The Influence of the Foreign Media's Host Destination Experience on Event Reporting

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Cities may host sport events to improve the destination’s image (Chalip, 2002; Kim & Morrison, 2005). How an event or city is reported in the media may have a significant influence on host city perceptions (Green et al., 2003). Media producers cannot cover an event in its entirety and therefore make decisions about the focus of their reports (Entman, 2004; 2010). Media framing theory posits that media producers’ cultural background influence how they view events, and that culturally congruent stereotypes of foreign nations are often reported (Entman, 2004; Mishra, 2012). Therefore, decision making bias influences the choice of what’s made salient in event media reports (Entman, 2010). Research has found that events hosted by non-Western nations are often reported negatively in media in Western countries, and so fail to significantly improve the hosts’ image (Manzenreiter, 2010; Mishra, 2012). Therefore, it has been suggested that non-Western nations may find it more difficult to improve perceptions of their destination among Western audiences (Manzenreiter, 2010).

Media contingents from each country involved in an event often travel to the host destination to report on the event. While previous research has noted that biases of media influence reporting, research has not considered how media’s experience in a destination influences event reporting. Expectancy disconfirmation theory posits that disconfirming pre-held beliefs through experience leads to increased satisfaction (Oliver, 1977; 1980). In this case, expectancy disconfirmation theory would suggest that if the media producer’s experience disconfirms negative cultural stereotypes of the host, it may lead to a more positive view of the host destination. This could, in turn, lead to more positive reporting of the host destination. This study examines how the experience of foreign media who travelled to a host destination to report on an event shaped the focus of their reports. Understanding how and why media producers’ perceptions and experiences impact the framing of media reports can provide further insight into factors that influence how host cities are reported in the media.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with foreign media who travelled to Russia to report on the 2018 FIFA World Cup. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data were coded using an inductive process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Preliminary results suggest three main themes that explain how the experience of foreign media in the host cities influence reports. These include: interactions with locals, observing diversity and distinction in the host city, and stereotype disconfirmation. Ongoing interactions between media and the host population saw the media’s perceptions of the host nation change over time leading to a greater understanding and appreciation of the Russian people. The experience in the destination created a more diverse view of Russia and its people – with a separation of the people and the government. The experience disconfirmed expectations of chaos, disorganisation, and potential violence. Media producers felt that with the change in perceptions, they had a duty to report a more positive, distinct, and diverse view of the host nation.