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Multiple Exposures: How the Indonesian Embassies Construct Differentiated Digital Diplomatic Images on Weibo and X

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Abstract

This study takes 888 posts published by the Indonesian Embassies' accounts in China and the United States from July 2023 to June 2026 as a sample. Using content analysis and parallel text comparison, it examines how one country presents different self-images to audiences in different major powers, looking at three dimensions: media form, issue framing, and digital diplomatic identity. The results show that media forms vary systematically with platform features (V = 0.646). The Weibo account uses more videos and encourages user interaction, while the X account mainly posts original pictures and texts and builds connections through @ mentions. Issue frameworks are chosen to fit the environment of the host country (V = 0.470 and 0.430). The Weibo account focuses on cultural tourism topics and cultural frames, while the X account gives more attention to economic and trade cooperation, people-to-people exchanges, and cooperation frames. When facing the same major diplomatic event involving the same state actor had markedly different visibility and framing across the two accounts, the two accounts choose completely different content to report, presenting two distinct interactional styles that approximate a casual "explainer and organizer" persona on Weibo and a formal "official speaker and community member" persona on X (V = 0.488). On Weibo, Indonesia appears as a friendly and open tourist destination that welcomes public participation; on X, it appears as a reliable and professional partner for cooperation. had markedly different visibility and framing across the two accounts and its hedging strategy in image communication. The findings suggest that the national image in digital diplomacy is not a single "national selfie", but a "multiple exposure" that changes with platforms and audiences.

Keywords digital diplomacy, national image, platform affordances, Weibo, Indonesia, content analysis

Introduction

Amid global competition for reputation, the nation is increasingly seen as a "brand" that requires active management, and the construction and communication of national identity have become a global enterprise (Aronczyk, 2013). A good national reputation is regarded as an important asset that influences diplomatic relations, cross-border investment, and the flow of talent, and public diplomacy is the principal means of managing this asset (Wang, 2006). The spread of the internet and social media has pushed public diplomacy into a "2.0" era (Cull, 2013); digital technology has not only changed how diplomatic institutions manage information but has also gradually yet profoundly reshaped diplomatic practice itself (Archetti, 2012).

In recent years, Indonesia has pursued an active *hedging-plus* strategy, maintaining a dynamic balance between China and the United States (Anwar, 2023). As the largest country in Southeast Asia and the de facto leader of ASEAN, Indonesia has continually adjusted its strategic narrative in response to the dynamics of great-power competition, making it a bellwether for the region (Acharya, 2014; Riyanto et al., 2023). At the same time, Indonesia has one of the world's most active social media user populations; digital platforms have become deeply embedded in its political and public life (Lim, 2017), and its diplomatic institutions also make extensive use of social media in their external communication.

However, the technical architecture and operating mechanisms of platforms quietly shape how information circulates (Gillespie, 2018), as well as the audiences that can be imagined and the forms of expression that can be produced (boyd, 2010). Different platforms offer markedly different affordances, and the same institution develops different patterns of use on different platforms (Bucher & Helmond, 2018). Although research on digital diplomacy has grown in recent years, it has largely focused on the media organizations of major powers or on European and American diplomatic institutions, and usually on a single platform (Zhang & Ong'ong'a, 2022; Tran Sautedé & Mo, 2025). The differentiated practices of the same country's embassies across platforms in different host countries—that is, how platform affordances and host-country context jointly shape image presentation—have not been systematically examined. In the case of

Indonesia in particular, research on how embassies construct images for overseas audiences remains scarce and has received only limited attention.

Based on this, this study adopts framing theory as its analytical perspective (Chong & Druckman, 2007; de Vreese, 2005) and platform affordance theory as its analytical framework (Bucher & Helmond, 2018). Employing a design led by quantitative content analysis and supplemented by parallel-text comparison and in-depth discourse analysis, the study takes as its sample all posts published between July 2023 and June 2026 on the Weibo account of the Indonesian Embassy in China and the X account of the Indonesian Embassy in the United States, and systematically examines how the two embassies construct differentiated images for Chinese and American audiences on social media platforms. This study terms this patterned divergence multiple exposures: the national image is not a single portrait broadcast uniformly, but a set of audience- and platform-specific exposures of the same nation-brand.

Literature Review

Frame Theory Study

A frame is an interpretive schema that allows individuals to locate, perceive, identify, and label an apparently inexhaustible number of concrete events by means of the terms it provides (Goffman, 1974). Tuchman (1978) first brought the framework concept into the study of news production, proposing the notion of the *news frame.* Media frames, by contrast, have been defined as persistent patterns through which journalists and their organizations recognize, interpret, and present the world (Gitlin, 1980). Because frames implicitly incorporate a set of standpoints, the media select particular frames to construct news narratives when covering issues (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989), and framing therefore enables the media to construct social reality in the minds of the public (Entman, 1993); television news, for instance, uses episodic and thematic frames that systematically shape how the public attributes responsibility for political problems (Iyengar, 1991). The frames adopted by news media in portraying a given country exert a significant influence on how the public perceives and evaluates that country (Wanta et al., 2004; Golan & Lukito, 2017). Although framing, agenda setting, and priming are treated as three distinct models of media

effects (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007), they share the same core mechanism—shaping public cognition through "salience." Building precisely on this insight, McCombs et al. (2000) advanced agenda setting from the *object level* to the *attribute level*, arguing that by emphasizing particular attributes of an object, the media determine the criteria on which the public evaluates issues or candidates. The media image of the same country can thus diverge systematically across platforms, reflecting differences in platform ecology and journalistic culture (Xu & Löffelholz, 2021).

However, classical framing theory rests on the premise that mass media dominate the communication process; the rise of social media has called this premise into question, and the construction of national image has changed accordingly.

National Image Construction on Media Platforms

A country's international image is regarded as a cognitive structure that influences state behavior and the international system (Boulding, 1959). To some extent, it is also a process through which political actors compete, via narrative projection, for the power to interpret the international order (Miskimmon et al., 2013). National image directly affects international relations, cross-border investment, and a country's attractiveness as a destination for tourism and education; states can therefore proactively shape and adjust their image among overseas publics through international public relations strategies (Kunczik, 2016). In recent years, social media has become a central arena for the self-construction of national image (Horbyk & Orlova, 2023; Kaneva, 2023; AlSaied, 2023; Wang & Xu, 2023). Empirical studies have shown that state actors are actively using social platforms to manage how their national image is presented (Sevin & Ingenhoff, 2018): they can select narrative frames on their own initiative, set the public agenda, and construct national narratives directly for overseas audiences (Hayden, 2012); embassies of different countries likewise adapt their interpretive frames to the host-country context, thereby accomplishing localized meaning-making (Sobel et al., 2016). While narrative frames on social media can significantly shape overseas publics' perceptions of a country's image, different frame types differ in their communicative effects, and confrontational diplomatic narratives may even backfire (Mattingly & Sundquist, 2023).

In this process, diplomatic actors are no longer merely disseminators of information; their communication practices have themselves become a form of diplomatic action—"whom to interact with, and in what identity to speak" has become a central concern of digital diplomacy research.

