

The Influence of Social Media on the Design of the National Image in the Globalization Context

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Abstract. With the constant improvement of the science & technology and the rapidly spread mobile internet, the information dissemination method is also appeared a variety around the world. And the position of the social media being the main force of information dissemination is also much more prominent. In contrast, the speed of information dissemination is also becoming faster and faster, the rapid and convenient information dissemination has accelerated the globalization process, making the relations between the countries all over the world much closer. Today, while the exchange of information among different countries in both the economic, political and cultural fields etc. Becoming more frequent, the quality of the national image shall influence the speaking right and competitiveness of one country among the international society directly. Therefore, being the important part of the national “soft power”, the design of national image is becoming crucial. In this paper, it took the Weibo of China Sina - such an important social media as the study platform, by selecting the Weibo accounts that certified by Sina and having the important influence on the design of American national image as the object of study, including the Weibo account of American Embassy in China that representing American political affairs, the TNC (The Nature Conservancy) Weibo account that representing the non-governmental organizations, and the personal Weibo account of Rupert Murdoch - the famous pressman, the executive chairman of US-based News Corp, by using the study methods of statistical analysis and text analysis, it focused on the analysis of the popular micro-blogging inside the three Weibo accounts, to analyze the important influencing effects that the Sina Weibo made on the design of the American national image, summarize the strategy and inspiration that using the social media to make the framework for national image, in order to provide some practical proposals for each country using the social media to improve their national image under the new media environment.

Keywords: Globalization context · Social media · The design of the national image

1 Introduction

With the coming internet era especially the rapidly popularized mobile internet, it makes the information dissemination more convenient and free, the interpersonal relationship

is becoming quite closer, and the exchange of information among different countries is also more frequent. The internet crossing the barrier of time and space has made the information dissemination becoming more instant and interactive. Along with the development of internet technology, online social media has been grown so rapidly. Undoubtedly, at present the online social media was becoming the backbone force to guide the public opinion and one of the effective carriers for international propaganda.

2 The Social Media Under Globalization Context

2.1 The Social Media Is Creating the New Model of Information Dissemination

The social interactivity and expressing superiority of the social media enables the receivers getting the rights of information dissemination in a wider range, largely enhancing the subjective initiative of the receivers in dissemination. In the social media, people can access the mass information conveniently and rapidly and give comments freely based on the received information, it integrates the interpersonal communication, organizational communication and the mass communication together. At the same time, such an unprecedented interactivity enables people making the barrier-free communication across the boundary, and makes the world more and more liking a “global village”.

2.2 The Social Media Enables Communication Subject Becoming Towards Diversification

Essentially, the social media shall be the effective carrier for information sharing and knowledge sharing, the platform for the public declaring their opinions and views. In such a internet era, every one could express their own voice through all kinds of social media openly. The internet has popularized the communication object from those special groups such as the reporter to each ordinary people who having certain expression and dissemination foundation. Everybody shall have the speech right on the social media, and the communication object of the information dissemination is also becoming more diversified accordingly.

2.3 The Social Media Accelerated the Speed of Information Dissemination

The social media that taking the Weibo as the representative shall have the biggest difference apart from the traditional media, that is its fission propagation mode in “One to N to N” style, such propagation mode promoted the freedom of information dissemination and accelerated the speed of information dissemination, enabled the social media presenting the academic and instant network structure for information sharing dissemination. At the same time the accelerated speed of the information dissemination also accelerated the globalization process. Currently, every country is coming to realize that under such new media environment, to positively and proactively utilize the internet for effective national communication and better design of national image shall play the

important role on the improvement of the nation's international prestige, maintenance of national security and social stability.

