

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Beyond the Games: Media Visibility and Framing of the Paralympic Games in Greece (2016–2024)

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#### Abstract

*In recent years, the media visibility and framing of the Paralympic Games have received considerable attention because of their potential to raise awareness of disability and promote societal change. This study had two objectives: (i) to examine the media visibility of the 2016, 2020, and 2024 Paralympic Games in Greek media, and (ii) to analyse how the Games were framed in selected national newspapers and news websites. Quantitative and qualitative content analyses were employed. The quantitative analysis measured the total hours of coverage provided by ERT, Greece's official Paralympic media rights holder, and the number of articles published by nine selected national newspapers and news websites (N = 814: 203 in 2016, 210 in 2020, and 401 in 2024). The qualitative analysis examined the same 814 articles using nine coding units: Informative, Athlete First, National Success, Publicity, Supercrip/Superhuman, Multidimensional, Impact of the PG, Business, and Political/Legal. The visibility of the Paralympic Games in the selected newspapers and news websites increased by 3.45% from 2016 to 2020 and by 90.95% from 2020 to 2024. In contrast, ERT television coverage declined by 6.96% from 2016 to 2020 and by a further 9.35% from 2020 to 2024. In 2016, Athlete First and National Success were the dominant coding units, while Athlete First remained dominant in 2020 and 2024. The underrepresentation of foreign athletes' achievements, including world records, and the continued prominence of the National Success frame indicate a strong nationalistic focus and suggest that the broader significance of the Paralympic Games may be undervalued in Greek media. Although the low prevalence of the Supercrip/Superhuman frame is encouraging, the nationalistic focus may limit broader recognition of Paralympic accomplishments.*

#### Keywords:

media framing, media visibility, Paralympic Games, disability, Greek media

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#### Introduction

The media play an important role in shaping social attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions by influencing what is considered socially acceptable (McQuail, 1977). Because people spend considerable time engaging with media, this influence extends beyond entertainment: the media can reinforce existing stereotypes or, in some cases, challenge them and affect social realities (Biagi, 2014; Zucker, 1978).

In representations of disability, media coverage has been criticised for contributing to social marginalisation through limited visibility and simplified or stereotypical narratives (Pullen et al., 2022). According to mediated contact theory, people may form perceptions and

attitudes towards disability through the media (Ortiz & Harwood, 2007). Perceptions of people with disabilities are therefore closely linked to how they are portrayed.

Although visibility has increased over time, representation remains uneven (DePauw & Gavron, 2005). People with disabilities continue to be underrepresented in the media, even though they comprise approximately 16% of the global population (Brittain, 2008; World Health Organization, 2023). When disability is represented, coverage often relies on outdated or medicalised narratives that portray people with disabilities as dependent, abnormal, objects of pity, asexual, or even villainous in fictional accounts (Esmail et al., 2010; French & Le Clair, 2018; Norazit, 2010; Teng & Tang, 2020). Such portrayals reflect the medical model of disability, which treats disability as a deviation from an idealised body rather than as a natural aspect of human diversity (French & Le Clair, 2018).

Within disability sport, media coverage can shape public understanding of both athletes and disability (Rees et al., 2019). The Paralympic Games (PG), the largest sporting event for athletes with disabilities, provide a unique platform for increasing the visibility of disability sport in global media (Brittain, 2008). Despite this potential, coverage of the PG remains limited and is often accompanied by stereotypical or inspirational narratives that may reinforce existing biases (Brittain, 2008; Tynedal & Wolbring, 2013).

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) promotes a vision of an inclusive world through Para sport (IPC, 2016), and achieving this vision is closely linked to the quality and extent of media representation. Effective representation can shape societal perceptions, reduce prejudice, promote social inclusion, and enhance public awareness of disability sport (Souza et al., 2020). The impact of the PG can be strengthened through greater media coverage and sustained commitment from stakeholders, including sports governing bodies, media organisations, and broadcasters (Chatzigianni, 2018).

### Disability and Media in Greek Society

In Greece, policies and services for people with disabilities developed later than in many Western European countries, partly because of the country's historical and political challenges during the early twentieth century (Balias & Kiprianos, 2005). Periods of conflict, including the Balkan Wars (1912–1913) and the Italian and German invasions (1940–1941), contributed to economic instability and delayed the development of social policy. Substantial efforts to support people with disabilities emerged after democracy was restored in 1974 following the fall of the military junta. This period marked the first major initiative to provide education for children with disabilities (Balias & Kiprianos, 2005).

Although progress followed, particularly after Greece joined the European Union (EU) in 1981, barriers to full social integration have persisted in areas such as education and sport (Avgerinos, 2000; Balias & Kiprianos, 2005). In recent decades, Greek constitutional and legal frameworks have increasingly recognised disability rights. Article 4 of the Greek Constitution establishes equal rights and obligations for all Greek citizens, irrespective of disability status, while Article 21(6) provides for measures that support autonomy, professional integration, and participation in the country's social, economic, and political life (Hellenic Parliament, 2019).

In practice, however, policies often focus on subsidies rather than structural measures that support long-term financial independence. Data from the 2003 Labour Force Survey illustrate these challenges: 18.2% of the Greek population had a chronic health condition or disability, yet only 18.4% of this group was economically active (Gavalas & Papanis, 2013). Employment therefore remained low, despite educational attainment, and healthcare provision became increasingly constrained during the economic crisis. Many people depend on government subsidies, which may be suspended during lengthy medical re-examination procedures (Koutsothanasi & Katsarou, 2014).

Recent Eurostat data highlight continuing challenges across Europe. In 2023, approximately 27% of the EU population aged 16 years or older reported some form of disability. Among people with disabilities in the EU, 17% of those aged 20–64 were unemployed in 2020, while 28.8% of people with disabilities aged 16 and over were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2024. Moreover, data from the Council of the European Union (2024) show that in Greece, the proportion of people with disabilities was 23.1% in the same year. These figures indicate that, despite legislative progress, the social and economic integration of people with disabilities in Greece remains incomplete. Addressing these challenges requires a shift from passive financial support towards policies that promote autonomy, employment opportunities, and meaningful inclusion in all areas of society.

Within this broader social context, media representation plays an important role in shaping public perceptions of disability. Although disability is no longer hidden in Greek society, stigma and marginalisation persist (Koutsothanasi & Katsarou, 2014). Zoniou-Sideri et al. (2006) described a 'new visibility' of disability in Greece during the twenty-first century, linked to broader efforts towards inclusion. However, greater visibility does not necessarily produce more balanced representation, and media coverage may continue to reproduce outdated terminology and stereotypical frames (Kim et al., 2017).

### The Paralympic Games in Comparison with the Olympic Games

The Olympic Games (OG) and the PG have been hosted in the same city since the 1988 Seoul Games, reflecting sustained collaboration between the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the IPC (Kim et al., 2017). The events are also connected through their scheduling, as the PG begin shortly after the OG conclude (Pappous et al., 2011). The term 'Paralympic' derives from the Greek preposition *para*, meaning 'next to', rather than from the word paraplegic (IPC, 2016). The name therefore signifies that the PG take place alongside the OG. Both events pursue high standards of sport and performance (Purdue, 2013), and athletes in the two events show similar levels of motivation, self-esteem, and body image (Dieffenbach & Statler, 2012). These similarities support the expectation of equitable public and media attention.

In practice, the PG receive substantially less media visibility than the OG (Ellis & Goggin, 2015; Tynedal & Wolbring, 2013). Historical factors may partly explain this disparity. The first modern OG were held in 1896, whereas the PG began in 1960 (Gold & Gold, 2007). The OG have also been televised for longer, beginning in 1936, while regular television coverage of the PG began in 1992 (Rees et al., 2018). Nevertheless, several decades have passed since Paralympic broadcasting began, and coverage, the number of participating athletes, and the popularity of the Games have all grown (Kolotouchkina et al., 2021). Substantial inequalities in coverage of the two events nonetheless remain (De Léséleuc et al., 2010).

