

Research on the Characteristics of CCTV's Comprehensive Media Coverage of the Paris Olympics

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Abstract: The Olympics is not only a global sporting event but also carries beautiful wishes for world peace. The enthusiasm of the Paris Olympics held from July 26 to August 11, 2024, has not yet faded away this summer. This global sporting event brings together about 10,500 athletes from over 200 countries and regions, competing in 329 gold medal events across 35 venues in the city of Paris, the Île-de-France region, and various parts of France. According to a comprehensive cooperation agreement signed in Paris between Shen Haixiong, the Director of China Central Television (CCTV), and Tony Estanguet, the President of the Paris Organizing Committee, CCTV, as the exclusive media rights holder, enjoys full broadcasting rights and exclusive coverage of the Paris Olympics. In the following sections, I will analyze the characteristics of the comprehensive media coverage of the Paris Olympics from five perspectives: rich expression in new media, application of technological means, immersive live broadcasting, deep engagement of opinion leaders, and customized exclusive programs for brand marketing.

1. Introduction

The fierce battles are in full swing at the Paris Olympics, with the Chinese delegation going all out and achieving remarkable success in multiple competitions, showcasing outstanding performances. In terms of coverage and promotion of this Olympics, the News New Media Center of China Central Television (CCTV) has dispatched a highly skilled business team to the competition venues, fully leveraging the global reporting resources of CCTV and the advantages of its 22 communication matrices. The main battlefield is the CCTV News app, where they employ forms such as short videos, text and image updates, mobile live streaming, and creative integrated media products to release daily match results, exciting highlights inside and outside the venues, and more. They share the exciting updates with their 1 billion new media followers, delivering firsthand information directly to the users' palms. Various commercial brands have successfully seized the first memory point of customers through CCTV News, joining hands with millions of netizens to cheer for the Chinese athletes.

During the Olympic Games broadcasting process, in order to provide viewers with a better viewing experience, China Central Television (CCTV) will establish a comprehensive media matrix integrating television, radio, and new media communications. Among them, CCTV-5, CCTV-5+, and CCTV-16 will create a 24-hour uninterrupted Olympic coverage platform.

2. Research on the Characteristics of Comprehensive Media Communication

2.1 Rich Expression in New Media

With the development of new media, the communication methods of the Olympics have become more diverse and enriched. CCTV utilizes short videos, social media, and other new media platforms to widely disseminate the exciting moments of the Olympics and the behind-the-scenes stories of athletes.

CCTV News has published 90 pieces of event-related content on short video platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou, with 35 videos making it to the trending list on Kuaishou, accumulating over 1.5 billion views in total^[1]. According to the “Xiangwu” Index released by CCTV, five rounds of statistics related to the Paris Olympics show that CCTV News ranks among the top in terms of original short video production capacity, dissemination effectiveness, and market share among mainstream media outlets, leading the list in terms of the number of appearances on the charts.

Since the beginning of the Paris Olympics, the emerging young athletes born in 2000 and 2005, known as “little sister” and “little brother”, have been making a name for themselves and frequently trending on social media. For example, the first gold medal partners “Sister A-Tiao” and “Brother Gan Fan”, Chen Yiwen and Chang Yani’s “princess hold”, Pan Zhanle’s “can this be said”... The memorable moments created by the post-2000 generation, processed and turned into memes by netizens, further amplified by algorithms, have rapidly gone viral on social media platforms, especially various short video platforms. This has significantly shortened the distance between athletes and audiences, establishing a genuine and three-dimensional personal image of post-2000 athletes.

These contents not only delve deeply into the diverse values of the Olympics but also cover the needs of different audiences, making Olympic communication more vivid, interesting, and evoking strong emotional resonance. I believe everyone has a deep impression of these scenes, such as: renowned singer Celine Dion enduring illness to return to the stage and passionately sing during the opening ceremony; Pan Zhanle winning the men’s 100m freestyle swimming event, setting a new world record, and “complaining” to journalists after winning the gold medal; Zheng Qinwen winning the women’s singles gold in tennis, marking China’s first women’s singles Olympic gold in tennis; Chinese artistic gymnasts winning the first Olympic gold in the all-around team event, creating history.