Interaction and Identity Construction in Digital Diplomacy

Diplomacy is the core practice through which states conduct international relations by negotiation rather than by force, propaganda, or recourse to law (Berridge, 2015). Traditional diplomacy takes place between governments, whereas public diplomacy extends the target to foreign publics; it was originally defined in terms of "the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies" (as cited in Cull, 2008), and has since been commonly understood as the process by which a state builds direct relationships with foreign publics to advance its national interests and international influence (Melissen, 2005). The long-term reshaping of diplomatic institutions' norms, working routines, and diplomats' self-narratives by digital technology has been termed the "digitalization" of public diplomacy (Manor, 2019), through which public diplomacy contributes to the accumulation of a country's soft power (Nye, 2004). Digital diplomacy, by contrast, is regarded as a process of change management, emphasizing that social media has not only changed how diplomatic institutions manage information but also reshaped how diplomats build relationships with foreign publics; diplomatic identity is thus understood as a situated and performative construct (Bjola & Holmes, 2015). State actors invest identity signals differently for different audiences (Wu & Sevin, 2023), while users systematically adjust their linguistic variants according to their imagined audiences; in other words, micro-level choices such as person, forms of address, and formality are themselves resources for audience design and identity performance (Pavalanathan & Eisenstein, 2015). Digital diplomacy blurs the boundary between institutions and individuals, enabling diplomats to bypass traditional media and speak directly to foreign publics, as one-way "government-to-people" communication expands into networked "person-to-person" interaction (Ross, 2011). The interaction data provided by platforms allows diplomatic institutions to monitor overseas public opinion in real time, remedying the traditional weakness of public diplomacy—its effects being "unmeasurable" (Sevin, 2015).

Research on Indonesia's Digital Diplomacy

Since independence, Indonesia has long adhered to the *Bebas Aktif* (free and active) foreign policy tradition, emphasizing strategic autonomy amid great-power competition and avoiding entanglement in bloc confrontation (Sukma, 2009; Laksmana & Alexandra, 2022). In recent years, the Indonesian government has actively embraced digital diplomacy, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its overseas missions making extensive use of social media for national image promotion, consular services, and public engagement (Darmastuti et al., 2021; Murdani & Wijayati, 2020). Triwibowo (2023) characterizes Indonesia's digital diplomacy as a coordinated communication system centered on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which the president's personal account, the foreign minister's account, and the accounts of overseas missions operate in concert. However, constraints on resources and personnel, uneven digital literacy among diplomats, and structural dependence on foreign platforms constitute the practical limitations of Indonesia's digital diplomacy (Triwibowo, 2024). Tracking and content analyses of the social media accounts of Indonesia's overseas missions show that embassies are the main force of the country's "Twitter diplomacy": almost every Indonesian embassy maintains an official Twitter account (Ifran et al., 2023).

Moreover, Indonesian scholarship on social media and national image has largely focused on domestic political communication (Nurnisya & Kasmani, 2025), while the accounts of overseas missions addressed to foreign audiences have rarely been systematically examined. This gap matters particularly because political factors are increasingly embedded in Indonesia's foreign policymaking, and elite interest bargaining, economic development demands, and public opinion have become important variables shaping the differentiation of its policies toward China and the United States (Priamarizki, 2024). Given that Indonesia's foreign policy orientations toward different major powers differ systematically, the communication practices of its overseas missions addressed to audiences in different host countries—from platform choice and content forms to issue frames—may diverge accordingly. Existing research, however, has yet to test this possibility.

Research Questions

In summary, existing research on national image self-presentation has mostly examined overseas diplomatic accounts as a single whole, with little attention to the host-country contexts in which embassies operate. Systematic analysis of how platform affordances and host-country contexts jointly shape image presentation remains lacking. Prior studies have either compared embassies of different countries (Dodd & Collins, 2017), examined one country's practices on a single host-country platform (Tseng, 2024), or contrasted one country's communication on domestic versus overseas platforms (Huang & Wang, 2021). Yet systematic research on how the same diplomatic mission communicates differently to different host countries is still absent. In the case of Indonesia, existing digital diplomacy studies have focused on the foreign ministry's central apparatus and domestic political communication, while the image-building efforts of Indonesian embassies directed at overseas audiences have received virtually no attention.

Accordingly, this study examines the social media accounts of Indonesian diplomatic missions on the platforms of two different host countries, and proposes three progressive research questions along the dimensions of content form, issue framing, and digital diplomatic identity:

RQ1 (Content Form): What differences do the two accounts exhibit in media formats? How do these differences reflect the characteristics of each platform?

RQ2 (Issue Framing): What differentiated features do the two accounts exhibit in topic types and narrative frames? How do these differences reflect their interaction with host-country contexts?

RQ3 (Digital Diplomatic Identity): What digital diplomatic identities do the two accounts construct respectively? How do these identity positionings differ across the core dimensions?

Research Method

Sampling

This study analyzes the text content published by two officially verified accounts of Indonesian diplomatic missions: the Weibo account of the Embassy of Indonesia in China (@Yinni Zhu Hua Dashiguan) and the X account of the Embassy of Indonesia in the United States (@Indonesian Embassy in Washington, D.C., USA), covering the period from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2026. The unit of analysis is each individual post collected, and only the textual portion of each post is coded. Indonesia pursues a hedging strategy amid U.S.–China rivalry (Priamarizki, 2024), and the social

media practices of its embassies in these two countries offer an ideal setting for observing how the same state crafts differentiated narratives for different great-power audiences. Both accounts remained active throughout the observation period with complete content records. As of July 2026, the Weibo account had approximately 49,000 followers and posted around 66 times per year on average during the observation period, while the X account had approximately 21,000 followers and posted around 230 times per year on average—both sufficient to support comparative analysis. The two embassies each operate on the dominant platform of their host country (Weibo in China and X in the United States), constituting two typical configurations of the combination of "platform characteristics and host-country context." The time frame was selected based on the principle of data accessibility: both accounts maintained complete and publicly accessible content records within this range, which ensures the equivalence and sample integrity of the cross-platform comparison. Moreover, the period spans exactly three years—sufficient to capture the cross-platform strategies of Indonesian diplomatic institutions during normal operations—and covers major diplomatic milestones such as Indonesia's presidential transition in 2024.

Data Collection and Sample Cleaning

Data for the Weibo account were collected on July 5, 2026 through Weibo's advanced search function combined with semi-automated Python processing, while data for the X account were collected using a custom Python script. Both channels accessed only publicly available posts and their metadata, without circumventing any access restrictions, and the data are used solely for academic research.

The two accounts publish in Indonesian, English, and Chinese. This study includes posts in all three languages, with the primary language of each post's content coded as one of the variables. A total of 909 posts were retrieved (206 from the Weibo account and 703 from the X account). After manually checking each post for relevance and removing 21 duplicate posts, the final sample consists of 888 posts (198 from Weibo and 690 from X). The difference in sample size between the two accounts reflects their actual posting frequencies; accordingly, the analyses below compare proportions rather than absolute numbers.

Coding Scheme

To address the three research questions, this study designed a category system in which the formal, content, and relational dimensions work in concert.

