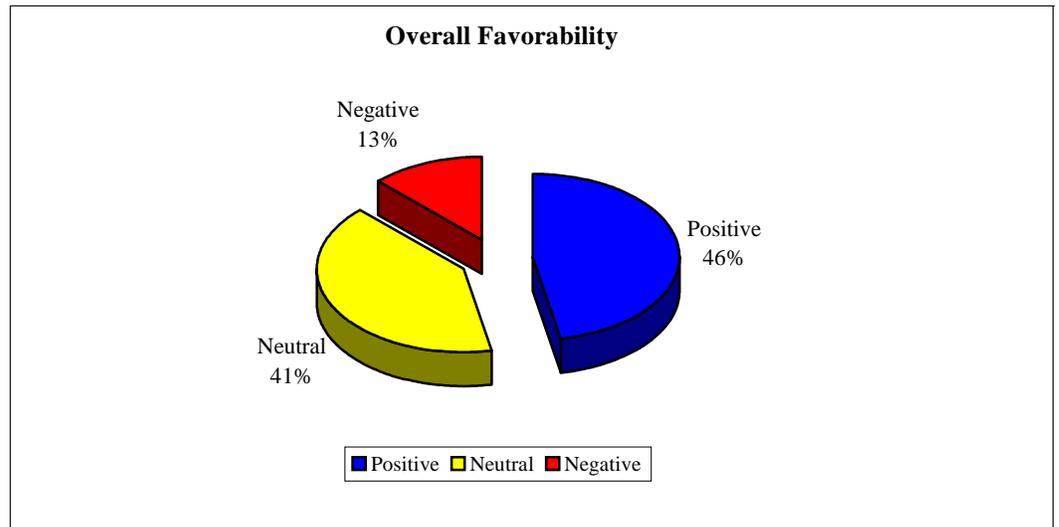


**THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS MEDIA ANALYSIS**

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**MEDIA COVERAGE BEFORE AND DURING THE OLYMPIC GAMES IS MOSTLY NEUTRAL, WITH POSITIVE COVERAGE OUTNUMBERING NEGATIVE.**



*“As the church spreads, I think there is no question about it. We’ll have an increasing number of people of foreign birth who will occupy positions of responsibility.”*