The short video content related to the Paris Olympics has garnered massive viewership, with CCTV News’ panoramic and comprehensive coverage through short videos catering to people’s needs for mobile reading and fragmented information consumption. This approach allows audiences who don’t have time to watch live broadcasts to stay updated on the actual proceedings by watching short videos, while also giving live viewers the chance to revisit some of the exciting moments of the matches. The content includes highlights of the competitions, award ceremonies, athlete interviews, various behind-the-scenes moments, and many viewers also delve into athletes’ social media platforms. I believe many are familiar with the shattered dreams and regrets of gymnast Zhang Boheng; badminton player He Bingjiao holding the Spanish Olympic Committee emblem on the podium, profoundly embodying the Olympic spirit; and Pakistani javelin thrower Arshad Nadeem breaking the event record with a throw of 92.97 meters to win the gold, securing Pakistan’s only Olympic gold in nearly 40 years and the country’s first-ever Olympic gold in athletics.

2.2 Application of Technological Means

Since the start of satellite television broadcasting at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, Olympic broadcasting technology has once again made significant advancements at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Olympic broadcasts have finally transitioned from “TV + satellite” to the “cloud + AI” era.

As the primary broadcasting organization and the international media outlet with the most successful bidding for the Paris Olympic Games broadcasting project, China Central Radio and Television Station is adept at utilizing the most advanced technological methods available today to broadcast the exciting moments and important information of the sporting event. The Central Station has dispatched a production and broadcasting team of over 2,000 people, establishing a comprehensive and three-dimensional media matrix across multiple channels and terminals for full coverage. With world-class sports event production capabilities and “5G+4K/8K+AI” technology^[2], they are presenting a visual and auditory feast of power and beauty for hundreds of millions of viewers worldwide.

In the media coverage process of the current Paris Olympics, advanced technological methods have been employed. Cloud broadcasting has enabled the integration of movie special effects-style visuals into the event broadcasts, creating magical effects such as super slow-motion and panoramic views that unfold before a global audience. AI is utilized to capture exciting moments during broadcasts, with Alibaba Cloud deploying AI-enhanced technology in 14 venues and introducing a multi-camera replay system that achieves “time-slice freeze-frame” effects. In the broadcasting of sports events like beach volleyball, tennis, judo, and wrestling at this Olympics, directors can leverage AI-supported multi-camera replay systems to present high-degree replay flexibility. This allows viewers to experience enhanced slow-motion effects and time-stopping visuals from multiple angles, akin to the iconic “bullet time” scenes from science fiction movies, offering an immersive and multi-dimensional perspective on athletes.

Cloud broadcasting technology, AI-enhanced technology, and others have made sports event broadcasts more exciting, allowing viewers to enjoy magical effects like super slow-motion and panoramic views. The application of these technologies not only enhances the viewing experience for audiences but also further expands the influence of the Olympics.

2.3 24-Hour Immersive Live Broadcasting

Central Radio and Television Station’s Director of New Media Center, Qian Wei, introduced the new media communication plan for the Paris Olympics by CCTV. CCTV News, CCTV Sports, and CCTV Financial Media will be conducting live broadcasts of the current Olympic Games. CCTV News will provide the most comprehensive coverage of Olympic events, including the opening and closing ceremonies as well as all 32 major categories comprising 7,294 live matches, with a daily broadcasting duration exceeding 180 hours. CCTV News will officially launch an “Olympics” tab page, offering viewing options across various platforms such as PC, tablet, in-car systems, and supporting features like screen casting and AI applications.

In terms of online video platforms, the Central Radio and Television Station has authorized China Mobile’s Migu to provide live broadcasts, delayed broadcasts, video on demand, and short video content for the 2024 Paris Olympics. Additionally, platforms like Douyin (TikTok), Kuaishou, and Tencent Video have been authorized to offer video on demand and short video content for the Paris Olympics.

During the Olympics, China Mobile's Migu provides “full live coverage” where viewers can watch the 2024 Paris Olympics events through real-time broadcasts, delayed broadcasts, video on demand (including replays), and short videos. Kuaishou focuses on multiple dimensions such as events, content, and interactive gameplay. From July 24 to August 12, Kuaishou airs exciting Paris Olympics content via video on demand, inviting renowned sports commentators, Olympic champions, and celebrities to the studio for professional commentary, in-depth discussions, and insightful reviews. With content available 24/7, users can enjoy the Paris Olympics throughout the

day. Numerous athletes participating in the Olympics will start personal live streams on Kuaishou immediately after their competitions, engaging in discussions with celebrity streamers and fans about Olympic anecdotes. Tencent Video allows viewers to access on-demand and short video content of this year's Olympics through various Tencent media channels, along with Tencent's original programs. Tencent Video's self-produced program, "Paris Live Chat", will connect with Olympic champions after the matches for live interactions, providing users with real-time updates on champions' post-event activities and sharing the joy of victory.

