

EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF BEIJING 2008 OLYMPIC GAMES ON FOREIGN NEWS COVERAGE ON CHINA: A CONTENT ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Hosting the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games prompted the Chinese government to employ a relaxed foreign media policy, which signaled a temporary change in the rigorous media control practice in China. This study examined the effectiveness of the relaxed policy by analyzing news content regarding China from the *International Herald Tribune* in two time periods: the 656 days on which the policy applied, and the 656 days before the policy announcement. A total of 1,418 news stories were analyzed, and the results showed that the Chinese government's change in foreign media censorship led to more news coverage of controversial issues on China. The findings suggest an improvement in the Chinese government's treatment of foreign media in the relaxed policy period. The foreign journalists gained access to sources that used to be off limits, and the international readers were therefore able to obtain news content that challenged the Chinese authorities. Nonetheless, the short span of the relaxed media policy indicates a limited degree of foreign press freedom in China. Future research on the foreign media censorship in China after the Games is required to examine how the Chinese government copes with the idea of a freer media environment.