RQ1 focuses on differences in media form. Carrier format is classified according to the media elements a post contains and its originality, yielding 15 categories: text-only, image-only, video-only, hyperlink-only, text+image, text+video, text+hyperlink, image+video, image+hyperlink, and so on. However, given the concentrated nature of media use by diplomatic accounts, a pre-set merging rule was applied during analysis: any category with a frequency below 5 for a single account was merged into "other composite formats," so as to ensure the statistical validity of the chi-square tests. Originality is classified according to platform functions into three categories: original posts, pure reposts, and reposts with added original content. Platform-function adaptation is adapted from the affordance framework (Treem & Leonardi, 2013) and adjusted to the practices of diplomatic accounts, and is classified into four types: basic publishing, visibility exploitation, association exploitation, and engagement exploitation.

RQ2 focuses on differences in topic selection and narrative framing. Topic types are determined by the core thematic domain presented in a post, judged by its central thrust, and cover eight domains: politics and diplomacy, economy and trade cooperation, culture and tourism, consular services, people-to-people exchange, society and livelihood, religion, and other. Narrative frames use Entman's (1993) four functions of framing as the analytical backbone, take Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) five news frames as the baseline dimensions, and draw on nation-brand theory (Anholt, 2007) and strategic narrative theory (Miskimmon et al., 2013). The categories were further merged and calibrated in light of the distinctive discursive resources of Indonesian diplomacy and the recurring narrative patterns observed in a pilot coding sample, yielding six frames: cooperation, culture, development, everyday-life, values, and crisis.

RQ3 focuses on the construction of digital diplomatic identities and their differences. The coding scheme captures institutional persona along three dimensions: person reference, discursive formality, and interactional stance. Person reference is coded according to how a post refers to the

account owner (i.e., the embassy itself), in four categories: first-person reference ("I," "we," including institutional self-reference), third-person reference ("he/they," "the Embassy," "the Ambassador," and specific personal names), mixed person (the text contains both first- and third-person references), and other (no person reference of any kind). Discursive formality is rated by the degree to which a text departs from everyday spoken language and approaches formal written documents, in terms of lexical choice, sentence structure, forms of address, emotional expression, and paralinguistic markers (emojis, internet memes, etc.), on a three-level scale: formal, semi-formal, and informal. Interactional stance is classified by the relational role toward the audience that the posting institution assigns itself within a single post, comprising seven role types: information announcer, knowledge interpreter, needs responder, equal dialogue partner, action organizer, emotional companion, and entertaining performer. Each category corresponds to a role metaphor and a set of observable linguistic features.

Coding Procedure and Reliability Testing

Coding was carried out independently by two coders who had received systematic training, with professional translators assisting in verification. During the training phase, the researchers developed a coding manual containing detailed operational definitions, boundary cases, and exclusion criteria for each category. The two coders pilot-coded a randomly selected 10% of the sample, discussed the categories on which they disagreed, and revised the coding manual until consensus was reached. The formal coding was then conducted independently in a back-to-back manner.

To assess coding reliability, another 10% of the total sample was randomly selected, and Holsti's coefficient and Cohen's Kappa were calculated. The thresholds were set at a Holsti's coefficient of no less than 0.90 and a Cohen's Kappa of no less than 0.80 for all core categories. Where these standards were not met, the coders discussed the disputed categories, redefined the operational definitions, and re-coded until the reliability requirements were satisfied. The final Holsti's coefficients ranged from 0.91 to 0.97 and Cohen's Kappa from 0.83 to 0.94 across all categories, all meeting the established standards and indicating good reliability of the coding results.

Data Analysis

At the level of media form, the analysis begins with percentage distributions to outline the basic differences between the two accounts, followed by chi-square tests to determine whether these differences are statistically significant; the quantitative results are ultimately brought back into the discussion of platform affordances.

The topic analysis attends to both distributional features and framing differences. Descriptive statistics first present the dominant topics and narrative frames of each account. Chi-square goodness-of-fit tests are then used to examine the concentration tendencies of topics within each individual account, while chi-square tests of independence assess the overall divergence between the two accounts in topic types and narrative frames, supplemented by Cramér's V to measure the strength of association. Where the overall test is significant, residual analysis is further employed to locate specific categories, identifying which topics or frames are significantly amplified or suppressed on a given account. To gain a deeper understanding of the framing mechanisms, the study also conducts parallel textual comparison of posts published by the two accounts on the same theme within similar time windows (such as Indonesia's 2024 presidential transition), revealing at the discursive level how the same theme is narrated differently in response to different host-country contexts.

The analysis of the identity dimension begins with a description of institutional persona profiles. The study tabulates the proportional distributions of person reference, discursive formality, and interactional stance to draw a basic portrait of each account's institutional persona, and uses chi-square tests to assess the significance of cross-platform differences. The subcategories of the three dimensions are then integrated into two analytical axes—"formality – informality" and "one-way declaration – two-way dialogue"—and a four-quadrant diagram based on the intersection of the two axes visually presents the overall differences in "digital diplomatic image" between the Weibo and X platforms. For typical posts showing significant differences, the analysis is supplemented by in-depth discourse analysis, observing in concrete textual contexts how the institutional persona responds to the cultural expectations of different platform communities. Given the considerable difference in sample size between the two accounts, all cross-account

comparisons of categories take proportions as the core indicator. Where expected frequencies below five occur in chi-square tests, Fisher's exact test or the merging of adjacent categories is applied. All inferential statistics report effect sizes, so as to prevent the larger-sample account from producing artificially significant results by virtue of its sample-size advantage.

Research Findings

RQ1: Media Format Differences and Their Reflection of Platform Characteristics

As of June 30, 2026, the Weibo account had published 198 posts and the X account 690 posts, the latter posting at roughly 3.5 times the intensity of the former.

Regarding media formats, after merging categories with a frequency below five into "other composite formats" according to the pre-set rule, the two accounts differed significantly in their distributions (χ^2 (6, N = 888) = 370.00, permutation test p < .001, Cramér's V = 0.646, a large effect). The Weibo account was dominated by "text+video" (51.0%) and "text+image" (39.4%), which together accounted for over 90% of its posts, while text-only posts made up a mere 0.5%. The X account, by contrast, relied primarily on "text+image" (75.1%), with text-only posts at 17.5% and "text+video" at just 2.0%. In other words, the video-based format that constitutes over half of the Weibo account's posts is nearly marginal on the X account, whereas the text-only posts that make up almost one-fifth of the X account are virtually absent from the Weibo account, as shown in Figure 1.

