

Use Overseas Social Media to Enhance International Communication : Jiangxi Case Study

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Abstract

The enhancement of international communication capacity and the improvement of the global communication quality of Jiangxi enterprises are pivotal to implementing Xi Jinping's diplomatic vision and his directives on strengthening international communication capabilities in the new era. This paper employs a case study approach to underscore the critical importance of international communication for Chinese enterprises, focusing on the strategies and practices adopted by Jiangxi enterprises in utilizing overseas social media platforms for global outreach. The findings provide valuable insights and strategic guidance for advancing the international communication capabilities of Chinese enterprises in the future.



Full Text Article



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Keywords: Overseas Social Media, International Communication, Chinese Brands, Jiangxi Enterprises, One Belt and One Road

Introduction

Effectively telling China's story and amplifying the voices of Chinese enterprises are essential tasks for building international discourse power in the new era. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the CPC Central Committee, with Xi Jinping at its core, has prioritized external communication efforts (Guo et al., 2023). During the 17th collective study session of the 20th CPC Central Committee Political Bureau, Xi (2024) emphasized the necessity of "proactively advocating China's propositions, promoting Chinese culture, and showcasing China's image". At the fourth symposium on the One Belt and One Road (OBOR), he underscored the importance of establishing high-level communication mechanisms to ensure the sustainable and high-quality development of OBOR.

The Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee adopted the Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Further Comprehensively Deepening Reform and Advancing Chinese Modernization, which emphasized the need to "accelerate the construction of a Chinese discourse and narrative system, and comprehensively enhance the effectiveness of international communication" (CPC Central Committee, 2024). Xi (2022) insights into international

communication, coupled with the Party's strategic decisions, provide essential guidance and foundational principles for Chinese enterprises seeking to enhance their communication capabilities in the global market.

In the context of deepening globalization and rapid advancements in internet technology, overseas social media platforms have become indispensable tools for fostering international communication and cooperation. Twitter (now rebranded as X), a globally renowned social media platform, is distinguished by its user-friendly features for sharing text, images, videos, and links, as well as its emphasis on real-time information and public discourse. It has established itself as a crucial medium for international communication.

Numerous prominent global political and business figures, including Twitter CEO Elon Musk, U.S. President Joe Biden, former U.S. President Donald Trump, and French President Emmanuel Macron, actively utilize Twitter to make significant announcements, share their views, and engage with the public. For global audiences, Twitter serves as a convenient channel to access information about Chinese culture, cuisine, and other topics, fostering deeper cross-cultural understanding, enhancing China's soft power, and creating new opportunities for Chinese enterprises to expand their presence in international markets.

The Concept and Significance of International Communication

2.1. The Fundamental Concept of International Communication

International communication is broadly defined as the exchange and dissemination of information across national borders. At its core, it entails the transmission of information, ideas, values, and cultural elements through various media and channels between different countries, cultures, or regions (Guo, 2024). Scholars widely acknowledge that international communication serves as a vital bridge in fostering international relations, facilitating economic globalization, and promoting cultural integration. Its scope primarily includes three key dimensions: communication at the national level, communication at the corporate level, and communication at the cultural level.

At the national level, international communication is recognized as an essential tool for enhancing a nation's soft power and shaping its global image. By leveraging traditional media (such as television and radio) and emerging digital platforms (such as social media), governments can articulate policy positions and project national perspectives to the international community. For example, China utilizes the One Belt and One Road (OBOR) initiative to highlight its commitment to openness, cooperation, and mutual benefit, thereby fostering stronger interactions and partnerships with countries along the OBOR routes.

At the corporate level, international communication centers on brand promotion and market expansion. With the proliferation of multinational corporations and the intensification of global competition, businesses increasingly depend on international communication networks to bolster their brand visibility in global markets. By leveraging these communication channels, enterprises can effectively articulate their core values and foster meaningful connections with consumers worldwide.

