in terms of national security as it serves an important tool to help states tell its "friends" from its “enemies”. Conversely speaking, it is also because of the differentiation that generates internal cohesion of a nation which “facilitates orderly and efficient responses to external threats”²⁰ as a patriotic form of national identity.

Last, in regard of literatures collected for this paper, it can easily be seen that the concept of national identity has changed and evolved along time. There have been various perspectives used to conceptualize the concept. The discourses of it have also been shifting and have been shaped by different social conditions. It therefore can, to some extent, reflect changes of society and may even facilitate the development of society. In this aspect, discourses of national identity are rather deeply rooted in social relations than some plain terms²¹.

2.2.2 National Identity in China

In the case of China, the external function is more emphasized than the internal function. It can be seen from the proportion of these two aspects discussed in literatures that the national identity China presents to the rest of the world is a more crucial task of China nowadays than its internal identity among its citizens. Along with the other developing countries, some scholars hold the view that the process of modernity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and the historical environment of that time has fueled the establishment of Chinese national identity. In the early phase of its establishment, it was the government of the new China that guided and reinterpreted its national identity. Later, the newly-formed national identity became a core factor of national coherence and an important driving force in shaping and enrichment of Chinese national spirit²². In the current phase of national identity, the emphasis of China’s

²⁰ Kowert, National Identity: Inside and Out, p.1.

²¹ Hogan, J.: Staging the Nation: Gendered and Ethnicized Discourse of National Identity in Olympic Opening Ceremonies. In: Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 27(2). UK: Sage Publications, 2003, p.102.

²² Scott, Noei; Ashton, Ann Suwaree; Ding, Peiyi and Xu, Honggang: Tourism Branding and Nation Building in China. In: International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research, Vol. 5 Issue 3. UK: Emerald Publishing, 2011, p.227.

national identity is placed on “an open-minded comprehensive national spirit, harmonious national character, and moderate national pride” while combining its “historical tradition with current global trends”²³.

In order to present a comprehensive national identity to the outside world, it’s not enough just to explain and stress the essence of national identity of China. However, an image needs to be created to present China in a way the Chinese government wish to show and, at the same time, function as a tool to alter the old impressions or stereotypes foreign countries and people hold for China. That’s what will be discussed next—— national image.

2.2 National image

2.2.1 Definition

National image is the image that a nation presents to the rest of the world which can be perceived differently among other nations. Starting from Nimmo and Savage’s (1976) definition of image which refers to “a human construct imposed on an array of perceived attributes projected by an object, event, or person”²⁴, it is further claimed that image is the consequence of manual effort not only showing but also being perceived by others at the same time. Among most of the literature, scholars tend to stress the external side of the image, discussing how it is presented and how it is viewed (Chen, 2012; Yao, 2010; Fan, 2006 and 2010). It is also suggested that the collective judgment of a nation’s image may also affect the reputation of it²⁵. Boulding (1959), however, defined image of a nation as “the total cognitive, affective, and evaluative

²³ Park and Tae, Arts Style and National Identity Reflected in the Olympics Opening Ceremonies: A Comparison of the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2012 London Olympics, p.176.

²⁴ Chen, H.: Medals, Media and Myth of National Images: How Chinese Audiences Thought of Foreign Countries During the Beijing Olympics. In: Public Relations Review, Volume 38, Issue 5. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2012, p.756.

²⁵ Zhang, Cui: International Coverage, Foreign Policy, and National Image: Exploring the Complexities of Media Coverage, Public Opinion, and Presidential Agenda. In: International Journal of Communication, 6. California: USC Annenberg Press, 2012, p.77.

structure of the behavioral unit, or its internal view of itself and its universe”²⁶ with an emphasis on the internal side.

Furthermore, national image is defined by Kunczik (1997) as “the representation that a person holds of a given country, what a person believes to be true about a nation and its people”²⁷ which shows the subjective aspect of viewing a national image. Similar definitions have been given, describing national image as pictures of other nations created in people’s minds which is also closely related to “attributes of the object and those of its beholder”²⁸. Except from the perspective of conceptualizing and discussing national image from internal and external, national image is also often viewed as a multi-dimensional term that is rooted in a large range of aspects of a nation. These aspects, like politics, economics, military, tourism, culture and citizenry, are also vital enough to affect a nation (Yao, 2010; Chen, 2012).

Taking into consideration the fact that “a nation’s image is the total sum of all mental associations about a nation in the mind of international stakeholders”²⁹, how these mental associations are shaped and how they later influence people’s attitude towards a nation seem worth exploring and discussing. To study this aspect, the concept of national image into three layers, namely cognitive attributes (the perceived characteristics of the nation), affective attributes (the liking or disliking of the object), and action attributes (the responses to the object) which are exactly the three core features of the whole process of people’s attitude towards a certain nation³⁰. Since image is the subjective knowledge of the world which governs people’s behavior

²⁶ Boulding, K.E.: National Images and International Systems. In: Paul Huth (ed.): The Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. 3, No. 2. University of Maryland: Sage Publications, 1959, p.120-121.

²⁷ Chen, Medals, Media and Myth of National Images: How Chinese Audiences Thought of Foreign Countries During the Beijing Olympics, cited in p.755.

²⁸ Li, X. and Chitty, N.: Reframing National Image: A Methodological Framework. In: Conflict & Communication online, Vol. 8(2). Berlin: Irena Regener, 2009, p.1.

²⁹ Scott; Ashton; Ding and Xu, Tourism Branding and Nation Building in China, p.229.

³⁰ Chen, Medals, media and myth of national images: How Chinese audiences thought of foreign countries during the Beijing Olympics, p.756.

(Boulding 1956)³¹, viewing through the lens of international politics, different attitudes of people towards a certain national image can generate either a favorable or unfavorable environment and determine how people treat it³². This overall environment may rise to the national level and be reflected in decision-making or policy-making processes of the nation vis a vis other nations, which supports the claim that national image is projected onto its foreign audiences (Fan 2008). In addition, however, as this attitude is strongly subjective, it may not be able to reflect the realities of certain nations, or may reflect only established stereotypes (Verlegh and Steenkamp 1999). This situation will go even worse and may bring negative consequences to those nations which don't pay attention to how its national image is perceived (Papadopoulos and Heslop 2002). Therefore, each nation must take control of its own reputation by managing its nation brand³³ and wise branding strategies of national image should be carried out.

2.2.2 National image in China

In the case of China, it is mentioned by many scholars that national image is China's urgent task to solve at present (e.g. Anholt 2008; Loo and Davies 2006; Zhang 2010; Zhang 2012). The reason why national image remains the greatest strategic threat of today is that China not only need to show a good national image to the rest of the world but also take into consideration how its image is perceived by other nations³⁴. Since national image is often associated with public diplomacy, international perception, and international relations³⁵, the importance of managing

³¹ Boulding, K.E.: *The Image*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press (Ann Arbor Paperback), 1956, Chapter I.

³² Chen, Medals, media and myth of national images: How Chinese audiences thought of foreign countries during the Beijing Olympics, p.755.; Zhang, Li: *The Rise of China Media Perception and Implications for International Politics*. In: *Journal of Contemporary China*, 19:64. UK: Taylor & Francis, 2010, p.233.

³³ Loo, T. and Davies, G.: *Branding China: The Ultimate Challenge in Reputation Management?* In: *Corporate Reputation Review*, Vol. 9, No. 3. Berlin: Springer, 2006, p.198.

³⁴ Zhang, *The Rise of China Media Perception and Implications for International Politics*, p.233.

³⁵ Zhang, *International Coverage, Foreign Policy, and National Image: Exploring the Complexities of Media Coverage, Public Opinion, and Presidential Agenda*, p.77.

national image is obvious. As for China, actions have also been taken. It was among the first steps that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP 中国共产党) established an Overseas Propaganda Department³⁶ (中央宣传部) in 1990 to deal with issues concerning national image. Since the beginning of the 1990s the Chinese government has frequently issued white papers on subjects such as human rights, the situation in Tibet and the environment³⁷. These white papers, published since 1991, functioned as a shield protecting China from critiques of other countries while explaining and claiming China's standpoint on these sensitive issues³⁸.

Other actions like hiring international media expertise to promote China's national image and sponsoring and/or organizing cultural events in other countries³⁹ have also been taken. Putting aside their effectiveness, study results indicate that countries pay less attention to their national image managing and promoting do receive more criticisms on their national image⁴⁰. To sum up, the national image of China is made up not only of the establishment of a governmental department and subsequent promotion of foreign policies, but also of the diplomatic performances of Chinese leaders, the behavior of Chinese citizens abroad (e.g. students, tourists, business people), and of products made in China⁴¹.

The national image of China, however, is always complex. While being described as a country with 'dazzling' and 'amazing' economic growth in news reports, it is also often criticized on issues like violating human rights, releasing pollution and neglecting intellectual property rights. In

³⁶ In 1998, the Party Propaganda Department changed its English name to Publicity Department while its Chinese name remained the same.

³⁷ Official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China. [www.fmprc.gov.cn].

³⁸ Wang, Hongying: National Image Building and Chinese Foreign Policy. In: China: An International Journal, Volume 1, Number 1. Singapore: NUS Press, 2003, p.48.

³⁹ Wang, National Image Building and Chinese Foreign Policy, p.49.

⁴⁰ Zhang, International Coverage, Foreign Policy, and National Image: Exploring the Complexities of Media Coverage, Public Opinion, and Presidential Agenda, p.78.

⁴¹ Zhang, The Rise of China Media Perception and Implications for International Politics, p.234.

addition, while China claims that it is still a developing country, it is viewed by other countries as a powerful and influential one. As is often viewed as ambivalent, what China need is to make clear its intention for “peaceful development”⁴² and to let other nations understand and agree on this world view.

As channels to promote national image, it is not only China, but most countries in the world that rely upon the media. News reports and policy speeches are often used to arouse recognition of national image. However, it is not solely dependent on that. Other things, such as national companies, or the brand image of products or services made or developed in a certain nation, can also be associated and analogized to national image and a country’s reputation (Zhang 2012; Anholt 2008).

The importance of national image in the current era has been fully stressed above and the channels through which national image is often presented have also be illustrated. The following step is to narrow it down and discuss detailed strategy as well as methods applied in presenting national image, more precisely, branding national image.

2.3 Brand and Branding

2.3.1 Brand

Brand, in it’s traditional application to products, enables consumers to identify a product and create a connection between them⁴³. From the customer’s perspective, a brand can be conceptualized as the total experience accumulated from all contact points⁴⁴ which may bring extra benefits and added value to the brand. A brand can also help enhance the functional value

⁴² Loo and Davies, Branding China: The Ultimate Challenge in Reputation Management?, p.199.

⁴³ Weilbacher, W. M.: Brand Marketing. Lincolnwood, IL: NTC Publishing Group, 2003.

⁴⁴ Lee, Annisa L.: Did the Olympics Help the Nation Branding of China? Comparing Public Perception of China With the Olympics Before and After the 2008 Beijing Olympics in Hong Kong. In: Place Branding and Public Diplomacy, 6. Berlin: Springer, 2010, p.211.

and level of identification of a product as well as help to develop its own loyal customers⁴⁵. Other than that, brands are also capable of informing consumers about the quality and special features of products⁴⁶. The concept of brand conceptualized by De Chernatony and Riley, in comparison, defines it as “an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant unique added values which match their needs most closely”⁴⁷.

In accordance to the research objectives of this paper, the explanation of nation branding will be further elaborated upon. It is claimed by scholars that nations are also brands of their own. Nations, in most cases, create their brand out of their own purpose. In addition, nation brands also need to be established and developed, just like normal corporate brands. However, though these two share some similarities, there are also significant differences between the two as nation brand is in many ways more sophisticated. While brand could have been established “deliberately or by default”⁴⁸, De Chernatony and McDonald describe a successful nation brand as an identifiable place stressed in a certain way that its audience will perceive as relevant to their needs with added values⁴⁹.

Meanwhile, as for sources contribute to the building of nation brand, it can be “word of mouth, education, mass media, travel, product purchases and dealings with its people”⁵⁰. Recently, new opinions have been raised. It is stressed by some scholars that corporations have been substantially involved in the process of developing a nation brand. Those involvements include

⁴⁵ Lee, Did the Olympics Help the Nation Branding of China? Comparing Public Perception of China With the Olympics Before and After the 2008 Beijing Olympics in Hong Kong, p.211.

⁴⁶ Scott; Ashton; Ding and Xu, Tourism Branding and Nation Building in China, p.228.

⁴⁷ De Chernatony, L. and Riley, Francesca D.: Defining A “Brand”: Beyond The Literature With Experts' Interpretations. In: Journal of Marketing Management, 14:5. UK: Taylor & Francis, 1998, p.403.

⁴⁸ Loo and Davies, Branding China: The Ultimate Challenge in Reputation Management?, p.198.

⁴⁹ Lee, Did the Olympics Help the Nation Branding of China? Comparing Public Perception of China with the Olympics Before and After the 2008 Beijing Olympics in Hong Kong, p.211.

⁵⁰ Loo and Davies, Branding China: The Ultimate Challenge in Reputation Management?, p.198.

such actions as establishing chambers of commerce, councils, government agencies and representatives from a variety of industry sectors⁵¹. The fact that industry groups are taking efforts to establish nation brands has also helped the improvement of national image.

2.3.2 Nation branding

Setting off from the concept of brand and its application in nation, here comes the part of more importance which studies the concept's usage as a verb and how it acts to help present national identity and national image which therefore, is better phrased as 'branding'. Concerning the objects being branded so far, there are extensive literature discussing about destination branding. Based on this literature and in accordance to the discussion of 'brand', however, only city and nation will be regarded as examples of destination branding here.

Starting with nation branding, nation branding aims to conceptualize the identity and reputation of entire countries by using people, symbols, colors and slogans to create a distinctive personality. It also stresses the mobilization of all of a nation's forces that can contribute to the promotion of its national image abroad⁵². These forces can often be seen as an entire industry with high profile consultants and annual rankings which help shape perceptions⁵³. It's obvious that nation branding is big business.

In term of functions of nation branding, it acts externally like a magnet attracting investors, buyers, and also tourists, all while promoting a sense of belonging among citizens, which leads to a rise in people's confidence in their nation. However, whether these functions work is largely dependent on how national image is perceived. Only when the people have positive feeling

⁵¹ Scott; Ashton; Ding and Xu, *Tourism Branding and Nation Building in China*, p.230-231.

⁵² Zhang, *The Rise of China Media Perception and Implications for International Politics*, p.233.

⁵³ Barr, M.(2012). *Nation Branding as Nation Building: China's Image Campaign*. *East Asia* (2012) 29, 81–94, p.83.

towards a nation can a nation branding function. Therefore, it is a process of accumulation, collecting respect and affection from people of the rest of the world⁵⁴.

As a rather new concept, nation branding also faces challenges. When trying to position a nation in an advantageous place on the international stage, countries face a lot competition. Additionally, in an age after the financial crisis in 2008, there appears to be a larger demand than need which creates a difficult situation for nation industries to brand abroad⁵⁵.

Finally, in the study of nation branding, the Anholt Nation Brands Index (ANBI) is one thought an outstanding example. It is developed by Simon Anholt to measure and standardize global brand equity of a nation. Based on more than 25,000 respondents from 35 countries and published quarterly, this framework provides an analytical brand index based on the following six areas, namely tourism; exports; governance; investment and immigration; culture and heritage; and people⁵⁶. As a significant scholar in this field, his argument and theories will be further applied in this paper.

2.3.3 City branding

Following the same logic as national branding which draws inspiration from product branding and marketing⁵⁷, city branding is a deliberate strategy to select some features of a city as core values so as to facilitate the process by which people can confidently recognize and appreciate these features. This idea of transplanting product branding to city branding is also supported by

⁵⁴ Barr, Nation Branding as Nation Building: China's Image Campaign, p.83.

⁵⁵ Rojas-Méndez, José I.; Papadopoulos, Nicolas and Murphy, Steven A.: Measuring and Positioning Nation Brands: A Comparative Brand Personality Approach. In: Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 16, No. 1. Berlin: Springer, 2013, p.48.

⁵⁶ Berkowitz, P.; Gjermano, G.; Gomez, L. and Schafer, G.: Brand China: Using the 2008 Olympic Games to enhance Chinas image. In: Place Branding and Public Diplomacy 3. UK: Palgrave, 2007, p.169.

⁵⁷ Zhang, Li and Zhao, Simon Xiaobin: City Branding and the Olympic Effect: A Case Study of Beijing. In: Cities, 26: 5. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2009, p.246.

other scholars like Anholt as well as Zhou and Wang⁵⁸. Like a product that possesses utility values, a city can generate utility functions that investors, visitors and the resident population can directly experience through daily commercial transactions and related activities. Following this logic, it is also claimed that cities should be treated as products and branded like products through tourism, business, retailing, cultural activities and sporting events⁵⁹. As one of a city's products, the city brand can act as a crucial factor in distinguishing one city from other competitor cities.

Similar to the relation between national identity and national image, a city first needs to build up an identity in order to brand its image. Rooted in various aspects of a city, the identifiable image created is the best answer to the question of what a city values most and what it wants other people to regard it as. City branding is therefore one of a few widely used city marketing strategies to strengthen the relationship between a city and its audience and present a good image of the city to its audience⁶⁰. It is also described as having the capacity to demonstrate a memorable identity of a city with its spatial configuration and its socio-cultural values⁶¹.

In order to brand a city successfully, the branding strategy should also be well-considered to best suit the city. Successful city branding depends largely on the identification of distinctive and defining special features possessed by the city which can include, city appearance, history, cultural attractions, economics and governance, people's experience of the city, and people's perception of the city. Consensus on the city's identity and core values between the city authorities and its people is important in this process⁶². In addition, it is also important to figure out how the city is

⁵⁸ Anholt, S.: 'Nation Branding' in Asia. In: *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 4. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 265–269.; Zhou, Lijun and Wang, Tao: *Social Media: A New Vehicle for City Marketing in China*. In: *Cities*, 37. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2013, 27–32.

⁵⁹ Zhang and Zhao, *City Branding and the Olympic Effect: A Case Study of Beijing*, p.246; Zhou and Wang, *Social Media: A New Vehicle for City Marketing in China*, p.28.

⁶⁰ Zhou and Wang, *Social Media: A New Vehicle for City Marketing in China*, p.28.

⁶¹ Zhang and Zhao, *City Branding and the Olympic Effect: A Case Study of Beijing*, p.246.

⁶² *Ibid*, p.245.

perceived by its people as they often represent their cities more directly than city authorities. The communication among locals and visitors about their interpretation of their perceptions of the city also affects the branding of a city⁶³.

Challenges also exist in terms of city branding. A key challenge of city branding is the difficulty of defining a city's identity and core values in a way that can be widely accepted, as well as easily marketed and presented⁶⁴. As a melting pot where various people reside, it is hard for a city to find its way from such a diversity of ideas and values held by people. It is especially stressed by Zhang and Zhao that an identity of a city needs to be salable and comprehensive enough to cover "claims, justifications and accusations exchanged with a variety of interests"⁶⁵.

2.4. Mega-events

2.4.1 Definition

Mega-events, according to Roche, are "large-scale cultural (including commercial and sporting) events which have a dramatic character by variable combination of national governmental and international non-governmental organizations and thus can be said to be important elements in 'official' versions of public culture"⁶⁶. As outstanding examples in recent decades, the Olympic Games are widely mentioned and discussed in recent literature, covering areas of media, cultural and communications studies as well as other disciplines including sociology, political science and public policy. There are scholars like Roche, who study how the Olympic Games have come to play a role as 'mega-events'. There are also other scholars who focus on certain aspects of these mega-events, such as the media which has generated a large degree of discussion under this topic.

⁶³ Zhang and Zhao, *City Branding and the Olympic Effect: A Case Study of Beijing*, p.246.

⁶⁴ Kavaratzis, M.: *Cities and Their Brands: Lessons from Corporate Branding*. In: *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 5. Berlin: Springer, 2009, 26–37.

⁶⁵ Zhang and Zhao, *City Branding and the Olympic Effect: A Case Study of Beijing*, p.246.

⁶⁶ Roche, M.: *Mega-events and Modernity, Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture*. London: Routledge, 2000, p.1.

Newspaper sports coverage, for instance, has been proven to have significant and profound impact on discursive manifestation for identities conceptualization, normalization as well as reflection⁶⁷.

Though scholars have different focuses when studying mega-events, there are some features of mega-event that are commonly agreed upon. First of all, mega-events are often characterized as an opportunity to spread the culture and thought of nations⁶⁸. In addition, mega-events are also said to have the ability to “integrate societies and evoke a renewal of loyalty to the society and its legitimate authority”⁶⁹. Instances have been listed such as the annual television show of Chinese New Year Gala, the national military parade in front of Tiananmen which takes place every ten years and international mega-events like the Olympic Games. The 2008 Beijing Olympics, for example, are considered to have the ability to offer Chinese citizens “new purchase on a sense of national greatness and collective destiny”⁷⁰. Furthermore, as an event which is able to “arouse and bring a high degree of attention”⁷¹ and infrastructural improvements, mega-events may also exert profound influence on “transforming and branding a city”⁷² for mega-events are “intended to attract national and international media recordation of the host city”⁷³.