3 The Design of National Image Through the Social Media

Till now there's still no unified definition on the "national image" in the academic circles. Chinese Scholar Liu Xiaoyan did think that the national image is the "overall evaluation that the international community and the public made on a certain country in the relative stable level", it's the "projection that the national objective state did make on the public opinions i.e. the overall reflection that the social public did think about the national influence, views, attitudes and evaluation - the summation of the emotion and will that the public did take to the country". In a word, the national image is one of the indispensable parts of the national soft power, it does not influence the external diplomatic policies and styles of the country, but also play the important role for the country getting the speech right and improving its own international position among the international community. Currently we're just at the active age to utilize the social media for diplomacy. From the International Monetary Fund in 2011, to the Prime Minister of UK - Cameron in 2014, then the executive chairman of the US-based News Corp - Rupert Murdoch in 2015, more and more international organizations and foreign dignitaries celebrities have opened their own account in the Weibo of China Sina. The social media shall have the incomparable advantages on the design of national image with its better characteristics in openness, interactivity and communitization.

3.1 The Manifestation Modes to Utilize the Social Media for Design of National Image

One of the difference between the social media that taking Weibo as the representative and the traditional media, is the diversification of the communication subject. Thus the communication subject of the national image in Weibo shall include not only the government and its subsidiary media, but also the organizations and ordinary people outside the government. From the perspective of communication subject, the themes for national image propaganda in Weibo can be mainly classified into the Weibo account of government body, such as the Weibo account of US Embassy in China; the personal Weibo account of state leaders, such as the personal Weibo account of the Prime Minister of UK Cameron; the Weibo account of non-governmental organization, such as the Weibo account of American's National Geographic and the personal Weibo account, such as account of the executive chairman of US-based News Corp Rupert Murdoch.

3.1.1 The Weibo Account of Government Body

The Weibo account of government body refers to the official Weibo account that the government and relevant agencies opened in the Weibo of Sina, such as Weibo account of US Embassy in China - it mainly introduce their national conditions and culture & arts, provide social service information accordingly. According to the search engine of Sina's Weibo, it shows that there are already 193 Weibo accounts related to the Embassy

and got certified by the Weibo of Sina, among them there are not only the official Weibo account of the various countries' embassy in China, but also the official Weibo account of their culture office related to their embassy in China.

3.1.2 The Personal Weibo Account of the State Leaders

Currently so many state leaders has opened their social media account, for example, there are already the Twitter accounts for US President Obama, the Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and German Prime Minister Merkel et al. In Weibo of Sina, there are also accounts of the former Australian Prime Minister Rudd Kevin and Prime Minister of US- Cameron et al. Those foreign dignitaries often declared some political, cultural and diplomatic topics related to their home country in Weibo and communicated with the people of the host countries. For example, while paying the visit to China in 2013, the Prime Minister of UK - Cameron has published the new of "thanks for your attention. And I'm glad to visit China again as the Prime Minister of UK. I want to get the knowledge of your ideas, please leave your questions here and I may arrange some answers according before I finished my visit in China." such micro-blog has been forwarded more than 39000 times and with 21000 comments until now. This micro-blog did not only express Cameron's willing to get knowledge of Chinese people, but even more important thing is that it gets the closer distance between Cameron and Chinese ordinary people effectively, and brings such a good feeling of kindness and friendship.

3.1.3 Weibo Account of Non-governmental Organization

The non-governmental organizations shall play the important role on diplomacy, whatever for government's decision making or the public opinions, it shall have the far-reaching influence accordingly; it is not limited within the activities of information dissemination and initiatives, but what is more to establish the relationship between them and the behavioral agent of citizen society of other countries and promote the network connection among the non-governmental organizations and groups at home and abroad. During the Weibo diplomacy, the non-governmental organizations usually play the essential role accordingly, many diplomatic actions that the state government is not convenient to do directly can be spread out through the non-governmental organizations. Such as The Nature Conservancy of American in Weibo name of "The Nature Conservancy TNC" has got more than 60000 fans in Weibo, and their micro-blog contents are taking nature environment protection as the theme, to convey the advanced concept of environmental protection, designing the American's national image from one side.

