

## **Red Dot Rising: Western Sentiments in Print Media Portrayals of Singapore**

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### **Abstract**

*Singapore has seen extraordinary development in its 43 short years of “nation building.” It has become the envy of its neighbors, by becoming a truly first-class global alpha city. From the image of the uniquely Singaporean Merlion to the Batik-clad Singapore Girl of Singapore Airlines, brand Singapore has been gaining ground in a hurry in the globalized marketplace. Yet despite its recognized efficiency in financial affairs and well-orchestrated National day parades, its’ very success at becoming a global city – may also be an Achilles heel, as the educated younger generations start seeing a world without frontiers. As a city with an amalgam of differing worldly influences, Singaporean identity remains an elusive concept. One thing for sure is that Singaporeans are fascinated by how outsiders view their country. Over time, how others view and define Singapore ends up at least anecdotally having an agenda-setting influence of its own when served up in such a manner. How has Singapore been portrayed in Western newspapers? And what bearing can such international media portrayals have on the nation’s identity? This study explores the nature of coverage for Singapore in two international print media outlets. A content analysis methodology utilizing sentiment analysis examined the variables of visibility, valence, and frames. The Singaporean government revels in controlling its internal image via a domestic agenda with maximum efficiency and benefit to its citizens and residents in the face of globalization; however, it may not always be successful in controlling its image abroad.*

**Keywords:** Portrayals, Sentiments, Singapore, Country Branding, Agenda-setting

### **Introduction**

The history of modern Singapore began in 1819 when Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles arrived and established what turned into an extremely valuable trading port for the British. In the coming years, two important treaties were signed, relinquishing the sole rights of the island to the British. Soon enough, Singapore became an important economic and political center, serving as a trade hub between China and British India and as the center of government for the Straits Settlement. This early stage development accordingly boosted the population from a couple hundred to about 81,000 people by 1860, comprising of 61.9% Chinese, 16.1% Indian, 13.5% Malay, and 8.5% other races including the Europeans (Official Gateway to Singapore, 2009). Due to the nature of its location and purpose, Singapore quickly became a multicultural inhabitation as is reflected in its modern ethnic makeup.

Over this period, Singapore experienced overwhelming growth and prosperity through trade. However, this development was halted and conflict arose when the Japanese began their campaign to overtake the land in 1941. In the coming years, the rights to Singapore were fought over by several parties, highlighted by the British’s retaking in 1945 and the state of emergency declared in 1948 because of the Communist Party of Malaya’s attempted takeover by force (Singapore Expats, 2004). In 1955, Singapore held its first political contest, which led to the creation of a coalition government comprised of the Labour Front political party, the United Malays National Organization, and the Malayan Chinese Association. Through a series of proposals and tensions, Singapore eventually became a sovereign, democratic, and independent nation in 1965.

At this point, the international media had marked its skepticism of Singapore's survival as a viable country after such an unstable period, hosting issues of unemployment, housing, education, and the lack of natural resources and land (Lepoer, 1989). The nation then responded by creating the conditions to successfully attract large companies while investing heavily to create development boards. As a result, significant changes took place and Singapore rediscovered an economic success much like when it served as a trade hub in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 2009, it experienced a gross domestic product of approximately S\$231 billion (US\$165 billion), which ranks fourth in the list of ASEAN countries behind Indonesia (US\$521 billion), Thailand (US\$269.6 billion), and Malaysia (US\$209.8 billion) (CIA World Factbook, 2009). Through its 45 years of nation building, Singapore has become a world-class alpha city with educational, financial, and cultural institutions recognized across the globe. Amid its current and rapidly growing success, the nation has begun to focus on establishing more internationally significant sectors including high-tech industries and tourism.

As Singapore develops as a young nation along with its economic, political, and military presence, several nations around the world, including the United States, are also affected as they are important trade partners. Sparked by Singapore's response to the doubts highlighted in international media reports after independence, this study seeks to investigate how various media channels portray the country and the effects it has on the nation's identity and agenda-setting influences. As pointed out in a 2004 study, there is a "clear relationship between media coverage of nations and how individuals viewed those nations" (Wanta, 2004, p. 9). Using content analysis and sentiment examination of assertions within articles, this study will aim to discover what influences media portrayals have on parties ranging from a foreigner who has never stepped foot in Singapore to businesses and political actors. Moreover, it will investigate what sentiments are commonly used when speaking about the "Lion City." How is the country depicted in the media outlets of one of its largest partners, the United States? And how does it compare to the portrayal of the country in Britain, a former predominant influence of Singapore?

### ***Literature Review***

It is a well-known fact that media exist almost everywhere in modern society (Elton, 2008). Over the past few decades and especially in the last couple of years, the spread of media has grown on an exponential rate correlated to the advances in technologies. This expanse has developed from its original form in the telegraph into radio, then television, and now the Internet and beyond. With this evolution, individuals are able to gain access to external sources of information that would have otherwise not been available. Throughout this entire period and through each form of communication, people have consistently relied on these sources to receive information about news and facts from places apart from them. Fields (2006, p.2) goes as far as saying that "it is widely accepted that what we know about, think and believe about what happens in the world, outside of personal first-hand experience, is shaped by how these events are reported in newspapers and communicated through the medium of radio and television." In addition to learning the facts of a particular event, people also continually seek to receive logical analyses within each report that assist them in forming opinions (Abdullah, 2010). Regardless of whether the reports are positively or negatively charged, global media has prompted individuals to become less complacent and to take action (Taylor, 1997) as the words and images that are viewed becomes a reality. Gerbner's Cultivation Theory stands to support this fact in saying that media such as television "has the power to influence our view of the world and is 'primarily responsible' for our perceptions of day-to-day norms and reality" (Fields, 2006, p.3; Infante, Rancer & Womack, 1997). Alternatively, Agenda-Setting Theory offers that the influence lays not so much on the impact of the media itself, but more on what issues are actually covered. Nevertheless, evidence shows that what is shown in the press has the power to inform and lead the public into mindsets and actions with the words and images it provides.