⁶⁷ Jiang, Qiaolei: Celebrity Athletes Soft Power and National Identity Hong Kong Newspaper Coverage of the Olympic Champions of Beijing 2008 and London 2012. In: *Mass Communication and Society*, 16. UK: Taylor & Francis, 2013, p.889.

⁶⁸ Park and Tae, Arts Style and National Identity Reflected in the Olympics Opening Ceremonies: A Comparison of the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2012 London Olympics, p.184.

⁶⁹ Dayan, D., and Katz, E.: *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, p.9.

⁷⁰ Polunbaum, J.: ‘Capturing the Flame: Aspirations and Representations of Beijing’s 2008 Olympics’. In: C.C. Lee (ed.), *Chinese Media, Global Contexts*. London: Routledge Curzon, 2003, p.70.

⁷¹ Chung, Sun-A: The Change of Nation Branding on China through Beijing Olympic Games. In: *International Journal of Human Movement Science* 4(1). South Korea: Korean Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance, 2010, p.889.

⁷² Zhang and Zhao, City Branding and the Olympic Effect: A Case Study of Beijing, p.247.

⁷³ Andranovich, G., Burbank, M. J. and Heying, C. H.: *Olympic Cities: Lessons Learned from Mega-Event Politics*. In: *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 23. Boston: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001, p.114.

Nowadays, the Olympic Games are chosen to serve the city and national government development agendas after the 1984 Los Angeles Games showed for the first time that such mega events could turn a profit for the host⁷⁴. As for the hosting city, it acts like a magnet attracting new resources and new investors, which in turn brings new profits and economic development to the city itself. Event sponsorships, various forms of partnerships established on different levels and marketing of commodities and souvenirs bonded with the event are possible ways to secure capital resources⁷⁵. Infrastructural improvements can be seen from architectures built up for hosting the event, such as the stadium and the international-standard athlete village as well as from other construction works done to improve the urban space of the hosting city⁷⁶.

Furthermore, another typical by-product of development is the boost in tourism⁷⁷. Faulkner (2003) also highlights that, though mega-events are generally built around non-tourism objectives (such as sport or cultural goals), national governments are increasingly regarding them as a useful instrument for the development of tourism⁷⁸.

Alongside these improvements, ‘soft’ changes are also able to be achieved. On the international level, hosting mega-event can, in most cases, bring change to the reputation and image of the hosting city with the help of media. Shedding light on the economic development mentioned above, the connection between it and image creation is that “image creation provides rationale for the allocation of scarce resources.”⁷⁹. Regarding by most hosting cities as a precious chance to

⁷⁴ Andranovich, Burbank and Heying, *Olympic Cities: Lessons Learned from Mega-Event Politics*, p.114 and p.124.

⁷⁵ Zhang and Zhao, *City Branding and the Olympic Effect: A Case Study of Beijing*; Roche, *Mega-events and Modernity, Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture*, p.247.

⁷⁶ Whitson, D. and Macintosh, D.: *The Global Circus: International Sport, Tourism, and the Marketing of Cities*. In: *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 20(3). UK: Sage Publications, 1996, p.283.

⁷⁷ Andranovich, Burbank and Heying, *Olympic Cities: Lessons Learned from Mega-Event Politics*, p.114.

⁷⁸ Lamberti, L.: *Mega-events As Drivers of Community Participation in Developing Countries: The Case of Shanghai World Expo*. In: *Tourism Management*, Volume 32, Issue 6. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2011, p.1477.

⁷⁹ Pagano, M. A., and Bowman, A. O. M.: *Cityscapes and capital: The politics of urban development*. Maryland: JHU Press, 1997, p.67.

alter and polish its image, the hosting cities make full use of media channels and publicize the latest developments in all aspects, “improvement of international relations, enhancement of economic and social capacities, upgrading of international gateway status”⁸⁰ to the rest of the world.

In this paper, an emphasis will be placed on the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games which remain the major mega-events that have been held in China. As an outstanding example of sports mega-event, the Olympic Games are seen to obtain an “globality” that connect, condense and compress the hosting country with the rest of the world⁸¹. Since the 1980s, sports mega-events have always provided an arena for countries in various phases and models of development to compete with each other in a symbolic and modern way. The appropriate examples that can be given are the Olympic Games held by the Soviet bloc and the ‘Free World’ separately during the Cold War period. The games were used mainly as a tool to demonstrate official versions of the public culture of the host country and “point of reference for the collective orientation of national societies toward international audiences”⁸².

Although mega-events like the Olympic Games only last for a limited period of time, promotion activities related are undertaken before, during and after the events. A development-boosting effect after mega-events is also expected by most hosting cities and nations. In addition, in comparison to other national or international events, the Olympic Games have already enjoyed a greater fame and wider recognition. Further arguments are also made by other scholars that a hosting city’s attractiveness for staging a mega-event is associated with its attractiveness for tourism and with the local community’s attitude towards hosting the event. Other possible impacts brought to the hosting city can also appear. Firstly, mega-events can attract huge

⁸⁰ Zhang and Zhao, *City Branding and the Olympic Effect: A Case Study of Beijing*, p.247.

⁸¹ Manzenreiter, W.: *The Beijing Games in the Western Imagination of China: The Weak Power of Soft Power*. In: *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 34(1). UK: Sage Publications, 2010, p.32.

⁸² Manzenreiter, *The Beijing Games in the Western Imagination of China: The Weak Power of Soft Power*, p.32; deLisle, Jacques: *After the Gold Rush: The Beijing Olympics and China’s Evolving International Roles*. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2009.

amounts of public resources for the hosting city in the usage of infrastructure construction and environment improvement. Additionally, mega-events can bring higher media exposure to the hosting city and spread its image worldwide. Furthermore, it is also expected to boost the development of new companies and organization serving the mega-events⁸³.

In terms of modern Olympic Games, companies also tend to have their part playing in the Olympics because the Olympics are able to capture the public imagination worldwide and to have great number of audience watching⁸⁴.

2.4.2 Way towards 2008 Beijing Olympics

As mega-events are regarded as valuable opportunities to present the identity and core values of the host city, here we take a closer look at how city branding was done through 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The Summer Olympics in 2008 took place in Beijing and was the 29th Olympiad. Beijing was, accordingly, designated by the Chinese government to become a city which is “international, culturally famous, livable and a great host”⁸⁵. In addition, Beijing was also promoted as a tourism destination and tried to attract large number of tourists through the holding the Beijing Olympics⁸⁶. Furthermore, with advertisements designed to promote attributes of the city and construction undertaken to polish the appearance of city, Beijing tried to present itself as a modern, cultural and people-oriented metropolis which has impact over the world. The strategy of Beijing branding was to make the city be understood in a particular way, to present its

⁸³ Lamberti, Mega-events As Drivers of Community Participation in Developing Countries: The Case of Shanghai World Expo, p.1477.

⁸⁴ Panagiotopoulou, R.: Nation Branding and the Olympic Games: New Media Images for Greece and China. In: The International Journal of the History of Sport, 29:16. UK: Taylor & Francis, 2012, p.2339.

⁸⁵ Zhang and Zhao, City Branding and the Olympic Effect: A Case Study of Beijing, p.246.

⁸⁶ Zhou and Wang, Social Media: A New Vehicle for City Marketing in China, p.28.

achievements, and to alter negative images that the international community had on certain issues that China has been long criticized⁸⁷.

However, the way to host the Olympic Games was not easy. The Beijing Olympic Committee stated that China's motivation in participating and hosting Olympic Games was to integrate itself and its culture into the rest of the world. It was in 1908 that China set three goals in terms of the Olympic Games, namely sending national athletes to take part in the games, winning the first gold medal and eventually becoming the host of the games⁸⁸. After that, China went through the failure of losing the bid of the right to host the 2000 Summer Olympic Games which was then held in Sydney. However, the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Bid Committee (BOBICO, which was tasked with the organization of the Beijing application) was founded in September, 1999. Eight months later, the Olympic Evaluation Commission entered the report of the candidate cities, and offered the following testimony for Beijing's high-quality application: 'It is the Commission's belief that a Beijing Games would leave a unique legacy to China and world sports, and the Commission is confident that Beijing could organize excellent Games'⁸⁹. After this announcement, the Chinese government took a magnificent effort to prepare the city for the International Olympic Committee (IOC) inspection.

The government mobilized a large number of people to clean up and re-paint many parts of the city. When the effort was complete, it was reported that an area in excess of 26,000km² had been painted. Beijing embarked on an investment program in the years following the announcement. BOBICO presented an 'Olympic Activity Plan' that included the construction of infrastructure projects in three phases. The first phase would last from December, 2001 to June, 2003 and would include preparations as well as the organization of the management. During the second phase from July, 2003 until June, 2006, construction would begin on the infrastructure necessary to host

⁸⁷ Zhang and Zhao, *City Branding and the Olympic Effect: A Case Study of Beijing*, p.247.

⁸⁸ Berkowitz; Gjermano; Gomez and Schafer, *Brand China: Using the 2008 Olympic Games to enhance Chinas image*, p.167.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p.168.

the games. Finally, the third phase would consist of testing the facilities until summer 2008. Overall, China committed to spend more than 40 billion US dollars on preparations for the Olympic Games. As of September, 2006, a total of 37 competition venues had been constructed, an additional 59 roads were under construction, and four new bridges were being built. In addition, 750km of road was to be repaired and upgraded. During this reconstruction process, 69 villages were moved and the controversial decision to raze entire sections of Hutongs (胡同 historic Beijing neighbourhoods) were implemented. The massive rebranding effort was well under way⁹⁰.

Apart from the unsuccessful bid experience, another obstacle in the path towards the holding of Olympic Games for China was its image problem. The statement made by John Kamm, former head of the American Chamber of Commerce, that “China’s deteriorating international image is impacting its ability to achieve its foreign policy goals, and could well affect its ability to stage a successful Olympics in 2008”⁹¹ also reflected the serious national image problem of China from another angle. Therefore, as an important part of China’s image branding process and of the preparation for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the priority should be put on improving China’s image. China wishes to promote a national image which presents a peaceful, civilized and progressive China⁹² instead of being perceived as “a rather severe, autocratic, dictatorial society in which dissent is not tolerated”⁹³.

Of particular importance was the addressing of issues that China is often criticized by foreign countries, such as environmental pollution and human rights. Concerning the environmental

⁹⁰ Berkowitz; Gjermano; Gomez and Schafer, *Brand China: Using the 2008 Olympic Games to enhance Chinas image*, p.168.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, cited in p.167.

⁹² Te, B.: *Beijing Olympics: A New Brand of China*. In: *Asian Social Science*, 5(3). Canada: the Canadian Center of Science and Education, 2009, p.84.

⁹³ Cook, Ian G. and Miles, Steven: Chapter 18 Beijing. In: Gold, John R. and Gold, Margaret M.: *Olympic Cities, City Agendas, Planning and the World’s Games, 1896-2020*, Third edition. London and New York: Routledge, 2017, p. 367.

problem, the environment has suffered for decades due to lack of regulatory controls, and extensive exploitation. As for human rights issue, it is argued by several scholars that the Chinese government has been encountering increasing internal pressure to provide additional freedoms to the population, while receiving external pressure from the international community that also follows China's political development very closely⁹⁴. Additionally, as one of the main issues that normally emerges from a long communist regime, though it has been stated by the leader of the IOC evaluation commission that 'the games have elevated international dialogue on such issues'⁹⁵, there exist still other more severe situations. Besides, while receiving often critical judgements from foreign countries, Chinese people's attitudes towards human rights issue in China are, to some extent, totally opposite to those. The Chinese citizens are relatively optimistic about human rights issues and hold the view that the Beijing Olympic Games can "display new standards of national quality development", of "civilization", "passion" and "smile"⁹⁶. Together with the contrast in attitudes between Chinese and people from foreign countries on these controversial issues, detailed explanation and analysis will be conducted later alongside the news articles about the torch delivery of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games in Chapter 4.

As response to these issues, China has set the following goals for the 2008 Olympics: People's Olympics, High-Tech Olympics, and Green Olympics. Though it took China great effort to finally win the bid of the 2008 Olympic Games, the effort made and achievements accomplished step by step during this time period have been witnessed by Chinese citizens and people over the world.

⁹⁴ Berkowitz; Gjermano; Gomez and Schafer, Brand China: Using the 2008 Olympic Games to enhance China's image, p.165.

⁹⁵ The Associated Press, IOC Congratulates Itself for Beijing Olympics. In: CBS News, 7 October, 2009a. [<http://www.cbsnews.com/new/ioc-congratulates-itself-for-beijing-olympics/>] (12 September 2017).

⁹⁶ Te, Beijing Olympics: A New Brand of China, p.88-89.

2.4.3 Branding through the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games

One example that is often viewed as a successful instance of city transformation is the 1992 Olympic Games, which took place in Barcelona, which attracted more than 9,3000 athletes from 169 countries and even more tourists. Praised for its smooth operation of the games without boycott and its great coordination between different government entities, Barcelona later became the third most popular European destination behind Paris and London. Another city which benefited from the Olympic Games is Sydney. The 2000 Olympic Games held in Sydney, Australia reshaped the city image. The infrastructural construction and improvement, especially on urban transportation and telecommunication, facilitated the reestablishment of city image and turned it into a modern and global city. Other examples of successful Olympic Games involve at least one outstanding symbol which was used to as the main force to brand their image, including the bullet train of the 1964 Olympic Games in Japan, and the Centennial Park of the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta⁹⁷. These examples show that the Olympic Games have the potential to alter and improve the image of the hosting city. Though successful Olympic Games will boost tourism and economy of the hosting city in a short period of time, the transformation of the image of hosting city can be, compared to these short-term gains, a much longer and profounder positive process for a city's development⁹⁸.

In addition to city image and national image improvement, GDP (Gross Domestic Production) growth is seen as another expected outcome. Benefitting from prolonged periods in the international spotlight, new flows of investments often come along with rising global attention. BOCOG (The Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad) confirmed similar expectations for Beijing. Beijing's projected GDP growth is 12.3 per cent, which is higher than the rest of China and is credited to Olympic preparations. Furthermore, it was estimated that from 2005 on, 1.8 million jobs would be created to support Olympic preparations and

⁹⁷ Berkowitz; Gjermano; Gomez and Schafer, Brand China: Using the 2008 Olympic Games to enhance Chinas image, p.170-171.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p.170.

Beijing would have a 0.8 per cent faster GDP growth in comparison to the rest of the country (BOCOG, 2006).

In the case of China, instead of taking the Olympic Games as a chance to promote tourism, China placed more emphasis on demonstrating its economic and technological achievements and organizational capacities⁹⁹. Girginov (2008) also argued that other than using the games to secure recognition by the international community like Japan and South Korea, China tended to “reinterpret the fundamental Olympic principles, to prove its reliability and willingness to engage with international models as well as to present its hospitality and cultural pride”¹⁰⁰.

Though wishing for favorable perception from the rest of the world, the study results of Panagiotopoulou (2012) and Manzenreiter (2010) revealed the unsatisfactory truth on the basis of the Gallup World Poll, the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) World Service Poll, Anholt’s Nation Branding Index, and other independent studies. As a poll designed to measure approval to political issues in many countries, thousands of carefully sampled respondents were asked whether their overall opinion of China is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable (or indifferent) in different 5 categories by the Gallup World Poll at least once a year. Since the reform and opening up of China in the 1970s, there has been a rise of the favorable attitude towards China. Winning the bid of 2008 Beijing Olympic Games in 2001 brought a distinctive rise of positive rates from 36% in late 2000 to 45% in February, 2001. The approval rate reached its climax in 2007 with 48% and fell back to 42% in February, 2008. The rate stays almost on the same level in the year after the 2008 Olympics¹⁰¹.

According to the results in 2005, 2007, and 2009 by BBC polls, China’s influence in the world has received increasingly negative rates over these years, including the Beijing Olympics period.

⁹⁹ Panagiotopoulou, Nation Branding and the Olympic Games: New Media Images for Greece and China, p. 2343-2344.

¹⁰⁰ Chung, The Change of Nation Branding on China through Beijing Olympic Games, cited in p.94.

¹⁰¹ Manzenreiter, The Beijing Games in the Western Imagination of China: The Weak Power of Soft Power, p.38.

Positive rates went down from 48% to 42% and 39%, whereas negative rates rose from 30% to 32% and 42% in 2009¹⁰².

An overall decline (4%) in NBI (National Bureau of Investigation) ranking for China except for the category of culture and heritage has been shown based on the survey in 2005 and 2007¹⁰³. Furthermore, by comparing the Olympic year 2008 with the year after, it can be seen that China has increased its reputation in the areas in which it was previously strong, such as culture and heritage. Small improvements have also been achieved in category of exports and tourism. Nonetheless, the incidents during torch delivery and the restrictions regarding Internet usage by foreign journalists and visitors led to negative attitudes for the country which even resulted in a lowered ranking position in the dimension of governance¹⁰⁴. In regard to these results, it can be claimed that despite the increase in exports and the financial growth that came along, the national image of China hasn't improved remarkably.

Even though, the Chinese government has still taken great effort in branding its national image during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. As the hosting city and its country are exposed to the audience worldwide in all perspectives while presenting themselves through all channels because of the Olympic Games, the games remain as a precious opportunity for reshaping national image. Media has been put into full use in order to fulfill the goal of national image improvement. Appearing in forms of newspaper, television and radio, media has played a significant role spreading the values of the hosting city and hosting country to the rest of the world while reflecting opinions and attitudes of receiving countries and their people back. The role and function of media will be further illustrated with sample news articles in Chapter 4.

¹⁰² Manzenreiter, *The Beijing Games in the Western Imagination of China: The Weak Power of Soft Power*, p.38.

¹⁰³ Panagiotopoulou, *Nation Branding and the Olympic Games: New Media Images for Greece and China*, p.2344.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p.2341.

3. Theory and methods

3.1 Theory

Two theories selected for this paper are branding theory and framing theory for they are able to support the study of media content and explain how news reports help to brand and frame a nation's image.

Starting with branding theory, one representative opinion in this field is of Simon Anholt. For Anholt (2010), a national image is “synonymous with the nation's reputation” supported by public opinions. Therefore, the force to brand a nation should also come from “the grassroots”¹⁰⁵. Following his logic, Anholt added that good branding strategy cannot “elevate or sustain” a poor image of a country with long accumulated stereotypes rooted deeply in minds of the people except from its citizens. “Advertising, PR (Public Relations) or slogans” cannot help countries with their national image building, but only substantial changes of governments' behavior. Even huge investment on national image improvement is “no proof that it works.”

Another view upon branding is of Gelder and Roberts (2007) which claims that “a branding process has the power to beautify a nation from top down”¹⁰⁶. Focusing particularly on city branding, they point out that city branding theory can be implemented on showcasing cities through proper “on-brand” measures such as “investment, physical and economic plans, attraction programs, events, and communications”¹⁰⁷.

The other theory is framing theory. Scholars like Entman (1993) states that frame is to promote a definition of a certain object through the usage of textual and visual devices. With the help of

¹⁰⁵ Lee, Did the Olympics Help the Nation Branding of China? Comparing Public Perception of China with the Olympics Before and After the 2008 Beijing Olympics in Hong Kong, p.210.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, cited in p.210.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

these devices, further interpretation, “moral evaluation and judgement”¹⁰⁸ can be performed on this object¹⁰⁹. Thus, frames are able to affect how people think about an issue “by defining the issues, presenting what or who is the cause or who is to blame, and suggesting what should be done to remedy the identified problem”¹¹⁰.

For Yao, media’s attitude towards a certain nation can bring impact on the public view on this nation as well. In the case of Olympic host countries, scholars argue that with conscious emphasis placed on certain aspects of the host country, it is possible to alter the public perception of the country during the games period.

NBI model established by Simon Anholt best combined these two theories. This model is designated to study how a country is viewed by the rest of the countries in the world. There are six dimensions of this index through which media frames national images, namely people, politics, exports, tourism, culture and heritage as well as investment and immigration¹¹¹.

When discussing the impact of media branding of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, these two theories and Anholt’s model will offer a good guidance for in-depth study on China and the city Beijing accordingly.

3.2 Method

The methodology adopted by this research are textual analysis, content analysis, critical discourse analysis and the “visibility and valence” model developed to study media by Manheim and Albritton (1984).

¹⁰⁸ Entman, R. M.: Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. In: Journal of Communication, 43. The United States: Wiley-Blackwell, 1993, p.52.

¹⁰⁹ Yao, Jiajun: The Effect of Hosting the Olympics on National Image: An Analysis of US Newspaper Coverage of Host Countries with Reputation Problems. Graduate Theses and Dissertations. Paper 11658 [<http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd/11658>], p.19.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p.20.

¹¹¹ Yao, The Effect of Hosting the Olympics on National Image: An Analysis of US Newspaper Coverage of Host Countries with Reputation Problems. Graduate Theses and Dissertations, p.24.

Content analysis is a “research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication”¹¹² as well as a useful method in “determining the underlying attitudes, biases and themes frequently employed in news coverage”¹¹³.

