Universität Freiburg (CH)

Departement für Medien- und

Kommunikationswissenschaft

Hauptseminararbeit Medien, Kommunikation

und wissenschaftliches Arbeiten

Tutor: Prof. Dr. Diana Ingenhoff

# Evolution of Public Diplomacy with the Advent of Social Media

Submitted by: Janice Butler
Gässlimattweg 8
3067 Boll

Email: janice.butler@unifr.ch
Student Number: 15-212-202
Date: 11. July 2016

# Contents

# Table of Illustrations

# Glossary

| Term | Meaning |
|---|---|
| *API* | Application Programming Interface |
| *GCC* | Gulf Cooperation Council |
| *NGO* | Non-Government Organization |
| *PD* | Public Diplomacy |
| *PD 2.0* | Public Diplomacy 2.0 (incorporating social media) |
| *PR* | Public Relations |
| *SIM* | Strategic Issue Management |
| *SM* | Social Media |
| *SNS* | Social Network Site |
| *UGC* | User Generated Content |

# 1. Introduction

In recent years Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and many other Social Media Networks have changed the lives of their users in many trivial and non-trivial ways. The advent of smart mobile devices in everyday life has added an additional dimension to the frequency and ease of usage of such services. This paper examines the degree and the types of change that Social Network Sites (SNSs) contribute to the field of public diplomacy (PD), which according to Zaharna and Uysal reflects a theoretical change in PD away from a unidirectional communication perspective, towards *"a relationship management perspective and, more recently, a network perspective"* (Zaharna & Uysal, 2016, p. 110)

Various definitions of what social media and public diplomacy are, are provided together with some historical perspective on both subjects. Statistical data are provided, indicating the current proliferation of social media usage in government giving a guide to exactly which channels are being used in PD. The differentiation between public diplomacy and other forms of diplomacy is discussed and the various actors involved in PD are touched upon. An overview of the results of current research is provided, including detail of the models typically applied to public diplomacy and their origins in public relations (PR) theory, as are some of the data collection and experimental techniques which can be applied to research in this area.

In diplomatic circles, opinion is divided on the necessity and efficacy of social media and diplomacy. Martin and Jagla quote former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright as jokingly stating that "*The advent of technology is almost the opposite of diplomacy*" (Martin & Jagla, 2013, p. 12), whereas the Mexican ambassador to the United States apparently tweeted that "*if you aren't using social media, you aren't relevant diplomatically*" (Zhang, 2013, p. 1313). Where little controversy remains, is that SNSs

empower those outside the elite circle of traditional power-brokers in new ways. In referring to the Arab Spring it is stated that: "*Technology has indeed disrupted the institution of international diplomacy*" (Martin & Jagla, 2013, p. 22) whilst in a clearly negatively intended sentiment McKie and Heath note that: "*social movement activism seeks self-empowerment through spawned disorder, as is the current case with ISIS*" (McKie & Heath, 2016, p. 299).

This paper concentrates on the changes that public diplomacy has undergone under the influence of social media usage. The advantages and disadvantages of so called noopolitik as opposed to realpolitik are highlighted and in conclusion a perspective for future research is presented. The interested reader may thus derive effective strategies for his or her diplomatic or political communication efforts.

## 1.1. Research Questions

**RQ 1**: Do opinion-leaders in the area of public diplomacy achieve a more positive resonance for their cause via social media than those without a social media presence?

**RQ 2**: Public diplomacy is a long-term strategy, but are social media postings influential in the long-term?

**RQ 3**: What must a public diplomacy practitioner do or not do, to be an effective communicator in the social media?

# 2. Theoretical Foundations and Current Research

In the following sections some general terms and models are explored both in the realm of social media, social networks and public diplomacy.

## 2.1. Diplomacy in the Modern World

According to Gilboa, diplomacy in general "refers primarily to international negotiation, to a communication system through which representatives of states and international or global actors, including elected and appointed officials, express and defend their interests, state their grievances, and issue threats and ultimatums" (Gilboa, 2001, p. 1). Public diplomacy is a subset of the overall field of diplomacy, which – conventionally – can be broken down into Traditional Diplomacy, Citizen Diplomacy, Business Diplomacy and Public Diplomacy (cf. Martin & Jagla, 2013, p. 8).

Traditional diplomacy is, and has historically been, the domain of diplomats, who by means of negotiation manage the international relations of states. Citizen diplomacy comprises the interaction of persons from different states who – irrespective of the state – interact with each other. Citizen diplomats may be students, athletes, business people or others who are motivated to enhance international cooperation and exchange of information (cf. Snow & Taylor, 2009, p. 102). Citizen diplomacy – a subset of public diplomacy – can be enabled particularly through social media presence of those involved. Business diplomacy refers to the aspect of public-private partnerships in bringing additional stakeholders to the diplomatic process regarding decisions on trade and commerce (cf. Martin & Jagla, 2013, p. 9). Finally public diplomacy – which interests us especially in this paper – will be handled in the following section in more depth.

### 2.1.1. Public Diplomacy (PD)

The aim of PD is to promote a positive image of a represented state through a variety of means, beginning with the media but comprising cultural exhibitions, public speeches, sporting events or scientific exchanges (cf. Widmer, 2014, pp. 284-285). In contrast to traditional diplomacy, PD addresses its message directly or indirectly to positively influence, inform and engage with foreign publics (cf. Martin & Jagla, 2013, p. 9). According to Strauß et al., PD can further be defined as: "*a government's process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies*" (Strauß, Kruikemeier, van der Meulen, & van Noort, 2015).

Widmer sub-divides PD further into traditional and new public diplomacy. Examples of traditional PD exist at least since the era of George Washington, whereby the modern public diplomacy reaches out to globally active NGOs. It also encompasses network-building with the aim of influencing stakeholders who may then be motivated to exert influence in favor of the state behind the PD effort (cf. Widmer, 2014, pp. 288-291).

### 2.1.2. Noopolitik and the Noosphere

The term noosphere, originally coined by French anthropologist and theologian Teilhard de Chardin, refers to a paradigm encompassing the earth (derived from "nous," the Greek word for mind) and has more recently found usage in describing abstract concepts related to information in and around the internet (cf. Xifra & McKie, 2012, p. 821). The derived expression noopolitik refers to diplomatic activities undertaken as much by non-state as by state actors and is synonymous with informational soft power (cf. 2.1.3) in expressing ideas, values, norms, and ethics through disparate media (cf. Snow & Taylor, 2009, p. 354). Xifra emphasizes also, that noopolitik is not a replacement for realpolitik (which is limited

to state activities) but that noopolitik works for many other players such as NGOs and stateless nations (cf. Xifra & McKie, 2012, p. 821).

### 2.1.3. Soft Power

Related to noopolitik, the term 'Soft Power' can be defined as the way **"…** a country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries – admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness – want to follow it" (cf. García, 2013, p. 559). As with noopolitik, soft power aims to attract, persuade, and manage the perceptions of public opinion (cf. Xifra & McKie, 2012, p. 821).

