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## Analyzing Nation Branding Through Public Relations Lenses-- the Case of the 2008 Olympics Opening Ceremony

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## **Abstract**

Studies across several disciplines, including marketing, political science and culture studies, have already touched on the concept of nation branding. Different experts with distinct academic backgrounds look at nation branding from different angles. This paper first takes a critical review of the conceptualizations of nation branding and then revisits the public relations theories, followed by a synthesis of public relations concepts with nation branding in a case study of the Beijing 2008 Opening Ceremony. It also seeks to open a conversation within the field of communication and public relations on the trend of nation branding. With an aim of contributing to the theoretical development of nation branding, the author attempts to review classic public relations theories and seeks for possibilities to integrate public relations theories into this fast-growing field.

Because nation branding is an umbrella term, the author narrows the research field to the case study of the Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony. By comparatively analyzing the commentaries of the Opening Ceremony from CCTV and Australia Seven, this study attempts to bring the Chinese nation branding events into the lenses of image management and communication.

**ANALYZING NATION BRANDING THROUGH PUBLIC RELATIONS LENSES**  
**THE CASE OF THE 2008 OLYMPICS OPENING CEREMONY**

by

Ruoshi Li

B.A., East China Normal University, 2015

Thesis

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Master of Science in Public Relations.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

With the acceleration of globalization and the influence of mediated news coverage, a good image of a nation is of tremendous importance when countries at the global market are competing against each other for economic strength and political status. Building and reinforcing a shared national identity is a matter of paramount importance. Thus, nation branding, a concept first emerging from marketing perspective, caught the attention of scholars within the field of public diplomacy, mass communication and culture studies. The central idea of nation branding lies in establishing an umbrella image of a nation. The umbrella image embraces different layers of images that represent a nation's history, culture, economy and politics. After harmonizing the sub-images, they are ultimately subordinate to the overall images (Fan, 2005; Olins, 2002; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2000). Countries see themselves as brands and work vigorously to manage their relationships with both domestic publics and international publics (Wang, 2016). International mega events "target at the international community for country branding purpose" and "are as much aimed at domestic audiences for political legitimization" (Chen, 2012, p.731). However, only some passing remarks are devoted to public relations 'contribution to nation branding. Public relations, the central mission of which is image management and relationship building, may bring fresh insights into the conceptualization of nation branding. expand the research scopes.

In public relations' definition, image is a condensed process in which a brand or corporate establish themselves and are perceived by their target publics (Hareich, 1993). The scope of image "covers the communication activities and their effects towards their publics." (Grunig, 1983, p.126) A corporation first establishes an umbrella image that, on

one hand, distinguishes itself from its competitors, while on the other, harmonizes the assorted symbols into a coherent and interlocking whole. Then, a detailed survey is done to get an idea of the perceptions of their publics towards their images and narrow the gaps between the projected image and perception.

The concept of reputation management has its origin in marketing. Charles Fombrun (1996) first establishes a reputation formula to quantify reputation. By equating reputation to the sum of images the various constituencies have of an organization (p.9), Fombrun makes it clear that, although image management and reputation management overlap, reputation is constructed on the basis of an accumulation of positive images. Doorley and Garcia (2011) revise the formula and attribute a good reputation to the equilibrium between performance, behaviors and communication. As nation branding, national image management and national reputation management at times are treated as interchangeable terms, this revised formula implies the cornerstone of a successful nation branding campaign--- the message conveyed to the target audiences should keep in line with the performance and behaviors of this organization.

Some previous studies exemplify the economic function of nation branding by using the case of Spain as the country has succeeded in rebranding itself and generating a tourism increase (Gilmore, 2002; Gomez & Luisa, 2013; Ulldemolins & Zamorano, 2015). Seeing nation branding from a public diplomacy angle, other scholars indicate that nation branding can help a nation in transition to disassociate itself from the biased image with the example of South Africa, Romania and Bulgaria (György, 2007; Jeremy, 2009; Kaneva & Popescu, 2011).

This paper aims to take nation branding into the communication sphere and marry the public relations models to nation branding campaigns, thus situating nation branding in a discursive context. Not limited to the publicity views of public relations, this paper expands the theoretical boundary and seeks the potentials of public relations in nation branding.

Put specifically, by bringing in James Grunig's "four models in communications" theory, this paper attempts to demonstrate how nation branding campaigns can be used as an implicit communication tool to convey a nation's message, defend a nation's political stance and respond to the publics' opinions.

Beijing Olympics provides a wonderful example of branding campaigns at a national level because, for China, the Olympics Games is a long-awaited moment in Chinese history. With a total attendance of over 200 delegations and more than 80 national leaders, Beijing 2008 Olympics Games sets world records and unquestionably draws the media spotlight. As a global emerging power with a 1.3 billion population and a two-digit growth rate, the long-awaited opening ceremony is a golden chance to project China's image to the global publics (Barr, 2012; Becker, 2011; Chen, 2012). Because of the adversarial relationships between China and the West during the Cold War, this mega sports event which claims to be free from politics, also offers China a platform to rebuild its reputation on a global stage. Additionally, as China is often criticized for its human rights issues, Tibetan issues and its environmental pollution problems, this mega event magnifies these accusations. As China is confronted with skepticism of its peaceful rising, the Olympics also provides China a global platform to communicate with the world. However, as it is known to all, many stereotypes or cultural associations have their

roots in history, and what result can be achieved in a nation branding campaign is hard to predict.

Therefore, this study attempts to focus its attention on the following perspectives:

1. How does China make full use of the Olympic kickoff to distinguish itself from other nations and brand itself as a peaceful rising power?
2. Is the perception of publics identical to the projected image China expects to achieve?
3. What kind of public relations model does the Opening Ceremony fit into?

The next chapter will start with a literature review of nation branding within the field of marketing, public diplomacy and cultural studies, following an extended discussion about the applicability of public relations models to nation branding.

As public relations image management function and reputation management function can theoretically contribute to nation branding, the emphasis of literature review shifts to the marriage of image management and reputation management to nation branding.

In the method chapter, the necessity and advantages of choosing textual analysis and semiotic analysis are illustrated together with the specific data collecting strategies. In Chapter Four, descriptive results are given by category. An extended, solid discussion is included in the final chapter, together with the limitation of this study and the direction of future study.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **The Conceptualization of Nation Branding**

Branding has long been used as a tool for creating product differentiation. The idea of nation branding has its root in product branding or corporate branding. Brands comprise multiple dimensions including quality, performances, values, and trustworthiness. Shimp (1993) adapts “brand equities” to “country equities,” referring to the mental leverage process between products and their countries of origin (COO).

Inspired by the corporate branding theories, there is an increasing awareness among statesmen and scholars that a nation’s image influences its product competitiveness and recognition at the global stage. Various countries from Britain to Brazil to Brunei have undertaken branding initiatives to earn their positions on the global stage and improve their images. As part of these ongoing nation branding campaigns, nations are devoting resources to increasing their trade volumes, to attracting foreign investments, to fostering a favorable political environment, to demonstrating the new political standings, or to uniting their peoples and constructing/reconstructing a shared identity (Anholt, 2003; Dzenovska, 2005; Gilmore, 2002; Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Wang, 2006, 2008).

Nation branding draws attention from diverse fields including marketing and economics, public diplomacy and political science, cultural studies and even anthropology. O’Shaughnessy (2000) and Olins (2002) illustrated that nation branding has its root in branding within the field of marketing. They refer to nation branding as the process of branding a nation as a whole using product promotion techniques. Central to this argument is the idea that the product of nation images is almost identical to the

creation of a corporate image (Kaneva, 2011). Fan (2006) associates nation branding with the marketing theory of “Country-Of-Origin” (COO).

However, O’Shaughnessy questioned defining nation branding as analogous to product branding in his research. Although a nation has attributes similar to a brand and product, a nation is not identical to a product and its image is bounded up with multifaceted economic and social attributes (O’Shaughnessy, 2000). He argues a nation brand bears a “fragmented image” which is “so multi-layered and fluid that [it denies] the clarity implicit in a term such as brand image”—the image is composed of the debris of historic, cultural and contemporary conditions (p.58). On the one hand, the fragmented, multilayered image results in incoherence in the nation’s brand, and on the other hand, calls for a dominate image, an image powerful and representative enough to exclude other meanings.

Fan (2006) also differentiates between nation branding and product branding. Although “Country of Origin” (COO) does have a strong impact on the public’s perception of a product, a place, or a nation, product branding serves as a functional tool to help product sales and develop relationships with target segments.

Additionally, Fan mentions that there are no tangible attributes in a nation’s brand, which causes difficulty in defining a nation’s image. In general, Fan defines nation branding as a procedure which applies branding and communication techniques to promote a nation’s image in the international arena. The aim of nation branding, in Fan’s definition is to “create a simple, clear, differentiating idea built around people’s perceptions” (p.9). Simon Anholt, founder of the “Good Country Index,” which proposes six dimensions of measurement of a country’s overall abilities, supports a similar

definition of nation branding.

Divergent as each of these different are, all share one thing in common: They each assume that all nations have a brand and that nation branding is an instrumental approach to promote the existing brand in the global marketplace, thus ignoring the ongoing conscious construction of nation brands in the play of political power (Kaneva, 2011). Influenced by Nye's "Soft Power" theory, many scholars examine nation branding through the fields of international relationships and public diplomacy. Nye (2008) states that soft power is a power of attraction, one that "shapes others preference" and "makes others want what you want" (p.95). He also points out that "soft power has its roots in its cultures, its political values and its foreign policies" (p.97).

The political values (at home and abroad) require public diplomacy to shoulder the responsibility to construct an identity that both foreign publics and domestic publics buy into. Public diplomacy, in some scholars' eyes, is regarded as a set of communication practices used for policy explanation and message distribution (Wang, 2006, 2007). Yet some scholars see public diplomacy as a component of broad strategies of national image management, thus believing nation branding and public diplomacy can be used interchangeably. They also point out that at the heart of nation branding, there is a set of communication practices used for policy explanation and message distribution (Wang, 2006).

Branding can be viewed as a perfect tool to achieve real-world political outcomes and to generate a favorable political environment at the world stage (Jeremy, 2009).

Nation branding is also a kind of innovation that nations employ to craft a differentiating identity in the international arena.

For example, in describing Spain's rebranding campaign *Marca Espana*, Gilmore (2002), Martínez (2010), and Gomez and Lusia (2013) point out that nation branding can be used as a vehicle to rebrand a country in the international arena and to balance its preexisting image and its less prominent characteristics. Jeremy (2009) illustrates in his research how the newly-born Republic of South Africa uses the techniques of nation branding to reposition itself in the global community as a facilitator to solve cross-border disputes or international crises. Szondi (2007) and Kaneva and Popescu (2014) use Belgium as an example of how nation branding helps a transitioning country disassociate itself from a communist past and repositions itself as a reliable member of the new system. All of these studies on nation branding campaigns serve as public diplomacy practices.

Also, many public diplomacy scholars highlight the dual objectives of nation branding campaigns. As Van Ham (2002) states, territorial branding is part and parcel of adding values to the territory-individual relationships. States and authorities face the challenges of legalizing their existence and winning the hearts and minds of their people both domestically and internationally.

Discussions of nation branding share affinities with the issues of identity construction in cultural studies because nation branding campaigns involve the construction of political identities. Cultural theorists like Stuart Hall connect nation branding to the construction of national/cultural identity as Anderson (1983) elaborates at length (1983).

Adopting thoughts of structuralism, constructivism, and Foucault's discursive practice, scholars refer to nation branding as an ongoing process of cultural identity construction and a dynamic network of Self and Other at the national level (Hall, 2000). Kaneva and Popescu (2011) directly state in their studies that the aim of any nation branding campaign is to project the nation's image by commodifying its characteristics and by enhancing collective memories and a sense of self-identification.

The limitation of nation branding studies so far is that many papers focus on studying the mechanisms behind nation branding campaigns, yet fail to concentrate on the techniques used in nation branding, public relations techniques in particular because scholars generally attach great importance to public relations only at the corporate level and not at the national level. Therefore, they neglect the application of public relations to nation branding, though the essence of public relations is management function.

### **The Applicability of Public Relations Models to Nation Branding**

There is some literature that touches a little on the potential of public relations in nation branding. J.E Grunig claims that "modern governments and other international organizations find themselves using public relations strategies as they conduct what political scientists have called public diplomacy" (Grunig, 1983). Signitzer and Coombs (1992) also point out that the increased pace of globalization and the broadening territorial of public participation in foreign affairs has resulted in increasing significance of public relations techniques applied to international relationships. J. E. Grunig (1993) claims that public relations features its management functions in organizations, contributing to strategic development by building and maintaining relationships with

diverse stakeholders that assist in achieving the goals of an organization. Grunig's theory concerning public relations' management function and relationship building has laid the foundation for the future exploration of public relations techniques at the corporate level and beyond. Grunig (1993) also points out that some public relations models are very effective to public diplomacy, and that some public relations theories are fundamental to public diplomacy.

Also, with the shift in public diplomacy from government-to-government connections to person-to-person engagement, the demand for fostering mutual understanding between government and its foreign audiences has increased greatly, which leads many public diplomacy scholars to borrow management and branding ideas from business scholarship. Wang (2006) in his paper elaborates that this premise for branding assumes the correlation between branding a corporation and branding a nation, which the paper discusses in more detail later.

However, there are still few studies that directly analyze nation branding campaigns through a public relations lens.

Szondi (2010) makes an attempt to advance the theoretical development of nation branding by incorporating public relations perspectives to this newly yet fast growing field. After a critical review of public relations contributions to destination marketing, a synthetic analysis of possible public relations functions with nation branding emerges. Szondi's research throws new light on the conceptualizations of nation branding. However, Szondi narrowed its research scope to the specific public relation techniques to a specific event rather than take a critical look to review the classic public relations

theories. Fitting public relations theories into the study of nation branding study may expose a new angle from which to study to this issue.

In our paper, we are committed to revisiting classic public relations theories, namely, **the four models of public relations**, the **image management theories**, and **reputation management theories** with the intention of facilitating the conceptualization of nation branding campaigns through public relations lenses.

### **Four Models of Public Relations**

J. E. Grunig sets up two parameters to help classify different public relations practices and behaviors. The two parameters are: direction (one-way/two-way) and balance of intended effect, asymmetrical & symmetrical (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Thus, by isolating the different variables that influence diverse public relations behaviors, J.E. Grunig simplifies public relations practices to four models: press agency/ publicity; public information; two-way asymmetric; and two-way symmetric (Grunig, Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang, & Lyra, 1995).

**Press agency/ publicity** takes on some propagandistic characteristics in that it employs persuasion and manipulation to influence targeted stakeholders in catering to the organization's desires. It spares no effort to seek press attention. It functions as a one-way lane in the information communication process (Grunig, 1989). Propaganda also falls in this category.

The second model, **public information model**, characterizes public relations as the dissemination of information without volunteering negative messages, that is,

projecting the reality and organizational information to chosen groups. This model relies heavily on mediated communication to influence the attitudes and behaviors of the target public. This method does not involve researching public perception. Government agencies are one of the most common vehicles for this public relations model (Grunig, 1989).

