

China's Digital Public Diplomacy during the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics

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Abstract: Public diplomacy has always been considered as an important complement to official diplomacy, and its connotation has been expanding since its concept was first put forward in the 1960s. It is one of the crucial tools for shaping the national image and enhancing its soft power. With the deepening of globalization and the development of information technology, a new form of public diplomacy called "digital public diplomacy" has emerged and attracted the attention of various countries. Although digital public diplomacy in China has not been developed for a long time, its role is becoming increasingly prominent. The 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, as a major international sporting event to be held in China, carries a unique mission, especially in the area of public diplomacy. This article mainly presents an in-depth analysis of the event from three aspects: subject coordination, audience research and communication. Through digital public diplomacy, the Beijing Winter Olympic Games not only strives to shape a reliable, admirable and respectable image of China and makes efforts to tell China's stories, but also provides an important case study for the development of China's digital public diplomacy.

1. Introduction

Digital public diplomacy is a form of new public diplomacy, which can be defined as "uses the internet, new information and communication technologies (ICT) and social media as means for strengthening diplomatic relations."^[1]With the support of advanced digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence, big data, AR and VR, it is possible to expand the scope and enhance the effectiveness of a country's public diplomacy by breaking through the limitations of time and space to a certain extent. For China, the rapid development of digital public diplomacy also brings opportunities for China to build a good national image. In this paper, the Winter Olympic Games, as a major global sporting event, has strong public diplomacy attributes. The Beijing Winter Olympics were affected by the new crown epidemic and foreign spectators could not reach the site to watch the games, but under the organization of the Beijing Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games, China's media, enterprises and the public carried out rich digital public diplomacy activities through advanced and diverse digital technologies, media and platforms, and achieved notable results.

2. China's Digital Public Diplomacy System

2.1. The definition of China's digital public diplomacy system

What is China's digital public diplomacy system? As the name implies, it is a systematic approach to China's digital public diplomacy. So, what is a system? According to some scholars, "a system is an organic whole composed of several elements or certain consciousnesses that are interrelated." Structurally, it consists of a number of interrelated and independent elements that are coalesced around a core or center. Functionally, once a system is formed, it can generate new functions that the individual elements do not possess. Based on the definition of a digital public diplomacy system, this article defines China's digital public diplomacy system as an organic whole consisting of several related subsystems for the purpose of realizing China's national diplomatic mission and safeguarding national interests.

2.2. The elements of China's digital public diplomacy system

The constituent elements of China's digital public diplomacy system refer to the various elements that influence the system's operation. According to Harold Lasswell, one of the four pioneers of communication, there are five elements that must be addressed when describing the act of communication: who, what, through what channels, to whom, and with what effect.^[2] From a systemic perspective, Chinese scholar Zhao Kejin suggests that a complete and functioning digital public diplomacy system needs to include five elements: objectives, resources, targets, methods and institutions.^[3] Based on the above research and combining the perspectives of communication and system, this study concludes that the basic components of China's digital public diplomacy system include six aspects: subject, object, objective, resource, specific path and implementation effect.

2.3. The structure of China's digital public diplomacy system

From the perspective of soft power, Joseph Nye lists five specific steps on how to apply soft power in reality, first by defining objectives, second by organizing resources, third by analyzing targets, then by choosing strategies, and finally by practical evaluation. In addition, Nye also discusses three important means of achieving soft power, namely, the three ways of implementing public diplomacy: daily communication, strategic communication, and relationship building. These are daily communication, strategic communication, and relationship building, all of which lay the foundation for the construction of the system that follows.

From the perspective of building a system, building a system means to gather the fragmented into the whole. In other words, it is a reasonable way to put things together to form a system that can be studied as a whole. To build a complete and functioning digital public diplomacy system, it is necessary to include five aspects: objectives, resources, objects, methods, and institutions.