Agenda-setting theory provides a useful framework for understanding the consequences of these disparities. The theory proposes that the media visibility of an event influences how the public perceives its importance (Baran & Davis, 2003; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The systematic prioritisation of the OG may therefore lead audiences to perceive the PG as a secondary sporting event.

Evidence from several countries illustrates this disparity. For example, American newspapers published 2,561 articles about the 2002 Winter OG in Salt Lake City but only 13 about the 2002 Winter PG (Golden, 2003). Similarly, between 1955 and 2012, 10,487 articles addressed the OG, compared with only 246 concerning the PG (Tynedal & Wolbring, 2013). In South Korea, coverage of the 2004 OG included 220 photographs and 261 articles, whereas coverage of the 2004 PG included only 17 photographs and 16 articles (Chang & Crossman, 2009).

Broadcast media show similar patterns. In Canada, the 2012 OG received approximately 5,500 hours of television coverage, while the PG received only one hour per day on television, supplemented by 500 hours online (Maika & Danylchuk, 2016). In the United Kingdom, approximately 100,000 hours were broadcast for the OG, compared with 500 hours for the PG (Ormsby, 2012). A similar pattern appeared in Singapore, where the 2016 OG were broadcast for 12 hours per day and the PG for two hours per day. These differences illustrate how media agendas prioritise Olympic sport over Paralympic sport.

Grigoris Polichronidis, Greece's flag bearer at the 2016 PG, noted that the PG receive substantially less media visibility than the OG, even though they are equally spectacular (News24/7, 2016). He also identified barriers such as smaller budgets, fewer broadcast outlets, fewer staff, and limited coverage of many Paralympic sports. Research likewise indicates that Paralympic athletes and Olympic athletes receive different levels of social recognition and financial reward (Brooke, 2019; Tynedal & Wolbring, 2013). In Singapore, for example, an Olympic gold medallist received SGD 1 million, whereas a Paralympian who won two medals and set world records received SGD 200,000 per medal (Brooke, 2019). These inequalities reinforce a hierarchy of perceived value in which social structures favour Olympic achievements.

This pattern reflects a belief among some media producers and programmers that Olympic coverage is more important than Paralympic coverage (Brittain, 2004, 2008). As a result, the PG may be marginalised within society (Smith, 2016).

Inequality in media coverage of the OG and PG extends beyond the number of articles or broadcast hours. Differences also occur in broadcast channels, scheduling (including access to peak viewing periods), and the placement of articles in print journalism, all of which shape audience exposure and engagement (Chang & Crossman, 2009). In Australia, for example, the PG were broadcast on 7Two, a Seven Network channel promoted as an entertainment channel.

In contrast, the OG were broadcast across three Seven Network channels and highlighted on the network's primary channel, Channel 7. Paralympic coverage was frequently scheduled outside peak viewing periods (Rees et al., 2018). In the United Kingdom, the 2012 OG were broadcast by the BBC, while the PG were aired on Channel 4 (The Guardian, 2011). Carole Neale (2000, as cited in Brittain, 2004) criticised coverage of the Sydney PG because it was limited to one hour per day and often aired while people were travelling home from work, whereas the OG received prime-time and continuous live coverage.

Limited visibility directly affects audience engagement: one study reported that 80% of respondents did not watch the PG at all (Brooke, 2019). Disparities also extend to media personnel, with approximately 9,000 journalists covering the OG compared with only 700 journalists, producers, and photographers assigned to the PG (Brooke, 2019). From an agenda-setting perspective, these differences signal that the PG are less important and reinforce the marginalisation of the Games and their athletes.

### Media Coverage of the Paralympic Games

The PG remained largely invisible in the media until the mid-1970s. The 1976 Toronto Games marked the first local broadcast, although coverage was limited (Flindall, 2020). International coverage developed gradually: the 1992 PG were broadcast across Europe for the first time, while the Tokyo 2020 PG reached audiences in 177 territories (Flindall, 2020; IPC, 2021). At the Paris 2024 PG, all 22 Paralympic sports received coverage for the first time, producing the most comprehensive media coverage of the Games to date (IPC, 2024).

Research has developed alongside this growth in coverage. Pappous et al. (2011) analysed photographic coverage of the 2000 and 2008 PG in Greece, Spain, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany, identifying increases in all countries except Spain. Their study provided early evidence concerning Greek media coverage, although it focused on selected

newspapers across five countries. Increased Greek coverage may have been associated with Greece's hosting of the 2004 PG and the establishment of the Hellenic Paralympic Committee in 1999 (Hellenic Paralympic Committee, 2019; Pappous et al., 2011). A subsequent study found that coverage of the 2012 PG exceeded that of the 2008 PG by 3,070 lines of text, 79 items, and 129 photographs (Solves et al., 2019). Media attention to paratriathlon also increased from no recorded articles before 2009 to 61 articles in 2016 (Wolbring & Martin, 2018). Australia similarly experienced substantial growth in Paralympic coverage across multiple platforms between 2004 and 2012 (Naar, 2016).

The London 2012 PG represented a pivotal moment for Paralympic media visibility, largely because of Channel 4's dedicated efforts. Its 'Meet the Superhumans' campaign sought to increase visibility through approximately 500 hours of coverage and the introduction of the Lexi graphics system, which helped audiences understand athlete classification (Channel 4, 2012). Despite these advances, concerns remain about the temporary nature of this visibility (Bush et al., 2013). Overall, Paralympic visibility has increased internationally, but equitable coverage has not yet been achieved.

### Media Narratives in Paralympic Coverage

Media portrayals of Paralympic athletes can shape public perceptions of both disability and athletic performance (Pearson & Misener, 2024). Research has identified recurring narratives that reflect and influence societal attitudes towards disability. Tynedal and Wolbring (2013), for example, identified two dominant narratives in *The New York Times*: the supercrip and the suffering entity. The supercrip narrative portrays athletes as extraordinary for performing activities that are considered routine for people without disabilities. This framing may devalue the abilities of people with disabilities, reflect low societal expectations, and reproduce the medical model of disability (Bruce, 2014; Pullen et al., 2019; Rees et al., 2019; Silva & Howe, 2012). Such narratives are often expressed through personal stories selected for their emotional appeal (Howe, 2011; McGillivray et al., 2021).

Elements of the supercrip narrative and gendered representation have also appeared in otherwise positive coverage, including coverage of the London PG and the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games (McPherson et al., 2016). Beyond personal or emotional storytelling, media coverage may employ the cyborg narrative, which emphasises the integration of technological devices with athletes' bodies to enhance performance, sometimes suggesting performance beyond that of athletes without disabilities (Howe, 2011).

Multiple narratives may coexist and shape public perceptions in different ways. Canadian media coverage of the 2016 PG was categorised into four principal frames: overcoming disability, which was the most dominant and was often expressed through supercrip, superhuman, or cyborg narratives; Athlete First; Informative, which educated audiences about the PG; and Multidimensional, which represented athletes' roles beyond sport. Although the overcoming-disability frame may negatively affect social perceptions, the other three frames have been associated with more positive perceptions (Pearson & Misener, 2021). Kim et al. (2017) identified a broader set of frames: supercrip/superhuman (14.0%), optimism (18.8%), factual information about events, schedules, and records (17.0%), competition involving medal counts or rivalries (7.9%), emotional or personal stories (4.0%), business matters such as sponsorship and infrastructure (1.1%), interest in the PG (12.5%), publicity for the host city or country (5.8%), identity and social integration (13.9%), legal or political matters (1.4%), and other issues (2.7%).

Other studies have identified frames such as Athlete First, victimisation, personal stories, and infantilisation (De Léséleuc et al., 2010; Maika & Danylchuk, 2016). These frames show how media representation may shift attention away from athletic performance and towards continuous positivity or the social dimensions of the Games (Renwick, 2016). Nationalistic

frames are also common, particularly in coverage of medal success. As in Olympic coverage, nationalism can align with ableist norms by making athletes with disabilities socially recognisable primarily through their national identity (Bruce, 2014; Pullen et al., 2019).