Nye – the originator of the expression 'soft power' – explains the third stage of public diplomacy as the long-term development of lasting relationships through scholarships, exchanges, training, seminars, conferences, and access to media channels (cf. Nye, 2004, pp. 107–110). A typical example of the exercise of soft power is in international sport communication in general, but especially that of international sport public relations. The power of sport to promote relationship-building with publics, exemplifies the utilization of sports for public diplomacy purpose (cf. García, 2012, p. 116).

Whilst soft power is designed to attract and persuade foreign actors, it implies also, a country's ability to attract its own citizens (cf. García, 2013, p. 559). Garcia argues further that the use of strategic communication (i.e. soft power) in the context of stateless nations (his specific examples are Catalonia and the Basque country) achieves demonstrable success in strengthening the national (Catalan/Basque) identity (cf. García, 2012, p. 119).

### 2.1.4. Terminology of New Public Diplomacy

In recent years a new form of PD has emerged, called "twitplomacy". This engagement in the noosphere refers to actors such as the government, state, NGOs, or individuals who communicate on Internet platforms (e.g., Twitter). The primary aim being to form

opinions, release diplomatic news and information, whilst expressing emotions in order to maintain and develop diplomacy and foreign affairs (cf. Strauß, Kruikemeier, van der Meulen, & van Noort, 2015).

Other names for much the same phenomenon are "E-*Diplomacy*" (Widmer, 2014, p. 293) or *"Public Diplomacy 2.0"* (Cull, 2013), (Widmer, 2014, p. 295 ff), (Zhang, 2013, p. 1316). The latter expression leaning on the more general technological but imprecise term Web 2.0 (see 2.3). All these terms, however, imply three basic characteristics in relation to PD:

- The enablement through technology to promote the creation of relationships within social networks
- Dependence of PD 2.0 on user-generated content via feedback channels and blogs
- Horizontally arranged exchange networks promoting 2-way data exchange as opposed to the more traditional vertical (top-down) method of information distribution

Although new technology facilitates these types of interactions, the underlying patterns of PD 2.0 are not considered new (cf. Cull, 2013, pp. 136-138). One has to acknowledge, that the various types of diplomacy use social media differently and thus have diverse opportunities and problems, this paper only refers to social media in the context of public diplomacy.

## 2.2. Social Networks

Internet access in developed countries has long since become ubiquitous, just as it has more recently attained popularity in second and even third world countries – which is attributable in particular to the wide spread of mobile devices throughout emerging economies. Around 40% of the world's population had internet access as of 2014 (InternetLiveStats.com,

2014). No longer is the mere passive consumption of pre-defined content enough for the masses, but the technical possibilities brought about by the so-called "Web 2.0" have taken over. Websites are no longer just accessed, but they allow or even encourage interactions with their users, who are now – to a greater or lesser extent – able to add their own web content. Social and networking features have been added to previously conventional sites, allowing users to create their own profile, link with profiles of further users, leave feedback and thus interact with others whilst creating a net of interactions and linked content (cf. Feinstein, Bhatia, Latack, & Davila, 2015) (cf. Schrock , 2015).

## 2.3. A Definition of Social Networks

With the evolution of social networks, there have naturally been controversies regarding the precise definition of social networks and their components. Central to the discussion has been how Web 2.0 can be differentiated from *User Generated Content* (UGC) and what features an SNS provides additionally. The term Web 2.0 was initially coined in 2004 to describe software elements that provided web-developers and end-users with new possibilities to use the World Wide Web (cf. Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). If Web 2.0 is the technological basis, then: "*User Generated Content (UGC) can be seen as the sum of all ways in which people provide […] content that are publicly available and created by end-users*" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61).

Based on these definitions it is possible to provide a general definition of Social Media. Social Media is "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61).

It is important to realize that social media consist not only of social networks like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, but also cover other kinds of media interaction. Kaplan and

Haenlein, distinguishing between six different types of social media, categorize these according to medium, high and low social presence or media richness and high or low self-presentation or self-disclosure (cf. Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 63).

*Figure 1: Classification of Social Media1*

| Self- Presentation / Self- Disclosure | Social presence / Media richness: Low | Medium | High |
|---|---|---|---|
| High | Blogs | Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook | Virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life) |
| Medium | Collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia) | Content communities (e.g., YouTube) | Virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft) |

## 2.4. Current Spread of Social Media in Public Diplomacy

It is helpful to be aware of some concrete statistics on SNSs in government. Of the 1,364 social media websites being run by the US government, the results of analysis in 2013, as summarized as in Figure 2, demonstrate a very strong preference for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr, although the use of feedback channels such as blogs within official websites is moderately common (cf. Rabina, Cocciolo, & Peet, 2013, pp. 85-86).

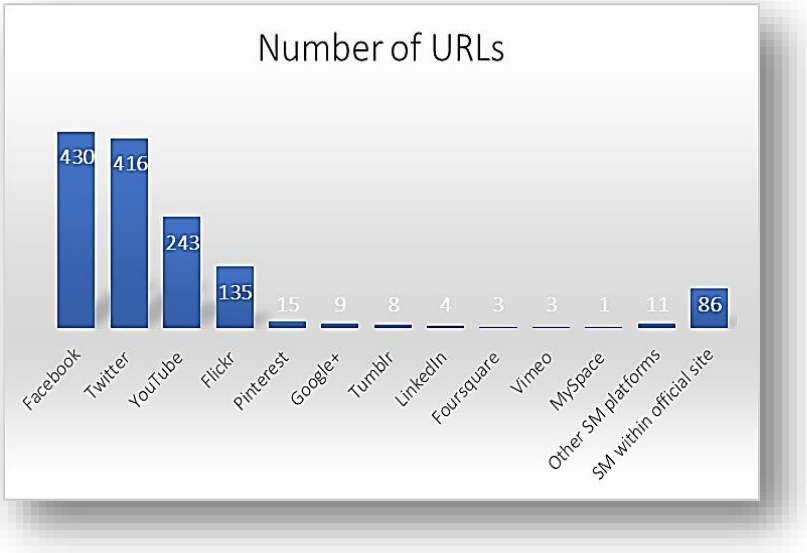


*Figure 2: Social Media use by the US Federal Government*

[1] Source: (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 62)

Of the 1,364 social media URLs it should be noted that the State Department (responsible for foreign affairs in the US) ranges in a close second place (with 110 URLs) of the 24 agencies listed, behind the House of Representatives.

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office reports of "250 country websites, including 93 in foreign languages… 120 twitter channels; over 120 Facebook pages; and numerous local or regional digital channels", whilst six Foreign Office Ministers and more than 20 British ambassadors tweet personally (Horsham, 2013). In Germany and Switzerland the development was in 2013 not quite as advanced as the US or UK, with the Auswärtige Amt represented by a Facebook site and more than 60 consulates and embassies maintaining a Facebook or similar social media presence. The Swiss permit their overseas diplomats to set up interactive platforms at their own discretion (Widmer, 2014, p. 296).

