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Dubai Wins: A Content Analysis of Global Media Coverage of the 2020 World Exposition Bidding Process Using Nation Branding Theory

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DUBAI WINS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF GLOBAL MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE 2020 WORLD EXPOSITION BIDDING PROCESS USING NATION BRANDING THEORY

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Abstract. The international selection process for the 2020 World Exposition, which included votes of delegates from 168 nations, resulted in the emergence of five bid finalist cities including Sao Paulo, Brazil; Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Ayutthaya, Thailand; Yekaterinburg, Russia, and Izmir, Turkey. Dubai was the ultimate winner in the Expo 2020 competition. This research, drawing on nation branding theory, sought to examine how each of these competing cities fared in global media coverage of their efforts to secure the bid in the months leading up to the final selection. A quantitative content analysis of 1,550 mentions of Expo 2020 and any of the five bid finalist cities published from 30 sources in 22 nations was conducted. Overall tone of the mentions of the five cities was strongly positive, with more than two-thirds mentioning positive attributes of the cities. Less than one-third was neutral, and less than 2% were negative. The bid process itself (72.9%), infrastructure (6.6%), and politics (4.1%) were the most common topics overall. Dubai was mentioned most frequently (48.8%) and most positively (80.2%). Dubai won the bid and the media coverage competition.

INTRODUCTION

The international selection process for the 2020 World Exposition, which included votes of delegates from 168 nations, resulted in the emergence of five bid finalist cities including Sao Paulo, Brazil; Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Ayutthaya, Thailand; Yekaterinburg, Russia and Izmir, Turkey. Just as cities clamor to win the rights to be the host cities for the Olympics or the FIFA World Cup in hopes of garnering positive media attention, increased tourism revenue, and civic and national pride, cities and nations view World Expositions as another highly viable, visible method of gaining international exposure, enhanced revenue streams and recognition as important participants globally. This is especially relevant among quickly developing nations who seek their place in the global spotlight. The ultimate winner in the Expo 2020 competition was Dubai, United Arab Emirates, a major player on the world stage.

This research study, drawing on the theoretical perspective of nation branding, sought to examine how the five bid finalist cities were covered in global media in the months leading up to the final selection. A quantitative content analysis of 1,550 mentions of Expo 2020 and any of the five bid finalist cities was conducted to examine how each of these competing cities fared in global media coverage of their efforts to secure the bid. The body of knowledge on nation branding clearly points to the fact that cities and nations are actively involved in widespread

efforts to define their brand identities and accomplish positive brand positioning. Nation branding is a prism through which the operationalization of these efforts can be conceptualized, and content analysis of media output from a broad spectrum of global sources, the method employed in the present study, is a good measure of the efficacy of branding efforts of cities and nations seeking to gain the Expo 2020 bid.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nation branding research is approached primarily from theoretical, critical, and case study perspectives. This literature review encompasses topics such as country reputation branding, national identity, commercial nationalism, destination branding, and nation branding. A spectrum of cases about Qatar, Romania, Turkey, Brazil, South Africa, and Korea are discussed.

Gastrodiplomacy and social media nation branding with Twitter and Second Life are covered as specialized studies of nation branding.

Yang, Shin, Lee and Wrigley, (2008) added new variables to a multi-dimensional model, which grew from organizational reputation research, for measuring the reputation of a nation, South Korea, among Americans. Specifically, political appeal was added to emotional, physical, financial, leadership, cultural, and global appeals. Further, individual experience was

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subdivided into two dimensions. Personal experience included travel, use of products or services, cultural events, and personal contact with international public. Second hand experience included word-of-mouth and mediated experience. Findings were that individual experience with South Korea resulted in enhanced reputation when mediated experience served to increase awareness. Positive reputation was associated with exposure to online media, personal communication, national TV, national newspapers, and libraries.

Content analysis of global media coverage of the five finalist Expo 2020 bid cities used in the present study, is a measure of media sentiment toward the cities vying to win the Expo 2020 bid. By extension, the media coverage of these cities may cultivate impressions of the viability, feasibility and desirability of these cities to host the 2020 Expo among the voting delegates from the 168 nations.