At the cultural level, international communication functions as a bridge for cross-cultural exchanges. Iconic elements of Chinese culture, such as the Spring Festival, martial arts, and

Chinese cuisine, are continually introduced to global audiences through films, social media, and other communication platforms. These cultural exports not only facilitate mutual understanding between China and other countries but also play a pivotal role in enhancing China's cultural soft power by cultivating a broader appreciation and recognition of Chinese culture on the global stage.

Furthermore, the advancement of internet technology has positioned emerging digital media as a pivotal driving force in international communication. Compared to traditional media, digital platforms provide enhanced interactivity and immediacy, enabling the rapid dissemination of information on a global scale. With the increasing prominence of global social media platforms, international communication has not only diversified in form but also expanded significantly in its reach and impact.

2.2. The Significance of Strengthening International Communication

Strengthening international communication is essential for enhancing China's global communication capacity and addressing the challenges posed by the dominance of Western discourse in shaping international narratives.

First, it is crucial for bolstering China's global discourse power. Under the hegemony of Western media, global narratives about China are frequently framed through biased perspectives. Wang (2022) said that approximately 90% of global news content and over 75% of video programs are produced by Western media. Consequently, a significant portion of the international audience—around 68%—relies on Western media for information about China, perpetuating misconceptions and stereotypes that contradict China's peaceful and cooperative image. This imbalance underscores the disparity between China's growing national strength and its international communication capabilities. Enhancing international communication is therefore imperative for fostering a favorable external environment for China's development and for presenting a truthful, multidimensional, and comprehensive image of the nation to global audiences.

Second, strengthening international communication is an indispensable requirement for Chinese enterprises in the social media era. The widespread adoption of the internet and mobile communication technologies has led to profound transformations in global communication methods. Social media platforms, distinguished by their immediacy, interactivity, and expansive user base, have emerged as indispensable channels for global information dissemination. Among these platforms, Twitter has achieved remarkable success and widespread adoption in international markets. Its compatibility with modern users' fast-paced lifestyles and preference for fragmented information consumption has established it as a favored tool for brand promotion and information sharing among multinational corporations and individuals alike.

As of the end of 2023, Twitter reported 368 million active users, including 238 million monetizable daily active users. A significant proportion of its user base falls within the 25–34 age demographic, accounting for 38%, with male users comprising 57% and female users 43%. Additionally, users from the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, Brazil, and Canada collectively represent over 50% of the platform's global audience. Among these, U.S. users contribute 25.47% of total traffic, solidifying the United States as Twitter's largest market (Paschigeyi, 2024). These statistics highlight that Twitter's audience is not only globally diverse but

also possesses considerable purchasing power, presenting new opportunities for Chinese enterprises to promote their brands in international markets.

In an era of intensifying global competition driven by information technology, leveraging social media platforms to enhance international communication capabilities allows Chinese enterprises to establish robust brand images and cultivate meaningful connections with global audiences. Social media's rapid dissemination capabilities enable enterprises to promptly respond to market dynamics, ensuring they remain agile in a fast-paced environment. Simultaneously, by gaining a deeper understanding of target market users' needs and preferences, Chinese enterprises can craft more precise and impactful communication strategies, thereby amplifying their global brand influence.

Moreover, strengthening international communication is a vital strategy for Chinese enterprises to build competitive brand images in the global marketplace. In the evolving communication landscape, fully utilizing the potential of social media platforms will be pivotal to enhancing their international communication capabilities and achieving sustainable global growth.

The Practice of Jiangxi Enterprises in Strengthening International Communication through Social Media

"Telling Jiangxi's compelling stories, spreading Jiangxi's most beautiful voice, and showcasing Jiangxi's positive image" has become a guiding principle for Jiangxi Province in the new era to enhance its international communication efforts and improve their effectiveness (Guo et al., 2023). As a prominent representative of Jiangxi enterprises in the international market, China Jiangxi International Economic and Technical Cooperation Co., Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as "China Jiangxi International Company, CJIC") successfully implemented the China-aid borehole drilling project in Zimbabwe. This project directly benefited approximately 400,000 people, accounting for 3% of Zimbabwe's population, and was recognized as one of the "Top 10 Comprehensive Classic Cases" in China-Africa Cooperation under the "Hundred Enterprises and Thousand Villages" initiative.