## 2.5. Theories, Definitions and Models of PD

In the pre-social media era, Gilboa proposed three models of diplomacy (cf. Gilboa, 2001, p. 5), namely:

- The basic cold war model
- The non-state transnational model and
- The domestic PR model

The third and most recent of these was strongly influenced by the 'CNN[2] Effect' at that time and mirrored the accelerated pace of international news coverage and the use of global media – initially during the 1990-91 Gulf conflict – to exchange open messages between the US, Iran and Iraq (cf. Gilboa, 2001, p. 3). Gilboa differentiates between the long range focus of PD on the one hand versus use of media diplomacy influencing the same actors, but in the short term and predominantly for conflict resolution on the other (see Figure 3).

[2] CNN: Cable News Network (http://edition.cnn.com/)

The third model – media-broker diplomacy – was created to analyze the involvement of journalists in diplomacy which is differentiated above all in the initiators, method, sides and target. While officials (politicians and diplomats) typically initiate and take control of media diplomacy, journalists are the actors initiating and conducting media-broker diplomacy (cf. Gilboa, 2001, pp. 15-20).

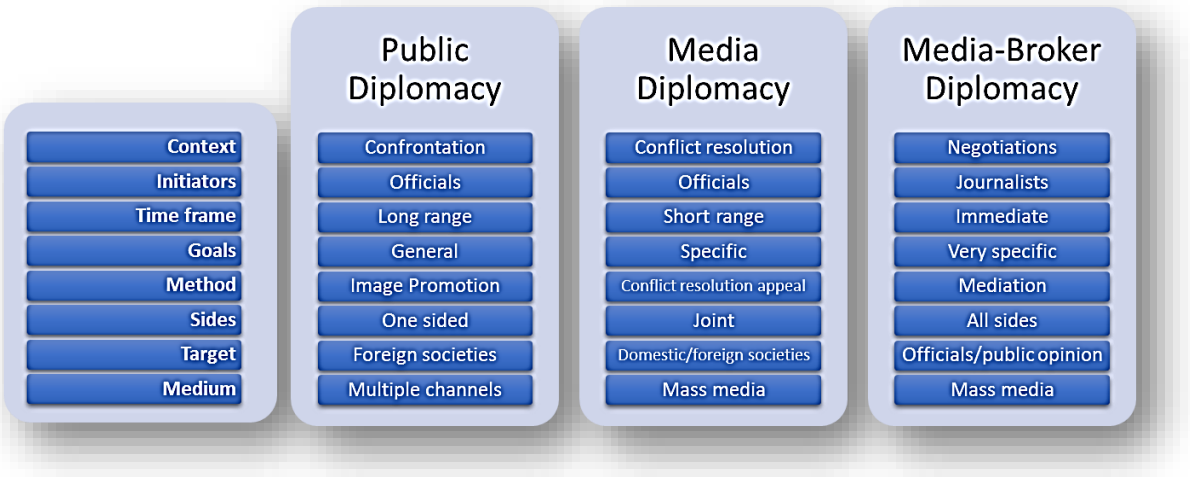


*Figure 3: Gilboa's comparison of public, media and media-broker diplomacy*
*Source (Gilboa, 2001, p. 23)*

## 2.6. Strategic Issue Management Approach to SM Use in PD

Although very insightful, Gilboa's models, while proposed before the emergence of social media, needed further development. In his paper of 2013, Zhang extends Gilboa's model as a strategic issue management (SIM) process, identifying four phases of the SIM process which interact with one another, namely:

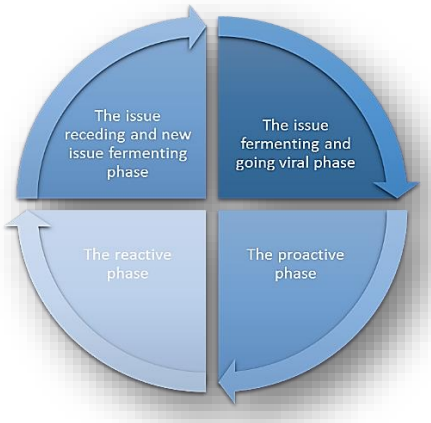


*Figure 4: The SIM process of social media use in public diplomacy*
*(Zhang, 2013, p. 1326)*

- In the first phase of issue fermentation and going viral, a strategic issue (i.e. with disruptive potential) is presented to diplomats where they

have the chance to act or to do nothing. If another event is triggered, the issue goes viral and traditional media may then also cover the subject.

- In the second – proactive – phase, reinforcement of favourable viral trends and focusing on the agenda is achieved via SM and conventional means.
- In the third – reactive – phase diplomats respond to negative sentiment arising from phases I and II via SM-channels according to the mixed-motive model[3].
- Subsequently in the fourth phase, the issues recedes with time until a new issue begins to ferment.

In effect, the need for strategic thinking in applying social media to PD is addressed by the SIM approach (cf. Zhang, 2013, p. 1314).

| | | Gilboa's three models of public diplomacy | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **SIM approach to social media use in public diplomacy** | **Basic cold war model** | **Nonstate transnational model** | **Domestic PR model** |
| **Initiators** | Anecdotal event and social media users, diplomats | Government | NGOs and activists | Government |
| **Major actors** | Social media users, diplomats, government, traditional media, opinion leaders | Government, state-owned media | Activist groups, and individuals, international mass media | Government, lobbying firms, PR firms |
| **Goals** | To identify opportunities, build agendas, resolve conflicts, facilitate debates, expand public sphere, cultivate national image | To create a favorable perception of the initiator's image and policy; to alter the target country's hostile foreign policy | To cultivate global support for the NGOs and activists' causes | To better achieve various goals in a given social and cultural context |
| **Types of media** | Social media, complemented by traditional mass media | Government-owned mass media such as the Voice of America | Mass media: Global news network | PR firms and lobbyists |
| **Means and techniques** | Viral marketing, issue management, agenda building, conflict resolution | International broadcasting | Media events; create linkages with influential individuals and groups in foreign society | Establish local support groups and movements |
| **Measure** | Easy; data readily available | Hard to measure | Hard to measure; polls needed | Hard to measure; polls and policy change needed |

*Figure 5: Comparing Zhang's SIM Approach with Gilboa's PD Models*
*Source: (Zhang, 2013, p. 1315)*

[3] Mixed motive: an organization trying to meet own objectives whilst attempting to help others achieve theirs

A Mixed-Motive Model of Public Relations evolved from the two-way symmetrical model of Grunig by employing elements of game theory. Grunig states that compared to a one-way model his two-way symmetrical model emphasizes that communicators like organizations and publics should adapt their ideas and behaviors according to those of others instead of trying to control how others think and act (cf. Grunig, 2006). The two-way communication aspect – although first put forward in 2001 – lends itself additionally to an implementation facilitated by social media.