In a critical analysis Volcic and Andrejevic (2011) conceptualized nation branding as commercial nationalism.

"Nation branding is decidedly not post-political insofar as it opens up new spaces for the commercial exploitation of the politicalfor the use of nationalism to sell a range of cultural products and to build brand loyalty p. 612)."

Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, which ultimately won the Expo 2020 bid, is a prime example of the 'enterprise state,' blending national and commercial ownership and interests including the media and the state-supported news agency, WAM. Kaneva (2011) performed a meta-analysis of 186 studies from 1997 to 2009 and developed a conceptual map of nation banding research with continuums of consensus-dissensus and essentialism-constructivism. This researcher called for nation branding research from critical theoretical perspectives.

Aronczyk (2009) explained nation branding as a purposeful effort to enhance reputation globally by bringing in nation-branding consultants working with government officials, business leaders, civic leaders, and citizens to build a national identity. Dubai, which boasts the tallest buildings in the world, the Burj Khalifa, the iconic Burj Al Arab hotel, and the expansive Palm Jumeriah Islands among a myriad of first and biggest projects, organized a well-organized, concerted effort, drawing on the expertise of several public relations, advertising, and marketing firms in the UAE to assist in the efforts to secure the Expo 2020 bid. Bobovnicky (2011) examined the impact of the brand image of Slovenia among tourists from the Czech Republic and found that a positive brand image perception effect on the intent to revisit Slovenia was as strong as satisfaction with the visit in the first place and that people who have a positive brand image were more willing to recommend the destination to others. In the present study, Dubai had overwhelmingly positive

coverage of its 2020 Expo bid compared to the other four bid finalist cities, which may have influenced the votes of delegates from 168 nations positively toward Dubai.

Bolin and Stahlberg (2015), in a direct response to Kaneva's call for critical research, analyzed the role of media in nation branding. In an analysis of a nation branding campaign in Ukraine, they concluded that the primary agents were political administrators, branding consultants, and corporations. The fourth agent they identified were the media corporations themselves. The first three agents act upon the media to accomplish their goals, but the media corporations also possess agency in the nation branding process. However, the authors point out that CNN and the BBC don't act out of loyalty to the nation; their primary motive is profit. However, in Dubai and the rest of the UAE, media corporations are often joint ventures of the government and corporations, and the UAE news agency, WAM, is largely state owned and controlled. This may account for the overwhelmingly positive media coverage of Dubai in the Expo 2020 bid process across multiple information sources. In the present study, there was strong evidence of highly positive coverage of a bid finalist city when the information source was within the same nation as the bid city.

Nation branding case studies tend to focus on strengths and weaknesses of campaigns. Viosca, Bergiel and Balsmeier, (2006) offered recommendations for South Africa including creation of a brand for the nation, integration of the public and private sector and promotion of the brand internally.

Al-Ghazzi and Kraidy (2013) outlined how Turkey has used Turkish television dramas to build better relations with the Arab world utilizing soft power, public diplomacy, and nation branding in its efforts.

Kaneva and Popescu (2014) studied the Romanian government's efforts to correct misperceptions of Romanians living abroad in other European countries.

Contrary to the intended outcome, the authors concluded that "...the purge of the Roma from their construction of Romanian-ness ..." (p. 516) failed due to reinforced racial stereotypes.

International media coverage of Brazil, which hosted the FIFA World Cups in 1950 and 2014, was analyzed by Buarque (2015). He found that in 2014, media coverage of Brazil was 47% negative, opposed to 20% in 1950. In 2014, the most common topics were politics (54%) and culture (28%); in 1950 they were culture (38%) and exports (25%). Stereotypes of social unrest/protests (32.5%), passion for football (32%), corruption/cup expenses (21%), and carnival/party/samba (13%) dominated the coverage in 2014; in 1950, only passion for football (21%) rose above 2%. The sheer volume of stories increased ninefold to 3,733 in the five international newspapers analyzed.