- Gordon B. Hinckley,  
Church President,  
*New York Times*,  
1/26/02

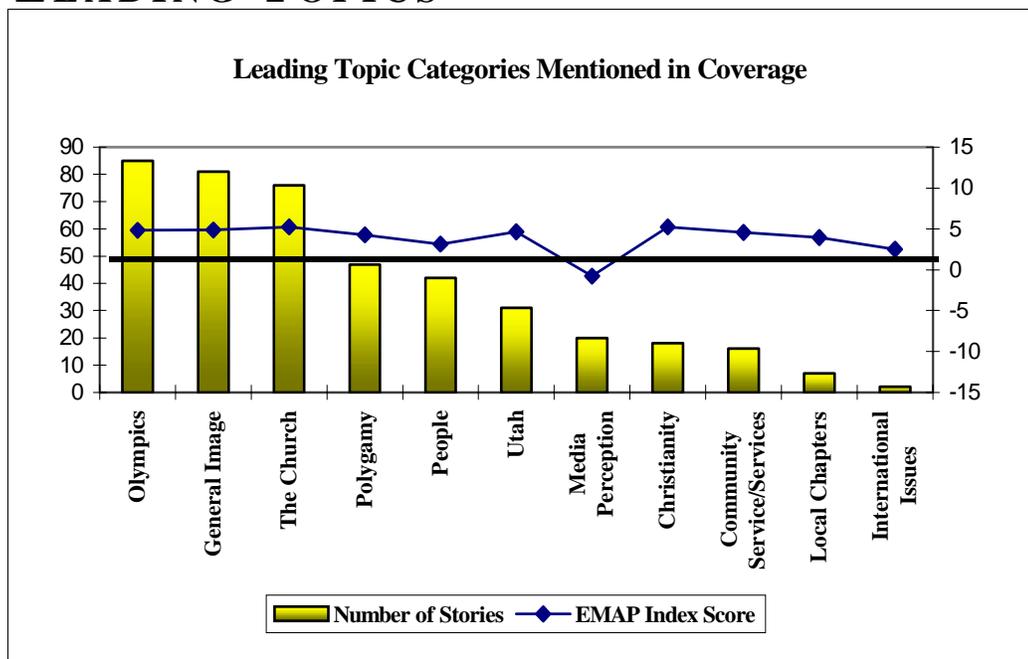


**INTRODUCTION AND KEY FINDINGS**

The following report will analyze key qualitative issues in media coverage for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Analysis for this report included media coverage from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. The research team did not include *The Salt Lake Tribune* or the *Deseret News* in its analysis. Articles were taken from the Dow Jones News database, which has a library of more than 6,500 publications, as well as from additional coverage gathered by the client. Using a computer-weighted criteria for selecting articles known as “relevancy ranking,” StrategyOne chose the 200 most relevant articles to analyze, which eliminates any biases or partialities by using a scientific method to select the sample.

The overall tone in media coverage generated during the specified time period was that the Church, Salt Lake City and residents were a nice surprise to Olympic attendants, despite pre-Games media speculation. The buzz leading up to the Games included debates regarding whether or not the Church would proselytize, and skeptics wondered how much fun could be had with the city’s perceived strict laws. The media and its “drive-by reporting” was a major topic of discussion, as coverage indicated the Church spent a large amount of time defending itself and repeatedly answering the same religion-based questions with “tired smiles.” Director of Media Relations Michael Otterson spent time correcting media reports, including an interview with a *Denver Post* reporter claiming the Church was using the Olympics as a “marketing scheme.” In most cases, negative messages were balanced out by positive messages, resulting in a majority of neutral articles. However, positive articles often appeared as features highlighting the positive attributes of the Church.

# LEADING TOPICS



*“Anyone coming here and expecting not to see the temple or see any influence of the Church in the city, it’s like going to Rome and expecting not to see any sign of the Catholic Church.”*

- Salt Lake City Mayor “Rocky” Anderson, *Orlando Sentinel*, 2/16/02



*Note: In addition to ranking a story as positive, negative or neutral, EMAP uses a scoring index system. The EMAP index score is a composite score representing the sum of the quality and quantity indices. Both indices range from -15 (most negative) to 15 (most positive). A zero score indicates neutral coverage. Features of the quantity index include circulation, overall tone and placement within the publication. Quality index components include target/non-target media, visuals, source placement and tone of headline.*

## General Image ( 87 articles )

The people of Salt Lake were described in glowing terms in most cases, including: friendly, hospitable during the Games, cultured, ambitious, happy and smiling (during the Games), accommodating, and engaging in humanitarian efforts. The overriding tone in media coverage of the Church and its members was extremely positive, while reports on their beliefs were primarily neutral and factual. The media highlighted the religion’s emphasis on strong family values, a clean lifestyle without alcohol, tobacco or coffee, and the need to be active, healthy and cultured.

## Christianity ( 18 articles )

Discussion regarding beliefs in Jesus as God or in Christianity was limited, but there were references in such publications as the *Miami Herald* that the Church is “Christian but different.” A *Washington Post* article quoted Church spokesman LaMar Sleight as saying that “doctrines may differ a little bit, but the central theme is the same.” The life of an LDS missionary was described in great detail, and various programs, including one for teens, were noted. Missionaries were described as friendly, well-mannered and “surprisingly normal.”

## Olympics ( 85 articles )

The Olympics were called a “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity” for Salt Lake City and the Church to show a changing face to the public, and to serve as accommodating, welcoming and friendly hosts while the world watched. Despite the concern that the Church would overpower the spirit of the Games, it was noted in nearly all publications that Church members were advised to “keep a low profile” and seek to educate interested parties and the media.