As mentioned earlier, the elements of China's digital public diplomacy system are: objectives, resources, subjects, objects, development paths, and effect evaluation. In terms of the relationship between the elements, both the formulation of goals and the organization of resources depend on the subject, especially the government subject, because digital public diplomacy, as a form of diplomacy, is by nature the only legal actor recognized in the international system, and it has the highest decision-making authority. The subject is both the recipient and the sender of the information. The "sending" here refers mainly to the feedback they receive after receiving the information. The path of digital public diplomacy activities is the bridge between the subjects and the objects. Based on the above logical relationship between the components of digital public diplomacy, this article builds a framework structure of digital public diplomacy system based on the

idea of “Subject-Object-Path”, namely, subject coordination system, audience research system and communication system. (As shown in Figure 1)

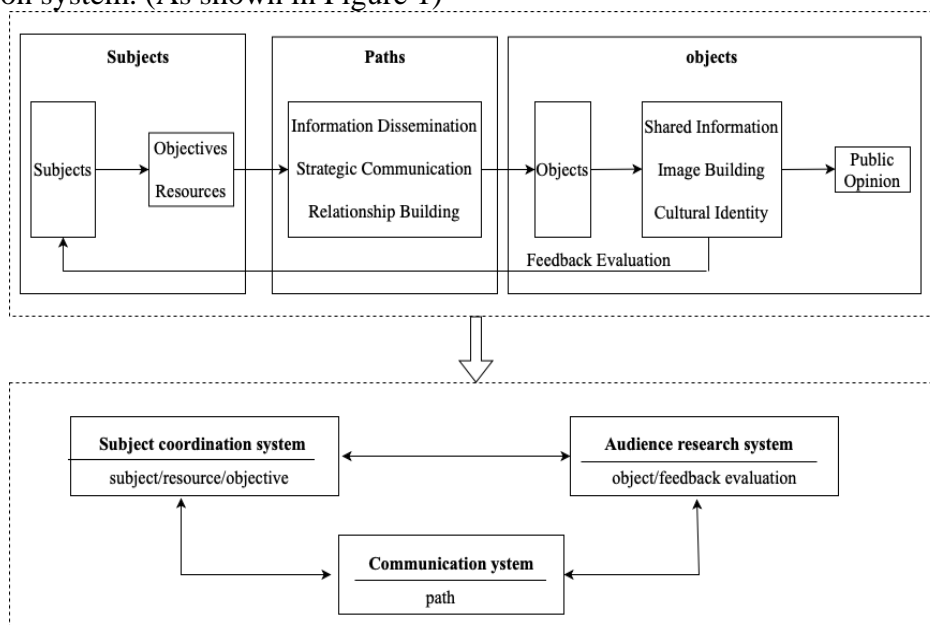


Figure 1: The structure of China’s digital public diplomacy system

2.3.1. Subject coordination system

The subject coordination system corresponds to subjects, objectives, and resources. Among these subjects, there are governmental and non-governmental actors. In the information era, governmental actors are responsible for setting goals and managing resources, planning the direction of China’s digital public diplomacy practice, providing strong resource support, and playing a leading role in specific practices. Non-government actors, on the other hand, are mainly responsible for expanding the scope of specific practices, broadening the path of practice and enhancing the effectiveness of digital public diplomacy activities through the soft power resources owned by different actors. The main coordinating system determines the goals of the system, the mode of governance and the way of operation.

2.3.2. Audience research system

Audience research system corresponds to object and feedback assessment. Good digital public diplomacy needs to start with listening. Listening here refers to the analysis of information, including audience analysis before conducting activities and feedback assessment afterwards. Good audience analysis can improve the efficiency of communication; good feedback evaluation can improve the quality of communication. Thus information analysis provides strong support for system operation and optimization.

2.3.3. Communication system

Communication system corresponds to specific paths. After clarifying what to do, what to rely on, who to do it with and to whom, the most important part is through what channels and pathways to do it. The system contains three paths: digital public diplomacy for media, digital public diplomacy for strategic communication, and digital public diplomacy for culture, all three of which are layered and designed to achieve the goal of digital public diplomacy in China. It can be said that

this system is the guarantee of the whole system operation.

3. The Analysis of China's Digital Public Diplomacy during the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics

3.1. Background information

On November 3, 2013, the Chinese Olympic Committee sent a letter to the IOC nominating Beijing as the host city for the 2022 Olympic Winter Games, and on July 31, 2015, Beijing was awarded the final right to host the 2022 Olympic Winter Games by 44 votes at the 128th IOC Plenary Session. Beijing is the first “dual Olympic city” in history to have hosted both the Summer Olympic Games and the Winter Olympic Games, which not only reflects its strong comprehensive strength, but also demonstrates the people's unremitting pursuit of Olympic culture and sportsmanship and a bright future.

During the 17-day game, 2,892 athletes from 91 countries and regions participated in the games, officials from more than 170 countries and regions from 70 countries and international organizations attended the event, and leaders from some countries came to China without even attending the athletes to show their support for the hosts with practical actions, in addition to more than 8,000 media gathered in Beijing to viewers around the world about the Beijing Winter Olympics. The Beijing Winter Olympics have created a public diplomacy platform for athletes and spectators from all countries to share information and interact with each other.