King (2008) performed a content analysis of media coverage of Qatar in 70 newspapers from 18 nations. A total of 14,244 articles mentioning Qatar were published from 2006-2007. He analyzed 706 mentions of Qatar in a random sample of 400 newspaper articles. Results showed that 92.1% of the mentions of Qatar in Western newspapers were neutral or positive and 95.6% in Eastern nations were neutral or positive. Placement of the Qatar brand in stories was measured. Qatar landed on section fronts 4.7% in Western newspapers, but never in Eastern newspapers. Qatar was included in prominent story locations such as headlines, in the lead paragraph or paired with photos or graphics 9.7% in the West and 6.1% in the East. The most frequent topics covered were sports, population/geographic facts, and economics.

Terrorism/war/violence and the Al Jazeera television network, based in Qatar, were the least frequent topics. The methodology in this research on Qatar was the basis for the present study on coverage of the Expo 2020 bid process. Specialized nation branding research is represented by a study on food in the Catalonian region of Spain. Vackimes (2013) explored how food culture and its attendant elites used in the production of culture in nation branding campaigns are juxtaposed against high levels of unemployment and hunger in the very region that produced the legendary gastronomic celebrities.

Zhang (2015) compared gastrodiplomacy campaigns across Asia (Japan, Malaysia, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand) and Latin America (Peru). The most common themes or frames were "…mysticism, exoticism, naturalness, and healthiness (p. 568)". Such campaigns are strategic in nature. Korea's $77 million campaign was

"…aimed at quadrupling the number of Korean restaurants in the world, making Korean food into one of the top five favorite ethnic cuisines, expanding the Korean food industry worldwide, and establishing Korean culinary courses in the world's top culinary schools (pp. 3-4)."

Another specialized form of nation branding research centers on social media technology. Christensen (2013) examined Sweden's innovative use of Twitter in its nation-branding efforts. The @Sweden project featured a different citizen serving as a curator each week with no censorship and no restrictions. The campaign generated widespread global media coverage, however the campaign managers did implement specific guidelines for curators to follow after controversial tweets were published. The ultimate conclusion was that the innovative use of Twitter as a nation-branding tool, which helped define Sweden as a modern, progressive nation, was the greatest achievement of the project. This represents McLuhanism at its core. Bengtsson (2011) studied Sweden's virtual embassy in Second Life, a huge

virtual world, and found that the international publicity value earned through the unique approach to nation branding was the strongest achievement. The virtual embassy featured Swedish architecture, synthetic furniture from Ikea, and recipes for traditional Swedish food.

The present study expands upon knowledge about nation branding by examining global media coverage of the five finalist bid cities in five different nations by more than 30 sources in 22 nations. The following research questions guided the study:

Research Questions

RQ1: What was the most frequent tone of the overall coverage of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities?

RQ2: What was the overall frequency of favorable story placement of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities?

RQ3: What was the overall frequency of favorable page placement of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities?

RQ4: Which topics were most frequent overall in coverage of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities?

RQ5: Which of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities gained the highest frequency of coverage?

RQ6: Which of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities had the highest frequency of negative, neutral or positive tone?

RQ7: Which of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities had the highest frequency of favorable story placement?

RQ8: Which of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities had the highest frequency of favorable page placement?

RQ9/ Which topics were most frequent for each of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities?

RQ10: How did the nation in which the source was published affect the tone of the overall coverage of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities?

RQ11: How did the nation in which the source was published affect the tone of the coverage in each of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities?

RQ12: If another of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities was mentioned in the story, what effect did this have on tone?

METHODOLOGY

To address the research questions, a quantitative content analysis of global media coverage of the Expo 2020 bid process was performed. The unit of analysis was any mention of Expo 2020 and any of the five bid finalist cities including Sao Paulo, Brazil; Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Ayutthaya, Thailand; Yekaterinburg, Russia and Izmir, Turkey. The analysis included stories published from Jan. 1, 2010 until Oct. 31, 2013 in more than 30 sources in 22 nations indexed in the Lexis/Nexis database. The Expo 2020 winning city was announced in November 2013;

the analysis cut-off date was Oct. 31 to control for increased coverage of the winning city, Dubai, after it was awarded the bid to host Expo 2020. A limitation of the research was the inclusion of only English language stories in the Lexis/Nexis database.