The use of media in shaping opinions in economic, social, and political issues has now become a topic that is widely studied and debated (Fields, 2006). In current times, various forms of media have been found to serve a primary role in all aspects of a country's development (Yahya and Begawan, 2007). Like mentioned earlier, international media had motivated Singapore to aggressively develop the country shortly after independence. Nowadays, these types of foreign public opinions are "gaining ever more significance in forming an emerging globalized public and influencing international political process and outcome," all of which highlights the importance of national reputation and its influence in matters of international interactions and transactions (Wang, 2006, p.1). Especially when it comes to attaining images of other nations and forming opinions about them, most people tend to rely on such images constructed in the mass media (Wanta et al., 2004). In that sense, Singaporeans are extremely curious to discover how and through what fashion outsiders view and understand their country. As an example, a 2009 episode of the American musical series *Glee* depicts one image of Singapore to its global viewers and presents an illustration of the influence of a fictional media portrayal.

In the episode, one of the characters said in the context of disciplining: “You know, caning has fallen out of fashion in the United States, but ask anyone who safely walked the immaculate sidewalks of Singapore and they’ll tell you one thing – caning works.” In this seemingly juxtaposed sentence, the speaker both compliments the beauty and safety of Singapore, but also highlights caning, which is one of the more infamous parts of the nation’s history. Liang (2009) extends this thought by expressing that Singapore is indeed known by the much of the world for its strict rules and its nickname of a fine city, with the pun being obvious, but states that Singaporeans currently accept little jibes without discomfort. Wanta (2004) continues the thought on the images of nations by writing that “the more media coverage a nation received, the more likely respondents were to think the nation was vitally important to U.S. interests. The more negative coverage a nation received, the more likely respondents were to think negatively about the nation” (p.1). As a result of such actions that can take place through the way a country is portrayed, whether it is in the news, television, or any other form of media, governments of nations across the globe have discovered the necessity of crafting and conveying particular images of its country to the rest of the world.

Throughout literature, several terms have been used interchangeably that describe the image of nations including national identity, national image, international attitudes, or national stereotypes (Becker & Nada, 2007). Regardless of which phrase is used, Lippmann (1922) sums it up by saying that the images and pictures that are imagined by individuals allow them to understand what foreign places are like and determine what they will do in response. With media coverage and information spread being so widely accessible, the importance of national image is no longer deniable and maintaining one is almost necessary to achieve various political and economic goals. The point to be wary about here though is that these portrayals can be developed by literally any form of media whether it be textbooks, radio, newspapers and various forms of press, films, and television – fiction or nonfiction. Past studies have shown that individuals are more likely to believe something they see on the television, whether it is fact or fiction, simply because the sight of moving images allows them to relate to each story on a closer level. This sort of an idea has various effects and implications on the actions people take in response to the media they witness.

For example, the 2003 SARS epidemic is often cited as a “media disease” as the press and television had made the situation seemingly worse than it actually was. Wallis and Nerlich (2005, p.2629) show that SARS had been often written in the context as a killer, “they stalk, they strike, they are mysterious, they are criminals.” Nevertheless, China’s national image was damaged as SARS headlined the media and China threatened to execute those deliberately spreading the syndromes. Accordingly, countless people avoided the country in response. The state of a country’s image can also apply to consumer purchasing behavior and risk perceptions. This concept, known as the country of origin effect, can move purchasing patterns toward or away from particular products; More specifically, “the country of origin influences product quality perception and purchase intentions, which vary depending on the product categories and degree of favorability of a country” (Jun et al., 2009; Jun & Choi, 2007). A further and more drastic example revolves around the term “the CNN effect,” which has been used to describe “television coverage, primarily of humanitarian disasters, that forces policymakers to take action that they otherwise would not have taken, such as military intervention” (Gilboa, 2003, p.98). The effect has even been said to have led to the invasions of Northern Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo (Becker & Nada, 2007).

There are also various problems that exist with such a high media influence in the portrayals of other nations. Masmoudi (1979, p.38) argued that there is a bias against developing nations because Western media, which are the predominant source of information in international communication, “present to the world images of developing countries which are predominantly negative by showing the countries in terms of failure, violent crises, and disorder.” The issue surprisingly also exists within the developing countries themselves. Izam (1989) found that both Nigerian and American news magazines had large amounts of negatively charged headline news, suggesting that, at least in the case of Nigerian and African news, such images and reports that the media deliver do not differ when compared internationally versus domestically. Nwuneli and colleagues (1993, p.6) wrote that “in addition to the relative unimportance of Third World issues on the international media agenda, developing countries do not seem to give more attention to other developing countries on their own media agenda than they give to developed countries. This could result in media audiences in developing nations knowing more about people and places in the developed world than those in other developing countries” and for audiences in general to receive a skewed perception of those countries portrayed in a predominantly negative light.

To study the effects of media on Singapore specifically, this report first narrowed down which countries have and had strong influences on the young nation. With the desire to study how Singapore is portrayed in the press of Western countries, the United States and Britain became two clear choices.

## Singapore-United States Relations

The importance of the relations between the U.S. and Singapore is one that has been gaining significance since the middle of the nineteenth century, predominantly in the fields of politics, military, and economics. As the United States grew more powerful in those areas, Singapore naturally became a closer ally as its strategic location and purpose as a center of trade were of extreme value to the global superpower. During the times following the American Civil War, commerce between the two countries strengthened over raw materials as industrialization took place in both parties' nations. As times evolved, so did the trade. Singapore later became a destination for American investments and grew into the financial center it stands as today. American companies also played a large role in the economic growth of Singapore as American companies had invested about \$57 billion in the island and employed tens of thousands of Singapore citizens (Business Times, 2010). The two countries have also signed the U.S.-Singapore Free Trade Agreement in 2003, America's first with a country in Asia (Smith, 2005). Currently, the United States has become Singapore's largest individual trading partner though exports to the U.S. have declined over the recent years (Statistics Singapore, 2010). Its 2009 non-oil domestic exports to the United States stood at \$15.3 billion, down from the \$20.2 billion in 2008. Regardless of this recent decline, it can still be argued that it was the trades and investments with the U.S. that became the largest contributing factor to Singapore's economic success. Singapore now ranks as one of the most important export destinations for the United States in Southeast Asia when factoring in investments, the service sector, and intangibles trade.

