

# Study on the Communication Strategy of Sports Events under the Perspective of Public Diplomacy

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**Abstract.** In the context of globalisation, sports events have increasingly become the focus of public diplomacy research in terms of their communication strategies. This paper interviews five groups of people and shares their views on the experience of major international sports events and their outlook for the future, and analyses how sports events can achieve the construction and dissemination of the national image through media communication, social media interaction, cultural display and other means. Research results show that successful communication strategies for sports events can not only attract the attention of global audiences, but also effectively convey the cultural values and national image of the host country. Specifically, cultural exhibitions and tourism promotion activities during the events can enhance the international community's understanding of and interest in the history and culture of the host country, while the extensive use of social media has greatly expanded the scope of the event's dissemination, facilitated direct communication and interaction between the international public and the host country, and deepened mutual understanding and friendship. Therefore, an effective communication strategy for sports events needs to take these factors into consideration and be flexibly adjusted to achieve the best public diplomacy effect.

## 1 Introduction

In the contemporary globalized world, the hosting of sports events is playing an unprecedented role in the relations between countries. The core of public diplomacy lies in shaping a country's image and enhancing the understanding and goodwill of other countries through cultural exchanges and information dissemination. In recent years, sports events, as an important carrier of international exchanges, have become an excellent platform for countries to showcase their culture, values and comprehensive strength. From the Summer and Winter Olympics to the World Cup to the various continental sporting events, every sporting event is an opportunity for a country or city to present itself to the world.

With the rapid development of new media technology, the communication mode of sports events has undergone profound changes. The rise of new communication channels such as social media, live streaming platforms and virtual reality has prompted the influence of sports

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events to cross geographical boundaries and reach billions of audiences around the world with their unique charm. This change not only creates unprecedented opportunities for the communication of sports events, but also poses new challenges, how to effectively use new media to tell the stories behind the events, and how to promote the positive construction of national image through the communication strategy of sports events. In this context, this study aims to explore the role and function of sports event communication strategy in public diplomacy.

The purpose of this study is to deeply understand the relationship between sports event communication strategy and public diplomacy, and to provide empirical research-based guidance for future sports event organizers and policy makers. Interviews with sports event workers in five different professions reveal best practices in sports event communication strategies, as well as the challenges and opportunities these strategies may encounter in different cultural and social contexts.

## **2 Method**

### **2.1 Research Subjects**

In the study of communication strategies for sporting events under the public diplomacy endeavour, choosing the right interview subjects is crucial to gain in-depth and multi-dimensional insights.

The first category the author chose is spectators and participants. Because the audience is very sensitive to the feelings, interactive experience and changes in the perception of the national image of the event communication content, volunteers and other direct participants, more understanding of the grassroots level of communication experience and cultural collision.

The second category consists of athletes and coaches. Athletes or coaches of a particular sport are chosen to learn about their experiences of communicating as cultural ambassadors on and off the field, and how their personal brand is integrated with the national image.

The third category encompasses media and communication practitioners, TV station event broadcasters, heads of webcasting platforms, and producers, all of whom have an understanding of media strategy, technology application, and audience interaction.

The fourth category is event organisers and managers, members of the host city's sports event committee or event directors, who are directly responsible for the overall planning and execution of the event and have a deep understanding of communication strategies. Representatives of international sports organisations or individual sports federations understand international rules, cooperation models and communication trends of global sports events.

The fifth category selects sponsors and partners, as well as the marketing heads of major sponsoring companies. They are involved in the commercial strategy of event communication and learn how brands can enhance their international presence through sports events. Representatives of international partners or multinational corporations to share the opportunities and challenges in cross-border cooperation.

### **2.2 Interview Outline and Process**

For many superpowers sports mega events have become central to their political and financial ambitions within the global society [1]. Public diplomacy is a new type of diplomacy in which sovereign states target foreign publics through media, sports, humanities and other forms,

with the aim of enhancing national influence and improving national image so as to realise national interests [2].

The outline of the interview is based on seven perspectives: opening and background introduction, communication strategy development, media and channel usage, cooperations and partnerships, evaluation and feedback, future and challenges and conclusion.

The outline of the interview is as Table 1 shows.

**Table 1.** “A Seven-dimensional Perspective”: Building a Comprehensive Interview Outline for Sports Events and Public Diplomacy Communication Strategies”.

