

# **Print Media Framing of the Olympic Games before Canadian Referenda: The Cases of Calgary 2026 and Vancouver 2010**

**Jared Monaghan**

**Claudio Rocha**

**University of Stirling**

## **Abstract**

This study uses a quantitative content analysis and a qualitative thematic analysis to explore how the Olympic Games were framed in print media prior to two Canadian Winter Olympic referenda. Content analysis results showed that the salient topics and the tone of newspaper articles were framed more positively prior to the successful Vancouver 2010 referendum compared to the unsuccessful Calgary 2026 referendum. The thematic analysis indicated four themes. Firstly, news discourse emphasised the importance of Olympic vision that is congruent with host city needs. Secondly, the prominence of health promotion through sport as a reported theme was more associated with a successful bid. Thirdly, the communication and quantification of intangible benefits were reported to be increasingly important so that the value of the Olympics can be assessed fairly against the ever-burgeoning hosting costs. Finally, the Olympic brand has been deteriorating, at least over the last 15-16 years according to print media. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

*Keywords:* Olympic Games, public opinion, referendum, sport mega-events

REFERENCE: Monaghan, J. F., & Rocha, C. M. (2022). Print Media Framing of the Olympic Games Before Canadian Referendums: The Cases of Calgary 2026 and Vancouver 2010. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 15(4), 1-12.

<https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.2022-0066>

---

## **Print Media Framing of the Olympic Games before Canadian Referenda: The Cases of Calgary 2026 and Vancouver 2010**

Most of the emerging literature on sport mega-event bidding examines the Summer and Winter Olympic Games (Bason & Grix, 2018; Lauermann, 2016; Sant & Mason, 2015). Until recently, the rights-owner of the Games, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) facilitated international bidding contests to host the Games that were once as fiercely competitive as the related sports events within it. However, it is remarkable that, since the 2010s, the number of aborted Olympic hosting bids have soared and overall bidding interest has dwindled (Giesen & Hallman, 2018; Lu et al., 2019). In 2004, 12 candidate cities bid to host the 2012 Games. In 2015, only five bid to host the 2024 edition. For the Winter Games, the same trend is apparent with eight bidding cities for the 2010 Games and only two for the 2022 Games. From the five initial candidate cities to host the 2024 Summer Games, Hamburg and Budapest withdrew their bids for lack of popular support, while Rome claimed fiscal difficulties. For the 2022 Winter Olympics, three cities (Munich, St Moritz/Davos and Krakow) aborted their bid intentions after lack of popular support, checked via referenda.

The literature on aborted Olympic bids has invoked various causes such as management issues of bid organisations (Kassens-Noor, 2019), fragile growth coalitions (Lauermann & Vogelpohl, 2017), local project policy problems (Hippke & Krieger, 2015), mega-event politics (Paulsson & Alm, 2020), and anti-bid opposition (Kassens-Noor & Lauermann 2018). A topic of high interest in recent literature is failed public referenda, highlighting stiff public opposition to the Games from the citizens of bidding cities (Bason & Grix, 2018; Coates & Wicker 2015; Konecke et al., 2016; Lauermann, 2016; Shaw, 2008; Wicker & Coates 2018). In the most recent episodes, the Olympic Movement has watched the public rejection of the Calgary 2026 Winter Games and the Vienna 2028 Summer Games (Hiller & Wanner, 2018; Maennig, 2017). The large number of failed referenda have shown

---

that residents are key stakeholders in the process of bidding for the Olympics and that positive public opinion towards hosting of the Games is a fundamental asset to move candidacies forward (Giesen & Hallmann, 2018; Kim et al., 2015; Scheu & Preuss, 2018).

The era of Olympic bids is now over (IOC, 2021). The new IOC system to select a host city presents a strategic move away from bidding and adopts a targeted dialogue with prospective host cities which meet some desirable criteria to host the Olympic Games (IOC, 2021). The new system was approved in 2019 (IOC, 2019). Then, in less than two years, the IOC awarded the hosting rights of the 2032 Games to Brisbane (IOC, 2021). The novelty of the process and the short period the IOC used to select the host may explain the lack of public consultation in the case of Brisbane. This is unlikely to repeat for future candidacies. Despite the new approach, the IOC knows that popular consultation and support will keep their fundamental importance in the process (IOC, 2021). In the era of the Olympic bids, scholars demonstrated the importance of popular support in order for a city to be awarded the right to host and actually host the Games with positive impacts (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002; Rocha, 2020; Zhou & Ap, 2009). Now, with the new approach, as public opinion data remains a fundamental prerequisite in expressions of interest, popular support for the Games has the power to make or break a host city's chances of hosting.

Public referenda have been the most frequently used mechanism to generate public opinion data in regard to hosting the Olympics (Bason & Grix, 2018; Wicker & Coates 2018). A better understanding about how influencing mechanisms can shape positive and negative responses to referenda about hosting Games, is of fundamental importance to inform future host city applicants. In the current study, we focused on print media, as a key influencing mechanism to shape public opinion (Jackson et al., 2016). We chose to examine print media in an attempt to review the most faithful and authentic sources of Olympic discourse (Martens et al., 2018). Written print media was believed to be the content type that

---

was least ambiguous and subjective for review as opposed to video and image types (Kassens-Noor & Lauermann, 2018). Previous studies have reported media framing of either successful (Kim et al., 2015) or unsuccessful bids (Kassens-Noor & Lauermann, 2018), but they failed to present comparable cases. To fill this gap in the literature, the aim of this study was to explore how the Olympic Games were framed in print media prior to two Canadian Winter Olympic referenda – Vancouver 2010 and Calgary 2026. Two bids from the same country with different results provide an excellent opportunity to investigate the effects of print media framing on popular support for hosting the Olympic Games.

### **Literature Review**

The perceived benefits of the Olympic Games for host city residents are well-researched in mega-event literature (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; Ritchie et al., 2010). Studies have investigated the holistic benefits that the Olympic spectacle promises in terms of global media coverage with world-city reputation enhancement, the stimulation of tourism intention that subsequently stimulates local economic growth and the catalysation of urban development (Andranovich & Burbank, 2011; Kassens-Noor, 2019; Rocha & Fink, 2017). However, there has been a paradigmatic shift with much literature emerging on how host city citizens are promised tremendous benefits from the Olympics before the Games, but those benefits are not being realised, leaving residents to suffer the brunt of the consequences (Broudehoux, 2007; Rocha, 2020; Watt, 2013). Müller (2015) introduced the notion of “mega-event syndrome” which defines the overpromising of benefits and underestimation of prevalent costs during bidding processes. Anti-Olympic discourse demonstrates how Olympic organisers have intentionally underreported costs in order to blindside key event stakeholders such as citizens (Andreff, 2012; Baade & Matheson, 2016; Barclay, 2009). Hall (2006) affirms that although short-term gains are likely to be achieved, undesirable long-term

---

financial costs are just as inescapable for host city residents, whose taxes often increase to cover public expenditure on infrastructure and urban redevelopment.

It is not just economic issues that dissuade citizens from viewing the Olympics favourably, but research also reveals how mega-events engender social and environmental issues in their intrusive nature (Hiller & Wanner, 2018; Karamichas, 2013; Zimbalist, 2017). Host city residents lament Olympic-induced problems such as pollution from additional traffic volume, resident displacement, and the exploitation of migrant workers to name a few (Horne, 2018; Rocha & Xiao, 2021). Furthermore, research has reflected the emergence of more sophisticated bid opposition from anti-Olympic groups and thus, residents are better-informed of the financial, social and environmental injustices that the Games tend to communicate poorly or gloss over in promotion campaigns (Kassens-Noor & Lauermann, 2018).

Another common source of public bid resistance is the deteriorating reputation and brand of the IOC (Hippke & Krieger, 2015; Scheu & Preuss, 2018). Lauermann (2016) notes that, "the Olympic brand has suffered in recent years because of several bid cancellations, bad press and costly, undesirable legacies" (p. 343). As the owner of one of the most media-frenzied events in the world, the IOC is not unfamiliar with scrutiny and scepticism over its objectives (Giesen & Hallmann, 2018). However, rumours of questionable practices and corruption have been increasing in recent years especially regarding bidding processes (Matheson et al., 2018). For instance, Konecke et al. (2016) found that a major factor in the failed Munich bid referendum for the 2022 Winter Olympics was mistrust towards the IOC and its partners over greed-for-profit suspicions and transparency issues. Studies have found a positive relation between event organiser trustworthiness and favourable public perception of the Games (Gursoy et al., 2017; Giesen & Hallmann, 2018).