Another methods applied in this paper is critical discourse analysis (CDA) created by John Flowerdew. His model has also been built on the basis of former scholars like Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, and Teun van Dijk. Flowerdew especially stressed the use of “discourses” instead of the singular form discourse because he thinks “discourses” can refer to “specific sets of meanings expressed through particular forms and uses which give expression to particular institutions or social groups”¹¹⁴ Further explanation of “discourses” is also provided. From Flowerdew’s perspective, “discourses” vary from person to person and are manifested through text.¹¹⁵ Adding that discourse is related to ideology and can reflect “subjective understandings of the world”, “discourses” may even be able to impose ideology on subjects and in turn, reflect “struggles within society”¹¹⁶.

Another scholar Shi-xu argued that Western countries need to understand ‘cultural Others’¹¹⁷. He clarified his point by giving an example of Western and Chinese media coverage of Hong Kong’s change of sovereignty. Almost opposite discourses were used, for instance, as China referred to the change of sovereignty as a “return”, Western media regarded it as a “handover”¹¹⁸. This difference in media discourses led to a comment given by Flowerdew which points out that for international readers, it is good for them to know what are the preferred Chinese terms.

¹¹² Yao, The Effect of Hosting the Olympics on National Image: An Analysis of US Newspaper Coverage of Host Countries with Reputation Problems. Graduate Theses and Dissertations, cited in p.26.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Flowerdew, John: Critical Discourse analysis in historiography. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p.6.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p.7.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Flowerdew, Critical Discourse analysis in historiography, p.11.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

Except from these analysis methods, the method developed by Manheim and Albritton (1984) is chosen to measure national images presented through media. This method indicated that “visibility and valence” are the two dimensions with which media portrays a certain nation. For these two scholars, visibility refers to the “amount the prominence” of media coverage while valence represents the extent of favor or disfavor of one country¹¹⁹.

Even though there is an extensive literature on the Western perception of the national image of China, most studies have simply fallen into a positive or negative judgment. This study moves beyond the national news media to the international arena and examines the perception of China in two transnational news media (The New York Times and the Guardian from January, 2007 to December, 2009) in order to understand how the two newspapers portray China’s national image within the context of the Beijing Olympic Games.

¹¹⁹ Yao, The Effect of Hosting the Olympics on National Image: An Analysis of US Newspaper Coverage of Host Countries with Reputation Problems, p.11.

4. Comparison and discussion

4.1 Main topics in the Guardian and The New York Times

The Guardian of the United Kingdom and The New York Times of the United States are chosen as two example newspapers to study as they stand for the main stream of the Western media while representing America and Europe accordingly to some extent. Common grounds and different focuses can be seen and found in order to have a better understanding of how foreign media actually view the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

4.1.1. Air pollution

Pollution in Beijing, especially air pollution, has been discussed and queried extensively. Generally speaking, the selected news content can be divided into two categories. Part of the news articles focused on how China tried to reduce its air pollution and described the measures it carried out while the rest emphasized more on the fact that the Chinese government failed to fulfill their promise of reducing its air pollution to a IOC standard for hosting Olympic Games. Critiques from different parties were also mentioned.

Starting with the first focus, China has carried out series of measures to overcome the air pollution problem. First of all, a series of laws have been passed and issued to deal with environmental problems since China won the bid of hosting 2008 Beijing Olympic Games in 2001. According to one report in the Guardian, people and units that offend relevant laws will be punished accordingly. Industrial units, in particular, will be sentenced a disclosure if they have inappropriate sewage disposal or illegal discharge of hazardous chemicals. According to an interview in a news report with Du Shaozhong (杜少中), deputy director of the Beijing Environment Protection Bureau, measures would be carried out to “ensure a semblance of clean

air”¹²⁰. For instance, “the dirtiest power stations, construction sites and industries around the city”¹²¹ will come to a closure.

Secondly, Chinese government kept applying Blue Sky day system as a standard to measure air quality in Beijing. As a system introduced two decades ago to measure sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and PM₁₀ (Particulate Matter)¹²², it can monitor each pollutants and calculate “a 24-hour average”¹²³ for each. The Blue Sky system sets a maximum rating of 500, with a “good” air in Beijing rating any below 101¹²⁴. Mentioned in the same news report, though this system can be regarded as a breakthrough for the Chinese government, it is not strict enough in terms of air-quality index when comparing to the United States. That is to say, a Blue Sky day rated as 101 can be regarded as a polluted day in America. By making progress each year since the system was put into use, Blue Sky days in Beijing increased already from 100 days in 1998 to 244 days in the year of Beijing Olympic Games. With an obvious reduction on sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide, PM₁₀ remains as the most urgent problem so far, which “are attributed to construction, industry and cars”¹²⁵. However, the validity of the Blue Sky rating is often questioned.

¹²⁰ Burke, Jason: Scandal of the Cancer Villages Lurks Behind China's 'Green' Makeover, in Hou Wang Ge Zhun. In: The Guardian, 22 June 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jun/22/china.olympicgames2008>] (12 September 2017).

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² PM₁₀ is a general term for organic air pollutants measuring less than 10 µm in diameter, which are linked to increased respiratory morbidity and mortality. *Segen's Medical Dictionary*. S.v. "PM₁₀." Retrieved 07 September 2017 from [<http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/PM10>].

¹²³ Yardley, Jim: Beijing's Olympic Quest: Turn Smoggy Sky Blue. In: The New York Times, 29 December 2007, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/29/world/asia/29china.html>] (12 September 2017).

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Yardley, Jim: Beijing's Olympic Quest: Turn Smoggy Sky Blue. In: The New York Times, 29 December 2007, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/29/world/asia/29china.html>] (12 September 2017).

Reporter of this news article, James Barret Yardley¹²⁶, wrote quite a few reports about the 2008 Beijing Olympics, covering issues from air pollution to human rights, from the general situation of the games to the subsequent impact of the games on China. Several other reports of him will also be seen later in this chapter.

More concrete and bold measures have also been issued shortly before the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, especially in terms of traffic and construction control. According to the Guardian's news reports in July and August of 2008, traffic restrictions at that time were to allow vehicles to drive based on alternate-day driving rules according to their number plates, i.e. even number plates on one day, and odd number plates the next¹²⁷. This measure has functioned effectively, reducing the daily traffic flow from 3.3m vehicles to 1.65m on the road. Cars which offend this regulation will be fined a 100 yuan (£7.30). It was hoped that this imposed measure could reduce vehicle emissions by more than 60%¹²⁸. The measures have been extended to neighboring Tianjin, a city with the same population as New York¹²⁹. In addition to vehicle restriction, "around 300,000 high-polluting vehicles"¹³⁰ were even not allowed to use during the games. Speaking of construction control, all building sites, more than 100 factories in and around Beijing and 56 coal-fired power plants as well as factories were shut down during the games because of the air

¹²⁶ James Barret Yardley, appeared in selected reports as Jim Yardley, was born on 18. June, 1964 in the United States. With a background in history, he joined the Times in 1997. His reports mainly cover issues like "social unrest, minority uprising and pollution issues in China" In addition, he won the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting in 2006 with Joseph Kahn, Times bureau chief in Beijing. What brought them to this prize was eight news reports on the "ragged justice in China as the booming nation's legal system evolves." His work related to China is not limited to news reports. He also wrote a book with a title of "Brave Dragons: A Chinese Basketball Team, an American Coach, and Two Cultures Clashing". (<http://www.whitepages.com/name/James-Barrett/Yardley-PA>; Wikipedia.)

¹²⁷ Stewart, Elizabeth and agencies: IOC Praises Efforts to Reduce Air Pollution in Beijing. In: The Guardian, 7 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/07/china.olympics2008>] (12 September 2017).

¹²⁸ Walker, Peter: Beijing Olympics: 1.15m Cars Banned from Roads in Last Ditch Smog Effort. In: The Guardian, 21 July 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jul/21/china.olympicgames2008>] (12 September 2017).

¹²⁹ Watts, Jonathan: Olympics Environment: Beijing Shuts All Building Sites and More Factories to Clear the Smog. In: The Guardian, 29 July 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/jul/29/olympicgames2008.china>] (12 September 2017); Stewart, Elizabeth and agencies: IOC Praises Efforts to Reduce Air Pollution in Beijing. In: The Guardian, 7 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/07/china.olympics2008>] (12 September 2017).

¹³⁰ Stewart, Elizabeth and agencies: IOC Praises Efforts to Reduce Air Pollution in Beijing. In: The Guardian, 7 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/07/china.olympics2008>] (12 September 2017).

quality¹³¹. Just to mention that even smoking was banned in Olympic venues and in taxis which complied perfectly with the air-quality control¹³².

Efforts China took to guarantee the air quality were commented by Jacques Rogge, the President of the IOC, as China has done “everything that is feasible and humanly possible”¹³³. There is also further praise from him saying that “what they have done is extraordinary”¹³⁴ to decrease pollution level and secure the healthy condition of athletes. Interestingly enough, Rogge’s praise brought up an apology from several American cyclists who wore protective masks when arriving in Beijing. Author of news report also used words like “overly cautious”, “pleasantly surprised” and “progress” to describe what athletes felt about Beijing¹³⁵.

However, just as Muhammad Cohen wrote in his report on 11 August 2008 on the Guardian, though Chinese citizens are mostly happy to see and proud of the progress their country has made, foreigners don’t see eye to eye to these feelings¹³⁶. Doubts and critiques on the air quality in Beijing were still common to see in the selected news articles. Introduction on the website of the Guardian described Muhammad Cohen as “a native New Yorker in exile”¹³⁷ which goes well

¹³¹ Stewart, Elizabeth and agencies: IOC Praises Efforts to Reduce Air Pollution in Beijing. In: The Guardian, 7 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/07/china.olympics2008>] (12 September 2017); Yardley, Jim: After Glow of Games, What Next for China? In: The New York Times, 24 August 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/25/sports/olympics/25china.html>] (12 September 2017); Morrison, Donald: Smoke Clears, Dust Does Not in Beijing. In: The New York Times, 1 June 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/01/travel/01globe.html>] (12 September 2017).

¹³² Morrison, Donald: Smoke Clears, Dust Does Not in Beijing. In: The New York Times, 1 June 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/01/travel/01globe.html>] (12 September 2017).

¹³³ Stewart, Elizabeth and agencies: IOC Praises Efforts to Reduce Air Pollution in Beijing. In: The Guardian, 7 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/07/china.olympics2008>] (12 September 2017).

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Stewart, Elizabeth and agencies: IOC Praises Efforts to Reduce Air Pollution in Beijing. In: The Guardian, 7 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/07/china.olympics2008>] (12 September 2017).

¹³⁶ Cohen, Muhammad: Why China loves the Olympics. In: The Guardian, 11 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/aug/11/olympics2008.usa>] (12 September 2017).

¹³⁷ [<https://www.theguardian.com/profile/muhammadcohen>].

along with another description of him, “totally globalized Muhammad Cohen”¹³⁸. He has been around the world and worked for various newspapers and magazines. His first published novel, *Hong Kong On Air*, appeared to be a big hit. This also has something to do with his experience in Hong Kong from 1995 to 2004. During this period of time, he assisted the startup of CNBC (Consumer News and Business Channel) Asia and worked as an editor for Bloomberg News, *The Hong Kong Standard* and *South China Morning Post*¹³⁹. It can be said that he may have a well knowledge about Hong Kong and China.

Tom Scocca's description of air quality in Beijing in his report is a good example of the doubts. Using discourses like “cleaner”, “not even close to what most Americans would call clean”, “not the unbroken, choking fug of 2004” and “less suffocating”¹⁴⁰, it is easy to sense his dissatisfaction. Additionally, he stated that Chinese government might be “fiddling with the air-quality numbers”¹⁴¹ to meet China’s commitment of “Blue Sky” days made by IOC. Another point mentioned in his report was also a commonly concerned topic by foreign media: whether the air quality is healthy enough for athletes. Starting by saying this issue is “the difficult part”¹⁴², he gave his answer as the air condition “should not be too bad”¹⁴³ only when the traffic restrictions succeed in keeping only half of the total car flow off the street, shutting heavy factories and construction down during the games while making the wind blow from the north.

¹³⁸ [<http://www.muhammadcohen.com/biography/>].

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Scocca, Tom: True or False: China Is Fit to Play Host, in Beijing, 3 August 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/03/sports/olympics/803BEIJING-t.html>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

In another news report of the Guardian, a discourse was used by Jonathan Watts as “a typically Chinese phenomenon”¹⁴⁴ to describe the air pollution problem in Beijing. A further supplement to this was “compared to the past, the situation is much better”¹⁴⁵. This discourse was used when discussing the air pollution problem in Beijing. Watts pointed out that though the air quality still hasn’t reached international standards, Beijing was proud of its progress made so far. From my point of view, using such discourse, there is a sense of irony in the author’s words, indicating that China was not dedicating enough on these issues and was easily satisfied with its performance. It is therefore worth mentioning the background information of this author. Jonathan Watts has been working for the Guardian since 1996. Focusing on East Asia, he has covered plenty of main issues and incidents including the Sichuan earthquake, the Beijing Olympics as well as progress China achieved in terms of its media, society and environment¹⁴⁶. Furthermore, his position as president of the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of China from 2008-2009 and his book *When a Billion Chinese Jump: How China Will Save the World or Destroy it* are solid evidence of his good knowing and understanding of China¹⁴⁷.

Apart from the doubts, foreign critiques were mainly about China not realizing its promise about solving air pollution problem as the air quality didn’t meet the standard issued by IOC. Stated in one editorial report on The New York Times, Beijing was directly described as “China’s smog-swamped capital”¹⁴⁸ which failed to meet the commitment of improving air quality to IOC.

It was in reported on December 29, 2007 that the Blue Sky rating was approaching 500 on the past Thursday and Friday. It was especially disappointing for authorities of Beijing for Beijing

¹⁴⁴ Watts, Jonathan: Olympics Environment: Beijing Shuts All Building Sites and More Factories to Clear the Smog. In: The Guardian, 29 July 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/jul/29/olympicgames2008.china>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_Watts].

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Editorial: Empty Olympic Promises. In: The New York Times, 4 February 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/04/opinion/04mon2.html>] (12 September 2017).

only needed one more “good day to reach its goal of 245 Blue Sky days of year 2007”¹⁴⁹, ending up having only 241 days in which the air quality was rated as good, up from 100 in 1998¹⁵⁰. Commented by Yardley, the increasing Blue Sky days were China’s efforts taken to reassure the world that air quality for the coming Olympics would also be fine¹⁵¹.

According to news reports, the air quality failed to meet standards for four days out of seven slightly before the opening ceremony of 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Author used “Greyjng”¹⁵² to describe Beijing for its bad air quality and warned athletes about force endurance events like the marathon. “Haze”¹⁵³ is another word that appears almost in every reports related to air pollution. In addition, there was also words used by some author that imply his attitude towards air pollution problem in Beijing.

“So, what else can we see through the thick Beijing air in the most politically loaded Olympics since Moscow in 1980? It depends from where you are looking. (...) The pollution in Beijing is not restricted to the air. It invades the soul”¹⁵⁴.

Discourses like “thick Beijing air” and “pollution...invades the soul”¹⁵⁵ shown strong personal preference on this issue which is, obviously, negative. Discourse like “thick air” does not only

¹⁴⁹ Yardley, Jim: Beijing’s Olympic Quest: Turn Smoggy Sky Blue. In: The New York Times, 29 December 2007, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/29/world/asia/29china.html>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁵⁰ The Associated Press, Before Welcoming World, China Tries to Clear the Air. In: The New York Times, 20 May 2007, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/20/sports/othersports/20olympics.html?partner=rssnyt&emc=rss&pagewanted=all>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁵¹ Yardley, Jim: Beijing’s Olympic Quest: Turn Smoggy Sky Blue. In: The New York Times, 29 December 2007, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/29/world/asia/29china.html>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁵² Watts, Jonathan: Olympics Environment: Beijing Shuts All Building Sites and More Factories to Clear the Smog. In: The Guardian, 29 July 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/jul/29/olympicgames2008.china>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁵³ Mitchell, Kevin: Olympics: I’m worried, Bird’s Nest may be watching me. In: The Guardian, 17 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/17/olympics2008>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

appear once here. In report on The New York Times, Donald Morrison also used these words to describe Beijing from his sight. The air, according to his words, was “thick with oxides of many colors and complex carbon chains yet unclassified”¹⁵⁶. Right in front of Morrison’s window, he could see a smokestack, with “a gray plume” rising from its summit and disappearing into the “gray muckosphere”¹⁵⁷. The moment Morrison realized the coming of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games was, according to his judgement, when the plume suddenly stopped on one morning.

When looking forward and talking about the future development of China’s anti-pollution measure, different voices have been heard. Rogge, chief of IOC, was holding a positive view on these measures. He believed that this measure were not one-shot measure but long-term ones that can bring benefits to the city¹⁵⁸. However, the author of The Penguin History of Modern China, Jonathan Fenby said that factories will be reopened, vehicles will be put into used as before. Meanwhile, he thought that Olympic effect will be very tiny on China because China’s air pollution is too vast to alter¹⁵⁹. This point of view was also supported by Mr. Shen, a professor of Fudan University in Shanghai. He agreed that Beijing would return to being cloudy and “full of smog”¹⁶⁰ after the Olympic Games. He also thought that public expectation of better air quality would be raised and residents in Beijing would ask the government for further measures to keep having clear skies. Similar concern was also expressed in Yardley’s report, wondering whether the air quality can be remained or not¹⁶¹.

¹⁵⁶ Mitchell, Kevin: Olympics: I’m worried, Bird’s Nest may be watching me. In: The Guardian, 17 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/17/olympics2008>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Yardley, Jim: After Glow of Games, What Next for China? In: The New York Times, 24 August 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/25/sports/olympics/25china.html>] (12 September 2017)

¹⁵⁹ Cohen, Nick: Don’t Be Fooled. China Hasn’t Changed. In: The Guardian, 10 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/aug/10/china.pollution>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁶⁰ Yardley, Jim: After Glow of Games, What Next for China? In: The New York Times, 24 August 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/25/sports/olympics/25china.html>] (12 September 2017)

¹⁶¹ Yardley, Jim: Beijing’s Olympic Quest: Turn Smoggy Sky Blue. In: The New York Times, 29 December 2007, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/29/world/asia/29china.html>] (12 September 2017).

4.1.2 Human rights

Aside from pollution issues in Beijing, human rights issue is also very often mentioned and discussed before and during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Often criticized for issues concerning human rights, critiques during the 2008 Beijing Olympics period mainly covered aspects such as freedom of speech and legal protest, freedom of journalists reporting on the Olympic Games, domestic media control and issues concerning Darfur and Tibet. Voices from various perspectives are also collected and analyzed.

Before discussing the critics, the discussion and opinions from various parties before the starting of the 2008 Beijing Olympics are also worth studying. It was according to Wang Wei (王伟), secretary general of the organizing committee, that the Olympic Games could help improving human rights conditions in China and was a “golden opportunity to showcase the new China”¹⁶². He also added that a better city would be presented alongside the opening of the games. Public education campaigns guiding people’s behavior in public and at the sport stadium were mentioned as supportive measures to ensure a qualified host city. Except from good wishes, Wang also talked about commitments made by Beijing as the host city. He believed that foreign reporters would be given enough freedom in terms of reporting about various aspects of China, including social wealth imbalance problems and corruption issues¹⁶³.

Speaking of what the 2008 Beijing Olympics meant for China, reports of The New York Times gave its answer. It saw the Olympic Games as a “coming-out party”¹⁶⁴ for China’s rising status in regard of its economy, politics and military power. Later in June, 2008, The New York Times gave further comments regarding the human rights situation in China before the games. It was

¹⁶² The Associated Press, Before Welcoming World, China Tries to Clear the Air. In: The New York Times, 20 May 2007, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/20/sports/othersports/20olympics.html?partner=rssnyt&emc=rss&pagewanted=all>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Editorial: Olympics Bound. In: The New York Times, 15 September 2007, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/15/opinion/15sat1.html>] (12 September 2017).

stated that China's act was "contradictory"¹⁶⁵. On the one hand, China was longing to invite the world to its Olympics while on the other hand, failing to ensure the basic freedoms of its own people and visitors.

Chinese scholars also expressed their opinion on hosting Olympic Games. Yang Bojiang, who worked at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations said that China regarded the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games as "a turning point"¹⁶⁶ which would foster its society into a more mature one, enhance comprehensive national power and beautify its image in the world.

Besides, the 2008 Beijing Olympics also meant something for other countries, interestingly. Opinions from a Bulgarian (Ivan Slavkov) expressed his wish that China would "blunt the political and sporting dominance"¹⁶⁷ that the United States obtained due to the fall of the Soviet Union. Slavkov hoped that China could act as a "check"¹⁶⁸ on the U.S.

After the beginning of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, critiques from Western countries flew to China. To begin with, it has been pointed out in many of the selected news reports that Beijing as the host city hasn't done enough to guarantee the freedom of expression which in turn, is viewed by the Western countries as a violation of human rights. Not only has Beijing been criticized directly for its performance in terms of human rights, it has also been mentioned when talking critically about IOC's not clinging enough to its principle and regulations. In terms of human rights issue, when criticizing IOC for not fully recognizing and carrying out its duty, it is argued that 'deciding who gets to host the games should not simply turn on which city is most capable of delivering the event. The IOC must also consider whether "basic human rights will be

¹⁶⁵ Editorial: China's List of Olympic Don'ts. In: The New York Times, 11 June 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/11/opinion/11wed3.html>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁶⁶ Wong, Edward: Getting in Shape for Games, China Strengthens Ties With Neighbors. In: The New York Times, 5 August 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/05/sports/olympics/05diplomacy.html>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁶⁷ Longman, Jeré: Why China Has the Torch. In: The New York Times, 3 August 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/03/sports/olympics/03longman.html>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

upheld” and “the games cannot take place in a political and moral vacuum”¹⁶⁹. Furthermore, it was also stressed by Amnesty International that the IOC and BOCOG must keep the words of “complete media freedom”¹⁷⁰ and free internet censorship from China.