The **two-way asymmetric model** is an imbalanced communication model that emphasizes the use of research to identify various publics' attitudes and catering the messages to those attitudes.

Last but not least, Grunig and Hunt's (1984) **two-way symmetric model** involves a dialogue with publics, the negotiation with all stakeholders, and the building of mutual understanding which results in attitudinal changes and behavioral changes in target publics. The part and parcel of this model lies in the establishment of a win-win relationship between organizations and their publics.

This model lines up with the theory of co-creation of meaning, and theory that offers diverse stakeholders the chance to agree to shared meanings and goals through two-way symmetric communication (Botan & Taylor, 2004). Also, this ideal model of multilateral communication may be the direction which all future nation branding campaigns are working towards.

Because the foundation of nation branding is still relationship management and engagement with all stakeholders, the four models of public relations can be applicable to nation branding and its communication process.

However, public relations can also help nation branding step out of the mud of propaganda and foster more open communication. Through its environmental scanning function and its relationship management function, public relations can contribute to the shift of nation branding from one-way communication to two-way communication. Public relations can make a nation branding campaign less static through real-time monitoring and continuous adaptation to changes among subsystems and the external environment (Szondi, 2010). Public relations techniques can be applied to nation branding with the aim of eliminating the gap between the projected images and public perceptions, thus achieving a success in “two-way symmetrical communications” or termed as “mutual beneficial relationships” (Grunig, 1984, p.30).

### **Image Management**

These communications models already involve the messages the organization would like to convey and the perceptions of publics towards a particular organization, which overlaps with image theory to some extent. As nation branding is sometimes called national image management, a review of public relations’ definition of image is needed.

There is a plethora of scholarly writing about “image” within the fields of art, psychology, cultural studies, marketing, and communications. The artistic concept of image weighs creators more than receivers — creators produce the image and give to the receivers compulsorily. In psychology, the definition of image goes to another extreme and takes on some characteristics of receptionism. Receivers construct or reconstruct the images according to their individual perceptions or personal understandings. Inspired by

psychology, a heated discussion dominated the marketing academia for some time (Haedrich, 1993). The central idea of this theory is not necessarily in line with the nature of products but in accordance with the perceptions of its consumers. Yet, as my ultimate goal in this paper is exploring the possibility of applying public relations theories to nation branding, we must address the definition of image from a public relations perspective.

Although the concept of images in public relations can be traced back to mental images in psychology and overlap with marketing's concept, public relations' concept of images is much broader (Grunig, 1993). On the one hand, images—in public relations—are not limited to visual symbols but include all symbols from visual to oral to written symbols that communicators can use to interact with publics. On the other hand, images are regarded more as the process of cognition, perception, and construction.

Image theory in public relations is of great significance because it is situated nearly at the same notional level as the concept of brand perception and corporate reputation, even used interchangeably at times.

The image concept condenses the entire process by which a brand, organization, or even person is perceived and experienced into a symbolic and psychological word. Countless objective and emotional qualities are embedded into this singular concept (Haedrich, 1993).

The blurry area in the definition of image as a creation of an organization and as an interpretation of publics unintentionally makes it possible for the term to refer to several symbolic relations between organizations and their stakeholders

“In the communication process, the goal of the sender-communicator is to convey a message to the receiver-audience in a form as identical as possible to what is in the mind of that sender. What the receiver gets after the message is encoded, sent and decoded, however, is really an image of reproduction of the thoughts or feelings of the sender” (Haberman & Dolphin, 1998, p. 15).

It is obvious that there exists a gap between the image projected by sender-communicator and the image decoded by receivers (audiences), which makes image management a critical and pressing task. As perceptions of your audiences can never be identical to the way an organization feels about itself, an organization wary of its environment will always attempt to scan the environment and ascertain each segmented publics’ understandings (Szondi, 2010).

### **Corporate Branding and National Image Management**

As a nation’s image is constructed and shaped by different publics and involves multiple divergent and competing parties, brand management strategies are crucial to governments.

The definition of **branding** includes three essential components—**brand definition, brand communication, and brand management** (Wang, 2011). Keller (1993) equates brand definition to the establishment of a product or an organization’s identity comprising its functional and symbolic meanings. Haedrich (1993) adds to this idea by stating that the central task of branding has two-faceted objectives: to construct a differentiating identity from its competitors and to justify and legitimate its existence. Under this circumstance, brand communication means delivering messages and creating

engagement through diverse platforms both internally and externally (Wang, 2008).

Obviously, distinctions exist between nation branding and image management. First, nation branding is enacted at the state level, with private-public partnership—namely, the cooperation between private firms and government—whereas image management is not limited to the state level but can be minimized to individual beings.

Therefore, to what extent can corporate branding strategies be applied to national image management, or, nation branding?

Wang (2008) in his study defines the premises for branding as follows:

- 1) a competitive marketplace where requires brands differentiating identities;
- 2) an achieved equilibrium between projected images by corporates and individual perceptions held by consumers (Keller, 2011);
- 3) located within a dynamic and ongoing identity construction;

Likewise, nation image management also meet these three aforementioned premises:

- 1) with the acceleration of globalization, competitions both for economic advantage or international influence among countries is increasingly fierce;
- 2) Images have a great importance to a market reality, and only a clear-cut image in a target audience's minds can distinguish an image from its competitors (Hawdrich, 1993). It is worthwhile to unearth the relevance and significance of branding within the marketing arena to national image management;

Anholt (2003) makes it clear that

Countries ... behave, in many ways, just like brands. They are perceived – rightly or wrongly – in certain ways by large groups of people at home and abroad; they are associated with certain qualities and characteristics.

Those perceptions can have a significant impact. In short, the image of a country determines the way the world sees it and treats it (p. 109).

3) Also, national image management is dynamic rather than static because image management is always in the flux of altering power relations (Youde, 2009).

### **Reputation Management**

Many papers on nation branding use image management and reputation management interchangeably, which requires us to get a sense of reputation management theory. First of all, we focus on reputation management at the corporate level, as it is one of the public relations management functions as stated by Ferguson (1984).

Reputation scholar Charles Fombrun (1996, p. 376) first quantify the reputation, with an equation:

$$\text{Reputation} = \text{Sum of Images}$$

He equates reputation to the total of the images held by an organization's various constituencies (p. 9). This equation is a strong proof to show the close correlation between reputation management and image management.

Doorley and Garcia (2011) adjusted Fombrun's equation as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Reputation} &= \text{Sum of Images} \\ &= \text{Performance} + \text{Behavior} + \text{Communication} \end{aligned}$$

The upside of this definition is that it contributes to a clearer explanation that communication, together with performance and behavior, is a critical and indispensable component of reputation (p. 4). As a reputation is built from the combination and coordination of these three components, it is not a fixed term but a cumulative concept. Thus, comprehensive reputation management involves the management of an organization's intrinsic identity and external images, requiring a company or organization to bridge these two and keep its performance/ behavior in line with its communication.

On its surface, this formula seems simple. Yet, the equation implies the formula of a successful reputation establishment and management, that is, reputations are based on your brand's images in others' eyes, which in turn are influenced by multiple factors. Only when long-term performances and behaviors are in accordance with the conveyed messages and projected images can a good reputation be built. This consistency of performance and communication requires a good understanding of the brand itself, the public's perceptions towards the brand, and the gap between these two factors. Only two-way symmetrical communication can meet this requirement.

### **Corporate Reputation Management**

Fombrun (2006) conceptualized reputation and then created a framework for corporate reputation management. Two components are part and parcel of corporate reputation: first, constructing a unique **identity**; and second, projecting a coherent set of images to the public (Haedrich, 1993). Doorley and Garcia (2011) have a similar idea and state: "Companies develop winning reputations by both creating and projecting a set of skills that their constituents recognize as unique and distinguish themselves from their competitors (p.9)."

And then, according to Garica (2011), well-regarded companies usually establish strong and positive bonds with both their internal subgroups and external environment.

### **A Country's Reputation**

O'Shaughnessy (2000) in his research mentions the similarity and likeability between corporations and countries, "[a] nation can be viewed as a brand as it can be reviewed as a compound of contemporary and historical associations that have relevance for marketing" (p. 56). This is the reason that management of a country's reputation is becoming a growing area within the field of public relations and public diplomacy (Yang, Shin, Lee, & Wrigley, 2008).

According to Passow, Fehlmann, and Grahlow (2005):

Reputation management is not limited to corporate level but can be applied to nation state. In an increasingly competitive global place, nations are more and more concerned with their reputation and turn to measuring and managing their reputations in an active and proactive manner" (p. 309).

The introduction of country reputation sheds light on current studies with an emphasis on soft power, nation branding, and public relations management function.

The value of country reputation adds a new factor to public diplomacy, also coined as "soft power." Nye (2008) claims that soft power becomes more relevant as a national strategy for diplomacy. Soft power of a country can be developed and enhanced through effective country reputation management, which is to manage attractiveness of a country in the minds of foreign publics, or in short, to "make publics want what you want" (p. 95).

On the nation branding side, the significance of country reputation is noted in Anholt's National Brands Index (NBI) (2005). To help nations ultimately establish a strong national image and reputation, the index combines six dimensions such as culture and heritage, people, tourism, governance, exports and investment and immigration. By condensing these six perspectives of elements into one index, Anholt demonstrates that a nation's reputation is built upon both physical, tangible assets and cumulative, intangible assets. As O'Shaughnessy (2000) puts it, nation branding is to "weave their own reputation capital" and "shaping a country's image reputation" (p.58)

On the public relations side, in an attempt to distinguish itself from the previous discredited terms, public relations spares no effort to shoulder management functions in organizational relationships and states that reputation is a product of management behaviors and organization-public relationships (Grunig & Huang, 2002). Seen from a broader perspective, a nation is similar to a corporation (Olins, 2002). The techniques used to manage reputations at a corporate level can, to some extent, be applied to the management of a nations' reputation.

Although many scholars have worked vigorously to distinguish between similar terms like reputation, image, impression and brand, in general, a corporate image can be built overnight through an image-building campaign, while the establishment of a good reputation is a thousand-year work centered on long-term impressions (Yang, Shin, Lee, & Wrigley, 2008). Basically all of these terms describe the process of cognitions and perceptions that publics form and hold toward certain organizations (Grunig & Huang, 2002).

Therefore, we have not spared any effort in strictly controlling the use of image management and reputation management in this article when studying their contribution to nation branding.

Because image and reputation are all about how a nation is perceived, the concept of image represents the whole process of perception and formation. The image concept condenses the entire process in which a brand, an organization, or even a person is perceived and experienced into a symbolic and psychological term. Countless objective and emotional qualities are embedded into this singular concept (Haedrich, 1993).

The brand concept does share some affinities with the concept of image. “Brand states are contextualized in the play of power and knowledge, of image and structure, a branded nation does not only relate to one single product or attribute, but associate itself with a flow of values, images, and other symbols,” (Van Ham, 2011).

Also, nation branding campaigns, are no longer tourism campaigns aimed at increasing foreign investment, but fierce competitions among countries for positive images and favorable reputations in the international arena. Therefore, image management and reputation management are regarded as inherent parts and ultimate objectives of nation branding campaigns (Hutton, Goodman, Alexander, & Genest, 2001).

### **Beijing Olympic Games & Nation Branding**

A few weeks after the Beijing Olympic Games ended, the School for Oriental and African Studies, University of London held a conference on “Documenting the Beijing Olympics” to discuss what the Games bring to a country. This conference gave birth to a

conference book titled *Documenting the Beijing Olympics*. Almost every piece of scholarship agrees that the Olympic Games Opening Ceremony gives the host nations a spotlight to demonstrate its social changes and soft power through a global network of mass media, and different scholars in the conference identified different angles of this idea.

Luo (2010) addressed the tradition and culture associated with the Olympic Games. Building on an anthropological description of ritual and ceremony, he looked at the cultural performance in the 2008 opening ceremony using textual analysis and cultural analysis methods. Although he touches a little on how Beijing used the opening ceremony to build a shared identity, he does not borrow public relations management theories. Another scholar, Liang (2010), also pays special attention to this opening ceremony and argues that the opening ceremony demonstrates China's attempt to present a national self and reposition China in the eyes of the West. Liang also does not use public relations theories.

However, Chen (2010) details the importance of holding mega events in the nation branding process and analyzes the dual objectives of this mega event: targeting the international community for branding purposes and establishing political legitimization among domestic audiences.

Sun and Paswan (2011) focused their study on the impacts of international events on the host country's brand image and on consumers' purchase intention. Based on the theories of Kotler and Gertner (2002), which state that a country's image is an overall total of geography, history, art and other factors, Sun and Paswan (2011) saw the Beijing

Olympics Games as an important element for China's nation branding campaigns and analyzed the contribution of this mega event. Greyster (2008) proposed the interesting opinion that China actually co-branded with the sports events to raise the country's visibility, thus directly marring the nation branding campaign to the Olympics.

Balmer and Chen (2015) provided their insights into China's nation branding as well. They defined several key dimensions of China as a nation brand. They also argued that Confucianism is one of the most significant perspective in China's nation branding campaigns, as it highlights harmony, benevolence, trustworthiness, and righteousness. Also, nation branding China is an act of demonstrating China's soft power on the global stage.

## **Chapter Three: Method**

### **Overview**

This study uses textual analysis to study how public relations theories are applied in nation branding campaigns. The author chose an interpretative, qualitative methodology as opposed to a quantitative analysis with the intention of revealing the implicit or symbolic meanings embedded in the images and elements of “Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony.” This semiotic analysis serves as a supplement for the grand opening ceremony as the object of the study combines moveable images, audio commentary, and subtitles (Penn, 2000; Rose, 2000). This methodology makes it easier to locate the dynamic construction of image and identity within the deep social and historical contexts. This method of post-structuralist textual analysis makes it possible for the author to examine both manifest and latent meanings of the elements and symbols in this mega opening ceremony.

### **Advantages**

When it comes to textual analysis, the first thing to do is to define “text.” According to Mckee (2003), regardless of forms, a text is what we make meaning from, or, in other words, that which interpreted (p. 4). Therefore, the definition of “text” is broader compared to the definition of “word.”

This study acknowledges that textual analysis, together with semiotic analysis, bears several unparalleled advantages that favor our in-depth research into this event filled with ideological symbols.

Mckee (2003) illustrates in his guidebook that, though subjective, textual analysis has a natural advantage in its qualitative-information collection process—to collect the interpretation about the world from diverse groups, communities and cultures.

As Mckee puts it, “The methodology seeks to understand the ways in which these forms of representation take place, the assumptions behind them and the kinds of sense-making about the world that they reveal” (p.17).

Through a specular event, like the Beijing Olympic Opening Ceremony, the host country attempts to “package its representation of a reality and deliver it to a huge global audience” (Martinez, 2010, p.746). Obviously, the opening ceremony is a product of the multi-dimensional symbolism of modern times and narratives of the modern state of the nation. Our method of textual analysis deconstructs this storytelling to comprehend the effort of the PRC in promulgating its ideology of harmony as part of its intangible assets and its political promise to the world as a peaceful, rising power (Luo, 2010).