---

The formation of resident attitudes and perceptions towards mega-events is a dynamic process that manifests through two types of influencing mechanism: intrinsic and extrinsic influencing factors (Lu et al., 2019). Although residents' perceptions of the Games can be influenced intrinsically by factors such as their economic status, demographic or community attachment, they can also be influenced by extrinsic factors such as news media which is where this study focuses. There is some research about the relationship between news media and public opinion in relation to sport mega-events (Kim et al., 2015, Konecke et al., 2016; Lu et al., 2019; Sant & Mason, 2015). Mackay (2012) described how the British newspaper, The Sun, was an important supporter of London 2012 by constantly backing the bid and minimising any negative press surrounding the Games. However, just as the media can highlight positive legacies of the Games, it can also report multiple negative legacies and consequences of hosting (Chien et al., 2012; Martin & Barth, 2013; Ritchie et al., 2010).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) has informed research in the field of mass communication on the interface between public opinion and news media (Gitlin, 2003; McCombs & Valenzuela, 2020 Willnat & Zhu, 1996). There are two core assumptions that underpin the theory. First, it proposes that news media filters and shapes reality but does not always reflect reality. Second, it assumes that the focusing of news media on certain issues guide people to believe that those issues are of more importance. The way in which newspapers subjectively select and make salient certain issues based on "newsworthiness" but omit other issues as a result, has been called *the framing effect* (Chien et al., 2010; Sant & Mason, 2015). As McCombs and Valenzuela (2020) describe, public opinion does not actually respond to the environment, but rather it responds to the pseudo-environment that is constructed or *framed* by news media.

---

Recent theoretical development has identified the link between agenda-setting theory and public attitudes towards political issues (Kim et al., 2002; Kioussis, 2011). Attribute agenda-setting function describes how issues become salient in people's minds. Kim et al. (2002) found that people give more weight to salient issues framed by the media when deciding whether to support the development of specific areas in a city. Support for events is also affected by media framing (Kassens-Noor & Lauermann, 2018; Kim et al., 2015). Beyond shaping public opinion on *what to think* about an event, by highlighting certain characteristics, news media can also shape public opinion on *how to think* about it (Kim et al., 2002). For example, the tone adopted by print media articles has potential to shape public sentiment (McCombs & Estrada, 1997; Golan & Wanta, 2001). As the public decision whether to host an Olympics is a political issue by nature, this extension of the agenda-setting theory has a significant implication when investigating news media in a mega-event-bid context.

Previous research has focused on salient topics in the media to inform public support for Olympic referenda. Kassens-Noor and Lauermann (2018) examined local print media and social media discourse during the failed Boston 2024 bid, finding that the overarching narrative of both media forms was largely critical of the Games, ascribable to the prominence of anti-bid groups within those media channels. Kim et al. (2015) examined the most frequently mentioned topics pertaining to two unsuccessful North Korean Winter Olympic bids and one successful bid, allowing them to discover which topics were associated with a successful and failed bid. However, the literature has failed to include the tone adopted by the media during a pre-referendum time period for a successful and unsuccessful Olympic bid. Using print media as a vehicle to examine news media discourse, the research questions are as follows:

---

**RQ1:** Was the tone of newspaper articles prior to a successful referendum more positive than the tone of articles prior to an unsuccessful referendum?

**RQ2:** What were the most salient Olympic topics prior to a successful referendum compared to an unsuccessful referendum?

**RQ3:** Were the most salient topics prior to a successful referendum more positive about the Olympics than the most salient topics prior to an unsuccessful referendum?

**RQ4:** How do the key themes, emerging from the most salient Olympic topics, compare prior to one successful and one unsuccessful referendum?

In the research questions, we are considering “success” from the point of view of the organisers of the Games, the IOC. Thus, a “successful” referendum is the one where public opinion was favourable of hosting the Games; while an “unsuccessful” referendum is the one where public opinion was against hosting. To answer the research questions, we needed comparable Olympic bid referenda. To make cases comparable, the bidding cities must be in the same country. Different countries have different media policy and politics which would create difficulties in comparing cases of successful/unsuccessful bids across countries. We do not have many examples of candidate city pairs to create a comparable case study. For instance, Boston (2024 Games) and LA (2024 and 2028 Games) might represent an option, but LA did not conduct a public referendum (Kassens-Noor, 2020). Therefore, we selected Vancouver 2010 and Calgary 2026 as cases of successful and unsuccessful Olympic bid referenda, within the same country. The cases provide an excellent opportunity to investigate the effects of print media framing on popular support for hosting the Olympic Games.

## Method

This study evaluated print media coverage before the successful Vancouver 2010 referendum (64% of voters said yes to hosting) and unsuccessful Calgary 2026 referendum

---



(56.4% of voters said *no* to hosting). For the Vancouver 2010 referendum, we analysed articles published between the 4 February 2002 (the first bid phase deadline after which the Vancouver bid was made official) and 22 February 2003 (the day before the referendum). For the Calgary 2026 referendum, we analysed articles published between the 20 November 2017 (the City Council approved funding to support the bid, giving the bid legitimacy) and 12 November 2018 (the day before the referendum). Both time periods are between 11 and 13 months, a period long enough to capture the sentiment that newspapers were reporting but short enough prior to the referendum so that public opinion on the bid could more likely have been influenced.

The online database LexisNexis was used to collect the newspaper articles for each Olympic pre-referendum period. On the LexisNexis database, we first typed *Vancouver 2010 Olympics* into the search bar as *keywords* not exclusive to each other. That search found articles that cited the words “Vancouver 2010” but not the word “Olympics” and so too articles that cited “Vancouver Olympics” but not the year “2010”, and so on. The search found those articles that mentioned the terms not only in keywords, but also in the title and in the main body of text. We then repeated the process with the terms of *Calgary 2026 Olympics*. From those search results, we used the filtering tools (tick-boxes) to tick the three chosen newspapers. To ensure that focus was on the most visible newspapers that would reach a higher audience in each bidding city, the most popular nationally distributed newspaper, The Globe and Mail (considered Canada’s “newspaper of record”) was chosen for analysis alongside the most popular local newspapers in Vancouver and Calgary - the Vancouver Sun and the Calgary Herald respectively. After that initial article search using Keywords, further filters were applied on the database results to eliminate any duplicate articles. Articles that were less than 150 words and any letters to the editor (as they do not represent the views of the newspaper itself) were excluded.

---

The final filtered search of LexisNexis resulted in 799 total newspaper articles from the three print media outlets. The articles were then exported into Microsoft Word format so that all analyses could be carried out. Upon review of the articles, we excluded those that were irrelevant to public opinion on the Vancouver/Calgary Olympics (e.g., athletes retiring, death of Olympic promoter) and those that only mentioned the words “Olympics”, “Olympic Games”, and/or “Olympic bid” fleetingly when focusing on other issues. Therefore, a final sample of 483 articles was reviewed.

Quantitative content analysis and thematic analysis were the chosen techniques adopted to identify tones and topics of the articles. Initially, we conducted a deductive quantitative content analysis (following concepts and procedures proposed by White & Marsh, 2006). The coding scheme for the thematic analysis was determined by Wild et al.’s (2019) three Ts: type, tone, and topic. Article type was categorised as either a report or an opinion piece. We ran a Chi-Square test to verify the association between the type of the article and the tone, to decide if we needed to analyse separately reports and opinion articles. Tone was defined as either *positive*, *negative* or *neutral/balanced*. Positive tone was illustrated by the appearance of words and phrases to describe the Olympics or the Olympic bid such as “inspiring”, “tremendous benefits” and “major attraction”. Negative tone was denoted by words and phrases such as “skyrocketing costs”, “laden with corruption” and “financial disaster”. Neutral/balanced tone was identified by passive, descriptive language on Olympic benefits and drawbacks or a balanced tone between positive and negative arguments. To test whether the tone of newspaper articles prior to a successful referendum were more positive than the tone of articles prior to an unsuccessful referendum (RQ1), we conducted an additional Chi-Square test, testing the association between the host city and the tone of the articles.

---

The tone of articles was divided by article type and reviewed separately as both types have a different journalistic purpose. An opinion article is more subjective and thus more likely to adopt a clear tone on an issue compared to news reports, which are usually more objective in nature and therefore more likely to use a neutral/balanced tone. Topic was denoted by the positive or negative Olympic issues mentioned in the article. The ten most frequently mentioned topics in the news discourse prior to each referendum were identified as well as the number of positive or negative issues identified amongst them. Each author conducted this quantitative analysis individually. There was an agreement in the type and topic approached in all articles ( $k = 1.00$ ), but a few divergences regarding the tone in articles in tone ( $k = 0.821$  – which still indicates almost perfect agreement (Cohen, 1988). For these select few ones, the authors discussed and agreed about the tone of the articles.

An inductive approach to thematic analysis was carried out using the suggested methods of Braun and Clarke (2006) and Chang et al. (2011). Braun and Clarke (2006) propose a 6-step process whereby one familiarises themselves with the data, generates initial codes, searches for themes after collating those codes, reviews the themes, names the themes, and finally produces the report. First, we started with immersion in and familiarisation with the data, through intensive reading, generating a large number of initial codes. The authors did these two first steps independently. Then, we generated potential themes based on the commonality of codes across the transcripts. The authors then cross-referenced the themes generated, agreed on appropriate theme names and finally produced the report. The heuristic of using keywords as a meaning unit for articles was the key method (Chang et al., 2011). The process is shown below with two examples (Table 1).

[Insert Table 1 around here]

---

## Results and Discussion

### Quantitative Content analysis

#### *Type*

Result of the first Chi-Square test was not statistically significant either in Vancouver ( $\chi^2 = 1.997$ ;  $df = 2$ ;  $p = .368$ ) or in Calgary ( $\chi^2 = 0.124$ ;  $df = 2$ ;  $p = .940$ ) indicating that there is no association between the type of the article and the tone. Therefore, to analyse the tone of the articles we considered all articles together, not separating them by type.