The two countries have also maintained its political alliance noted by the collaboration in the war on terrorism as highlighted by Singapore's standing with the United States in both the 1991 and 2003 Iraqi conflicts. Fueled by an acknowledgement of its vulnerability to potential external attacks, Dr. Tony Tan Keng Yam, the Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for Security and Defense, fears that Singapore is an iconic target for Islamist terrorist groups (Smith, 2005). Singapore has also drawn several parallels with the United States on its stance on terrorism, including its views and definitions of terrorism, but sometimes goes even further than what the States are prepared to do. Consequently, the "Singaporean government lobbies Washington to do considerably more in Southeast Asia through an extended force presence and through wider engagement with the Indonesian military and the Armed Forces of the Philippines" (p.3). As such, Singapore supports the United States in decisions regarding terrorism and strives to keep them as a close ally to serve as protection.

The strong ties between the two nations are also visible in a more cultural standpoint as reflected in the large size of the American community in Singapore, about 20,000 strong (Baker, 2005) along with the clear presence of western influences in the people's lifestyle. As far back as the 1800s, Americans were found exchanging cultural experiences and contributing to "an image of Asia that was constructed in the West and was reinforced by the observations of American travelers, missionaries, and expeditions of exploration (p.14). Known as 'Asia 101', Singapore is celebrated to be an entry point for Westerners assimilating into Asia. The usage of English as one of the national languages, along with the existence of American media, Ryan Seacrest on the radio, designer brands names, and even hamburgers presents an undeniable influence of the United States on Singapore. Moreover, there also exist American Associations and clubs across the country. Critics, however, including Mr. Calvin Cheng, CEO of Lumina-Loogue International, believe that "Singapore needs to recognize that being a Global City does not mean being a Western City. Singapore must understand that no matter how globalized or modernized it may be, it is still an Asian City" (Straits Times, 2010). During Mr. Cheng's speech to the Ministry of Information, Communication, and the Arts' budget meeting in Parliament, he also slammed the fashion industry for using mostly Caucasian models on the covers and inside stories stating that "it is obvious that again, our media labors under the false impression that Western is International" (p.1). Regardless of how Singaporeans feel about western penetration into their country, the culture that is present is popular and has spread throughout Singapore.

At times through history, however, conflict would arise between Americans and Singaporeans as the nations modernized. Different political views had been challenged and opposing opinions in economic and social processes played out. In fact, the press in Singapore often displays highly critical views of the United States in order to appease to portions of the residing Chinese communities. During this culture war, the debate of Asian vs. Western values prevailed, but influences were shared on both ends. The success of the relations between the two nations prevailed afterwards and the partnership continues to grow. Following the election of President Barack Obama in 2009, Singapore's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. George Yong-Boon Yeo, stated that "Singapore's relations with the US are excellent and should remain so under the Obama Administration" (Parliament Report, Feb 2009, p.1).

### **Singapore-Britain Relations**

Singaporean relations with Britain have long been in existence as it was the early British traders who founded modern Singapore. Though British influences still remain in Singapore, the majority of the British milestones in the country were from its colonial times. Through the passing of the colonial days, Singapore served as a trading hub for the British India Trade Company as the area flourished. The Company then grouped Singapore, Penang, and Malacca to form the Straits Settlement in 1826. Over the years, the governing of this arrangement drew criticism due to the administration's ineffectiveness and the British government agreed to reestablish the Straits Settlements as a separate Crown Colony in 1867 to be ruled under the supervision of the Colonial Office in London. As each period passed in Singapore's history, Britain's influence fluctuated as well. During World War II, Britain's failure to defend Singapore destroyed its credibility as a ruler in Singaporeans' eyes (Lepoer, 1989), but later came back into influence as British subjects voted and took seats in the Legislative Council. Accordingly, a British parliamentary system was imposed and adapted in Singapore.

Because of the longstanding and strong presence of British in Singapore, many of those who would become Singapore's first generation leaders, including the former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, received their education from the United Kingdom. Moreover, such exposure and influence helped to pave Singapore's way into the English language and construct its legal and administrative systems, parliamentary government, and British standards in their profession, leaving such an imprint on their culture and views (Yew, 2004). Britain remained the preeminent economic and political investors on the island until it withdrew its military presence from in 1971 due to an economic shock. Because of their dependency on the presence of British forces, Singapore faced a serious problem in patching the holes left in both its national defense and its economic security (Omar, 2007). Singapore had worked fast to relieve the deficiencies and prevented potential problems by the time of the full withdrawal. America took over as the predominant influence shortly after the departure of the British. Through recent years, the presence of the colonial founders has diminished as Singapore becomes a more global country, while developing stronger relations with major powers around the world including the United States, China, Japan, and the European Union. Nonetheless, the deep roots planted by the United Kingdom remain intact in the status quo and the partnership remains positive.

### **Newspaper Analysis**

Within these two nations, the report selected two of the world's most well-established and renowned newspapers to study – *The New York Times* and *The Times of London*. *The New York Times*, founded in 1851, is the largest local metropolitan newspaper in the United States and third largest overall, only trailing the *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*. Moreover, it features a strong international section within its publication and is thus a sound choice in searching for Singaporean news. This paper has become the “defacto choice” for media analyses and as Shoemaker and Reese (1996) correctly noted “[c]ertain media have special influence (p. 125); further “*The New York Times* is considered the final arbiter of quality and professionalism across all the news media (p. 125). Inoue and Patterson (2007) for example, used the paper in examining the news media's impact on Americans' perceptions of Japan-U.S. relations. The list of studies relying on this paper is long and attests to its influence. *The Times of London* has been in existence in the United Kingdom since 1785 and has been a leading daily newspaper in the UK (Stewart, 2006). Due to its long-standing status and prestige in coverage across politics, science, literature, and the arts, it stands as a publication that can cover a wide array of potential stories.