Facing these critics on IOC’s lack of impact on urging Beijing to improve human rights and media freedom, the chief of IOC responded that making China the host country of 2008 Beijing Olympics was “the right choice”¹⁷¹ as China and the world learnt more about each other. Paul Kelso has been a sports reporter for the Guardian and The Daily Telegraph selectively¹⁷². He spent 13 years at The Guardian and was a major reporter for the Beijing 2008 Olympics. After moving to The Daily Telegraph, he remained reporting about the London 2012 Olympics and the 2010 World Cup¹⁷³.

Additionally, though the IOC and the Olympics can’t bring thorough changes to certain problematic issues on nation states, positive changes can be triggered through sport. Rogge was confident that some obvious changes took place in China and other changes would also follow up in the future¹⁷⁴. What’s more, according to Jeré Longman’s report in The New York Times, IOC was already aware of the the risks when it entitled Beijing to host the 2008 Olympic Games in 2001. Nevertheless, IOC was hoping that the global attention gathered by the Olympic Games on China would “foster change”¹⁷⁵, just like the 1988 Summer Olympic Games in South Korea

¹⁶⁹ Fawcett, Alexandra: Torch of Freedom? In: The Guardian, 23 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/aug/23/olympics2008.china>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁷⁰ Borroff, Ryan: China Reneges and Censors Internet Access. In: The Guardian, 30 July 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/jul/31/olympicgames20083>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁷¹ Kelso, Paul: Triumph of Beijing Raises Bar for London, Says IOC Chief. In: The Guardian, 25 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/aug/25/olympics2012.olympics20081>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁷² [<https://www.theguardian.com/profile/paulkelso>].

¹⁷³ [<https://tvnewsroom.org/biography-images/paul-kelso-102316/>].

¹⁷⁴ Kelso, Paul: Triumph of Beijing Raises Bar for London, Says IOC Chief. In: The Guardian, 25 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/aug/25/olympics2012.olympics20081>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁷⁵ Longman, Jeré: Why China Has the Torch. In: The New York Times, 3 August 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/03/sports/olympics/03longman.html>] (12 September 2017).

helped accelerating the its transition to democracy. There were comments on IOC which could make this a more complete picture. Many experts argued that even a more powerful IOC would not be able to persuade the Chinese to improve their record on human rights issue as the Olympic Games generally didn't "undermine governments"¹⁷⁶.

As one of the major journalists of the selected news reports, Jeré Longman has been a sport reporter for The New York Times since October 1993 with a special focus on the Olympics. Mr. Longman was born in Coronado, California on July 17, 1954 and received his bachelor's degree in journalism from Louisiana State University in 1976. What also worth mentioning is that he was awarded first place in the APSE (Associated Press Sports Editors) breaking news category, together with his colleague Juliet Macur, for their report on the age issue of the Chinese gymnasts at the 2008 Beijing Olympics in 2009¹⁷⁷.

When talking about China, one author used discourses like "China's well-documented contempt for human rights", "an Olympics that is technically beyond reproach"¹⁷⁸. It is obvious to see the negative attitude of author towards China's human rights issue. Based on this attitude, a further discourse that the author chose to describe Beijing as the host city and China says more—"the capital of one of the world's most powerful dictatorships"¹⁷⁹. Describing Chinese government as dictatorship, it is clear that the author doesn't agree on what China positions itself as socialist country with people's democracy system. Differed in this aspect, interpretation of China's performance will vary. An editorial of The New York Times also expressed similar opinion, describing China as a "mighty economic power" which nobody would want to "antagonize"¹⁸⁰. It

¹⁷⁶ Longman, Jeré: Why China Has the Torch. In: The New York Times, 3 August 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/03/sports/olympics/03longman.html>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁷⁷ [http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/l/jere_longman/index.html].

¹⁷⁸ Fawcett, Alexandra: Torch of Freedom? In: The Guardian, 23 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/aug/23/olympics2008.china>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Editorial: The Torch and Freedom. In: The New York Times, 9 April 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/09/opinion/09wed2.html>] (12 September 2017).

was argued nevertheless in the editorial that China should at least prove and show to the rest of the world that it was worth giving the right to host the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Another author described the Olympics as ‘an irresistible magnet for human rights activists’ and “a right pain for Chinese leadership”¹⁸¹. However, the author also added that if China wish to become a global leader, the 2008 Beijing Olympics would be an ideal ‘training ground’ for China to endure and deal with criticism from the rest of the world¹⁸².

The second aspect on which China has been further blamed for is the freedom of journalists reporting on the Olympic Games. It was China’s promise in 2001 that “there will be no restrictions on journalists reporting on the Olympic Games”¹⁸³. However, several journalists commented on this saying that it is clear not the case. Several journalists have been denied press credentials because they have mentioned issues like Darfur or Tibet in their reports¹⁸⁴. Human Rights Watch also claimed that foreign reporters were under the risk of detention, harassment and intimidation¹⁸⁵. Tim Hancock, director of Amnesty International UK campaigns, also reacted on this. According to his words, censored internet access to journalists “compromised”¹⁸⁶ fundamental human rights. In addition, there are also visa restrictions for journalists coming to China. According to several reports, the government has “clamped down on allowances for protests in and around Olympic events after the turmoil that surrounded the Olympic torch relay earlier this year”¹⁸⁷.

¹⁸¹ Tran, Mark: Olympics is China's Training Ground for World Leadership. In: The Guardian, 7 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/news/blog/2008/aug/07/theolympicsischinasowntra>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Doran, James: Beijing Lays Down the Law for Army of Global Media. In: The Guardian, 27 July 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2008/jul/27/olympicsandthemedias.chinathemedias>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Editorial: Olympics Bound. In: The New York Times, 15 September 2007, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/15/opinion/15sat1.html>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁸⁶ Borroff, Ryan: China Reneges and Censors Internet Access. In: The Guardian, 30 July 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/jul/31/olympicgames20083>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁸⁷ Doran, James: Beijing Lays Down the Law for Army of Global Media. In: The Guardian, 27 July 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2008/jul/27/olympicsandthemedias.chinathemedias>] (12 September 2017).

Except from restrictions on reporting, journalists were also under risks of being arrested. According to the claim of Committee to Project Journalist, an advocacy group based in New York, 29 domestic reporters were imprisoned in China. The Committee therefore asked for the release of these journalist and a looser reporting restriction for journalists¹⁸⁸. Not only foreign journalists, but also domestic journalists were also under risk. According to Human Rights Watch, Beijing kept a “stranglehold”¹⁸⁹ on activities of local journalists. Domestic journalists are “as restricted as ever”¹⁹⁰. Other than journalists, human right activists were also under severe circumstance. Hu Jia (胡佳), one of the human rights activists, was taken away from his home by state police agents and was charged for “inciting subversion”¹⁹¹. The New York Times’ comment on this was that the Chinese government seemed tone determined to “silence” anyone who dares to tell the truth about “its abuses”¹⁹².

Domestic media control can be regarded as the third source from which critiques came. To give an example about the situation of media control, the flag-hanging act of two American protesters can be supportive. It was on on August 15, 2008 that Philip Kirk and Nicole Rycroft climbed up the back of one of the large Olympics billboards set outside China’s state television news headquarters and hung a banner with “Free Tibet”¹⁹³ on it. This incident, however, in the end didn’t appear much on media or any of CCTV’s (China Central Television) 18 channels¹⁹⁴.

¹⁸⁸ Yardley, Jim: Rights Groups See No Improvement in China. In: The New York Times, 7 August 2007, [<https://mobile.nytimes.com/2007/08/07/world/asia/07cnd-rights.html>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁸⁹ Editorial: Olympics Bound. In: The New York Times, 15 September 2007, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/15/opinion/15sat1.html>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁹⁰ Editorial: Empty Olympic Promises. In: The New York Times, 4 February 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/04/opinion/04mon2.html>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Haynes, Jonathan and agencies: Olympic Games: Climbers Held Over Tibet Banner Protest in Beijing. In: The Guardian, 15 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/15/china.tibet>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁹⁴ Hyde, Marina: Olympics: CCTV Quickly Wears Out Its Welcome With Singing the Country's Praises, in Beijing. In: The Guardian, amended on 18 April 2009, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/16/olympics2008.olympicsandthemedial>] (12 September 2017).

As a leader writer of the Guardian, Tania Branigan has been based in Beijing since 2008 as its China correspondent¹⁹⁵. She therefore has not only covered the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, but also other important stories including the Sichuan earthquake and riots in Xinjiang¹⁹⁶. Noting that this was an act of media control, Tania Branigan did not give direct comment to it but sarcastically wrote that “in fairness it is always difficult when a story breaks as far as two feet from your watercooler, so let us assume it was simply unable to get any reporters or cameramen outside in time”¹⁹⁷. A supplementary comment was added that the official channels of Chinese government was too busy playing the official Olympic song named Beijing Welcomes You (北京欢迎你) “at least 987 times in any news cycle”¹⁹⁸ to report such incident. As is concluded by Branigan, after all, “everyday is a good day to buy bad news”¹⁹⁹. Using again a sarcastic metaphor, the standpoint of the author is well seen.

Internet access to sensitive subjects was another aspect of media control listed by foreign media. According to what Branigan wrote in her report in August, 2008, websites with sensitive subjects like “the bloody crackdown on democracy protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989”²⁰⁰ became accessible after Chinese government raised the internet restrictions according to their commitments made for 2008 Beijing Olympics while some websites which sympathize Tibet could still not be accessed. Regarding China’s Olympic commitments, Kevan Gosper (head of the IOC’s press commission) responded as claiming progress was achieved while admitting restrictions still remained. Progress can be seen from the even further access of websites like

¹⁹⁵ [<https://www.theguardian.com/profile/taniabranigan>].

¹⁹⁶ [<http://www.chinafile.com/contributors/tania-branigan>].

¹⁹⁷ Hyde, Marina: Olympics: CCTV Quickly Wears Out Its Welcome With Singing the Country's Praises, in Beijing. In: The Guardian, amended on 18 April 2009, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/16/olympics2008.olympicsandthemedial>] (12 September 2017).

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Branigan, Tania: China Lifts Ban on Tiananmen Sites. In: The Guardian, 2 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/03/china.humanrights>] (12 September 2017).

BBC's Chinese-language service and Amnesty International. Nonetheless, inaccessible websites with content in terms of "Chinese democracy movement", "banned spiritual movement"²⁰¹ of Falun Gong, the International Campaign for Tibet and etc.

After discussing critiques covering different aspects, opinions from various units are to be illustrated. First of all, human rights groups, such as Amnesty International, accused China for not keeping its official promises to make human rights a "centerpiece"²⁰² of the Olympic Games. Opinions of Amnesty International towards China's human rights issues were mentioned in several news reports. As it was claimed in Peter Walker's report, China's failure of following its promise to improve human rights for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games in 2001 "betrayed the values of the Olympics"²⁰³. Peter Walker has been working for the Guardian since late 2006, covering mainly political issues. Before that, he has been in Beijing and Hong Kong due to work reasons when he was working for Agence France Presse and CNN (Cable News Network).²⁰⁴

In addition, it was already written in a report by the Amnesty International in August 2007 that some political activists in Beijing were facing "either tight surveillance or house arrest" while some Chinese journalists were being "targeted in an ongoing crackdown"²⁰⁵. In the same news report, actions of the police were also mentioned. Described by Amnesty International as a "clean-up" operation within the city, police officers were said entitled to check all citizens in Beijing and even to "detain people for up to four years without trial"²⁰⁶. Later in 2008, Amnesty

²⁰¹ Branigan, Tania: China Lifts Ban on Tiananmen Sites. In: The Guardian, 2 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/03/china.humanrights>] (12 September 2017).

²⁰² Yardley, Jim: Rights Groups See No Improvement in China. In: The New York Times, 7 August 2007, [<https://mobile.nytimes.com/2007/08/07/world/asia/07cnd-rights.html>] (12 September 2017).

²⁰³ Walker, Peter: China 'Betrayed' Values of Olympics by Failing to Improve Human Rights. In: The Guardian, 28 July 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jul/28/china.olympicgames2008>] (12 September 2017).

²⁰⁴ [<https://www.theguardian.com/profile/peterwalker>].

²⁰⁵ Yardley, Jim: Rights Groups See No Improvement in China. In: The New York Times, 7 August 2007, [<https://mobile.nytimes.com/2007/08/07/world/asia/07cnd-rights.html>] (12 September 2017).

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

International continued speaking out about the human rights' situation in China. Chinese government "continued to persecute and punish those who speak out for human rights ahead of the games"²⁰⁷. Amnesty International even issued a 17-page report analyzing the situation of human rights issues in China in which stated that China needed to further work on aspects like "the death penalty, detention without trial, the persecution of rights activists and the lack of media freedom"²⁰⁸. Concerning this report, the following points are worth noticing. First of all, it was claimed that restrictions on human right campaigners, foreign journalist and lawyers were intensified because Beijing was the host city. The waves of "imprisonments and abuses"²⁰⁹ occurred actually resulted from the Olympics. Secondly, it pointed out the reason why the Chinese government was trying to repress "dissident voices"²¹⁰. For China was trying to demonstrate to the rest of the world a national image of "stability and harmony"²¹¹.

Other human rights groups, Human Rights Watch for example, was criticizing Beijing on civil liberties, especially in terms of clamping down on dissent, "forced evictions and labor rights abuses"²¹² during the preparation period of the Olympics. It also pointed out before that 2008 Beijing Olympic Games would be the first Olympic Games to be held in an "undemocratic country"²¹³ since the 1984 Games in Sarajevo.

Additionally, China also received criticism from leaders foreign cities and governments. Bush government expressed Bush's concerns about human rights issues in China on a meeting with

²⁰⁷ Walker, Peter: China 'Betrayed' Values of Olympics by Failing to Improve Human Rights. In: The Guardian, 28 July 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jul/28/china.olympicgames2008>] (12 September 2017).

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Yardley, Jim: Rights Groups See No Improvement in China. In: The New York Times, 7 August 2007, [<https://mobile.nytimes.com/2007/08/07/world/asia/07cnd-rights.html>] (12 September 2017).

²¹³ Editorial: Olympics Bound. In: The New York Times, 15 September 2007, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/15/opinion/15sat1.html>] (12 September 2017).

some Chinese human rights groups. The president also claimed that China should seize the Olympics as the opportunity to show “compassion on human rights and freedom”²¹⁴. As a response to this concern, the Chinese government held the view that these remarks were “irresponsible”²¹⁵ and regarded as rude interference with China’s domestic affairs which may had sent “a seriously wrong message to anti-China hostile forces”²¹⁶.

However, despite of the criticism from overseas, voices of Chinese should also be heard and noticed. In reports of the Guardian, opinions of two Chinese citizens were mentioned. One responded to human rights issues with an attitude that he/she doesn’t think that there exists this problem and feels free living in Beijing. Regarding the Olympic Games in Beijing, he/she said that “who doesn’t support the Olympics” and it is just “foreigners that like to criticize China”²¹⁷. Mia, a 20-year old university student also shared this view by saying that “some people from the West just don't feel comfortable that China has now become powerful. And it is easy to pick on any country's problems”²¹⁸. In addition, 26-year-old graduate students Miao Qu of Columbia University also claimed that China was trying to make progress, but the pressure from the international community might be too much for China. He further expressed that as human rights issue is a problem that every country can have, China should be given more time to solve it²¹⁹. These claims, differ from the general Western opinion, reflect to some extent Chinese citizen’s view upon the human rights issue.

²¹⁴ Watts, Jonathan: China Accuses US of Trying to Sabotage Olympics. In: The Guardian, 31 July 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jul/31/olympics>] (12 September 2017).

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Zhang, Lijia: Time to Stop Criticising China—We've Already Come So Far. In: The Guardian, 10 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/aug/03/china.olympicgames20081>] (12 September 2017).

²¹⁸ Zhang, Lijia: At Last the Dream Comes True for China's Eccentric Pilgrims. In: The Guardian, 10 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/10/olympics2008.china>] (12 September 2017).

²¹⁹ Dembosky, April: Celebrating the Olympics, and Rallying for the Host. In: The New York Times, 3 August 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/03/sports/olympics/03rally.html>] (12 September 2017).

Author of these reports, Lijia Zhang, is a rare example of Chinese reporter who appears in foreign newspapers. As a writer, she studied creative writing at University of London in 2003 and later published many articles and also books. During the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, she was in the position of a producer of the BBC crew reporting the games. Describing herself as “a communicator between China and the world”²²⁰, she gave talks about contemporary China and also lectured at many top universities like Harvard and Stanford. She also wrote *‘Socialism is Great!’ A Worker’s Memoir of The New China* reflecting her early life in China.

Another voice from Chinese is also positive, saying that “the Olympics brought out the best in the Chinese people”²²¹. Ying Fu took people “cheered enthusiastically” for all athletes regardless of nationalities and “smiling volunteers” all around in the city as instances to show China’s sense of humanity. Furthermore, Fu ascribed the success of the Olympics to the “painstaking preparations” from 2001 to 2008 and the “persistent reform” since 1979 (i.e. reform and opening up policy issued by Deng Xiaoping (邓小平))²²². When talking about the time that China took to achieve the successful Olympics, author used words like “painstaking” and “persistent” to demonstrate that this was not an easy process but with difficulties and China went through with great perseverance. Speaking of human rights, from the Fu’s perspective, there has already achieved gradual improvement. With the success of the Olympics, China will continue enforce its commitment on this issue.

As a rare example in the Guardian in tone of writing, this article tried to demonstrate some positive and progressed aspects of China. However, when looking the author, it is not surprising anymore, for it was written by a Chinese. Further thoughts are, there is actually an general attitude and a position of people when viewing a certain country. Though subtle differences also

²²⁰ [<https://www.theguardian.com/profile/lijia-zhang>].

²²¹ Ying, Fu: Bringing Out the Best in Us. In: The Guardian, 4 September 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/sep/04/china.olympics2008>] (12 September 2017).

²²² Ibid.

exist between individuals, there stays one mainstream standpoint that overweighs the others. In accordance to articles collected on the Guardian which is written by either British or other non-Chinese, an overall atmosphere of being critical and doubting can be easily sensed.

Regarding China's performance and Chinese's satisfaction about the issues criticized by foreign countries, Muhammad Cohen took 'I (heart) China' as an example and made such comments:

'I love China' serves as the Beijing regime's succinct public response to foreign criticism of China's human rights record: If our people love our country, then you meddlers from outside ought to just shut up. It's a fair point.²²³

This comment speaks very much for most news reports collected which discussed about how different attitudes Chinese and foreigner were holding upon issues like human rights. For not only in one news report was it mentioned that foreign critics all focused on what China has failed to achieve while Chinese citizens saw all that China has accomplished. "They are proud of those achievements and resentful of foreigners pointing out China's shortcomings, especially when those failings don't bother the alleged victims"²²⁴.

4.1.3 Protests

While being criticized for human rights issue, there were also people standing out and protesting against the human rights's situation. To mention just a few, there was a gathering of 100 parents who peacefully protested against "shoddy"²²⁵ school construction and the death of their children in the earthquake happened in Sichuan Province on May 12, 2008. Another example can be that a group of Chinese scholars, journalist and lawyers who wrote an open letter to President of that

²²³ Cohen, Muhammad: Why China loves the Olympics. In: The Guardian, 11 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/aug/11/olympics2008.usa>] (12 September 2017).

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Editorial: China's List of Olympic Don'ts. In: The New York Times, 11 June 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/11/opinion/11wed3.html>] (12 September 2017).

time, Hu Jintao (胡锦涛) and some other national leaders in which they advocated that “Same Human Rights”²²⁶ or “Universal Human Rights”²²⁷ should also be added to the slogan China designed for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, namely “One World, One Dream” (同一个世界，同一个梦想). Under this claim, they asked for freeing arrested journalists. This claim didn’t come out of no reason. On August 6, 2008, a group called “Reporters Without Borders” were arrested after displaying a banner outside the Olympics headquarters. The same also happened to some pro-Tibetan independence advocates the day after for they hanged a banner with “One World, One Dream, Free Tibet 2008”²²⁸ stated on it.

Speaking of protest happened before and during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, though there was no successful protest at the ceremony, several protests marched on Chinese embassies in several other countries. In Nepal and India, protesters tried to attack Chinese consular offices. Nevertheless, there were also demonstrations in smaller scales took place in London, Brussels and elsewhere²²⁹. Not only did protesters aim at Chinese embassies, they also tried to protest during the torch delivery. Free Tibet protesters have been appearing all around the world and conducting demonstrations. There were also people gathering around the Olympic Park and protested for Tibet and Darfur²³⁰. Even at the final relay of the torch which was delivered to Li Ning (李宁), who won three gold medals, two silvers and one bronze at the 1984 summer

²²⁶ Yardley, Jim: Rights Groups See No Improvement in China. In: The New York Times, 7 August 2007, [<https://mobile.nytimes.com/2007/08/07/world/asia/07cnd-rights.html>] (12 September 2017).