#### *Tone*

RQ1 asked if the tone of newspaper articles prior to a successful referendum was more positive than articles prior to an unsuccessful referendum. Result of the second Chi-Square test was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 25.47$ ;  $df = 2$ ;  $p < .001$ ), indicating that there is a moderate/strong association ( $\phi = .230$ ; Cohen, 1988) between the city and the tone of the articles. Table 2 shows the quantity of print media articles before the Vancouver 2010 Olympic bid. Before this bid, a positive tone was most common (41%) in the local newspaper articles. In the national newspaper articles, a neutral/balanced tone was most common (44%). In both local and national newspapers, a positive tone was more common than a negative tone (41% v. 25% and 31% v. 25%, respectively). Table 3 shows the quantity of print media articles before the Calgary 2026 Olympic bid. Before this bid, a neutral/balanced tone was most common in both local and national newspaper articles (43% and 44% respectively). In both newspapers, a negative tone was more common than a positive tone (38% v.19% and 39% v. 17%, respectively).

[Insert Table 2 around here]

[Insert Table 3 around here]

---

For the newspaper articles examined, results show that there were a higher percentage of articles with a positive tone before the successful Vancouver referendum than before the unsuccessful Calgary referendum. Furthermore, there was a higher percentage of negatively toned articles before the unsuccessful referendum than before the successful referendum.

### ***Topics***

RQ2 asked what the most salient topics prior to a successful referendum were, compared to an unsuccessful referendum. The ten most frequently mentioned issues in the local and the national newspapers prior to the referenda are shown in Table 2 and 3, respectively.

RQ3 probed whether the most salient issues were of a more positive nature prior to the Vancouver referendum compared to the Calgary referendum. Seven out of the top 10 most frequently mentioned topics in the articles for Vancouver 2010 were positive ones, in both the local and the national newspapers. By comparison, only 3 and 4 out of the top 10 most frequently mentioned topics in the articles for Calgary 2026 were positive ones, respectively in the local and the national newspapers.

### ***Reflecting on the Literature: The Agenda-Setting Theory***

Returning to the agenda-setting theory, these results provoke significant findings. The answer to RQ2 identifies the most salient topics framed in pre-referendum discourse. As the agenda-setting theory assumes that the focusing of news media on certain issues guide people to believe that those issues are of more importance, it is suggested that the most salient topics may have also been the most prominent in the minds of many citizen readers who subsequently cast their referendum vote (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

The answer to RQ3 extends the findings even further to reveal that the most salient topics prior to a successful referendum were positive, while the ones prior to an unsuccessful

---

referendum were negative. Therefore, it is suggested that those citizens who read newspapers and voted in the Vancouver referendum might have been more aware of positive issues, while voting readers before the Calgary referendum might have been more aware of negative issues regarding the Olympics. Ultimately, in accordance with Kim et al. (2002), Vancouverites in 2003 and Calgarians in 2018 would likely have given more weight to the most salient issues and their attached sentiment when deciding whether to support the Olympics.

Furthermore, the tone of articles was more positive prior to a successful referendum and more negative before an unsuccessful referendum. Therefore, it may be concluded, in line with Kioussis' (2011) attribute agenda-setting extension, that readers could have been influenced by print media to support or oppose the Olympics in a referendum because not only they have been told *what* issues to think about but also they have been informed *how* (based on how different issues were framed using tone) to think about it.

RQ4 queried how key themes compare prior to one successful and one unsuccessful referendum. This question was answered through the thematic analysis below.

### **Thematic Analysis**

Following the results of the content analysis that reflects the differing discourse and sentiment surrounding the two Olympic bids, it was considered valuable to explore the overarching reasons why any sentiment shift had occurred. Therefore, a thematic analysis was undertaken on the pre-referendum newspaper discourse for the Vancouver 2010 and Calgary 2026 bids. Numerous themes emerged, representing the narrative portrayed by bid proponents and opponents, whether they were reporters/columnists themselves or the thoughts and quotations of key Olympic stakeholders.

#### ***Pre-Vancouver 2010 Referendum Discourse***

---

**Theme 1: Putting British Columbia on the Map.** The discourse stressed how enormous a showcasing opportunity the Olympics would be not only for Vancouver but also for British Columbia as a province. The Games would, “re-establish British Columbia on the world stage as an exceptional province with exceptional people” (*Vancouver Sun*, February 13, 2003). Vancouver experienced news discourse invoking the location as a sleeping giant of Winter sports with great facilities and pedigree on the doorstep. The global appeal of the Games is reflected in the tourism dollars the event might attract. With large broadcasting potential, the tourist attraction of the Games would not only be limited to holidaymakers and snow sport enthusiasts but publicised as a “bonanza for city businesses” (*Vancouver Sun*, November 19, 2002). The domino effect of Olympic investment in creating jobs and stimulating gross domestic product (GDP) growth was also widely reported. Positive sentiment was widespread on how Olympic exposure could transform Vancouver, exhibiting its yet-undiscovered qualities like its vibrant arts scene – “What an opportunity to showcase Canada's most creative artists, writers, film-makers, theatre innovators... alongside our rich aboriginal heritage and human diversity” (*Vancouver Sun*, December 20, 2002).

**Theme 2: A truly alarming waste of money.** A theme highlighted in the discourse of a less positive nature was the fear that the Olympic Games would be a considerable financial drain for a city, especially given the context of Vancouver and the world. It was heavily cited that the Games would demand a large financial commitment from any host city, leading to substantial amounts of money having to be raised by the city alone. The logistical cost of building a new highway fit for the purpose of a Games was often cited as a potentially crippling investment. Bid opponents affirmed that it is not always guaranteed that profits are generated from the Games, even in the long-term, and any cost overruns would leave taxpayers with a huge bill post-Olympics. The Montreal 1976 Games was commonly brought up to invoke the perils of the cost-benefit trade-off. Brunt (2002) questioned “what if the

---

people of Montreal had been asked the real question: Are you in favour of staging an event that will help put your city on the international map, but that will also create debts that will last for a generation?" (*The Globe and Mail*, September 4, 2002).

Aside from more taxes to pay, healthcare and education would also suffer the consequences of the Games through funding restrictions. Mickleburgh (2003) asked "how do we have the money for a 17-day sporting event when people are being cut off welfare, schools are being closed and seniors' benefits are being reduced? It's very hard to justify. The spending priorities are skewed" (*The Globe and Mail*, February 22, 2003). Furthermore, there is sentiment that money would be better served in sport by funding grassroots-level sport rather than hosting the big-budget Games. For example, "...the cliches about the legacy of sport are more 'disneyish' than ever" (*Vancouver Sun*, February 20, 2003).

The 2002/2003 world context was also brought up as a tumultuous setting in which to host an exorbitant mega-event. The security costs necessary to ease terrorism concerns in a post-9/11 landscape led critics to say that costs would escalate uncontrollably (*Vancouver Sun*, February 7, 2002; *The Globe and Mail*, January 17, 2003).

**Theme 3: Community Benefits.** Bid proponents have portrayed the Olympics as a powerful catalyst for a host city community, invoking numerous benefits such as the Games' capacity to inspire, unify people and bolster national pride (*Vancouver Sun*, June 18, 2002). The pro-Olympic narrative produced many nostalgic first-hand recollections, reminiscing about previous Canadian mega-events such as the Expo 1986 and the Calgary 1988 Winter Olympics; "I can't help recalling how wonderful we all felt after Expo 86. How proud we were of where we lived... this province hasn't felt that way in a long time" (*Vancouver Sun*, December 16, 2002). Lee (2003) points out that unfortunately intangible benefits are difficult

---



to describe and even harder to calculate, causing them to be easily forgotten versus glaring costs (*Vancouver Sun*, February 20, 2003).

Proponents did note that the Olympics could bring tangible community benefits like increased employment, urban development, and opportunities for local arts and businesses. Furthermore, proponents touted how the Olympics can be leveraged for community gain. For promoting health and wellness, Christie (2002) claimed, “we need high-performance success stories to inspire people to become...more active” (*The Globe and Mail*, February 8, 2002). The Games were also cited to have the power to “galvanise politicians in the region into thinking about sustainability and how to deal with the issues of growth and congestion, drugs and crime” (*Vancouver Sun*, March 2, 2002).

**Theme 4: Undesirable Legacies.** The discourse demarcated many non-financial negative hosting legacies. Lee (2003) expressed that the “Olympics represent a feast for big business at the expense of the environment” (*Vancouver Sun*, February 20, 2003).

Vancouver 2010 would tread a fine environmental line by constructing a new highway and new stadiums as Sullivan (2002) notes, “we can't begin to calculate the cost to the flora and fauna, tragically fragile, as ever” (*The Globe and Mail*, September 11, 2002). Furthermore, with new infrastructure, there is also a, “risk of... a white elephant Olympics... too many new large infrastructures in host cities, stadiums... which are then not filled” (*Vancouver Sun*, February 12, 2003). Further social issues caused by the new highway would be the seizing of aboriginal-owned land which had one representative claim that the Olympics, “would bring exploitation to our people” (*Vancouver Sun*, June 27, 2002) and the disruptive six years of construction for commuting Vancouverites.