In analyzing these newspapers, one commonly used method that scholars utilize to determine the emotional charge of a communication is known as sentiment analysis. This type of study can be useful in evaluating the intentions or interpretations of events by an author, the way it could be received by an audience, and resulting implications of such a report. The United States government uses this method in analyzing newspapers and other news sources to understand the opinions and portrayals of the country from abroad (Lipton, 2006). In addition to the tracking done by governments, there exist several agencies that offer various types of sentiment and communication oriented services, which are aimed to help develop and improve nations' images around the world. A survey conducted by East West Communications, a private sector agency, in fact found Singapore to be the “World's Top Brand” with sentiments “drawn from the analysis of five million mentions in 38 top news sources around the world” (East West Communications). The study used an analytic system developed by Ohio's Perception Metrics and uses a formula based on the positive or negative message of a text and the number of times a country is mentioned to calculate a score for each country (Barker, 2010). Using this type of information can help answer the following research questions:

RQ1: With what sentiments has Singapore been proclaimed within the writings of *The New York Times* and *Times of London*? Does the country seem to be portrayed in an overall positive or negative light?

RQ2: What are the predominant issues and subjects that are being covered in these papers, relevant to Singapore?

With trade and politics being the main reasons for the U.S. and Britain, it will be interesting to see if those will be the main topics of coverage in their respective leading newspapers.

RQ3: What groups of people tend to be written about and which groups are the ones actually offering their insights and opinions of Singapore?

### **Method**

The final collection of articles included seventeen articles from *The New York Times* and twelve articles from *The Times* of London that specifically discussed Singapore. Two of the articles in *The Times of London*, although indexed under different IDs, were identical. The sample size for *The Times of London* was therefore reduced to eleven. These articles represented a census of articles which had Singapore as the main subject matter in the year 2008. The country does not get a tremendous amount of coverage. While the sample size appears limited, the number of recording units available within these articles for examination was quite large, leading to hundreds of coding decisions needing to be made.

Martin and White's (2005) framework was used to analyze the portrayal of Singapore in these articles. Before describing the results of analysis, a review Martin and White's (2005) framework might be useful. First, **appraisal groups** (i.e. the smallest assertions which indicate a single occurrence of appraisal) need to be identified within each article. Each appraisal group would then be analyzed for the following variables:

- Actors (i.e. *appraiser* and object of *appraisal*).
- Type of appraisal, including *affect*, *judgment*, and *appreciation*.
- The author's engagement in the arguments, including *monoglossia*, *proclamations*, *disclamations* of other arguments, *entertainment* of counterarguments, and *attribution* of arguments to other sources.

Martin and White's (2005) *graduation* was eliminated since it was of little analytical value in political news (Nourbakhsh, Khoo & Na, 2007). Martin and White's (2005) framework was designed for analyzing appraisal in the general context. Nourbakhsh, Khoo and Na (2007) have shown that when applying it to political news, minor adjustments need to be carried out:

First, **Affect** as Martin and White (2005) describe it, refers to personal human emotions such as sorrow, fear, anger, etc. and an appraisal group can only be regarded as affectual when clearly addressing either of these emotions, e.g. in "I love Singapore" or "I cried all day". Nevertheless, many political texts convey a positive or negative political relation through acts of "objection", "approval", "outcry", verbal or military "attack", etc. Therefore we decided to add *political affect* to the analysis to make up for this type of appraisal.

Second, Martin and White (2005) identify **proclamation** as a way to emphasize appraisal through

- Modality, e.g. "He is *absolutely* wrong"
- Reasoning from facts and statistics, citing reports, etc. e.g. "taxes have raised 20% in the last year".

Since the second category could indicate the author's tendency to document the argument and be more factual, we distinguished between the two categories, calling the second "**Proclamation: citation**".

Martin and White's (2005) framework also focused exclusively on *appraisal* groups and entirely ignored neutral assertions such as "the island-state of Singapore" which did mention the country and provide information about it, but didn't convey appraisal. Since the analysis focused on the coverage of Singapore, either opinionated or not, we included these assertions in the analysis, but identified their polarity as neutral. Whenever the appraisers were not clearly identified, e.g. in sentences such as "Some believe ...", or "He is the most popular ...", it was labeled *anonymous*.

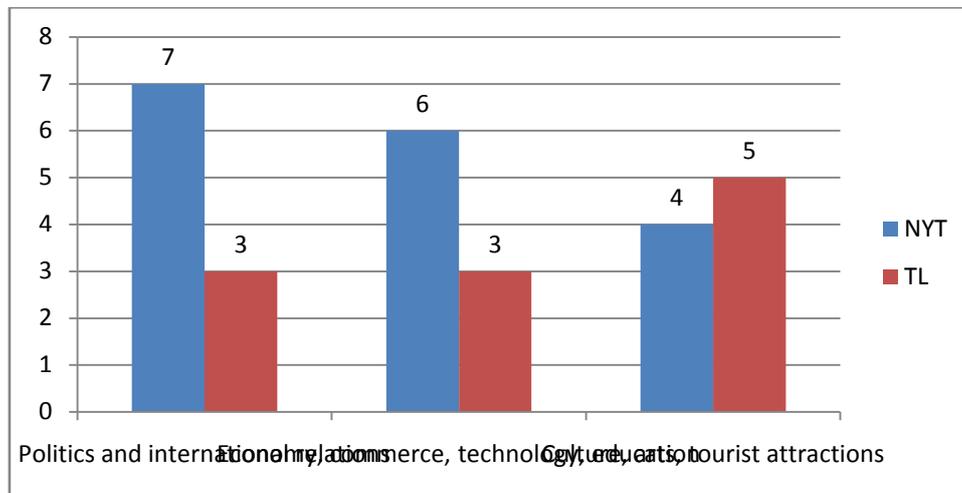
### **Results**

The preliminary analysis resulted in a total of 1068 appraisal groups in *The New York Times* and 650 appraisal groups in *The Times of London* (roughly 61 appraisal groups per article). The appraisal groups were analyzed for the above-mentioned variables. While variables like *type of appraisal*, *polarity* and *engagement* were individually important, *actors of appraisal* did not have independent significance for analysis and could only be considered in conjunction with other variables, e.g. what is the most *negatively* appraised object, or who has been most *judgmental* of Lee Kuan Yew? The following reports the results of analysis.