Stuart Hall explicates the method of textual analysis more extensively (Lindlof, 1991). Drawing on the core theories posed by previous or contemporaneous structuralists and linguistics like Althusser, Gramsci, Barthes and Foucault, he emphasizes four parts: language and meaning, ideology, ideology and myth, and historicity (Fiske, 1994). These four constructs are the mechanisms operating behind the 2008 Olympics Opening Ceremony.

In terms of **language and meaning**, like Ferdinand de Saussure’s “signified” and “signifier,” “meaning” is not static but dynamic, and it is produced in social practice with language as the medium (Hill, 1979). Hall further points out the media’s effort to

construct reality (Hall, 1982). Therefore, every image and every element included in the opening ceremony can be regarded as one of these constructions. Textual analysis is the best method to apprehend the underlying meaning of China's nation branding campaign during the 2008 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony.

In terms of **ideology and myth**, building on Roland Barthes's theory that every cultural product has meaning and that this meaning is conditioned by ideology and myth, textual analysis serves as a powerful vehicle to figure out the connotation between the first-class signification and the second-class signification, also termed as cultural association.

As for the **ideology**, drawing on the insights of Marxism, Scholars focus on the intimacy between language and ideology (Rai, 1984). As the polysomic layers of meaning unfolds, the ideological force behind the meaning surfaces (Kress, 1983).

Employing textual analysis in the study helps readers to understand the deeper meanings behind the images and the political motivations behind the Opening Ceremony.

When it comes to **historicity**, the method of textual analysis contributes to digging out the influence of historical conditions in the text production and consumption, a historical perspective for examining the meaning produced in the encounter between the text and subject (Hardt, 1989). Semiotic analysis functions as a necessary supplement to textual analysis, especially when the object of research is a combination of visual text, still images and audio commentary (Rose, 2000). Semiology has its root in structural linguistics that originated in the linguistic theories of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Central to Saussure's ideas is that language is a sign system and any sign is

composed of two parts, one being sound/image, coined as “signifier,” the other being the concept/idea, termed as “signified.” The link between the two components is arbitrary and influenced by its position in the language system. Building on Saussure’s theories of the sign as the association of signified and signifier, Barthes (1964) introduces “a second-order signer” to the previous studies and comes up with a second-order semiotics system. In Barthes’s semiology theory, the signified of the systems evolved to the signifier of the second-order systems.

Barthes refers to the first-order signifier-signified system as “denotation” where the signifier and signified are associated by linguistic and anthropologic relations. At the second-level linguistic system, the “connotation,” the signifier (the first-order signified) is linked to the signified by cultural or social factors. To analyze the opening ceremony, which was packed with images and symbols, special attention should be paid to identifying the implicit cultural links between the “first-order system” and “second-order system.” For example, the sign of the pigeon in the artistic performance sections means the stout-bodied birds with short bills and necks at the denotation level. However, the analysis does not end there, but takes both the visual image and zoological definition of a dove as a whole and uses the overall concept to signify the hope for world peace. It is not the common sense embedded in the first-order system, but the associative meanings between the two-sign system that are worth notice and further study. Equal importance should also be attached to the constructed nature of the projected image, which gives room for image management from a public relations standpoint.

To develop a full understanding of how the Opening Ceremony conveys its message to diverse audiences and how it can feed its projected images to the target

groups, we collected data from two sources, by watching full HD videos of the Opening Ceremony and by reviewing the newspaper articles about the ceremony.

### **A Comparison between Two Videos on the Opening Ceremony**

Our video footage comes from Youtube, and we used both the CCTV-HD version with Mandarin commentary and Chinese subtitles and the footage from Australia Channel Seven with English and Chinese lyrics and subtitles. Both of the two videos are four hours long, but the commentaries differ to some degree. Apart from the translation issues, these differences provided direction to our research.

Central China Television, originally Beijing Television, was the first television network in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Central China Television (CCTV) is a state-run, monopolistic television giant that operates under the supervision and regulation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). It was the sole service provider for live broadcasting Beijing 2008 Olympic Games in mainland China. According to Forbes (2008), the 2008 Summer Olympics coverage led to an aggregate 41% audience share. In this case, the Mandarin commentary is mainly designed for Chinese-speaking communities.

Australia's Seven Network, also known as Channel Seven, is one of Australia's highest-rating commercial television networks. Independent of any governmental institutions, it is the home for the most-watched franchises in Australia such as AFL and the Summer Olympics. Prior to the 2008 Olympics, Seven succeeded in bidding for the exclusive broadcast rights to the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympic Games. Channel Seven was also awarded the Golden Rings award for its overall Olympic coverage. In this case,

Channel Seven's English commentary of the Opening ceremony demonstrates perceptions of foreign audiences.

Therefore, the critical comparison and analysis of the broadcast from Central China Television (CCTV) and from Australia's Seven Network allow for studying the gap between the image projected to the internal audience and the impressions left on the external audience.

In this study, detailed, we first searched, transcribed, and edited complete commentaries for the two videos. Then, for understanding's sake, we translated into English partial transcriptions of certain important episodes and cultural performances which we elaborate on later are. Following the translation comes an analysis and comparison between the Mandarin version and English version. By focusing on different parts and the missing part in the English version, we used this study to explain the inconsistency between the two versions through a public relations lens.

This research makes it possible for the cross-cultural studies through the public relations standpoints. The audiovisual material is complex because it not only involves analyzing the narratives and images, but also camera angles and shot frames. Therefore, in order to make ideas clear, we include necessary screen shots of scenes for future analysis in this paper.

### **A Close Analysis of News Coverage on the Opening Ceremony**

The news reports and media coverage for this study are from *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, and *CNN*, which comprise

the mainstream media in the United States. The analysis spans from August 8, 2016, the opening date, to August 15, 2016, one week after the Games, in consideration of the news reporting cycle.

*The New York Times* is an American daily newspaper outlet based in New York City. With 119 Pulitzer prizes as of 2016, *The New York Times* ranks the first among other media organizations (*The New York Times*, 2016).

In newspaper history, *The New York Times* earned its high reputation by involving several landmark events in media history and contributing to the freedom of press, like *New York Times.co vs. Sullivan* and *New York Times Co.v. United States*. As of January 2015, the digital traffic of unique visits to *The New York Times* totals 53,966,000, making it the second largest online news provider (Pew Research Center, 2016).

As the digital version is more accessible to global readers and subscribers, *The New York Times* with its 26 foreign bureaus has a great influence in the mediated international arena, especially when a global event or international dispute arises. Additionally, NYTimes.com made use of multimedia resources to cover and broadcast 2008 Olympics.

The *Wall Street Journal* is the largest newspaper in the United States in terms of print circulation. The data on the Pulitzer Prizes official websites shows the newspaper has won 39 Pulitzer Prizes through 2015. According to Pew Research Center (2015), it ranks the fourth in the list of “Top 25 Newspaper by Digital Traffic,” following USA Today.com, NYTimes.com and WashingtonPost.com.

Prior to the 2008 Olympic Games, the Hollywood actress Mia Farrow, together with her law student son Ronan Farrow, wrote an Op-Editorial for the *Wall Street Journal* to criticize Beijing's bankrolling of Darfur's genocide and China's indifference to stop the chaos in Sudan. They called for the retraction of US sponsorships for the 2008 Games and a cessation of any technical support and artistic advising to Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games as a punishment and sanction (M. Farrow & R. Farrow, 2007). This argument directly resulted in Spiegel's resignation in April, 2008 (Cooper, 2008; Ramzy, 2008).

Therefore, considering the popularity of the *Wall Street Journal* in the United States and the controversy relevant to the *Wall Street Journal* that this paper will discuss later, the choice of the *Wall Street Journal* as one of the sources is representative.

CNN is American household name among cable and satellite television channels. With its 16 sister channels, it broadcasts through CNN international to viewers in over 200 countries. CNN covers various topics in its continuous 24-hour news cycle. With the rise of social media, CNN has established an online platform, CNN.com.

Before the 2008 Olympic Games, CNN devoted its coverage to the Tibetan unrest in March, 2008, criticizing the Chinese government for its human rights issue in Tibet. In its depiction of the violence in Tibet, CNN included a cropped, misleading picture originally taken to show the cruelties of fighting mobsters instead of military repression (China-UN, 2008). Chinese netizens were so angry that they, led by Rao Jin, a university student at that time, established a nationwide Anti-CNN campaign, then a website to slam CNN and other Western media for their unfairness and stereotypes in reporting Lhasa

uprising in March, 2008. In response, CNN (2008) post its statement on Tibet coverage claiming that “CNN refutes all allegations by bloggers that it distorts its coverage of the events in Tibet to portray either side in a more favorable light” and “our coverage through the use of words, images or video always reflects a wide range of opinions and points of view on every story.”

Jack Cafferty, an Emmy-award-winner and an experienced journalist at CNN, created controversy again both for himself and CNN when he made an anti-Chinese comment in his show. This controversy ultimately led to diplomatic interference and an official apology made by Jim Walton, the president of CNN (Telegraph, 2008; China daily, 2008; Xinhua, 2008).

Therefore, a detailed examination of the news coverage of 2008 Olympics Opening ceremony from this controversial news outlet provides for a comprehensive understanding.

*The Washington Post* has a strong influence in the Washington, D.C. area. Owing to its location, this newspaper emphasizes political issues. It made its name investigating the Watergate Scandal and publishing the then-classified Pentagon Papers, which resulted in the resignation of then-president Richard Nixon. According to the Alliance for Audited Media (2013), as of March 2013, its weekday circulation on average was 431,149,000, making it the fifth most-read newspaper in the country by circulation. Its digital platform, as of January 2015, WashingtonPost.com enjoys a total of 47,815,000 unique visitors, ranking the fourth in digital traffic (Mitchell & Holcomb, 2016).

*USA Today* is a middle-market newspaper which caters to ordinary people by

combining serious “hard” news and entertaining sensationalist stories. With a total of 54 million digital readers as of January 2015, it ranks first amongst other daily newspaper by digital traffic (Pew Research Center, 2015). Since *USA Today* positions itself as a news provider for the general public, there’s no denying that it has great influence on the American public’s perception of the 2008 Olympics Opening Ceremony.

These five established media outlets are chosen for this study owing to their different emphases, different political stances and different target markets. The search was performed using the keywords of “Beijing 2008 Olympics Opening Ceremony, [the name of certain newspaper]” for example, “Beijing 2008 Olympic Opening Ceremony, The New York Times.”

Each word entry yielded thousands of search results. To further narrow the samples, the author scanned the headlines, dates of publication and synopses manually. The report that focus on comparing the Beijing Olympics Games and previous Olympic Games were discounted, and the rest of the reports were further filtered to include detailed reports focusing on the opening ceremonies themselves rather than criticism on Beijing’s pollution and human rights issues, resulting in a final sample size of 24 articles within the time frame.

The author made a spreadsheet afterwards to record detailed information about different articles including titles, news organizations, publication dates and key words or topics.

Because the audiovisual material is a complicated association of meanings, images, shot sequence and shot framings, it gives analysts a multiple angle for analysis,

thus leaving the door open for different interpretations (Rose, 2000). We use the news coverage as a reference point to get a hold of the feedback in the eyes of the foreign public. To test the result of Chinese nation branding campaigns, particularly the 2008 Olympic Games, a comparison and contrast between the transcription of CCTV-HD commentary and news coverage from these five first-tier media outlets needs to be completed.

Outlined above is the methodology employed in pursuit of analyzing the Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony through public relations lenses.

## Chapter Four: Result

### Findings of the Comparative Analysis of Two Videos

This section provides observations gleaned from a careful comparison of the commentaries of the CCTV and Australia Seven. As the Opening Ceremony is comprised of seven parts, that is, Countdown, Welcoming Ceremony, Scroll painting, Silk road and Sea voyage, Ritual and Music, Starlight, and Dream, the study aims to detail the similarities and differences by section.

#### Countdown

Following the flame as it wraps around the stadium and the appearance of a projected Chinese sundial, 2,008 bronze Fou drums light up from inside and kick off the countdown, tiny illuminated points on the surface of the Fou drums which later form both Chinese and Arabic numerals. Although both media outlets acknowledge the obvious relationship between the number of drums and the year 2008, NBC doesn't explore the historical background of Fou, while CCTV mentions the origin of Fou in the Xia or Shang dynasties and its ritual function.



(Picture 1: the lit up drum in the countdown)

#### Welcome Ceremony

In the subsequent segments, these 2,008 robed percussionists beat the drums rhythmically and move their bodies in sync. Passages from the Analects of Confucius

were chanted, accompanied by the drum beats. The glowing red drum sticks lit the darkened stadium.

The commentaries for this segment vary considerably. While Australia Seven stays nearly silent aside from a few exclamations, CCTV elaborates on the meaning of the Confucius chapter chanted by the performers. According to the CCTV's narratives, marrying Confucius's philosophies to the visual extravaganza highlights China's splendid culture and Confucius philosophy. By chanting "friends come from afar, how happy we are," the drummers demonstrate the Chinese people's love for friendliness and reinforces the nation's welcoming spirit.

The History of Foot Print and Dream Ring. While the commentators of Australia Seven silently enjoy this visual feast, CCTV's two commentators excitedly recall the journey of China's bid for both 2000 and 2008 Olympic Games.

### **Scroll Painting**

In the scroll painting segment, both versions of commentaries share great similarities—both stations notice that the black-costumed dancers with ink brushes in hand use their bodies to leave black trails on the giant white paper, reminiscent of Asian ink wash paintings.



(Picture 2: the dancers using their body to draw a landscape painting)

Both groups of commentators briefly introduce the Guqin, an ancient Chinese seven-stringed instrument, and the signature paintings projected on the paper. All the paintings demonstrate the prosperity of Ancient China. However, Australia Seven this time has a strong interest in the combination of ancient painting and contemporary dancing and the mixture of historical civilization and high-end technology. The commentators even point out that the scroll is a metaphor for Chinese culture and history and a motif for the whole opening ceremony as well.

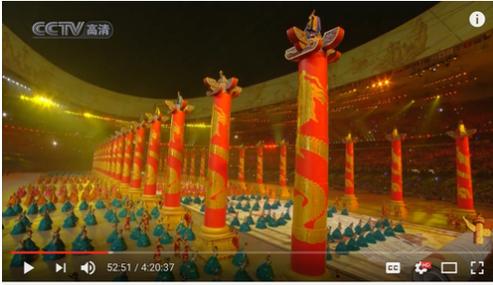
### **Silk Road and Sea Voyage**

In this section, accompanied by the music of “Parting at the Yangguan Pass,” a charming Dunhuang dancer are dancing over the giant scroll, which is held by 12 rows of 14 business ambassadors. Under the projection, the scroll turns into an endless golden desert, reminding audiences of the ancient Silk Road. Following the performance of an ancient diplomatic envoy on the Silk Road, blue-costumed oarsmen process into the stadium, and then arrange themselves to form a junk, representing the great maritime expeditions of Zheng He. He commanded expeditionary voyages during the early Ming Dynasty to Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. By leaning their bodies and swinging the huge oars, the performers vividly depict the adventures on sea. Both of the commentaries acknowledge the historical significance of the Silk Road and its impact on global trade, yet CCTV emphasizes the cultural exchange by saying that the Silk Roads lends credence to the Chinese tradition of friend-making, mutual benefits, and cross-culture learning by attributing these grand expeditions to China’s motivation and concern for universal well-being. In contrast, Australia Seven’s commentators keep from praising

Chinese openness and friendliness, but they joke about the difficulties the dancer experiences in keeping her balance over the script. They also provide a biographical introduction for Zheng He, including the fact that he was a eunuch. Also, an obvious mistake is made in the English commentary when the commentator says the Silk Road on land starts from Beijing, the capital city of Tang Dynasty. Indeed, Chang'an, the then capital city, was the start of this trading route.