A final undesirable legacy for Vancouver would be risking having its image muddied by working with the IOC. Following the Salt Lake City 2002 Winter Olympic bid, “blatant

---

Olympic corruption was uncovered – the lavish gifting and bribing by cities bidding for the Olympics” (*The Globe and Mail*, April 8, 2002). As this scandal was still fresh in the public mind, opponents believed the association with the Olympic brand at that time would hurt Vancouver's image.

**Theme 5: Sporting Legacy.** Despite the scandals surrounding the IOC, the reputation of the Olympics as a hot commodity event itself, appeared untainted in the view of bid proponents; “No city in recent memory that has held the Winter Olympics has regretted it. Both Calgary and Lillehammer ...want to do it again” (*The Globe and Mail*, February 22, 2003). Based on the beneficial sporting legacy possible from the Games, Kerr (2003) said “we need to win an Olympic Games [bid] for Canada, reflecting our country's reputation as a truly sporting nation” (*The Globe and Mail*, January 11, 2003). The four key legacy benefits were summarised by Morse (2003) – the Games would “develop sport facilities, stimulate sport development...provide great role models for younger (and older) Canadians, and, when carried down to community, school and family levels, to play a major role in decreasing health-care costs” (*The Globe and Mail*, January 6, 2003).

**Theme 6: Bid Politics.** The discourse reveals that the Olympics is not just a sporting vehicle to inspire but also a political vehicle to peddle influence. Therefore, an Olympic bid could become just another political campaign on a politician's agenda that is open to be manipulated (*The Globe and Mail*, March 22, 2002). Mickleburgh (2003) claimed that “much of the Games criticism has focused on controversial policies of the provincial government, a major partner in the bid” (*The Globe and Mail*, February 22, 2003). Much political lobbying was presented in the discourse from a lack of bid transparency, to fudging figures, overstating benefits and greed-for-profit motivations. All bid manipulation tactics ultimately could have come at the expense of the citizens who could be blindsided and ignored, despite their support being so crucial. Such campaigning with a lack of public involvement, led bid

---

opponents to lament the intentional overselling of the Olympics, which was as good as telling citizens what they wanted to hear even though a subsequent under-delivering was likely to happen. In this scenario Bramham (2002) said that “if winning means fudging figures and misleading people... about the true costs then who wants the Games anyway?” (*Vancouver Sun*, August 31, 2002).

### ***Pre-Calgary 2026 Referendum Discourse***

**Theme 1: The Renovation Games vs Reinventing the Wheel.** As hosts of what was accepted in the discourse as one of the most successful Winter Olympic Games ever in 1988 (*Calgary Herald*, November 3, 2018; *Calgary Herald*, September 13, 2018), a Calgary 2026 Olympics was viewed as an opportunity to repeat the feat. From the coined term “the Renovation Games” (*The Globe and Mail*, September 14, 2018), many proponents boasted that Calgary had multiple cost-saving advantages over bidding competitors, such as already having the majority of the necessary infrastructure as legacy from the 1988 Games.

However, bid opponent sentiment protested that there was no need to reinvent the wheel. Economists noted that “economic gains associated with the Olympics normally flow to more closed economies where the Olympics signals the intention of opening up internationally, whereas Canada is already open” (*The Globe and Mail*, September 20, 2017). Furthermore, the vision for the Games appeared to resemble someone with rose-tinted glasses looking at red flags and seeing flags, with huge differences between 1988 and 2026 bidding contexts – “Calgary had one big outdoor party in 1988 with everybody mingling. Now, you're talking about barricades and safe zones” (*The Globe and Mail*, June 25, 2018).

Kelly (2018) adds that Calgary 2026 can be seen as “giving into hysterical nostalgia”. In other words, simply wanting to host again because it went wonderfully once before is not a powerful or justifiable vision in itself (*The Globe and Mail*, November 2, 2018). The

---

problematic lack of vision is summarised by Breakenridge (2018) who states that Calgary 2026 “is a myopic conversation about replicating a past success...whatever legacy and benefits 1988 delivered haven't gone away... putting a fresh coat of paint on that legacy does not require signing a blank cheque over to the IOC” (*Calgary Herald*, August 7, 2018).

**Theme 2: Timely Tonic or Pursuing the Unicorn?** Another commonly discussed theme was Calgary’s financial context and whether the Olympics would be a “timely tonic” (*The Globe and Mail*, November 2, 2018), for a city and province that was in a difficult economic malaise or simply an unnecessary distraction from bigger issues. The Olympics could provide investment and, “real growth at a time when we (Calgary) continue to feel the pinch of low oil prices” (*Calgary Herald*, October 26, 2018). Proponents added that the Olympics could give the city a psychological lift and new jobs at a time when Calgary had the highest unemployment rate in the country.

Contrastingly, bid opponents claimed that the Olympics were not sustainable, nor a quick fix for the economy and that Calgarian politicians had other issues to solve that would even be exacerbated by the Games; “Hosting the Olympics will increase taxes, neglect the deficits, rely on government transfers and put economic eggs in a 16-day basket. Does this sound like a good way to promote sustainable growth?” (*Calgary Herald*, October 27, 2018). Braid (2018) affirmed that the government was as good as broke and could not afford to use the Olympics to paper over those financial cracks (*Calgary Herald*, October 27, 2018). Giovannetti (2018) declared that Calgarians “have a tendency to pursue the unicorn, the one big thing that is going to solve all problems”, but they should instead focus on more feasible action (*The Globe and Mail*, October 13, 2018).

**Theme 3: Host Privileges of the International Stage.** Although anti-Olympic discourse commented that the Games would have huge opportunity costs and funds should go

---

elsewhere, the bid supporters claimed that over \$6 billion of investment and a GDP increase for the province of \$2-\$3.1 billion was an even bigger opportunity cost to walk away from. Strong (2018) commented that the Games are “a 10-for-1 return, and I just don't know that you can say ‘no’ to something like that in a business sense” (*The Globe and Mail*, November 2, 2018). Niven (2018) argued that “without the Games, these dollars will not come to our city” and that by leveraging the Olympics, the level of funding and investment would allow Calgary to tackle any other problems in the long-term (*Calgary Herald*, November 3, 2018). With such a scale of new investment, “that's money in the pockets of those who really need it today... money for restaurants... bars and in coffee shops, and money for local businesses and their workers” (*Calgary Herald*, October 25, 2018). Alongside investment in the city from new businesses, supporters assumed that tourism would be boosted and that Alberta would have a massive marketing opportunity to rebrand itself internationally. For bid proponents, the international stage would have many privileges that would allow Calgary to “blow away those cobwebs and kick-start the city's transformation into a global player” (*Calgary Herald*, February 9, 2018).

**Theme 4: Bid Politics.** The political nature of bidding for the Olympics is unavoidable based on the Calgary discourse. The overstating of benefits that often do not materialise post-Olympics, the understating of debilitating costs and a “tsunami of misinformation and political grandstanding” (*Calgary Herald*, April 14, 2018) are all political power-plays mentioned by bid opponents in the print media. A prime example was the withholding of documents from two reputable economists, who criticised an overly rosy and cherry-picked economic benefit analysis from another economist that was being used as a guiding report. The *Globe and Mail* newspaper itself released the documents so that they could reach the public eye and even the eyes of some members of the bid committee. Bid opponents affirmed that such blindsiding and a lack of transparency only leads to suspicion

---

and citizen reluctance to support an Olympic bid. Corbella (2018) concluded that transparency leads to trust, thus, the public should have had access to the bid documents, “warts and all”, and anything more secretive would be a reason to vote against it (*Calgary Herald*, September 25, 2018).

**Theme 5: A Fiscal Boondoggle.** With costs versus benefits analyses rife in the discourse, many articles claimed that the costs far outweighed any benefits. Frequently mentioned were the risk of cost overruns, overstating of inflows and perhaps most mentioned of all, “the skyrocketing costs of recent Olympics have fuelled scepticism in potential host cities” (*The Globe and Mail*, October 10, 2018). Giovannetti (2018) highlighted that “since the Vancouver Olympics, the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi, Russia...were the most expensive ever...and the 2018 Winter Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea, also went over the bid’s budget” (*The Globe and Mail*, October 13, 2018). Sentiment seemed to suggest that the Olympics is becoming less financially sustainable each year, making it a “fiscal boondoggle” (*Calgary Herald*, November 25, 2017). One report even described how bid opponents from the Canadian Taxpayers Association feared the potential cost burden on Calgarian taxpayers so much that they publicly endorsed a competing bid from Stockholm (*Calgary Herald*, October 18, 2018).

Another unique costly factor that a Calgary 2026 Games would face was the need to host Olympic disciplines in different cities to avoid constructing new facilities. Although a multi-city bid might give other towns a chance to capture slices of the economic benefit pie, Spencer (2018) noted that this was no comfort for Calgarians, who would be the ones paying taxes to cover the increased security, travel and accommodation costs (*The Globe and Mail*, September 21, 2018).