Frames and athlete portrayals that align with ableist norms tend to receive more media attention, contributing to a hierarchy of disabilities and the persistence of the cyborg athlete. Certain impairments, including amputation, paralysis, blindness, and paraplegia, are represented more frequently, while others remain underrepresented (Tynedal & Wolbring, 2013). The hierarchy also appears to favour acquired disabilities, which may be perceived as more appealing to audiences (Ellis, 2008; McGillivray et al., 2021).

The prominence of stereotypical frames may partly reflect structural factors, including insufficient media training, limited preparation or pre-Games research among media personnel, and athletes' restricted control over their representation. These conditions may impede a shift towards more performance-focused coverage (Pappous & Gómez-Iniesta, 2025; Pearson & Misener, 2024).

The literature therefore identifies 15 recurring narratives in media coverage of the PG: (1) factual information; (2) competition information; (3) emotional or personal stories about athletes with disabilities; (4) superhuman narratives; (5) optimism; (6) business-related matters; (7) interest in the PG; (8) publicity for the host city or country; (9) identity; (10) legal and political matters; (11) Athlete First; (12) overcoming disability, often expressed through supercrip, superhuman, or cyborg narratives; (13) Informative coverage that educates audiences about the PG; (14) Multidimensional coverage of athletes' roles beyond sport; and (15) National Success, or an 'us' narrative.

Media coverage of the PG has attracted substantial international research interest (Brooke, 2019; Flindall, 2020; Kolotouchkina et al., 2021; Maika & Danylchuk, 2016; Pearson & Misener, 2021, 2024; Solves et al., 2019; Souza et al., 2020). The present study examines Greek media coverage of the 2016, 2020, and 2024 PG by combining a quantitative analysis of visibility on ERT and in selected newspapers and news websites with a qualitative analysis of framing and dominant narratives. It addresses the underexplored Greek context and assesses whether internationally documented frames, including supercrip, overcoming-disability, and nationalistic narratives, also appear in Greek media. In doing so, the study applies agenda-setting and mediated contact theories while exploring potential cultural variations in Paralympic coverage. Given the historically delayed development of disability services and structures in Greece, compared with other European countries, Greek coverage might be expected to prioritise overcoming-disability and supercrip narratives.

## Materials and Methods

This study addressed two objectives: (i) to examine the media visibility of the 2016, 2020, and 2024 PG in Greek media, and (ii) to analyse how the Games were framed. A mixed-methods design combined quantitative and qualitative content analyses. Data on the Tokyo 2020 PG were collected from 2021 because the Games were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For consistency with the official event name and to facilitate comparison, this article refers to the event as the 2020 PG throughout.

### Media Visibility: Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative component measured the media visibility of the PG by examining the frequency and extent of coverage across two media channels:

- (i) ERT, Greece's official Paralympic media rights holder, for the 2016, 2020, and 2024 Games; and
- (ii) selected Greek online newspapers and news websites.

### Television Coverage

The total number of hours of television coverage provided by the Greek national broadcaster ERT was calculated. Data were extracted from ERT's publicly available online programme schedules, which provided the precise start and end times of each broadcast. Included programmes comprised live and recorded coverage of the Games and summary programmes.

For each edition of the PG, broadcast end times were entered in Column A of an Excel spreadsheet, and start times were entered in Column B. Both columns were formatted as [h]:mm:ss. The formula =A-B was used to calculate the duration of each broadcast, and the SUM function was then used to calculate the total number of broadcast hours for each edition.

### Online Newspapers and News Websites

Media visibility was also assessed by calculating the number of articles about the PG published by selected online newspapers and news websites.

Articles published during a defined period, one week before the Games, throughout the Games, and one week after the Games, were considered. The periods are shown in Table 1. This timeframe captured the lead-up to each event, the Games themselves, and their immediate aftermath. All articles published by the selected outlets during each period were examined, and only articles directly related to the PG or Paralympic athletes were included. Because tags and keywords were used inconsistently across outlets, relevant articles were identified manually rather than solely through tag or keyword searches. This procedure was important because the number of articles constituted a central measure of media visibility.

To assess reproducibility, the calculation of total broadcast hours and the identification of relevant newspaper and news-website articles were each independently repeated three times. No discrepancies were observed across repetitions.

*Table 1. Dates of the Paralympic Games and timeframe for article selection*

| Games                 | Dates of the Games         | Timeframe                   |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Paralympic Games 2016 | 7–18 September 2016        | 31 August–25 September 2016 |
| Paralympic Games 2020 | 24 August–5 September 2021 | 17 August–12 September 2021 |
| Paralympic Games 2024 | 28 August–8 September 2024 | 21 August–15 September 2024 |

### Selection of Newspapers and News Websites

The most prominent Greek newspapers and news websites were identified from three sources, as shown in Table 2: the SCImago Media Rankings, the BBC, and 4 International Media & Newspapers (4imn), an international directory of newspapers. Using multiple sources increased the likelihood that widely used outlets were represented. Local outlets and outlets whose 2016 articles were inaccessible, approximately nine years after publication, were excluded. Nine newspapers and news websites met the criteria and were included in the analysis (Table 3): Naftemporiki.gr, Tanea.gr, Kathimerini.gr, Tovima.gr, Newsit.gr, Newsbomb.gr, News24/7.gr, Iefimerida.gr, and Reporter.gr.

*Table 2.* Top Greek newspapers and news websites according to the SCImago Media Rankings, 4imn, and the BBC

| Top 10 Greek newspapers –<br>SCImago | Top 10 Greek newspapers<br>– 4imn | Top 5 Greek newspapers<br>– BBC |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| In.gr                                | Tanea.gr                          | Tanea.gr                        |
| Protothema                           | Tovima.gr                         | Tovima.gr                       |
| Naftemporiki                         | Kathimerini.gr                    | Kathimerini.gr                  |
| Newsit.gr                            | Naftemporiki                      | Naftemporiki                    |
| Newsbomb.gr                          | Ethnos.gr                         | Ethnos.gr                       |
| Ethnos.gr                            | Eleftherotypia.gr                 |                                 |
| Kathimerini.gr                       | Dimokratiki.gr                    |                                 |
| Tanea.gr                             | Espresso.gr                       |                                 |
| News24/7.gr                          | Reporter.gr                       |                                 |
| Iefimerida.gr                        | Rizospastis.gr                    |                                 |

*Table 3.* Final newspapers and news websites included in the study

|                  | Included        | Excluded       |
|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
|                  | Naftemporiki.gr |                |
|                  | Tanea.gr        |                |
|                  | Kathimerini.gr  | In.gr          |
| Final Newspapers | Tovima.gr       | Protothema     |
|                  | Newsit.gr       | Ethnos         |
|                  | Newsbomb.gr     | Eleftherotypia |
|                  | News24/7.gr     | Espresso       |
|                  | Iefimerida.gr   |                |
|                  | Reporter.gr     |                |

### Media Framing: Content Analysis

A content analysis of articles from the nine selected outlets was conducted to examine how the PG were framed in Greek media. The dataset comprised 814 articles: 203 concerning the 2016 PG, 210 concerning the 2020 PG, and 401 concerning the 2024 PG.

### Coding Process

Coding units were developed from literature on the framing of disability sport (Bruce, 2014; De Léséleuc et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2017; Pearson & Misener, 2021), following an approach previously used by Thomas and Smith (2003). Searches were conducted in Scopus, ProQuest, and Google Scholar, as well as publisher platforms including Elsevier and Springer, using the terms Paralympic Games, media, framing, visibility, media portrayal, and media coverage.