3.1.4 Personal Weibo Account

The figures who enjoyed the higher reputation among the world usually act the role of opinion leader while designing the national image in Weibo, being with higher awareness and wider range of social communication with national characters, while becoming the subject of Weibo they can also make the very direct influence on the Weibo fans with attention on them. For example the executive chairman of US-based News Corp - Rupert Murdoch has opened his own Weibo account in Sept. 2015 and now his fans are already more than 380000 person. Even though his Weibo update quantity and speed is

quite slow, but each micro-blog did get thousands of comments, forwarding and likes in average. Thus it can be seen that the personal Weibo account shall also have the power on design of national image that cannot be ignored accordingly.

3.2 The Characters to Utilize Social Media for Design of National Image

In recent years, along with the continuous progress of media technology, the platform for design of national image gradually shifted to the network media and new media accordingly, thereinto the use of social media, especially the use of Weibo has been drawn the attentions from more and more countries and presented the situation with more and more popularity. By combining the character of social media and making a general survey of diplomatic activities by each country, it summarizes the features that the design of national image on social media may have.

3.2.1 The Design of National Image on Social Media Is More Open and Transparent

The features of good openness and interactivity that the social media may have enables the designing activities of national image on social media becoming more open and transparent, it provides the wider public with such a channel to understand the national images of each country more conveniently and rapidly. For example, through the Weibo account of US embassy in China, Chinese people could learn more about American's local customs & practices and social culture directly and participated in corresponding discussion, that makes the design of American national image more transparent and direct & stereo.

3.2.2 The Design of National Image on Social Media Is More Direct and People-Oriented

In comparison with the output model by using traditional culture, the design of national image on social media can touch the people in the country more directly and widely. For example, through the platform of Weibo of Sina, the state institution could connect and communicate with billions of netizen and people directly, thus can save many intermediate links among the design of national image. While saving the cost of dissemination, it shall also achieve the better propagation effects.

3.2.3 The Design of National Image on Social Media Has the Participants in Diversity

Everyone shall have speech rights on social media and everybody can be the communication subject also. Therefore. The participants for the design of national image on social media are diversified, they are no longer the task performed by only one department or institution, but with the participation by more and more organizations, individuals - including the non-governmental organizations and individuals. With the further development of the social media like the Weibo etc., the design of national image may

have more obvious trend towards the diversified main body, any organization and individual could participate in the design of national image through Weibo of Sina.

3.3 The Important Significance to Utilize Social Media for the Design of National Image

Under the new media ecological environment, the better social interactivity, topic time-liness and expression superiority presented by social media has provided a brand new method for the countries all over the world to make the design of national image, it made the national image of each country more stereo and diversified, and made the diplomatic system that being ever in closer state becoming more free and open, endowing the diplomacy of each country with more personal characteristics. With the continuously accelerated pace of globalization, the demand of each country community to design the positive and active national image is becoming stronger increasingly, the good and bad national image on the international stage shall directly influence the international competitiveness and influence of one country.

3.3.1 The National Image Shall Be the Important Part of the Soft Power of the Country

The overall national strength of a country does not only include the hard power, such as the state economic strength, army force and technology power, but also contain the soft power - such as the culture & arts, values and national image of the country. The soft power of the country is such an intangible power, it presents the attraction of the values and the ability of political orientation of one country. Under the globalization context, both the countries of the world is positively designing their better national image, transmitting the culture and values and life concept of their own country, so as to guide foreign people being melt with the state interests of their native country, further to form the stronger national soft power, to realize the maximization of state interests. In recent years, from the mutual Cultural Year hosted among the European countries such as UK, France, Russia and China, to the opened Weibo account of several foreign dignitaries, these do not only present the changes of current art & culture output and values concept propagation mode, but also highlight the emphasize that each country made to the design of national image.