Category	Questions
Opening and Background Introduction	1.Profile of the Interviewee - Please briefly describe your role and your experience in the field of combining sports events and public diplomacy.
	2.Connection between sports events and public diplomacy - Why do you think sports events can be an effective platform for public diplomacy? What are the unique advantages?
Communication Strategy Development	1.Goal Setting and Strategy Planning - How do you set communication goals for public diplomacy during the preparation stage? What are the key factors to consider?
	2.Audience Analysis and Positioning - Who is the target audience? How do you differentiate your communication strategy for different audience segments?
	3.Messaging and Storytelling - How can compelling stories be developed and shaped to convey national values and cultural identity?
Media and Channel Usage	1.Traditional and New Media Integration - How to balance and integrate the use of traditional and new media in the communication of sports events?
	2.Social Media and Digital Platforms - What are the specific applications of social media in enhancing the international impact of the event? How can data analysis be used to optimise communication effectiveness?
	3.Live experience and interaction - How to deepen participation and cultural experience through live events and audience interaction?
Cooperations and Partnerships	1.International Partnerships - How can international partnerships be established and maintained to increase the impact of public diplomacy?
	2.Multi-stakeholder engagement - How to co-ordinate the efforts of governments, NGOs, businesses and civil society to create synergy?
Evaluation and Feedback	1.Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms - What methods are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the communication? How can feedback be collected and used to make strategic adjustments?
	2.long-term impact and sustainability - How can the positive impact of public diplomacy be sustained after the event? What are the success stories?
Future and Challenges	1.Technological Innovations and Trends - How are new technologies (e.g. VR/AR, AI) changing the public diplomacy communication of sports events?
	2.Challenges and responses - What were the biggest challenges encountered during implementation? How can this be overcome?
Conclusion	1.Personal insights and expectations - What are your expectations or suggestions for the future development of sports events as a platform for public diplomacy?
	2.Thank you and conclusion - Thank you for your time and sharing, is there anything else you would like to add?

## **3 Result**

The interviews lasted about 30 minutes for each individual and were recorded by audio recording. Below are the responses given by the five categories of respondents to the interviews

### **3.1 Spectators and Participants**

#### *3.1.1 Sports diplomacy: The power of events*

As a sports enthusiast and an observer of public diplomacy, they often pay attention to how international sports events influence national images and promote cultural exchanges. They have witnessed how large-scale events such as the Olympic Games and the World Cup have become a stage for different countries to showcase their cultures, values and diplomatic concepts. They believe that sports events can be an effective platform for public diplomacy because they can cross borders, attract the attention of a global audience, and provide a window for communication without language barriers. Events not only demonstrate the athletes' competitive level, but also reflect the cultural heritage and social outlook of the host country, enhancing the international community's positive perception of the country. At the same time, when setting the communication objectives of public diplomacy in the preparatory stage, it is necessary to consider the positioning of the national image, the focus of cultural output and the expected socio-economic effects. It is crucial to understand the international political environment and the cultural preferences of the target audience.

#### *3.1.2 Fusion media: the intersection of tradition and fashion*

Along with the continuous development of new media, there is a physical integration of traditional and new media. Traditional media such as television, radio and newspapers provide authoritative and in-depth coverage, while new media such as social media and digital platforms are more immediate and interactive. By integrating the two, a wide coverage and deep reach of content can be achieved. In addition, the use of social media data analysis tools can pinpoint the target audience and understand their interests and behavioural patterns, so as to optimize content delivery and improve communication efficiency. The application of new technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) provides new possibilities for public diplomacy communication of sports events, such as immersive experience, personalised content recommendation and intelligent translation services, which further enhances audience participation and the depth of cross-cultural communication.

#### *3.1.3 Strategy and adaptation*

In the process of implementation, the biggest challenge may be how to achieve a wide and in-depth communication effect within a limited budget, as well as how to maintain the flexibility and adaptability of the strategy in the changing international environment. These challenges can be gradually overcome through innovative communication strategies, close international cooperation and effective crisis management.

### ***3.1.4 Forward-looking vision: The symbiotic way of sports events, public diplomacy and social progress***

They expect that in the future, sports events as a platform for public diplomacy can pay more attention to sustainable development and social responsibility, utilise the power of technology to enhance the audience experience, deepen cultural exchanges and promote world peace and development. It is recommended that interdisciplinary research be strengthened to explore new modes and methods of combining sports events and public diplomacy.