## TOPICS CON'T

There were concerns from such publications as the *Miami Herald* that religion would “dominate the games the way Temple Square dominates downtown.” Fears of proselytizing by the Church were put aside, and journalists reported that the Church was the only religious body not evangelizing. The Church’s original communications plan to recruit at the Games was mentioned, but it was noted that this idea was dropped after negative media coverage. The *Houston Chronicle* ran an article with a headline stating that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) scandal, in which Olympic judges were bribed, threatened to ruin the Olympics, but “the end result should be memorable.” When the scandal was mentioned, Salt Lake Organizing Committee CEO Mitt Romney’s role as mediator was said to have reversed the stigma of the “scandal games.”

Church members' global experiences proved valuable at the Games, where bilingual members were on duty to assist foreign attendees. Michael Otterson called members’ knowledge of up to four or five languages “one of the hidden treasures people will find here.” The high level of volunteerism was lauded, and one publication noted that there were so many on duty that volunteers were turned away.

### Church ( 76 articles )

The leading message in this category was that the Church is one of the fastest growing religions. When this topic was discussed, the media almost always cited the 11 million strong membership worldwide, half of whom are outside of the United States. It was also noted by such publications as the *Washington Post*, *San Jose Mercury News* and *Chicago Tribune* that LDS is now, according to the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Church*, the fifth largest religious body. An additional leading message was that the Church has a strong global presence, which continues to expand at a rapid pace. Specifically, temples and churches in Arizona, Philadelphia and Las Vegas were featured in the media. Diversity in the composition of the Church was also said to be a recent positive change.

Although references to sexism and racism were mentioned several times as perceived Church practices, the Church was portrayed overall as being more open and welcoming than perhaps in the past. A *Chicago Tribune* article headline read, “Perceptions of Mormon Women Miss the Mark, Say Experts,” as the Olympics proved an outlet in which to set records straight. The *Boston Globe* noted that the Church seems to have a “more tolerant outlook” on homosexuals in particular.

Several Church characteristics were discussed in the media, primarily regarding the history, founding fathers, current leaders and general news and events. There were very limited references to the Church as a “theocracy.” The most prevalent messages were neutral, stating that the Church has a strong influence over the city and the state, and that this influence is evident throughout Salt Lake’s community. Journalists also noted the “no drug” signs, the sarcastic billboards and ads joking about the alcohol policy. According to Church spokesman Bruce L. Olsen, Church members took media jokes in a “good natured manner,” and they “chuckle and don’t take umbrage.”

*“People are not coming here for a religious experience, they’re coming for the games. If people are stopped on the street and asked about their religion, it won’t be by us.”*

Michael Otterson, Director of Media Relations, *Financial Times*, 2/7/02



*“This ranking represents a very brisk increase in membership for a church with a relatively brief history.”*

- Rev. Eileen W. Lindner, Editor of *Yearbook of American and Canadian Church*, *Dallas Morning News*, 2/16/02

## TOPICS CON'T

### Mormon Tabernacle Choir ( 17 articles )

The world-famous Tabernacle choir was featured in several Olympic preview articles. A feature in the *Los Angeles Times* noted the high standards of the choir, its recognition including a grammy and an emmy, and the rigorous tryouts. The members' talent and the importance of music in the Church were noted as well. Choir member Karen Jepson told the *Denver Post* that "it's part of our culture, and we enjoy it."

### Polygamy ( 47 articles )

Polygamy was said to be one of the primary reasons behind the current Church and Utah stereotypes. The media noted that it has been difficult for the Church, state of Utah and city of Salt Lake to "shake" the image associated with it.