### **Ritual and Music**

The segment on “Chinese Rites and Music” takes place immediately following the Silk Road segment. Accompanied by the tune of “Spring River Flower Moon Night,” Kunqu performances introduce more evidence concerning the diversity of Ancient Chinese Culture to the world. As the giant scroll expands, several classic painting are beamed onto the paper in turn, “The Spring Party of Lady Guo-Guo,” “Along the River during the Qingming Festival” and “Royal Visit to Lu Bo.” The rows of performers dressed in the signature long gowns of the Tang Dynasty dance to the tune “Spring River Flower Moon Night” as golden and red dragon pillars stretch skyward. On top of these pillars are royal musicians in splendid attires. Both sets of commentators note nearly the same elements, however, they highlight and emphasize vastly different perspectives. CCTV tempers national pride and keeps its narratives away from worshiping of super power-status and economic dominance of the Tang Dynasty. Instead, CCTV praises ancient Chinese rites and music. In Australia Seven’s commentary, the broadcasters proclaim the magnificence and extravagance of this time period. They even link this performance segment with Zhang Yimou’s film, *The Curse of Yellow Flowers*.

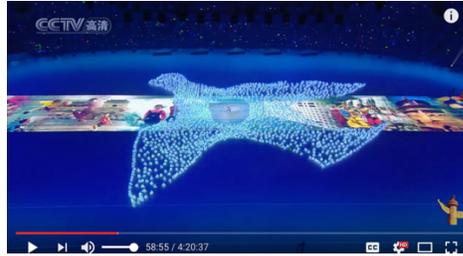


(Picture 3: royal dragon pillar rise skywards and performers dressing Tang Dynasty clothing dance to the ancient music)

### **Starlight**

After the pink fireworks die down, the performance moves to the next chapter, which features China's glorious era of modernization. At center of stage, world-renowned pianist Lang Lang and his five-year-old student, Li Muzi, perform a piano duet. Luminescent performers push the scroll backwards and sway their bodies in sync, making a wave at stage. Twinkling with green flashes, the illuminated performers maneuver themselves into the shape of a dove. Then, the luminescent dots converge to become the Milk Way, and then a swirl of stars. Eventually, they walk themselves into the shape of Bird Nest, a representation of the Beijing National Stadium.

Although Australia Seven's commentators note the dove of peace, they refer to the dove as "one of the most traditional Olympic images," instead of keeping to the idea that the dove represents China's unique hope for peace. CCTV, by contrast, dissociates the dove with Olympic tradition but associates it with the good will of the Chinese nation.



(Picture 4: The illuminated performers maneuver themselves into the shape of Dove)

## Nature

As the ceremony unfolds and moves into the next performance section, titled “Nature,” 2,008 Tai Chi masters present a fluid, synchronized performance. After this more modern interpretation of this ancient martial art, a spectacular waterfall appears on the screen and wraps around the Bird Nest. Then, at the center of the stage, a party of school children paint and color the paper scroll while chanting about global warming in both Chinese and English. Meanwhile, the 2,008 Tai Chi masters reform a circle with the square scroll inside.

Both Australia Seven and CCTV note that Zhang Yimou uses the practice of Tai Chi as a metaphor to illustrate abstract but omniscient psychological ideas, but CCTV takes its commentary about Tai Chi in a direction that Australia Seven does not. CCTV acknowledges that the essence of Tai Chi lies in a harmonious relationship with nature and the external world, reinforcing the “harmonious society” discourse championed by President Jintao. Linking ancient Tai Chi to the present pursuit of harmony also demonstrates an evolution from a magnificent Confucian past to a more modern present. The commentaries by both television stations explain the significance of a circle in Chinese philosophy and the semiotic meaning of the return of birds. Australia Seven’s complete omission of the spectacular waterfall and CCTV’s lengthy description display a

striking juxtaposition. The commentator from CCTV even recites four lines of Li Bai’s “Waterfall at Lu Shan,” a household poem in Chinese culture.

## **Dream**

The following segment, titled “Dream,” features China’s history of space exploration. With all lights darkened, the stadium turns into a universe full of twinkling stars. The astronauts are suspended in the air above floor searching for something. As the floor parts, a gigantic sphere symbolizing the earth rises slowly from beneath. Acrobats walk sideways and upside down on the surface of this rising sphere, on which is projected an aerial photo of the earth. With a change in the color of lights, the earth is transformed into a traditional Chinese lantern.



(Picture 5 Acrobats walk sideways on the rising globe)



(Picture 6 The blue globe turns into a red lantern)

In Australia Seven’s coverage, the commentators display no surprise that China demonstrates its achievement of space exploration in the ceremony as, “China is the third country to get men in the space with rocket.” However, China curbs this patriotic sentiment and instead transfers national pride into human curiosity during this portion of the ceremony. Unlike Australia Seven, China attributes this segment to Chinese folklore instead of its exploratory ambitions. It is the folktale of Chang’e that spurs the dreams of exploring the moon for generations of Chinese people. Chang’e took the elixir of

immortality and then flew upward towards the moon, and he became a permanent resident there. This dream is planted in the childhood of Chinese people and gives rise to China's breakthrough in space. As the giant sphere rises to the air, the commentator tells the audience that regardless of race or nation, we are all part of one globe. Then they expand the idea by saying that we have a shared and uniformed dream as we are all part of one family. Folding umbrellas with photos of smiling children from around the world open wide and surround the rising sphere. Although both commentaries notice the umbrellas and discuss the photo-collecting campaign that took place prior to the Games, the CCTV commentary departs from the English commentary when it comes to the latent meanings of the image. Australia Seven's broadcasters make no remarks on the semiotic meanings of the smiling faces, while commentators from CCTV mention that smile is a representation of universal humanity, regardless of race, color or nationality.

### **Findings of the Close Analysis of the News Coverage**

This next section highlights the key findings that emerged from the comparative analysis of CCTV video commentary and news coverage from the five aforementioned established media outlets.

#### **The New York Times**

Between August 8, 2016 and August 15, 2016, three articles from *The New York Times* directly focused on the theme of the opening ceremony and China's motivation to portray itself as a peace-loving and non-threatening nation.

These articles elaborate on the tone of harmony the Olympics Games would like to display. “The party wants to inspire national pride within China, and bolster its own legitimacy in the process, even as leaders want to reassure the world that a rising China poses no danger” (Yardley, 2008a). “The elaborate production for the opening ceremony included 15,000 performers and a three-part performance focused partly on China's long history and its desire for good will with the rest of the world” (Yardley, 2008b).

Meanwhile, the remaining two articles stress the crises or scandals concerning the opening ceremony afterwards, like the lip-synchronization scandal in the section “Ode to Motherland.”

### **the Washington Post**

Four out of seven news reports from the Washington Post focus on the national pride of the opening ceremony. “On the one hand, they praised China's ancient culture, and on the other hand they showed modern China. Together those things combine to show the dream of a Chinese empire” (Cody, Fan & Drew, 2008). “The Beijing Games have provided a platform to herald the party's achievements over the past three decades in leading the world's largest country toward ever-increasing prosperity at home and growing acceptance as a reliable partner abroad. It has been a long journey from the Maoist ideology that guided the party for its first three decades in power -- and shattered millions of lives in the process -- and now is the time to bask in recognition” (Cody, 2008). One news report out of these four reports also mentions the reason why the Opening Ceremony features the Confucian elements. “Officials used Confucian elements in the show to help portray a harmonious society. The catchphrase is meant to evoke

President Hu Jintao's legacy but underscores Communist Party concerns that an unhappy public is a threat to its power” (Fan, 2008). The other three articles mention the performances of the Beijing Opening ceremony in passing but emphasize respectively the lip-synchronization scandal, the identity controversy of the flag-bearer of American delegation and President Bush’s attendance at the Opening Ceremony after his rebuke of China’s human rights record.

### **The Wall Street Journal**

Two of the four *Wall Street Journal* articles are directly relevant to the opening ceremony. One article covers the final performance section, the lighting of the flame cauldron. It elaborates on the dramatic fashion of lighting the cauldron and the reason why Li Ning was chosen as the final torch-bearer. The other article lists the statics of the Opening Ceremony to demonstrate how splendid and grandiose the kickoff it is. The rest of the coverage focuses on the firework locations and the order of the processions sequence.

### **CNN**

Both of *CNN*’s news segments are pertinent to the Opening Ceremony. One states that “Friday's Opening Ceremony not only officially started the Summer Games but was a symbolic expression of a nation seeking its place as a global superpower” (Chang & Drew, 2008). The other focuses on the influence that the attendant leaders bring to the mega events.

## **USA Today**

*USA Today* contributed two articles to the coverage of the 2008 Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony. One article discusses the fact that the opening ceremony set multiple world records. The other focuses on the lip-synchronization scandal as other media outlets do.

## Chapter Five Discussion

Previous chapters have detailed the public relations theories that conceptualize and advance the theory of nation branding and the methods selected for analyzing this symbol-loaded event.

This chapter juxtaposes the commentaries of CCTV and Australia Seven, critically contrasting and comparing them, and offers evidence of public relations philosophies in this nation branding campaign.

I will argue first that both Central China Television (CCTV) and Australia Seven mention that the Opening Ceremony features the splendid culture and the developed modernity.

However, the differences between the two types of commentaries are on the one hand, reflections of different ideologies, and on the other, which may be more important, strong examples of the inevitable difficulties in image management. Projected images seldom line up with the perceptions of the target audiences (Fan, 2006). I will further claim that the gap between projected images and perceived images may be unbridgeable and the host of a nation branding campaign may have different expectations on diverse publics in terms of understanding. Hence, a nation branding campaign shoulders dual objectives. I will also contribute some insights to the functions of nation branding campaigns like the Beijing 2008 Olympic Opening Ceremony and how this nation branding campaign serves as a powerful and trustworthy vehicle for a country to engage its adversaries.

Following the comparison of two sets of commentaries on the same performance sections, I will probe deeply into the incoherence between the two versions of

commentary and then discuss the lingering problems in image management. Through a close comparative analysis of the commentaries from Central China Television in Mandarin and Australia Channel Seven in English, I will argue that nation branding campaigns, in the case of 29th Olympiad, tailor different messages to different target groups, specifically by feeding messages to external audiences and internal audiences. A discussion of Beijing's effort in "two-way communication" (Grunig's term) in the four-hour opening ceremony will come afterwards, followed by a further discussion of how successful reputation management can be achieved. I will refer to some scenes and performances from the opening ceremony and approach them from different angles as they have multiple meanings in the narrative and serves multiple functions. The theories of nation branding, communication models, image management and reputation management aforementioned inform the close analysis of study of Beijing 2008 Olympic Opening Ceremonies.

The notion that public relations' management and relationship building functions can benefit public diplomacy provides grounding for the examination of nation branding through public relations lenses (Grunig (1983; Vam Ham, 2002).

Grunig's model of public relations practices theoretically backs up China's goals in communicating with the rest of world. With a careful selection and arrangement of the polysomic elements, China spares no effort in demonstrating its political stance concerning certain human rights issues and defends itself from some of the criticism prior to the Games.

Image management theory, together with branding theory, put forward by branding scholars like Gunther Haedrich and expanded by James Grunig, Wang Jian,

Chen Ni, informs the breakdown of what elements and characteristics of a nation-state are included and excluded in a nation branding campaign, stating that there are no random choices.

Charles Fombrun's reputation formula (1996)—adjusted later by Doorley and Garcis (2011)—explains how to achieve a good reputation in the process of nation branding, which provides a further direction for Chinese leaders after the Olympics.

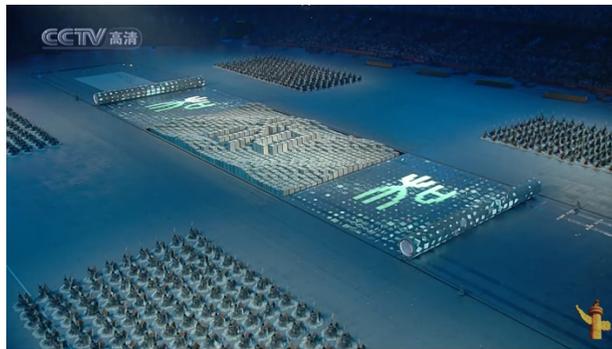
### **Delivering a Unified and Coherent Image**

The Beijing 2008 Olympic Opening Ceremony is composed of seven episodes of artistic performances, featuring China's splendid culture and contemporary society. The first half of the performances explore ancient Chinese civilization, the four great inventions, Confucianism, the Peking Opera, the Silk Road and Tai Chi, while the second half address the dream of modern China, that is, to develop in harmony with world as well as nature. Although different episodes of performances exhibit different attributes of China, they all depict China as seeking a harmonious relationship with the rest of the world.

The stadium is filled with 2,008 drummers and illuminated Fou drums, which are lit up inside.

The roll of drum beats, although intimidating, bolsters the chanting of one household quote from the Analects of Confucius in China: "Friends have come from afar, how happy we are." The Analects is a collection of sayings and philosophy attributed to Confucius. Categorized by topics and themes, the Analects comprises 20 books totaling over 500 passages. They exhibit the insights of Confucius and his disciples concerning

governance, ethics, rituals and a person's character. The thunder-like drum beats, however, are only accompanied by one of the 517 passages in the Analects of Confucius, with the intention of depicting Beijing as an enthusiastic host welcoming people from all over the world. This emphasis on friendliness and harmony is also evident in following performance sections. In the character part, nearly 900 moveable type blocks made of clay rising to the LED platforms, with the character "HE" (harmony) illuminated three times. This character is shown in three different scripts which date to different dynasties: bronze inscription, seal script and regular script (traditional Chinese). These three different scripts exhibit different historical periods, yet they all demonstrate the Chinese people's determination in the pursuit of a harmonious society throughout history.



(Picture 7: the moveable type blocks on the rise forms the Chinese character "He")

It is also worth mentioning that the chanting that goes along with the performance has deeper meanings. "Harmonious is most precious" and "Within the four seas, all men are brothers," also quotes from the Analects of Confucius, are in line with the phrase "harmonious society," coined by then-president Hu Jintao. The pursuit of this "harmonious society" does not end here. The next performance section, the Silk Road, continues with these ideas. The Silk Road, a reminder of the prosperity and strength of ancient China, is a network of trade routes connecting the Asian continent to the

Mediterranean Sea. It starts from Chang'an, (then capital of the Han dynasty), through the Hexi corridor into Central Asia and ends in the Mediterranean area. Trade blossomed along the route and created China's initial contacts between several ancient civilizations like the Roman civilization and the Byzantine civilization. However, in the 2008 Summer Opening Ceremony, instead of focusing on the trade or economic perspectives, the commentary from CCTV highlighted the cultural exchanges. That is why Zhang Yimou, the director of the Beijing Opening Ceremony, gives more of the spotlight to the Dunhuang dancers on the scroll, which was held by crowds of diplomatic envoys. The two commentators from CCTV said, "the painting scroll that suspends in the air, turns into desert under the projection. Led by the Dunhuang dancer, a friendly journey starts." Coincidentally, the seven expeditions made by Zheng He, a court eunuch and mariner during the Ming Dynasty, are also referred to as a journey for "friendliness and cultural flourishing."