## **3.2 Athletes and Coaches**

### ***3.2.1 Sports witness friendship***

As professional athletes and coaches who have long been involved in international sports events, they have experienced first-hand how sports events can serve as a bridge for intercultural exchanges, especially in promoting public diplomacy. Not only does sport pursue excellence on the playing field, but also behind the scenes, they have witnessed how sport can promote friendship and understanding between nations.

### ***3.2.2 Sporting events enhance the country's image***

They believe that sports events are effective platforms for public diplomacy because they have a global audience base and can instantly attract attention from all over the world. Events are not only a display of sports competitions, but also a concentration of cultures, values and spirituality of different countries. The performance of athletes on the field of play, the way the event is organised and its integration with the local culture can convey a profound message and enhance the positive image of the country.

### ***3.2.3 Diversified channels to meet audience needs***

Different audience groups have different concerns and expectations about sports events. For sports fans, they are more interested in the results and exciting moments of the games, while for ordinary viewers, the cultural stories and humanistic concerns behind the events may be more attractive. Therefore, communication strategies should take into account both the competitive and humanistic aspects, and meet the needs of different audiences through diversified channels and content.

### ***3.2.4 Build a lasting sports diplomatic legacy***

At the same time, establishing good cooperation with international sports organisations, media partners and sports associations of other countries can share resources and expand the international vision and influence of the event. In addition, through the joint organisation of training camps, friendly matches and other activities, it is possible to promote exchanges between athletes and deepen mutual understanding and respect.

After the event, the positive impact of the event can be continued through the establishment of sports foundations, follow-up sports and cultural exchange projects and educational programmes, which can promote the inheritance of the spirit of sports and the deepening of international friendship. For example, after the 2008 Beijing Olympics, China

launched a series of youth sports education programmes to promote the Olympic spirit and cultivate a new generation of sports talents.

### ***3.2.5 Sport is a bridge connecting the world***

As athletes or coaches, they expect future sports events to serve as a platform for public diplomacy and pay more attention to the rights and welfare of athletes, and promote the global dissemination of sportsmanship. It is recommended that support for athletes' mental health be strengthened and more opportunities for cultural exchanges be provided, so that sport can truly become a bridge connecting the world.

## **3.3 Media and Communication practitioners**

### ***3.3.1 Power of the media***

In recent years, with the birth and continuous and high-speed development of the new media network centred on Internet technology, the dissemination of social information has undergone radical changes, and quantitative, instantaneous and interactive dissemination has become synonymous with the dissemination of information in the network era, and the dissemination of sports news is no exception [3].

In the field of sporting events and public diplomacy, media and communication practitioners have important roles to play. With the rapid development of new media, the public's attention and participation in sports events as well as the exposure of sports events are increasing year by year [4]. With the rapid development of digital technology and profound changes in the way of information dissemination, comprehensively promoting media integration and exploring innovative development paths under the new situation has become an urgent issue for traditional sports media. Sports media must promote the comprehensive and in-depth integration with emerging media through content, channels, platforms, operation, management and other aspects, and continuously improve their communication power, guidance, influence and credibility, so as to unite all parties for the construction of a strong sports nation [5].

They are responsible for planning public diplomacy communication strategies related to various sports events. At the same time, they implement and evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies. Using the power of the media is the focus of their work, with the goal of turning sporting events into platforms to showcase the image of the country. Promoting the exchange of different cultures is also one of the goals they pursue through the platform of sports events.

### ***3.3.2 Sports events promote cultural exchange***

Sports events are ideal vehicles for public diplomacy because they are global, inclusive and emotionally resonant. Events not only attract hundreds of millions of spectators around the world, but also incorporate the presentation of a country's culture, history and values into the excitement of competition. This unique combination enables sporting events to transcend linguistic and geographical boundaries and become a bridge between different peoples and cultures.

### ***3.3.3 Building a sympathetic diplomatic communication strategy***

When setting public diplomacy communication objectives, factors such as the positioning of the national image, the characteristics of the target audience, and the scale and influence of the event must be considered. Strategy planning should focus on enhancing the national brand, promoting cultural identity and strengthening international relations, while ensuring the accuracy and sensitivity of the content to avoid cultural misunderstanding. At the same time, communication strategies should be focused. For the on-site audience, it strengthens the on-site experience and cultural interaction; for the global audience, it focuses on delivering the exciting moments and stories behind the event through digital means. Through refined content production and channel selection, it ensures that every group can feel the unique charm of the event.