²²⁷ Yardley, Jim: Abuses Belie China Pledge on Rights, Critics Say. In: The New York Times, 8 August 2007, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/08/world/asia/08china.html>] (12 September 2017); Guthrie, Marisa: China’s Game Face. In: Broadcasting & Cable, 4 August 2008, [<http://www.broadcastingcable.com/news/news-articles/chinas-game-face/84991>] (12 September 2017).

²²⁸ Yardley, Jim: Rights Groups See No Improvement in China. In: The New York Times, 7 August 2007, [<https://mobile.nytimes.com/2007/08/07/world/asia/07cnd-rights.html>] (12 September 2017).

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Hyde, Marina: Like It or Not, China Will Play Host to Political Games. In: The Guardian, 9 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/09/olympics20081>] (12 September 2017).

Olympics, protests were still going on. According to a pro-Tibet group, three US demonstrators had been hiding near the site and planning to hold up Tibetan flags during the ceremony²³¹.

Similar acts of flag hanging happened also when five protesters abseiled down the China Central Television building in Beijing and unfolded a banner which stated “Free Tibet” in Chinese and English on August 15, 2008. Another banner-hanging incident was happened on the same day, but at the back of one of the large Olympics billboards located outside China’s state television news headquarters. Philip Kirk and Nicole Rycroft, described by the author as ‘campaigners’ rappelled down the billboard’s front after unfurling a “Free Tibet” banner²³².

As a reaction to such protests on issues of human rights, Tibet and Darfur issues, opinions of several Western presidents and prime ministers were expressed in Steven Erlanger’s report. Steven Erlanger has been bureau chief for many capitals of countries in Europe, the Middle East and the Southeast Asia and is now the London bureau chief of The New York Times²³³. He achieved his Bachelor of Arts in political philosophy from Harvard in 1974. Then he began his career in journalism as an editor and correspondent for the Boston Globe in 1976. After that, he also wrote for various magazines²³⁴.

Mentioned in Erlanger’s report, US president of the time, George Bush, placed high emphasis on these issues and advocated for freedom of speech and religion. Nicolas Sarkozy, the former French president, was the one who initially suggested the boycott. However, he changed his statements by saying that he would reconsider this act depending on whether “the dialogue

²³¹ Walker, Peter: Beijing Olympics Open With Spectacular Ceremony. In: The Guardian, 8 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/08/olympics2008.china1>] (12 September 2017).

²³² Hyde, Marina: Olympics: CCTV Quickly Wears Out Its Welcome With Singing the Country's Praises, in Beijing. In: The Guardian, amended on 18 April 2009, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/16/olympics2008.olympicsandthemedial>] (12 September 2017).

²³³ [<https://www.nytimes.com/by/steven-erlanger?action=click&contentCollection=World&module=Byline®ion=Header&pgtype=article>].

²³⁴ [<http://www.nytimes.com/ref/international/erlanger-bio.html>]; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steven_Erlanger].

between China and the Dalai Lama was renewed”²³⁵. Later, he also raised human rights and Tibet issues during a lunch meeting with Hu Jintao (胡锦涛) and premier Wen Jiabao (温家宝)²³⁶. The French foreign minister, Bernard Kouchner, is an activist of human rights issue. He found himself “torn”²³⁷ regarding the judgement of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. He admitted that protests could only make it even harder for China to change and to find a solution, but was not able and not willing to criticize these protesters.

Two senior politicians from Merkel’s Christian Democratic party expressed opposite opinions about boycotting the Beijing Olympics.. Chair of the European parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering held the view that boycott on Beijing Olympics should be encouraged while Ruprecht Polenz, who served (2005-2013) as head of the Foreign Committee (“Außenpolitischer Ausschuß”) of the German Parliament, said a boycott should “remain on the table”²³⁸. However, it was also explained by Merkel’s Christian Democratic party that Merkel’s staying away from Beijing Olympics didn’t indicate a boycott nor a political protest against the Chinese military and police campaign in Tibet and surrounding areas. Commenting on heads of states refusing to attend the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Tsering Jampa, executive director for Europe of the International Campaign for Tibet, held her view that this act would help to push the Chinese government to deal with human rights issues and Tibet issue²³⁹. Brown, prime minister of Britain, determined to be in Beijing while planned to meet Dalai Lama. Not only Brown, but

²³⁵ Erlanger, Steven: For the West, Many Tough Calls on China. In: The New York Times, 13 April 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/13/world/13china.html>] (12 September 2017).

²³⁶ Walker, Peter: Beijing Olympics Open With Spectacular Ceremony. In: The Guardian, 8 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/08/olympics2008.china1>] (12 September 2017).

²³⁷ Erlanger, Steven: For the West, Many Tough Calls on China. In: The New York Times, 13 April 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/13/world/13china.html>] (12 September 2017).

²³⁸ Traynor, Ian and Watts, Jonathan: Merkel Says She Will Not Attend Opening of Beijing Olympics. In: The Guardian, 29 March 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/mar/29/germany.olympicgames2008>] (12 September 2017).

²³⁹ Erlanger, Steven: For the West, Many Tough Calls on China. In: The New York Times, 13 April 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/13/world/13china.html>] (12 September 2017).

also some British and US diplomats also traveled to Lhasa, the capital of Tibet after permission from the Tibetan²⁴⁰.

What's more, concerning the Tibet crisis, European foreign ministers in Slovenia and president of European Union from France planned to call for "a team of European officials to be dispatched to China on a fact-finding mission"²⁴¹. In regard of foreign countries' reaction to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, comments from news reports have been made. There was such an assumption that a sense that the Olympics was being used to "vilify the host"²⁴² would pervade in China if Merkel, the German Chancellor, did not attend the opening ceremony. In addition, though China was hoping that the Olympics can help bring focus to its economic achievement and progress in terms of opening-up, comments have been made that this occasion was used rather as a target that all criticism goes to, blaming China for its "one-party political system, human rights abuses, treatment of minorities and tightly controlled media"²⁴³.

Additionally, when speaking of unharmonious protests happened around, it was not hard to recall that China named this torch relay "a Journey of Harmony" (和谐之旅)²⁴⁴. The "Journey" faced eruptions in London, Paris, San Francisco and other cities²⁴⁵. Another author argued that it was Chinese government's "encouragement and heavy diet of propaganda"²⁴⁶ that led to the conviction of Chinese citizens that anti-Olympic protester were "interlopers bent on insulting

²⁴⁰ Erlanger, Steven: For the West, Many Tough Calls on China. In: The New York Times, 13 April 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/13/world/13china.html>] (12 September 2017).

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Traynor, Ian and Watts, Jonathan: Merkel Says She Will Not Attend Opening of Beijing Olympics. In: The Guardian, 29 March 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/mar/29/germany.olympicgames2008>] (12 September 2017).

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Yardley, Jim: China's Leaders Try to Impress and Reassure World. In: The New York Times, 8 August 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/09/sports/olympics/09china.html>] (12 September 2017).

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Cohen, Muhammad: Why China loves the Olympics. In: The Guardian, 11 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/aug/11/olympics2008.usa>] (12 September 2017).

China”²⁴⁷. It was claimed by this author that it was due to Chinese government’s information control and brainwashing of its citizens that made Chinese citizens believe Tibet has always been part of China and that Chinese government is trying to help this region get rid of its backwardness instead of “conducting cultural genocide and resource exploitation”²⁴⁸. A further statement made in terms of information control is that the author thinks that the Chinese public doesn’t know about Darfur or understand “how China could be part of genocide among Africans”²⁴⁹.

Apart from the opinions of foreign officials, acts of people who were closer to the Olympics offered their explanation and standpoint towards these protests and issues which had greater and more profound influence on the public as they saw what ordinary people didn’t see and they knew what ordinary people didn’t know. The US film director Steven Spielberg, for example, was the artistic adviser to the games. However, he resigned over China’s complicity in humanitarian crisis in Darfur²⁵⁰. Steven had been working since 2007 to help “choreograph the games’ opening ceremony”²⁵¹. Before his resignation, he used to warn Beijing that he would withdraw if nothing further would be done to cease the violence in Darfur. To further claiming his point, he also expressed his statement by saying that it was his conscience that could no longer allow him to continue with what he had been doing for the Olympics. While speaking of what happened in

²⁴⁷ Cohen, Muhammad: Why China loves the Olympics. In: The Guardian, 11 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/aug/11/olympics2008.usa>] (12 September 2017).

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Branigan, Tania: China Faces Renewed Criticism As Dissident's Subversion Trial Starts. In: The Guardian, 20 February 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/feb/20/china>] (12 September 2017).; Weaver, Matthew: Martin Hodgson and agencies, China Calls Spielberg's Resignation from Olympic Role ‘Unfair’. In: The Guardian, 13 February 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/feb/13/china.olympicsandthemedial>] (12 September 2017).

²⁵¹ Weaver, Matthew: Martin Hodgson and agencies, China Calls Spielberg's Resignation from Olympic Role ‘Unfair’. In: The Guardian, 13 February 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/feb/13/china.olympicsandthemedial>] (12 September 2017).

Darfur, he used discourse “the unspeakable crimes against humanity”²⁵² to describe it. Also, he thought that he should be devoted to help bring peace to this place but not spending time on Olympic ceremonies. In regard of the resignation of Steven Spielberg, China called it “unfair”²⁵³.

Chinese artist Ai Weiwei (艾未未), also the consultant for the design of the Bird’s Nest stadium, is another person close enough to speak about and react to the Olympics. In regard of the Beijing Olympics, Ai Weiwei said that the government was taking advantage of the ‘terrorist threat’ as an excuse to enhance its power. In the interview taken by the Guardian, he expressed his feeling that the control is stricter than before with the help of modern technology and China is spoiling the atmosphere of the games with “an overzealous security operation”²⁵⁴. By this “overzealous security operation”, reports of Chinese media can give an answer to that. 100,000 police and 300,000 surveillance cameras were put into practice, alongside with anti-aircraft missiles set next to the stadium. Checkpoints were also set up on roads into the city and identity card inspections as well²⁵⁵. Commenting on this, Ai Weiwei thought that people's rights are heavily violated and even questioned whether this is an sport event or some kind of warfare. He further stated that it was a shame and loss that the Beijing Olympics didn't turn out to be what it ought to be. Contrary to an event that welcomes international community to China, celebrates humanity and talks about peace and social harmony, this Olympics was taken place in “a police state”²⁵⁶ in which everywhere is under government’s tight control. According to Catherine Sampson, Ai Weiwei was attacking “the Chinese leadership repeatedly and unambiguously with

²⁵² Weaver, Matthew: Martin Hodgson and agencies, China Calls Spielberg's Resignation from Olympic Role ‘Unfair’. In: The Guardian, 13 February 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/feb/13/china.olympicsandthemedial>] (12 September 2017).

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Watts, Jonathan: Beijing Olympics: Police State Wastes Goodwill, Says Stadium Designer. In: The Guardian, 2 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/02/china.olympicgames2008>] (12 September 2017).

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

regard to the crackdown on dissent in the run-up to and during the games”²⁵⁷. And luckily, he had been speaking out loud while getting away from punishment so far because of his fame²⁵⁸. Catherine Sampson is reporter of the Guardian who has lived in mainland China for 15 years and in Hong Kong for another two years. Before joining the Guardian, she also based in Beijing and wrote reports for the Times. Other than these, she published a crime novel named The Pool of Unease which took Beijing as the background²⁵⁹. It can be assumed that her experience and those years spent in Beijing as well as other places in China can provide her a deep insight of China.

Another voice was heard from Zhang Yimou (张艺谋), the director of the opening and closing ceremonies. Instead of making comments on protests, he said that “the only other country in the world that could put on such mass display was North Korea”²⁶⁰. He also discussed about some political intervention in cultural events.

Not only these people who play an important role in the Olympic Games, other ordinary people were also taking actions and expressing their opinions. One example can be given is about Yang Chunlin (杨春林), an unemployed factory worker from Jiamusi in Heilongjiang, north-eastern China. Devoted to protest activities because of land seizures, Yang collected 10,000 signatures for an open letter of complaint with an title of “We want human rights, not the Olympics”²⁶¹. However, Yang and other protesters were worried about the fact that the government would press down on dissent to make sure a silent atmosphere for the Olympics²⁶².

²⁵⁷ Sampson, Catherine: After the Olympics, Will China Crack? In: The Guardian, 17 September 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/sep/17/china.olympics2008>] (12 September 2017).

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ [<https://www.theguardian.com/profile/catherinesampson>].

²⁶⁰ Walker, Peter: Beijing Olympics Open With Spectacular Ceremony. In: The Guardian, 8 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/08/olympics2008.china1>] (12 September 2017).

²⁶¹ Branigan, Tania: China Faces Renewed Criticism As Dissident's Subversion Trial Starts. In: The Guardian, 20 February 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/feb/20/china>] (12 September 2017).

²⁶² Ibid.

People standing opposite from the standing point of these protesters also stated that though they admit those negative stories, the West shouldn't be standing in "moral judgement"²⁶³. Concerning the Tibetan issues, Zhang held the view that the fact of this issue can be more complicated than "the Chinese government's ruthless crackdown on Tibetan protest"²⁶⁴. Additionally, Zhang thought that as long as there was a "violent racial riot"²⁶⁵, no country can tolerate that, just as China.

In addition, Chinese argued that foreign countries were putting too much pressure on China. As a reaction to former French President Mr. Sarkozy's decision to "a partial boycott"²⁶⁶ of the Beijing Olympic Games, a boycott of French goods was prompted by some Chinese citizens and was spread online which arouse a rather big impact. Mentioned in the same report, Chinese netizens circulated a photograph which showed how a protester was trying to snatch the torch from a women in wheelchair. Details were also given as the protester was wearing a cap in Tibetan colors and the women was highly praised for protecting the Olympic flame²⁶⁷.

Foreign reporters also made comments on the Olympics in Beijing. One gave comments like this: "even without overt protest, it might be difficult to say where the sport ends and the politics begin"²⁶⁸. Stressing again on the political facet of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the games has been viewed by many journalists as an event with which the Chinese government tool full use of to

²⁶³ Zhang, Lijia: Time to Stop Criticising China—We've Already Come So Far. In: The Guardian, 10 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/aug/03/china.olympicgames20081>] (12 September 2017).

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Erlanger, Steven: For the West, Many Tough Calls on China. In: The New York Times, 13 April 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/13/world/13china.html>] (12 September 2017).

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Hyde, Marina: Like It or Not, China Will Play Host to Political Games. In: The Guardian, 9 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/09/olympics20081>] (12 September 2017).

demonstrate its political power throughout its territory²⁶⁹. In accordance with Hyde, Sampson also held the view that the Olympics would “mark an important point in China’s political development”²⁷⁰. Based on this report, provincial officials were warned not to let protesters from their province disrupt the games, otherwise they would suffer. Sampson described this action as “a nationwide crisis-management campaign”²⁷¹, direct enough to see her point. Eberhard Sandschneider, a China expert at the German Council on Foreign Relations in Berlin, expressed his concern over the protests happened before and during the Olympic Games. Admitting that China is such an vigorous economic power, his judgement was that sovereignty still remained the priority for Chinese government. The Olympic Games was important, but not so important as sovereignty²⁷². What’s more, as a sarcasm to the Beijing Olympics, it was mentioned in an article named “From Beijing with lessons for London” about things London should not do when holding its Olympics. The author wrote that it was to be avoided to “sentence grandmothers to a year's re-education through labour because they apply to protest about something”²⁷³.

Cover of magazines also told readers some opinions that words didn’t say or highlighted some statements from the Western world. It was on a German magazine “Der Spiegel” that printed “the five Olympic rings retooled in barbed wire, with a picture of Chinese leaders underneath”²⁷⁴

²⁶⁹ Hyde, Marina: Like It or Not, China Will Play Host to Political Games. In: The Guardian, 9 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/09/olympics20081>] (12 September 2017).; Sampson, Catherine: After the Olympics, Will China Crack? In: The Guardian, 17 September 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/sep/17/china.olympics2008>] (12 September 2017).

²⁷⁰ Sampson, Catherine: After the Olympics, Will China Crack? In: The Guardian, 17 September 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/sep/17/china.olympics2008>] (12 September 2017).

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Erlanger, Steven: For the West, Many Tough Calls on China. In: The New York Times, 13 April 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/13/world/13china.html>] (12 September 2017).

²⁷³ Kelso, Paul; Hyde, Marina; Williams, Richard; Ingle, Sean; Kitson, Robert; Donegan, Lawrence; Fotheringham, William; Bierley, Steve; Bull, Andy and Nichols, Pete: From Beijing with Lessons for London. In: The Guardian, 25 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2008/aug/25/olympicsfrombeijingwithles>] (12 September 2017).

²⁷⁴ Erlanger, Steven: For the West, Many Tough Calls on China. In: The New York Times, 13 April 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/13/world/13china.html>] (12 September 2017).

on its cover. A cartoon on *Le Monde*, a French newspaper, drew a citizen was told to face his armchair and stay away from the television as his “training for the Olympics”²⁷⁵.

4.1.4 Gymnastics athletes and Liu Xiang

When talking about Chinese athletes took part in the Olympics, athletes in fields of gymnastics, diving, table tennis are always given more attention than the others as Chinese teams are more advantageous and more promising of winning gold medals in these fields. Chinese news reports always describe these athletes as heroes and pride of China, however, foreign news agencies usually see different things in these athletes and criticize on issues like under-age gymnastic athletes and great pressure famous athletes suffer from great number of sport audience.

Starting from discussion about under-age gymnastic athletes, there have been quite a few reports on both newspapers talking about this issue. Two authors stood on counterparts and discussed this issue in a report named “Is 14 is too young to be competing at the Olympics?”²⁷⁶. The article was published on the *Guardian* on February 27, 2008. Alan Jones was the one saying yes to this question. By making his point, he was arguing that though teenagers of age 14 may look mature enough to handle what is being demanded, the matureness of his or her mind might be another thing. Jones took Tom Daley as an example who seemed well capable of performing well in the Olympics for Britain. However, as a tennis coach himself, Jones pointed out that teenagers who can deal well with extraordinary pressure were exceptions. This pressure can be from their parents, coaches or associations out of a strong will of winning. Jones further explained that child with talent usually got trained very early on in professional sport and made their fortunes before they hit their mid-20s.

²⁷⁵ Erlanger, Steven: For the West, Many Tough Calls on China. In: *The New York Times*, 13 April 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/13/world/13china.html>] (12 September 2017).

²⁷⁶ Jones, Alan and Davies, Sharon: Is 14 Too Young to Be Competing At the Olympics? In: *The Guardian*, 27 February 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/feb/27/diving>] (12 September 2017).

The other author who gave the opposite answer to this question argued that this age issue depended also partly on whether players themselves were ready for an Olympics or not. Also as a player who won medal on Olympics at the age of only 13 in 1976²⁷⁷, Sharron Davies stated that Tom Daley got all things he needed for the Olympics competition. Also based on her own experience, she added that the experience Tom gained in the Beijing Olympic Games would pave the road for his even better performance in 2012 London Olympics. As a sport player who has been trained for so long just trying to get ready for performing on one day and win a medal, Davies believed that participating in Beijing Olympics would only lead Tom to that end. As her last point, Davies mentioned age issue of gymnasts and compared that to divers. By making her point clear, she distinguished these two types of athletes from each other by stressing that the key of diving is more of acrobatics than light figures which is more significant for gymnasts.

Following the discussion about age of gymnasts, it was in 1997 that the International Gymnastics Federation issued a rule to raise the age of gymnasts from 15 which has been applied since the 1980s and to ensure that competitors must be at the age of 16 when participating in the games of that year²⁷⁸. This amendment of age limit was mean to avoid younger players being pushed too hard and thus brought negative affect to their mental and physical development²⁷⁹. However, in 2008 Beijing Olympics, under-age gymnast issues came again into problem. In the report of the Guardian on August 15, 2008, chief medical officer of the International Olympic Committee admitted that age gymnasts were manipulated and at least one of China's gold medallists from

²⁷⁷ Jones, Alan and Davies, Sharon: Is 14 Too Young to Be Competing At the Olympics? In: The Guardian, 27 February 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/feb/27/diving>] (12 September 2017).

²⁷⁸ Nichols, Pete: Olympics: Chinese Gymnasts Accused of Being Under Minimum Age. In: The Guardian, 18 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/18/olympics2008.olympicsgymnastics>] (12 September 2017).

²⁷⁹ Branigan, Tania: Olympics: Chinese Gymnasts Under Investigation After Underage Claims. In: The Guardian, 22 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/22/olympics2008.olympicsgymnastics>] (12 September 2017).

the team event was underage²⁸⁰. He Kexin (何可欣), one of the gold-medallists of Chinese team, was stated to have just turned 13 in 2007 in one report found on Xinhua website (an official news agency of the government). However, together with some other reports, they were amended or removed in the wake of questions²⁸¹.