Sources were broadly based from print, online, broadcast, news wire services, public relations wire services and national news agencies. Four coders achieved 90 percent agreement or better on intercoder reliability on all variables. Independent variables were the City that was the primary subject of the story and the Nation in which the story was published. Nation was recoded into Continents and East/West region of the world. Dependent variables were:

Tone

The overall tone of the story toward the bid city that was the subject of the story (negative, neutral or positive).

Story Placement

Where the name of the bid city that was the subject of the story was placed in the story (headline, lead, with photo or graphic, or body). Placement of the brand, in this case the name of the city, in the headline, lead or with a photo or graphic is considered more favorable than placement in the body of the story because these sections of a story have higher readership.

Page Placement

The page where the story was placed (front page, section front, or inside page). Placement of the brand on the front page or a section front also commands more attention from media consumers and is also considered more favorable placement than on an inside page from a branding perspective.

Topic

The primary topic associated with the bid city that was the subject of the story. Fourteen topics were included in the analysis. A control variable was whether another bid city was mentioned in the story (yes or no). Identification variables included the source of the story and the date of publication.

RESULTS

The research findings show interesting patterns overall and fairly strong differences among the coverage of the city that won the bid, Dubai, and the four other bid finalist cities.

RQ1: What was the most frequent tone of the overall coverage of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities?

TABLE 1
Overall Tone

Tone	Frequency	Percent
negative	26	1.7
neutral	457	29.5
positive	1067	68.8

N= 1,550

Overall tone of the mentions of the five Expo 2020 finalist bid cities was strongly positive, with more than two-thirds mentioning positive attributes of the cites along with information about the Expo 2020 bid.

Less than one-third was neutral, and less than 2 percent were negative.

RQ2: What was the overall frequency of favorable story placement of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities?

TABLE 2
Overall Story Placement

Story Placement	Frequency	Percent
Body	1148	74.1
Lead	251	16.2
Headline	151	9.7

N= 1,550

Almost three-fourths of the mentions landed in the body of the story, while one-fourth landed in the more favorable locations, the headline and the lead. From a branding perspective, this suggests that overall, the five Expo 2020 finalist bid cities were fairly successful at gaining preferred locations in the story that are more highly read by media consumers.

RQ3: What was the overall frequency of favorable page placement of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities?

TABLE 3
Overall Page Placement

Page Placement	Frequency	Percent
Inside page	824	53.2
Front page	1	0.1
N/A	725	46.8

N= 1,550

The five Expo 2020 finalist bid cities failed to gain prominent page placement with only one of the cities landing on the front page of a publication. This measure only applies to print publications and not the other sources which explains the high number of not applicable cases.

RQ4: Which topics were most frequent overall in coverage of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities?

TABLE 4
Overall Topics

Topic	Frequency	Percent
The bid process	1130	72.9
Infrastructure	102	6.6
Politics	64	4.1
Tourism	53	3.4
Bid leaders	47	3.0
General facts	44	2.8
Economics	38	2.5
Business climate	27	1.7
Education	19	1.2
Culture	14	0.9
Technology	4	1.3
Medical	3	0.2
Sponsors	3	0.2
Natural disasters	2	0.1

N= 1,550

The bid process itself, with almost three-fourths of the coverage, was the dominant overall topic about the five Expo 2020 finalist bid cities. Infrastructure was a distant second with 6.6 percent; these stories focused on the ability of the cities to build the necessary infrastructure and the current state of infrastructure. Politics, tourism, bid leaders (horserace focus), general facts and economics each constituted less than 5 percent of the topics. The business climate, education, culture, technology, medical, sponsors, and natural disasters all came in at less than 2 percent.

RQ5: Which of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities gained the highest frequency of coverage?

TABLE 5
Coverage among the Bid Finalist Cities

City	Frequency	Percent
Dubai, United Arab Emirates	756	48.8
Yekaterinburg, Russia	455	29.4
Ayutthaya, Thailand	152	9.8
Izmir, Turkey	129	8.3
Sao Paulo, Brazil	58	3.7

N= 1,550

Dubai, which was the winner in the Expo 2020 selection process, strongly dominated the coverage frequency with almost half the mentions of the five bid finalist cities. Next was Yekaterinburg with 29.4 percent.