The implementation of this project not only exemplifies CJIC's successful practices in the global market but also highlights the capability and achievements of Chinese enterprises in effectively telling China's stories and amplifying its voice through international communication.

3.1. Establishing Social Media Communication Account

Between 2012 and 2021, CJIC implemented the construction of 1,000 boreholes across six provinces in Zimbabwe in four phases. This project addressed the critical drinking water needs of approximately 400,000 people, accounting for 3% of Zimbabwe's population. It significantly improved local sanitation conditions and fostered strong relationships between the company and local communities throughout its implementation.

To amplify the international impact of China's aid efforts, CJIC established a dedicated Twitter (now X) account for the project before its launch, successfully attracting over 1,200 local followers. Leveraging this social media platform, CJIC regularly shared project updates with Zimbabwean and

global audiences. This strategy not only enhanced the project's transparency and interactivity but also contributed to shaping a positive international image for the "China-aid in Africa" and One Belt and One Road initiative.

3.2. Enhancing the Precision of International Communication through Local Employees

In cross-cultural communication, the effectiveness of information transmission is often impeded by differences in language, cultural background, and modes of expression. These challenges can create a disconnect between the communicator's intent and the audience's understanding. To address this issue, CJIC has adopted an "internationalized mindset" and actively explored diverse communication strategies by leveraging local resources. The company encourages and supports exceptional local employees to take on pivotal roles in its international communication efforts.

In the China-aid borehole drilling project in Zimbabwe, the team emphasized the role of local employees as cultural bridges in their promotional activities. By drawing on their deep understanding of local language and cultural nuances, the team tailored project communication to meet the preferences and expectations of the local audience. This "Chinese-led, local employee-supported" communication model integrated local language and cultural elements, significantly enhancing the localization of content and mitigating misunderstandings arising from linguistic or cultural differences.

The active involvement of local employees further facilitated meaningful cultural exchanges between China and Zimbabwe, effectively addressing cross-cultural communication challenges often characterized as "speaking past each other." This approach not only bolstered the company's recognition and influence within the local community but also strengthened its capacity to forge enduring connections with the populations it serves.

3.3. Efficient Delivery Enhances CJIC's Impact

During the fourth phase of constructing 500 water wells, CJIC overcame significant challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these obstacles, the company successfully completed the construction tasks within the designated two-year timeframe. On August 13, 2022, the 500th water well was officially completed at Sinodo Primary School in Gwanda, Zimbabwe. Local teachers and students expressed their heartfelt gratitude to China through vibrant singing and dancing, symbolizing the project's profound impact on their community.

This memorable moment was captured on video and shared on Twitter, where it quickly attracted widespread attention. The Chinese Embassy in Zimbabwe reposted the video, garnering over 200 likes and nearly 100 retweets within a short period. This not only amplified the visibility of the project but also enhanced the impact of China's aid efforts, effectively showcasing the success of the "One Belt and One Road" initiative and its commitment to fostering international development.

3.4. Fulfilling Corporate Social Responsibilities and Building CJIC's Image

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic in Zimbabwe, Jiangxi International Company (CJIC) actively fulfilled its social responsibilities by donating 40,000 disposable medical masks and a batch of disinfectant supplies to the local government. These donations helped mitigate the critical shortage of hygiene and protective materials during a challenging period. The President of Zimbabwe personally attended the donation ceremony and highly praised the company's contributions to public welfare. He specifically acknowledged that the "China-aid water wells" project not only addressed the drinking water shortages in remote communities but also reduced the risk of disease transmission during the pandemic (Yan, 2021).