A majority of the negative articles contained references to the belief that polygamy is still practiced by the Church, even though it was banned a century ago. Articles by such outlets as *The New York Times* included testimonies by current and former Salt Lake City residents, who either practiced it themselves or knew people who did. Some of these articles included polygamy references as part of an overall back-grounder on the city or the Church, while others were sarcastic in tone, poking fun at the idea. The Tom Green bigamy case was mentioned frequently in media coverage.

An interesting note is that a number of the articles did not distinguish between polygamists and Church members. The media did note that, according to city residents, even though the practice is illegal in the Church, the law is not enforced.

Some Church members told the media that they felt if they did not practice polygamy, they would be ultimately punished. According to media coverage, this belief is reportedly based on a revelation had by founder Joseph Smith in which God commanded polygamy.

### Genealogy ( 11 articles )

A large portion of the media wrote about the Church's extensive genealogy library, reportedly the world's largest, and the access it gives the public to its 2 billion-plus name database. The library members' "dogged efficiency" for keeping files current was praised, and the *New York Times* noted that even the Bush family records were made available to The President during his visit. Articles discussed how the Mormons are using their significant familial archives to help African Americans trace their ancestral roots, many of which focused on Black History Month and family values.

### Utah ( 31 articles )

"So much more than religion" was how the setting for the Olympics was described. Journalists wrote about the scenery and other pleasant discoveries upon arrival in Salt Lake City. The city was described as cultural, clean, offering several non-Church-related activities and having an interesting history. Nearly all articles mentioned the history of the state and Brigham Young. Salt Lake City was called "a high tech and educational center" by the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, and many journalists noted that the "Temple Square is to the Church as the Vatican is to the Catholic Church."

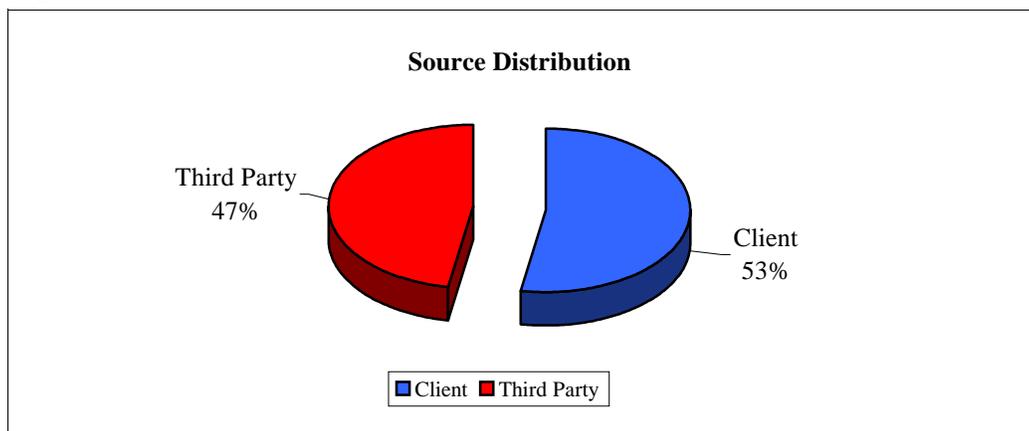
*"It's a well kept secret that Utah isn't just about provincial faith or Mormonism anymore. The Olympics will announce that to the world."*

- Jan Shipps, Professor emeritus of American history and religion at Indiana University-Purdue University,