---

**Theme 6: Community Benefits.** There were multiple community benefits cited that would be stimulated by a Calgary 2026 Games. One of the most common was the tangible benefit of new infrastructure, with new athlete accommodation making way for a city centre housing plan post-Olympics (*The Globe and Mail*, September 14, 2018). Furthermore, the construction of new sporting facilities and upgrading of existing sporting facilities would meet Calgary's growing need for accessible recreation in the community and give excellent facilities to the next generation of young athletes (*The Globe and Mail*, October 2, 2018).

On the intangible side of the spectrum, aspects like the feel-good factor of the Games, its ability to lift the community up in spirit and inspire an unbreakable sense of national pride were all commonly mentioned. Stinson (2018) stated that "it's a big, communal party...civic pride gets a horse-steroid injection" (*Calgary Herald*, September 13, 2018). However, Corbella (2018) noted that it's increasingly difficult to quantify such intangible benefits up against the escalating costs – "this is the softer side of a winning Olympic bid. Not the tangible stuff, but the intangibles of healthier, happier citizens. How do you put a figure on that?" (*Calgary Herald*, October 25, 2018). Potkins (2018) looked at it differently to conclude that the benefits to the wider community in previous editions of the Games, such as Vancouver, "went beyond the [intangible] party atmosphere that permeated the neighbourhoods and extended to the creation of new jobs and job skills training programs that benefited disadvantaged groups" (*Calgary Herald*, April 14, 2018).

**Theme 7: Degradation of the Olympic Brand.** It was well-documented in the discourse of newspapers that fewer cities were interested in hosting the Olympics at the time of Calgary's 2026 bid (*The Globe and Mail*, November 2, 2018). Wood (2017) even claimed that the only cities still willing to host were those with authoritarian governments due to the fact they are less reliant on public support, while democratic countries were increasingly rejecting the Olympics in hosting referenda (*Calgary Herald*, November 25, 2017). Many

---

writers and bid opponents were quick to justify the dwindling bidding interest, discussing the negative associations that are increasingly linked to the Games and their rights-owner, the IOC.

According to the anti-Olympic sentiment, soaring costs were making the Games more inaccessible with many previous hosts drowning in debt from Athens in 2004, Sochi in 2014, to as recently as PyeongChang 2018 (*The Globe and Mail*, October 10, 2018). Corbella (2018) said that not only costs have scared away bidders but “so have white-elephant venues, which still litter Rio... and empty venues also remain from PyeongChang” (*Calgary Herald*, September 25, 2018). Negative environmental consequences are difficult to ignore too, as Calgary 2026 “would not only imperil sensitive grizzly bear habitat around the ski hill [in Banff] but loosen future constraints on development” (*Calgary Herald*, January 24, 2018).

Additionally, the discourse emphasised the oft-unethical, corrupt, and elitist reputation surrounding the IOC (*The Globe and Mail*, September 14, 2018; *Calgary Herald*, February 9, 2018). The IOC had failed to deal with emerging issues that undermine the Olympics such as gender inequality, doping, and match fixing (*Calgary Herald*, November 20, 2017; *Calgary Herald*, July 3, 2018). These failures made many bid opponents wonder if the Olympic brand is still as positive as it once was and question if the IOC is a reliable partner. Some cities had been left in the lurch by the inert IOC so severely that Kelly (2018) sarcastically summated that “the IOC... pulls into town a few months ahead of an Olympic Games and expects that locals have already erected the big tent. It doesn’t even bring the elephants. All it does is staff the ticket booth” (*The Globe and Mail*, November 2, 2018).

### ***Reflecting on the Literature: A Comparison of Key Themes***

Collating all the relevant themes and the content within them, the discourse for each pre-referendum time period was examined side-by-side to uncover whether there were any

---



similar lines of discussion as well as any contrasting commentary. We identified many similar themes but also some thematic differences between Vancouver 2010 and Calgary 2026 pre-referendum discourse. This seems to reflect differing contexts and changing attitudes towards the Olympics across time. Themes that are constant are high costs, revenue opportunities on the international stage, bid politics and community benefits. This suggests that these themes are highly likely to keep being covered by the media and that they may have some importance in producing either supporters or opponents of bids (Chien et al., 2012; Lauermann, 2016). In the present study, beyond the country where both cities are located, a contextual similarity is that at the time of the bids, they were both facing economic downturns. Thus, the bid proponent narrative took advantage of this context to hold up the Olympics as an opportunity to transform the host city's destiny (*Vancouver Sun*, June 18, 2002; *Calgary Herald*, October 26, 2018). This finding could spark an intriguing new line of research, as it perhaps suggests that cities which are economically stable are less likely to have the intention of bidding for an Olympics. But those cities, where politicians are under fire, may be more likely to use the bid as an investment catalyst as well as a rallying point for increased political support.

Contextual differences were also apparent. Each bid faced different hosting challenges. Vancouver had a logistically disruptive new highway project and Calgary, a multi-city hosting proposal that created a big headache. Furthermore, both cities approached hosting with very different visions based on their Olympic pedigree. Jang (2018) claimed that the 2010 bid was more appealing for the city/region as “it made sense for Vancouver to successfully bid since it placed a spotlight on BC (British Columbia), which had not previously held a Games”, whereas there was “nothing to be gained in Calgary because it has already hosted it...and [it is] known internationally for winter sports” (*The Globe and Mail*, June 25, 2018). The emphasis on having a vision congruent to host city needs is something

---

that has been scarcely explored, only by Florek and Inch (2011) and more recently by Zhang et al. (2020). This finding further solidifies vision as a key part of mega-event planning and reinforces the host city-vision congruence matrix, as an important area for further research.

The reasons affecting willingness to host are also partly different when comparing the two prospective bids, such as the huge emphasis of Vancouver on creating a sporting legacy and promoting health through sport, something which was almost non-existent in Calgary's bid. Although community benefits communicated by the media were examined by Ritchie et al. (2010) and Chien et al. (2012), this finding suggests that the print media publicity around the sporting legacy of hosting the Olympics may have benefits for proponents. The evidence regarding a sport participation legacy reported to date is mixed. Some authors found that hosting the Olympics has not increased sport or physical activity participation (Bauman et al., 2021; Weed et al., 2015). Others have proposed that such legacy may happen, as they reported a positive relationship between actual programmes and policies developed in the context of hosting an Olympic Games and increased citizen frequency of participation post-Olympics (Kokolakakis et al., 2019; Potwarka & Wicker, 2020). The so-called trickle-down effect (TDE) suggests that, although unlikely to inspire sedentary people to get active, hosting Olympic Games can inspire active people to become even more active and the communication of the community benefits associated with this fact may well inspire more host city residents to support the Games in the future (Potwarka et al., 2021; Ramchandani et al. 2014). Thus, the news discourse associating the Olympics with sport participation may be effective in convincing people to support hosting the Games. This is another exciting area for further research.

A final key difference was the deterioration of the Olympic brand and the IOC's reputation over the period of 15-16 years between the two referendums. The discourse around Vancouver's bid did have some question marks over the IOC, but the Games were still highly

---

desirable in 2002/2003, during their bid process. That fact was made well known in the print media. However, since then, print media has frequently reported the financial woes of recent host cities and the Olympics are often presented in the media as a financially unsustainable event to host (Hippke and Krieger, 2015; Koba et al., 2021). The print media covering both Canadian bids struggled to communicate intangible benefits versus more obvious tangible ones (e.g., costs). Thus, an underexplored area of future research within the public opinion-news media paradigm is the application of the increasingly sophisticated Social Value concept, which attempts to put a tangible value on intangible benefits (Misener & Schulenkorf, 2016).

Bid opponents have exposed the IOC's continual struggle to establish itself as an ethical body and establish the Games as an event built on the foundation of integrity and fairness. The numerous print media citations of less interested host cities in 2017/2018, compared to two decades earlier, has increased negative perceptions surrounding the Games. Price and Tewksbury (1997) found that the ways in which the Olympic Games are portrayed or framed in the media over time could affect the public's point of view of hosting the Olympic Games. Konecke et al. (2016) pointed to the IOC's reputation in the print media as a key factor in the failed Munich 2018 referendum. The findings of the current study were able to trace that deterioration across time and reviewed how print media may influence public opinion by connecting the negative legacies and dwindling bidding interest in the Games to the overall degradation of the Olympic brand. It is worth noting that the differences in the print media themes above may also be due to the 15-year gap between the two pre-referenda time periods reviewed. Extrinsically led factors such as changes in Canadian lifestyles, social values, print media audiences and media consumption can also explain some of the differences (Hazari, 2018; Kassens-Noor & Lauermann, 2018; Waitt, 2003).