## 2.7. PD Quadrant Theory

The so called "relational lens" is introduced by Zaharna & Uysal to draw on communication technology and public diplomacy initiatives that *"move from assumptions of no relations with publics, to favourable relations, to adversarial relations"* (Zaharna & Uysal, 2016, p. 109). Through tactical maneuvers the adversaries (e.g. state and activist groups) become relationally more involved whilst – paradoxically – becoming politically further separated. The 4-quadrant model (summarized in Figure 6) was developed for the analysis of relational dynamics between states and publics:

| | State-based | Public-based |
|---|---|---|
| State-centric | 1<br>state & public separate,<br>relations positive, neutral or negative<br>state-initiated activity<br>state-driven needs, goals<br>state-controlled<br>public largely passive, "target audience"<br>international broadcastingtion branding | 3<br>state & public, relations<br>neutral to positive<br>public-initiated activity<br>alligned to state needs, goals<br>public initiative, state co-opted<br>to work with public<br>public active/participatory<br>networked approaches,<br>empowerpent, capacity building |
| Public-centric | 2<br>state & public, relations<br>neutral to positive<br>state-initiated activity<br>alligned to public needs, goals<br>state-sponsor, public pertnerships<br>public passive/participatory<br>engagement' strategies,<br>relational approaches | 4<br>state & public, relations<br>negative to adversarial<br>public-initiated activity<br>public driven needs, goals<br>public-controlled<br>state targeted, state irrelevant<br>network, social media campaign<br>'crisis public diplomacy' |

*Figure 6: A typology of relational dynamics: the four public diplomacy quadrants*

*Source:* (Zaharna & Uysal, 2016, p. 112)

- 1st PD Quadrant (state-based/state-centered) reflects the traditional view of public diplomacy. Public diplomacy during the Cold War era exemplifies the state-based, state-centric public diplomacy
- The 2nd PD Quadrant (state-based/public-centered) represents an initial evolution in the development of an awareness of the relational dynamics in public diplomacy and a focus on needs and goals of the public
- 3rd PD Quadrant: The public is now able to use digital media to reverse communication roles and by implication, reversing the relational power of the state. The *public* are initiators in the 3rd quadrant.
- The 4th PD Quadrant represents a definite shift in state-public relations from the positivity of quadrats 2 and 3 to negative and even hostile relations. Again, the public takes the role of initiator, but now hostile and not in partnership with the state.

What the 2nd and 3rd PD Quadrants have in common is the assumption of positive relations between a state and publics, whilst the 4th quadrant may include activists employing communication techniques which would be unacceptable for governments (cf. Zaharna & Uysal, 2016, pp. 111 - 113).

## 2.8. A Note on Social Media Research in Public Diplomacy

It is a little surprising to discover that in their paper reviewing scope and status of public relations research in PD, Vanc & Fitzpatrick only report a mere 2.2% of public relations scholars publishing on social media topics related to PD. However researchers do generally call for two-way symmetrical communication, concepts involving dialog which would be well served by SM (cf. Vanc & Fitzpatrick, 2016, p. 4).

# 3. Methodology and Operationalization

In addition to existing methods of empirical social research, the new technology of social media demands (but importantly *allows*) the development of novel research techniques and metrics. These should help develop and establish appropriate research techniques and leverage the potential of social media data in order to further understand issues in public diplomacy (cf. Criado, Sandoval-Almazan, & Gil-Garcia, 2013, p. 324).

## 3.1. Data Selection

In selecting data for analysis, social media lend themselves very well to a multi-phased approach. An initial analysis of the topic under consideration (grounded theory approach) should enable a pre-definition of appropriate meta-data or a priori codes (Zhang, 2013, p. 1318), (Vanc & Fitzpatrick, 2016), (Zhang & Swartz, 2009, p. 48). In the case of Twitter, for instance, these would be hashtags and/or a selection of Twitter handles (cf. Dang-Xuan, Stieglitz, Wladarsch, & Neuberger, 2013, p. 801), which can then be fed into the data-collection phase (see 3.2). In addition, further iterations of data-selection via feedback are permitted, once data-evaluation (see 3.3) has begun to yield results (known as emergent coding).

## 3.2. Data Collection

Most of the larger social networks provide extensive application programming interfaces (APIs) which allow a targeted and comprehensive retrieval of SM data. For instance, Twitter offers their API Console Tool[4], which allows access via a browser to 51 different types of search (the console can also be used to post data to Twitter via 32 different interfaces). It is possible to constrain the search to specified hashtags, time (from and/or

[4] Twitter API Console Tool: https://dev.twitter.com/rest/tools/console

until), geographical position (longitude, latitude plus a radius), trends, users, retweets, friends etc. (Twitter, Inc, 2016). The result-sets are returned in json[5] format, which can then be fed into any number of post-processing tools (discussed in 3.3). Facebook also offers an extensive API[6], as does LinkedIn[7]. In each case, it should be noted, that APIs only access data which are otherwise publicly available. For our research this fortunately represents no real limitation, since Public Diplomacy itself only functions via *publication* of information. Secret data plays no active role in PR.

For the less technically minded, the collection of data is also possible through more straightforward means. The research team around Nadine Strauß used the simple online tool "AllMyTweets.net" whilst analyzing the strategic communication of western embassies to capture data from Twitter (cf. Strauß, Kruikemeier, van der Meulen, & van Noort, 2015, p. 372).

## 3.3. Visualization and Evaluation

In ascertaining results from SM data analysis, there are essentially 3 approaches, which can be – and often are – combined with one another. **Metrics** are statistically derived numerical results, emanating from the raw-data collected. Metrics are a basis for quantitative methods, eliminating pure gut-feeling when interpreting results and enabling the processing of large data-sets, which could not otherwise be usefully interpreted "by hand" in a useful timeframe. **Visualization** supports the researcher, by displaying the collected data (or metrics from the data) in a way which allows new or unexpected interpretation of results, which might otherwise remain hidden. Finally, **manual**

[5] json: JavaScript Object Notation
[6] Facebook for developers: https://developers.facebook.com/
[7] LinkedIn Console: https://apigee.com/console/linkedin

**evaluation** can be applied when rather smaller numbers of unstructured, complex data (or indeed the results of visualization and determination of metrics) are at hand.

Many SNSs and affiliated third party vendors offer tools to easily analyze one's own network. For example Socilab[8] makes it very easy to extract data from a profile to construct a network map (see Figure 7). A similar approach is implemented by SocioViz[9] which offers additional visualizations.