Ayutthaya, Izmir and Sao Paulo each gained less than 10 percent of the coverage.

RQ6; Which of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities had the highest frequency of negative, neutral, or positive tone?

TABLE 6
Tone among the Bid Finalist Cities

City	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Dubai	0/0.0%	150/19.8%	606/80.2%
Yekaterinburg	9/2.0%	134/29.5%	312/68.6%
Ayutthaya	11/7.3%	68/44.7%	73/48.0%
Izmir	6/4.7%	62/48.1%	61/47.3%
Sao Paulo	0/0.0%	43/74.1%	15/25.9%

N= 1,550; df= 8, chi-square= 186.78, $p < .001$

Dubai received the most positive coverage (80.2%), followed by Yekaterinburg (68.6%). Less than 50 percent of the mentions of Ayutthaya and Izmir were positive, and Sao Paulo had the least percentage of positive mentions (25.9%). Interestingly, mentions of these five finalist bid cities, when they were not pos-itive, were most frequently neutral, rather than negative. Dubai and Sao Paulo had no negative coverage. Ayutthaya had the highest percentage of negative coverage (7.3%), while Izmir and Yekaterinburg had less than 5 percent negative mentions.

TABLE 7
Tone among the Bid Finalist Cities (Collapsed)

City	Negative/Neutral	Positive
Dubai	150/19.8%	606/80.2%
Yekaterinburg	143/31.4%	312/68.6%
Ayutthaya	79/52.0%	73/48.0%
Izmir	68/52.7%	61/47.3%
Sao Paulo	43/74.1%	15/25.9%

N= 1,550; df= 4, chi-square= 153.74, $p < .001$

Data were collapsed into positive and negative/neutral categories to control for low frequency cells in the chi-square analysis. The differences among the cities were strongly significant.

RQ7: Which of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities had the highest frequency of favorable story placement?

TABLE 8
Story Placement among the Bid Finalist Cities

City	Body	Lead	Headline
Dubai	546/72.2%	137/18.1%	73/9.7%
Yekaterinburg	310/68.1%	87/19.1%	58/12.7%
Ayutthaya	135/88.8%	10/6.6%	7/4.6%
Izmir	102/79.1%	14/10.9%	13/10.1%
Sao Paulo	55/94.8%	3/5.2%	0/0.0%

N= 1,550; df= 8, chi-square= 44.23, $p < .001$

The five finalist bid cities did gain prominent placement within the stories. Yekaterinburg was mentioned in headlines 12.7 per-cent of the time, followed by Izmir (10.1%) and Dubai (9.7%). Ayutthaya landed in headlines less than 5 percent of the time

and Sao Paulo never gained placement in headlines. Headlines are the most prominent position for a brand; the lead of the story is the next most prominent position. Yekaterinburg (19.1%) and Dubai (18.1%) were the leaders in this regard. These differences were statistically significant.

RQ8: Which of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities had the highest frequency of favorable page placement? The only mention of any of the five finalist bid cities that landed on the front page or a section front was about Dubai.

TABLE 9
Page Placement among the Bid Finalist Cities

City	Inside	Front Page/ Section Front	N/A
Dubai	523/69.2%	1/0.1%	32/37.9%
Yekaterinburg	96/21.1%	0/0.0%	359/78.9%
Ayutthaya	115/75.7%	0/0.0%	37/24.3%
Izmir	54/41.9%	0/0.0%	75/58.1%
Sao Paulo	36/62.1%	0/0.0%	22/37.9%

N= 1,550

All the rest of the mentions were on inside pages or not applicable, as this measure only applied to print coverage and not other sources. No statistical chi-square analysis could be applied due to the frequency of empty cells.

RQ9: Which topics were most frequent for each of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities?