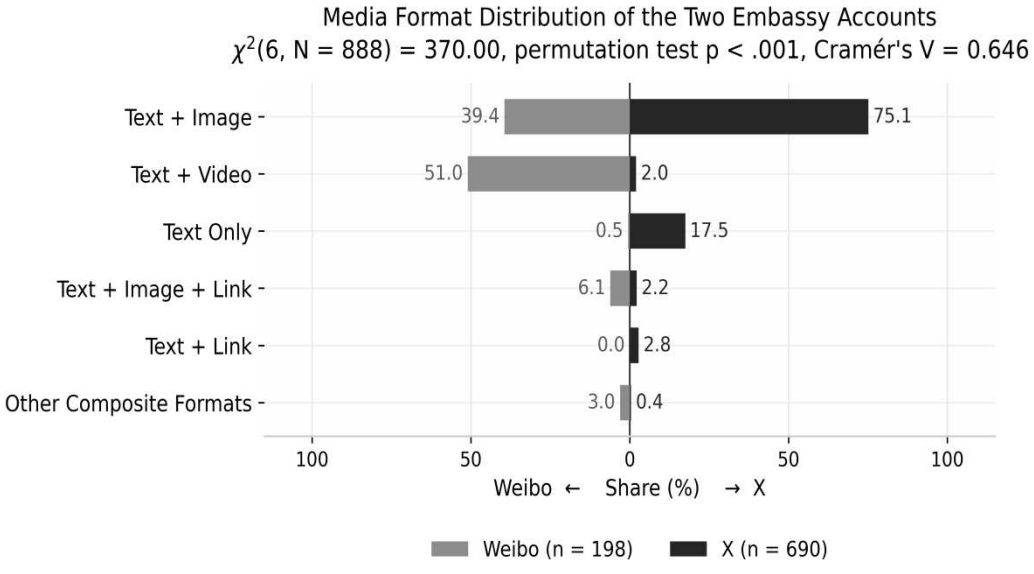


Figure 1: Comparison of Two Accounts across Media Forms

Second, regarding originality, the two accounts differed significantly, $\chi^2(2, N = 888) = 148.60$, permutation test $p < .001$, Cramér's V = 0.409. 98.3% of the X account's posts were original, showing almost no reliance on reposting. On the Weibo account, original posts accounted for 75.8%, while "repost with added original content" reached 23.2% (46 posts); most of these were reposts of video material from Indonesian tourism authorities and travel bloggers, accompanied by Chinese-language commentary (such as attraction promotions credited "Source: @pesona.indonesia" and "Source: @chepybennington"). After merging the categories into "original" versus "repost-related," a Fisher's exact test indicated a significant difference ($p < .001$, $\varphi = 0.368$), as shown in Figure 2.

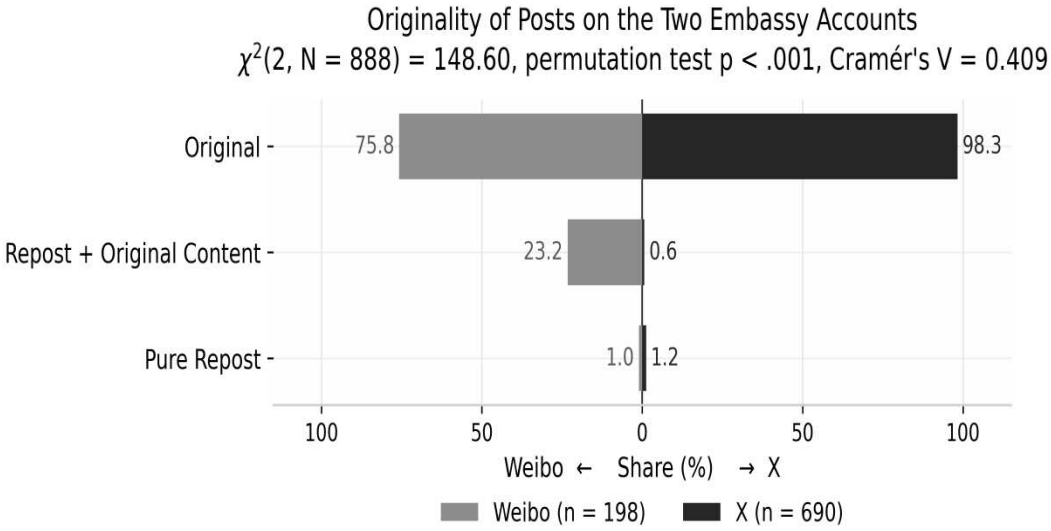


Figure 2: Comparison of Two Accounts in Terms of Originality

Finally, on the dimension of platform-function adaptation, the two accounts again differed significantly ($\chi^2(3, N = 888) = 44.05$, $p < .001$, $V = 0.223$). "Association exploitation" accounted for 35.5% of the X account's posts, higher than the Weibo account's 20.7%; these posts frequently used @-mentions of ambassadors, diplomats, U.S. government agencies, think tanks, and corporate accounts (e.g., @rosanroeslani, @prabowo), embedding the embassy within the institutional network of the host country. The Weibo account, in contrast, showed a markedly higher share of "engagement exploitation" (26.8%, versus 9.7% on X), mostly in the form of

questions directed at followers ("Have you been to this beach?"), event announcements, and calls for interaction. Visibility exploitation (hashtags) was broadly comparable across the two platforms (17.2% versus 19.6%), and basic publishing was nearly identical (35.4% versus 35.2%), as shown in Figure 3.

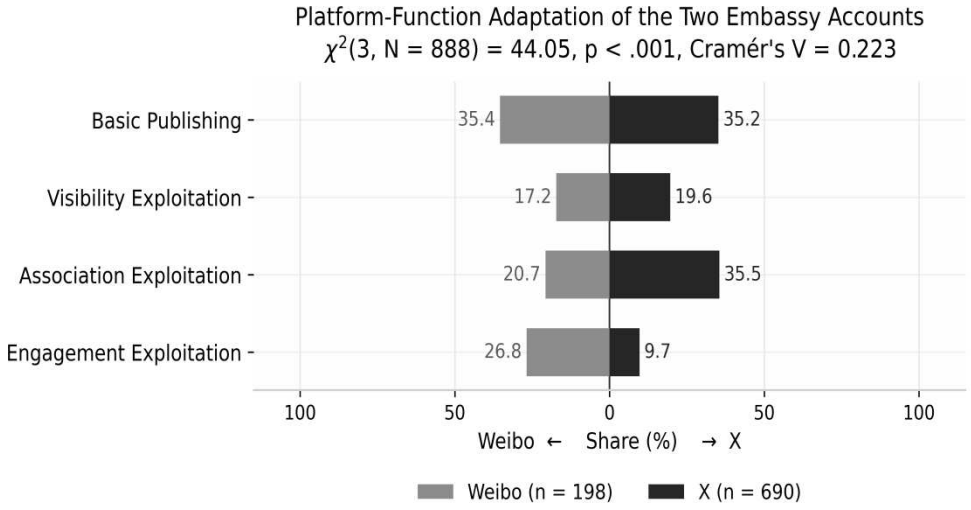


Figure 3: Comparison of Two Accounts in Terms of Platform Adaptability

Overall, the Weibo account has developed a morphological profile of "video-based content, secondary editing, and strong interaction guidance," whereas the X account has formed a profile of "text-image dominance, original production, and @-mention networking." Both accounts draw on the signature features of their respective platforms, but in different directions: Weibo emphasizes participatory affordances, while X emphasizes associative affordances. The differences in media form thus correspond closely to the division of labor between the two platform ecologies.