### **Subject**

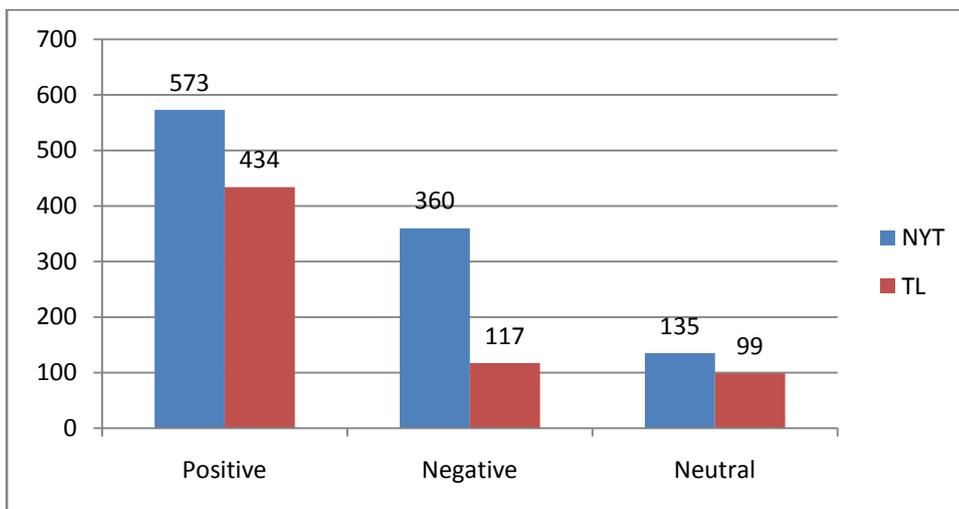
Both newspapers were fairly divided between political and economic issues, mainly because most of the economic issues addressed in both newspapers (e.g. salary raises of top government officials, the conflict on Singapore's sand imports from Indonesia, etc.) had a political undertone to them and were treated as political rather than economic topics in many articles.

The political/economic category covered most of the articles in *The New York Times*, while *The Times of London* had a clear bias toward cultural coverage (Figure 1). This could be because of four articles that, although not classified as ads, promoted Singapore’s tourist attractions. These types of articles were totally absent in *The New York Times*. The cultural articles of *The New York Times* instead, tended to focus on art events and festivals rather than tourist attractions.



**Figure 1 – Overall topics of articles in the corpus**  
 Note: NYT – The New York Times, TL – The Times of London  
**Polarity**

As can be seen from Figure 2, both newspapers have a positive bias on Singapore. The positivity has been stronger in *The Times of London*, again probably attributable to the presence of promotional articles. Nevertheless, the analysis does not reveal much about the contents of the articles at this level. Polarity becomes more informative when considered in conjunction with the appraisers and objects of appraisal.



**Figure 2 – Polarities of appraisal groups**  
 Note: NYT – The New York Times, TL – The Times of London  
**Most positive/negative appraisers**

Table 1 shows the five most positive, negative, and neutral appraisers in each newspaper. Naturally, authors - as the most vocal appraisers- have the highest number of positive, negative and neutral assertions in both newspapers. In *The New York Times*, Lee Kuan Yew who was generally referred to as “the former prime minister, now bearing the title of Prime Minister Mentor,” has received numerous quotations, a lot of them including negative and neutral assertions. Judging from Table 1, most of the appraisers in *The New York Times* are either insiders (i.e. Singaporeans or Singapore government officials), or economic commentators. This is an indication of *New York Times’* bias in covering Singapore’s domestic issues, rather than its international relations.

The pattern is slightly different for *The Times of London*. Here, the most positive appraisers are insiders, while the most negative appraisers include international figures and diplomats from neighboring counties.

Positive appraisers are mostly from education or economic sectors while negative appraisers are politicians or diplomats. This indicates *Times*' more international perspective on Singapore.

**Table 1 – People who have been most positive, negative, or neutral about Singapore**

Most positive		Most negative		Most Neutral	
NYT	TL	NYT	TL	NYT	TL
Author (299)	Author (365)	Author (170)	Author (57)	Author (130)	Author (99)
People: diplomats: Singapore's founding Prime Minister: Lee Kuan Yew (68)	People: Academics: NUS: Lim Yue Lee (11)	People: diplomats: Singapore's founding Prime Minister: Lee Kuan Yew (35)	Indonesia (14)	People: diplomats: Singapore's founding Prime Minister: Lee Kuan Yew (4)	
People: artists: chief executive of the National Arts Council: Lee Suan Hiang (25)	Individuals: interviewees: Steven Brown (9)	People: artists: Amanda Heng (13)	Anonymous (7)	People: artists: curators: Heman Chong (1)	
People: business owners: Robert V. Chandran (10)	People: Academics: NBS: Ooi Lee Lee (7)	Singapore (12)	People: diplomats: Indonesia's former intelligence chief: Hendropriyono (7)		
People: Singaporeans (9)	Singapore economy: organizations: Singapore Airlines (7)	Neighbors (10)	People: diplomats: Singapore's Foreign Minister: George Yeo (4)		

Note: NYT – The New York Times, TL – The Times of London, numbers in parentheses show the number of appraisal groups

Table 2 is a list of all appraisers in *New York Times* ranked by the number of their assertions and Table 3 provides the same information about *The Times of London*. Both tables confirm the above discussions.