Frames identified in previous studies were collated to develop the final coding units. Frames that were labelled differently but described similar narrative patterns were consolidated into nine coding units, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Development of coding units from existing literature

| Content units from literature | Description of content units from literature                                                                                                                                                                                            | Final coding units       |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Factual Information           | Event information, game schedule, or game record                                                                                                                                                                                        | Informative              |
| Competition Information       | Medal counts, or rival relationship among the athletes                                                                                                                                                                                  |                          |
| Informative                   | Providing information                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                          |
| Emotional                     | Personal stories about the athletes with disabilities                                                                                                                                                                                   | Supercrip/<br>Superhuman |
| Overcoming Disability         | Focusing on overcoming disability                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                          |
| Superhuman                    | Any 'supercrip' type athlete                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                          |
| Optimism                      | Educational role model, positive future for people with disabilities, positive images of the Paralympic Games and athletes with disabilities, building a more equitable society, or changing attitudes towards people with disabilities | Impact of the PG         |
| Interest                      | Interest in PG                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                          |
| Identity                      | Social integration, self-recognition                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Multidimensional         |
| Multidimensional              | Representing also the athlete's role outside the sport                                                                                                                                                                                  |                          |
| Athlete First                 | Focusing on athletic performance                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Athlete First            |
| National Success              | Focusing on national athletes' success                                                                                                                                                                                                  | National Success         |
| Legal and Political           | Legal or political support for athletes with disabilities                                                                                                                                                                               | Political/Legal          |
| Publicity                     | Major city image and publicity through hosting the Paralympic Games                                                                                                                                                                     | Publicity                |
| Business                      | Sponsorship opportunities or infrastructure development                                                                                                                                                                                 | Business                 |

The Supercrip/Superhuman coding unit combined three closely related frames from previous literature: emotional narratives, overcoming disability, and superhuman or supercrip portrayals. These frames present athletes as inspirational figures whose courage, dedication, and hard work enable them to defy the odds and accomplish the seemingly impossible.

Factual Information, Competition Information, and Informative were combined into the Informative coding unit, which covered information about the PG, events, schedules, records, and competition. Interest and Optimism were combined into Impact of the PG, which included interest in the Games and narratives concerning a positive future for people with disabilities, positive images of the PG and Paralympic athletes, a more equitable society, and changing attitudes towards disability.

Identity, defined as social integration and self-recognition, was incorporated into the Multidimensional unit because both categories addressed athletes' lives and social roles beyond sport.

The Business, Publicity, Athlete First, National Success, and Political/Legal categories were retained without consolidation. The nine final coding units used in this study are presented in Table 4.

A single coder conducted the analysis. Before coding began, the coder reviewed the literature included in this study on disability sport and Paralympic media framing to become familiar with recurring narratives and framing approaches. The operational definitions and examples in Table 4 served as a coding guide. The coder then applied the definitions systematically to all articles, reading each article in full and comparing its content with the coding units.

Each article was assigned a maximum of two coding units. A second unit was assigned only when both frames were clearly present. When a possible second frame was uncertain or borderline, only the most strongly represented unit was recorded. If the primary frame was ambiguous, the article was re-read in full and compared again with the operational definitions.

Each assignment of a coding unit was treated as one coding entry so that an article could contribute up to two entries. An Excel spreadsheet was used to organise the coding. For each article, the applicable coding unit or units were recorded by entering 1 in the corresponding column. The SUM function was used to calculate the total occurrences of each coding unit for each outlet. This procedure was conducted separately for the 2016, 2020, and 2024 PG. Three tables were then produced to present the coding units across the nine outlets, one for each edition of the Games.

The separate collection and analysis of data for each edition enabled comparison of media visibility and framing across the 2016, 2020, and 2024 PG and provided a descriptive account of change in Greek media coverage over time. Because the study used a single coder, the findings were interpreted as descriptive trends and no generalisable claims were made.

### Ethics

All television schedules, programmes, and newspaper or news-website articles included in the study were publicly accessible. No personal or private data were collected or stored. Because the research did not involve human participants or animals, formal ethical approval was not required.

### Limitations of the Study

The principal limitation is that one researcher conducted all coding. The researcher's background and experience may have therefore influenced coding decisions, and intercoder reliability could not be assessed. The study was also limited to selected newspapers and news websites and excluded other outlets and media formats, which restricts the scope of the findings. Finally, because this is the first study to examine both the visibility and framing of the PG in Greek media, no directly comparable national data were available. The results should therefore be interpreted as descriptive rather than generalisable.

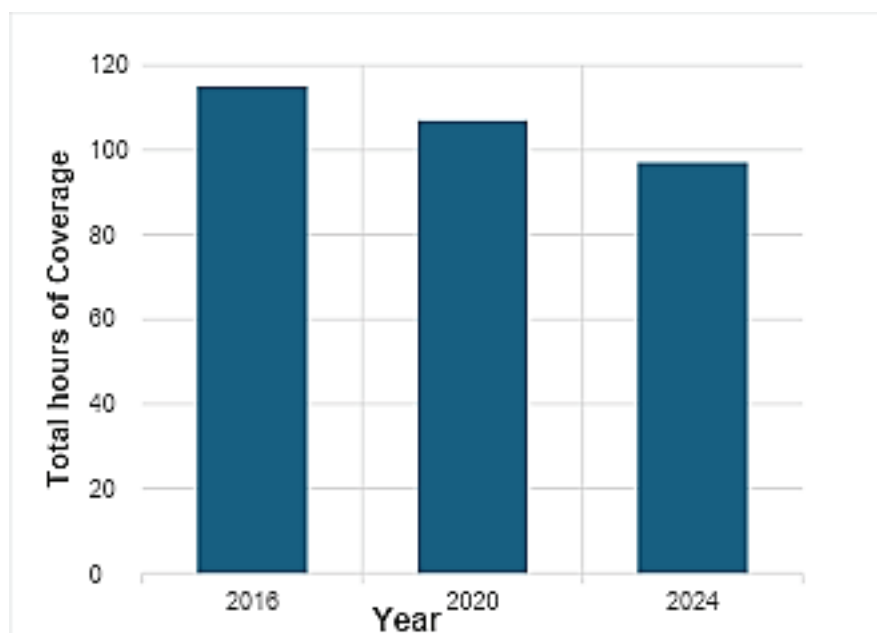
## Results

### Visibility of the Paralympic Games on ERT

The total number of hours of coverage on ERT was used to assess the broadcast visibility of the PG. Coverage was examined separately for the 2016, 2020, and 2024 editions. As shown in Table 5, ERT broadcast 115 hours in 2016, 107 hours in 2020, and 97 hours in 2024. Figure 1 shows a gradual decline in broadcast visibility, with a 6.96% reduction from 2016 to 2020 and a further 9.35% reduction from 2020 to 2024.

*Table 5.* Total broadcast hours of the 2016, 2020, and 2024 Paralympic Games by ERT channel

| Year of Event | Total Broadcast Hours |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| 2016          | 115                   |
| 2020          | 107                   |
| 2024          | 97                    |



*Figure 1.* Total hours of ERT media coverage for each Paralympic Games (2016–2024)

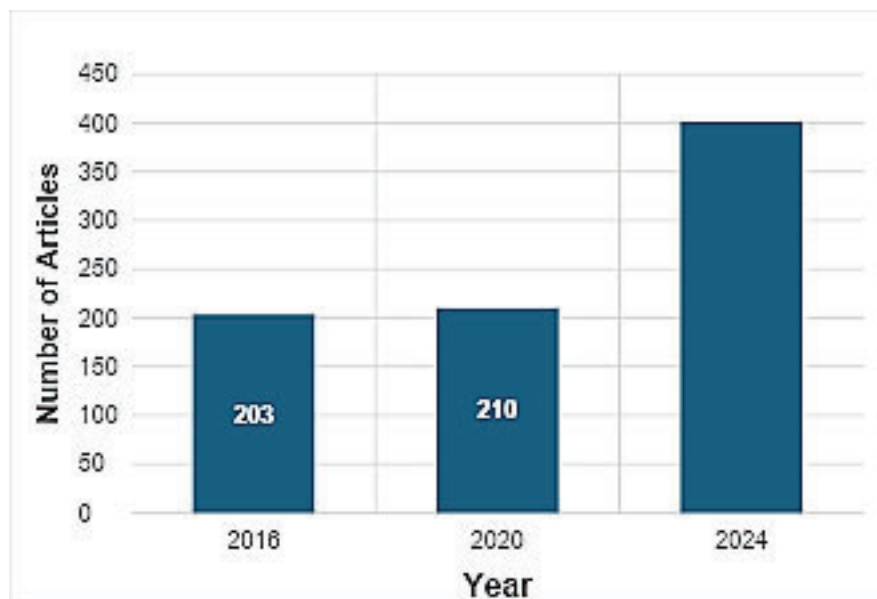
### Visibility of the Paralympic Games in Selected Greek Newspapers and News Websites

In contrast to television coverage, the number of articles published by the selected newspapers and news websites increased across the three editions. As shown in Table 6 and Figure 2, 203 articles were identified for the 2016 Games, 210 for the 2020 Games (an increase of 3.45%), and 401 for the 2024 Games (a further increase of 90.95%). This pattern indicates substantial growth in attention within the selected outlets, particularly between 2020 and 2024.