During CCTV's commentary, "friendliness" and "peace" are clarified on a recurring basis, with an aim of eliminating the misunderstanding that China was aggressive and invasive even a long time ago. Similar symbols that also portray China as a peaceful and friendly rising power appear in the shape of the peace dove formed by illuminated performers.

Branding scholars have already pinpointed the paradox of nation branding, that is, how to condense all the attributes of a nation into one umbrella image and ensure all the components of one image go with each other (Fan, 2005; Olins, 2002; J. O'Shaughnessy & N. O'Shaughnessy; 2000).

Interestingly, the ceremony starts with the depiction of the four great inventions of Ancient China: papermaking, moveable printing press, gunpowder and the compass. However, during the performance of the Scroll Painting, Chinese characters and the Silk Road feature papermaking, printing and the compass, respectively, and the Opening Ceremony uses spectacular fireworks to stand for gun powder, which is indeed more frequently used in weapon manufacture and warfare.

It is worth noting that unlike other image promoting films that attribute the modernity of Chinese society to the Mao era and the Chinese Communist Party, the storytelling of the opening ceremony for the Olympics attempts to gain more acceptance from the foreign public. It keeps a distance from the narratives of the Mao era and communist past, which is also related to the Cold War.

Choosing from assorted cultural heritages and philosophies, the Beijing Opening Ceremony sets its theme for “harmony” and “friendliness.” By filtering out the cultural elements that go against the umbrella image as a peace-loving, non-threatening nation, China expects to project a unified, coherent image to the world. Some of the foreign media also get this point. *The New York Times* (2008) comments:

“An ecstatic China finally got its Olympic moment on Friday night. And if the astonishing opening ceremonies of the 2008 Olympic Games lavished grand tribute on Chinese civilization and sought to stir an ancient nation’s pride, there was also a message for an uncertain outside world: Do not worry. We mean no harm.”

“The party wants to inspire national pride within China, and bolster its own legitimacy in the process, even as leaders want to reassure the world that a rising China poses no danger.”

### **The Gap between the Projected Image and Public Perceptions**

The Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony still faces lingering tricky problems in image management and nation branding of how to bridge the gap between the projected image and public perceptions, or in other words, how to convey a single image to diverse publics who have different levels of knowledge and cultural associations concerning a nation.

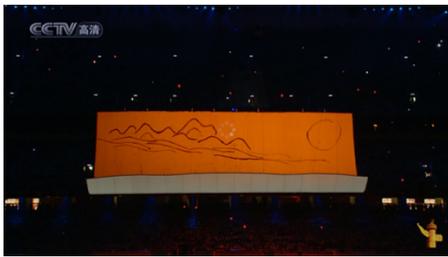
However, seen from a different angle, is it possible that to feed a singular message to different audiences.

By a critical comparison of commentaries of CCTV and Australia Seven, some hints of this difficulty can be traced.

First, the Opening Ceremony is full of unique cultural metaphors. As declared by one of two commentators from CCTV, “We are employing this unique way to express Beijing’s most sincere welcome.” The question there is the likeability of comprehending the stories and sentiments behind each symbol for foreign publics.

As Roland Barthes (1984) suggests, “Myth is a system of communication, that it is a message.” “There are no eternal myths for it is human history which converts reality into speech.” Myth can live just because the message it represents has something to do with reality. Unfortunately, the foreign publics or external audiences cannot fully comprehend the messages that myths of a particular culture embrace.

In the Scroll Painting section, upon finishing the landscape painting, the female commentator associates the sun drawn at the corner with the story of Kua Fu. Even though she explains this legend as “chasing the sun from one side of China to the other and drying up all of the rivers,” she makes no mention of what the story of Kua Fu signifies to the Chinese public. At the end of Character section, ceramic blocks of moveable type rise and fall, finally arranging themselves in the shape of the Great Wall. Although the commentators of Australia Seven note this by saying “this is the great wall rising from the movable type sets. The great wall is six-thousand-kilometer-long and this is a scale model,” he does not suggest the Great Wall is a metaphor for the Chinese spirit of unity and perseverance.



(Picture 8: the sun at the corner of scroll painting reminds of the story of Kua Fu)



(Picture 9: the types rise and fall, forming the Great Wall)

Likewise, two clips of the videos from these two channels depicting the Silk Roads and sea voyages further elucidate the disjunction between the projected image of a host nation and the perception of its foreign publics.

For CCTV, the female commentator declares that the Silk Roads make it possible for the civilizations to make connections along the routes and to exchange necessities. However, these routes demonstrate China’s friendly and welcoming spirits throughout history. The male commentator follows up by saying the maritime explorations led by Zheng He foster cultural learning and mutual exchanges. These expeditions are strong

proof that Chinese people are friendly to other cultures and are enthusiastic about sharing their culture and technology with other civilizations.

Australia Seven, by contrast, moves its commentary away from the theme of openness and friendliness but joke about the difficulty for the Dun Huang dancer to “move above the carpet without making mistakes” and “the girl seems to give some ideas about long history in gymnast in China.” The commentators even make a serious mistake by commenting that the Silk Road starts from Beijing to Europe.

The commentators of Australia Seven make no mention of the friendly spirit and open-minded values that CCTV or the Beijing Olympic Committee would like to display.

These gaps between the narratives of CCTV and Australia Seven present the cognitive divide upon close scrutiny, which is inevitable. Cultural associations concerning a nation have been rooted in different publics. It is next to impossible that several mere cultural performances can alter the deep-seated stereotypes and convey a brand-new image and message to the foreign publics.

The failure to convey the messages with more latent meanings seems more evident in the performance vignettes of the ritual and poem. Commentators from CCTV mention that, accompanied with an ancient piece of music titled “Spring River Flower Moon Night,” the giant scroll at the center of the stage expands and has projected onto its surface several famous paintings from the Tang Dynasty, Song Dynasty, Yuan Dynasty, Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty. Yet, these five dynasties have distinctive clothing. Chosen from customs styles of five dynasties, customs of Tang Dynasty stand out. Performers dress up as aristocratic court ladies with butterfly wing-like painted eyebrows. Their red, long, loose fitting gowns covered by lightweight, embroidered gauzes with

floral motifs were signature and fashionable in the Tang Dynasty. Their hair is bunched up in a high bun adorned with gold ornaments shaped like lotus or peach blossoms, which was the most fashionable hair style at that time.



(Picture 10: Court Ladies of Tang Dynasty)

There is no random choice in this grand-scale event which took China and its people seven years to prepare. The Tang Dynasty, from the seventh century to ninth century, was comparatively a golden age for ancient China. Owing to wise emperors and efficient administrations, China enjoyed two centuries of consecutive political stability, economic prosperity and cultural boom. The Tang Dynasty is always referred to as a heyday in Chinese history and has unparalleled charm to Chinese people. The Chinese Communist Party claim as part of their duties to realize the great rejuvenation of Chinese nation. Hence, embedding the symbols of The Tang Dynasty instead of other dynasties, can arouse the nation's pride more easily and make emotional linkages between the then most developed nation and the present rising power.

However, Australia Seven's narratives offer no further elaboration of the motivation behind the choice. It merely mentions that female clothing is "amazing." All of these factors discussed above serve as a vivid example of the gap between projected images of a host nation and the real perception in a foreign public's minds.

This goes back to the unique challenges of nation branding, in Fan's assertion (2005), that the possibility of constructing an umbrella image and delivering a singular message to diverse audiences.

However, the dual objectives of nation branding can never be overlooked. Nation branding, on the one hand, contributes to the improvement of images in the foreign public's eyes. On the other hand, it emphasizes arousing national pride within and reinforcing a shared cultural and political identity at home (Chen, 2012; Wang, 2006.). It is possible that the host of nation branding campaigns have already acknowledged that different levels of comprehension and recognition are expected from different audiences.

In the vignette of Chinese Characters and Confucius, performers dress up as disciples of Confucius and chant the excerpts from the Analects of Confucius in Mandarin. Commentators from Australia Seven are silent at this point while some captions of basic literal translations appear on the screen. Yet, even with translations, some sentences do not make sense to the audiences who are not familiar with Confucius, for example, "there were four things which Master taught: Letters, Ethnics, Devotion of souls and Trustfulness." The meanings lost in the translation account for part of the problem. However, more efforts could have been taken to explain and illustrate the points of the Analects in a more comprehensible way, as it is done with the theme song of 29<sup>th</sup> Olympiad and children's chanting.

Notable Chinese singer Liu Huan and iconic English singer Sarah Brightman performed a duet of the theme song, "You and Me," in both Chinese and English, in a carefully prepared arrangement that exhibited the welcoming spirit of modern China and deliver China's hope for joining the world family. The duet performed by a domestic

singer and a foreign singer from an old capitalist power itself is an example of “You and Me” (one famous lyric is “you and me, from one world, we are family”).

In a previous scene, the episode of “Nature,” school children draw and color on the scroll that appears repeatedly through the whole ceremony. It is worth noting that these children are also chanting in both Chinese and English. Therefore, with a bilingual presentation, it is not impossible to overcome the language barriers and make the important message clear to foreign publics.

Therefore, I suggest that the expected levels of understanding of particular information in the Opening Ceremony differ among different groups of people. To a foreign audience, the Analects of Confucius is a representation of Chinese culture and philosophy, but to a domestic audience, it is more than that. “Learning without thinking leads to puzzlement; thinking without learning is perilous,” and “When you know a thing, say that you know it; when you do not know a thing, say that you do not know. It is wise doing so” teach Chinese people rigorous scholarship. “In a party of three, there must be one I can learn from,” and “I will pick his merits to emulate them, to find his demerits to amend mine” are related to modesty, one of the highest valued characteristics in Chinese education. All aforementioned passages from the Analects of Confucius are the government’s expectation on its people throughout Chinese history, which may not make sense to the people out of East-Asian Culture. However, it echoed with the socialist outlook on honor and shame championed by then-president Hu Jintao.

Also, in the later part of artistic performances, the commentators refer to the myth of Chang’e as a representation of the Chinese dream to explore outer space. However, to domestic audiences, the name Chang’e is more than a character in a folktale.

It is also the name of an unmanned spacecraft and the nation's lunar exploration program, which is viewed as a hallmark event and a sign of its rising power in a multipolar world. This inclusion of the myth implies that China's space exploration is an expression of universal human curiosity rather than a show-off of its space competitiveness. Additionally, it reminds the domestic audience how far the nation has come.

### **The Communication Functions of the Opening Ceremony**

The **four models of public relations** in the Beijing Olympic Games Opening Ceremony theoretically back up China's goals in communicating with the rest of world in self-defense and for eliminating misunderstanding. With an elaborate selection and arrangement of polysomic elements, China spares no effort in demonstrating its political stance in some issues and defends China from some of the criticism from before the Games.

J.E. Grunig (1989) breaks down public relations practices to four models by using the metrics of communication directions (one-way/two-way) and balance of intended effort (symmetric/ asymmetric).

**Press agentry/ publicity** is a one-way asymmetric model of public relations, featuring persuasion and manipulation. It neglects the target audience's perception of the organization on purpose and expects the audience to cater to the organization's attitude. The public information model, a one-way symmetric model, characterizes public relations as the dissemination of information without volunteering negative messages and examining public opinions. The two-way asymmetric model is an imbalanced communication model, emphasizing the use of research to identify public opinions and

tailor the projected image to the public's liking. According to Grunig (1984), the two-way asymmetric communication differs from the one-way asymmetric communication in its concern with the perceptions of the receivers. Propagandas fall into the category of one-way asymmetric communication because they are used merely for transmitting the ideology messages and placing influences on the publics while the two-way communication model takes the ideas of either side into account (Van Ruler, 2004).

The two-way symmetric model is deemed as the ideal model for public relations because it involves dialogue and negotiation with the publics after systematic research. The ultimate goal of this model is to achieve both attitudinal change and behavioral change of publics and to establish a mutually beneficial relationship.

The 2008 summer Olympics Opening Ceremony is a closely scrutinized event with an estimated audience of two billion viewers (Nielson, 2008). As the established media termed, it is "a political as well as an athletic event" that "celebrate 5,000 years of history and exulting in their newly recovered status as a world power," (*The Washington Post*, 2008) "a symbolic expression of a nation seeking its place as a global superpower" (CNN, 2008). The media also notes that China's intention in hosting this lavish event as to "inspire national pride within China, and bolster its own legitimacy in the process, and reassure the world that a rising China poses no danger." (*The New York Times*, 2008).

Therefore, the Opening Ceremony for 29<sup>th</sup> Olympiad is a communication process that leaves room for us to bring a framework of public relations models in studying this event. As perception and image are productions of a set of complex cognitive activities, they are all set in a social and discursive context (Grunig, 1993).

In the case of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, to understand whether the opening ceremony is only a one-way information dissemination process or a two-way communication model, some Olympic-related news coverages which caused issues before the games are briefly examined, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the political and social environment in the pre-Olympic times. Juxtaposing the media coverage of issues prior to the Games and the performance vignettes in relation to this issue will form a discursive research angle, thereby adding new understanding of nation branding and models of public relations. The news coverages and the media criticism are regarded as one side of the communication, while the performances of Olympics Opening Ceremony are viewed as the feedbacks and responds.

The vignette of Ode to Motherland is an interesting case for close analysis. The lyrics themselves are an obvious result of the tailored messaging of nation branding campaigns to target audiences and catering to their attitudes after research on their perceptions concerning a nation or country.

Before the 2008 Olympics, “China’s threat theory” aroused great fear in the Western society as China’s astronomical military budget and fast-growing high-tech weaponry poses a threat to the neighboring countries who have territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea. Also, China’s cheap labor and dumping export prevents other nations from entering the global market. China’s dominant position in Africa and its communist ideology reminds the western world of Colonialism and Cold War.

With a clear picture of this concern, the Central government of People’s Republic of China (PRC) implemented the term “China’s Peaceful Rise” to rebut against the

international skepticism. The leadership states the rise of China would not pose a threat to the world's peace and stability but bring benefits to other nations instead.

Thus, in the grand opening ceremony, the narratives are carefully selected to avoid reinforcing the foreign fear while highlighting its prosperity and achievement.

The patriotic ballad sung by a girl in red prior to the national anthem demonstrates the Chinese nation's determination of victory, unity and prosperity. However, the song is displayed with only one third of its original version with an additional repeat of the refrain, "five-star red flag flutter in the winds, what a resounding song of victory, singing for our dear motherland, from now on towards prosperity." Even in the first third of the ballad, the lyrics are revised by replacing the line of "the heroic people have stood up" with the line about peace-loving and pride in homeland. Two-thirds of the original lyrics are omitted from the performance including "whoever dares to infringe us, we shall call for his death!" and "Our leader Mao Zedong, guides us the way forward." All of these discussed above exemplify China's effort to project an image of a peace-loving and responsible emerging power while brushing away international concerns that China will pose a threat to the world stability in its rising, much as *The New York Times* (2008) comments, "If the astonishing opening ceremonies of the 2008 Olympic Games lavished grand tribute on Chinese civilization and sought to stir an ancient nation's pride, there was also a message for an uncertain outside world: Do not worry. We mean no harm."