3.3.2 Better National Image Shall Be the Important Guarantee for National Interests

With the rapid growth of internet technology, the boundary between the countries is becoming blurring gradually, the economic trade flow and art & cultural exchange are also becoming closer increasingly. Under current international environment, to design the good national image shall be the important path for one country achieving international speech rights, improving its international position and securing state interests. The negative national image shall be not only isolated and resisted by other countries, the more important is to obstruct the external political, economic and cultural exchange, then bring severe damage to state interests. The good and bad national image shall be

the key factor of whether this country could stand firmly among the nations of the world, it shall have the great impact on it to accomplish the maximization of state interests, play the national power and promote the overall national strength.

3.3.3 The Design of National Image Shall Be Important Means for Improving International Influence of the Country

Under the great environment with increasingly fierce competition, many countries has incorporated the design of better national image as their state strategy. The cultural values of their own country, the media organization and dissemination ability the country may have in the international community and the state discourse construction ability should be the foundation for the design of national image. Obtaining the strong media dissemination ability may help the country gaining the speech rights in the international community, and enable the country protecting the national rights in international stage and improving the international influence of the country. In contrast, for those countries with the weak media dissemination ability and relatively deprivation of material culture at present, because they did not construct the positive and true national image, they are always in the aphasic situation among the dissemination of national image, thus also damaged both the national interests and international influences accordingly.

4 The Survey and Analysis on American's National Image Based on Weibo of Sina

The China-US relations should be one of the most important relations in the 21st century, in this paper, the reason for the US being selected as the behavioral agent is that, on one hand is based on the leading position of that the US has utilized the social media for their diplomacy, on the other hand it is because of that to explore the diplomatic behavior of US made on the social media shall have certain realistic and reference significance, through the survey and analysis on the American's national image in Weibo of Sina, it shall provide certain guide suggestions for other country to carry out the public diplomacy accordingly. Usually there are four forms to express the design of national image in Weibo of Sina, they are: the government organization's Weibo account, personal Weibo account of the state leaders, the Weibo account of non-governmental organizations and personal Weibo account. Thus, for the study on American's national image in Weibo of Sina, in this paper it selected the Weibo account of US embassy in China, the Weibo Account of The Nature Conservancy TNC and the personal Weibo account of the executive chairman of US-based News Corp - Rupert Murdoch as the object of study, to focus on the study of these hot micro-blog contents in the three Weibo accounts, through the text analysis method to explore the American's national image formed by these Weibo accounts in three different categories. For it still haven't found the quality personal Weibo account certified by Weibo of Sina that related to US leaders, this time the expression form for the personal Weibo account of the state leaders is not included in the analysis range accordingly.

4.1 Its Political Image Is Spread Out Around the “Democracy System”, “Legal Human Rights” and “Public Supervision”

For the design of American’s political national image, this paper mainly focused on the text analysis of the Weibo account of US embassy in China, it selected 45 hot micro blogs in this Weibo account during Jan of 2016 that been widely noted by the fans for classification. Through study it was found that among these 45 micro blogs, 20 of them are about American politics/society categories, 10 for bilateral diplomacy, 5 for culture/exchange, and 7 for environment/energy sources/technology, 2 for education/visa, and 1 for others. For 2016 is just the US election year, besides creating the topic of # the Primary Election in US # in its Weibo account of Sina, the US embassy in China did also interact with Chinese netizen positively, to popularize the relative knowledge of American Votes. Among them, the reading quantity of # the Primary Election in US # is as high as 8.131 million people and with discussion in 1283 times. The US embassy in China did not only discuss the issue of “American Votes” with Chinese people in Weibo of Sina, but also discussed the problems related to the U.S. fiscal spending with the people, making the efforts to form the American’s national image with transparent & in-corrupt government, maintaining the Constitution and securing citizen’s rights.