RQ2: Differences in Topic Types and Narrative Frames and Their Interaction with Host-Country Contexts

In terms of topic distribution, the two accounts differed significantly (χ^2 (7, N = 888) = 195.75, p < .001, Cramér's V = 0.470). The X account's economy-and-trade posts mostly covered roundtable meetings with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and American companies, investment launches (such as Microsoft's US$1.7 billion digital infrastructure investment), and trade award ceremonies, whereas the Weibo account's culture-and-tourism posts mainly featured attraction promotions,

food introductions, and information on facilitating travel to Indonesia.

The Weibo account was heavily concentrated on culture and tourism (49.5%), followed by politics and diplomacy (12.1%), economy and trade cooperation (12.1%), and people-to-people exchange (10.6%), while consular services (2.5%) and religion (1.0%) accounted for very low shares. The X account, by contrast, was dominated by economy and trade cooperation (27.7%), people-to-people exchange (24.1%), and politics and diplomacy (18.8%), with culture and tourism at only 8.4%, consular services at 7.8%, and religion at 4.9%. Goodness-of-fit tests indicated significant concentration tendencies within both accounts (Weibo: $\chi^2(7) = 267.29$; X: $\chi^2(7) = 354.43$; both $p < .001$), with the top three topics accounting for 73.7% and 70.6% of posts respectively. Residual analysis showed that culture and tourism was significantly amplified on the Weibo account ($r = 10.72$) and significantly suppressed on the X account ($r = -5.74$); economy and trade cooperation ($r = -3.46$), people-to-people exchange ($r = -3.21$), consular services ($r = -2.25$), and religion ($r = -2.13$) were all significantly suppressed on the Weibo account. The difference in politics and diplomacy between the two platforms did not reach statistical significance (18.8% on X versus 12.1% on Weibo), making it a core topic retained by both accounts, as shown in Figure 4.

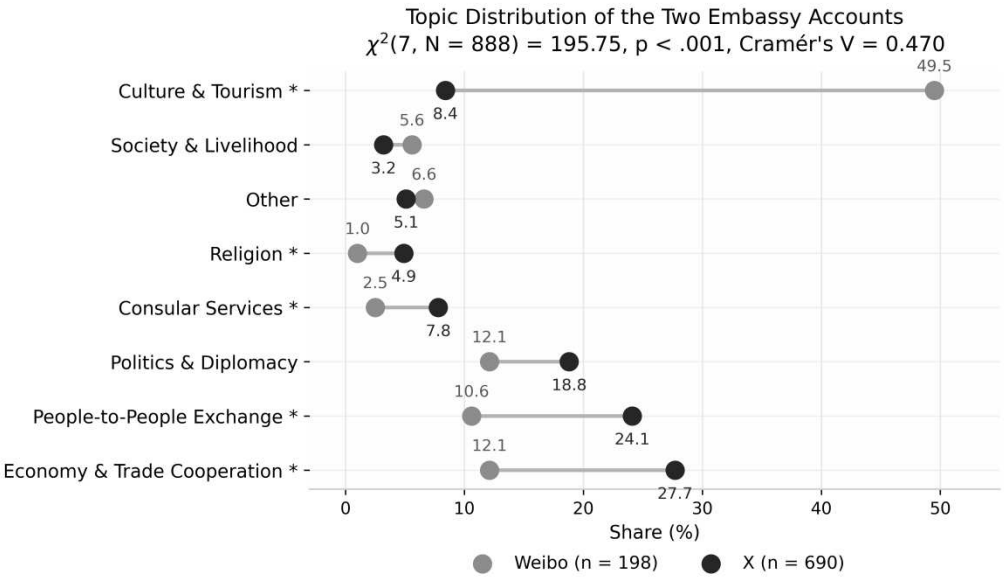


Figure 4: Comparison of Two Accounts in Terms of Topic Distribution

In terms of narrative frames, the difference was likewise significant ($\chi^2(6, N = 888) = 163.82$,

permutation test $p < .001$, $V = 0.430$). The Weibo account was dominated by the culture frame (40.4%), followed by the everyday-life frame (20.2%), cooperation frame (17.7%), values frame (10.1%), development frame (7.1%), and crisis frame (1.0%). The X account was led by the cooperation frame (36.4%), followed by the everyday-life frame (28.6%) and the values frame (18.8%), while the culture frame accounted for only 6.1%, and posts with no salient frame (pure hashtag posts, etc.) made up 4.3%. Residual analysis showed that the culture frame was significantly amplified on Weibo ($r = 10.12$) and significantly suppressed on X ($r = -5.42$); the cooperation frame was significantly suppressed on Weibo ($r = -3.60$), as was the values frame ($r = -2.32$). The crisis frame accounted for less than 2% on both accounts, indicating that crisis narratives remained marginal on both, as shown in Figure 5.

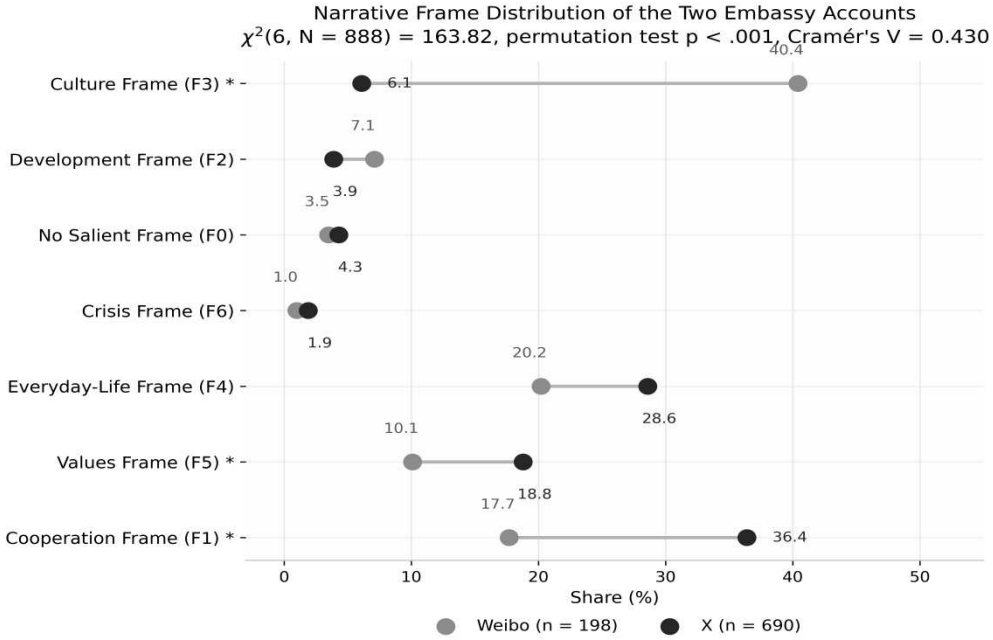


Figure 5: Comparison of Two Accounts in Terms of Narrative Frames

A parallel textual comparison around the presidential transition of October 2024 shows that the same major event involving the same state actor had completely different visibility across the two accounts, and that topic selection corresponded closely to the bilateral agenda of each host country. The Weibo account published a congratulatory post on inauguration day, October 20 (values frame, invoking the "Golden Indonesia 2045" vision), covered the National Day reception on October 31 (cooperation frame), and reported on November 12 the meeting between Prabowo and Xi Jinping, at which several memoranda of understanding were signed (cooperation frame). None of the seven posts published by the X account during inauguration week mentioned the transition of power;

they covered instead an Indonesian officer receiving an award during training in the United States (development frame) and a visiting finance ministry delegation (cooperation frame). During Prabowo's visit to China in early November, the X account published no China-related posts at all—only a closure notice for Veterans Day and an informational post about Indonesian Heroes' Day—and on November 7 reposted Prabowo's congratulation to Trump on his election victory. The Weibo account, meanwhile, published zero posts related to the U.S. presidential election across the entire sample period.