Some articles from the 2016 Games were no longer accessible because they had been published approximately nine years before the study. To improve comparability across the three editions, outlets with inaccessible 2016 data were excluded.

*Table 6.* Number of articles on the 2016, 2020, and 2024 Paralympic Games in selected Greek newspapers and news websites

| Outlet / Event  | Paralympic Games 2016 | Paralympic Games 2020 | Paralympic Games 2024 |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Naftemporiki.gr | 17                    | 29                    | 18                    |
| Tanea.gr        | 22                    | 19                    | 29                    |
| Kathimerini.gr  | 18                    | 12                    | 22                    |
| Tovima.gr       | 17                    | 13                    | 21                    |
| Newsit.gr       | 37                    | 38                    | 122                   |
| News24/7.gr     | 8                     | 10                    | 47                    |
| Iefimerida.gr   | 51                    | 40                    | 65                    |
| Newsbomb.gr     | 30                    | 47                    | 71                    |
| Reporter.gr     | 3                     | 2                     | 6                     |
| TOTAL           | 203                   | 210                   | 401                   |



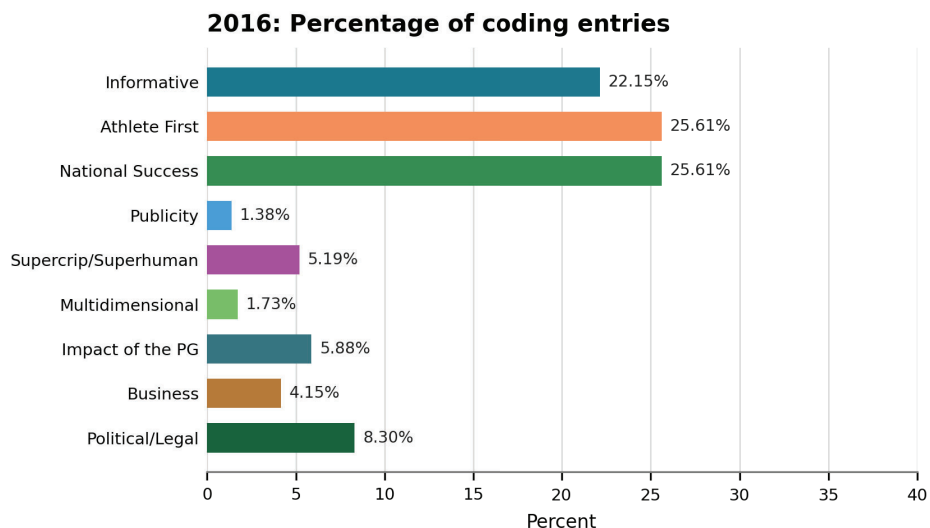
*Figure 2.* Number of newspaper and news-website articles about the Paralympic Games in selected Greek media outlets (2016–2024)

### Framing of the Paralympic Games in Selected Greek Media

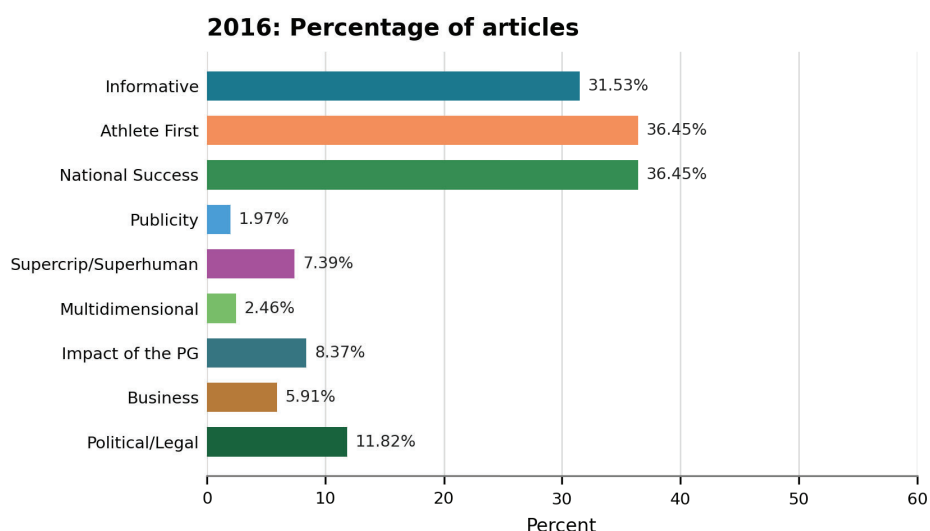
The articles were classified using the nine coding units shown in Table 4: Informative, Athlete First, National Success, Publicity, Supercrip/Superhuman, Multidimensional, Impact of the PG, Business, and Political/Legal. Because each article could receive up to two coding units, the findings are reported in two ways: (i) as percentages of all coding entries and (ii) as percentages of all articles.

For the 2016 Games, Table 7 and Figures 3 and 4 show that Athlete First and National Success were the most prevalent frames. Each accounted for 25.61% of coding entries and appeared in 36.45% of articles. These frames were followed by Informative, 22.15% of coding

entries and 31.53% of articles; Political/Legal, 8.30% and 11.82%, respectively; Impact of the PG, 5.88% and 8.37%; Supercrip/Superhuman, 5.19% and 7.39%; Business, 4.15% and 5.91%; Multidimensional, 1.73% and 2.46%; and Publicity, 1.38% and 1.97%. Coverage therefore focused primarily on athletic performance and national achievement, with comparatively limited attention to broader social or contextual perspectives.



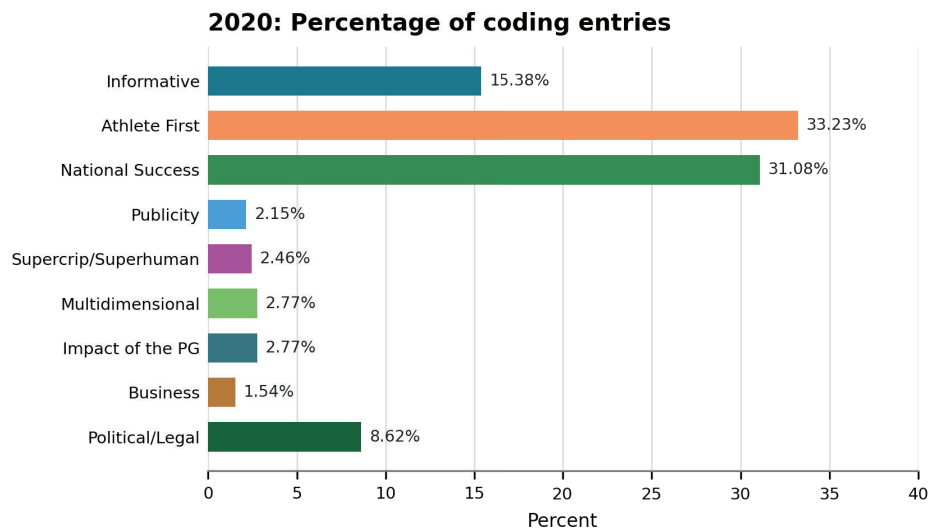
*Figure 3.* Distribution of frames in selected Greek media coverage of the 2016 Paralympic Games, based on coding entries