Fig. 1. #The US primary elections# Weibo Topic

4.2 It Social Image Is Mainly Presented Through Rendering the Welfare Benefits of the National Life

The study on American’s social image is taken from the text data in both the official Weibo accounts of both the US embassy in China and The Nature Conservancy TNC. For example, upon the request of netizen, the Weibo account of US embassy in China has discussed the fiscal spending of American government made for people’s livelihood and education. Another example is that, for the environmental protection, the official Weibo account of The Nature Conservancy TNC has released the micro blog in name of Leonardo donated One Million US Dollars again to TNC and got the unanimous praise from the netizen of Weibo. Meanwhile, the Weibo account of US embassy in China did also set the dissemination and discussion on those topics such as “wild animals protection” and “global warming” etc. At the same time they’ve also given the clear attitude

for some inherent social problems, such as the reporter’s personal safety. And the dissemination of such a micro blog has been got the highest record in the history, gaining forwarding in 5262 times and 3179 comments, also induced the resonance of Chinese people. Through the dissemination of such series micro blogs, it outlined the great-nation image with high welfare, responsibility and high gross national happiness accordingly.

“对于那些试图恐吓或监禁记者的人，我们需要站出来大声、清晰地说从事新闻业、报道真相不是犯罪。它是荣誉的象征。它是一种公共服务。”——克里国务卿在华盛顿邮报总部强调美国致力于保护新闻业。



1月29日 14:45 来自 微博 weibo.com

收藏 | 转发 5262 | 评论 3179 | 1469

Fig. 2. Weibo communication effect of reporters’ personal safety issue

4.3 Its Cultural Image Emphasizes the Diversification and Innovation

For the design of national cultural image, the US embassy in China has spread multiple topics, such as that the Pluto was “degraded” as the dwarf planet and “the nine planets in the solar system changed into eight” in astronomy category, and the US astronaut-related in aviation category, in addition the travel news related to American landscapes—such as the famous US Route 66 etc. Although the disseminated topics are multiple, but all of them did show the core values of American’s bravery and innovation etc. To fully

Wonderful Chinese food in Beijing. Now back to boring diet in NY. Any suggestions for places with real Chinese food?
2015-9-20 11:24 来自 iPad客户端

收藏 | 转发 301 | 评论 916 | 1347

同时转发到我的微博 评论

全部 | 热门 | 认证用户 | 关注的人 共916条

别chao : go believe (狗不理包子)
2015-9-20 12:55 回复 12

张家二爷之游城探香 : boss, bring me to ny , I can cook Chinese food 🍝
2015-9-20 11:29 回复 108

Fig. 3. Communication effect of the personal Weibo account of Rupert Murdoch

propaganda American's culture, the US embassy in China did also create the Weibo topic of #2016 wandering to the US#. For the aspect of cultural image propagation, the executive chairman of the US based News Corp - Rupert Murdoch did also show some in his few micro blogs released before, one of them is the micro blog asking for help to seek the real Chinese food in N.Y., gained the forwarding in 301 times and 916 comments. Rupert Murdoch has conveyed such a kind and friendly image to Chinese people through his personal Weibo account, and made the good impression in the netizen.

5 The Strategy for Design of National Image in Sina's Weibo

5.1 The Propagation Mode Based on the Opinion Leader

"The Weibo information & content should be spread through the network layers with the attention or being concerned." Among the Weibo propagation, the opinion leader with even higher credibility shall have more influence on the design of national image. By taking the personal Weibo account of Rupert Murdoch at his age of more than 80 as the example, there have the micro blog of meeting with the general secretary Xi Jinping of CCCP, the micro blog of visiting the Xiaomi Company and also the micro blog of asking for help from the netizen to seek for the real Chinese food in N.Y. etc., all the three micro blogs has got the good communication effect. For individual, it outlines such a personal image of down-to-earth, up to the design of national image, it shows the national image with the diversified country, innovation and hating to lose. Through the communication with hot nodes of the opinion leader on social media, to create the better communication and designing effects with quite small even the cost without expense, this should be incomparable for the traditional media.