The equilibrium the Communist Party of China would like to achieve between the hope for demonstrating a rising, prosperous new China and its concern of threatening its neighbors and the rest of the world is evident in its handling of this patriotic song. That is the reason why the theme of peace and harmony is repeatedly stressed in the ceremony. If

the equilibrium or deliberate balance can be regarded as an action of considering two-sided ideas, the Beijing 2008 Olympic Opening Ceremony can be counted as a two-way model of public relations in a broader way or can be counted as a communication practice that has some “two-way communication” characteristics.

Also, the national flag-raising ceremony is a good example of how public relations models are applied to defending a country’s political stance and fighting against criticism in a more explicit manner. The previous criticism from western media can be referred to as one side of the conversation while the performances in the Opening Ceremony are visual communications, the other side of the conversation.

Accompanied by the song “Ode to Motherland,” 56 children wearing signature dress of China’s 56 ethnic minorities carried the national flag into the stadium. At the beginning, there is a close shot of one singing youngster followed by a long shot of the parade of 56 children walking into the stage from another end of the national stadium. As some of the smiling children enter in hand in hand, the lyrics state “our unity and fraternity are as strong as steel.” Then, a medium shot reveals 56 adult minority performers standing next to Lin Miaoke. This scene is full of metaphors and latent meanings when recalling the news coverage about the chaos in Tibet in March and the Torch Delay caused by Dalai and its headed organizations.

On March 14, 2008, nearly five months before the 2008 Olympic Games, a group of monks protested in the streets of Lhasa, Tibetan regional capital, for socio-economic reasons. Yet, this protest soon devolved into a series of riots, burning and ethnic killings and spread to other Tibetan areas. The violence and uprising caught attention of the central government, then People’s Armed Police intervened.

However, some western media outlets reported on the Tibetan unrest with an emphasis on criticizing the government's human rights records and a neglect of objective and overall coverage of both sides. Some media outlets even used what were later found to be distorted or even fake multimedia resources to document this unrest. This stirred great anger in China, and later, a boycott.

For example, in depiction of the violence in Tibet, CNN included a cropped, misleading picture originally taken to show the cruelties of fighting mobsters instead of military repression (China-UN, 2008). CNN also uploaded a manipulated video to report the Tibet riots. However, it turned out to be a videotape of a protest in India. *The Washington Post* carried a picture of police in Nepal clashing the protestors and claimed that they were the Chinese army in Lhasa.

*China Daily* (2008), on behalf of China's mainstream medias, was annoyed and slammed these media outlets for "completely running against the basic principles of objectivity and impartiality in their reports about the riots in Tibet." Some Chinese netizens established a national-wide Anti-CNN campaign to exemplify and criticize some western media outlets' biased reports concerning the Lhasa uprising.

The torch relay, a hallowed tradition of the Olympic Games, drew more worldwide attention to the mediated reports about China. Along the route within Europe and North America, the torch relay was disrupted by members of pro-Tibet groups. The torch was even extinguished several times, which was one of the public relations crises for the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympics Games (BOCOG).

However, "the Ode to Motherland" section and the flag-raising ceremony themselves serve as strong defense for People's Republic of China in face of these

reports. If the criticism over China's racial problems are referred to as public perceptions, this "Ode to Motherland" serves as a feedback and respond to this criticism and thus having some "two-way communication" characteristics. The shot of 56 minority ethnic children actually sends message to both internal audiences and external audiences. At home, it recalls the unity of Chinese nation as a whole, and on the world stage, it fights against the criticism over its racial problem and reinforces the statement that "our unity and fraternity are as strong as steel."

Coincidentally, the theme song of the 29th Olympiad Opening Ceremony can be viewed as one component of this communication practice at a national level. "You and Me" was performed by Chinese reputational male singer, Liu Huan and the British top vocalist Sarah Brightman at the top of the rising globe which represents the shared blue planet. The song is far beyond an artistic performance. It is a presentation, a message and a call for the unity. The duo sings the 2008 Olympic theme song in Chinese and English alternatively. Deliberately and surprisingly, the Chinese singer performed in English and the English singer performed in Chinese. This signifies unity across language, cultural and political barriers, resulting in an emotional high point. One famous sentence of the lyrics is "you and me, from one world, we are family". "You" and "me" are not only a pair of personal pronouns but also metaphors. They respectively represent the Eastern culture, the Communist ideology, the new power and Western culture, the Capitalism and the old supremacy, where the two performers came from. The ending of the theme song features an Oriental man and an Occidental woman holding hand atop the globe, which signifies the same height both of them enjoy.

It keeps to the 2008 Olympics slogan of "One World, One Dream" and presents

the hope that every nation has to join hand to fight against globalized problems and issues regardless of their ideologies and political models.

Recalling the previous criticism on China's political issues and ideology, the theme song is a romantic and humanitarian way to respond to these charges.

Instead of mediated public diplomacy and high-level, head-to-head meetings, a nation branding campaign such as an international sports event may be a new direction for future explorations.

Unlike old-school propaganda or one-way asymmetrical models neglecting target audience's perception of the nation, it is evident that Beijing has a clear picture of what publics will perceive and where potential criticisms or crises will come about. It identifies the messages that are most possible to produce the favorable images and win the most support from foreign publics to comprise the theme of the 2008 Olympics. This explains the reason why Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympics Games (BOCOG) sets "harmony" and "peace-loving" as its theme while still displaying China's prosperity and modernism. As "China threat theory" is widely reported or speculated, overemphasis on China's wealth and power may arouse great antipathy among foreign publics. Yet, it invites recognition and support when China demonstrates its hope for world-peace and its commitment to the well-being of the whole society.

With a careful selection and arrangement of polysomic elements, China spared no effort to demonstrate its political stance in human rights issues and defended itself against some of the criticism that took place prior to the Games. Therefore, a nation

branding campaign serves as an effective tool to do its two-way asymmetrical communication or even two-way symmetrical communication to some degree.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

A literature review of nation branding, image management, communication models of public relations and reputation management laid the theoretical foundation for this study. Insights from branding, public diplomacy and public relations theory were taken upon in thinking about public relations functions and potentials in nation branding. J. E. Grunig's categorization of public relations practices brings new angles to nation branding and helps its theoretical advancement.

Insights into image management and reputation management give us some thoughts in analyzing failed nation branding campaigns and the campaigns that do not achieve the expected outcomes.

Ideas from J.E. Grunig, Stuart Hall and Roland Barthes offered theoretical support in the comparative analysis of different videos and news coverage.

A qualitative methodological package comprising of textual analysis and semiotic analysis was chosen as proper when taking into consideration the fact that the Olympic Games Opening Ceremony is highly symbolic, ideology-laden and intertwined with other political issues.

Branding theories emerging from marketing perspective can be further understood in the analysis of the 2008 Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony. A nation's image is

multilayered, condensed and composed of historical debris and cultural heritage. The central task is to rearrange the fragmented elements into a coherent line of sub-images to support the strong, umbrella image as a whole (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2000). A close scrutiny of the Beijing Opening Ceremony serves as a vivid example of this point. As an ancient civilization rich in cultural and historical resources, what elements should be included and what should be excluded is a matter of statecraft, not of random choice. By weaving in the philosophy of Confucianism, China links its cultural tradition to its modern pursuit of "harmonious society." "Friendliness" and "Harmony" are two key components of its national image as a rising power. To ensure the national image is coherent and the dominate image can crowd out all the other resonance, the Beijing Opening Ceremony deliberately avoids narratives of its economic power and instead addresses political influence and address its friendly motivations.

The comparative analysis of the commentaries of the CCTV and Australia Seven, together with a close examination of the media coverages on the opening ceremony from five first-tier media outlets based in the U.S., is designed to unearth the gap between the projected message and receivers' perceptions in image management as CCTV is the monopolist, state-run media outlet.

Recalling the news coverages on big issues like Tibetan uprising and the torch relay prior to the Games set the Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony in a chain of events and closely connected to the mediated context. Thus, opening the door for analysis of the grandiose kick-off as a dialogue to the world's criticism and a communication attempt.

Broadcasting of both TV channels were viewed repeatedly, transcripts were developed and revised, and necessary English-Chinese translation was conducted. Special attention was also paid to comparing and contrasting particular video vignettes and performance segments. As much material for analysis is audiovisual, some screen shots and notes were taken.

First, the study offers new research angles for conceptualization of nation branding. The comparative analysis of both CCTV commentary and NBC commentary further exemplifies the difficulties in image management, that is, the incoherence between the projected image and public perceptions. Second, this is one of the few nation branding studies to incorporate the theory of four models of public relations into the process of branding a nation. It further extends the body of nation branding by putting the campaign under the public relations lenses as many previous nation branding literatures put their attention on the economic benefits and the political advantages. Also, it is a good example of using qualitative analysis methods (textual analysis and semiotic analysis at particular) to do a research.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Study**

The above discussion suggests that classic public relations theories can be employed to look at the nation branding events, thus pushing the research boundary. A comparative, text-based analysis is crucial for researchers to do the cross-culture analysis. Fully exposing the mechanisms and motivations of nation branding is beyond the objectives of this study, but it adds an angle and inspires studies to come. However, deficiencies do exist, which are also areas for growth.

First of all, a quantitative analysis method can be employed in the future study to supplement the qualitative analysis. This study, by the use of textual analysis and semiotic analysis, demonstrates how a nation branding campaign can be analyzed through public relations lenses and how image management functions contributes to the conceptualization of nation branding. Like this study, it has already given out a clear message that the Beijing Olympic Opening Ceremony has a dual target audience, domestic audience (internal audience) and foreign audiences (external audiences). It also makes it clear that the Olympic Opening Ceremony has dual objectives corresponding to different audiences. For one thing, the Olympic opening ceremony distinguish China from other countries by highlighting its glorious history and its long pursuit of establishing a harmonious society. This tries to reassure its foreign publics that China is a peace-loving rising power and poses no harm to the world as it has long pursued throughout history. For another, the Olympic Opening Ceremony surely entices national pride and reinforces the shared national identity among its domestic peoples. However, to decide which segment of the artistic performances aimed more at external audiences is really hard if only using the qualitative analysis.

However, quantitative research makes it possible to connect empirical observation and numeric description of relationships, or in other words, quantitative analysis is a perfect supplement to qualitative analysis for the reason that it can verify and support the hypotheses and findings of a qualitative work. In the case of Beijing 2008 Olympics Opening Ceremony, the findings of qualitative analysis contribute to the creation of questionnaire and a post-event stratified systematic sampling survey. This blend of

qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis can produce more credible and numerical results.

Second, Confucianism is not as household and influential in Western culture spheres as in East Asian cultural spheres. However, this study focuses mainly on the established media outlet based in the United States and the television channel in Australia, thus the perceptions of the Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony may be circumscribed and failed to present a universal opinion. Media coverages about the opening ceremony from Hong Kong media, Japan media and even Singapore media should be collected and referred to as control groups, thus wiping out the possible influence of culture associations in the shaping of perceptions and public opinions and finding other possible factors.

Additionally, as the same with news coverage, NBC has also broadcasted the 2008 Summer Olympic Opening ceremony. It invited Joshua Cooper Ramo, expert of China and its image building campaigns, as the color commentator. NBC's broadcasting attracted an audience of 34.2 million, making it most watched television program since that year's American Super Bowl. Therefore, referring to more TV broadcasting of the Opening Ceremony may help diverse the opinion pool.

# Appendix

## A List of Tables

**Table 1 Commentary of Australia Channel Seven**

Music, Captioning and Off-Scene	Australia Channel Seven Screen Image	Commentary
<p><b>Chanting: The Analects of Confucius, chapter 1.1</b> Friend comes from afar, how happy we are</p>		<p>In just a few minutes, the China will finally welcome the world. The opening ceremony is about to begin. At the 8, 8th, Aug, 2008, M: so the first image inside the stadium are fou drums and drummers W: 2,008 of them. No coincident them M: No. They are all military drummers I think even you are deaf, you will know something really big happens there. W: These drums are ancient, a thousand years old. The countdown begins M: it is the first time that China let 90,000 to countdown from ten to one in Chinese. That is going to be one of the specular opening ceremony we have seen</p>
<p><b>Footprints of History</b></p>		
<p><b>Dream Ring</b> <b>Music:</b> Dreaming tonight, Stars into rings alight All are harmonious All are still and bright Friend meets in Beijing, happy and delight</p>		
<p><b>National Flag-raising Ceremony</b> <b>Music: Ode to Motherland</b> Five Star red Flag flutter in the winds What a resounding song of victory Singing for our dear motherland, From now on towards prosperity Across the mountains, across the plains Over the roaring Yellow and Yangtze Rivers, Is our dear home, We love peace, we love homeland Our unity and fraternity are as strong as steel. Five Star red Flag flutter in the winds What a resounding song of victory Singing for our dear motherland, From now on towards prosperity</p>	<p>Shott frame—56 minority adult dressing in their customs.  Close-shoot on 56 minority children dressing in their walking the red flag to the National Flag Team</p>	
<p><b>Chinese National Anthem: March of the Volunteers</b> Arise! Who those refuse to be slaves! Let our flesh and blood forge the new Great Wall! As the Chinese nation has arrived at the most perilous moment Every person is forced to expel his last roar! Arise! Arise! Arise! Our millions hearts beating as one, Brave the enemy's fire march on! Brave the enemy's fire march on! March on! March on! On!</p>		

## Scroll Painting

**Music: High mountains and Flowing Waters**

## Chinese Writing & Confucius Philosophy 25:00

**Chanting: the analects of Confucius ( excerpts)**

**Written during the warring period**

“In a party of three, there must be one I can learn from,  
I will pick his merits to emulate them, to find his  
demerits

To amend mine.”

“Within the four seas, all men are brothers”

There were four things which Master taught: Letters,  
Ethnic, Devotion of souls and Trustfulness.

## Art Performance

M: Ok, this frame represents  
One of four important ancient  
inventions in China, Gun  
powders, compass and moveable  
type for printing, are the great  
inventions in China and they  
gonna be presented right through  
this opening ceremony.  
It is a metaphor of Chinese  
civilization and cultures.  
In the first part, it is a sheet of  
paper on the floor appearing  
throughout the opening  
ceremony.

W: some amazing contemporary  
dance now. With the dancers to  
use their body to paint pictures,

M: Yes, in fact the paper  
represents one of the earliest  
paper inventions

By dancing to paint the images  
on the paper, the paper will have  
painting, and calligraphy

This instrument that is being  
played is actually a thousand  
years old. And now only 50  
masters can play them. The  
music piece that is being played  
is actually reversed for this  
opening ceremony. So it is very  
very unusual

W: what I love about this is that  
you use contemporary dance, or  
modern dance to melt up with  
ancient China.