Another gymnast Yang Yilin (杨伊琳), who won the bronze for the Chinese team on the 2008 Olympic Games, was also questioned about her age. Proofs have been provided by the articles of The New York Times, listed documents found in Chinese news reports that wrote her age differently. By listing these instances, Nichols used words “gave her age as”²⁸² repeatedly to describe how her age was stated in the reports. Age of He was shown in 13 or 14 in different newspapers while in the case of Yang, her records in online files of the General Administration of Sport in China showed her birth date as August 26, 1993, undoubtedly under 16 in 2008. It is also worth noticing that Nichols mentioned in this report especially those years that showed Yang’s birth year as 1993, i.e. 2004, 2005 and 2006. It was also mentioned in another report that Yang’s year of birth was given as 1992 last year which differed from what was listed before²⁸³. Two evidence provided by New York Times showed that He Kexin's birthday was listed as January 1, 1994 in a “2007 national registry of Chinese gymnasts”²⁸⁴ and also in an intercity competition in Chengdu in 2006. However, the birth date stated on He’s passport is January 1,

²⁸⁰ Scott, Matt: Olympics: IOC Admits to Age Concern After Gymnastics Allegations. In: The Guardian, 15 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/15/olympics2008.olympicsgymnastics1>] (12 September 2017).

²⁸¹ Branigan, Tania: Olympics: Chinese Gymnasts Under Investigation After Underage Claims. In: The Guardian, 22 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/22/olympics2008.olympicsgymnastics>] (12 September 2017).

²⁸² Nichols, Pete: Olympics: Chinese Gymnasts Accused of Being Under Minimum Age. In: The Guardian, 18 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/18/olympics2008.olympicsgymnastics>] (12 September 2017).

²⁸³ Branigan, Tania: Olympics: Chinese Gymnasts Under Investigation After Underage Claims. In: The Guardian, 22 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/22/olympics2008.olympicsgymnastics>] (12 September 2017).

²⁸⁴ Longman, Jeré and Macur, Juliet: Records Say Chinese Gymnasts May Be Under Age. In: The New York Times, 27 July 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/27/sports/olympics/27gymnasts.html>] (12 September 2017).

1992, which was issued February 14, 2008. Based on these sayings and evidences, it is rational for readers to be suspicious about Yang's records of the years even earlier. Will they be different from the records that are stated in these three years? As for He, her inconsistent records also brings query. No answers were given, but questions are left.

Suspicion about these young gymnasts came mostly from their appearance, according to several reports²⁸⁵. In terms of solutions to these problems, what can be sensed from responses of the International Gymnastics Federation is that there is actually not much can be done to this issue. The secretary-general of the Federation told the author about what they have done to check the record. According to Andre Gueisbuhler, the secretary general of the International Gymnastics Federation, they asked Chinese gymnastics federation to send documents to prove the ages of gymnasts and what they received was copy of passports with age on it²⁸⁶. As a conclusion, Gueisbuhler said that was all they could check²⁸⁷. Limitations and difficulties of proving the age of gymnasts were also argued in another report. Arne Ljunqvist, who heads the IOC's medical commission, expressed that it was hard to conduct tests which were scientifically and legally accurate. The error range of test results could be up to two years which is, therefore, not reliable enough²⁸⁸. Additionally, Giselle Davies, director of communications for the IOC, said that investigation was undertaken based on information collected and was designed to clear up the

²⁸⁵ Branigan, Tania: Olympics: Chinese Gymnasts Under Investigation After Underage Claims. In: The Guardian, 22 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/22/olympics2008.olympicsgymnastics>] (12 September 2017).; Nichols, Pete: Olympics: Chinese Gymnasts Accused of Being Under Minimum Age. In: The Guardian, 18 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/18/olympics2008.olympicsgymnastics>] (12 September 2017).

²⁸⁶ Longman, Jeré and Macur, Juliet: Records Say Chinese Gymnasts May Be Under Age. In: The New York Times, 27 July 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/27/sports/olympics/27gymnasts.html>] (12 September 2017).

²⁸⁷ Nichols, Pete: Olympics: Chinese Gymnasts Accused of Being Under Minimum Age. In: The Guardian, 18 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/18/olympics2008.olympicsgymnastics>] (12 September 2017).

²⁸⁸ Scott, Matt: Olympics: IOC Admits to Age Concern After Gymnastics Allegations. In: The Guardian, 15 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/15/olympics2008.olympicsgymnastics1>] (12 September 2017).

situation and “put it to rest”²⁸⁹. In particular, the IOC did not mention the individuals concerned²⁹⁰.

Coaches of Chinese gymnastic team also expressed their opinion on this issue. Huang Yubin (黄玉斌), head coach of Chinese team, denied these claims by arguing Asian figures are different from Westerners²⁹¹. Another coach, Lu Shanzhen (陆善真), provided documents of He to erase doubts which included an old passport, a residency card and her current identification card²⁹².

Additional support came from Cui Dalin (崔大林), China’s deputy sports minister of that time. Facing these suspicions and blames, he insisted that all members of the Chinese gymnastics teams met the age standard issued by IOC²⁹³. As an explanation to age discrepancy appeared in various news reports, Cui ascribed it to He’s transfer from one local team to national team during which a mistake was made²⁹⁴. Responding to suspects from New York Times, Chinese official also provided copies of passports of He Kexin, a gold-medal favorite in the uneven parallel bars, and Jiang Yuyuan (江钰源), indicating they are 16²⁹⁵. It was later on in October 2008 that the controversy over China’s under-age gold medallist of gymnastics came to an end. The International Gymnastics Federation announced that it was happy that competitors were not

²⁸⁹ Branigan, Tania: Olympics: Chinese Gymnasts Under Investigation After Underage Claims. In: The Guardian, 22 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/22/olympics2008.olympicsgymnastics>] (12 September 2017).

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Staff and agencies, Olympics: China Insists Gymnasts Were Old Enough to Compete, 24 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/24/olympics2008.olympicsgymnastics>].

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Longman, Jeré and Macur, Juliet: Records Say Chinese Gymnasts May Be Under Age. In: The New York Times, 27 July 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/27/sports/olympics/27gymnasts.html>] (12 September 2017).

underage²⁹⁶. A five-week investigation was undertaken through document-checking, including “passports, identity cards and family booklets or Household Registers, confirm the ages of the athletes”²⁹⁷.

Liu Xiang (刘翔), a Chinese 110m-hurdler, gained his fame at the 2004 Athens Olympics when he won China’s first men’s track and field gold medal. As this medal was a breakthrough on Chinese sport history when Chinese athletes finally broke into an area previously dominated by Western athletes, Liu has been since then regarded as a hero and a hope of China’s ascent towards “a sporting superpower”²⁹⁸. This statement is a well-grounded one as Liu’s performance at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games was what no Asian man had ever achieved. Liu’s record not only matched with Colin Jackson’s 11-year-old world record, but also beat American Terrence Trammell into the second place²⁹⁹. Liu Xiang’s original words describing his performance in Athens also shows why it matters so much to Chinese people. “It is kind of a miracle. It is unbelievable — a Chinese, an Asian, has won this event. It is a proud moment not only for China but for Asia and all people who share the same yellow skin color”³⁰⁰, he said.

²⁹⁶ Bryant, Tom and agencies, ‘Underage’ Chinese Olympic Gymnast Was Eligible to Compete. In: The Guardian, 1 October 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/oct/01/gymnastics.olympicsgymnastics>] (12 September 2017).

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Hong, Zhang: China Still Loves Liu. In: The Guardian, 19 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/aug/19/olympics2008.china>] (12 September 2017); Watts, Jonathan: ‘The Pressure from 1.3bn People Hurt Him’. In: The Guardian, 18 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/18/olympics2008.olympicsathletics2>] (12 September 2017).

²⁹⁹ Watts, Jonathan: ‘The Pressure from 1.3bn People Hurt Him’. In: The Guardian, 18 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/18/olympics2008.olympicsathletics2>] (12 September 2017).

³⁰⁰ Vecsey, George: Pain Travels Far Beyond a National Hero’s Leg. In: The New York Times, 18 August 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/19/sports/olympics/19vecsey.html>] (12 September 2017); Yardley, Jim: The State Requests That Citizen Liu Win Gold. In: The New York Times, 3 August 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/03/sports/playmagazine/803HURDLER-t.html>] (12 September 2017).

Others describe Liu as the “face of the Beijing Olympics”³⁰¹ and “a source of immense national pride”³⁰². This is not just a metaphor, Liu was actually appearing frequently in advertisements, “racing animals in Visa commercials, popping Nutrilite dietary supplements with 100m world record holder Asafa Powell and advertising Nike trainers”³⁰³. Besides, he was also the spokesman for Coca-Cola, which has been long a sponsor for the Olympic Games. This “poster boy”³⁰⁴ was even compared to what David Beckham meant for England and often considered even more popular than basketball superstar Yao Ming (姚明) whose NBA (National Basketball Association) success is “a point of immense national pride”³⁰⁵ for Chinese citizens. However, his performance on the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games was a shock to both Chinese and foreigner audience—he pulled out of the 110m hurdles. Recalling from that day, “60,000 of the 81,000 seats”³⁰⁶ in the Bird’s Nest were occupied and Liu’s name was chanted repeatedly out of people’s great wish for him to win the game again.

Reactions towards his decision varied among Chinese and foreign audience, professional sporting staff like his coach and journalists over the world. As Liu Xiang’s coach, Sun Haiping (孙海平) expressed his feeling about Liu’s withdrawal and also gave explanation towards that. According to Sun, Liu has been suffering from tendon problems for long, “even before he won gold at Athens

³⁰¹ Mathiason, Nick: Sponsors Also Aim for Olympic Gold. In: The Guardian, 6 January 2008, [https://www.theguardian.com/business/2008/jan/06/olympics2012.marketingandpr] (12 September 2017); Watts, Jonathan: ‘The Pressure from 1.3bn People Hurt Him’. In: The Guardian, 18 August 2008, [https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/18/olympics2008.olympicsathletics2] (12 September 2017).

³⁰² Watts, Jonathan: ‘The Pressure from 1.3bn People Hurt Him’. In: The Guardian, 18 August 2008, [https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/18/olympics2008.olympicsathletics2] (12 September 2017).

³⁰³ Mathiason, Nick: Sponsors Also Aim for Olympic Gold. In: The Guardian, 6 January 2008, [https://www.theguardian.com/business/2008/jan/06/olympics2012.marketingandpr] (12 September 2017).

³⁰⁴ Vulliamy, Ed, ‘The Nest Generation.’ The Observer/Guardian Unlimited, Sunday, June 29, 2008. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/jun/29/olympicgames2008.china (accessed July 11, 2017).

³⁰⁵ Yardley, Jim: The State Requests That Citizen Liu Win Gold. In: The New York Times, 3 August 2008, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/03/sports/playmagazine/803HURDLER-t.html] (12 September 2017).

³⁰⁶ Vulliamy, Ed, ‘The Nest Generation.’ The Observer/Guardian Unlimited, Sunday, June 29, 2008. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/jun/29/olympicgames2008.china (accessed July 11, 2017).

2004”³⁰⁷. This problem appeared again during Liu’s training several days before the competition and intensified again during warming-up slightly before the game. Though professional medical team was working on Liu’s injury, nothing could help. Sun even broke down in tears after finish explaining the whole situation. Feng Shuyong (冯树勇), head coach of China’s athletics team, supplemented on the situation by saying that Liu still determined to enter the first round in spite of his painful situation and he would not have made this decision if there was any other choices³⁰⁸.

Taking into consideration the possible frustration and fury of Chinese audience towards Liu Xiang’s performance, except from Sun Haiping and Feng Shuyong’s defending and showing understanding to Liu’s decision, authorities also asked Chinese websites to run “a piece of commentary, first appearing on the state-run People’s Daily, urging people to show sympathy to Liu and respect his decision”³⁰⁹.

As for ordinary audience, huge disappointment, frustration, fury and sympathy pervaded over the internet were all of their voices. Starting with domestic audience, most people seemed to understand Liu’s decision on quitting the game. According a poll taken on the website of Beijing’s Economic Observer, 51% of the respondents expressed their understanding to Liu while the rest still held the view that he should have at least finished the competition, in whatever way³¹⁰. This percentage of people that were for and against Liu’s withdrawal was again proved in Jonathan Watts’s report on August 18, 2008. Stated in that report, there were more sympathetic comments, showing awareness and understanding of Liu’s serious injury and huge pressure he

³⁰⁷ Bull, Andy: Olympics: Defending Champion Liu Xiang Pulls Out of 110m Hurdles. In: The Guardian, 18 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/18/liuxiang>] (12 September 2017).

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Hong, Zhang: China Still Loves Liu. In: The Guardian, 19 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/aug/19/olympics2008.china>] (12 September 2017).

³¹⁰ Vecsey, George: Pain Travels Far Beyond a National Hero’s Leg. In: The New York Time, 18 August 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/19/sports/olympics/19vecsey.html>] (12 September 2017).

was under as well as asking others to believe in Liu and to calm down³¹¹. “We are just the audience. I am sure he is the one that regrets this the most, not anyone else. We feel disappointed, of course, but we still like him as a person”³¹², spoken by Feng Gang, who came with four of his friends far away from Chongqing, a city in southern China. However, people who couldn’t accept Liu’s performance on the Olympics left comments accusing Liu was “playing with the nation’s emotions”³¹³ and describing Liu’s quitting as “a terrible anti-climax”³¹⁴. As was expressed online, some comments indicated that audience were not there to watch Liu quit and he should have even “crawl to the finish line”³¹⁵ if he really wish to dedicate to the nation. Other comments also said about Liu’s injury and blaming him for not using the last four years well enough to recover from the injury. More emotional comments drew directly to the conclusion that Liu had always meant to lose.

In report of Jonathan Watts on August 18, 2008, content of one online post was mentioned. According to this post, the poster stated that “ordinary Chinese people who have had their hopes fanned by too much propaganda” which made them be blind about the “open secret” of Liu’s poor sporting and health condition while expecting this “indestructible flying man” to win another gold medal³¹⁶. Speaking for Liu, this poster thought that Liu’s quitting might be the best result to avoid even worse insult.

³¹¹ Watts, Jonathan: ‘The Pressure from 1.3bn People Hurt Him’. In: The Guardian, 18 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/18/olympics2008.olympicsathletics2>] (12 September 2017).

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

From the perspective of journalists, Marina Hyde put Liu's story as the biggest disappointment of the Beijing Olympics and added that "a nation really did seem to mourn"³¹⁷. There is also other news comments that described Liu's withdrawal as "China's Olympic Games lost its biggest star which shocked the 90,000 strong crowds into silence"³¹⁸. Michael Phillips, another journalist, made his point in his report with a title of "Liu dashed hopes of a nation"³¹⁹ that no matter Liu take part again in the 2012 Olympic Games in London to "make up for this hell" or not, he just cannot replace this loss and the loss of 1.3 billion people.

Besides, opinion of a Chinese writer (Wang Xiaoshan 王小山) of Sports Illustrated (体育画报) was mentioned in Jonathan Watts' report. It was this Wang's assumption that Liu was largely hurt by the pressure from 1.3 billion people. He also added that he believed that it might be more of psychological reason than other reasons that hold Liu from recovery³²⁰. This argument was also supported by one of the selected news reports of New York Times in which stated that "one thing he will not lose is the pressure. He is still expected to fulfill the expectations of one-fifth of humanity"³²¹. Mentioned in the same report, watching Liu Xiang getting the gold medal ranked highest in the list of Chinese people's wish of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, even higher than "staging a successful Olympics"³²². From another perspective, this ranking also showed where the pressure on Liu Xiang could possibly originate from.

³¹⁷ Kelso, Paul; Hyde, Marina; Williams, Richard; Ingle, Sean; Kitson, Robert; Donegan, Lawrence; Fotheringham, William; Bierley, Steve; Bull, Andy and Nichols, Pete: From Beijing with Lessons for London. In: The Guardian, 25 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2008/aug/25/olympicsfrombeijingwithles>] (12 September 2017).

³¹⁸ Bull, Andy: Olympics: Defending Champion Liu Xiang Pulls Out of 110m Hurdles. In: The Guardian, 18 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/18/liuxiang>] (12 September 2017).

³¹⁹ Phillips, Michael: Liu Dashes Hopes of A Nation. In: The Guardian, 18 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/18/olympics2008.olympicsathletics3>] (12 September 2017).

³²⁰ Watts, Jonathan: 'The Pressure from 1.3bn People Hurt Him'. In: The Guardian, 18 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/18/olympics2008.olympicsathletics2>] (12 September 2017).

³²¹ Yardley, Jim: The State Requests That Citizen Liu Win Gold. In: The New York Times, 3 August 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/03/sports/playmagazine/803HURDLER-t.html>] (12 September 2017).

³²² Ibid.

Speaking of the consequence of Liu's withdrawal, writer Wang Xiaoshan gave his own estimation in terms of Liu's personal earnings³²³. As was stated in another new report, Liu's 2007 earnings was more than 23 million US dollars³²⁴. Wang estimated that Liu might lose sponsors which were obtained after the success in Athens. In a more realistic sense, Wang supplemented that Liu might appear less on advertisements if "he was unable to keep his medal on home territory"³²⁵. Last comment made by Wang was that though he believed Liu would overcome this injury, he thought it might be difficult for Liu to regain his glory³²⁶.

The reason why Liu Xiang's withdrawal was not just treated as a simple disappointment of himself and his audience, but an issue important enough to arouse strong reaction and heated discussion of the whole nation. Setting off from China's standpoint, it is easier to analyze and understand this situation.

As for China, winning gold medals matters most. Unsatisfied with just winning medals, China has placed so much national prestige and has focused its entire sports apparatus on winning gold³²⁷. As a proof of this, the Project 119 was a government program that striving to get a larger share of medals that Chinese athletes have a potential to win gold, especially in swimming as well as track and field³²⁸. With a fruitful result in Athens, the Chinese government had counted on this program for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Other than achieving the most gold medals, China

³²³ Watts, Jonathan: 'The Pressure from 1.3bn People Hurt Him'. In: The Guardian, 18 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/18/olympics2008.olympicsathletics2>] (12 September 2017).

³²⁴ Yardley, Jim: 'The State Requests That Citizen Liu Win Gold'. In: The New York Times, 3 August 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/03/sports/playmagazine/803HURDLER-t.html>] (12 September 2017).

³²⁵ Watts, Jonathan: 'The Pressure from 1.3bn People Hurt Him'. In: The Guardian, 18 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2008/aug/18/olympics2008.olympicsathletics2>] (12 September 2017).

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Yardley, Jim: 'The State Requests That Citizen Liu Win Gold'. In: The New York Times, 3 August 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/03/sports/playmagazine/803HURDLER-t.html>] (12 September 2017).

³²⁸ Ibid.

also wish to demonstrate a “rising, modern China”³²⁹ to the rest of the world. Just as the author stated later in the report, there was a basic message resonated: “Look at what three decades of economic reforms have done! Look at this new China, led by the Communist Party”³³⁰!

It is stated in Zhang Hong’s article that Chinese people are “too eager to become successful”³³¹ in both economic and sport field because of the invasion history in the 20th century. Liu Xiang’s withdrawal, therefore, was seen as “shattering his nation's hopes”³³². Additionally, some people also blamed Liu for being selfish and self-persevering which, together with their fear of losing hope, turned into fury towards Liu. In the report, Zhang’s personal opinion on this issue was also stated. Zhang held the view that no people has the right to ask Liu sacrifice his health for China’s glory. Zhang used the word ‘intriguing’ when describing the fact that the government expressed sympathy towards Liu and drew to the conclusion that Liu’s case can be taken as an opportunity to show the more humane side of the Chinese government by changing attitude towards what should be regarded as a rational way to provide glory to the country³³³.

4.2 Scholarly Analysis on selected media content

It was more than once mentioned in all the news articles above that China regarded the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games as a golden opportunity to showcase its stunning achievements and progress for these decades. However, as is sensed from most of the collected articles, foreign countries didn’t view China the way China wish to present its national image, more precisely a

³²⁹ Yardley, Jim: The State Requests That Citizen Liu Win Gold. In: The New York Times, 3 August 2008, [<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/03/sports/playmagazine/803HURDLER-t.html>] (12 September 2017).

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Hong, Zhang: China Still Loves Liu. In: The Guardian, 19 August 2008, [<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/aug/19/olympics2008.china>] (12 September 2017).

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid.

newly-polished national image. In regard of China's intention behind the holding of the 2008 Olympics and its goal to demonstrate its national image through this event, scholarly literature offered further and more profound analysis.

It is generally agreed that the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games would mark China's arrival on the international arena³³⁴. In addition, most observers held similar views in regard of China's intention behind the Olympics. China was wishing to "promote itself as an attractive and trusted member of"³³⁵ and to "accelerate its integration into"³³⁶ the international society through the holding of 2008 Olympic Games. What is more, scholar stated that winning the right to host the Game was an "affirmation"³³⁷ of China's social and economic progress for the past three decades and its new status as a big power worldwide. China also tried to deliver a message to the rest of the world that it has become strong enough in economy and national power to host global events³³⁸ and that it has "subscribed to the Olympic spirit of excellence and victory"³³⁹.

China's status as the origin of Eastern civilization was another aspect stressed during the Olympics³⁴⁰. By placing special emphasis on this status, Chinese authentic cultural history was taken advantage by the Chinese government as an adding point on its path to build its national image as "a partner among the global political and economic powers"³⁴¹.