Hosting the Beijing Winter Olympics is an important step in promoting China's digital public diplomacy and enhancing the country's soft power. Large-scale international sports events can attract special attention to our country from people and media all over the world, thus giving our country an opportunity to showcase its national image and influence international public opinion. The national image that our country presents under global attention does not lie in our economic strength or military power, but comes from the heartfelt recognition and appreciation of people from all over the world. Such large-scale sports events play a far more influential role in digitizing public diplomacy and enhancing soft power than mere policy propaganda and information dissemination.^[4]

3.2. Analysis from subject coordination

3.2.1. Objectives

The Beijing Winter Olympics should be based on the concept of the community of human destiny and use the sports event as a carrier to not only actively demonstrate China's profound cultural heritage and cultural confidence and enhance the country's cultural soft power, but also to show the people of the world the good image and valuable character of the Chinese people who are self-improvement, hard-working and brave, and to highlight China's determination to rise peacefully and its will for common development. The two main objectives of digital public diplomacy for this Beijing Winter Olympics are as follows:

First, to establish a more open national image. The Olympic Games are a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to promote China's further opening up and development in communion with the world. China also hopes to use this opportunity to present to the world the image of an open, transparent and responsible great power. Therefore, the goal of the Beijing Winter Olympics is to take sports and cultural exchanges as an opportunity to enhance the country's soft power and shape a more liberated national image.

Second, to tell China's stories. Based on the Olympic activities, the combination of the spirit of sports and the spirit of the times is explored, thus enriching and developing the connotation and

quality of China's sports culture, enhancing its attractiveness, achieving the perception and recognition of China's cultural soft power in a subtle way, and building a human community with a shared future. ^[5]

3.2.2. Subjects

The successful practice of digital public diplomacy for the Beijing Winter Olympics was evolved under the leadership of the government, with the full support of various national departments and multiple localities, through the coordinated organization of the Beijing Winter Olympics Organizing Committee, and with the joint assistance of social organizations, media, enterprises, and the public, to achieve excellent digital public diplomacy results. Please produce your figures electronically, and integrate them into your document.

Firstly, Beijing Organising Committee for the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics (hereinafter referred to as BOC) coordinates all preparations of the Beijing Winter Olympics. From October 15 to December 31, 2018, the BOC is open to the world for creative proposals for the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics. This campaign is open to the world, which to a certain extent allows the international public to deeply participate in the Beijing Winter Olympics and fully understand China's culture and national image, which is a good warm-up for the digital public diplomacy of the Beijing Winter Olympics. In addition, the BOC has issued several documents to ensure the normal holding of the Beijing Winter Olympics and to guarantee the digital public diplomacy. For example, the "Legacy Report of Beijing 2022" proposes to focus on building a number of the Beijing Winter Olympics legacies in 7 aspects and 35 areas, such as sports, economy, society, culture, environment, city and regional development, which are the resource base for digital public diplomacy during the Beijing Winter Olympics. In concrete practice, the Press and Publicity Department of the BOC plays an important role. The routine press conference at the time of the competition gathers the attention of the global media and is a hard battle that the host countries must do their best to win in the history of the Beijing Winter Olympics. A total of 15 regular press conferences and one special Chinese New Year themed conference were held during the Beijing Winter Olympics, covering many important topics such as the opening and closing ceremonies, epidemic prevention and control, sustainable development, event communication technology, athlete care and service, and volunteers. Each press conference was held jointly with the IOC, using a double moderator mechanism, with the general moderator being a foreign party and the co-host being a Chinese party, in order to face the questions from journalists on site in a more comprehensive and comfortable manner. There were many challenging questions, but the speakers did a good job of responding to them, showing China's confidence.

Secondly, Technology companies help digital public diplomacy for the Beijing Winter Olympics. The use of 5G technology is an important support to realize the Beijing Winter Olympics with technology. As the only official communication service partner of the Beijing Winter Olympics, China Unicom, with the theme of "Smart Winter Olympics, Connected Future", actively participated in the preparatory work of the Winter Olympics, providing full coverage of 5G network for the venues in Beijing and Zhangjiakou, as well as the roads connected to the venues. Combining cloud computing, big data, VR technology, AR technology and other technologies under the premise that 5G communication is guaranteed, 5G cloud relay, ultra-high definition live broadcast, intelligent viewing, intelligent vehicle networking and other applications were introduced to meet the needs of off-site audiences for immersive live viewing while ensuring the quality of the competition was carried out, bringing a more enjoyable viewing experience to audiences around the world.