**Table 2 – Appraisers in New York Times appraisal groups**

Appraiser	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Author	17	299	13
People: diplomats	76	12	4
People: artists	17	3	1
People: business managers	3	26	
Governments: Singapore government	6	18	
Countries: Singapore	12	11	
Nations: Singaporeans	9	12	
Organizations: businesses	2	13	
People: intellectuals	1	5	
People: Singaporeans	8	6	
anonymous	7	5	
People: business owners		12	
Countries: Singapore's neighbors	11		
People: general	3	7	
Countries: Indonesia	5	3	
Organizations: Political	4	3	

People: academics	5	
Governments: Thai government	4	
Nations: Asians		4
Countries: Southeast Asian countries	2	1
Governments: Chinese Ministers		3
Organizations: arts		3
Governments: European authorities	2	
Governments: Singaporean financial authorities		2
Countries: economics		1
Countries: Japan and Europe		1
Countries: Middle East		1
Countries: Thailand	1	
Governments: many governments	1	
Governments: Thai coup leaders	1	
Governments: US government	1	
Nations: Chinese		1
Nations: Indonesia and Malaysia		1
Nations: Indonesians		1
Organizations: ASEAN		1
People: individuals		1

**Table 3 – Appraisers in Times appraisal groups**

<b>Appraiser</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neutral</b>
Author	356	57	99
People: academics	25		
People: diplomats	2	13	
Countries: Indonesia		14	
People: individuals	14		
anonymous	6	7	
Organizations: businesses	7		
People: business managers	6	1	
People: Singaporeans		7	
People: general	1	5	
Countries: Singapore	3	2	
Governments: Singapore government	5		
Organizations: businesses	2	1	
People: business owners	2	1	
Attractions: restaurants		2	
Countries: Malaysia		2	
Countries: Singapore's neighbors		2	
People: activists		2	
People: intellectuals	2		
Organizations: academic	1		
People: artists	1		
People: historic figures	1		
People: reporters		1	

**Most positively/negatively received objects**

When analyzing polarity, it is important to know what issues have been received more positively or negatively. Table 4 shows the five most positively and negatively received and most neutrally described objects. While *The New York Times* keeps a balance between positive and negative appraisals of economic, political and cultural issues, *The Times of London* seems to be much more positive on cultural issues and more negative on political and economic issues.

**Table 4 – The five most positively, negatively, and neutrally described issues**

Most positive		Most negative		Most Neutral	
NYT	TL	NYT	TL	NYT	TL
Singapore culture: festivals: Singapore Show (28)	Singapore arts: attractions: entertainment outlets: The New Majestic (18)	Singapore security: health and sanitary conditions: dengue epidemic (39)	Singapore attractions: night life: bars: Clinic (29)	Singapore politician raises (8)	Singapore politics: salary attractions: food and drinks (9)
Singapore politics: politician salary raises (27)	Singapore attractions: reservoirs: The MacRitchie reservoir (15)	Singapore (24)	Singapore economy: sand import (19)	Singapore arts: artists: Lynn Lu: productions (7)	Singapore culture: the Peranakan community (7)
Singapore (24)	Singapore economy (15)	Singapore people: drivers (22)	Singapore (13)	Singapore attractions: St. Regis Singapore hotel (5)	Singapore diplomat: biography (7)
Singapore economy: banking (24)	Singapore (12)	Singapore politics: politician salary raises (16)	Singapore politics: government (9)	Singapore government: organizations: Temasek holdings: the Thailand deal (5)	Singapore politics: attractions: culture: Festivals: Hari Raya Puasa (6)
Singapore politics: politicians: Lee Kuan Yew (24)	Singapore attractions: rainforests: Bukit Timah Nature Reserve (12)	Singapore culture: arts: festivals: the Singapore Art Show (14)	Singapore politics: politician salary raises (6)	Singapore government: organizations: The Government Investment Corporation (5)	Singapore politics: attractions: night life: bars: Clinic (4)

Note: NYT – The New York Times, TL – The Times of London, numbers in parentheses show the number of appraisal groups

### Neutrality

Polarity can also show the level of bias in articles. Each row in Table 5 represents an article in the corpus along with the number of positive, negative and neutral appraisal groups in the article. As can be seen from the table, very few articles have a fairly even divide between positive and negative assertions or a bias toward neutral assertions. In other words, most of them are strongly opinionated and have a clear bias toward either of the categories.

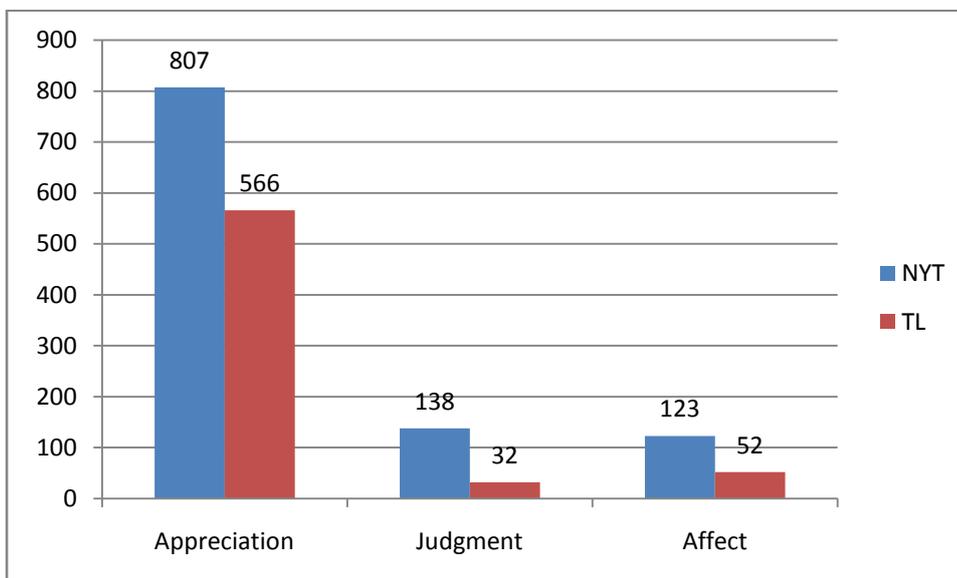
**Table 5 – The number of positive, negative and neutral appraisal groups in each article in the corpus**