TABLE 10
Topics among the Bid Finalist Cities

Topic	Dubai	Yekaterinburg	Ayutthaya	Izmir	Sao Paulo
bid process, bid leaders sponsors	553/73.1%	338/74.3%	121/79.6%	110/85.3%	58/100.0%
Infrastructure, education, Technology	60/7.9%	60/13.2%	4/2.6%	1/ 0.8%	0/0.0%
economics, business climate	32/4.2%	20/4.4%	4/2.6%	9/7.0%	0/0.0%
tourism, culture	39/5.2%	13/2.9%	13/8.6%	2/1.6%	0/0.0%
Politics	53/7.0%	7/1.5%	0/0.0%	4/3.1%	0/0.0%
General facts, medical, natural disasters	19/2.5%	17/3.7%	10/6.6%	3/2.3%	0/0.0%

N= 1,550

Topics associated with the bid process, bid leaders and sponsors dominated the coverage for each of the five Expo 2020 finalist bid cities. Infrastructure, education and technology were the next most frequent topics for Dubai (7.9%) and Yekaterin-

burg (13.2%). The third most frequent topics were tourism and culture for Ayutthaya (8.6%) and economics and the business climate for Izmir (7.0%). Every mention of Sao Paulo (100.0%) was about the bid process, bid leaders or sponsors.

TABLE 11
Tone among the Bid Finalist Cities (Collapsed)

Topic	Dubai	Yekaterinburg	Ayutthaya	Izmir	Sao Paulo
bid process, bid leaders sponsors	553/73.1%	338/74.3%	121/79.6%	110/ 85.3%	58/100.0%
other topics	203/26.9%	117/25.7%	31/20.4%	19/14.7%	0/0.0%

N= 1,550; df= 4, chi-square= 29.68, $p < .001$

To control for low frequency cells in the chi-square analysis, data were collapsed into bid process, bid leaders and sponsors and other topics categories. The differences among the cities were statistically significant. Among the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities, Dubai (26.9%), Yekaterinburg (25.7%) and Ayut-

thaya (20.4%) had the most coverage of topics other than the bid process, bid leaders and sponsors.

This suggests that these cities had somewhat more scrutiny by the coverage than Izmir or Sao Paulo, but recall from the analysis of the differences in tone among the five cities that

the tone of coverage of Dubai and Yekaterinburg was largely positive, but coverage of Ayutthaya, Izmir and Sao Paulo was more neutral or negative.

RQ10: How did the nation in which the source was published affect the tone of the overall coverage of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities?

TABLE 12
Overall Tone by Source Nations

Nation	Negative	Neutral	Positive
UAE	0/0.0%	147/19.3%	615/80.7%
Turkey	1/3.4%	7/24.1%	21/72.4%
China	2/9.1%	5/22.7%	15/68.2%
Thailand	7/7.4%	32/33.7%	56/58.9%
Russia	2/0.5%	164/41.1%	233/58.4%
UK	3/4.1%	29/39.7%	41/56.2%
Italy	4/22.2%	4/22.2%	10/55.6%
USA	6/6.1%	42/42.4%	51/51.5%
Pakistan	1/4.3%	12/52.2%	10/43.5%
India	0/0.0%	0/0.0%	6/100.0%
Jordan	0/0.0%	0/0.0%	3/100.0%
Malaysia	0/0.0%	0/0.0%	2/100.0%
Netherlands	0/0.0%	0/0.0%	1/100.0%
Germany	0/0.0%	0/0.0%	1/100.0%
Singapore	0/0.0%	0/0.0%	1/100.0%
Israel	0/0.0%	0/0.0%	1/100.0%
Ukraine	0/0.0%	9/100.0%	0/0.0%
South Africa	0/0.0%	2/100.0%	0/0.0%
Sierra Leone	0/0.0%	1/100.0%	0/0.0%
Finland	0/0.0%	1/100%	0/0.0%
Oman	0/0.0%	1/100.0%	0/0.0%
Qatar	0/0.0%	1/100%	0/0.0%

N= 1,550

Among nations with more than 10 mentions of any of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities, overall mentions were most positive in the United Arab Emirates (80.7%), Turkey (72.4%), China (68.2%), Thailand (58.9%) and Russia (58.4%). These nations, except China, are the nations in which four of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities are located.

An analysis of whether these four nations were more positive toward the bid cities located within their borders than other bid cities will be included later in the paper. Sources from Brazil, where Sao Paulo is located, were not indexed in the database, and thus were not included in the analysis. More than half of the mentions were positive in Italy, the USA and the UK. Less than half of the mentions (43.5%) were positive in Pakistan. The frequency in the remaining 13 nations was less than 10 mentions in each nation.