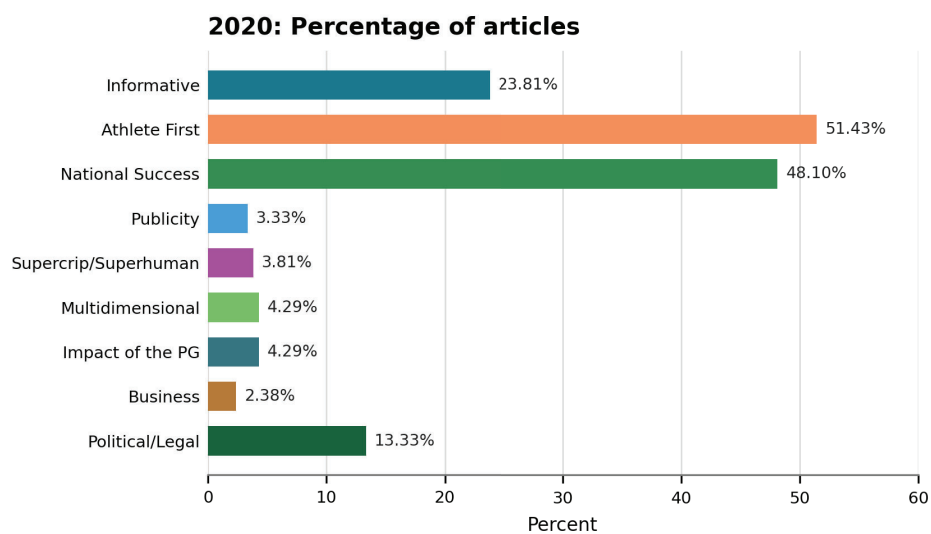
*Figure 4.* Distribution of frames in selected Greek media coverage of the 2016 Paralympic Games, based on articles

For the 2020 Games, Table 8 and Figures 5 and 6 show that Athlete First was the dominant frame, accounting for 33.23% of coding entries and appearing in 51.43% of articles. National Success followed at 31.08% of entries and 48.10% of articles, while Informative accounted for 15.38% and 23.81%, respectively. The less frequent frames were Political/Legal, 8.62% of entries and 13.33% of articles; Impact of the PG and Multidimensional, each 2.77% and 4.29%;

Supercrip/Superhuman, 2.46% and 3.81%; Publicity, 2.15% and 3.33%; and Business, 1.54% and 2.38%.



*Figure 5.* Distribution of frames in selected Greek media coverage of the 2020 Paralympic Games, based on coding entries

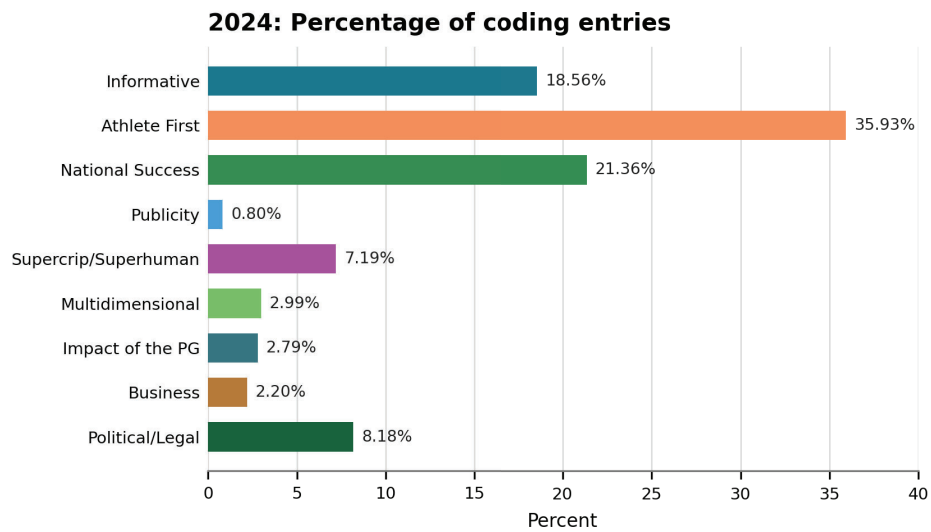


*Figure 6.* Distribution of frames in selected Greek media coverage of the 2020 Paralympic Games, based on articles

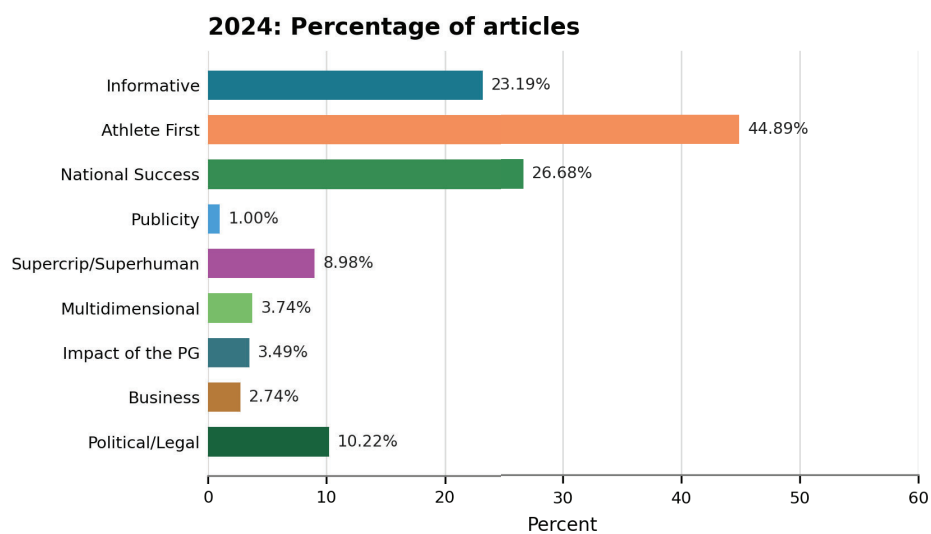
Compared with 2016, the 2020 findings show a stronger emphasis on the Athlete First frame and less frequent use of most secondary frames.

For the 2024 Games, Athlete First accounted for 35.93% of coding entries and appeared in 44.89% of articles, while National Success declined to 21.36% of entries and 26.68% of articles. Informative accounted for 18.56% and 23.19%, respectively; Political/Legal, 8.18% and 10.22%; Supercrip/Superhuman, 7.19% and 8.98%; Multidimensional, 2.99% and 3.74%;

Impact of the PG, 2.79% and 3.49%; Business, 2.20% and 2.74%; and Publicity, 0.80% and 1.00% (Table 9 and Figures 7 and 8).



*Figure 7.* Distribution of frames in selected Greek media coverage of the 2024 Paralympic Games, based on coding entries



*Figure 8.* Distribution of frames in selected Greek media coverage of the 2024 Paralympic Games, based on articles

This distribution confirms the continued dominance of Athlete First and a notable decline in National Success relative to the two earlier editions. The increase in Supercrip/Superhuman suggests a modest shift towards inspirational narratives, while the other frames remained relatively stable. Figures 9 and 10 compare the distribution of all nine coding units across the three editions, using percentages of coding entries and percentages of articles, respectively. The figures highlight the sustained prominence of Athlete First, variation in National Success, and the relative stability or decline of the remaining frames.