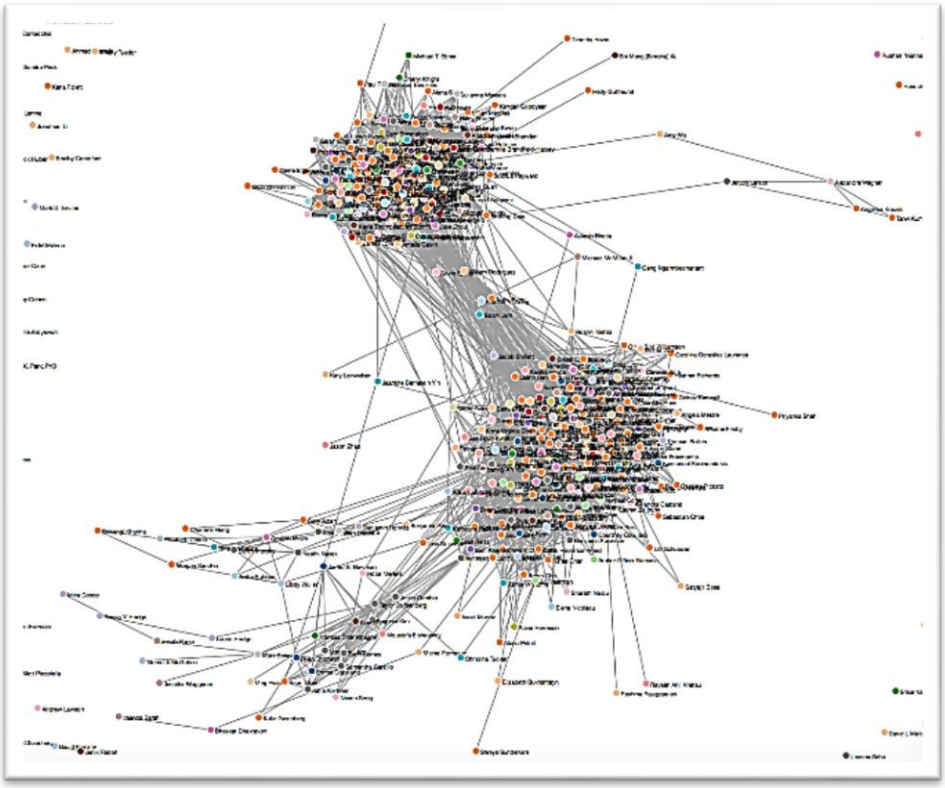

*Figure 7: LinkedIn Network Visualization*
*(Source: https://twitter.com/socilabdotcom, retrieved 01.07.2016)*

The content analysis algorithms of tools such as SentiStrengh[10], AFINN[11] or NTLK[12] are able to numerically grade the level and positivity of emotionality in Tweets. This is a most useful metric when, for instance, comparing the effects of a PD campaign from one time-period to the next. The content of these emotionally grouped Tweets can then be manually

[8] Socilab: http://socilab.com/#home
[9] SocioViz: http://socioviz.net
[10] SentiStrength Automatic sentiment analysis: http://sentistrength.wlv.ac.uk/
[11] AFINN sentiment analysis in Python: https://github.com/fnielsen/afinn
[12] NLTK, Natural Language Toolkit: http://www.nltk.org/

analyzed (for reasons of affirmation or comparison) as shown by Dan-Xuan's team (cf. Dang-Xuan, Stieglitz, Wladarsch, & Neuberger, 2013, pp. 802-803). In a second iteration the content data can be sent into a feedback loop to identify the relevant opinion leaders.

Even in much shorter time frames, there have been visualizations of sentiment, such as during President Obama's 2015 State of the Union speech (see Figure 8). In this example there is color-coding depending the topics being mentioned, with the amplitude expressing the magnitude of sentiment.

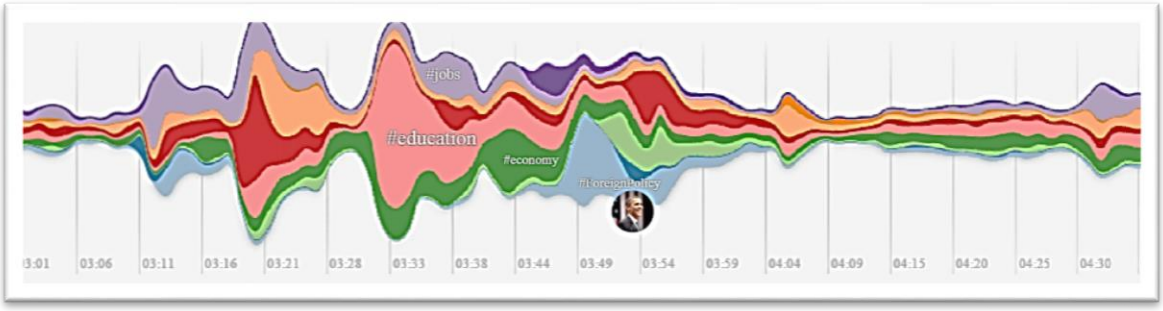


*Figure 8: State of The Union address minute by minute on Twitter*
*Source: http://twitter.github.io/interactive/sotu2015/#p1 (retrieved, 02.07.2016)*

Identification of opinion leaders used to be achieved through self-reporting and personal characteristics. Now, in the era of SM, the influence of the people tweeting can be separated into *followership influence*, *retweet influence* and *mention influence* (cf. Dang-Xuan, Stieglitz, Wladarsch, & Neuberger, 2013, p. 798). By taking the sheer number of retweets for a given user, a metric for influence (or lack of it) can be derived. In cross-testing, the top-30 identified influentials, for instance, were compared in various respects with a random subsample of another 30 users, the so-called 'non-influentials' (cf. Dang-Xuan, Stieglitz, Wladarsch, & Neuberger, 2013, p. 802).

A geographical tool such as #interactive[13] (see Figure 9) or Tweepsmap[14] can also be added when the variation in location rather than the relationship is considered most relevant. Alternatively, as mentioned in 3.2, the geo-location may be taken into account with appropriate data pre-selection via an API, when a single specific locality is required.