RQ3: Differences in the Construction of Digital Diplomatic Identities

On the dimension of person reference, the two accounts differed significantly, though the effect size was small (χ^2 (3, N = 888) = 11.55, p = .009, V = 0.114). The Weibo account was dominated by posts with no person reference (51.0%, mostly reposted attraction promotions); third-person references ("the Embassy," "the Ambassador," and specific personal names) accounted for 32.3%, and first-person references for only 12.1%. On the X account, first-person references accounted for 21.3%—markedly higher than on Weibo—with "we" appearing frequently as institutional self-reference (e.g., "We were honored⋯," "We wish⋯"); third-person references accounted for 34.8% and posts with no person reference for 40.0%, as shown in Figure 6.

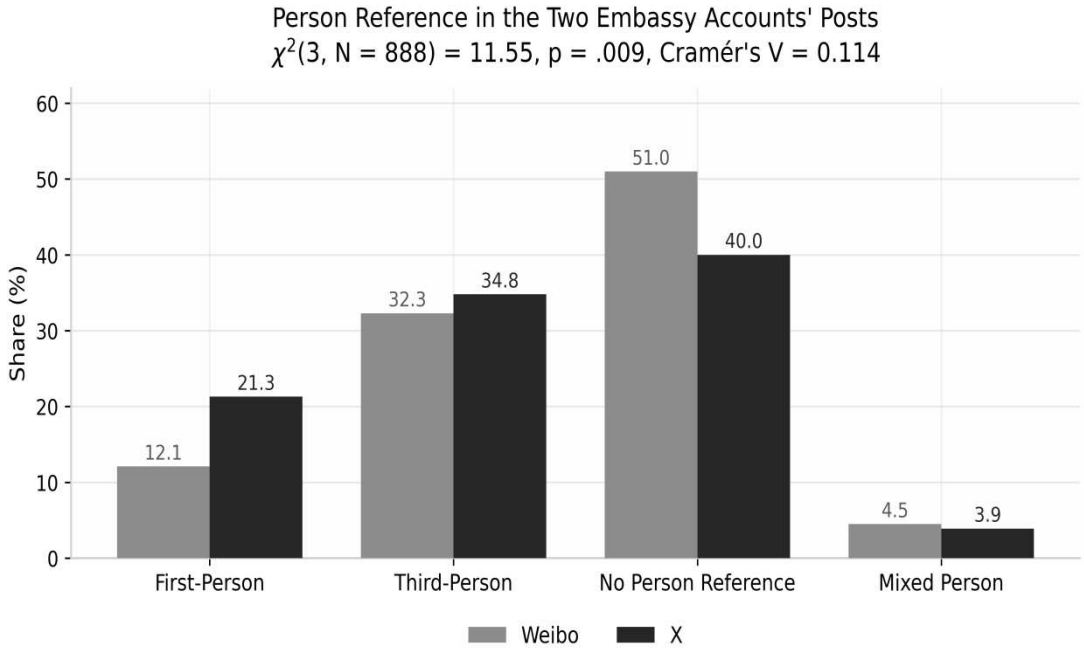


Figure 6: Comparison of Two Accounts in Terms of Person Use

On the dimension of discursive formality (valid N = 885; three posts without substantive text were excluded from coding—two Weibo pure-video shares whose body text contained only the system-generated words "shared a video," and one X image-only post with no text captured), the two accounts differed significantly ($\chi^2(2, N = 885) = 64.22$, $p < .001$, $V = 0.269$). Formal register accounted for 79.0% of the X account's posts, semi-formal for 13.9%, and informal for only 7.1%; on the Weibo account, formal register accounted for 55.1%, informal for as much as 26.5%, and semi-formal for 18.4%. Modal particles, emojis, and colloquial sentence patterns are common in Weibo posts (e.g., " Don't miss out—an opportunity like this won't come again!", "Only five days to go!"), whereas X posts are dominated by standard written diplomatic register, with informal posts mostly limited to holiday greetings and emoji salutations, as shown in Figure 7.

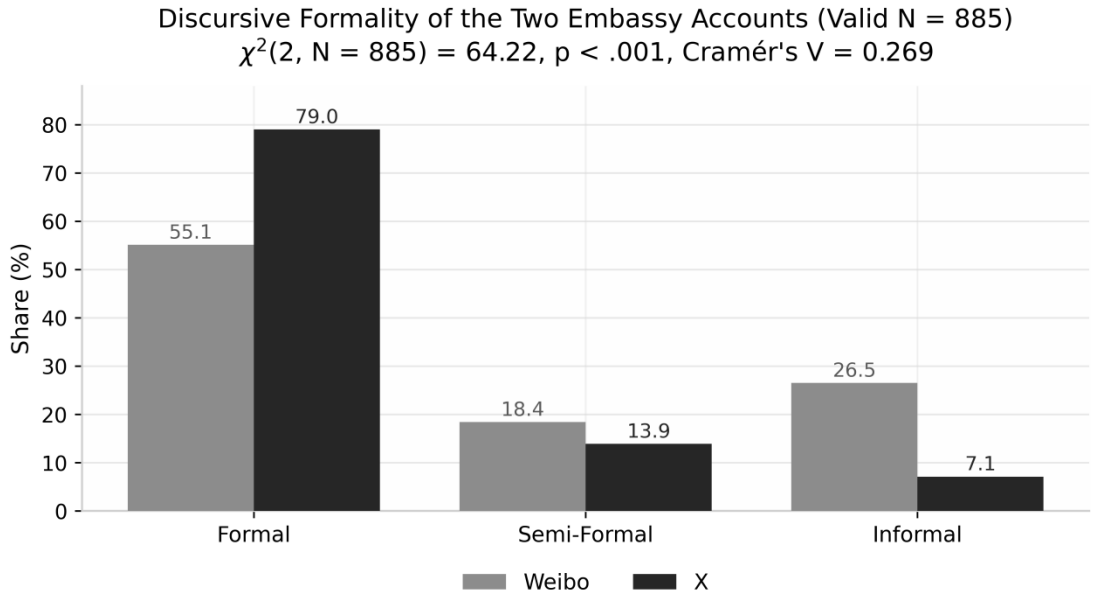


Figure 7: Comparison of Two Accounts in Terms of Discourse Formality

On the dimension of interactional stance (valid N = 887; one X image-only post with no captured text was excluded), the two accounts differed significantly, with an effect size approaching the large range ($\chi^2(6, N = 887) = 211.34$, permutation test $p < .001$, $V = 0.488$). On the Weibo account, the distribution was: information announcer 35.0%, knowledge interpreter 25.4%, action organizer 14.7%, dialogue partner 11.7%, emotional companion 6.6%, needs responder 3.6%, and entertaining performer 3.0%. On the X account: information announcer 66.8%, emotional companion 15.7%, dialogue partner 6.1%, needs responder 6.2%, action organizer 2.9%, knowledge interpreter 2.2%, and entertaining performer 0.1%. Residual analysis showed that

knowledge interpreter (r = 9.36), action organizer (r = 5.49), entertaining performer (r = 3.57), and dialogue partner (r = 2.25) were significantly amplified on the Weibo account, while information announcer (r = −4.49) and emotional companion (r = −2.68) were significantly suppressed; the X account showed the reverse pattern. Typically, Weibo posts end with questions inviting audience responses ("Have you been to this beach?") and frequently mobilize offline activities (Indonesian cultural festivals, scholarship info sessions), whereas the X account's emotional-companion posts include greetings to the American public on Memorial Day and well-wishes for Eid al-Fitr and Christmas, as shown in Figure 8.