These philanthropic efforts were met with widespread positive responses across various sectors of Zimbabwean society, amplified through coverage on Twitter and local media. CJIC's actions not only underscored the company's commitment to social responsibility but also significantly bolstered its reputation and influence within the local community.

3.5. Practicing Shared Development and Strengthening People-to-People Ties

During the implementation of the project, CJIC actively embodied the concept of "shared development" by creating employment opportunities and offering skills training to foster local economic growth. At the initial stages of the project, the company adhered to the principle of "teaching by example and mentoring," employing a substantial number of local workers while Chinese technical experts conducted comprehensive training programs. Over the course of the project, CJIC successfully trained 10 drilling machine operators, 6 mechanics, and numerous masons and carpenters.

Lauren, a Zimbabwean employee who served as a project coordinator, expressed that her involvement in the project not only equipped her with valuable professional skills but also allowed her to experience the warmth, support, and mentorship of her Chinese colleagues. Similarly, Abedinico Ncube, Governor of Matabeleland South Province, commended the "China Water Well" project for delivering tangible benefits to the Zimbabwean people. He remarked, "China and Zimbabwe are good friends and good brothers, and the water well project exemplifies the practical cooperation between the two countries" (Gao, 2021).

3.6. Strengthening Media Collaboration and Expanding Communication Impact

CJIC bolstered its communication efforts by establishing a strategic collaboration with Zimbabwe's largest newspaper, The Daily News. The company invited journalists to visit project sites and beneficiary communities, resulting in a series of in-depth reports that comprehensively highlighted the project's positive outcomes. These reports not only increased the project's visibility within Zimbabwe but also enhanced the international profile of China's aid efforts in Africa.

Moreover, central Chinese media outlets, including Xinhua News Agency, China Central Television (CCTV), and People's Daily Online, have extensively covered the project. Since August 2021, these reports have further amplified CJIC's international communication impact, solidifying its reputation as a significant contributor to fostering China-Africa cooperation and mutual development.

3.7. Leveraging Official Accounts to Enhance Communication Efficiency

CJIC strategically leveraged the influence of official Twitter accounts, including those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson and the African Affairs Department, to amplify the visibility of its project-related tweets. These posts were further shared by official accounts such as the Chinese Permanent Representative to the United Nations, the Chinese Embassy in Zimbabwe, and ambassadors to Malawi and Pakistan. This engagement garnered numerous likes and retweets, significantly extending the project's reach and impact.

Throughout the project's implementation, CJIC consistently published updates on progress, recruitment opportunities, and procurement announcements. This proactive use of social media not only ensured transparency but also engaged a wider range of stakeholders. By utilizing efficient communication strategies, the company enhanced its visibility and reputation within the international community, further cementing its role as a key player in global development efforts.

Conclusion

Amid the deepening globalization and transformative changes in the international communication landscape, strengthening international communication has become a critical strategy for Chinese enterprises to enhance their national image and amplify their soft power. Through the implementation of the water well project in Zimbabwe, CJIC not only addressed pressing local livelihood issues but also effectively conveyed China's story and Jiangxi's voice via the social media platform Twitter. By utilizing a dedicated Twitter account and collaborating with authoritative accounts, the company achieved real-time dissemination of project updates, expanded its outreach, and established a transparent and trustworthy image of China's aid to Africa. These efforts have significantly contributed to the positive branding of Chinese enterprises in international markets.

The international communication practices demonstrated by CJIC's water well project in Zimbabwe illustrate that, in today's information-driven and digitalized communication environment, effectively leveraging emerging social media platforms alongside traditional media channels can significantly enhance the communication capabilities of Chinese enterprises. This integrated approach fosters a multi-dimensional and comprehensive international communication framework. Looking ahead, Chinese enterprises should continue to adapt to evolving trends in international communication, deepen cultural exchanges and engagement with target markets, assume greater social responsibilities, and actively promote sustainable development in international markets. Such efforts will play a pivotal role in advancing China's global communication capacity and strengthening its presence on the international stage.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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