NYT			TL		
Positive	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Neutral
116	30	5	15	8	0
117	70	13	6	34	6
56	18	23	16	0	1
3	9	0	83	0	37
114	7	34	119	4	20
26	42	6	108	0	20
3	17	0	14	2	0
7	3	0	7	19	2
33	30	12	9	46	6
6	0	6	6	4	7
35	81	7	51	0	0
8	2	1			
7	11	2			
3	6	0			
4	28	1			
31	6	23			
4	0	2			

Note: NYT – The New York Times, TL – The Times of London

**Type of appraisal**

Figure 3 is an overview of the three main types of appraisal in each newspaper. Predictably, journalists tend to use many more appreciations than judgments. There are many cases of affect in these articles. Yet as previously discussed, this doesn't necessarily mean that the articles have been emotional, since large part of affect in news articles is political affect (Nourbakhsh, Khoo & Na, 2007).



**Figure 3 – Number of appreciations, judgments and affects in the appraisal groups**

Note: NYT – The New York Times, TL – The Times of London

A closer look at the appraisers confirms the above assumption. Table 6 shows the most frequent appreciators, judges, and affecters among the appraisers. While the authors have asserted most of the appreciations, they have participated in fewer judgments to maintain a factual tone. The affecters are all non-authors, since the major type of affect in political news is *political affect* that happens between different political parties (e.g. the Parliament rejecting a bill, a country attacking another country, people protesting against a statute, etc.).

**Table 6 – Major appreciators, judges and affecters**

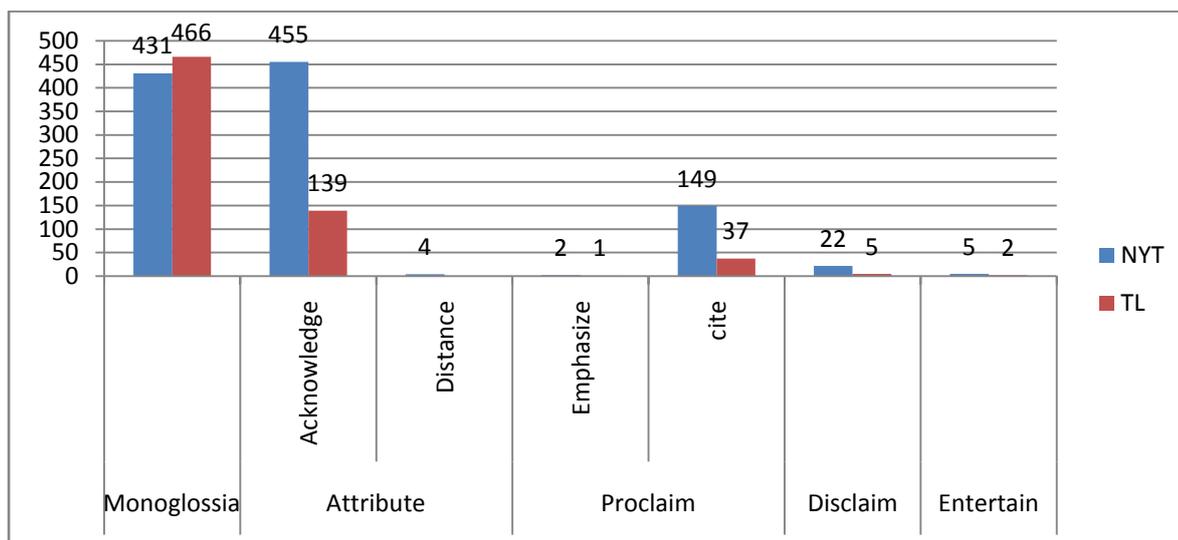
Frequent appreciators		Frequent judges		Frequent affecters	
NYT	TL	NYT	TL	NYT	TL
Author (516)	Author (489)	Author (27)	Author (23)	Singapore (16)	Indonesia (12)
People: diplomats: Singapore's founding Prime Minister: Lee Kuan Yew (85)	Academic staff: NUS: Lim Yue (11)	People: diplomats: Singapore's founding Prime Minister: Lee Kuan Yew (16)	People: diplomats: Singapore's Foreign Minister: George Yeo (3)	Author (11)	Singapore economy: organizations: Singapore Airlines (7)
People: artists: chief executive of the National Arts Council: Lee Suan Hiang (29)	Individuals: interviewees: Steven Brown (9)	People: critics (6)	Indonesia (2)	Neighbors (10)	Singapore (4)
People: Singaporeans (11)	Academic staff: NBS: Ooi Lee Lee (7)	People: diplomats: Minister Mentor: Lee Kuan Yew (5)	People: many in Singapore (1)	People: Singaporeans (7)	Anonymous (4)
People: artists: Amanda Heng (11)	Anonymous (7)	Organizations: United Nations task force (5)	Governments: Singapore government (1)	People: diplomats: Singapore's founding Prime Minister: Lee Kuan Yew (6)	People: Singaporeans (3)

Note: NYT – The New York Times, TL – The Times of London, numbers in parentheses show the number of appraisal groups

### Engagement

Engagement can reveal information about the author's style and persuasion tactics. When using monoglossia, authors tend to be direct and open about their opinion. Attribution of appraisal to other sources can indicate the authors' tendency to avoid admitting responsibility for an opinion, promoting the credibility of their arguments by citing expert sources, or presenting an argumentative article by reporting on different views. Proclamation shows the authors' confidence in their arguments, and, when asserted using citations to facts and figures, their tendency to appear more credible. Disclamations and entertainments show the authors' uncertainties and their willingness to present opposing views and arguments.