In addition to the support brought by enterprises in the viewing experience. Companies have also made considerable contributions to communication between the public. 2019, KDDI set up a special

team for the demonstration application of the Beijing Winter Olympics, with the help of a multilingual intelligent voice and language service platform, to accelerate the pace of implementation of the application scenarios of the Winter Olympics, providing speech recognition, voice synthesis, machine translation and other functions, automatic question and answer and other technical support, through artificial intelligence technology to exclude all aspects of Communication barriers, close the race, the relationship between the athletes and the media, the distance between the audience. The use of Xunfei AI products is ubiquitous at the Beijing Winter Olympic Games. Xunfei translation pens, translators, recorders, etc., intelligent office books and other products are used at the Winter Olympic Games to enable journalists to get rid of tedious records and present live information of the Winter Olympics to the global audience at the first time. It can also help volunteers to complete daily travel traffic navigation, guided tours and snow and ice road safety protection. In the Winter Olympic Village, “Aiga”, a virtual human who is proficient in six countries, including China, Japan, Russia, France and Spain, is ready to provide consultation services, combined with the characteristics of CCTV reporter Wang Bingbing, 3D modeling, and increased the interactive emotional design virtual human “Wang Bingbing” The virtual human technology has been applied in more than four hundred media and enterprises in China.

Thirdly, China’s sports stars are also important subjects in digital public diplomacy. As the top China’s sports stars of the Beijing Winter Olympics, Su Yiming, Gu Ailing and other Winter Olympics participants show their unique oriental height, oriental speed and oriental beauty in their respective fields, constructing a cross-cultural subject imagination that transcends single cultural boundaries. The media presentation of young sports talents, represented by the athlete Gu Ailing, shows great humor and wisdom and achieves global cross-cultural empathy. At the same time, the general public in China, with their increasing media literacy, sports rationality and great citizenship, have also made important contributions on social media. For example, during the Beijing Winter Olympics, when inaccurate statements about our country appeared on foreign websites, affecting our national image, our public came forward in time to argue their case. We did our best to defend the image of our country.

3.2.3. Resources

The material resource base of the Beijing Winter Olympics digital public diplomacy is mainly reflected in broadcasting on the cloud. With the help of artificial intelligence, big data, cloud computing, 5G and other advanced digital technologies, different Olympic scenes were presented in a comprehensive manner, especially in the communication of the opening ceremony, which was a concentrated display of various scientific technologies. China Central Radio and Television, an international mainstream media, is the rights-holding broadcaster of the Beijing Winter Olympics. Using the world’s leading 8K technology production, it panoramically showed the splendid, ingenious and magnificent opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics through a flowing and well-organized broadcast. Seven 8K cameras were set up for the opening ceremony, and the innovative A6 OB van and flying cat, swing arm and other equipment, aerial helicopters and other special equipment independently developed by the main station were used to capture the wonderful moments of the opening ceremony in all aspects. By giving full play to the high-definition characteristics of the 8K camera, the picture is beautifully richer in expression and other features, and through flexible and scientific scheduling of the camera, the grand scenes of the opening ceremony were shown in three dimensions, and the most wonderful part of the opening ceremony technology empowered for the art was fully demonstrated on the international public signal, and the opening ceremony site had a large screen broadcasting and control system of nearly 14,000 square meters, showing the opening ceremony for the global audience. The aesthetic visual effects of the perfect opening ceremony let the world see China’s efforts to promote the building of a community

of human destiny and the image of a friendly, sunny and rich and open country.

Of course, in addition to the support of material resources, soft power resources also provide rich content support for the digital public diplomacy of the Beijing Winter Olympics. In terms of cultural resources, the ice dun dun is popular all over the world, touching people all over the world and becoming the focal point for people abroad to pay attention to the Beijing Winter Olympics and get to know Chinese cultural symbols.^[6] The opening countdown of the twenty-four solar terms attracted the attention of audiences all over the world through the unique number “twenty-four”; the red and blue technological color scheme, the delayed photography of fireworks and streams of light, the futuristic young girls dressed on the traditional Chinese roofs, and other futuristic Chinese elements brought the gratitude and admiration for nature in the traditional Chinese farming culture to life in a visual way and admiration for nature in traditional Chinese farming culture to the world audience in an intuitive and easy-to-understand way. In terms of values, the concept of the community of human destiny is present throughout the Beijing Winter Olympics digital public diplomacy. At a time when global warming is becoming more urgent and the new pneumonia epidemic is ravaging the world, there is no time when human solidarity is more necessary than today. In July 2021, on the eve of the opening of the Tokyo Olympics, which had been delayed by a year due to the epidemic, the International Olympic Committee added “Together” to the Olympic motto, and the familiar century-old phrase “Faster, Higher, Stronger” became “Faster, Higher, Stronger, together”. The desire for world unity and peace has been a constant pursuit of China since ancient times.