³³⁴ Loo and Davies, *Branding China: The Ultimate Challenge in Reputation Management?*, p.206.

³³⁵ Editorial, 'Nation Branding' in Asia, p.267.

³³⁶ Loo and Davies, *Branding China: The Ultimate Challenge in Reputation Management?*, p.206.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Chan, Lik Sam: *Emotional Duplex in the Nation (De-)branding: A Case Study of China and Shen Yun Performing Arts*. In: *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, Volume 33, Issue 2. UK: Taylor & Francis, 2016, p. 143.

³³⁹ Loo and Davies, *Branding China: The Ultimate Challenge in Reputation Management?*, p.206.

³⁴⁰ Brownell, S.: *Beijing's games: What the Olympics Mean to China*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008, p.39.

³⁴¹ Chan, *Emotional Duplex in the Nation (De-)branding: A Case Study of China and Shen Yun Performing Arts*, p. 4.

Reacting on the intension of China, however, some scholars indicate that China's future development shall depend largely on whether it owns a "comprehensive, robust and improving national brand"³⁴² with a trustworthy governmental system for its people. By this trustworthy system, it refers to a system through which the government can well manage itself and for which its people can have confidence in and willing to offer time as well as money input. Speaking of using a successful Olympic Games as a image-turner, it is said that it will surely not be sufficient for a long run, but only a good start³⁴³. There are further claims in this article: a process of building and branding a national image should be a continuous yet comprehensive one, accompanied with obsessive queries about the next step and an overall improvement of a wide range of social aspects³⁴⁴. In addition, it will only be real change, other than media propaganda worldwide that can turn around a national image³⁴⁵.

4.2.1 Air pollution

Speaking of the Olympic impact on China, the first to mention should be the environmental problem, air pollution for example. Positive impacts were brought by the games like construction of new green areas, an increasing awareness of environmental issues across China, a rise in Blue Sky days and improvements in regard of waste disposal and recycling³⁴⁶.

Adhering to the slogan of "Green Olympic" (绿色奥运) advocated by the Chinese government for the Beijing Olympics, more green areas were created. In addition, among the measures taken to reduce air pollution, the restrictions on car use were proved to be the most successful ones. Therefore, based on the original measures, the Beijing Traffic Management Bureau designed a

³⁴² Editorial, 'Nation Branding' in Asia, p.267.

³⁴³ Ibid, p.267-268.

³⁴⁴ Ibid, p.268.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Cook and Miles, Chapter 18 Beijing, p.373.

new one which barred “one-fifth of the private cars and a third of official cars”³⁴⁷ while planned to widen a ban on high-polluting cars and trucks in the whole city. These measures could bring an emission reduction by 20 percent and were implemented for a further 12 months.

Improvement of air quality was obvious. Blue Sky days increased from less than 180 in 2000 to 246 days in 2007³⁴⁸ and reached 274 days in 2008 according to a report of UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) in 2009³⁴⁹. This report was based on data published by the Beijing Environmental Protection Bureau (EPB 北京市环境保护局), ranging from 2000 to 2008 including a couple of months immediately after the Olympic Games³⁵⁰. Except from the increase in Blue Sky days, it also implied an evident improvement of air quality due to the policy interventions adopted for the games³⁵¹. Regular field courses conducted by Cook from 1992-2012 also showed significant improvement of air quality in Beijing³⁵². According to one working paper, it is claimed that air quality improvement in Beijing during the Olympic Games was real, but temporary³⁵³. Cited from a comment made by the UNEP, a “real and lasting nationwide legacy”³⁵⁴ could be yielded if this approach can be applied to other cities across China. However, improvement functioned only in the periods immediately before or during the

³⁴⁷ Cook and Miles, Chapter 18 Beijing, p.373.

³⁴⁸ Andrews, Steven (2008) “Beijing Plays Air Quality Games”, Far Eastern Economic Review, p.54.

³⁴⁹ Chen, Yuyu; Jin, Ginger Zhe; Kumar, Naresh and Shi, Guang: The Promise of Beijing: Evaluating the Impact of the 2008 Olympic Games On Air Quality. In: National Bureau Of Economic Research, 2011. Working Paper 16907, [<http://www.nber.org/papers/w16907>] (07 September 2017), p.7-8.

³⁵⁰ Chen; Jin; Kumar and Shi, The Promise of Beijing: Evaluating the Impact of the 2008 Olympic Games On Air Quality, p.7-8.

³⁵¹ Ibid, p.8.

³⁵² Cook and Miles, Chapter 18 Beijing, p.374.

³⁵³ Chen; Jin; Kumar and Shi, The Promise of Beijing: Evaluating the Impact of the 2008 Olympic Games On Air Quality, p.3.

³⁵⁴ Andrews, “Beijing Plays Air Quality Games”, p.54.

games³⁵⁵ and didn't stay long with "roughly 60% of this improvement in air quality dissipated"³⁵⁶ in 2009.

Adding to that, the measures taken to reduce the air pollution for hosting the Olympic Games were also proved effective, such as "plant closures and traffic control"³⁵⁷. In some articles, measures were described as "radical but effective"³⁵⁸. For Andrews (2008), he viewed the measures taken against air pollution more of a pressure because of the Olympic Games. Calling them the "self-declared war"³⁵⁹ on air pollution and blue sky campaign, these measures was first issued by the Beijing EPB in 1998. Nevertheless, Braniš and Větvička (2010) claimed in their report wrote for the Czech Olympic support team to prepare the athletes for unfavorable environmental condition that though the changes in PM concentrations went better during the Olympic Games period, it was not solely due to "restrictions on emission sources"³⁶⁰, i.e. the traffic restriction measures taken by the Chinese government. They revealed that this improvement could be a result of a coincidental better weather condition, "cooling of the air, increased frequency of precipitation, windy conditions"³⁶¹ for example.

Other than positive impacts, voices of doubts are also heard. Wang's study using his own measurements of air quality in stead of the official Air Pollution Index (API) may arouse some suspects. Wang was collecting PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} data in Peking University between July 28 and October 7, 2008 and the absolute level of the self-measured data of PM₁₀ was 30% higher than

³⁵⁵ Andrews, "Beijing Plays Air Quality Games", p.54.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Andrews, "Beijing Plays Air Quality Games", p.4.

³⁵⁸ Ibid, p.27.

³⁵⁹ Ibid, p.54.

³⁶⁰ Braniš, Martin and Větvička, Jaroslav: PM₁₀, Ambient Temperature and Relative Humidity during the XXIX Summer Olympic Games in Beijing: Were the Athletes at Risk? In: Aerosol and Air Quality Research 10. Taiwan: Taiwan Association for Aerosol Research, 2010, p.107.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

the published one. “This finding triggered some concerns that the official API must have been subject to manipulation, but this discrepancy can be attributed to sampling (through systematic bias in the locations of samplers and types of samplers used) and methodological differences (Tang et al, 2009, Yao et al. 2009, Simorich 2009)”³⁶².

Andrews (2008) also expressed some suspects. As he mentioned foreign “media scrutiny”³⁶³ for China’s manipulation of the statistics, Andrews provided evidence like the relocation of air-quality monitoring stations. In addition, in his words, Chinese government faked the effectiveness of car restrictions and continued making positive reports about the air quality. A headline comparison was made between Xinhua news and the Washington Post: “Air improves during test for Olympics” vs. “Beijing’s Pollution Rises in 4-Day Test of Restricted Driving”³⁶⁴. Another comment was made towards a spokesman’s words. It was slightly after China achieved its 246th Blue Sky day in 2007 when the spokesman said nothing on this achievement but the rising awareness of people on environmental protection issues. The next move made by the government made Andrews even more suspicious about the real air situation as Beijing reduced the size of the Beijing Environmental Protection Bureau. All these actions taken by the Chinese government: “calling polluted days that meet the Chinese definition of good air quality ‘Blue Sky’ days, embracing weakened standards for nitrogen oxides and the cessation of ozone reporting, manipulating data near the blue sky boundary, and selectively placing monitoring station in less polluted areas”³⁶⁵ seem very doubtful for Andrews.

³⁶² Chen; Jin; Kumar and Shi, *The Promise of Beijing: Evaluating the Impact of the 2008 Olympic Games On Air Quality*, p.7.

³⁶³ Andrews, “Beijing Plays Air Quality Games”, p.56.

³⁶⁴ Ibid, p.57.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

Braniš and Větvička concluded that based on the PM₁₀ levels recorded by them and by others around the Olympic Games venue, the environmental condition in Beijing would not be considered “hazardous”³⁶⁶ for athletes participating the Olympic Games.

4.2.2. Human rights

Human rights has always been an unrelenting and controversial issue of China for the West. In the period preparing and holding the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, it was again “widely raised in the Western media”³⁶⁷. As an important component of human rights, scholars expressed various opinions on freedom of expression, mostly seen as criticism of restriction of reporting freedom of media and journalists as well as express freedom of the public, especially in regard of sensitive topics like Free Tibet.

According to Brady (2009), reports concerning any sensitive topics directly related to the Olympics needed the Propaganda Department of BOCOG to approve. Incidents of foreign tourists, for example, needed to be reported to the official line but no others. One instance was illustrated to show the real situation. It was an incident on August 10, 2008 when an American tourist was stabbed to death by a Chinese attacker. The victim was the father-in-law of one of the US Olympic coaches³⁶⁸. On the one hand, the Chinese journalist who covered the press for this incident was asked to hand in notebooks and tapes related to this case. On the other hand, it was added by Brady that online reports were given more freedom than print media on such sensitive stories for audience for each are different. Describing internet with a “porous nature”³⁶⁹,

³⁶⁶ Braniš and Větvička, PM₁₀, Ambient Temperature and Relative Humidity during the XXIX Summer Olympic Games in Beijing: Were the Athletes at Risk?, p.108.

³⁶⁷ Askew, David: Sport and Politics: The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. In: Georg Wiessala, John Wilson and Pradeep Tanja (ed.): The European Union and China. Leiden: Brill, 2009, p.111.

³⁶⁸ Brady, Anne-Marie: The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction. In: Tim Pringle (ed.): The China Quarterly 197. University of London: SOAS, 2009, p.14.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

Brady said that Chinese “netizens”³⁷⁰ will be able to get access to foreign reports on the same story.

Chinese government, in fear of anti-China forces taking use of the Olympics to attack China’s national image, implemented stricter regulations and even instruction on news report writing. According to Guthrie (2008), China applied “beefed-up security and a more rigid visa process”³⁷¹. However, this fear didn’t appear without a reason, the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) also warned that the Beijing Games could be “a target for terrorists eager to take advantage of the worldwide media opportunity”³⁷². Sensitive incidents, such as genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan, the Tibetan issue and protests during torch relay where protestors were trying to extinguish the flame already aroused “negative media attention”³⁷³ during the games’ time.

In addition, restrictions on journalists were high. Domestic journalists were asked to write “the achievements of the construction of a harmonious society”, “the important role of the Olympics in China’s economic reforms”, “how the whole nation was preparing for the Olympics” and “the superiority of the socialist system in organizing important events”³⁷⁴. Interestingly enough, the “barrage of negative foreign reports”³⁷⁵ over the 2008 Beijing Olympics didn’t affect such a “marketing dictatorship”³⁷⁶ but even aroused patriotism and nationalism around Chinese people and made them unite. As most Chinese people see these negative foreign

³⁷⁰ Brady, *The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction*, p.14.

³⁷¹ Guthrie, Marisa: China’s Game Face. In: *Broadcasting & Cable*, 4 August 2008, [<http://www.broadcastingcable.com/news/news-articles/chinas-game-face/84991>] (12 September 2017).

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Brady, *The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction*, p.14.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Brady, Anne-Marie: *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China*. Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009.

reports about China as “hostile and prejudiced”³⁷⁷, they responded with an “outpouring of nationalistic support”³⁷⁸ for their country and the Beijing Olympic Games online.

The situation of foreign journalist, as is elaborated in the last chapter, were also not easy. In order to manage the large amount of foreign journalists coming to Beijing (more than 20,000 were registered during August 2008), “traditional CCP political hospitality techniques”³⁷⁹ were applied to them, according to Brady. Media staff in Beijing were instructed to “utilize all-encompassing and detailed hospitality work on the media”³⁸⁰ so as to make the media say what Beijing want to say to the world and hopefully to report China and the Olympics from an objective perspective. The real situation was, however, many foreign journalists felt tiresome of the “excessive hospitality from volunteers”³⁸¹ and frustrated about the “continual stonewalling”³⁸² of Chinese media authorities when it comes to any political questions.

Furthermore, though China made commitment for the 2008 Beijing Olympics that it will loose its restriction on foreign websites and domestic website with sensitive content, many reflected that this policy “was interpreted very differently”³⁸³ in practice and sensitive topics remained its level of constraint. As examples supporting Brady’s point, it was stated in Guthrie’s article that lots of media were blocked (like websites with content of Tibet or Taiwan) or not given the freedom as promised (such as Amnesty International and Radio Free Asia)³⁸⁴. Jon Williams, who worked at BBC, used to comment on China’s media reaction to the Uprisings of Tibetan monks

³⁷⁷ Brady, *The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction*, p.15.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Brady, *The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction*, p.15-16.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Brady, *The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction*, p.16.

³⁸⁴ Guthrie, Marisa: China’s Game Face. In: *Broadcasting & Cable*, 4 August 2008, [<http://www.broadcastingcable.com/news/news-articles/chinas-game-face/84991>] (12 September 2017).

in spring of 2007 that China is no free-information society. China's blocking of BBC's website and radio again served as an evidence to Williams's words. BBC World News and the BBC's international television service which contained news contents concerning the Tibet protests were also "taken off the air"³⁸⁵. Words of Williams reflected to some extent foreign media's feeling towards China's performance, both in terms of sport and media during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. "The Chinese are more open to us telling the world about China. They are less open to us telling China about the world. And they are actively suspicious about us telling China about China"³⁸⁶.

Except from media and express freedom, there are things that are more related to rights of the residents in Beijing, to name just a few. To start with, the demolition undertook to make way for the new urban planning for the Olympic Games and the relocation of residents came alongside were viewed as "controversial"³⁸⁷ as these acts of the government violated human rights of the residents of Beijing, according to some foreign media. According to Acharya (2005), nearly 300,000 people were "evicted specifically because of the Olympics"³⁸⁸. However, there were also other scholars stated that as the main Olympic site was far from the city centre, it was hard to see such a huge displacement³⁸⁹. Cook also added that when he visited the Geographical Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in the early 1990s, there was little housings but fields in that area. Admitting that some of these relocation projects violated the law while "older parts of the

³⁸⁵ Guthrie, Marisa: China's Game Face. In: Broadcasting & Cable, 4 August 2008, [<http://www.broadcastingcable.com/news/news-articles/chinas-game-face/84991>] (12 September 2017).

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Cook and Miles, Chapter 18 Beijing, p.370.

³⁸⁸ Acharya, S. K.: Urban Development in Post-reform China: Insights from Beijing. In: Hesselberg, Jan (guest ed.): Norwegian Journal of Geography. Volume 59, Issue 3: China. Norway: Taylor & Francis, 2005, p.231.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

city would still continue to be demolished”³⁹⁰ for the Olympic urban planning, according to Mayor of that time, Wang Qishan.

Displaced people, again, attracted the attention of human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch Asia along with a bunch of other issues like “the overall lack of democracy, use of the death penalty, the occupation of Tibet, Uighur (Muslim) insurgency in Xinjiang Province and the treatment of the Falun Gong (a Buddhist sect)”³⁹¹. Facing pressure and suspects from these groups, China’s tight security over internet seemed unbreakable. In addition, even for the seemingly vulnerable aspect of public protests, the Chinese government also figured a way out and fought against these by “pointing to the lack of basic rights in countries such as the United States” and its “operation of double standard” regarding its war on terrorism and the involvement in Iraq at that time as well as certain examples of human rights abuse by US soldiers³⁹².

4.2.3. Protest

As is mentioned in almost all articles related to protest, the disrupted torch relay is a topic that can’t be avoided. The torch relay was shortly interrupted in Greece by an activist affiliated with *Reporters Without Borders*. However, bigger and harsher protests were encountered later in London, Paris, and India³⁹³. “In San Francisco, pro-Tibetan activists hung a giant banner on the Golden Gate Bridge, which became another international media spectacle (“Torch relay in San Francisco

³⁹⁰ Cook, Ian G. (2006), Chapter 4 Beijing as an ‘Internationalized Metropolis’, in: Wu, Fulong (2006), *Globalization and the Chinese City*, 63-83, cited in p.81.

³⁹¹ Cook and Miles, Chapter 18 Beijing, p.370.

³⁹² Ibid, p.371.

³⁹³ Ibid.

draws massive protest', 2008). However, when the torch proceeded to South America, Africa and Western Asian, no disruption was reported"³⁹⁴.

Protest against Beijing's hosting of the Olympic Games was China's "nightmare"³⁹⁵ and "disaster"³⁹⁶ in terms of public relations which also showed that China wasn't ready for these protests on issues like Tibet and human rights. Huang and Fahmy (2013) expressed in their article noting that the protests happened all around before and during the torch relay was totally contrary to what the Chinese government planned to have as "*a journey of harmony*"³⁹⁷ (Gries, 2009), "symbol of friendship" or "harmony and peace"³⁹⁸. Instead, the torch relay was the most powerful element that brought threats and critics to China. China was, therefore, forced to face the "the ugliest verbal confrontations for years"³⁹⁹ towards it.

For Askew, "the violence in Tibet significantly diminished China's global status, but the games undoubtedly enhanced it. The international respect, status and recognition converted readily to legitimacy for the regime"⁴⁰⁰. He also added that these "unrest and then violence in Tibet served only to underline China's status as a responsible international citizen"⁴⁰¹. Though Askew also questioned whether Beijing would be able to keep this enhance legitimacy, he still believed that it depended on Beijing's own acts.

³⁹⁴ Huang, Ying and Fahmy, Shahira: Picturing A Journey of Protest or A Journey of Harmony? Comparing the Visual Framing of the 2008 Olympic Torch Relay in the US Versus the Chinese Press. In: Media, War & Conflict, 6(3). UK: Sage Publications, 2013, p.201.

³⁹⁵ Askew, Sport and Politics: The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, p.113.

³⁹⁶ Huang and Fahmy, Picturing A Journey of Protest or A Journey of Harmony? Comparing the Visual Framing of the 2008 Olympic Torch Relay in the US Versus the Chinese Press, p.192.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Mangan, J.A.(2008), Prologue: Guarantees of Global Goodwill: Post-Olympic Legacies—Too Many Limping White Elephants? in Olympic Legacies: Intended and Unintended—Political, Cultural, Economic and Educational, ed. Mangan, J.A. and Dyreson, Mark (2008), London and New York, , xvii-xxxi, p.xxiii.

³⁹⁹ Huang and Fahmy, Picturing A Journey of Protest or A Journey of Harmony? Comparing the Visual Framing of the 2008 Olympic Torch Relay in the US Versus the Chinese Press, p.192.

⁴⁰⁰ Askew, Sport and Politics: The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, p.113.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, p.111.

Sharing similar opinions with Askew, Beijing Olympic Games was described as “a lighting rod”⁴⁰² and “a focal point”⁴⁰³ for protest. Cottrell and Nelson (2010) view Olympic protests as “a structure in which a range of actors at different levels of global society exercise different forms of political power”⁴⁰⁴ but not just something is initiated and involved only domestic people. Giving an explanation to this argument, they provided four features of Olympic Games which foster such a development and make the games “a particularly attractive venue for all types of political protest”⁴⁰⁵: a) The Olympics are “accessible and high-profile”. b) The Olympics can “increase the potential availability of influential allies and supporters”. c) The Olympics can make the regime less influential on and capable of repressing “collective claim-making”. d) Most importantly, the Olympics are endowed with special symbolic meaning that facilitates “collective claim-making” and widens political opportunity⁴⁰⁶.

Noteworthy is that while protests happened around the world against China, supporters of the Chinese government also appeared as a counter-force in Hong Kong and mainland China trying to defend their nation⁴⁰⁷. As a general fight-back at Western critiques, Chinese government argued that Western countries were trying to impose their value on China while neglecting and misunderstanding Chinese culture. A further claim was that cultural change should occur “over the course of development of a civilization”⁴⁰⁸ but not overnight.

⁴⁰² Cottrell, M. Patrick and Nelson, Travis (2010), Not Just the Games? Power, Protest and Politics at the Olympics, *European Journal of International Relations* 17(4) 729–753, p.730.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Cottrell and Nelson, Not Just the Games? Power, Protest and Politics at the Olympics, p.734.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid, p.733.

⁴⁰⁷ Cook and Miles, Chapter 18 Beijing, p.371.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

4.2.4. Gymnastic athletes and Liu Xiang

Generally speaking, the “sleek, health and athletic body” of Chinese athletes appeared on the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games were perceived as “an official attempt to project to the world an image of a healthy, modern, and Western China”⁴⁰⁹.

When speaking of gymnastics of China, Chinese female athletes have always enjoyed a high reputation and better performances than their Western competitors (Chung 2004)⁴¹⁰. Chung attributed this better performance to the advantageous body figure of Asians for they have more petite athletic body shapes, in most cases⁴¹¹. It was since the 1960s when China again started supporting sport, “women's elite sport expanded steadily”⁴¹² from 3,552 (33.3 per cent) in 1962 to 6,348 (38.3 per cent) in 1978. Speaking of current situation, Dong and Mangan claimed that Chinese athletes were ready to “conquer the world” with women athletes “in the vanguard of the charge”⁴¹³.

