ABSTRACT

This study is a multi-framing analysis that examines the change of China's image in the mainstream American media, represented by "Time" magazine, from 1992 to 2008.

Adopting four generic frames that reflect the enduring values of American journalists—ethnocentricity, responsible capitalism, human rights and conflict—the study found that the image of China in the US media has changed significantly in the past 17 years: China was first portrayed as an underdog with potential, but lots of problems, but is now portrayed as a potential rival, catching up with the US, though still with a certain distance between these two nations. There is a subtle change of emphasis in the US media; China has transformed from an ideologically different enemy that should be eliminated to a competing super-power. The criticism of China's economy gradually reduced, and the accusation shifted from illegality to morality. China is still considered to be an autocratic country lacking individual freedom. However some improvements are mentioned as China gives more freedom in the areas of economy and life-style, but politics is still off limits to the Chinese people. Interestingly, after reviewing the major incidents that influenced Sino- American relationships from 1992 to 2008, the study discovered that the Sino-US crisis, instead of pushing the US to view China as an enemy, prompted more articles that advocated viewing China as a country that can bring the US more benefits than disadvantages.

Key words: China image, framing analysis, Time magazine, ethnocentricity, responsible capitalism, human rights, conflict