### ***3.3.4 New media provide data support***

In addition, new media are utilized to achieve swift content dissemination and deep audience engagement. Official accounts are created, highlights posted, and discussions sparked, attracting the global attention of fans. The use of data analysis tools to monitor audience response, optimise content strategy and enhance user stickiness is an important means to improve communication effectiveness, and data analysis can also help identify potential markets and audiences, providing data support for future event communication.

### ***3.3.5 Sustainable development of sports events***

After the event, the impact of the event can be sustained through follow-up media coverage, documentary film production, cultural exhibitions and educational programmes. Successful examples include the Rio+ programme established after the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, which aims to turn the Olympic legacy into a driving force for the city's development, including improving infrastructure, promoting community development and raising civic awareness.

### ***3.3.6 Challenges faced***

Challenges faced during implementation may include fundraising, copyright protection, information security and contingency management. These challenges can be effectively addressed by establishing diversified funding sources, strengthening copyright regulations, enhancing cyber security measures and developing emergency response plans.

### ***3.3.7 Innovation and diversity in sports events***

For the future development of sports events as a platform for public diplomacy, they expect to see more innovation and diversity. This is not only reflected in the organisation and dissemination of the event itself, but also includes active exploration in cultural expression, social inclusion and environmental protection. It is recommended that cross-sectoral cooperation be strengthened and more diverse voices and perspectives be brought in to co-create a more open, inclusive and sustainable ecology for sports events.

### **3.4 Event organisers and Managers**

#### ***3.4.1 Strategic implementation of sports diplomacy***

As sports event organisers and managers, they are responsible for not only the day-to-day operation of the event, but also the coordination and cooperation with governments, sponsors, media and international sports organisations, especially in the strategic planning and implementation of the use of sports events as a platform for public diplomacy.

#### ***3.4.2 Sports events are efficient platforms for public diplomacy***

Sporting events are highly effective platforms for public diplomacy because of their enormous global influence and emotional appeal. By bringing together athletes and spectators from all over the world, events provide an excellent opportunity to showcase a country's culture, values and soft power. It is suggested that cross-sectoral co-operation be strengthened and more diversified voices and perspectives be brought in, so that we can work together to create a more open, inclusive and sustainable ecology for sports events. Additionally, there should be greater focus on the mental health and well-being of athletes and spectators. This ensures that sporting events, not only serve as arenas for competition, but also reflect a sense of humanistic care.

### **3.5 Sponsor and Partner**

#### ***3.5.1 Win-win stage***

As a sponsor and partner of sports events, the enterprises it represents have been actively participating in the sponsorship of major sports events at home and abroad for a long time. In addition to promoting cultural exchange and demonstrating corporate social responsibility through the platform of sporting events, increasing brand awareness and market share is the goal of this work.

#### ***3.5.2 Sports events resonate with public diplomacy***

Sports events can become an effective platform for public diplomacy mainly because of their global audience base and strong emotional resonance. The events not only attract the attention of the whole world, but also show the cultural heritage, values and innovation ability of the host country through the performance of the athletes and the organisation of the event. In addition, the commercial activities, cultural exchange programmes and public welfare activities during the events also provide opportunities for sponsors to display their corporate image and assume social responsibility, further promoting mutual understanding and respect among countries and people.

#### ***3.5.3 Jointly develop communication goals for public diplomacy***

Sponsors and partners need to work closely with event organisers to jointly set communication objectives for public diplomacy. These objectives should include enhancing brand image, promoting cultural exchange, and demonstrating corporate social responsibility. Strategic planning should take into account the nature of the event, the characteristics of the audience and the effectiveness of the communication channels to ensure that the return on investment is maximised, while at the same time taking into account the long-term benefits



of public diplomacy. Sponsors and partners should develop differentiated communication strategies based on the characteristics of different audience groups. For example, attracting young audiences through social media and digital platforms, using traditional media to consolidate the brand's position in mature markets, while deepening ties with local communities through cultural events and public service activities.