TABLE 13
Tone by Region

East/West	Negative	Neutral	Positive
East (Asia, Middle East, Africa)	10/1.1%	201/21.8%	709/77.1%
West (North America, Europe)	16/2.5%	256/40.6%	358/56.8%

N= 1,550, df= 2, chi-square= 71.72, *p* <.001

Data from the 22 nations was collapsed into East/West regions of the world categories to allow for statistical chi-square analysis due to the large number of low frequency cells. Sources in the East (77.1%) region of the world were much more positive than sources in the West (56.8%).

This difference was strongly statistically significant.

RQ11: How did the nation in which the source was published affect the tone of the coverage in each of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities?

TABLE 14
Tone toward Bid Cities from Russian

City	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Sao Paulo	0/0.0%	21/80.8%	5/19.2%
Dubai	0/0.0%	19/82.6%	4/17.4%
Ayutthaya	0/0.0%	20/83.3%	4/16.7%
Yekaterinburg	2/0.7%	81/27.1%	216/72.2%
Izmir	0/0.0%	23/85.2%	4/14.8%

Sources: N= 1,550, df= 8, chi-square= 96.93, $p < .001$

The tone from Russian sources was most positive (72.2%) in mentions about Yekaterinburg, which is located in Russia. Tone toward the other five Expo 2020 bid finalists cities was less than 20 percent positive and more than 80 percent neutral.

TABLE 15
Tone toward Bid Cities from UAE

City	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Sao Paulo	0/0.0%	12/63.2%	7/36.8%
Dubai	0/0.0%	99/14.5%	584/85.5%
Ayutthaya	0/0.0%	12/57.1%	9/42.9%
Yekaterinburg	0/0.0%	12/60%	8/40%
Izmir	0/0.0%	12/63.2%	7/36.8%

Sources: N= 1,550, df= 4, chi-square= 97.67, $p < .001$

A similar pattern was observed from UAE sources, which were 85.5 percent positive toward Dubai, which is located in the UAE. Tone toward the other five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities was less than 45% positive and more than 55% neutral.

TABLE 16
Tone toward Bid Cities from Thailand

City	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Sao Paulo	0/0.0%	2/100.0%	0/0.0%
Dubai	0/0.0%	9/90.0%	1/10.0%
Ayutthaya	7/8.9%	19/24.1%	53/67.1%
Yekaterinburg	0/0.0%	1/100.0%	0/0.0%
Izmir	0/0.0%	1/33.3%	56/58.9%

Sources: N= 1,550, df= 8, chi-square= 23.68, $p < .001$

This trend was also evident from Thailand sources. Mentions about Ayutthaya, located in Thailand, were positive (67.1%), as were mentions about Izmir (58.9%). The other three Expo 2020 bid finalist cities were 90 to 100 percent neutral. Sources in Turkey were most positive toward Izmir (73.1%), which is located in Turkey, but they were also positive toward Sao Paulo (66.7%). Dubai, Ayutthaya, and Yekaterinburg were not mentioned in coverage from sources in Turkey.

Clearly, sources within nations in which each of the five Expo 2020 bid cities were located, more frequently published positive mentions about the bid cities within their borders. This effect was strongly evident from Russian and UAE sources, but also present in sources from Thailand.

RQ12: If another of the five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities was mentioned in the story, what effect did this have on tone?

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TABLE 17
Tone toward Bid Cities from Turkey

City	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Sao Paulo	0/0.0%	1/33.3%	2/66.7%
Dubai	-	-	-
Ayutthaya	-	-	-
Yekaterinburg	-	-	-
Izmir	1/3.8%	6/23.1%	19/73.1%

Sources: N= 1,550, df= 2, chi-square= 0.25, p= n.s.