3.3. Analysis from audience research

3.3.1. Audience analysis

The media and relevant communicators should stand in the position of the audience, analyze the needs of platform users, develop communication strategies and choose appropriate communication methods, communication contents and communication forms according to the needs of platform users. Under the background of media integration, TV sports news programs need to continuously explore and innovate in order to gain a broader space for development. In the Beijing Winter Olympics, CCTV news adheres to the current hot content for young users as the basis for targeted coverage, through the shape of Gu Ailing and Zhang Yang, Su Yiming and other sports stars, the production of the Beijing Winter Olympics super IP “Bing Dwen Dwen”, with text, video-based, picture and other diversified forms of presentation. The diversified presentation forms of text, video-based and pictures, combined with the humorous social language, enable the coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics to reach every level of the circle and adapt to the requirements of audiences at different levels. At the same time, by setting issues and leading audiences to participate in discussions, the connection between the public opinion field and the real world is enhanced. On this basis, CCTV News breaks through the traditional form of sports news reporting, using the identity of “athlete” and “anchor” to show vivid Olympic stories from a unique perspective, adding infectious power to the culture of the Beijing Winter Olympics, thus promoting the influence of the Beijing Winter Olympics. The impact of the Beijing Winter Olympics has been further expanded.^[7]

3.3.2. Accurate communication

The Beijing Winter Olympics is guided by algorithms to carry out accurate communication. Algorithm technology is continuing to develop in the era of smart media, which can be combined with viewers’ personal information on the platform to record the evolution of various materials through viewers’ selective exposure, selective understanding, selective memory and selective

behavior. By analyzing various media information releases, information needs and preferences of various groups of people can be obtained. According to the information, the media can set and arrange the content in a more targeted way, so as to achieve the purpose of accurate and personalized communication.^[8]At present, globally, algorithms have been widely used in various media fields. After “Bing Dundun” became the “top stream” of the world, it has attracted the general attention of people all over the world, which is inextricably linked to the use of algorithmic technology by media platforms such as Weibo, Tiktok, and YouTube for dissemination. Through the active collection of user information and user feedback, guide the audience to discover and accept the popularity of Bing Dundun, and continue to strengthen the link between Bing Dundun and the audience, and actively build a local communication platform, overseas through the analysis of overseas user interests, content preference habits, etc., refining the generally recognized and accepted, cultural value Chinese elements symbols, pushing the same with foreign media platforms. With China’s unique cultural connotations, the two-way communication of China’s voice, told with more width and depth China’s stories.

3.4. Analysis from communication

The Beijing Winter Olympics is not only a world sports exchange event, but also an important window for China to show its national soft power and national image, and a narrative field for telling the Chinese story to the outside world. In order to better achieve the above-mentioned goals and enhance other countries’ people’s perception of China, the dissemination of information is particularly important, especially relying on the media. Generally speaking, there are two main modes of media digital public diplomacy: one is “bring in”, so that foreign media can directly write and report on the real situation of a country; the other is for domestic media to go out, which includes two ways. The second way is for the domestic media to “going global”, which includes two ways: one is for the domestic media to report on the country and be relayed or commented by the international media, and the other is for the domestic media to report directly to the outside world.

3.4.1. Media digital public diplomacy——“going global”

The Beijing Winter Olympics has divided the media into three main categories: registered print and photo journalists, licensed broadcasters, and master broadcasters, with a total of 9,388 people; 1,952 registered print and photo journalists from 520 news agencies of 50 national and regional Olympic committees; 24 licensed broadcasters (including the Olympic Channel), with a total of 3,607 people; and master broadcasters Olympic Broadcast Services (OBS), with a total of 3,829 people, producing more than 6,000 hours of video; more than 660 OBS cameras and more than 1,600 microphones.

