

Research in Brief

Content Analysis and Press Coverage: Vancouver's Cultural Olympiad

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ABSTRACT *Increasingly, local cultural communities are called upon to support global mega-events such as the Olympic Games with the promise that they represent a “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity” for the host arts community. With regard to Vancouver's 2010 Cultural Olympiad, it is now clear that there have been some unintended consequences for Vancouver's arts community. This research note, taken from a wider 2010 Cultural Olympiad impact study, explores one aspect of the mega-event's promise—increased national and international press profile through press coverage.*

KEYWORDS *Arts funding; Content analysis; Cultural Olympiad; Mega-events*

RÉSUMÉ *De plus en plus, on demande aux communautés culturelles locales d'appuyer les grands événements mondiaux comme les Jeux olympiques en leur assurant que ceux-ci représentent une occasion exceptionnelle pour la communauté artistique d'accueil. En ce qui a trait à l'Olympiade culturelle de Vancouver 2010, il est maintenant clair qu'il y a eu des conséquences inattendues pour la communauté artistique vancouveroise. Cette note de recherche, qui provient d'une étude d'impact plus large sur l'Olympiades culturelle de 2010, explore un aspect des conséquences promises pour ce grand événement : une présence médiatique accrue pour les artistes locaux, tant au niveau international que national.*

MOTS CLÉS *Financement des arts; Analyse de contenu; Olympiade culturelle; Grand événement*

Introduction

The contemporary Olympic movement makes a global marketing claim: that the event is an exceptional opportunity for place marketing and promotion that will stimulate further economic development (Fainstein & Judd, 1999a; García, 2005; Hall, 2000; Holcomb, 1999; Judd & Simpson, 2003). Arts and culture groups are called to support this agenda (Low, 2011), with promises that they too will benefit from the growth and development that may result. As demonstrated by a series of commissioned Pricewaterhouse Coopers reports to document Vancouver's Olympic Games,

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[t]he 2010 Winter Games are expected to heighten international awareness of BC and Canada as a creative and cultural destination. Afterwards, more artists and performers could increase their opportunities for product sales, touring and other commercially related activities thereby increasing the capacity of the arts and culture sector. (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2009, p. 28)

For many Olympic observers, the marriage between sport and the arts is not a natural fit; indeed, many are unaware of the fact that there even is a cultural component of any modern Olympics. According to the existing IOC regulations it is compulsory to host a Cultural Olympiad; yet, there are no exact rules as to what constitutes the event. This lack of clarity has led many observers to conclude that the arts component has tended to have a marginal position within the event's general organization (García, 2004, 2008; Inglis, 2008; Stevenson, 1997).

Politicians and planners often see "flagship" festivals or "events" as a catalyst for urban regeneration; places that attract tourist and business travellers, as well as the increasingly important tourism economy, which will continue the process of economic rejuvenation. Many observers believe that securing an Olympic Games represents one of the greatest opportunities for tourist-related development (Holcomb, 1999; Hughson, 2008; Thornley, 2000). This research note uses data from the Vancouver Olympics to examine the claim that such a mega-event can place a local cultural community on the global stage.

Methodology

Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use. ... As a research technique, content analysis provides new insights, increases a researcher's understanding of particular phenomena, or informs practical actions. Content analysis is a scientific tool. (Krippendorff, p. 24, 2012)

Two data coding systems were devised to test the theory that a Cultural Olympiad increases the national and international press profile of host cities' arts communities. Researchers used media search engines to identify more than 3,000 articles from 151 news titles published between January 1, 2008, and March 1, 2010. The research project recruited participants from organizations that operate on a professional basis and that were in receipt of operational (as opposed to project) government funding and represented a broad cross-section of the city's arts organizations.

Using the IBM SPSS Statistics software, the first coding system focused on Cultural Olympiad stories. Each article identified was content coded according to the following coding criteria: date of publication, Olympic year, country of origin, news story, title, style, content, theme, tone, and size. The second coding system, using one of the Vancouver case studies as the identifying factor, duplicated the first set of coding criteria but also coded whether the story was related to their the arts group's "day to day" operation or the Cultural Olympiad.

By conducting two separate newspaper content analysis studies, the research project was able to triangulate one set of data, Cultural Olympiad news coverage, against another set of data, case studies of specific organizations, to examine the overall Cul-

tural Olympiad coverage and how coverage of the case studies fits within that data. Using the two separate coding systems also allowed analysis of how case study coverage related to both Cultural Olympiad and non-Cultural Olympiad coverage.

The Findings

Content analysis of Cultural Olympiad news print coverage

Over the period from January 1, 2008, until April 1, 2010, a total of 1,732 articles were identified using the search criteria “Cultural Olympiad” or “Arts” or “Olympics” (see Table 1).