## **Limitations and Future Research**

---

The number of Olympic bids and the number of newspapers chosen to examine them can be considered limitations. The number of Olympic bids is actually limited by the inexistence of comparable bids from the same country. We identified Boston 2024 and LA 2024/2028 bids as a potential pair of comparable bids. However, LA did not conduct a public referendum. The option for a small number of newspapers came from our concerns to select comparable print media outlets. The Vancouver Sun and the Calgary Herald are comparable as they are both reliable sources of information and are the most popular newspapers in their cities. Adding other local newspapers might create a bias in terms of the tones or topics explored. We added the most popular newspaper in the country, The Globe and Mail, to minimise the limitation of having information from only two sources. Another possible limitation of this study is the fact that not a huge percentage of any city population reads newspapers anymore. This seems to be a consequence of social media distraction and other digital media (Zerba, 2011). Despite this limitation, we preferred to rely on established means of communication instead of dealing with social media problems, such as the use of robots to spread *fake news*. Still related to social media, another limitation of the study may be the print media context for the examination of Calgary 2026 news discourse. Due to the rise of the social media age, catalysed by Facebook's emergence in 2004, Calgary public opinion could also have been influenced by digital news media, unlike those citizens prior to the Vancouver referendum. Facebook, Instagram and other applications alongside the notion of *fake news* are interesting areas for future research on the news media-public opinion interface in the context of mega-event bidding.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

This study has examined further the news media-public opinion interface, contributing to sport communication research by applying the agenda-setting theory in the context of a mega-event-bid process. The pre-referendum time period during a bidding

---

process is a critical time when public opinion can be swayed. Exploring one of the key extrinsic factors that influence public opinion added value to existing mega-event bid literature. The analysis of print media frames showed that, based on tone and topic coverage in Canadian newspapers, a reader in a prospective host city was more likely to read a positively framed article prior to the successful Vancouver referendum and a negatively framed article prior to the unsuccessful Calgary referendum.

There are practical implications from the results to host cities and the IOC. It is vital for prospective host cities to establish an Olympic vision that is congruent to its needs. Host cities must also try to keep political agendas out of Olympic bids as much as possible, as any manoeuvrings are well-reported and may affect citizen willingness to support the Games. The promotion of health through sport as an Olympic theme is more associated with public support. Therefore, bid proponents would be wise to prioritise clear communication and effective policies of Olympic-induced possibilities regarding sporting legacy. Bid proponents should also be wary of how legacy and TDE is communicated in print media, considering mixed evidence so far. Furthermore, it appears important that there is transparent communication of intangible benefits so that the tangible costs can be counteracted in a fairer Games outlook. More research is still necessary on the area of intangible benefits driven by the Olympics, mainly concerning those long-term legacy benefits.

This study suggests that the IOC must strive to restore legitimacy and trust in the Olympic brand and the organisation itself because of numerous negative legacies for host cities reported in recent Games. The problem is not in what the print media has reported, but in the actions of the IOC and the effects of the Games. To restore its reputation, the IOC should consider improving their current practices by conceiving hosting cost reduction strategies to make the Games more financially and environmentally sustainable, enforcing stricter regulations to resolve issues such as doping and match fixing and, most importantly,

---

tackling human rights abuses in host cities/countries, which are one of the closest business partners of the IOC. Although it must be noted that the IOC have recently changed the host city selection process and conceptualised a recommendation road map called Agenda 2020+5 (IOC, 2021), it remains to be seen whether these measures can bring the necessary reputation-saving reform.

---

## References

Andranovich, G., & Burbank, M. J. (2011). Contextualizing olympic legacies. *Urban Geography*, 32(6), 823-844.

Andreff, W. (2012). The winner's curse: why is the cost of mega sporting events so often underestimated? In *International handbook on the economics of mega sporting events*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Baade, R. A., & Matheson, V. A. (2016). Going for the gold: The economics of the Olympics. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 30(2), 201-18.

Barclay, J. (2009). Predicting the Costs and Benefits of Mega-Sporting Events: Misjudgement of Olympic Proportions? *Economic affairs*, 29(2), 62-66.

Bason, T., & Grix, J. (2018). Planning to fail? Leveraging the Olympic bid. *Marketing intelligence & planning*.

Bauer, M. W. (2000). Classical content analysis: A review. *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound*, 131-151.

Bond, D., & Azmier, J. (2002, March 22). Arts grants key to luring global firms. *The Globe and Mail*, B8.

Braid, D. (2018, October 27). Braid: Federal cabinet votes more money than expected for 2026 Games. *The Calgary Herald*, Politics.

Bramham, D. (2002, March 2). Harcourt sees Olympics as a golden chance. *The Vancouver Sun*, B1.

---

Bramham, D. (2002, August 31). Battle rhetoric won't help Games bid: If Vancouver wants to win the right to host the 2010 Olympics, it should open the books. *The Vancouver Sun*, A3.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

Breakenridge, R. (2018, August 7). City can build infrastructure without Olympics; Avoid false dichotomy of comparing hosting Games with doing nothing. *The Calgary Herald*, A7.

Broudehoux, A. M. (2007). Spectacular Beijing: the conspicuous construction of an Olympic metropolis. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 29(4), 383–399.

Browning, P. (2003, February 3). Forum audience gets its say on Olympics: Participants in the mayor's forum on social sustainability of the 2010 Winter Olympics, held Saturday in Vancouver, have diverse opinions about whether the Games will benefit the city and its residents. *The Vancouver Sun*, B1.

Brunt, S. (2002, September 24). Sensible Switzerland may be on to something with Olympic vote. *The Globe and Mail*, S1.

Bauman, A. E., Kamada, M., Reis, R. S., Troiano, R. P., Ding, D., Milton, K., Murphy, N., & Hallal, P. C. (2021). An evidence-based assessment of the impact of the Olympic Games on population levels of physical activity. *The Lancet*, 398(10298), 456–464.

Chalip, L., Green, B. C., & Hill, B. (2003). Effects of sport event media on destination image and intention to visit. *Journal of sport management*, 17(3), 214-234.

---



Chang, I. Y., Crossman, J., Taylor, J., & Walker, D. (2011). One World, One Dream: A Qualitative Comparison of the Newspaper Coverage of the 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Games, *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 4(1), 26-49.

Chien, P. M., Ritchie, B. W., Shipway, R., & Henderson, H. (2012). I am having a dilemma: Factors affecting resident support of event development in the community. *Journal of Travel Research*, 51(4), 451-463.

Christie, J. (2002, February 8). Turning winter into gold; Canada is sending a large and powerful team to the Salt Lake Winter Olympics in expectations of a record-setting medal haul. *The Globe and Mail*, O1.

Christie, J. (2002, April 8). Ottawa sets new sights for sport; Policy targets women, aboriginals,; while phys ed to make comeback. *The Globe and Mail*, S6.

Coates, D., & Wicker, P. (2015). Why were voters against the 2022 Munich Winter Olympics in a referendum. *International Journal of Sport Finance*, 10(3), 267–283.

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Erlbaum.

Corbella, L. (2018, September 25). Nenshi needs to be more like ralph; Transparency should be the watchword for the 2026 Winter Olympics bid process. *The Calgary Herald*, A5.

Corbella, L. (2018, October 25). Corbella: The numbers and the human stories say Yes to Calgary 2026 Olympic bid. *The Calgary Herald*, Columnists.

Deccio, C., & Baloglu, S. (2002). Nonhost community resident reactions to the 2002 Winter Olympics: The spillover impacts. *Journal of travel research*, 41(1), 46-56.

---

Florek, M., & Insch, A. (2011). When fit matters: Leveraging destination and event image congruence. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 20(3-4), 265-286.

Gerson, J. (2017, November 20). Calgary's Olympic bid? Economists say run away - fast. *Calgary Herald*, N3.

Giesen, N., & Hallmann, K. (2018). The impact of the perceived image and trust in the International Olympic Committee on perceptions of the Olympic games in Germany. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 10(3), 509–523.

Giovannetti, J. (2018, October 13). Alberta leaves Calgary, Ottawa with an Olympic-sized tab. *The Globe and Mail*, A10.

Gitlin, T. (2003). *The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making and unmaking of the new left*. Univ of California Press.

Golan, G., & Wanta, W. (2001). Second-level agenda setting in the New Hampshire primary: A comparison of coverage in three newspapers and public perceptions of candidates. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 78(2), 247-259.

Gursoy, D., Yolal, M., Ribeiro, M. A., & Panosso Netto, A. (2017). Impact of trust on local residents' mega-event perceptions and their support. *Journal of Travel Research*, 56(3), 393-406.

Gursoy, D. and Kendall, K.W., 2006. Hosting mega events: Modeling locals' support. *Annals of tourism research*, 33(3), pp.603-623.

Hall, C. M. (2006). Urban entrepreneurship, corporate interests and sports mega-events: the thin policies of competitiveness within the hard outcomes of neoliberalism. *The sociological review*, 54(2\_suppl), 59-70.

---

Hazari, S. (2018). Investigating social media consumption, sports enthusiasm, and gender on sponsorship outcomes in the context of Rio Olympics. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*.

Hiller, H. H., & Wanner, R. A. (2011). Public opinion in host Olympic cities: The case of the 2010 Vancouver Winter Games. *Sociology*, 45(5), 883-899.

Hiller, H. H., & Wanner, R. A. (2018). Public opinion in Olympic cities: From bidding to retrospection. *Urban Affairs Review*, 54(5), 962–993.

Hippke, A.-S., & Krieger, J. (2015). Public opposition against the Olympic games: Challenges and considerations in light of Hamburg's 2024 Olympic bid. *Journal of Qualitative Research in Sports Studies*, 9(1), 163–176.