A lot of news coverage was done by various media. Given the special nature of the Beijing Winter Olympics and the uniqueness of the Chinese media industry, the Chinese media's coverage showed certain characteristics. First, the Chinese media used a variety of traditional and digital media to provide quality coverage of the Winter Olympics. Secondly, the Chinese media used the social media fission mode of communication to make the “Bing Dwen Dwen” and “Gu Ailing”and other hot spots of the Winter Olympics successfully “out of the circle”, which got good communication effect and economic benefit. and economic benefits. Once again, Chinese media have promoted the traditional Chinese culture in the Winter Olympics by choosing different topics for their reports. Finally, the Chinese media focused on the moving stories of the athletes both on and off the field through an emotional narrative strategy, highlighting the humanistic spirit of the Olympics.

The Beijing Winter Olympics media digital public diplomacy in foreign communications pay more attention to digital transformation. As the most digitally advanced Winter Olympic Games, the main channel for global communication of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games no longer relies only on traditional television broadcasting, but also on Internet-based digital platforms. As a major partner of the International Olympic Committee, AliCloud not only occupies a pivotal position in information exchange, but also plays an active role in post-production and distribution. Social platforms, streaming media, video sharing sites and other digital companies make up a new global communication network, and with the help of new digital media, the Beijing Winter Olympics had a larger online audience than ever before.

3.4.2. Media digital public diplomacy——“bring in”

China’s foreign communication should not only tell the China’s stories by ourselves, but also let foreigners tell the China’s stories, so that the foreign communication can be more effective.

People’s Daily published “Many political parties and dignitaries express their confidence and expectation for Beijing Winter Olympics”, and “International Forum” invited foreign dignitaries, international celebrities, IOC officials and Chinese ambassadors abroad to write articles to express their warm expectation for the Winter Olympic Games and reflect the international community's concern and support for the Beijing Winter Olympic Games. Overseas.com’s full-media series “Winter Olympics Here I Come” interviewed 17 international dignitaries, Winter Olympics athletes and other international figures, and told the story of Beijing Winter Olympics to the world in multiple languages, with a total of 110 million reads on various platforms at home and abroad. The English version of the Global Times published articles and interviews of 26 foreign dignitaries, IOC officials and famous scholars, including ambassadors of many countries in China, Samaranch Jr. and Martin Jacques, conveying the blessings of the international mainstream society to the Beijing Winter Olympics.

Emotional empathy is an important factor in strengthening the effectiveness of digital public diplomacy. Digital public diplomacy is an art of communication, an exchange of culture and emotion. Through artistic ingenuity, daily details and multiple interactions, it makes the other side truly understand China, comprehend China and love China, which is atmospheric and authentic. Beijing Winter Olympic Games, many foreign athletes and coaches, officials spontaneously filmed and released graphics and videos, etc., in overseas social media platforms post they came to Beijing to participate in a variety of daily good feelings. The food and hospitality in the Winter Olympic Village, the Chinese cultural elements, the mascot “Bing Dwen Dwen”, the black technology of the Winter Olympic venues, etc. all became the main characters in their footage. These videos have attracted a lot of attention and comments, and inadvertently formed and expanded the “Beijing Winter Olympics circle of friends”overseas, which, to a certain extent, has broken through the information and discourse barriers between the U.S. and the West, allowing the information we want to express and show to reach the Western mainstream society, which is conducive to changing the prejudice and mistrust of some overseas audiences, and playing a role in correcting some inaccurate reports outside the country. This will help change the prejudice and mistrust of some overseas audiences and correct some inaccurate reports.

4. Conclusions

Taking the Beijing Winter Olympic Games digital public diplomacy as an example, this paper presents an in-depth analysis of it from three dimensions: subject coordination, information analysis and communication. In this large-scale digital public diplomacy practice, all actors played an important role under the organization of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games Organizing Committee.

Non-governmental actors were actively involved, especially technology companies, which not only provided advanced technology support but also showed their strengths to the world. In addition to this, the continuous output of the public, especially opinion leaders, on social media has continued to build momentum for the Beijing Olympics, introducing and interacting with China to the world public. Moreover, empowered by advanced technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence, the demands of foreign audiences are more clearly understood and therefore the content of communication is more targeted. Given the impact of the new crown epidemic, no overseas audience could come to watch the games, but it did not affect everyone's enthusiasm for the Beijing Winter Olympics, thanks to the media's all-round and all-time coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics. It is undeniable that digital public diplomacy in the media is an important way to carry out digital public diplomacy for the Beijing Winter Olympic Games, telling the story of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games and the story of China through "going global" and "bring in". We hope you find the information in this template useful in the preparation of your submission.

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