Figure 4 is a summary of these types of engagement in the corpus. As can be seen from the figure, both *New York Times* and *Times of London* authors have been confident in their opinions, and used few disclamations and entertainments. Both of the newspapers have used some citations for their arguments, nevertheless cases of monoglossia and attribution have been far more common. Interestingly, *The New York Times* writers have used nearly as many attributions as monoglossic assertions, while *Times* writers have used many more monoglossic assertions. This could mean that *Times* writers have a more direct and confident tone, not willing to quote or site other sources when discussing different issues. *New York Times* journalists on the other hand, have been far more willing to quote others and use expert and non-expert opinion in their articles.



**Figure 4 – Authors’ engagement strategies in the arguments**

**Note:** NYT – The New York Times, TL – The Times of London

Table 7 shows the objects of appraisal for each type of engagement. Looking at Table 7, it’s clear that authors in both newspapers have confidently and openly expressed their opinions on issues of less political nature or issues that didn’t require expert knowledge, e.g. the dengue epidemic or Singapore’s tourist attractions. But while discussing more political issues such as wage raises for top political officials, the authors have used more attributions and citations. One clear exception is Lee Kuan Yew who has been the object of appraisal in fifteen *New York Times* assertions. Studying these assertions shows that most of them are about his looks and manners (e.g. “Mr. Lee sat back in a zippered blue jacket, sipping small cups of hot water and laughing often”) and lack political evaluations or comments on his strategies.

**Table 7 – Five most common objects for each type of engagement**

Monoglossia		Attribution		Proclamation: citation	
NYT	TL	NYT	TL	NYT	TL
Singapore security: health and sanitary conditions: dengue epidemic (17)	Singapore attractions: arts: entertainment outlets: The New Majestic (20)	Singapore (42)	Singapore (21)	Singapore security: health and sanitary conditions: dengue epidemic (36)	Singapore attractions: night life: bars: Clinic (9)
Singapore people: drivers (16)	Singapore attractions: food and drinks (19)	Singapore culture: arts: festivals: the Singapore Art Show (36)	Singapore economy: sand import (17)	Singapore technology: marketing opportunities (9)	Singapore politics: government (6)
Singapore politics: politicians: Lee Kuan Yew (15)	Singapore attractions: reservoirs: The MacRitchie reservoir (17)	Singapore politician salary raises (33)	Singapore attractions: night life: bars: Clinic (17)	Singapore people: driver (6)	Singapore politics: politician salary raises (5)
Singapore attractions: food and drinks (14)	Singapore attractions: rainforests: Bukit Timah Nature Reserve (15)	Singapore economy: banking (21)	Singapore education: business schools: Insead (7)	Singapore attractions: Sentosa Cove (5)	Singapore economy: organizations: Singapore Airlines (4)
Singapore politics: politician salary raises (13)	Singapore attractions: nature parks: Pulau Ubin (14)	Singapore politics: strategies: pragmatism (15)	Singapore economy (7)	Singapore culture: arts (5)	Singapore attractions: night life: nightclubs: Clinic (2)

Note: NYT – The New York Times, TL – The Times of London, numbers in parentheses show the number of appraisal groups

## Discussion

An investigation of the appraisal groups in both newspapers shows a bias toward political and economic issues in *The New York Times* and a cultural/promotional bias in *The Times of London*. This could either be a result of historical ties between Britain and Singapore, the attractiveness of Singapore as a common tourist target for Britain, or the presence of an advertising genre in *Times* articles that doesn't exist for *The New York Times*. *The Times of London* also tends to be more positive about Singapore's art culture compared to *The New York Times*, again an indicator of Britain's cultural connection to the country.

While *The New York Times* discusses more political and economic issues however, it focuses on domestic issues such as wage raises for government officials or tax incentives, while *The Times of London* presents a more international perspective by discussing issues such as Singapore's conflicts with other countries in the region over natural resources. This is interesting when considering the fact that Singapore is regarded as a major economic and political ally of US in the region and that regional conflicts between Singapore and neighboring countries can impact these relations. However, it should also be noted that *The Times of London's* larger coverage of international issues is proportional to its sample size. Generally, *The New York Times* includes roughly as many articles on Singapore's international relations as *Times* does. Moreover since *Times of London* appears to be more negative on these issues than *New York Times*, the avoidance to discuss these issues can indicate *The New York Times'* reluctance to portray a negative picture of Singapore. Even when *The New York Times* does discuss the issues which have been harshly criticized in *Times of London* (e.g. the wage raises of Singapore's government officials), it tends to be much less blunt and use many more quotations, which can suggest a cultural ground for the newspapers' general approach to criticism.

The conventional tendency in political journalism to present arguments by evaluating issues and policies rather than judging individuals or expressing personal emotions is evident here. Both newspapers have many more appreciations than judgments and affects, and almost all affectual assertions involve political affect (i.e. formal acts of approval or objection by political parties) rather than personal emotions. The authors in both newspapers try to maintain a credible argument by commonly attributing arguments to expert sources or citing facts and figures. Nevertheless they mostly fail to maintain an argumentative discourse through presenting opposing views: most of the articles are either strongly biased toward positive or negative evaluations.

Finally, the small size of the corpus in comparison to the overall number of articles retrieved using the keyword "Singapore" indicates that rather than being the center of discussion, the country is usually involved in peripheral arguments. Here again, the sample size becomes an issue. Nevertheless, the insights gained from examining coverage of the country over a one year period in these two papers should allow future researchers to take note. The use of only two newspapers is an acknowledged limitation of the study. A separate analysis of the portrayal of Singapore in these peripheral arguments can help maintain a better understanding of the way the country is perceived and presented in broadsheet US and UK newspapers.

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