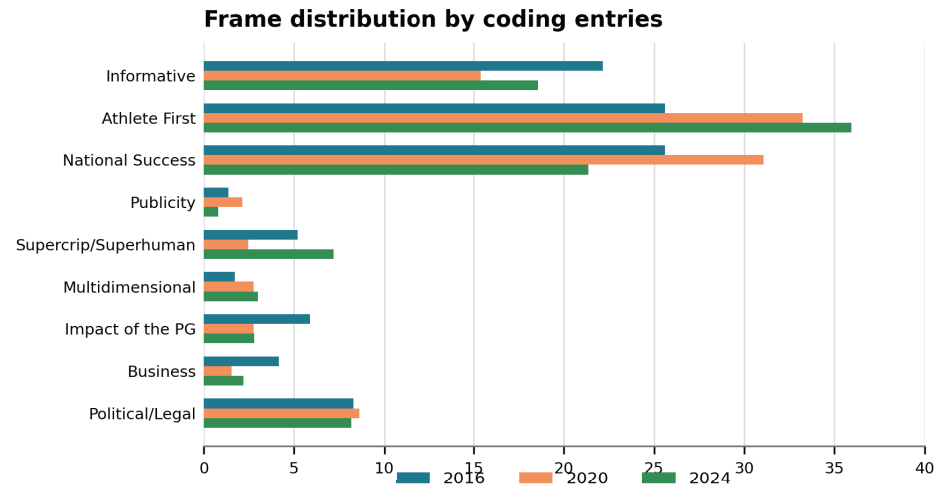


Figure 9. Distribution of frames across the 2016, 2020, and 2024 Paralympic Games in selected Greek media outlets, based on coding entries

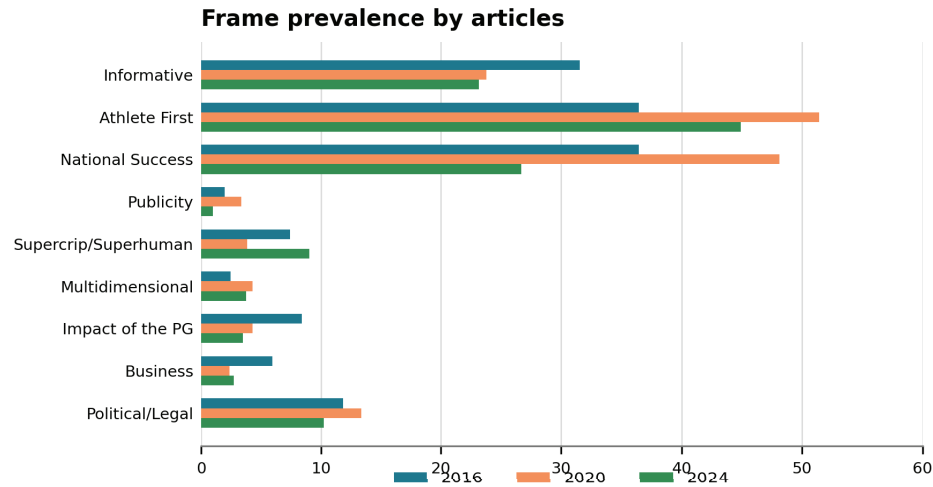


Figure 10. Distribution of frames across the 2016, 2020, and 2024 Paralympic Games in selected Greek media outlets, based on articles

Table 7. Classification of selected 2016 newspaper articles by context

| Outlet / Context     | Naftemporiki.<br>gr | Tanea.<br>gr | Kathimerini.<br>gr | Tovima.<br>gr | Newsit.<br>gr | News24/7.<br>gr | Iefimerida.<br>gr | Newsbomb<br>.gr | Reporter.gr | Total | Total %<br>of coding<br>entries | Total %<br>of<br>articles |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Informative          | 4                   | 4            | 3                  | 7             | 19            | 1               | 14                | 12              | 0           | 64    | 22.15                           | 31.53                     |
| Athlete First        | 7                   | 17           | 11                 | 5             | 6             | 2               | 17                | 7               | 2           | 74    | 25.61                           | 36.45                     |
| National Success     | 8                   | 16           | 9                  | 7             | 5             | 2               | 19                | 6               | 2           | 74    | 25.61                           | 36.45                     |
| Publicity            | 0                   | 0            | 0                  | 0             | 2             | 1               | 1                 | 0               | 0           | 4     | 1.38                            | 1.97                      |
| Supercrip/Superhuman | 0                   | 2            | 3                  | 1             | 1             | 1               | 5                 | 2               | 0           | 15    | 5.19                            | 7.39                      |
| Multidimensional     | 0                   | 1            | 0                  | 0             | 0             | 1               | 2                 | 1               | 0           | 5     | 1.73                            | 2.46                      |
| Impact of the PG     | 0                   | 1            | 1                  | 1             | 2             | 3               | 6                 | 3               | 0           | 17    | 5.88                            | 8.37                      |
| Business             | 1                   | 1            | 1                  | 0             | 1             | 0               | 5                 | 3               | 0           | 12    | 4.15                            | 5.91                      |
| Political/Legal      | 4                   | 0            | 3                  | 1             | 6             | 3               | 3                 | 4               | 0           | 24    | 8.30                            | 11.82                     |

Table 8. Classification of selected 2020 newspaper articles by context

| Outlet / Context     | Naftemporiki.<br>gr | Tanea.<br>gr | Kathimerini.<br>gr | Tovima.<br>gr | Newsit.<br>gr | News24/7.<br>gr | Iefimerida.<br>gr | Newsbomb.<br>gr | Reporter.gr | Total | Total %<br>of coding<br>entries | Total %<br>of<br>articles |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Informative          | 7                   | 5            | 0                  | 2             | 14            | 0               | 9                 | 13              | 0           | 50    | 15.38                           | 23.81                     |
| Athlete First        | 14                  | 10           | 12                 | 8             | 20            | 9               | 17                | 17              | 1           | 108   | 33.23                           | 51.43                     |
| National Success     | 14                  | 12           | 11                 | 9             | 20            | 5               | 12                | 18              | 0           | 101   | 31.08                           | 48.10                     |
| Publicity            | 2                   | 0            | 0                  | 0             | 0             | 0               | 1                 | 4               | 0           | 7     | 2.15                            | 3.33                      |
| Supercrip/Superhuman | 0                   | 2            | 1                  | 1             | 0             | 0               | 2                 | 2               | 0           | 8     | 2.46                            | 3.81                      |
| Multidimensional     | 0                   | 1            | 0                  | 1             | 1             | 0               | 3                 | 3               | 0           | 9     | 2.77                            | 4.29                      |
| Impact of the PG     | 0                   | 0            | 0                  | 0             | 0             | 1               | 2                 | 6               | 0           | 9     | 2.77                            | 4.29                      |
| Business             | 1                   | 0            | 0                  | 0             | 0             | 0               | 1                 | 3               | 0           | 5     | 1.54                            | 2.38                      |
| Political/Legal      | 5                   | 0            | 0                  | 0             | 3             | 1               | 11                | 7               | 1           | 28    | 8.62                            | 13.33                     |

*Table 9.* Classification of selected 2024 newspaper articles by context

| Outlet / Context     | Naftemporiki.<br>gr | Tanea.<br>gr | Kathimerini.<br>gr | Tovima.<br>gr | Newsit.g<br>r | News24/7.<br>gr | Iefimerida.<br>gr | Newsbomb.<br>gr | Reporter.<br>gr | Total | Total %<br>of coding<br>entries | Total %<br>of<br>articles |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Informative          | 4                   | 4            | 3                  | 7             | 36            | 8               | 16                | 15              | 0               | 93    | 18.56                           | 23.19                     |
| Athlete First        | 7                   | 17           | 11                 | 5             | 60            | 19              | 26                | 31              | 4               | 180   | 35.93                           | 44.89                     |
| National Success     | 8                   | 16           | 9                  | 7             | 20            | 14              | 12                | 19              | 2               | 107   | 21.36                           | 26.68                     |
| Publicity            | 0                   | 0            | 0                  | 0             | 0             | 1               | 3                 | 0               | 0               | 4     | 0.80                            | 1.00                      |
| Supercrip/Superhuman | 0                   | 2            | 3                  | 1             | 9             | 5               | 8                 | 7               | 1               | 36    | 7.19                            | 8.98                      |
| Multidimensional     | 0                   | 1            | 0                  | 0             | 5             | 0               | 6                 | 3               | 0               | 15    | 2.99                            | 3.74                      |
| Impact of the PG     | 0                   | 1            | 1                  | 1             | 4             | 3               | 1                 | 3               | 0               | 14    | 2.79                            | 3.49                      |
| Business             | 1                   | 1            | 1                  | 0             | 2             | 2               | 1                 | 2               | 1               | 11    | 2.20                            | 2.74                      |
| Political/Legal      | 4                   | 0            | 3                  | 1             | 4             | 8               | 16                | 4               | 1               | 41    | 8.18                            | 10.22                     |

