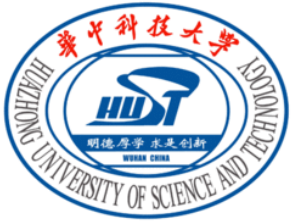


October 27th - 29th, 2017, 2nd PRSC Conference, Wuhan, China



Toward an innovative strategy in China's social media: French museums' "smart move" on strategic communication in French public diplomacy in the digital era

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Introduction – genesis of French Museums digital project in China

Context :

- By the end of 2016, 751,000,000 Chinese netizens = total European Internet Users
- Social media has already become the information center in China: 69,1% Chinese netizens use Wechat V.S. 43,5% of Chinese netizen use Weibo
- In 2017, 2,200,000 Chinese tourists will visit in France, only 1,5% of the total of Chinese tourists aboard
- The digital tool and digital communication in the social media age could be considered as an important diplomatic tool for deploying one country's soft power in attracting foreign publics, including potential foreign tourists with a “low price”.
- The main French museums have already engaged in place branding process for promote France attraction

What are the links between French institutional PR actions and French new public diplomacy efforts ?

– H1. Hybrid practice : mix of cultural diplomacy, soft power, place branding, use of digital tools;

– H2. Strong informational support and use of CI tools in the decision-making process;

H3. Strategic posture: a good “visitor” for diplomatic and politic communication

Introduction - Strategic communication & the evolution of public diplomacy

Strategic Communication – a hybrid concept :

- As purposeful use of a set of communication actions by an organisation to achieve objectives (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verčič, & Sriramesh, 2007, p. 7)
- (French academia) as a fresh concept related to “public diplomacy” (Huyghe, 2011; Pahlavi, 2015, pp. 553–606) and a toolbox (Reynaud & Walas, 2015) of diplomatic achievements which also related to a country's soft power.
Soft power : using a set of immaterial resources to attract foreign audience – “Diplomatie d’influence” (Martel, 2013; Tenzer, 2013)

- To solve **4I** problem (Huyghe, 2011, p.85): **I**mage, **I**nfluence, **I**deology , **I**nterest

- Includes “*formulation of language elements, storytelling, valorisation of the national patrimony, communication of great stories of*”

Method

Literature review for framework building:

- Theoretical endorsement: *strategic communication, PR, soft power, public diplomacy and competitive intelligence*

Corpus building since 2015:

- Long term observation in Chinese social media, principally Weibo
- Semi-structured interviews with diplomats, communicators, and PR managers of French China-based public institutions
- Qualitative study in French Museums and their PR company
- Questionnaires and interviews with Chinese public
- 2,200 French museums' Weibo posts have been collected and analysed

Corpus – between 02/2016-08/2017

Account (Creation date)	Louvre (01/05/2015)	Orsay Museum (30/07/2015)	Army Museum (07/10/2016)	Total
Followers	78 283	46 087	61 118	185 488
Original posts	512	617	192	1321
Retweets	478	333	112	923
Total	990	990	304	2244

I. French museums' online PR campaign: both marketing & Diplomatic efforts

I.A. Diplomatic efforts

Using social media platforms for deploying French soft power

- Mission of SCAC-IFC : *"increasing French 'elites' attractiveness (...), and promoting the debate of ideas and the intellectual influence of France as well as developing France as a cultural image"*

Using social media platforms for increasing French cultural influence and attraction