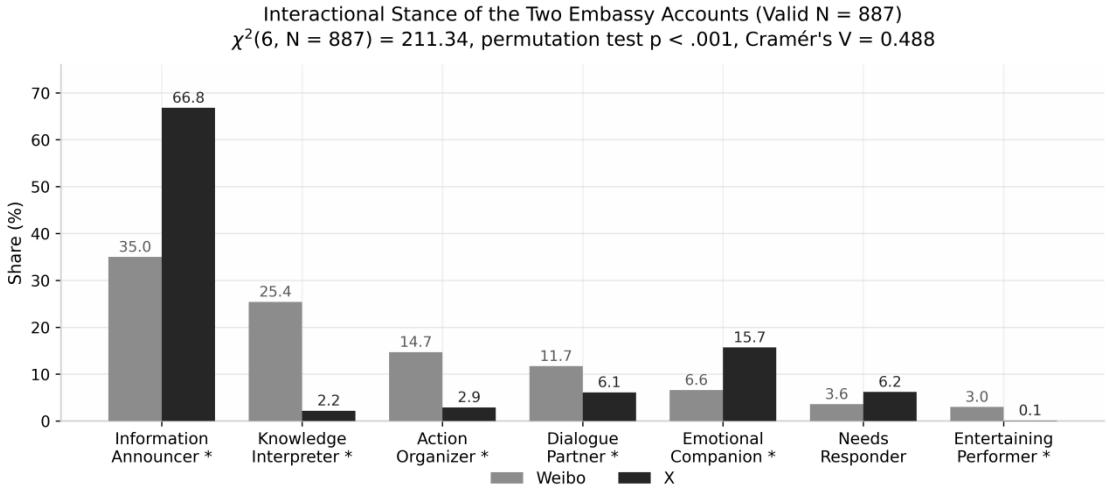


Figure 8: Comparison of Two Accounts in Terms of Interactional Stance

The seven stances were consolidated into three groups, corresponding respectively to the two poles of the analytical axes and an independent empathy dimension: the one-way declaration category (information announcer + knowledge interpreter) accounts for 60.4% on Weibo and 69.0% on X; the two-way interaction category (dialogue partner + needs responder + action organizer + entertaining performer) accounts for 33.0% on Weibo and 15.4% on X; and the emotional companionship category accounts for 6.6% on Weibo and 15.7% on X.

Synthesizing the three dimensions, the Weibo account constructs an identity of a "colloquial interpreter and organizer": a high share of informal discourse, predominantly third-person or no-person narration, and frequent questioning and event mobilization. The X account constructs an identity of a "formal institutional spokesperson and community member": a written register,

first-person institutional self-reference, one-way announcement as the core, supplemented by empathy-laden content such as holiday greetings, condolences, and congratulations, embedding itself in the local social calendar (Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Eid al-Fitr, and Christmas). Both accounts rest on one-way declaration as their baseline, but the Weibo account's tendency toward interaction and mobilization, together with the X account's combination of formal declaration and emotional bonding, constitute two differentiated institutional persona profiles.

Discussion

Media Format Divergence and Platform Affordances

The findings for RQ1 indicate that the divergence in media form is above all a product of platform affordances rather than of differences in the embassies' communicative intentions. The same diplomatic institution produces strikingly different content on the two platforms, and the directions of divergence broadly align with the platforms' functional designs. This offers an empirical illustration from a state actor consistent with Treem and Leonardi's (2013) affordance framework: whereas affordance theory has mostly been tested in corporate organizational settings, this study shows that it likewise constrains state institutions in cross-border communication.

This study also identifies an easily overlooked methodological issue: the "post" as a unit of analysis is itself shaped by platform architecture. X's character limit forces long content to be split into threads, and nearly half of the X posts in our data are in fact fragments of the same piece of content; Weibo imposes no such constraint. If this is ignored, both posting volume and media-format proportions in cross-platform comparisons will be systematically distorted. Comparative platform research should therefore restore the natural units of texts before coding—otherwise the very premise of comparison, the equivalence of units, does not hold.

The gaps in video use and @-mentions further reveal a "division of labor" logic within platform ecologies. The X account cedes video communication to dedicated platforms such as YouTube, retaining only introductory and referral functions, whereas Weibo treats short video as a native content form, directly reusing ready-made promotional material from Indonesian tourism

authorities. Likewise, the X account's @-mentions point to real networks of political figures and institutions, through which the embassy embeds itself in the host country's elite networks (Ross, 2011); in the Chinese public sphere, official actors available for @-mentioning are scarce, so the embassy instead aggregates traffic through hashtags and mobilizes participation through questions and event calls. In other words, both accounts are engaged in "networking"—where the network is built simply depends on what interfaces the local ecology provides. Nor should the high proportion of "repost with added original content" be dismissed as mere inertia: it is a pragmatic strategy under resource constraints (Triwibowo, 2024), and its translation of domestic materials into Chinese-language travel advice is itself an act of localized meaning-making (Sobel et al., 2016). The findings for RQ1 thus support Xu and Löffelholz's (2021) conclusion that national media images diverge systematically with platform ecologies—a platform is not merely a channel, but an integral part of the production mechanism of national image.

Topic Framing and Host-Country Contexts

The divergence in topic distribution indicates that the embassies' topic selection is essentially a response to the bilateral agenda and audience structure of each host country, rather than a matter of random content preference. Communication toward China takes culture and tourism as its entry point, while communication toward the United States centers on achievement-oriented content such as investment launches and corporate roundtables—findings that corroborate Rachmawati's (2025) observation that achievement-related content performs best in engagement. More revealing than what each account talks about more is what each leaves out: the stable presence of consular services and religion on the X account suggests a sizable Indonesian diaspora among its audience, whereas the absence of these topics on Weibo draws another boundary—Indonesians residing in China are not among its intended addressees.