M: the instrument is called  
Guqin, it takes over 20 years to  
know how to play the Guqin.  
Public severant in the empire's  
court.

W: I know you were joked  
when you say they lost contact  
lenses. But it does look like they  
are searching something.

The technology of this is  
desperately simple. Numerous  
video screen on which a sheet of  
paper the image was provide by  
TV pictures that going to that  
floor.

The images on the paper are the  
oldest signatures found in China,  
first, cave painting and five  
famous paintings from different  
dynasty

W: it was finished. The painting  
with a sun drawn at the corner. I  
love the story of Kuafu. In  
Chinese mythology, he chased  
the sun from one side of China  
to the other and dried up all of  
the rivers.

To continue the metaphor of  
paper and writing, the Confucius  
scholars bring in the earliest  
form of writing on bamboo. The  
primitive day's paper.

If I were told of the truth in the morning, I would die  
Willingly even in the evening.

Harmony is most precious.  
To govern means to act rightly.

Isn't it a pleasure to learn and constantly practice what  
Learnt.

When you know a thing, say that you know it; when you  
Do not know a thing, say that you do not know. It is

Doing so.

Chinese Character "HE (harmony)"

Enjoyment without being licentious, grief without being  
Hurtfully excessive.

Learning without thinking leads to puzzlement;  
Without learning is perilous

Review what has been learned to learn what is new and  
You can be a teacher.

Study without satiety and teach without weariness.

"Within the four seas, all men are brothers"

**Opera 32:07**

M: Now the scroll spread to  
moveable types, the second  
greatest Chinese invention.  
The size of football field is what  
we are looking at.  
Numerous elevators moves  
automously down there, it is  
moveable types, feels like a type  
writer. Ingenious mechanisms  
makes it happen.

It was Chinese great invention  
600 years before the Gutenberg  
press in Europe.

The pattern formed here is "HE"  
A Chinese character and symbol  
for harmony.

See the symbol repeat three  
times in Chinese calligraphy.

Once again, the image of  
harmony. The techniques is  
pretty OK in the ceremony.

This is the great wall rising from  
the movable types set up. The  
only representation we could fit  
in (31:00). The great wall is  
kilometer long. This is a scale  
model

W: Peking Opera  
M: a small example of Peking  
Opera.

Opera was used to entertain the  
emperor in the town.

For those of you who watched  
Peking opera, surely you  
appreciate number we just say.

**Silk Road 34:50**  
**Music: parting at the Yangguan Pass**

This is the representation of Tang Dynasty, the only Buddhist dynasty in Chinese long history. Among all, it is the most beautify dynasty that creates the most beautiful arts, most memorable customs. To set at the beginning represents the silk road, a two-thousand-year-old trading routes from Beijing to Europe. The image portray the girl as dancers the road represents long trading history of China reaching towards the West, although the west did not really trade with China.

Very tricky to move above the carpet without making mistakes.

The girls seems to give some ideas about long history in bringing up gymnasts in China

**Maritime Silk Road & Voyages of Zheng He**

茶

Now the oarsmen are moving into the stadium. Zheng he, is one of the extraordinary explorers on Chinese history, the fifteen century. He was captioned by Chinese emperor and then became an enutic. Zheng He is one of the famous He leads seven treasure fleets on voyage out of China

This represents seven treasure fleets at his time

The dancer in the middle is celebrating the third greatest Chinese inventions- the compass

It becomes traditional in Olympic ceremony to represent sea voyage. That's one of the best time we have seen.

That's the early Chinese compass. The representation of spoon, a magnetic spoon that rotated at of water

W: Another performance now.  
M: Yep. A big part of Southeast of China.

W: This part includes the music in ancient China.

M: Yes, music is a humanistic arts of communication.

In the opening ceremony, the paper is the metaphor that links dynasties and links history.it is going to show through painting, through arts and through calligraphy. It represent the history of China in a really graphic, and yep really great way.

W: I don't think the costume are disappointing even today. The color is just amazing.

M: Let's realize it has some truth. The Chinese history is

**Ritual and Music**  
**(Poem: Spring River Flower Moon Night) Zhang Ruoxu**  
In Spring the river rise as high as the sea,  
With the river's rise, the moon up rises bright,  
She follows the rolling waves for ten thousand li,

**Starlight**

something of emperors at courts and at the palaces. The ancient Chinese have various clothes.

Zhang Yimou has made some films that represent Tang-late Dynasty. The latest ones, Raise the Red Lantern and the Curse of Yellow Follower. This is very typical great movies.

It is an extraordinary stripe that Chinese wear cloth.

Yellow Flowers

M: I think at least half of the representation is about ancient China's splendid culture.

W: Now at the center of stage, it's the world famous pianist

M: And the man lean against piano was the 26-year-old Lang Lang, probably the greatest exponent of piano

It says it has a five-year-old to learn from him, probably as good as he was a kid.

W: Not sure she's paying attention, to have fun now. She is five.

W: Now, we are landed on modern era of China.

M: Yes. We see the scroll expanding is pushed backwards by the performers moving towards the scroll. This represents bringing China into the modern days.

W: I think it is a biggest waves that I have seen in my life. It says these guys rehearsed three months ago at a military camp

Great costumes. At least cause it is to bring China into the modern day the technology goes into the lighting in these customs.

They are forming one of the most traditional Olympic images, the dove, the dove of peace.

They are forming one of the most traditional Olympic images

Travel from the tang dynasty to the bullet trains to the bird nest stadium, the scroll has the pictures of every day activities. People from agriculture and people in the cities.

M: Kites was invented in China, The little girl. Remember the date when only one place has kites in China.

M: I hope Mickey is watching. It may bring back the memories.

I am sure you can see the formation the dancers achieve

here. The wonderful representation of Bird's stadium. Lang Lang and a piano, a kite over head

Now the performers walk their way out and prepare for the new segment. It is like a blossom flowers.

## Nature

Moving to the new segment where the crowd instantly realize it is Tai Chi Practice.

W: Tai Chi is of course practiced in the public space throughout China. The movement replicate fish, birds, sometimes water fly

It will begin with a very poetic metaphor that Zhang Yimou is chosen to try to illustrate philosophical concepts. It is really difficult to represent it physically.

Those are all Tai Chi masters, 12 Tai Chi masters.

W: 2008 Tai Chi performers on the floor, moving in perfect unison.

From someone dream like Tai chi, the monster showed that this is not hard to reach.

In the center, on a large sheet of paper that you remember from the beginning of this ceremony, the forty school children are painting on the same piece of paper, a continuing metaphor that China, is still working on the same piece of paper. the resource showing at the beginning

M: while they are painting, they are chanting words about the global warming. "the air is warming, the ice cap is melting, The lands came smaller and banished 57;33

Children than any other of  
Children on earth, the segment  
is to inspire Children all over  
the world to care the planet.

I think Zhang Yimou try that  
hard, which he had to be.

W: the timing is 58:16, not  
distinguish pithed to the music  
that they are following.

M: They have been rehearsing  
for five months,  
Reforming a perfect circle which  
again is part of Chinese legend,

Appears often

The children continues to paint  
the hope that the land will  
become green again and the  
birds will come back.

M: I wonders what the viewers  
will say.

Now, the birds return. The  
children's future is sure.  
Simple message but lay very  
deeply.

It reinforce the concept of Green  
Gains.

The giant paper continues his  
travel in the opening ceremony

Is astronaut resending to the  
stadium and proceeding to the  
stadium.

Well indeed, China is the third  
country to get men in the space  
with ten rocket. We were very  
luck to the ceremony. We had an  
administrator in the Chinese  
rocket science program,  
technically responsible for the  
opening ceremony.

His name is Yu Jianping. He is  
the technical directors of the  
Opening Ceremony, responsible  
for many effects and  
extraordinary technology,  
including this opening floor.

He may not quite understood  
what we are laughing about.

W: As the floor parts, we see a  
giant globe.

In the center of cosmic, the  
center of the universe,  
The globe is about 18 diameters  
wide, not quite sure  
Basically a way to express man  
is part of the globe.

They tell their audiences to get  
their lights up. And the globe  
begins rotating.

On top of the globe, two famous  
singers, one Chinese, One  
English

**Dream**

**You and Me**

**Theme Songs: You and Me**

You and Me  
From one World  
We are Family  
Travel dream  
A thousand miles  
Meeting in Beijing  
Come friends,  
Put your hands in mine  
You and Me  
From one World  
We are Family

**Parade of Nations**

**Music: Dance of the golden snake**

The popular singer in China,  
Mr.Liu.

Now on the stage is Sarah  
Brightman who is the voice of  
Christina, Phantom of Opera

Smiling face around the world  
Send the invitation to people and  
ask them to send their or their  
children's smiling pictures.

Led by the biggest man in sport,  
Yao, 2.02 in . the most popular  
sportsmen from China.  
What I have the full story of Lin  
Hao, age nine, comes from the  
earthquake-stricken area,  
Sichuan Province. He  
instinctively helped some of his  
school children to get out of  
trouble. An amazing story, a  
straight and courage nine-year-  
old.

It just got so interesting to see  
what is going to fill in this team  
in the next 14 days. It is said that  
they are qualified for everything.  
Hosting the Olympic Games has  
been the century-old dream for  
the Olympics.  
Seven years ago, 1.3 billion  
people made this deep-  
commitment dream into reality.

Table 2 Commentary of Central China Television

中国中央电视台

字幕 / 音乐 / 画外音

画面表演

解说词

### 倒计时

美丽的欢迎焰火烧体育馆一周，在鸟巢上空，如花朵般绽放，璀璨的焰火引发了一道耀眼的光环，激活了古老的日晷。

男：现在在鸟巢上方出现的图案，就是我国古代，利用太阳投射的影子，来测定时间的仪器，日晷。此刻，由日晷发出的时间之光，点亮了鸟巢，点亮了由 2008 面缶和 2008 个击缶者组成的巨型缶阵。

男：缶，是古老的打击乐器，早在夏商时代，就有了“击缶而歌”的演奏。

女：此刻，缶面上的灯光和着有节奏的击打依次亮起，整齐而震撼的声音，以光波的律动，向我们传递光阴的概念

男：和着如心跳般的击打声，缶阵中出现了巨大的光影数字。每一次怦然心动的声响，每一次光影数字的更迭，都预示着北京奥运的分秒临近。

夜空璀璨，缶声震天，颂歌高扬，情谊无边。接下来，我们将会看到一场独具中国艺术魅力的欢迎仪式。欢迎所有远道而来的朋友

中国素以“礼仪之邦”“文明古国”著称于世，几千年来，不仅创造了灿烂悠久的历史，更形成了高尚的道德准则和完整的礼仪规范

女：此刻，2008 名乐手，一边击缶，一边吟诵着数千年前，孔子写在《论语》中的名句。我们用这种最独特的方式，表达北京最真挚的欢迎之情。

男：欢迎所有热爱友谊与和平的朋友们来到北京，来到中国，欢迎所有热爱奥林匹克运动的朋友们，来到奥林匹克大家庭。

男：在震撼的声响中，我们惊喜的看到，由焰火组成的巨大脚印，正沿着北京的中轴路，穿过天安门广场，直奔国家体育场而来

女：29 个焰火脚印，象征着 29 届奥运会的历史足迹，也意味着中国追寻奥运之梦的百年跋涉，正在一步步走近梦想成真的时刻，

男：七年前，当中国人把申办报告交给奥组委时，就把“绿色奥运，科技奥运，人文奥运”的承诺，交给了世界。

女：七年后，中轴路上新生的鸟巢，和郁郁葱葱的奥林匹克森林公园，成为了庄严的奥林匹克广场最快乐的伙伴

男：中轴路上这三个特色鲜明的北京地标，不仅体现了北京奥运的三大理念，更连接起了一座城市的昨天和今天。

男：此刻的鸟巢，繁星点点，犹如浩瀚的星河落入人间。美丽的飞天在繁星中歌舞，唯美浪漫，如梦如幻。

女：曾几何时，为奥运五环，增添一抹灿烂的中国色彩，为奥运五环烙印一段辉煌的中国记忆，也像这梦幻，在中国人心中，憧憬百年。

男：一个由星光组成的奥运五环，散发着璀璨的光芒，美丽的飞天把闪光的五环托起在北京的夜空，点亮北京的夜色。点燃了每一个热爱和平、热爱友谊、热爱奥林匹克运动的人，心中跃动的激情

男：一曲旋律优美的《歌唱祖国》响彻鸟巢上空，56 名各民族儿童簇拥在五星红旗的周围，进入会场。

### 击缶欢迎

字幕：

演员在吟诵的是《论语》中的句子：有朋自远方来 不亦乐乎

### 历史足迹

### 梦幻五环

今夜梦见，繁星变五环，万象和谐，大地平安，仙女降人间，彩云布满天。朋友北京来相聚，尽开颜

### 升国旗仪式

## 画卷

### 文艺表演

随着一个短片的开始，我们将看到一幅跨越时空，意境优美的中国画卷，它讲述着博大厚重、

女： 意蕴悠远的中国故事，全世界的朋友都会领略优雅的东方神韵，了解悠久的历史，感受中国的现代魅力。

男： 画面中呈现的是散发着中国古典韵味的文房四宝，笔墨纸砚，在清雅的古琴声中，我们看到了一幅画作产生的完整过程，纸张制作、墨墨着色，装裱成轴，今晚的故事将从这幅飘逸婀娜，变化万千的中国画卷开始。

女： 影像中的画卷神奇地出现在场地中间，这幅长达 70 米的巨大卷轴在我们面前缓缓铺陈开来。琴声悠扬，水磨浸染，充满中国古典艺术的淡雅神韵。画卷上，墨迹漫卷，流淌击暖，依次呈现出演化、陶瓷、青铜器等在中国文化起源和发展过程中极具代表性的文化符号。一席黑衣的舞蹈演员来到画卷之上，用肢体做墨迹，表现中国水墨画的洒脱写意，随着舞蹈演员的动作，洁白的画纸上出现起伏回旋的墨色线条。

清雅的旋律来到这张有着一千多年的古琴，这张名为“太古遗音”的古琴在琴弦波动中，体现出中国文化底蕴的渊源流长。中国水墨画讲求以形写神，不拘泥于神似，更讲求神韵，舞蹈演员独特的肢体语言，正体现出中国水墨画特有的意趣和韵味。

此刻，画作完成，原本不存在地上的画纸，被凌空提起，一幅山峦交错，起伏连绵的水墨画呈现在眼前。

## 文字

中国汉字是世界上最古老的文字之一，古老的汉字承载着中华文明久远深邃的历史，在这一篇章的表演中，我们将看到中国汉字的魅力。

男： 此刻孔子的三千弟子手持竹筒高声吟诵，缓缓步入场内，《论语》中经典名句响彻耳畔。

女： 70米长的画卷上出现了巨幅竹筒，向世人呈现中国古代最早的书籍形式

男： 完整的巨幅画卷中间，魔幻出现了立体活字印刷体，方板汉字凹凸起伏，不断地变化。

女： 整个活字印刷板如微风拂过，层峦叠嶂，如水波涌动，此消彼涨，充满动感的表演，将为我们呈现中国汉字的演化过程。

男： 活字印刷板中间出现了中国古代的“和”字，第二个古体的“和”字出现。此刻我们看到了现代字体的“和”，一个和字荏苒千年，发展变化，表达了孔子的人文理念和为贵，彰显出中华民族的和谐观，历史悠久，传统优良。此刻巨大的活字印刷板变化出万里长城的雄伟之姿，这座人类文明史上最伟大的建筑工程之一，是中国古代劳动人民勇气和智慧的结晶，象征中华民族坚强不屈的脊梁。