*Denver Post*, 2/3/02



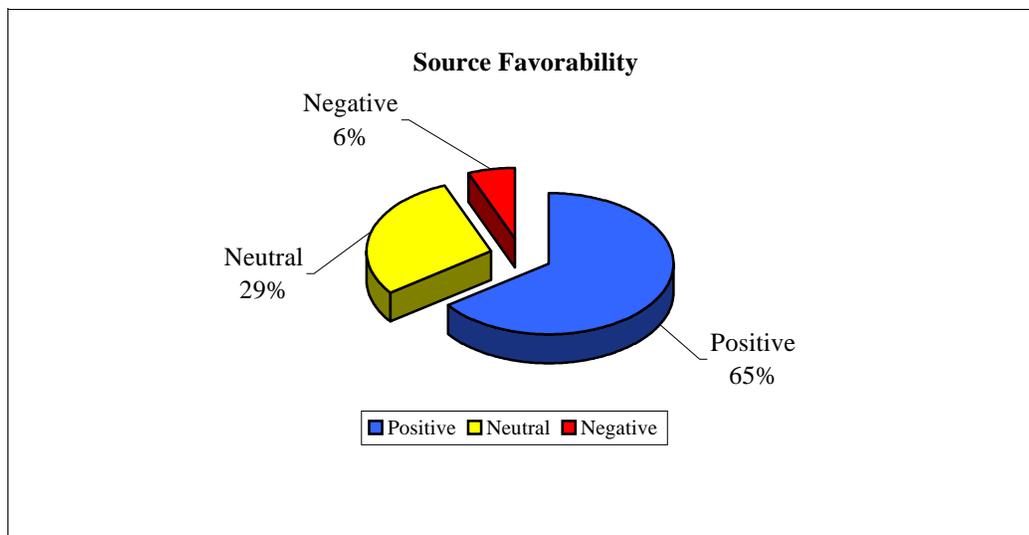
## QUOTE ANALYSIS



**Client** - There were several Church individuals quoted in media coverage, including Gordon B. Hinckley, Bruce Olsen and Michael Otterson. Spokespeople communicated that the Olympics would be a good opportunity for the Church to dispel some myths and let people make their own judgments. They also continually emphasized that all members of the Church were Christians. Almost all sources affiliated with the Church that were quoted, whether they were ranking members of the Church or just missionaries working abroad, were consistent with messages. They leveraged the idea that the Church has resources to make contributions to various initiatives and programs.

**Critics** - There were very few direct quotes criticizing the Church, but the ones found in coverage were former members and members of other faiths. Two examples were Steve Benson, grandson of former Church President Ezra Taft Benson, and former member Paul Willardson. Other critics focused on specific issues such as polygamy, racism, sexism and the Church being similar to a cult.

**Other Third-Party Sources** - Most of these sources were favorable toward the Church and its actions, particularly during the Olympics. The consensus seemed to be among those involved with the Olympics that Church volunteers were both helpful and unobtrusive. Some people were skeptical about how the Church would capitalize on the Olympics, but they generally seemed to have a “give them a chance” attitude.



*“The Mormon church is part of the fabric of this community and will be part of the story of the games... I think the world is going to see a diversity here that will surprise some.”*

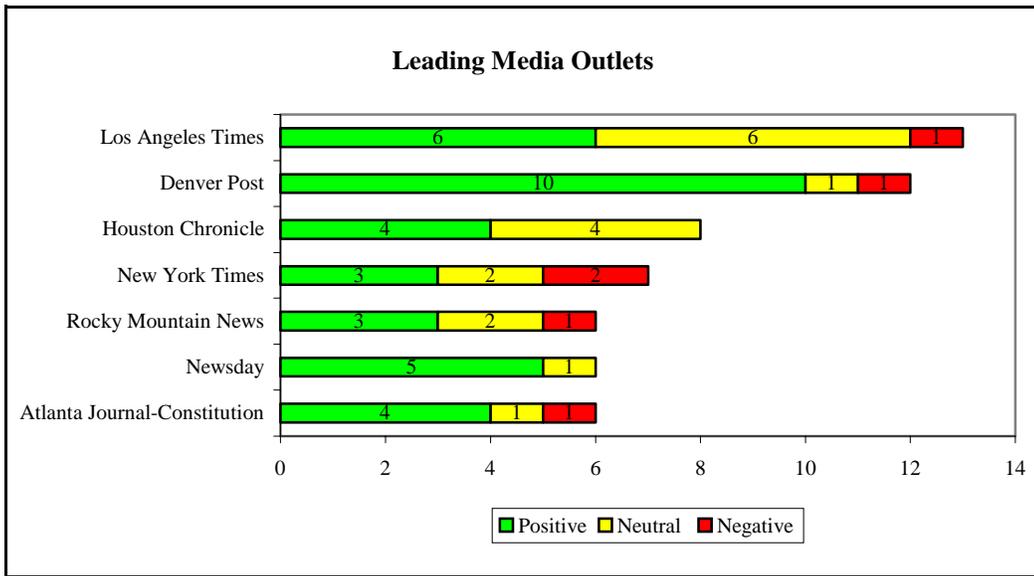
- Mitt Romney, Salt Lake Organizing Committee, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 1/27/02