Horne, J. (2018). Understanding the denial of abuses of human rights connected to sports mega-events. *Leisure Studies*, 37(1), 11-21.

Hudes, S. (2018, October 23). Taxpayers Federation goes to IKEA to show support for Sweden's 2026 Olympic Bid. *Calgary Herald*.

Hutcheson, S. (2018, October 26). Opinion: 2026 Olympic bid is Calgary's best opportunity. *The Calgary Herald*, Columnists.

IOC. (2019). Evolution of the revolution: IOC transforms future Olympic Games elections. (2019, June 26). <https://olympics.com/ioc/news/evolution-of-the-revolution-ioc-transforms-future-olympic-games-elections>

IOC (2021). IOC Session approves Olympic Agenda 2020+5 as the strategic roadmap to 2025. (2021, March 12). <https://olympics.com/ioc/news/ioc-session-approves-olympic-agenda-2020-5-as-the-strategic-roadmap-to-2025>

---

Jackson, D., Thorsen, E., & Wring, D. (2016). *EU Referendum Analysis 2016: Media, Voters and the Campaign*. The Centre for the Study of Journalism, Culture and Community.

Jang, R. (2018, June 25). COC approves Calgary's plans for 2026 Olympics bid. *The Globe and Mail*, A4.

Karamichas, J. (2013). *The Olympic Games and the environment*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Kassens-Noor, E. (2020). The Los Angeles Olympic Games: Planning Legacies BT - Los Angeles and the Summer Olympic Games: Planning Legacies. E. Kassens-Noor (ed.). (pp. 1–60). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38553-8\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38553-8_1)

Kassens-Noor, E. (2019). "Failure to adjust": Boston's bid for the 2024 Olympics and the difficulties of learning Olympic wisdom. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 51(8), 1684-1702.

Kassens-Noor, E., & Lauermann, J. (2018). Mechanisms of policy failure: Boston's 2024 Olympic bid. *Urban Studies*, 55(15), 3369-3384.

Kaufmann, B. (2018, January 24). Alpine venue hurdle to Olympic bid; IOC officials deem legacy facilities, including Dome, suitable for Games. *The Calgary Herald*, A1.

Kelly, C. (2018, November 2). Opinion: It's time the IOC started helping hosts to put on its Olympian parties. *The Globe and Mail*, B13.

Kerr, G. (2003, January 11). Building heroes goal of new CEO. *The Globe and Mail*, S7.

Kim, A., Choi, M., & Kaplanidou, K. (2015). The role of media in enhancing people's perception of hosting a mega sport event: The case of Pyeongchang's winter Olympics bids. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 8(1), 68-86.

---

Kim, S. H., Scheufele, D. A., & Shanahan, J. (2002). Think about it this way: Attribute agenda-setting function of the press and the public's evaluation of a local issue. *Journalism & mass communication quarterly*, 79(1), 7-25.

Kiousis, S. (2011). Agenda-setting and attitudes: exploring the impact of media salience on perceived salience and public attitude strength of us presidential candidates from 1984 to 2004. *Journalism Studies*, 12(3), 359-374.

Koba, T., Gong, H., Ross, W. J., & Grady, J. (2021). Sustainable Olympic Development: A Proposed Benchmark for Managing Economic Outcomes. *Journal of Global Sport Management*, 6(1), 49-69.

Kokolakakis, T., Lera-López, F., & Ramchandani, G. (2019). Did London 2012 deliver a sports participation legacy?. *Sport Management Review*, 22(2), 276-287.

Könecke, T., Schubert, M., & Preuß, H. (2016). (N) Olympia in Germany? An analysis of the referendum against Munich 2022. *Sportwissenschaft*, 46(1), 15-24.

Lauermann, J. (2016). Temporary projects, durable outcomes: Urban development through failed Olympic bids? *Urban Studies*, 53(9), 1885-1901.

Lauermann, J., & Vogelpohl, A. (2017). Fragile growth coalitions or powerful contestations? Cancelled Olympic bids in Boston and Hamburg. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 49(8), 1887-1904.

Lee, J. (2003, February 20). No coalition leader breaks the mould: Spokesman Chris Shaw is an army reservist and anti-war protester. *The Vancouver Sun*, A5.

Leonardsen, D. (2007). Planning of mega events: Experiences and lessons. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 8(1), 11-30.

---

Lu, Q., Mihalik, B. J., Heere, B., Meng, F., & Fairchild, A. (2019). Media effect on resident attitudes toward an Olympic bid. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 29, 66–75.

Mackay, C. (2012). “Back the Bid” The London Olympic Bid Committee and the Sun Newspaper. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 36(4), 410-421.

Maennig, W. (2017). Public referenda and public opinion on Olympic Games. *Hamburg Contemporary Economic Discussions*, 57, 1-23.  
[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2989536](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2989536)

Maki, A. (2018, October 10). Calgary’s Games bid accepted by the IOC ahead of plebiscite. *The Globe and Mail*, B13.

Martens, B., Aguiar, L., Gomez-Herrera, E., & Mueller-Langer, F. (2018). The digital transformation of news media and the rise of disinformation and fake news.

Martin, A., & Barth, K. (2013). Resident perceptions of sport mega-events: A host community perspective on the forthcoming commonwealth games in Glasgow 2014. *Event Management*, 17(1), 13-26.

Mason, G. (2002, December 16). Olympics bring more than glory: 2010 Winter Games would bring a renewed sense of unity to B.C. *The Vancouver Sun*, D1.

Mason, G. (2018, September 14). Why Calgary could go for gold in an Olympic bid. *The Globe and Mail*, A13.

Matheson, V. (2006). Mega-Events: The effect of the world’s biggest sporting events on local, regional, and national economies.

Matheson, V. A., Schwab, D., & Koval, P. (2018). Corruption in the bidding, construction and organisation of mega-events: An analysis of the Olympics and World Cup.

---

In *The Palgrave Handbook on the economics of manipulation in sport* (pp. 257-278).

Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public opinion quarterly*, 36(2), 176-187.

McCombs, M. & Estrada, G. (1997). The news media and the pictures in our heads. In S. Iyengar & R. Reeves (ed.), *Do the media govern?* (pp. 237--247). Sage.

McCombs, M., & Valenzuela, S. (2020). *Setting the agenda: Mass media and public opinion*. John Wiley & Sons.

McMartin, P. (2002, February 7). We need the Olympics? Run that by me again. *The Vancouver Sun*, Column.

Mickleburgh, R. (2003, February 22). Olympic battle tearing Vancouver ring from ring; Residents will vote today on whether they support city's bid for the 2010 Games. *The Globe and Mail*, A4.

Mickleburgh, R. (2003, January 17). Vancouver Olympic bid wins auditor's approval. *The Globe and Mail*, A8.

Mickleburgh, R. (2003, February 22). Olympic battle tearing Vancouver ring from ring; Residents will vote today on whether they support city's bid for the 2010 Games. *The Globe and Mail*, A4.

Misener, L., & Schulenkorf, N. (2016). Rethinking the social value of sport events through an asset-based community development (ABCD) perspective. *Journal of Sport Management*, 30(3), 329-340.

Morse, E. (2003, January 6). Bucks for pucks? We've been there. *The Globe and Mail*, A11.

---

Müller, M. (2015). The mega-event syndrome: Why so much goes wrong in mega-event planning and what to do about it. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 81(1), 6-17.

Nelson, C. (2018, February 9). Tokyo governor believes her city needs Olympics; Calgary needs to make up its mind, one way or the other. *The Calgary Herald*, A9.

Niven, B. (2018, November 3). Games' Impact Felt For Years; Olympics would do wonderful things for Calgary, says Bob Niven. *The Calgary Herald*, A15.

Palmer, V. (2002, June 18). Olympics boosterism scares up Sacred ghosts. *The Vancouver Sun*, A14.

Pappas, N. (2014). Hosting mega events: Londoners' support of the 2012 Olympics. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 21, 10-17.

Paulsson, A., & Alm, J. (2020). Passing on the torch: Urban governance, mega-event politics and failed olympic bids in Oslo and Stockholm. *City, Culture and Society*, 20, 100325.

Poole, J. (2002, December 20). Arts, culture and promoting peace all part of Olympic mix. *Vancouver Sun*, A23.

Potkins, M. (2018, April 14). Late campaign to 'resuscitate' Olympic dream in full swing. *The Calgary Herald*, A4.

Potwarka, L., Ramchandani, G., Castellanos-García, P., Kokolakis, T., Teare, G., & Jiang, K. (2021). Beyond the host nation: an investigation of trickle-down effects in the 'Hometowns' of Canadian athletes who competed at the London 2012 Olympic Games. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 1-20.

---



Potwarka, L. R., & Wicker, P. (2020). Conditions under which trickle-down effects occur: A realist synthesis approach. *Sustainability*, 13(1), 69.

Pound, R. (2003, February 12). Crunching the Olympic numbers: Former Olympian from B.C. cites billions of reasons to support the magical Games. *The Vancouver Sun*, Column.

Preuss, H., & Arne Solberg, H. (2006). Attracting major sporting events: The role of local residents. *European sport management quarterly*, 6(4), 391-411.