女： 无数立体的桃花出现在活字印刷板的顶端，雄伟的长城形象被优美的桃花覆盖，让人瞬间置身于满园春色，和谐浪漫的桃花仙境，表达中国人热爱和平的美好心愿

男： 中国戏曲历史悠久，品种繁多。热闹的锣鼓声为我们带来了中国传统戏曲的表演，中国广阔的地域成就了诸多的戏曲种类，大家熟悉国粹京剧，表演丰富，历史悠久，被世人称为东方歌剧

## 戏曲

女：华丽的活动戏台，在数千名演员的簇拥下，来到场中，京剧扮相的提线木偶，做工考究，工艺精制，他们活灵活现地表现着戏剧舞台上传达意境和神韵。

## 丝路

男：这场名为“丝路”的表演，表现的是中国古代陆路与海洋中的两条纽带，路上丝绸之路和海上丝绸之路的景象。

女：广交朋友，互通有无，彼此学习，礼尚往来，中华民族热情友善的特质古来有之，两条丝绸之路就是最好的印证。

男：两千多年前，中国的商队就开始带着贵重的丝绸由长安出发，经河西走廊进入欧洲大陆，丝绸之路是中西方经济文化交流的重要通道。

女：悬浮于半空中的画纸，此刻已幻化成辽远无边的沙漠，敦煌舞者在沙漠之上轻步漫舞，引领我们展开一场友谊之旅。

男：近代的船桨把我们的思绪从风情多样的内陆带到了一望无际的海上，船桨连接，呈现出中国古老的航海形象，海上丝绸之路是古代中国与外国经济贸易和文化交往的海上通道。

女：体育场的上方此时已是波浪汹涌，场中的长幅画卷上也已经海浪滔天，船桨滑落，桨手们在波浪中搏斗，体现了中国人挑战自然的勇气与智慧。

男：风平浪静后，长幅画卷上出现了中国的特产，瓷器与茶，因为陶瓷的大量出口，海上丝绸之路也被称为海上陶瓷之路，

女：场地中间的演员，手捧指南针，为风浪中的勇士，指明航向，海上丝绸之路不仅说明了中国古代航海技术的高超水平，更有力的印证了中国这个文明大国，历来的友善与热忱。

男：至此，中国古代四大发明，造纸术、火药、活字印刷术和指南针，已经在表演中呈现，自古以来，中国人民就懂得，在劳动中凝结智慧，在实践中，谋求发展，因而书写了中国历史上众多的盛事鸿篇。

## 礼乐

女：现在大家看到的是我国古老的戏曲，昆曲表演。演员吟唱着唐朝诗人张若虚写在《春江花月夜》中的诗句：“春江潮水连海平，海上明月共潮生”。

男：在远远飘来的乐曲声中，众多画师宁静专注的挥毫泼墨，人在画中间，画与人相和，画卷上依次呈现出唐、宋、元、明、清五个朝代的五幅中国长卷画，配以演员们的古典舞，再现了古代中国礼乐之邦的盛世气象。

女：乐声激昂，灯火通明，千名古装舞者融入画中。随着乐台上乐师的演奏悠然起舞，仿佛画中的景象，真实地跃然纸上。

男：此刻，山水长卷绕体育馆一周慢慢展开，32个乐台拔地而起，形成高耸的龙柱，擎天矗立，尽显中国古代文明的雄伟壮阔

## 星光

女：如果说刚才我们看到的表演，是在描述中国的古典美，接下来，我们将一睹现代中国的风采。

男：年轻钢琴演奏家朗朗和一个稚嫩的孩子，成为我们瞩目的焦点。他们共同演奏的钢琴曲轻灵委婉，就让我们在这浪漫的意境中，开启中国崭新时代的魅力旅程。

场中的长幅画卷从古绘制至今，从黑白两色的水墨神韵，转化为色彩斑斓的绚丽世界，无数绿衣使者，受到色彩的吸引，逐渐汇聚到画卷之中。

此刻，场地中的绿衣使者开始闪耀光芒，如同绘画的笔触，将为我们绘制一幅星奇炫目的星光画作。

男：这些美丽的星星，时而汇聚成美丽的银河，时而旋转成灿烂的星云，无穷的变化，引发无尽的想象。

女：此刻呈现在观众面前的是巨大的星光和平鸽，鸽子是和平、友谊、圣洁的象征，今晚我们放飞这只散发着光芒的和平鸽，愿它能向全世界传递来自中国的友好情谊。

男：此时在光亮的鸟巢上飘来一只风筝，牵风筝的孩子无忧无虑，她的心中此刻正有一个想飞的愿望，就让我们祝福她的梦想能够乘风飞翔。

女：绿衣使者为我们搭建起一个绿色的鸟巢。星光流转，绿色鸟巢瞬间变得晶莹剔透，精致美丽。画卷之上，展现出中国大江南北的时代风貌，传递着丰富的现代社会信息，构建出一幅人民安居乐业的和谐景象。

## 自然

女：中国传统武术中的太极拳，讲究刚柔相济，动静结合，气韵生动，朝气蓬勃。太极的理论真谛是“天人合一”，拥有和谐底蕴，尽显自然之美。此刻的表演，让整个鸟巢，都笼罩在一片祥和宁静的氛围中。

男：演员手中的纱幕上出现一幕幕自然的景象，营造出一派生命繁茂，生生不息的美好意境。

女：巨大的水声充斥耳膜，体育场上空，飞瀑激流，滚滚而下的景象，不禁让人想起了唐代诗人李白的名句：“飞流直下三千尺，疑是银河落九天”的波澜壮阔！

男：2008名太极选手在场中形成一个巨大的圆。圆，是中国文化中的一个重要精神符号，它与中国人的宇宙意识，生命情调都有十分密切的关系。

女：孩子们趴在画纸上，用彩色的画笔描绘美丽的大自然，用纯真的童心播种绿色的希望。就让我们共同努力，实现诺言，交给世界一个绿色奥运。

男：此时，孩子们收起画笔，凝神矗立，数千名太极拳表演者也仿佛受到了某种力量的吸引，屏息注目。转瞬之间，鸟巢上方涌现出无数的飞鸟，挥动着七色的翅膀，快乐地回旋，仿佛在告诉我们，这里就是他们眷恋的绿色家园。

## 梦想

男：人类第一次抬头仰望夜空，就想知道，星星到底什么模样，中国人代代传承嫦娥的故事，始终执着于飞天的梦想。终于，人类用智慧敲开了宇宙的大门，卫星发射，载人航天，太空漫步，一项项伟大的创举，总始于一个个伟大的梦想。

女：此刻，一颗梦幻般的蓝色星球，冉冉升起，徐徐旋转。这是我们共有的家园！我们想邀请地球上，外太空的每一个角落，邀请每一个能够听到我们声音的朋友，都来分享我们的梦想，奥运的梦想！

## 主题歌《我和你》

女：我们身处同一个世界，我们拥有同一个梦想。梦想和平，梦想友谊，梦想团结，梦想发展。梦想地球变得很小，就像一个家庭，梦想怀抱变的宽广，可以拥抱世界。

男：在北京奥运会主题歌优美的旋律中，2008张灿烂的笑脸如花朵般的盛放。这是北京奥组委耗时一年，专为这次北京奥运会的开幕式表演，向全世界征集的笑脸。无论肤色，无论种族，无论国籍，无论语言，微笑，就是我们最好的表达。一个微笑，就能让彼此，心意相同，情意相融。奥运的北京，一定是微笑的北京。奥运的北京，会用最美的笑容，为你铺陈最温暖的， 竞技征程。

## 运动员入场式

男：各位观众，现在入场的是中华人民共和国体育代表团，中国代表团入场：旗手是著名的篮球运动员姚明，这是他第二次担任中国奥运会代表团的旗手。和姚明一同牵手的是汶川县映秀镇小学二年级的小学生，他曾经获得抗震救灾英雄少年的光荣称号。

女：从1932年洛杉矶奥运会刘长春单刀赴会，到19年，许海峰实现金牌零的突破，从新中国恢复在国际奥委会的合法席位，到2004年雅典奥运会排名金牌榜第二位，中国体育代表团一共获得了112枚夏季奥运会金牌，24枚冬季奥运会金牌。

本届奥运会中国体育代表由1099人组成，参赛运动员639人，不仅创造了中国历届奥运会参赛人数之最，也是本届奥运会当中规模最大的体育代表团。

全团运动员平均年龄为24.4岁，其中37人曾参加过2000年悉尼奥运会，165人曾参加2004年雅典奥运会，还有部分运动员是连续参加过亚特兰大、悉尼、雅典三届奥运会三朝元老，有469人是第一次参加奥运会。

**Table 3 List of News Coverage on the 2008 Summer Olympics Opening Ceremony**

No	Title	Media Outlet	Date of Publication	Author	URL	NOTE
1	China's Leaders Try to Impress and Reassure World	The New York Times	8-Aug-08	Jim Yardley	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/09/sports/olympics/09china.html?_r=0">http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/09/sports/olympics/09china.html?_r=0</a>	direct
2	Gritty Renegade Now Directs China's Close-Up	The New York Times	7-Aug-08	David Barboza	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/08/sports/olympics/08guru.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/08/sports/olympics/08guru.html</a>	indirect
3	Olympic Games begin in Beijing	The New York Times	8-Aug-08	Jim Yardley	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/08/world/asia/08iht-09china-web.15110615.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/08/world/asia/08iht-09china-web.15110615.html</a>	direct
4	Even the Cynical Succumb to a Moment of Real National Pride	the New York Time	8-Aug-08	ANDREW JACOBS	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/09/sports/olympics/09beijing.html?action=click&amp;contentCollection=Olympics&amp;module=RelatedCoverage&amp;region=EndOfArticle&amp;pgtype=article">http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/09/sports/olympics/09beijing.html?action=click&amp;contentCollection=Olympics&amp;module=RelatedCoverage&amp;region=EndOfArticle&amp;pgtype=article</a>	direct
5	Live-Blogging the Opening Ceremony	The New York Times	8-Aug-08	Lynn Zinser	<a href="http://beijing2008.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/08/08/the-opening-ceremony-begins/">http://beijing2008.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/08/08/the-opening-ceremony-begins/</a>	direct
6	Pretty Face and Voice Didn't Belong to Same Girl	the Washington Post	13-Aug-08	Ariana Eunjung Cha	<a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-lyn/content/article/2008/08/12/AR2008081201567.htm">http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-lyn/content/article/2008/08/12/AR2008081201567.htm</a>	indirect
7	For China, It's Showtime	the Washington Post	8-Aug-08	Edward Cody	<a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-lyn/content/article/2008/08/07/AR2008080703548.htm">http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-lyn/content/article/2008/08/07/AR2008080703548.htm</a>	direct
8	A Spectacular Opening to the 29th Olympiad	the Washington Post	9-Aug-08	Edward Cody, Maureen Fan and Jill Drew	<a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-lyn/content/article/2008/08/08/AR2008080801134.htm">http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-lyn/content/article/2008/08/08/AR2008080801134.htm</a>	direct
9	The Opening Ceremony By the numbers	the Washington Post	9-Aug-08		<a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-lyn/content/article/2008/08/08/AR2008080803263.htm">http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-lyn/content/article/2008/08/08/AR2008080803263.htm</a>	direct
10	For Chinese, A Long-Awaited Occasion of Hope and Pride	the Washington Post	9-Aug-08	Maureen Fan	<a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-lyn/content/article/2008/08/08/AR2008080803508.htm">http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-lyn/content/article/2008/08/08/AR2008080803508.htm</a>	direct
11	China Rebuffs Criticisms As Bush Arrives in Beijing	the Washington Post	8-Aug-08	Michael Abramowitz	<a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-lyn/content/article/2008/08/07/AR2008080701378.htm">http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-lyn/content/article/2008/08/07/AR2008080701378.htm</a>	indirect (scandal)
12	Lomong Is Chosen To Carry U.S. Flag	the Washington Post	7-Aug-08	Amy Shipley and Liz Clarke	<a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-lyn/content/article/2008/08/06/AR2008080600877.htm">http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-lyn/content/article/2008/08/06/AR2008080600877.htm</a>	Indirect
14	Review: Opening ceremony rewrote the record books	USA Today	9-Aug-08	Robert Bianco	<a href="http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/television/reviews/2008-08-09-opening-ceremony-review_N.htm">http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/television/reviews/2008-08-09-opening-ceremony-review_N.htm</a>	direct

15	Olympic opening uses girl's voice, not face	USA Today	13-Aug-08	Cara Anna	<a href="http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-08-12-1810460787_x.htm">http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-08-12-1810460787_x.htm</a>	indirect
16	Beijing's Minority Stunt	the Wall Street Journal	14-Aug-08		<a href="http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB12186344212293673">http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB12186344212293673</a>	direct
17	Live-Blogging the Opening Night of Beijing 2008	the Wall Street Journal	8-Aug-08		<a href="http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2008/08/08/live-blogging-the-opening-night-of-beijing-2008/">http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2008/08/08/live-blogging-the-opening-night-of-beijing-2008/</a>	importan -real-time feedback
18	Hooray for Haze	the Wall Street Journal	8-Aug-08		<a href="http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2008/08/08/hooray-for-haze/?cb=logged0.5781208882108331">http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2008/08/08/hooray-for-haze/?cb=logged0.5781208882108331</a>	indirect
19	Get in Line: The Olympic Potentate Procession	the Wall Street Journal	8-Aug-08	Sky Canaves	<a href="http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2008/08/08/get-in-line-the-olympic-potentate-procession/">http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2008/08/08/get-in-line-the-olympic-potentate-procession/</a>	indirect
20	Fireworks for Miles and Miles	the Wall Street Journal	8-Aug-08	Sky Canaves	<a href="http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2008/08/08/fireworks-for-miles-and-miles/">http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2008/08/08/fireworks-for-miles-and-miles/</a>	direct
21	Let the Number Games Begin!	the Wall Street Journal	8-Aug-08	Jason Dean	<a href="http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2008/08/08/let-the-number-games-begin/">http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2008/08/08/let-the-number-games-begin/</a>	indirect
22	The Grand Li Ning Finale	the Wall Street Journal	8-Aug-08	Sue Feng	<a href="http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2008/08/08/the-grand-li-ning-finale/">http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2008/08/08/the-grand-li-ning-finale/</a>	direct
23	Emotion kicks off China's Olympics	CNN	9-Aug-08	Kevin Drew, Emily Chang	<a href="http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/08/08/olympics.opening/">http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/08/08/olympics.opening/</a>	direct
24	Olympic show opens with a bang	CNN	8-Aug-08		<a href="http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/08/08/olympics.opening.us/index.html">http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/08/08/olympics.opening.us/index.html</a>	direct

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