Table 1: Number of newspaper articles by international origin

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Canadian	1,361	78.6
	U.S.	30	1.7
	European	313	18.1
	Australasian	24	1.4
	Other news source	4	0.2
	Total	1,732	100.0

Source: Author counts based on: Databases: Press Display, LexisNexis, and ProQuest: Keyword search: Cultural Olympiad; Arts; Olympics: Dates: January 1, 2008, to April 1, 2010

Table 2 shows the same international press coverage broken down by Olympic year. It reveals that although the 2010 Cultural Olympiad (C.O.) received some international press coverage, the 2008 and 2009 Cultural Olympiads received none. As for the international coverage for the 2010 Cultural Olympiad, the results were, again, not encouraging (see Tables 3 and 4).

Table 2: Number of newspaper articles by Olympic year and international origin

		Media national origin					Total
		Canada	U.S	Europe	Australasia	Other	
C.O.	2008 Vancouver	54	0	0	0	0	54
	2009 Vancouver	199	0	0	0	0	199
	2010 Vancouver	1,106	24	20	12	2	1164
	2012 London	1	3	293	11	2	310
	2014 Sochi	0	2	0	0	0	2
	2016 Rio	1	1	0	1	0	3
Total		1,361	30	313	24	4	1,732

Source: Author counts based on: Databases: Press Display, LexisNexis, and ProQuest: Keyword search: Cultural Olympiad; Arts; Olympics: Dates: January 1, 2008, to April 1, 2010

Table 3: U.S. newspaper coverage of 2010 Cultural Olympiad

Type of coverage	Preview artistic content	1
	Preview artistic content with photo	1
	Review artistic content	1
	Review artistic content with photo	1
	General article artistic content/structure	2
	Passing reference to C.O. whilst not being main story focus	13
	Article on arts/artistic issue/impacted by Olympics/C.O.	5
Total		24

Source: Author counts based on: Databases: Press Display, LexisNexis, and ProQuest: Keyword search: Cultural Olympiad; Arts; Olympics: Dates: January 1, 2008, to April 1, 2010

Table 4: International press coverage of 2010 Cultural Olympiad

Type of coverage	Preview artistic content	6
	Preview artistic content with photo	4
	Review artistic content	1
	Passing reference to C.O. whilst not being main story focus	20
	Article on arts/artistic issue/impacted by Olympics/C.O.	1
	Editorial/Comment referencing Cultural Olympiad	1
	Statement by public figure re Cultural Olympiad	1
Total		34

Source: Author counts based on: Databases: Press Display, LexisNexis, and ProQuest: Keyword search: Cultural Olympiad; Arts; Olympics: Dates: January 1, 2008, to April 1, 2010

When looking at the international media data—58 articles, representing 5% of the total 2010 coverage—33 (over 60%) of those international press stories were categorized as having only a “[p]assing reference to the Cultural Olympiad whilst not being the main focus of the story.” In addition, the study found only 12 previews and 3 arts reviews over the entire three-year cultural program. Given these results, one can only conclude that Vancouver’s professional arts community did not experience the anticipated rise in international profile through world media coverage.

Cultural Olympiad coverage that originated in Canada was equally disappointing. Of the 1,359 articles printed, 832 (61%) originated in British Columbia, 344 (25%) were coded as “[p]assing reference to Cultural Olympiad,” and—perhaps most disappointing—there were only 96 reviews for the entire three-year artistic program of work.

Content analysis of selected Vancouver arts organizations

Over the period from January 1, 2008, until April 1, 2010, a total of 1,345 articles were identified using the individual search criteria of one of the Vancouver case studies (see Table 5).

Table 5: Number of case study articles by year referring to Cultural Olympiad

			Case study article refers to Cultural Olympiad coverage		Total
			No	Yes	
Year	2008	Count	430	24	454
		%	94.7	5.3	100
	2009	Count	577	130	707
		%	81.6	18.4	100
	2010 until April 1	Count	88	96	184
		%	47.8	52.2	100
Total	Count	1,095	250	1,345	
	%	81.4	18.6	100	

Source: Author counts based on: Databases: Press Display, LexisNexis, and ProQuest: Keyword search: Individual Vancouver case studies: Dates: January 1, 2008, to April 1, 2010

Table 6 shows that over the collection period on average, only 18.6% of total case study press coverage referred to the Cultural Olympiad.

Table 6: Number of articles referring to Cultural Olympiad coverage by case study

			Article refers to Cultural Olympiad coverage		Total
			No	Yes	
Case Studies	Arts Club Theatre – Stanley Theatre	Count	290	28	318
		%	91.2	8.8	100
	Playhouse Theatre	Count	99	34	133
		%	74.4	25.6	100
	Firehall Arts Centre	Count	133	33	166
		%	80.1	19.8	100
	Vancouver Symphony	Count	315	87	402
		%	78.4	21.6	100
	Vancouver Opera	Count	134	40	174
		%	77.0	23.0	100
	Contemporary Art Gallery	Count	37	23	60
		%	61.7	38.3	100
	Scotiabank Dance Centre	Count	87	5	92
		%	94.6	5.4	100
	Total	Count	1,095	250	1,345
		%	81.4	18.6	100

Source: Author counts based on: Databases: Press Display, LexisNexis, and ProQuest: Keyword search: Individual Vancouver case studies: Dates: January 1, 2008, to April 1, 2010

When focusing solely on the international coverage the case studies received, we find even more dramatic evidence of the lack of media profile. Vancouver Opera was the sole Vancouver case study to receive an article referencing the Cultural Olympiad in the international press (see Table 7).