The live broadcasting of this Olympics has achieved a high level of integration across large, medium, and small screens, ensuring comprehensive coverage of all events without any omissions. Various platforms have been consistently striving to showcase their unique features, aiming to provide the ultimate live viewing experience. This Olympics has presented more details clearly to a global audience, allowing viewers to freely choose immersive viewing experiences around the clock.

2.4 Deep Engagement of Opinion Leaders

Olympic champions like Deng Yaping, Gao Ling, and He Chong have shared their thoughts on winning gold at the Olympics, expressing that the Central Radio and Television Station has witnessed the glory of every Olympic champion and recorded China's numerous milestones in Olympic history through visuals. They hope to leverage the Central Radio and Television Station's broadcasting platform to enable more people to experience the charm of competitive sports and to help the world better understand Chinese brands.

Chinese Olympic Committee Vice-Chair and International Olympic Committee Member Li Lingwei, renowned sports commentator Song Shixiong, Olympic champions Lang Ping, Qian Hong, Liu Xuan, Hui Ruoyi, Xu Haifeng, Wang Junxia, Chen Yibing, Zhang Yining, Wei Qiyue, Lin Yue, Wu Minxia, Gong Lijiao, Li Fabing, and others have sent video messages to cheer for the Olympics and for China.

Famous athletes and celebrities were invited by CCTV to deeply engage as opinion leaders in this year's Olympics. The in-depth involvement of opinion leaders has sparked various discussions online about the Paris Olympics. Taking Weibo as an example: with the outstanding performance of the Chinese team and athletes, especially the post-2000s athletes showcasing their authentic and excellent spirits, the fervor of national discussions on watching the games reached new heights. On August 13, 2024, the "Weibo Paris Olympics Viewing Hotspot Report" was released, revealing various data on the Weibo platform during the Paris Olympics. The total number of posts, interactions, topic readings, and other data across all Weibo platforms broke records set during the Tokyo Olympics! Additionally, CCTV News's official Weibo account had 65 Olympic-related topics trending, with 8 ranking at the top of the trending list and another 7 in a "viral" state, accumulating nearly 1.3 billion views.

2.5 Customized Exclusive Programs for Brand Marketing

Relying on the strong resource aggregation advantage of the Central Television Station, CCTV News has ingeniously conceived and carefully designed new media projects such as "Paris Frontline" and "Champion 'Home' Moments", effectively revitalizing the new media resources of the Central Television Station. These projects come in diverse forms that are easily disseminated on the internet, enabling multiple breakthroughs in the operation of the Central Television Station's new media.

"Paris Frontline" arrived at the scene in Paris, entering the "Paris Time" of Sino-French cultural exchange and mutual learning alongside Xiaomi, Haier, and BYD^[3]. The program shifted its focus

to the natural scenery along the Seine River and the technological forefront of the Olympics. Lei Jun brought the Xiaomi SU7 to “visit”, picking his favorite ride with He Wei and Su Bingtian, embarking on a marvelous cultural exchange journey between China and France. Sponsored exclusively by Wuliangye and passionately supported by Gree, the first online live viewing program “Champion ‘Home’ Moments” focuses on champion athletes’ hometowns and families. The champions’ families join in to cheer for shining moments, connecting athletes and netizens with strong, heartwarming family bonds. This show bridges the gap between brands and viewers through Olympic companionship, allowing brands to celebrate real scenes and achieve growth.

Leveraging the sponsorship of CCTV News on Douyin and projects like “Road to Champions” and “Dreams in Paris”, customized marketing content is being developed to continuously enhance the Central Television Station’s communication, influence, and marketing capabilities in the field of new media. This strategy aims to make the new productive forces the greatest increment in the development of the Central Television Station’s operations. CCTV News fully utilizes the advantages of its 22 communication matrices to provide brands with three-dimensional and customized new media marketing solutions.