*“The Games weren’t awarded to the Church, they were awarded to Salt Lake City.”*

- Caroline Shaw, spokeswoman, SLOC, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 2/3/02

## LEADING MEDIA



Although the *Los Angeles Times* published the most Church-focused stories, the *Denver Post* had the most positive. Reports focused on the role Church members would play at the Olympics, including the many hours of volunteering they were expected to provide. One positive story in the *Denver Post* discussed the large number of bilingual Church members due to their travels around the globe, and how they translated for many Olympic officials and athletes.

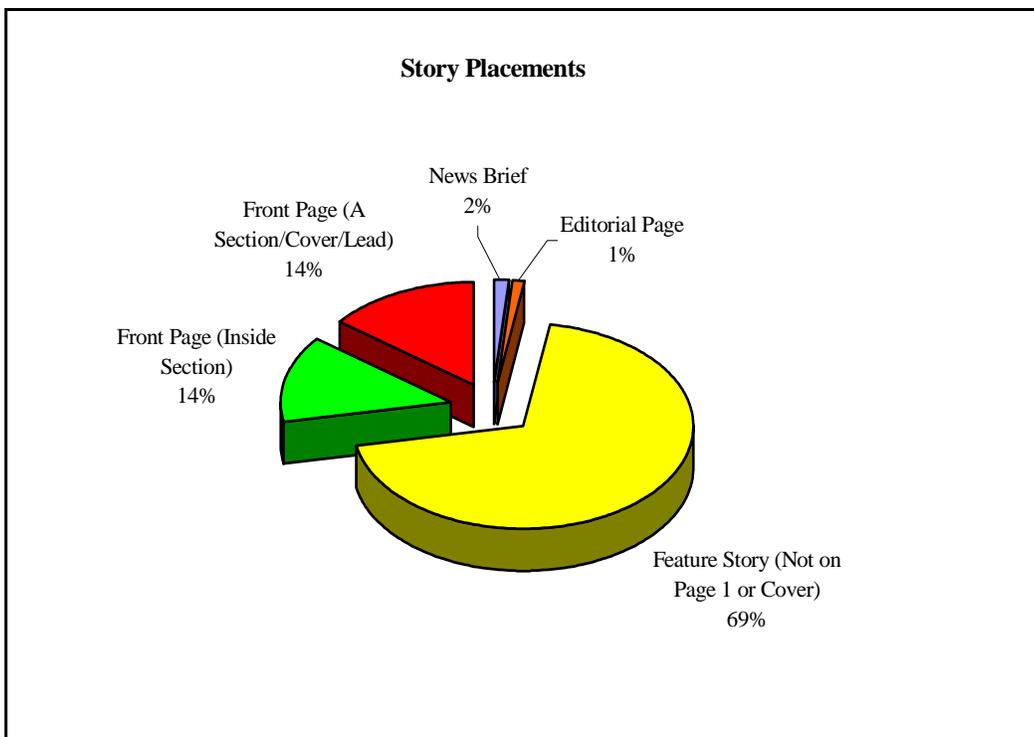
Almost a third of coverage appeared as front-page or lead stories. This demonstrates the prominence of coverage and shows that the Church was an important story in the media.