5.2 To Make the "Built-in" Real Time Dissemination on the Hot Topic

By taking the Weibo as the representative, the social media shall have so many terminal sharing platform. At the same time it has the flexible method of information publish and with the strong interactivity, can realize the real time dissemination on the hot topics. For example the American Votes in 2016, it did not only create the topic of #the American Votes#, but also release the micro blogs such as "what is the political congress of party representatives", "who has the right to run for the president?" and "how did a midterm election influence the Votes?" etc., to carry out the warp-up of the hot topic on American Votes. Meanwhile, it also follow up the 2015 World Climate Conference in Paris, North Korea nuclear problem and the news of American government leader visiting China through Weibo. Through the publication of those micro blogs, it did not only improve the timeliness of the news, but also form the good interaction with Chinese people. In comparison with the traditional media, the social media such as Weibo can accelerate the communication speed of information on one hand, on the other hand can also more directly face to the audience widely for designing the national image.

5.3 To Integrate Online/Offline Sources Effectively

Whatever it is the US embassy in China or The Nature Conservancy TNC, on one hand, it did effectively integrate the network resources like the official website, blog and other related websites through the open interface of Weibo, on the other hand it shall also positively integrate the online and offline resources while there's hot topic. For example the hot topic of American Votes, it may ask the offline audience and give the answer for their concerned problems, enable the audience participating in this process and forming the good interaction accordingly. It shall perform the live broadcast on the high-level visit to China through Weibo, meanwhile invite audience to participate in their offline activities in the form of giveaway program. The social media that taking Weibo as representative has the good cross-platform characteristics, it can effectively integrate all kinds of communication resources.

5.4 The Propagation Mode by Utilizing the Agenda-Setting

By taking the agenda-setting method to accomplish the guiding effects on the public opinion, guide the thinking direction of the audience, it manifests in two ways: the one is focusing on the setting of Weibo content agenda, the other one is to make the continuous report by using Weibo. For example the Weibo account of US embassy in China, in order to draw attention of the audience, it always releases the relative hot topic or comments related to China in time, such as the North Korea nuclear problem. Through the attention paid on these hot events, it shall gradually bring out the values their native country have hold, further to expand the communication effects and seize the market opportunity in time. Through the continuous follow-up and creating the topic on 2016 American Votes through Weibo, the US embassy in China has fulfilled the attitude of the audience on the hot events, meanwhile effectively popularized the knowledge of the democratic system in their own country.

6 The Inspiration from the Improvement of National Image by Utilizing Social Media

6.1 To Emphasize the Localized Operation, Positively Cultivating the Opinion Leader

The design of national image by using so-called localized operation of social media shall contain two aspects: the one is the localization of content selection, the other one is the localization of operating staff in social media. For the content, it may meet the demand of the audience, which is related to the audience and loved by the audience. The operating staff in social media shall be local people, for they may write, select and propaganda the content for design of other national image in more true and comprehensive way, and can be easily fit the demand of the audience. By designing the national image through the opinion leader, it not only enables the information content more feasible, but also improves the depth and width of the information dissemination during the designing process.

6.2 To Master the Hot Topic, Building the Communication Subject in Diversity

While performing the design of national image, the country shall positively grab the hot topic, chase the speech right among the international community, guide the direction of public opinion among the audience. In such an era with economy of attention, the country should learn to grab the attention of audience, because that grabbing the attention may equal to having the influence, but while grabbing the hot public opinion it shall fully understand the audience psychology. With the good cross-platform attribution of social media, each behavioral agent shall focus on playing more interaction between the subjects of public opinion, break the barriers among the information dissemination platform to fully develop their own characteristics, to mutually play the role by combining the multiplex subjects of public opinion.

7 Conclusion

In the gradually accelerated globalization process of today, the design of national image shall have the unprecedented significance than ever before, because the national image may impact the speech rights and influence of one country among the international community. Along with the continuous development of network technology and the increasingly changed ecological environment of media communication, the social media shall gradually become the important means for the design of national image. In this paper, it took the design of American national image on Weibo for study, as a case study this paper may have the limitation accordingly. But in light of the leading position that the US may have in the fields of designing national image and national relation practice, the research findings it has made may also have certain reference meanings then.

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