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined the media visibility and framing of the PG across three editions, 2016, 2020, and 2024, using coverage from ERT, Greece's official media rights holder, and selected newspapers and news websites. Research on Paralympic media coverage in Greece remains limited. By providing a descriptive comparison across three editions, the study complements international research, offers preliminary evidence from the Greek context, and establishes a basis for further investigation. ERT coverage declined from 115 hours in 2016 to 107 hours in 2020 and 97 hours in 2024. In contrast, the selected newspapers and news websites showed a modest increase from 203 articles in 2016 to 210 in 2020, followed by a substantial increase to 401 in 2024. This divergence may reflect editorial priorities, audience interest, or resource constraints and suggests that Greek television coverage has not kept pace with developments in other media.

Internationally, the Paris 2024 Games marked a historic development because all 22 summer sports received live coverage, compared with 19 at the Tokyo 2020 Games (IPC, 2024). A record number of media rights holders also reflected growing global interest. Better, a charitable social enterprise in the United Kingdom, reported large increases in searches for several Paralympic sports, including table tennis, athletics, wheelchair rugby, sitting volleyball, cycling, triathlon, badminton, goalball, blind football, and swimming. Across these sports, Wikipedia views increased by a combined 942% (Hellenic Paralympic Committee, 2024; McGowan, 2024). Greek broadcasting did not fully mirror this trend, as the largest increase in visibility occurred in newspapers and news websites rather than on television.

Agenda-setting theory highlights the importance of media visibility in shaping perceptions of the significance of the PG, but the framing of the Games is equally important. The theory suggests that the media may influence not what people think, but what they think about (Baran & Davis, 2003). In Greece, declining television coverage alongside increased coverage in newspapers and news websites may indicate a shift in attention towards particular media platforms, while potentially limiting overall exposure to the Games.

Mediated contact theory complements this interpretation by emphasising that media representations of social groups can shape public perceptions of those groups, including people with disabilities and Paralympic athletes (Ortiz & Harwood, 2007). Visibility determines whether the Games are noticed, while framing influences how audiences understand them. The results were reported both as percentages of coding entries and as percentages of articles, enabling interpretation of each frame's relative weight within the coding dataset and its prevalence across the selected outlets.

Across all three editions, Athlete First was the dominant frame in the selected newspapers and news websites. In 2016, it was equally prominent with National Success, but by 2024 the emphasis on National Success had declined. The strong focus on national athletes is consistent with previous research and may partly reflect the structure of the Games, in which athletes represent their countries (Cheong et al., 2025; Pullen et al., 2019). Foreign athletes and their achievements were largely absent and appeared mainly in exceptional circumstances, including the death of a Paralympic cyclist (Tovima, 2016b), an athlete's decision to postpone euthanasia (Tovima, 2016a), personal or inspirational stories (News24/7, 2024; Newsbomb, 2021), or secondary references when a Greek athlete won a medal. Even when Greek athletes medalled, headlines often prioritised national achievement over individual performance. One 2016 article, for example, used the headline 'Gold Day for Greece' and mentioned the athlete's name and performance only briefly (Reporter.gr, 2016). In other cases, the national medal count appeared only at the end of the article.

The relatively low frequency of the Supercrip/Superhuman frame in the Greek context contrasts with international studies in which it was a dominant feature of Paralympic coverage (McGillivray et al., 2021; Pearson & Misener, 2021; Tynedal & Wolbring, 2013).

Overall, the framing used by the selected Greek media outlets may be interpreted as generally positive. Paralympians were usually described as athletes or champions, with attention directed towards athletic performance and the success of the Greek Paralympic team. The relationship between Athlete First and National Success can be partly understood through Bruce's (2014) argument that nationalistic framing can position athletes with disabilities as elite athletes. In this interpretation, national identity overrides other identity characteristics, including disability, that might otherwise contribute to marginalisation. The persistence of national framing across all three editions may also indicate that Greek media use this narrative to make Paralympic sport socially recognisable. However, the limited visibility of foreign athletes, which differs from mainstream sport coverage (De Léséleuc et al., 2010), may suggest that disability sport is regarded as less significant unless national athletes are involved. The Informative frame, which included Games schedules and information about the Greek team's participation, was also present across all three editions.

From the perspective of mediated contact theory, the dominant Athlete First and nationalistic frames may support a less stereotyped view of Paralympic athletes by focusing on athletic skill rather than disability. A nationalistic focus can also strengthen national pride and engagement with the Games, but it may reinforce an understanding of the PG that is centred primarily on national achievement.

Regardless of the factors underlying this pattern, declining television coverage is a concern for future editions. Greater visibility and constructive framing of the PG could contribute to the social inclusion of people with disabilities. Conversely, reduced visibility may limit sponsorship opportunities and the growth of fan communities for Para athletes (Kolotouchkina et al., 2021).

In Greece, greater visibility of the PG could support the social acceptance and normalisation of disability and help reduce stereotypes and prejudice. These changes could contribute to improvements in rehabilitation services, education, and workforce participation for people with disabilities (Smith et al., 2017). Although the PG represent only one dimension of disability, they can promote inclusion by raising awareness, providing role models, and normalising the participation of people with disabilities in sport and physical activity (Kamberidou et al., 2019; Pullen et al., 2019).

The social impact of the Games may nevertheless be temporary. After the London 2012 Games, many athletes returned to an 'inaccessible reality' (Bush et al., 2013). Lasting change therefore requires a stronger Paralympic legacy that extends beyond the two-week duration of the Games (Pearson & Misener, 2021). Sustained and responsible media coverage could contribute to this objective.

### Recommendations for Future Research

This study provides a starting point for further research on both media coverage of the Paralympic Games and the wider context of the Games in Greece. Several priorities warrant investigation.

Future research could include:

1. **Comparative Analysis of PG and OG Media Coverage:**  
Comparing media visibility and framing of the PG and OG would provide deeper insight into how the two events are portrayed and would identify persistent disparities or improvements in coverage.
2. **Audience and Public Perception:**  
Research on how Greek audiences interpret and engage with Paralympic media coverage could clarify the social effects of visibility and athlete representation. Surveys or interviews could be used to examine public attitudes towards the PG.

3. **Sponsorship and Commercial Effects of Paralympic Media Coverage:**  
Examining the relationship between media visibility and sponsorship opportunities for Paralympic athletes and the Games could clarify the economic implications of increased coverage and identify strategies for strengthening sponsorship engagement.
4. **Athletes' Perspectives on Paralympic Media Coverage:**  
Future studies could examine whether Paralympic athletes believe they are represented accurately and how media narratives affect their public image, career opportunities, and experiences as athletes.
5. **Representation of International Athletes:**  
The nationalistic focus identified in Greek media was accompanied by limited coverage of international athletes' achievements. Future research should investigate the causes of this pattern and its consequences for the global recognition of Paralympic sports and athletes.

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The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

### **Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process**

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Grammarly to assist with improving spelling, grammar, and language clarity. The authors carefully reviewed and revised the output to ensure accuracy and take full responsibility for the content of the final manuscript.

### **Notes on Contributors**

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