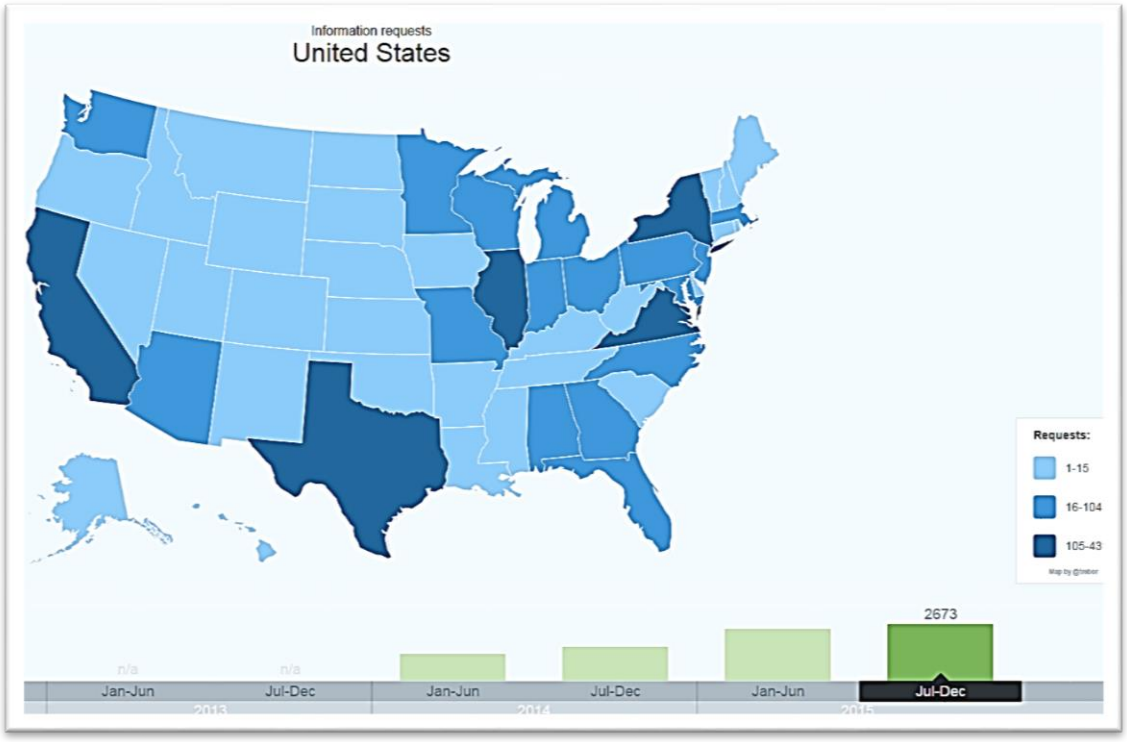


*Figure 9: Number of Government and NGO Requests Received for Twitter Information*
*Source:* https://interactive.twitter.com *(retrieved, 4 July 2016)*

[13] #interactive: https://interactive.twitter.com
[14] Tweepsmap: http://tweepsmap.com/

# 4. Results

The proliferation of internet access and the ensuing rise in popularity of social media have enabled private persons and public officials to enter into open dialog across national borders. This paper sought to discover what long-lasting impacts social media have had on the effectiveness of public diplomacy (see RQ 1 and RQ 2). To this end, existing literature dating from not earlier than the year 2000 was researched.

Research results are presented showing mixed findings in the application, areas of and efficacy in usage of social media in the diplomatic world. In answer to RQ 3, some contrasting opinions from researchers and experienced diplomats are summarized as recommendations and best practices.

## 4.1. Advantages of Social Media Usage in PD

The network analysis of Strauß et al. indicates an opportunity for embassy personnel to reach beyond the usual partners – the so-called "in crowd" –by engaging directly via social media with a diversity of stakeholders (cf. Strauß, Kruikemeier, van der Meulen, & van Noort, 2015, p. 372).

Although not explicitly specifying social media for its implementation, (Vanc & Fitzpatrick, 2016, p. 5) report that "*the application of relational concepts in public relations [could] stimulate discussion and debate regarding public diplomacy purposes and practices*".

Hong also concludes that: "results indicate a positive relationship between the respondent's favorable experience with government websites and his or her trust in government" and that: "respondents who interacted with the government through social media were more likely to trust state and local governments". It should be noted nonetheless, that despite

positive experiences on official websites, evidence shows that citizens are still strongly influenced by negative coverage of government in other media such as national newscasts (Hong, 2013, p. 352).

When it comes to short-term and immediate actions, Zhang recognizes SNSs as useful – albeit primarily tactical– tools in the first and last phases of his SIM model, but acknowledges possible strategic applications in the proactive and reactive (2nd and 3rd) phases. He sees SM as predominantly related to small-scale and routine actions in day-to-day diplomacy (cf. Zhang, 2013, p. 1312).

Arguably a further advantage of SM in public diplomacy is – when viewed from the non-state perspective – the power that publics have derived from the strategic use of social media, allowing them to level the playing field by defining and redefining relations (cf. Zaharna & Uysal, 2016, p. 110). This is a challenge which many states dealing with a mobilized public have to face, so from a state perspective this may alternatively be viewed as a shortcoming (cf. 4th PD Quadrant in 2.7 and potentially phase III of SIM process in 2.6).

Similarly, as reported by Bartolotta & McGillis, student protests in Tunisia and Egypt escalated into national anti-government demonstrations facilitated by SNSs such as Facebook, Twitter and online blogs (cf. Bartolotta & McGillis, 2012, S. 69).

The natural inclination of organizations to want to spend less time on one-on-one symmetrical conversations, whilst relinquishing control that is given by one-way communications has – according to the study by (Waters & Williams, 2011, p. 359) – slowly been pushed aside in favor of focusing solely on relationship-building approaches and dialogue, which can be well supported with an SM approach.

Several peripheral but important reasons for using SNSs are mentioned by Rabina et al.:

- Non-official (i.e. informal, but significant) communications can be emitted via SM, being not subject to legal requirements (retention, preservation and access)
- SM may also be used less for publication but to collect information and opinions
- SNS usage can help in cost-cutting or even with the use of advertising, to create some revenue

On the down side, there may be issues with access to open SNSs in some regions (cf. Rabina, Cocciolo, & Peet, 2013, p. 80)

## 4.2. Shortcomings and Limitations of SM Usage in PD

Over time, democracy has shifted from being representational to direct due to the nature of instantaneous replies to publicity. Martin and Jagla show that institutions need to acknowledge this fact, since this has significant implications on how technology is implemented in policymaking. Through this shift however, difficulties are generated in making compromises and in reconciliation, which can hinder long-term decision making (cf. Martin & Jagla, 2013, p. 15).

The heightened opportunity for members of the public to engage with government via SM, can lead to a potential loss of power. As stated by (Zaharna & Uysal, 2016, p. 117) "*if the ability to communicate represents a form of power the relational power dynamic has moved away from states to publics*" and further: "*the use of social media tools on a global level can heighten the state's visibility as well as its vulnerability to questions of legitimacy*".

Widmer analyzes further, that vulnerability can be of a political or technical nature. One problem which has arisen through technology are cyberattacks, a danger which can mean access to classified data by unauthorized personal who subsequently publicize the information. For this reason diplomacy rather than increasing its transparency, may

develop in the opposite direction despite the opportunities that SM may bring. Uncontrolled leakage of information may lead in diplomatic realms to more mistrust, leading diplomats to perhaps think twice about freely revealing even apparently harmless information (cf. Widmer, 2014, pp. 297-298).

Strauß et al. maintain that Ambassadors are just at the beginning of implementation of social media for public diplomacy in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. They still shy away from two-way communication with their stakeholders through not engaging in dialog, even though the opportunities are technically available. In addition, embassies who do not interact with a variety of stakeholders fail to expand their social network (cf. Strauß, Kruikemeier, van der Meulen, & van Noort, 2015, p. 378).