Price, V., & Tewksbury, D. (1997). News values and public opinion: A theoretical account of media priming and framing. *Progress in communication sciences*, 173-212.

Ramchandani, G., Kokolakis, T., & Coleman, R. (2014). Factors influencing the inspirational effect of major sports events on audience sport participation behaviour. *World Leisure Journal*, 56(3), 220-235.

Ritchie, B. W., Shipway, R., & Chien, P. M. (2010). The role of the media in influencing residents' support for the 2012 Olympic Games. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*.

Rocha, C. M. (2020). Temporal Variations in the Relationship Between Legacies and Support: A Longitudinal Case Study in Rio 2016 Olympic Games. *Journal of Sport Management*, 34(2), 130–146. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2019-0039>

Rocha, C. M., & Fink, J. S. (2017). Attitudes toward attending the 2016 Olympic Games and visiting Brazil after the games. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 22, 17–26. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2017.01.001>

---

Rocha, C. M., & Xiao, Z. (2022). Sport Mega-Events and Displacement of Host Community Residents: A Systematic Review. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*, 3, 393–409. <https://www.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fspor.2021.805567>

Rowe, D. (2012). The bid, the lead-up, the event and the legacy: Global cultural politics and hosting the Olympics. *The British journal of sociology*, 63(2), 285-305.

Rumbolt, R. (2018, July 3). Olympic lobby groups get set to face off ahead of plebiscite; Anti-Games campaign asking Calgarians where potential funds should go instead. *Calgary Herald*, A3.

Sandler, J. (2002, June 27). Aboriginal group complains about bid for 2010 Olympics: Coalition delivers formal objection to plans for Whistler-area developments to IOC offices in Switzerland. *The Vancouver Sun*, B4.

Sant, S.-L., & Mason, D. (2015). Framing event legacy in a prospective host city: Managing Vancouver's Olympic bid. *Journal of Sport Management*, 29(1), 42–56

Scheu, A., & Preuss, H. (2018). Residents' perceptions of mega sport event legacies and impacts. *German journal of exercise and sport research*, 48(3), 376-386.

Shaw, C. A. (2008). *Five ring circus: Myths and realities of the Olympic Games*. New Society Publishers.

Shimizu, S. (2014). Tokyo-Bidding for the Olympics and the Discrepancies of Nationalism. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 31(6), 601-617.

Spencer, D. (2018, September 21). Calgary's Whistler ski-jump plan pilloried; The IOC has given its approval for the 2026 bid to reuse the 2010 venue, but city officials in Alberta aren't so sure. *The Globe and Mail*, B13.

---

Stinson, S. (2018, September 13). Calgary bid designed to avoid post-Olympic Games sadness. *The Calgary Herald*, B14.

Strong, G. (2018, November 2). With key council vote cleared, Olympic vote in home stretch. *The Globe and Mail*, B18.

Sullivan, P. (2002, September 11). Whistler hasn't got a chance. *The Globe and Mail*, A11.

Tait, C. (2017, September 20). Calgary eyes multicity bid for Olympics; Officials to consider including Edmonton and Whistler in 2026 Winter Games pitch as reports fuel debate over economic benefits. *The Globe and Mail*, A3.

Terrazzano, F. (2018, October 27). Opinion: Don't toss these Calgary 2026 realities to the side. *The Calgary Herald*, Columnists.

The Olympian task ahead for Calgarians. (2018, November 2). *The Globe and Mail*, A12.

Tinsley, H. E., & Weiss, D. J. (1975). Interrater reliability and agreement of subjective judgments. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 22(4), 358.

Waitt, G. (2003). Social impacts of the Sydney Olympics. *Annals of tourism research*, 30(1), 194-215.

Ward, D., & Daniels, A. (2002, November 19). MPs challenge plan for drug sites: 'Don't do it,' Vancouver mayor-elect warned on two issues on his agenda: Olympics: Referendum too risky, bid chairman and businesses say. *Vancouver Sun*, A1.

Watt, P. (2013). 'It's not for us' Regeneration, the 2012 Olympics and the gentrification of East London. *City*, 17(1), 99-118.

---

Weed, M., Coren, E., Fiore, J., Wellard, I., Chatziefstathiou, D., Mansfield, L., & Dowse, S. (2015). The Olympic Games and raising sport participation: a systematic review of evidence and an interrogation of policy for a demonstration effect. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 15(2), 195–226.

We're on the right track: Campbell: B.C. Liberals are making progress, premier argues in televised speech to province, excerpted below. (2003, February 13). *Vancouver Sun*, A21.

White, M. D., & Marsh, E. E. (2006). Content analysis: A flexible methodology. *Library Trends*, 55(1), 22–45.

Whitson, D., & Horne, J. (2006). Underestimated costs and overestimated benefits? Comparing the outcomes of sports mega-events in Canada and Japan. *The Sociological Review*, 54(2\_suppl), 73-89.

Wicker, P., & Coates, D. (2018). Flame goes out: Determinants of individual support at the 2024 Hamburg games referendum. *Contemporary Economic Policy*, 36(2), 302–317.

Wicker, P., Whitehead, J. C., Mason, D. S., & Johnson, B. K. (2017). Public support for hosting the Olympic summer games in Germany: The CVM approach. *Urban Studies*, 54(15), 3597–3614.

Wild, T. C., Koziel, J., Anderson-Baron, J., Hathaway, J., McCurdy, A., Xu, X., ... & Hyshka, E. (2019). Media coverage of harm reduction, 2000–2016: A content analysis of tone, topics, and interventions in Canadian print news. *Drug and alcohol dependence*, 205, 107599.

Willnat, L., & Zhu, J. H. (1996). Newspaper coverage and public opinion in Hong Kong: A time-series analysis of media priming. *Political Communication*, 13(2), 231-246.

---

Wood, J. (2017, November 25). Kenney cautious on Games bid. *The Calgary Herald*, A2.

Zerba, A. (2011). Young adults' reasons behind avoidances of daily print newspapers and their ideas for change. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 88(3), 597-614.

Zhang, Y., Kim, E., & Xing, Z. (2020). Image congruence between sports event and host city and its impact on attitude and behavior intention. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*.

Zhou, Y., & Ap, J. (2009). Residents' perceptions towards the impacts of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. *Journal of Travel Research*, 48, 78–91.  
doi:10.1177/0047287508328792

Zimbalist, A. (2017). *Rio 2016: Olympic myths, hard realities*. Brookings Institution Press.

---

Table 1

*Examples of coding process adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006)*

Highlighted phrase	Initial code	Category	Theme
<p>“We need the kinds of events the Olympics do, where we will create a whole new set of values around activity”  <i>(Vancouver Sun, February 3, 2003).</i></p>	Olympics...create...values around activity	Promotion of health through sport as an activity	Community Benefits
<p>“But if winning means fudging figures and misleading people ...about the true costs then who wants the Games anyway”  <i>(Vancouver Sun, August 31, 2002)?</i></p>	Fudging figures and misleading people	Bid manipulation	Bid politics

Table 2

*Print media coverage of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic bid (period: 4/02/2002 - 22/02/2003)*

	Vancouver Sun	The Globe and Mail
Total articles	195	48
Type		
Report (n)	57% (112)	75% (36)
Opinion (n)	43% (83)	25% (12)
Tone		
Positive (n)	41% (80)	31% (15)
Neutral/Balanced (n)	34% (66)	44% (21)
Negative (n)	25% (49)	25% (12)
Topics		
10 Most frequently mentioned per number of citations (n)	Infrastructure gains (52) Investment (50) High Costs (45) Promotion of sport as activity for health (41) Money should be spent elsewhere (36) Civic pride (30) Tourism boost (27) Bid politics (24) Expo inspiration (24) A great Olympic Vision (20)	Promotion of Sport as an activity for health (19) Infrastructure Gains (16) Huge costs (14) Investment (11) Bid politics (8) Civic Pride (7) IOC Issues (5) A great Olympic vision (5) Employment (5) Timely tonic (4)
Number of Olympic benefits cited in top 10 most mentioned topics	7	7

Table 3

*Print Media Coverage of the Calgary 2026 Olympic Bid (period: 20/11/2017- 12/11/2018)*

	Calgary Sun	The Globe and Mail
Total articles	204	36
Type		
Report (n)	68% (138)	83% (30)
Opinion (n)	32% (66)	17% (6)
Tone		
Positive (n)	19% (39)	17% (6)
Neutral/Balanced (n)	43% (87)	44% (16)
Negative (n)	38% (78)	39% (14)
Topics		
10 Most frequently mentioned per number of citations (n)	High costs (54) Infrastructure gains (34) Wrong timing (32) Investment (29) IOC reputation (29) Lack of transparency (27) Bad Bid Management (25) Lack of transparency (25) Overstated benefits (24) Positive legacy of 88+ (23)	High Costs (12) Cost-saving possibilities (12) Positive legacy of 88+ (10) Lack of transparency (8) Infrastructure gains (8) Negative Legacies (8) Civic pride (8) Multi-city struggles (7) Deteriorating IOC Reputation (7) Less bidding interest (7)
Number of Olympic benefits cited in top 10 most mentioned topics	3	4