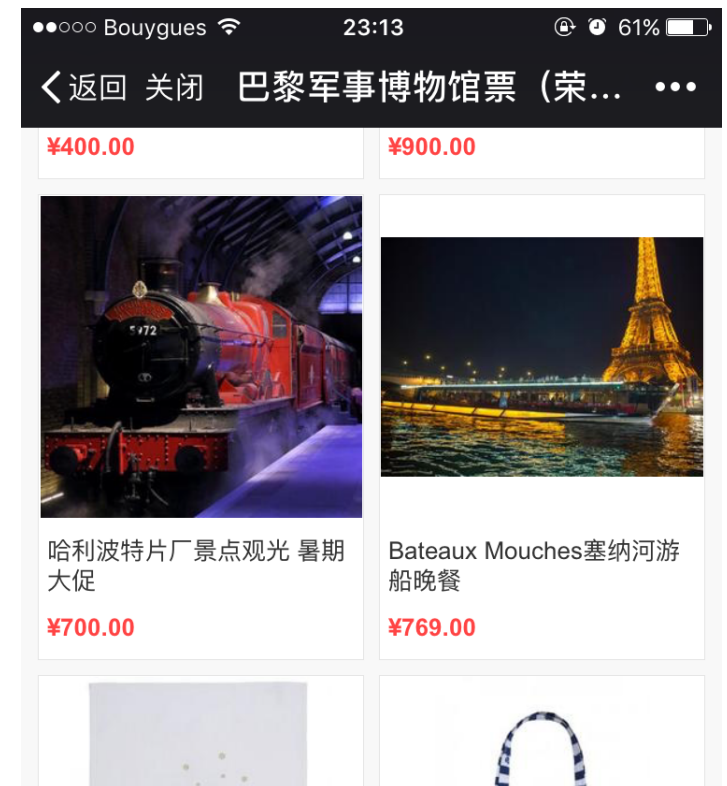
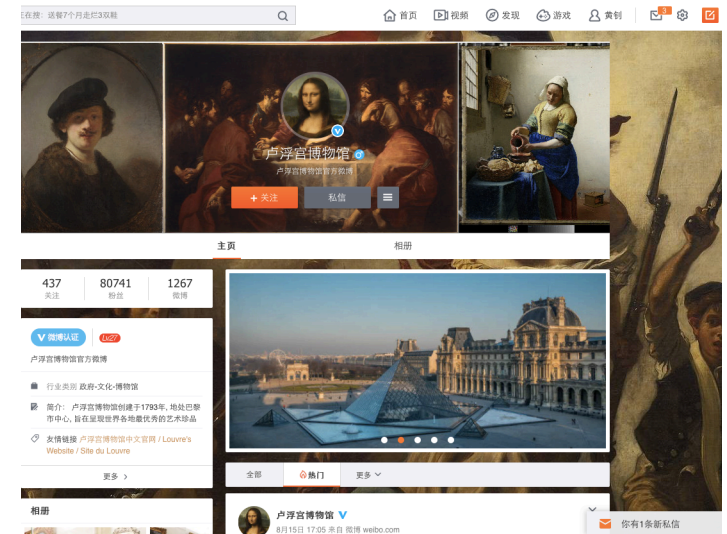
- *"We pay attention to this new communication tool from the beginning of 'Weibo age', we have specialized staff for social media communication. Up to now, as a foreign governmental institution, we have attracted at least 1,559,500 Chinese Weibo users to follow us."* (Interview with Yong Qi, Atout France, 31/08/2017)

Using social media for French soft power is also a challenge

- *"(...) how to put a link or a combination of our Franco-Chinese cultural events and social media communication so that the Chinese public can better know and understand French culture, it is a main question that we are working on."* (Interview with Yingxuan Ba, SCAC-IFC, 22/08/2017)

I. French museums' online PR campaign: both marketing & Diplomatic efforts

- I.B. 5 findings for French museums' 'smart move' in Chinese social media
 - Image building by unifying Museums' official names
 - Creating special events only for Chinese users
 - Inter-museum, bilateral museum digital communication cooperation
 - Focusing on younger generation by using new social media tool
 - Achieving commercial aims by using social media platforms



II. The use of competitive intelligence tools in the decision-making process of daily communication

PR as “*a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their publics*”
(PRSA, Wilcox et al., 2014, p. 33)

The competitive intelligence, as a set of methods and processes, consists of an analytical capacity focused on the implementation and planning of strategic communication.

- **Internal and external audit** for a global understanding of all resources and the management of knowledge which could be used in the future
- **Strategic capacity** links knowledge and communication channels
- **Strategic planning** corresponds to daily operation that focuses on a “tool box” of communication : storytelling, spin doctors, image sharing, popular topic, live video, planning, etc.

III. Storytelling serves to French new public diplomacy in China

- French museums' social media editorial and communication process: 291 posts have been identified as diplomatic or political function on behalf of "France Voice".

- Storytelling at important political anniversary for explaining government position
- Storytelling with clear diplomatic symbol for seeking a mutual understanding



Conclusion

Aims of this paper:

- To discover and highlight the strategies, tactics and tools mobilised by French museums in Chinese social media for their innovative communication and international transcultural PR operation.

Three communication effects confirmed:

- Spreading French culture in Chinese social media
- Stimulating the desire of potential tourists
- Increasing the number of visitors to French museums owing to the digital strategic communication

Future research:

- French institutional grass-roots lobbying in China ? ?

Thank you ! Merci ! 谢谢!

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