What begins positively with transparency and engagement in governmental SM-usage can regress – as the findings of Hong's study showed – if citizens' needs or expectations are not broadly met (cf. Hong, 2013, p. 354). This concurs with other general recommendations for effective SM engagement and gives rise to additional government-specific best practices (see 4.3).

In terms of long-term effectiveness of digital diplomacy, Widmer cites the decreased positivity towards the US between 2009 (25% positive opinion) and 2012 (15% positive) and affirmation of Obama's foreign policy (34% reducing to 15% in the same time frame)[15], 2009 marking the start of US E-Diplomacy 2.0. According to Widmer, E-Diplomacy achieves nothing if actions don't follow words (cf. Widmer, 2014, p. 299).

## 4.3. Recommendations and Perceptions of SM Usage in PD

Whilst the use of social media in public diplomacy has, in many ways, changed structures and speed of handling of diplomatic situations for the better (see 2.5), it is recognized that

[15] Opinion polls by the Pew Research Center in Turkey, Egypt, Jordan and the Lebanon (2009 and 2012)

"*...no software has been able to capture the taste, sight and smell of a negotiator's environment 8,000 miles away from Washington, D.C.*" (Martin & Jagla, 2013, p. 18), and that technology has its limitations. Martin & Jagla also note, that the difficulty for policy makers lies in the balancing act of revealing the necessary and socially demanded information on the different platforms whilst keeping sensitive government information sufficiently hidden from the public.

The former Secretary of State Madeline Albright also came to this conclusion (see 1). Commensurate with the analysis of Martin and Jagla, she perceived an overflow of information to be challenging for diplomats to filter and dissect, but also that diplomacy is a process which takes time for goals to be reached. In effect, (traditional) diplomacy may be quite the opposite of the rapid, fast moving world of technology (cf. Martin & Jagla, 2013, p. 13).

Practical advice regarding effective use of SM in government and diplomacy is available from many sources. Very briefly this includes:

- Personalization of the account's Twitter page. Incorporate the organization's logo, website, and information about who is maintaining the account.
- An organization needs to follow other users. This shows engagement and less self-preoccupation which can help build a social network community.
- Official organizations should not be too promotional.
- Try to be informational asking: "What is my organization's SM presence giving people?" Posting links to advice on topics pertaining to the organization motivates users to follow an organizational account
- It is important to post regularly (but it is not necessary to publicize updates hourly
- Organizations should reply to direct queries in a reasonable time-frame to address concerns and further encourage interaction via SM

- It helps to keep asking questions of the organization's followers and stimulate dialog. Use a dedicated hashtag, such as #ORGfeedback, for easy monitoring.
- Link to other organizational accounts, if they exist. This broadens their social network community (cf. Waters & Williams, 2011, pp. 360-361).

This advice is largely echoed by Strauß et al. who identified the six communication strategies of:

1) Interactivity
2) Personalization
3) Positive sentiment
4) Relevance
5) Transparency
6) Communicating within a broad network

(cf. Strauß, Kruikemeier, van der Meulen, & van Noort, 2015, p. 375).

Finally, it is of course required that sufficient technical and human resources be maintained to interactively uphold symmetrical communication with stakeholders. This includes monitoring tools and specialist social media teams (cf. Strauß, Kruikemeier, van der Meulen, & van Noort, 2015, p. 378)

# 5. Interpretation of Results

As the research results have shown, social media represents a modern, powerful tool which can and is being used on a daily basis by diplomats, governments and NGOs to enter into dialog with stakeholders, informing and influencing them in the sense of nation branding (see RQ 1). SM can be a cost effective tool, but to work effectively, specialist teams are needed and continual management of content and reaction to public feedback is essential.

It can be stated that social media certainly enable the promotion of a two-way symmetrical model according to long-standing but also newer theories of public diplomacy (see 2.8). This is, conditionally, a positive answer to RQ 1, but whilst engaging publics in a tactical manner, unsympathetic stakeholders may, however, use social media to retaliate (ref. 4th PD Quadrant in 2.7). One method of understanding and containing such retaliation is the SIM approach (see 2.6). Once again, the speed of reaction and counter-reaction via SM is quite rapid in comparison with the traditional diplomatic world. A real-world example is described in Appendix A. Not only are prompt and weighed responses to antagonistic posts necessary, but also a continuous monitoring of the noosphere is required (see also RQ 3).

With respect to RQ 1, the research supports the possibility of achieving positive resonance in PD via social media, but it is also abundantly clear that long-term, traditional diplomacy cannot be substituted by online technologies. There is little evidence that SM engagement has long term effects for a given theme (see RQ 2), but that it is a good tactical tool for every-day purposes (see 4.1) which in the era of internet cannot be ignored.

As regards building and maintaining social networks, the best practices (described in 4.3 and questioned in RQ 3) are of great practical help.

## 5.1. Limitations and Problems in SM Research

As regards the research outlook, it can be said that whilst SNSs offer excellent possibilities to conduct empirical research including automation using the standard APIs, this applies only where the content is largely textual, rather than on video or photo sharing applications such as YouTube and Flickr. Although there are tools for analyzing pictorial data, the cost and precision lag far behind those for textual analyses and, unsurprisingly, the availability of research on non-textual SMs is – in comparison – negligible.

The analysis of social media effects carries with it methodological problems, since social network users are not only consumers, but also creators and producers of content. Therefore, unlike in other one-sided communication scenarios, social media cannot be regarded as an independent variable in an experiment. Much care is needed in designing experiments and in interpreting results to be certain about whether actions or reactions (to a previous action) are being analyzed.

# 6. Outlook / Research Gap

As suggested in 4.3, it is good practice to use a dedicated hashtag, such as #ORGfeedback. If enough of these dedicated hashtags could be monitored, then research into feedback to organizations could be facilitated and could be a focus for further research.

Given that microblogging sites (Twitter, Tumblr, Sina and Tencent Weibo etc.) and other social media are global phenomena, it would be fruitful to discover if the current findings were similar to how public affairs practitioners in Africa, Asia, and Latin and South America use those services. Clearly, such analyses would require excellent language skills for coding and interpretation of results.

Also pertaining to the global aspect of social networking; it could be surmised that since SM require no localized presence, their use for PD could become largely centralized. This would allow for a specialized team of social network experts (well versed in best practices for SM) to efficiently monitor and maintain an appropriate level of SM activity whilst – in an era of omnipresent cost-cutting – freeing localized resources for tasks which really can only be carried out on the diplomatic front (cf. 4.3). New research could look into the efficiency gains and effectivity of centralization of SM services for relationship building in PD.

Finally, the "level playing field" (cf. 4.1) which SNSs offer, would seem to provide an ideal medium for stateless countries to gain traction for their causes. Although there is a moderate amount of research on public diplomacy of these stateless countries there is a gap regarding research on their SM usage which could be filled.