### *3.5.4 Emotional resonance and the Shaping of Brand country impression*

Sponsors and partners should explore unique stories related to the event, such as the inspirational stories of athletes, the cultural heritage behind the event, and the actions of corporations involved in social welfare, etc., and convey the core values of the brand and the cultural characteristics of the country through these stories. Stories should be contagious and resonant, able to touch people's hearts and deepen the audience's impression of the brand and country.

### *3.5.5 Public diplomacy and brand prosperity*

Sponsors and partners should actively seek cooperation with international sports organisations, media groups and other multinational corporations to jointly plan and execute globally influential projects to expand their influence. Through shared resources, joint marketing and brand co-branding, the impact of public diplomacy can be expanded to enhance brand awareness and reputation in the global market. Coordinate multi-stakeholder engagement. Sponsors and partners should take the initiative to participate in cross-sectoral cooperation by co-initiating public welfare projects, cultural exchange activities and educational programmes, creating a win-win situation for all parties, and jointly promoting the social value and long-term impact of the event.

### *3.5.6 Continue the influence of the event*

After the event, sponsors and partners should continue to focus on the long-term impact of the event, especially on brand reputation, market share and corporate culture building. Through subsequent media coverage, brand storytelling and consumer research, the positive impact of the event can be sustained, reinforcing the brand's position in the minds of consumers. During the implementation process, the main challenges faced by sponsors and partners include budget control, accurate communication of brand messages and response to unexpected crises. These challenges can be effectively addressed by establishing a flexible budget management mechanism, strengthening the unity and consistency of brand storytelling, and developing a detailed crisis response plan.

### *3.5.7 Innovative collaboration and sustainable communication*

Sponsors and partners expect to see more innovative cooperation models and sustainable communication strategies for the future development of sports events as a platform for public diplomacy.

## **4 Discussion**

In particular, in the area of foreign sports exchanges, with the purpose of actively carried out international exchanges in sports and culture, conveyed the voice of Chinese sports to the

world, told the story of Chinese sports well, and continuously enhanced our international influence [6].

The five types of sports event-related practitioners interviewed all agreed that sports events are an effective platform for public diplomacy, capable of transcending national boundaries, attracting a global audience, and facilitating cultural exchanges and a positive presentation of the national image.

International communication capacity is a manifestation of a country's comprehensive strength and an important factor in enhancing the international influence of a great power [7]. As an effective platform for public diplomacy, sports events can cross cultural and linguistic barriers, present national images and promote cultural exchanges.

Participation in or hosting of major sporting events and public diplomacy has many advantages in terms of shaping the national image, increasing international influence and enhancing international identity [8].

The study finds that with appropriate ministerial support and innovative diplomats, both the theory and practice of sports diplomacy have a bright, promising future [9]. The different players expect to further enhance the role of sports events in public diplomacy through innovative communication strategies, international co-operation, the application of technology and a focus on sustainable development. At the same time, the need to overcome challenges such as budget, copyright, and information security during implementation was emphasised, and events were expected to focus more on social responsibility and athlete well-being.

Along with the steady improvement of China's comprehensive national power, the great role played by sports in international communication cannot be ignored. It is possible to explore the strategy of constructing national identity in sports diplomacy from the perspective of diplomacy, and it is also possible to construct and strengthen national identity with Chinese characteristics from the perspective of sports, and to explore the strategy of sports culture with Chinese characteristics in the context of globalisation [10].

## **5 Conclusion**

From the perspective of public diplomacy, this study delves into the communication strategies of sports events as a tool for national image building and international relations promotion. By analysing interviews with five groups of people, we found that sporting events not only enhance the global recognition of a country, but also promote intercultural understanding and respect.

Although this study provides valuable insights, it also has some limitations; it focuses primarily on a few major international sporting events and may not adequately reflect the communication strategies of smaller or regional events. The population interviewed in this paper involved five categories of people working for sports events, and data collection was limited, which may have affected the comprehensiveness and depth of the results.

Future research could consider longitudinal studies that analyse the evolution of communication strategies and their impact on national image by following specific sports events over time. There are also comparative studies that compare and analyse the different communication strategies used by different countries in hosting sports events and explore the cultural, political and social factors behind them. Finally there are empirical studies designing experiments or surveys to directly assess the impact of specific communication strategies on the attitudes and behaviours of target audiences. The following directions are taken in order to deepen the understanding of the application of communication strategies of sports events in public diplomacy. Through these directions, this article can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of sports events in public diplomacy, and provide future event planners with more precise and effective suggestions for communication strategies.

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