*“I’ve been here for 15 days and have yet to encounter one member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Nobody has come up to me and tried to tell me about their religion or ask me to quit drinking my beer.”*

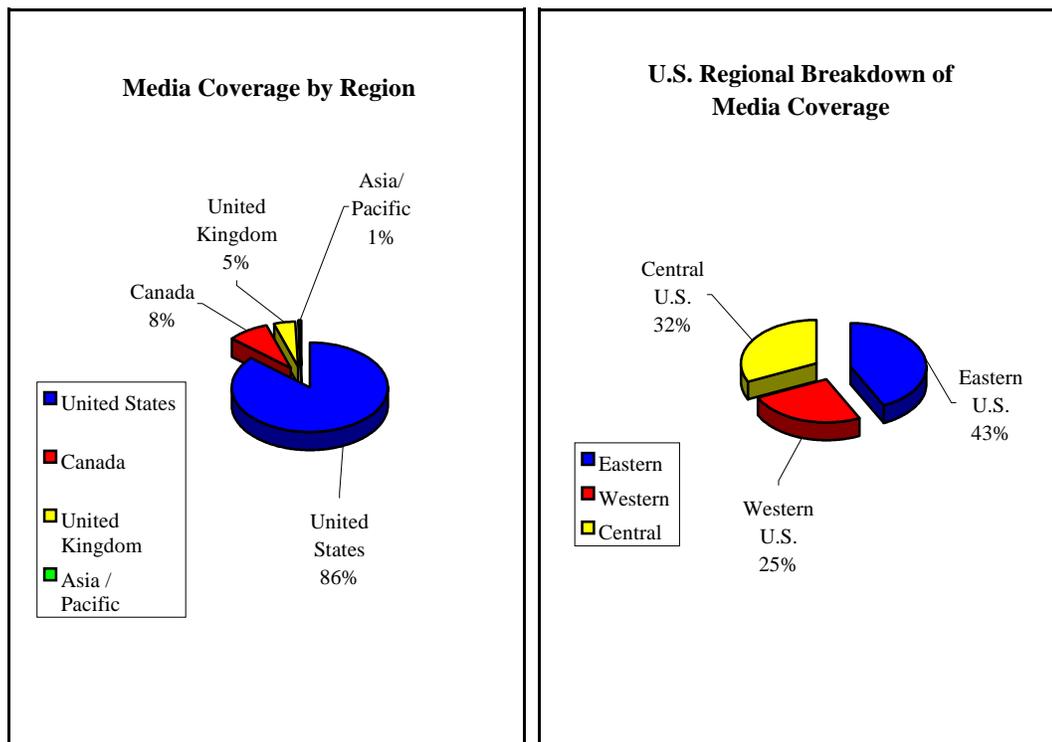
- Todd Jones, *Columbus Dispatch*, 2/20/02