Leonardo et al (2010) used Brazilian news reports to talk about the controversy of age problem of gymnastics athletes. Part of the title stated as “Farce – age of gymnast is questioned the day that the organization confirms new fraud in the opening party”⁴¹⁴. He Kexin was again first mentioned and questioned for her real age. Though Beijing denied this information, foreign news reports did not cease researching and discussing.

⁴⁰⁹ Askew, Sport and Politics: The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, p.109.

⁴¹⁰ Yu, Chia-Chen (2009), A Content Analysis of News Coverage of Asian Female Olympic Athletes, *International Review For The Sociology of Sport* 44/2–3(2009) 283–305, p.287.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Dong, Jinxia and Mangan, J. A.: Olympic Aspirations: Chinese Women on Top – Considerations and Consequences. In: *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Volume 25, Issue 7: Preparing for Glory: Beijing 2008–Chinese Challenge in the ‘Chinese Century. UK: Taylor & Francis, 2008, p.803.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Leonardo et al.; Brazil–Beijing Changes the Way Mega-media Events are Presented: Perspectives of 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. In: *Journal The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Volume 27, Issue 9-10: Encoding the Olympics–The Beijing Olympic Games and the Communication Impact. UK: Taylor & Francis, 2010, p.1761.

“Poster boy”⁴¹⁵ is used to describe Liu Xiang among scholarly literature. For Cook and Miles (2017), in Liu’s hands “lay the hopes of a nation”⁴¹⁶. His giving-in was undoubtedly a loss of face of the Chinese government and a “devastating blow” to those who saw him as “a symbol of an internationally competitive China”. Leonardo et al analyzed Liu Xiang’s case in an all-round way involving aspects such as emotion and support, controversy, marketing, idolatry, health condition, attitude of news agencies and Liu’s coach as well as Liu’s hope for the future. Starting with emotion and support, these two elements were fully presented by words of Liu’s coach, Sun Haiping as well as lots of Chinese audience. Adding to these, foreign reporter, Nara Alves, also described the situation on the day of Liu’s quitting as “the sound of the crowd was deafening and touching. The speaker on the Chinese television cried, live, while he described the scene. I also cried for the first time during the games”⁴¹⁷.

Controversial opinions towards Liu Xiang also appeared in Brazilian news as in Chinese domestic news. With news articles appeared with a title such as “Liu, the fugitive”⁴¹⁸, there were also other ones supporting Liu. Chen (2010) also pointed out that Liu’s quitting would “aroused very strong repercussions” and “criticism from Chinese netizens”⁴¹⁹. Viewing Liu from a commercial perspective, study on a Brazilian website (www.sportmarketing.com.br) argued that Liu would continue to be “a marketing phenomenon”⁴²⁰ for years and that the sponsors did not intend to end contracts with Liu.

⁴¹⁵ Cook and Miles, Chapter 18 Beijing, p.373.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Leonardo et al, Brazil–Beijing Changes the Way Mega-media Events Are Presented: Perspectives of 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, p.1773.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid, p.1774.

⁴¹⁹ Chen, Weixing: The Communication Gesture of the Beijing Olympic Games. In: Journal Sport in Society, Volume 13, Issue 5. UK: Taylor & Francis, 2010, p.816.

⁴²⁰ Leonardo et al, Brazil–Beijing Changes the Way Mega-media Events Are Presented: Perspectives of 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, p.1774.

Gu Baogang (顾宝刚), Liu Xiang's first coach, expressed his opinion on Liu's injury. He held the view that it was the "enormous pressure of the public, officials and excessive training" that played a main role in Liu's injury. Gu also expressed his concern over officials who might "contest Xiang's decision and blame him for it"⁴²¹. Instead, he thought that the officials should encourage and console Liu if they still want him to be back on court. As for the comeback, Liu said by himself that he was still young and never gave up easily. With sufficient confidence, he left words that he would be back⁴²².

4.3 Olympic impact on national identity and national image branding through media

4.3.1 Olympic impact

Commenting on the 2008 Beijing Olympic, it was regarded as a proof that "China had not only stood up, but also was no longer a pariah state and was ready to take its rightful place as one of the leading countries on earth"⁴²³. Lord Sebastian Coe, Chair and CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of the London 2012 Olympic Game, expressed his impression towards the 2008 Beijing Olympics using words like "fantastic" and "superb" to describe the city and the Olympic venues⁴²⁴. His excitement towards the 2008 Beijing Olympics was "exactly what the Chinese authorities wanted to hear"⁴²⁵. Brownell argued in her book that the most valuable "bequest" would be the way in which the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games provided an opportunity for Beijing to get its people ready for "linking up with international standard (与国际接轨)"⁴²⁶. The games

⁴²¹ Leonardo et al, Brazil-Beijing Changes the Way Mega-media Events Are Presented: Perspectives of 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, p.1775-1776.

⁴²² Ibid, p.1776.

⁴²³ Cook and Miles, Chapter 18 Beijing, p.360.

⁴²⁴ Ibid, p.359.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Brownell, Beijing's Games : What the Olympics Mean to China, p.189.

have helped China to obtain and stand firmly on the world stage as an important player. It was China's great enthusiasm that reflected its commitment to "being a full member of the global community"⁴²⁷ and a leading driving force in building the global society⁴²⁸. Similar arguments is also made by Short (2004) that hosting the Olympic Games can help nation-states with their process of "internationalization"⁴²⁹. As for Beijing, the games marked as a milestone of China's increasing involvement in global affairs and rising global citizenship⁴³⁰.

The Olympic Games have always been related to and described as a political event⁴³¹, but the games in Beijing are especially regarded so when comparing to some historical analogies like the Seoul Olympics, the Rome Games of 1960 and the Tokyo Games of 1964⁴³². Similar to these Olympic Games, 2008 Beijing Olympic Games staged China on the international arena and showcased its "fruit of thirty years of rapid, market-oriented and internationally engaged development"⁴³³. It was not only a "coming out party" of China, but also a "redemption" from its failure of losing the bid for the 2000 Games, the "opprobrium" it suffered for its former acts on the 1989 Tiananmen Democracy Movement and from its humiliating history of being semi-colonized by the Western countries in the mid-nineteenth century⁴³⁴.

Admitting Olympic Games as a political event, deLisle also acknowledge that China has achieved its "principal political aims" by demonstrating itself as a "prosperous, internationalized and

⁴²⁷ Close, Paul; Askew, David and Xin, Xu: *The Beijing Olympiad—The Political Economy of a Sporting Mega-event*. Oxon: Routledge, 2007, p.178.

⁴²⁸ Cook and Miles, Chapter 18 Beijing, p.377.

⁴²⁹ Short, J.R.: *Going for Gold: Globalizing the Olympics, Localizing the games*. In: Short, J.R.: *Global Metropolitan: Globalizing Cities in a Capitalist World*. London: Routledge, 2004, p.95.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Short, *Going for Gold: Globalizing the Olympics, Localizing the Games*, p.89; deLisle, *After the Gold Rush: The Beijing Olympics and China's Evolving International Roles*, p.179.

⁴³² deLisle, *After the Gold Rush: The Beijing Olympics and China's Evolving International Roles*, p.180 and p.181.

⁴³³ Ibid, p.181.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

powerful country”⁴³⁵. It was, for China, a moment of “national arrival” and “political reacceptance” in the world⁴³⁶. Words of one official of the BOCOG also supported this argument and added that winning the right to host the 2008 Olympics was for China a regain of “respect, trust and favor of the international community”⁴³⁷. For Jarvie's et al (2008), “as far as the critical Western gaze was concerned”, the decision to award the 2008 Olympic Games to Beijing was, “a compromise between the political imperative to give the Olympic-host role to China and the ethical imperative to refuse to do so”⁴³⁸. Askew also predicted that if Beijing’s performance was not satisfactory enough, the West wouldn’t give it another chance⁴³⁹.

Praises of the Beijing Olympic Games are heard. Cook and Miles admitted in their article that the 2008 Olympics was “an enormous success” with which the Chinese government succeeded in demonstrating “a new confident and revitalized”⁴⁴⁰ China to the whole world, regardless of other issues being criticized. They also admitted China’s medal performance with “fifty gold medals in a total of 100 medals in all” and claimed that this fruitful result had close relation with “the massive investment on the part of the Communist Party to ensure that China was seen to succeed not only as a host, but, at least for now, as the greatest sporting nation on earth”⁴⁴¹.

Critics and suspects on the Beijing Olympic Games appear on issues like the lip-synching singing by a girl singer at the opening ceremony who was standing there only because she was regarded prettier than the other girl whose voice was actually heard⁴⁴². In addition, deLisle added that

⁴³⁵ deLisle, *After the Gold Rush: The Beijing Olympics and China’s Evolving International Roles*, p.179.

⁴³⁶ Ibid, p.181.

⁴³⁷ Ibid, p.182.

⁴³⁸ Jarvie, Grant; Hwang, Dong-Jhy and Brennan, Mel: *Sport, Revolution and the Beijing Olympics*. Oxford: Berg, 2008, p.118.

⁴³⁹ Askew, *Sport and Politics: The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games*, p.111.

⁴⁴⁰ Cook and Miles, Chapter 18 Beijing, p.377.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid, p.373.

⁴⁴² Ibid, p.372.

except from the image that China wished to show, the Olympic Games also revealed some shortage and under-developed aspects of China which are not in accordance the commitment China made for hosting the games⁴⁴³. Together with some other acts that are contradictory to China's foreign policy, Western countries still see China's involvement in the international society as ambivalent⁴⁴⁴.

Lovell (2013) argues that Beijing hoped the 2008 Olympics would prove to “be a harmonious fusion of nationalism and internationalism, of Chinese tradition and high-tech modernity: a Utopian symbol of China's triumphant—but decidedly non-hegemonic—recovery of central position in the international political, economic and cultural realm, some 150 years after the country's humiliating nineteenth-century clash with Western imperialism”⁴⁴⁵. Describing the Olympic Games as a “double-edged sword”⁴⁴⁶ is appropriate in terms of human rights issues, for sport events like the Olympic Games can be both a promotor of peace and harmony and the trigger of conflict, argued by Huang and Fahmy.

4.3.2 Media impact on national identity and national image

For Short, participation and success in the Olympic Games will bring prestige to the nation worldwide and also serve as a basis for “an important strand of national identity”⁴⁴⁷.

⁴⁴³ deLisle, After the Gold Rush: The Beijing Olympics and China's Evolving International Roles, p.179.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Lovell, Julia: Prologue: Beijing 2008—The Mixed Messages of Contemporary Chinese Nationalism' in Beijing 2008. In: J.A. Mangan and Dong Jinxia (eds.), Preparing for Glory: Chinese Challenge in the “Chinese Century”, Sport in the Global Society. London: Routledge, 2013, p.9.

⁴⁴⁶ Huang and Fahmy, Picturing A Journey of Protest or A Journey of Harmony? Comparing the Visual Framing of the 2008 Olympic Torch Relay in the US Versus the Chinese Press, p.201.

⁴⁴⁷ Short, Going for Gold: Globalizing the Olympics, Localizing the Games, p.96.

Mass media acts as the “main channel”⁴⁴⁸ through which they can get information about foreign countries and a “key player in formulating and disseminating images of nations”⁴⁴⁹. People have always been relying on mass media for most people do not always have access to first-hand experience these countries (Yao, 2010; Smith, 1973; Chen 2012). In this case, the way of the mass media coverage will affect perceptions and opinions of the public, which, in turn, “may have a major impact on a country’s political, diplomatic, business and other transactions with the rest of the world”⁴⁵⁰. As people build up their impression of the world through the media (Lippmann 1992), it can be therefore inferred that media coverage will play an important role in how people form their picture of the host countries of the Olympic Games⁴⁵¹. It is therefore the Olympic Games that offer opportunities and challenges for host countries to manage the media coverage and “countries to pursue their global image-building strategies”⁴⁵².

According to Manheim and Albritton's “visibility and valence” model mentioned earlier in chapter 3, the increase of “visibility” can be brought to the host countries of the Olympic Games. Findings of Billings and Eastman (2003) stated that “no other television event is remotely like an Olympic telecast” and the Olympics is unmatched in terms of the “nationalism, internationalism, sport, and human drama” it represents⁴⁵³. Further benefits for the host country can also include “prestige and glory”⁴⁵⁴ of hosting the event, “a concentration of

⁴⁴⁸ Yao, *The Effect of Hosting the Olympics on National Image: An Analysis of US Newspaper Coverage of Host Countries with Reputation Problems*, p.15.

⁴⁴⁹ Chen, *Medals, Media and Myth of National Images: How Chinese Audiences Thought of Foreign Countries During the Beijing Olympics*, p.756.

⁴⁵⁰ Yao, *The Effect of Hosting the Olympics on National Image: An Analysis of US Newspaper Coverage of Host Countries with Reputation Problems*, p.15.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.10-11.

⁴⁵² *Ibid*, p.16.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid*, p.15.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

images”⁴⁵⁵ which consist also of other aspects of the host country like culture, and last but not least, an opportunity to “showcase their economy, technology, political stability as well as the positive attributes of their peoples”⁴⁵⁶.

Changes bring to China’s national image through media are evident after the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Guo and his colleagues (2009) stated that China’s negative image was improved to some extent in the Western media with biases remained⁴⁵⁷. Their study proved the increase of visibility of China in news coverage during the Olympics on The New York Times. A slight fall in percentage of negative news about China was witnessed. Objective content about China’s economy, for example, rose to over 50% of the reports⁴⁵⁸. They did comparison between the national image presented by the China and the one appeared in Western news articles. China’s improvement and performance in economy, diplomacy and culture were widely acknowledged while topics such as politics, human rights and democracy still stay controversial in Western media⁴⁵⁹. Concluded by saying that national interest was also an important factor in media, they gave their explanation to negative news coverage as “bad news attracted far more attention than good news”⁴⁶⁰.

⁴⁵⁵ Yao, The Effect of Hosting the Olympics on National Image: An Analysis of US Newspaper Coverage of Host Countries with Reputation Problems, p.16.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Guo, Qing; Wang, Hong-jiang; Yu, Ting-ting; Tang, Xiao-ru; Chen, Rui and Li, Ping-ping: A study on Chinese National Image under the background of Beijing Olympic Games. In: China Sport Science, Vol. 29. China: Sport Science, 2009, 44-47. Translated by Amy Yu Zheng, p.44.

⁴⁵⁸ Guo; Wang; Yu; Tang; Chen and Li, A Study on Chinese National Image Under the Background of Beijing Olympic Games, p.46.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Guo; Wang; Yu; Tang; Chen and Li, A Study on Chinese National Image Under the Background of Beijing Olympic Games, p.47.

4.3.3 Media coverage (U.S. media as an example)

According to Zhang (2012), international media coverage has an “agenda-setting effect”⁴⁶¹ on public opinion of foreign nations. Zhang particularly stressed the role of American media in bringing impact to public perceptions and attitudes towards a certain nation. Claims of various scholars were listed. According to the study of Wanta and his colleagues (2004), increased negative coverage of a nation would generate and deepen the negative attitudes of the public towards the nation. In addition, U.S. citizens tend to have more negative attitudes towards a certain country because of the domestic negative media coverage of that country (Kioussis and Wu 2008).

Reactions of American media was studied in Wu and Xu’s (2010) article. Also taking The New York Times as an example to analyze, articles of Lynn Zinser (titled “China's Big Hope in Track Doesn't Get Out of Blocks”) and George Vecsey (titled “Pain Travels Far Beyond National Hero's Leg”) were selected⁴⁶². In the former article, Liu’s withdrawal was attributed to his recurrence of a serious injury. Another point stressed was the “special significance”⁴⁶³ of this race towards the Chinese people. While the latter placed emphasis on how disappointed Liu’s withdrawal was to the audience as well as all Chinese people. It also put an metaphor on Liu’s injury as Achilles’ heel, indicating that no one was perfect and it was “dangerous to place all their hope on one person”⁴⁶⁴. After listing and studying some other news articles from other American media, authors concluded that the American media coverage mainly concentrated on the withdrawal itself and the following press conference using mostly “news messages and critical

⁴⁶¹ Zhang, International Coverage, Foreign Policy, and National Image: Exploring the Complexities of Media Coverage, Public Opinion, and Presidential Agenda, p.80.

⁴⁶² Wu, Min and Xu, Zhen: Mirroring the Olympic Games—The Beijing 2008 Olympic Games in the American Media. In Qing, Luo and Richeri, Giuseppe (eds.): Encoding the Olympics: The Beijing Olympic Games and the Communication Impact Worldwide. Oxon: 2012, p.399.

⁴⁶³ Ibid, p.400.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

commentary”⁴⁶⁵. Speaking of The New York Times, authors held the view that it applied rhetoric to describe the story with words such as “China's big hope”, “national hero” and “star hurdler”⁴⁶⁶. By explaining positive and unfavorable news coverage on certain issues, Yu attribute that to the different news source. Sources came from native countries of athletes tend to be written in a more positive way while sources from other countries might reflect a more “reserved attitude towards athletes’ winning”⁴⁶⁷.

Speaking from a broader perspective, it is the different focuses of China and the foreign media which led to the different presentation in media⁴⁶⁸. Reporting on the same issue of Tibet, news content of Chinese, US and also UK media vary because of the different policy these countries made. Adding a new explanation to these various reports, Huang and Fahmy stated that “conflict has been an important news value in the Western press”, particularly for issues happened in other countries. Western media coverage of Olympic Games has always been related to “conflict, power abuse, and politics”⁴⁶⁹. US government, in particular, has a high sympathy towards various human right groups and the Tibetan issue. Similar claims have also been made in terms of different focus of media coverage when speaking of athletes. Study of Tuggle and Owen (1999) revealed that media are interested in reporting “unfavorable” news content about physical strength of athletes. Instance was mentioned as He Kexin who was suspected of her true age after winning a gold medal on the 2008 Beijing Olympics⁴⁷⁰.

⁴⁶⁵ Wu and Xu, *Mirroring the Olympic Games—The Beijing 2008 Olympic Games in the American Media*, p.401.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Yu, *A Content Analysis of News Coverage of Asian Female Olympic Athletes*, p.300.

⁴⁶⁸ Huang and Fahmy, *Picturing A Journey of Protest or A Journey of Harmony? Comparing the Visual Framing of the 2008 Olympic Torch Relay in the US Versus the Chinese Press*, p.202.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ Yu, *A Content Analysis of News Coverage of Asian Female Olympic Athletes*, p.300.

5. Conclusion

Answering to the four listed hypotheses raised for this paper, it can be concluded from the former analysis of news articles and scholarly literature that in the case of Beijing, city image do have a wide and deep impact on national image. With the spotlight on Beijing during the Olympics time, the improved air quality situation, the protests happened, the measures taken which were regarded as a violence of human rights as well as the performance of Chinese athletes on the games can be all regarded as the performance of Beijing city. These performances, in turn, also affect how the city image of Beijing is received by the foreign countries. Additionally, as is mentioned above, city image has a close relation to national image, for in most of the cases, perception that people hold towards a certain city will largely affect how they view the country.

Secondly, as the capital of China, Beijing also gained more significance during and after the games which led it further towards a global city. Due to the Olympic Games which is highly internationalized, host city like Beijing received high attention from the rest of the world. Trying to play a perfect role of the host city on the one hand, and answering to these attention on the other hand, Beijing took great effort preparing for and organizing the games. Resulting from these factors, Beijing gets more globalized during the whole process.

Its performance during the games' period, also showcased the rest of the world about China and represented to some extent, the national image. From the media analysis did above, it can be clearly sensed how foreign media perceive and how foreign countries react to China's demonstration of its national image through the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. As is widely regarded by observers that China utilized the games as an opportunity to promote itself in front of the overseas countries. The improved air quality in Beijing was a proof of Beijing and China's effective measures in terms of environmental protection. Protests and other human rights related issues happened before and during the games also reflected the current situation of human right issue and Tibet issue in China and how Chinese government reacted to that. Athletes like Liu

Xiang, a symbolic and outstanding athlete of China, his excellent performance during the 2004 Athens Olympic Games as well as his withdrawal of the 2008 Beijing Olympics both had great impact on national image. When speaking of young gymnastic athletes, though it has always been a controversial issue about China on Olympic Games, how China defend and prove itself has also been witnessed by the rest of the world and affecting their perception about China.

Finally, different interpretations of Chinese and foreign media of China and Beijing's performance in the years between 2007 and 2009 are proved to be resulted in various media style, national policy and international status of countries. Taken as two samples to study, the New York Times and the Guardian share similar focuses regarding China's hosting of the Olympic Games. However, they also differ in interpreting China's performance. Based on scholarly analysis, China's intention of representing itself nicely on the global arena and joining into international society is highlighted. Another important issue stressed is that China wished to re-brand its national image through this event. Commenting on this, most scholars think that the measures China took preparing the Olympic Games and its performance during the Games are effective in changing and promoting China's national image. Also, scholars hold the view that this effectiveness may not last long once certain measures stop, but this can be a good starting point for China to go further on its path of promoting its national image.

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