Mengniu has collaborated with CCTV News on social media accounts such as Weibo and WeChat to create exclusive creative content, engage in hot discussions, and interact with viewers through bullet comments. By associating the Olympic spirit of competition with Mengniu’s spirit of strength, this collaboration aims to strengthen brand output. Amway, through CCTV News’ Douyin account, engages in remixing and sharing exciting moments such as the opening ceremony, breakthroughs, and gold-winning moments, aiming to reach a younger audience and achieve deep consumer engagement for the brand. Alibaba has placed ads on CCTV News’ WeChat account with the theme “Good Morning, Olympics!” to gather the latest Olympic information for users, bridge time zone gaps, and achieve long-term brand companionship.

Furthermore, Luzhou Laojiao has partnered with “Road to Champions” to utilize AIGC technology and promptly narrate the stories of champions’ growth to the audience, creating more dialogues between the brand and viewers^[4]. Yanghe collaborates with the short video program “Dreams in Paris”, leveraging exclusive news footage from CCTV to empower efficient brand communication and enhance brand value. These programs offer new paths and methods for brands to break through traditional communication barriers and reach a wider audience^[5].

3. Analysis of Issues and Solutions in Comprehensive Media Communication

As of August 12th, the Paris Olympics-related coverage broadcasted by the Central Radio and Television General Station has accumulated nearly 7.7 billion views across its own platforms, setting a record high for the communication effects of all previous Summer Olympics with the use of cutting-edge technological applications, compelling content creation, and an extensive cross-media communication matrix. The comprehensive media coverage of the Paris Olympics by the Central Radio and Television General Station has successfully enhanced China’s influence in the global sports broadcasting arena, showcasing China’s strength and characteristics to the world while disseminating the voice and spirit of China.

As mentioned earlier, short videos were the primary platform for Olympic coverage. It is well-known that short video dissemination has distinct advantages and disadvantages. During the dissemination process, issues such as copyright infringement through derivative works, a tendency towards vulgar content, and violations of the privacy rights of Olympic champions may arise. As an official media outlet, comprehensive strategies for short video sports event communication should be developed from the following aspects: firstly, enhancing the Central Television Station’s official agenda-setting capabilities^[6]; secondly, strengthening the development of event-related derivative

content; and thirdly, improving the supervision of short videos related to major events. The goal is to ensure that users on constantly evolving short video platforms encounter top-notch content in terms of theme selection, copywriting, visuals, and more.

The application of technological means is a general trend, but it is important not to let technology take control. While continuously learning advanced technologies, it is crucial to harness human initiative. In the process of brand marketing, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of the brand background and philosophy, integrate brand culture with the Olympic spirit, and incorporate new, audience-friendly ways into advertising communication, rather than simply inserting ads that may lead to visual fatigue among the audience.

4. Conclusion

The content elements of the Paris Olympics have been rich and diverse in their communication. Firstly, there is the athletic competition itself, with its uncertainty, drama, and transcendence. Self-challenges that push the limits of human capabilities, such as Pan Zhanle's achievements, can evoke strong empathy in people. Secondly, beyond victory and defeat, there is the shining of human nature. For example, when Chinese badminton player He Bingjiao, who won a silver medal in the women's singles, held a badge of the Spanish Olympic Committee while standing on the podium, it deeply embodies the spirit of the Olympics. Thirdly, when athletes from different backgrounds compete together, it showcases cross-cultural exchanges and demonstrates a higher level of human solidarity and civilization. These aspects have contributed to the Paris Olympics having a significant impact in communication.

The Paris Olympics provide an excellent platform for telling compelling Chinese sports stories, yet there are challenges and dilemmas in storytelling. For instance, the complex and ever-changing international communication environment lacks proactive discourse expression. The overwhelming amount of information interference and emotional dissemination hinders the communication of positive values. The narrative mode is often singular, leading to weaker international discourse power. Controversies surrounding swimmer Pan Zhanle's achievements, conspiracy theories about Wang Chuqin's broken racket, and the "fan culture" in table tennis are examples that do not favor the external communication of positive Chinese sports stories. So, how can we effectively tell Chinese sports stories and enhance China's international influence in major sports events? This is a question that requires careful consideration. The author believes that firstly, it is essential to integrate diverse storytelling elements deeply to enhance the "infectiousness" of Chinese sports stories. Secondly, there is a need to transform the narrative discourse system to elevate the value consensus of Chinese sports stories. Lastly, maintaining an open and inclusive communication posture to present a true and comprehensive image of China is crucial.

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