Table 7: Case study articles with reference to the Cultural Olympiad by press origin

		Case studies							Total
		AC/ST	PTC	FAC	VSO	VO	CAG	SDC	
Media origin	Canadian	28	34	33	87	39	23	5	249
	U.S.	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	International	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		28	34	33	87	40	23	5	250

Source: Author counts based on: Databases: Press Display, LexisNexis, and ProQuest: Keyword search: Individual Vancouver case studies: Dates: January 1, 2008, to April 1, 2010

Perhaps one of the most disturbing Olympic outcomes, that of “sponsorship exclusion,” is seen when looking exclusively at press coverage for the period January to March 2010 (Table 8). The Scotiabank Dance Centre, Canada’s only purpose-built centre for dance, was excluded from the 2010 event due to the fact that the official finance sponsor of the Games was the Royal Bank of Canada. Due to sponsor conflict, no Canadian dance was seen at the centre during the Cultural Olympiad. In the three months of January to March 2010, the centre was not mentioned in a single press article; it was as if it had disappeared from the cultural landscape.

Table 8: Number of articles written in January, February, and March 2010 referring to Cultural Olympiad coverage by case study

January, February, and March 2010 press coverage			Article refers to Cultural Olympiad		Total	
			No	Yes		
Case Studies	Arts Club Theatre – Stanley Theatre	Count	44	13	57	
		%	77.2	22.8	100	
	Playhouse Theatre	Count	12	11	23	
		%	52.2	47.8	100	
	Firehall Arts Centre	Count	11	11	22	
		%	50.0	50.0	100	
	Vancouver Symphony	Count	10	30	40	
		%	25.0	75.0	100	
	Vancouver Opera	Count	10	25	35	
		%	28.6	71.4	100	
	Contemporary Art Gallery	Count	1	6	7	
		%	14.3	85.7	100	
	Total		Count	88	96	184
			%	47.8	52.2	100

Source: Author counts based on: Databases: Press Display, LexisNexis, and ProQuest: Keyword search: Individual Vancouver case studies

The unintended consequences

The data clearly show that significant national and international arts coverage did not materialize from the 2010 Cultural Olympiad. The unintended consequence of Vancouver hosting the Winter Games was that many organizations invested heavily to showcase local creative product (Low & Hall, 2011). The fact that neither the media nor the audience materialized has had economic ramifications for local arts organizations, many of which are now facing economic uncertainty.

The Cultural Olympiad was politically promoted as a positive legacy experience for the local arts community. However, the sector was caught completely unawares when the provincial government announced 33% arts funding cuts three weeks before completion of the Cultural Olympiad. Vancouver had just spent years producing one of the most highly subsidized arts events, a Cultural Olympiad, when it was reported in the *Vancouver Sun* on May 29, 2010, that the social development minister “defends [the] decision to end funding for music and arts events he says ... should pay their own way.” The article reported that he went on to say, “ ‘It’s not the government’s job to decide whether a festival is commercially viable by subsidizing it’ ” (Shaw, 2010).

In the 20 months following Vancouver’s 2010 Cultural Olympiad, it is clear that the B.C. arts sector has been negatively impacted. The March 2, 2010, budget confirmed the provincial government’s substantial cut in arts funding through the B.C. Arts Council and B.C. Gaming Funds (Alliance for Arts and Culture, 2010).

Recent announcements have exposed the 2010 experience of several of Vancouver’s not-for-profit groups: the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG) announced an \$886,000 operational deficit during the 2010 fiscal year (CBC News, 2011), and Vancouver Opera posted a \$1.4-million deficit for the same fiscal year (Vancouver Opera falls million short, 2011). It also emerged in September 2011 that city council had, during in-camera meetings held months earlier in March (City of Vancouver, 2011a, 2011b) and June, awarded a “\$1 million bailout” to the Vancouver Playhouse. The in-camera June report entitled “Immediate Financial Support for Key Cultural Institutions” offered several reasons for the theatre’s financial difficulties. One cited that their problems “were further compounded by the intense competition for sponsorship dollars during the pre and post 2010 Winter Games” (City of Vancouver, 2011, p. 2).

With plans already well underway for the Sochi and Rio Cultural Olympiads, and the recent announcement that South Korea would host the 2018 games, it is clear that cultural mega-events are a fixture of the twenty-first-century urban landscape. Yet, as witnessed in the case of Vancouver’s arts community, the post-Olympic legacy often does not meet pre-Games promises and may be marred by the negative impact on post-Olympic arts funding and the lack of either the international cultural press or the cultural tourist.

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