TABLE 18
Tone by another Bid City in Story

Another bid city in story	Negative	Neutral	Positive
No	24/2.0%	208/17.0%	989/81.0%
Yes	2/0.6%	249/75.7%	78/23.7%

N= 1,550, df= 2, chi-square= 428.77, $p < .001$

In cases where none of the other five Expo 2020 bid finalist cities was mentioned, tone toward the city that was mentioned was overwhelmingly positive (81.0%). On the other hand, in cases where other bid cities were mentioned the tone toward the bid city that was the primary focus of the story was strongly neutral (75.5%).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This quantitative content analysis of global media coverage of the five finalist bid cities for Expo 2020 revealed many useful findings. Overall results showed that the coverage was strongly positive (68.8%) or neutral (29.5%). That only 1.7% of the coverage was negative is remarkable, since news is generally much more negative.

Overall, from a branding perspective, the brands, the bid cities, did land in prominent locations within stories; 9.7% in headlines and 16.2% in leads. However, the bid cities did not command prominent page placement, with only one mention of any of the cities landing on the front page or section front. This suggests that while the bid cities were prominently placed within stories, the Expo 2020 story tended to be less visible in publications as it only landed on the front page or a section front once; the city was Dubai.

One of the most interesting findings was the frequency of the topics associated with Expo 2020 and the bid finalist cities. The overwhelming emphasis was on the bid process itself (72.9%). This suggests there was media emphasis on the horserace nature of the coverage, rather than more attention to substantive topics that might affect the votes of delegates such as infrastructure, which was a distant second (6.6%). Politics, tourism, economics, the business climate, education, culture, technology, medical facilities and natural disasters, all of which could reasonably be seen as having an impact on a city's ability to effectively host a World Exposition, received scant coverage. This trend held constant across all five of the bid finalist cities, suggesting that it was the media convention of covering political news in a horserace manner rather than differences among the cities that determined the nature of the coverage.

There was strong evidence that Dubai's efforts to secure the rights to host the 2020 World Exposition were effective. The United Arab Emirates city had the highest frequency of coverage (48.8%), the most positive coverage (80.2%), and the least negative coverage (0.0%), and Dubai was the only city that gained front page or section front coverage.

Clearly, information sources in the nations in which each of the cities were located, were more frequently positive than sources outside those nations.

Stories about Dubai published in the UAE were highly positive (80.7%); stories about Izmir in Turkey were positive (72.4%); stories about Ayutthaya in Thailand were positive (68.2%) and stories about Yekaterinburg in Russia were also positive (58.4%). There were no sources from Brazil included in the Lexis/Nexis search.

This suggests a localization bias among the media; as corporations themselves, they are very likely to see financial gain from increased ratings and advertising sales associated with a world-class event such as Expo 2020 at their doorstep.

This bias was also evident when comparing coverage among the five finalist bid cities from information sources within each nation. When the sources were from Russia, the frequency of positive tone toward Yekaterinburg (72.2%) was much higher than for the other cites, all fewer than 20%. UAE sources provided more positive tone toward Dubai (85.5%) than the other cities, all fewer than 43%. Thailand sources were positive

toward Ayutthaya (76.1%) and Izmir (58.9%), but the frequency of positive tone toward the other cities was very low for Dubai (10.0%) or nonexistent for Sao Paulo and Yekaterinburg. Turkish sources only covered Sao Paulo and Izmir, with only 29 mentions total. The frequency of positive tone toward Sao Paulo was 66.7% and toward Izmir, 73.1%. The region of the world in which the stories were published had an effect on tone. Stories from Eastern regions (Asia, Middle East, Africa) were more frequently positive (77.1%) than from Western regions (North America and Europe), which were 56.8%. positive. This is perhaps due to variations in the press systems and inclusion of state supported news agencies in the analysis. This study has approached nation branding on a wide scale and is one of the few nation branding studies that has used quantitative content analysis of media coverage as the methodology. The findings, which show that Dubai, which won the bid to host Expo 2020, also convincingly won the media competition, which may have had an effect on the voting delegates from 168 nations who ultimately made the decision of which city would host the event. Two recommendations emerge from this research. First, media ownership or control, especially by governments, would be an interesting additional variable in future analyses. Research to measure whether positive media coverage of a city bidding to host a major event such as the Olympics, the FIFA World Cup or the World Exposition has an effect on voting intentions would also be very informative.

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