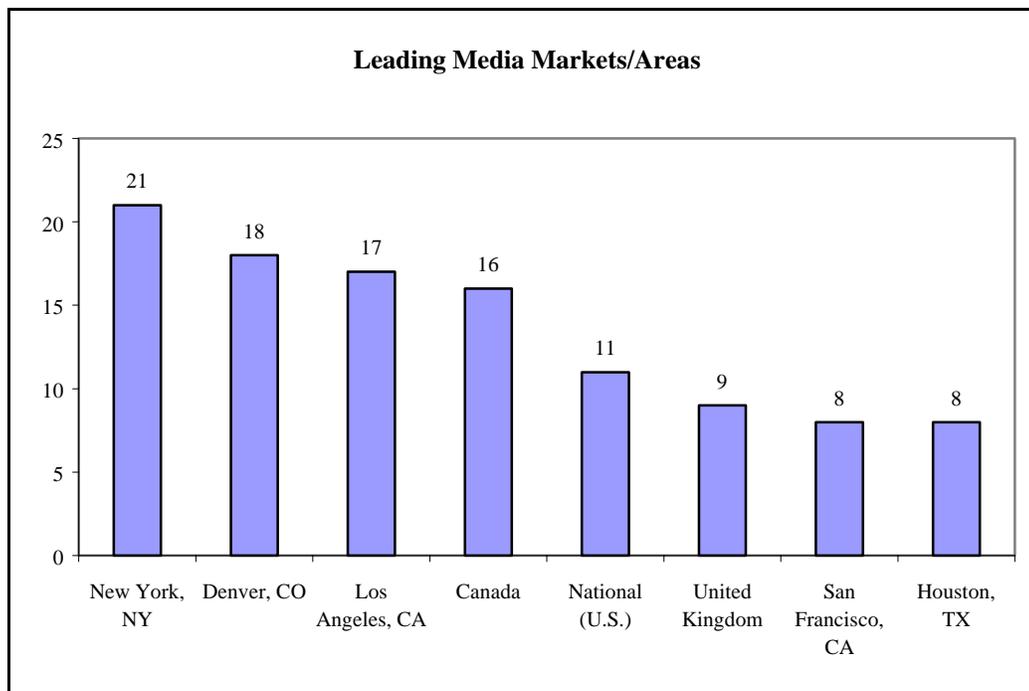
## STORY PLACEMENTS



# GEOGRAPHIC MEDIA COVERAGE



Analysis for this report included media coverage from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The majority of coverage in the articles analyzed appeared in United States publications. The leading states for coverage in the United States were California, Texas, Colorado and New York. The leading area for coverage in Canada was Ontario, while Scotland was the leading area for coverage in the United Kingdom. Stories from the Asia/Pacific region came from New Zealand but made up a small percentage of the sample articles analyzed.



## CONCLUSIONS

The terms “misunderstood,” “misconceptions,” and “myths” were frequently linked to the Church, by both Church spokespeople and the media. The press appeared pleasantly surprised by the lack of Church proselytizing, the friendly nature of members, the beauty and culture of the city and the focus on sports rather than the anticipated focus on religion. There were very few primarily negative articles found during the coverage period, because any negative mentions (including references to polygamy, racism, etc.) were almost always balanced out by equally as many, if not more, positive mentions.

Media coverage for the two-week period prior to and throughout the Olympics was both neutral and positive concerning the Church, but more importantly, coverage relayed a significant number of the Church’s messages, and its history and beliefs. There were negative references to religion stereotypes, particularly regarding polygamy. For every sarcastic or joking remark made during the Games, the press consistently mentioned how “good naturedly” the Church members responded. Church spokespeople were friendly, helpful and informative, and never defensive, in their discussions with the press. Third-party sources, particularly those directly involved with the Olympic games, repeatedly stated that they were quite pleased with the amount of help Church volunteers provided.

Journalists noted Church members’ commitment to positive attitudes, volunteerism and the decision not to proselytize. In fact, the media criticized other faiths for actively evangelizing. The overall message that appeared in the press was that for Church members, proselytizing during the Games was replaced with much-needed volunteerism.

### **Broad Recommendations Based on Media Coverage:**

- The Church can continue to initiate stories emphasizing its commitment to community service and explain the importance of teaching others about their religious philosophies and history.
- The Church can use the recent positive media coverage to leverage all that Utah has to offer, and specifically, promote Salt Lake City as an attractive place to vacation or live, based on the success of the Olympic games.
- The Church can continue to reach out to specific regions, media outlets and journalists who perpetuate stereotypes, incorrectly report inaccuracies or poke fun at some characteristics of the Church's faith.

In addition, several media outlets grouped polygamists in Utah as a whole and did not distinguish between the Mormons and non-Mormons. It seems that, even though the Olympics proved to be a beneficial time to educate the media and the public, there are still misconceptions regarding current practices and laws.