# Appendix A

## A Case Study of the SIM Process for Social Media

The case study of Ambassador Gary Locke's trip to China demonstrates, according to Zhang, all stages of his 4-phase SIM model (see 2.6). In Phase 1 Locke acts in a non-privileged manner (paying for a coffee at the airport) to which the Chinese are not used to seeing in high-placed officials. Some photographs and a report of the anecdote on the ambassador were posted by a Chinese American businessman on Sina Weibo (microblog), which in the following days went viral.

In the proactive phase, diplomats used the positive attention in order to reinforce their position and form public opinion. Gary Locke continued to promote U.S. values in a humble way e.g. flying in economy class and eating noodles together with Vice-President Biden during his visit to Beijing in 2011. Although the initial "coffee incident" was unplanned, some of the subsequent actions were broadcast on the embassy's social media accounts.

In the reactive phase a backlash is provoked as the Chinese government try to save face. The Chinese media dispute Locke's modest life-style, note that he travels in a bullet-proof limousine, lives in the lavish US embassy etc. Chinese journalists are instructed not to "hype" the ambassador's trip.

Finally in phase 4 the U.S. embassy responds with what are called the "principled approach" and "contention". Briefly: details of U.S. diplomats' salaries and benefits are published and Gary Locke expresses his openness in a TV interview to help US/Chinese relations (Zhang, 2013, pp. 1319-1322).

The case study demonstrates both sides of the social media coin. Promotion of positive sentiment, negative reactions and management of a strategic situation. As would be expected, at the end of phase 4 the Gary Locke incident gave way to different issues on Chinese social media (Zhang, 2013, p. 1322).

## 6.1. Bibliography


Bartolotta, C., & McGillis, J. (2012). Beyond the Arab Spring: A new Era of Popular Sovreignty and Protest. *The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy*, *XIII*(1), p. 7-19.

Criado, J. I., Sandoval-Almazan, R., & Gil-Garcia, J. R. (2013). Government innovation through social media. *Government Information Quarterly, 30*, pp. 319–326.

Cull, N. J. (2013). The Long Road to Public Diplomacy 2.0: The Internet in US Public Diplomacy. (I. S. Association, Ed.) *International Studies Review, 15*, pp. 123–139.

Dang-Xuan, L., Stieglitz, S., Wladarsch, J., & Neuberger, C. (2013). An Investigation of Influentials and the Role of Sentiment in Political Communication on Twitter During Election Periods. *Information, Communication & Society, 16*(5), pp. 795–825. Retrieved from http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1369118X.2013.783608

Feinstein, B., Bhatia, V., Latack, J., & Davila, J. (2015). Social Networking and Depression. In N. A. Cheever, L. M. Carrier, L. D. Rosen, L. D. Rosen, N. A. Cheever, & L. M. Carr (Eds.), *The Wiley Handbook of Psychology, Technology, and Society.* Blackwell Publishing. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/b.9781118772027.2015.00017.x

García, C. (2012). The Use of Sports as a Tool of Public Diplomacy in Regions or "Stateless Nations". (U. o. Press, Ed.) *Journal of Sports Media, 7*(2), pp. 115-128.

García, C. (2013). Strategic communication applied to nation building in Spain: The experience of the Catalan Region. *Public Relations Review, 39*, pp. 558-562.

Gilboa, E. (2001). Diplomacy in the media age: Three models of uses and effects. *Diplomacy & Statecraft, 12*(2), pp. 1-28.

Grunig, J. (2006). Furnishing the Edifice: Ongoing Research on Public Relations As a Strategic Management Function. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 18*(2), pp. 151-176. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjprr1802_5

Hong, H. (2013). Government websites and social media's influence on government-public relationships. *Public Relations Review, 39*, pp. 346– 356.

Horsham, C. O. (2013, Dec 10). *The Foreign and Commonwealth Office Digital Strategy*. Retrieved June 19, 2016, from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/39629/AB_12-11-14_Digital_strategy.pdf

InternetLiveStats.com. (2014). *internet live stats*. Retrieved July 5, 2016, from http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons, 53*, pp. 59 - 68. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003

Martin, C., & Jagla, L. (2013). *Integrating Diplomacy and Social Media: A Report of the First Annual Aspen Institute Dialogue on Diplomacy and Technology.* The Aspen Institute, Communications and Society Program. Washington D.C.: The Aspen Institute.

McKie, D., & Heath, R. L. (2016). Public relations as a strategic intelligence for the 21st century: Contexts, controversies, and challenges. *Public Relations ReviewPublic, 42*, pp. 298–305.

Nye, J. S. (2004). *Soft Power The Means to Success in World Politics.* New York: Public Affairs.

Rabina, D., Cocciolo, A., & Peet, L. (2013). Social Media Use by the US Federal Government at the End of the 2012 Presidential Term. (M. U. Press, Ed.) *Alexandria: The Journal of National and International Library and Information Issues, 24*(3), pp. 73-93. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.7227/ALX.0013

Schrock , A. (2015). The Emergence of Mobile Social Network Platforms on the Mobile Internet. In L. D. Rosen, N. A. Cheever, L. M. Carr, L. D. Rosen, N. A. Cheever, & L. M. Carr (Eds.), *The Wiley Handbook of Psychology, Technology, and Society.* Blackwell Publishing. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/b.9781118772027.2015.00020.x

Snow, N., & Taylor, P. M. (2009). *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy.* New York NY: Routledge.

Strauß, N., Kruikemeier, S., van der Meulen, H., & van Noort, G. (2015). Digital diplomacy in GCC countries: Strategic communication ofWestern. *Government Information Quarterly*, 369-379.

Twitter, Inc. (2016). *Twitter Developer API*. Retrieved June 30, 2016, from https://dev.twitter.com: https://dev.twitter.com/rest/reference/get/direct_messages

Vanc, A. M., & Fitzpatrick, K. R. (2016). Scope and status of public diplomacy research by publicrelations scholars, 1990–2014. *Public Relations Review*. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2015.07.012

Waters, R. D., & Williams, J. M. (2011). Squawking, tweeting, cooing, and hooting: analyzing the communication patterns of government agencies on Twitter. (W. O. Library, Ed.) *Journal of Public Affairs, 11*(4), pp. 353–363. doi:10.1002/pa.385

Widmer, P. (2014). *Diplomatie: ein Handbuch.* Zürich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung.

Xifra, J., & McKie, D. (2012). From realpolitik to noopolitik: The public relations of (stateless) nations in an information age. *Public Relations Review, 38*, 819-824.

Zaharna, R., & Uysal, N. (2016). Public Relations Review. *Going for the jugular in public diplomacy: How adversarial publics using social media are challenging state legitimacy, 42*, pp. 109-119. Retrieved from http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0363811115001010

Zhang, J. (2013). A Strategic Issue Management (SIM) Approach to Social Media Use in Public Diplomacy. *American Behavioral Scientist, 57*(9), pp. 1312–1331.

Zhang, J., & Swartz, B. C. (2009). Toward a model of NGO media diplomacy in the Internet age: Case study of Washington Profile. *Public Relations Review*, pp. 47-55. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2008.09.018