This boundary appears most sharply in the parallel textual comparison: the same major diplomatic milestones—the presidential inauguration, the state visit to China, and the U.S. presidential election—materialize as mutually exclusive event lists on the two accounts. Such "same country, different narratives" resonates with Indonesia's "free and active" tradition, though whether this parallelism reflects deliberate strategic design or emergent platform adaptation remains an open

question (Sukma, 2009 ; Laksmana, 2022): the diplomatic imperative of avoiding alignment in great-power competition is translated into a precise offsetting of topic lists at the digital level. Audience design theory (Pavalanathan & Eisenstein, 2015; Wu & Sevin, 2023) explains the mechanism—each account tells only the part of Indonesia that its audience would expect to be "relevant to them." The composition of posting languages provides the hardest evidence: all Weibo posts are published exclusively in Chinese, while the X account is predominantly in English with a minority in Indonesian, the latter concentrated in consular notices and religious greetings.The dual alignment of language and topic choice suggests that the embassies' calibration of their "imagined audiences" is not merely an incidental tendency but potentially a conscious and consistent operating principle.

Divergence at the framing level further demonstrates that how topics are told also serves audience positioning. The marginalization of the crisis frame on both accounts resonates in practice with Mattingly and Sundquist's (2023) warning about the backfire effects of confrontational narratives. Meanwhile, the non-significant difference in the share of politics-and-diplomacy topics across the two platforms precisely delineates the boundary of divergence: institutional identity obliges the retention of core political topics, and differentiation occurs only within the range of "elective topics"—differentiation is a matter of strategy, whereas what is retained is a matter of identity.

Constructing Differentiated Institutional Personas

The Weibo account shifts toward the platform-style end of the spectrum: informal discourse reaches 26.5%, action organizing, dialogue, and entertaining performance together account for nearly 30%, and the extensive use of modal particles, emojis, and rhetorical questions gives it a colloquial "interpreter and organizer" persona. The X account, by contrast, shifts toward the institutional-norm end: formal register accounts for 79.0%, one-way announcement for 66.8%, and institutional subjecthood is asserted through the first-person "we," presenting a formal "institutional spokesperson" persona. The gap in person reference (first person: 12.1% versus 21.3%) partly derives from content form—over half of the Weibo posts are reposted, no-person attraction promotions—but even discounting this factor, the high frequency of "we" in X posts still indicates a conscious effort to speak in an institutional voice. This contrast is consistent with Bjola

and Holmes's (2015) argument that diplomatic identity is a situated, performative construction (2015) argument that diplomatic identity is a situated, performative construction: micro-linguistic choices of person reference, forms of address, and formality are themselves resources of audience design and identity performance (Pavalanathan & Eisenstein, 2015).

At the same time, the two accounts share a baseline that platform differences have not dissolved: one-way declaration stances account for over 60% on both. This suggests that the dialogic turn promised by digital diplomacy (Ross, 2011) is only partially fulfilled in the embassies' daily operations, and that institutional attributes constrain communication more strongly than the interactive possibilities platforms provide. What Sevin and Ingenhoff (2018) describe as state actors' autonomous image management via social media here takes the form of "elaborate broadcasting to audiences" rather than "peer conversation with audiences."

The two accounts also differ in the allocation of emotional labor. Emotional companionship accounts for 15.7% of the X account's posts—significantly higher than the Weibo account's 6.6% —with holiday greetings, condolences, and congratulations that actively embed the embassy in the host country's social calendar (Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Eid al-Fitr, and Christmas). This is precisely the operating mechanism of Manor and Segev's (2015) "America's selfie" metaphor: by participating in the emotional moments of the local society, the embassy presents itself as a community member rather than an outside preacher, accumulating an amiable and credible image at low cost in the service of soft-power goals (Nye, 2004). The Weibo account, by comparison, builds emotional bonds primarily through the mobilization of offline activities (cultural festivals, scholarship info sessions), channeling online traffic into face-to-face contact. Taken together, the two accounts occupy different quadrants along the axes of "formality – informality" and "one-way declaration – two-way dialogue": the Weibo account leans toward informality and interaction, while the X account leans toward formality and declaration supplemented by emotional bonding—together constituting two endpoints of Indonesia's digital diplomatic identity spectrum.

Two Self-Consistent Digital Diplomatic Images

Taken together, this study overlays the five dimensions of form, topic, frame, language, and

identity, showing that each account presents a self-consistent overall image rather than an assemblage of scattered features.

The Weibo account constructs an Indonesia that is "visitable, approachable, and participable." Video-based landscape presentation (51.0%), the near-half share of culture-and-tourism topics, the dominant culture frame (40.4%), the exclusively Chinese voice, and the colloquial persona (26.5% informal discourse, with action organizing, dialogue, and entertaining performance together approaching 30%) interlock with one another: in the posture of a guide and organizer, the embassy presents Indonesia as a travel destination and cultural neighbor within the Chinese public's immediate reach. Political and economic topics are not abandoned (together about 24%) but recede into "background music"; functionally, the account operates more like a localized promotional window for "Wonderful Indonesia."

The X account, by contrast, constructs an Indonesia that is "credible, professional, and worth partnering with." The orderly text-and-image format, the 98.3% originality rate, the dominance of economy-and-trade and people-to-people exchange topics (51.8% combined), the salience of the cooperation frame (36.4%), the formal register (79.0%), and the one-way-announcement-led stance (66.8%) together point to an institutionalized image of a partner state: a reliable economic collaborator, an active party in educational and cultural exchange, and a participant in regional affairs. Meanwhile, empathy content embedded in the American social calendar (15.7%) overlays this formal image with an affable coating of "community membership," while the roughly 7% of Indonesian-language posts enable the account to simultaneously serve the diaspora in the United States—speaking of "partnership" to Americans and of "the homeland" to compatriots.

Conclusion

This study examines how a single state presents itself to different great-power audiences, drawing on a sample of 888 posts published between July 2023 and June 2026 by the Weibo account of the Indonesian Embassy in China and the X account of the Indonesian Embassy in the United States, along three progressive dimensions: content form, topic framing, and digital diplomatic identity. Media forms diverged systematically with platform architecture ($V = 0.646$): the Weibo account is

video-based, secondarily edited, and rich in interaction guidance, while the X account is text-image dominated, originally produced, and networked through @-mentions. The gaps in text-only and video proportions are, to a considerable extent, technical products of character limits, the threading mechanism, and the division of labor in platform video ecologies. Topics and frames are selectively configured according to host-country contexts (V = 0.470 and 0.430): culture-and-tourism topics and the culture frame dominate on Weibo, while economy-and-trade and people-to-people exchange topics and the cooperation frame dominate on X. Parallel textual comparison shows that the two accounts present mutually exclusive visibility of the same major diplomatic milestones, and the composition of posting languages (all-Chinese versus an English-Indonesian bilingual mix) further supports the inference of clearly drawn audience boundaries. The two accounts construct two institutional personas (V = 0.488): a colloquial "interpreter and organizer" on Weibo, and a formal "institutional spokesperson" cum "community member" on X. Yet one-way declaration stances account for over 60% on both accounts—the dialogic turn promised by digital diplomacy is only partially fulfilled.

Overlaying the three dimensions reveals two self-consistent national images: a "visitable, approachable, and participable" destination Indonesia for Chinese audiences, and a "credible, professional, and worth-partnering-with" partner Indonesia for American audiences. This divergence appears to emerge from the interplay of platform affordances, audience structure, and bilateral agendas—potentially reflecting image-level dimensions of hedging behavior "free and active" tradition and hedging strategy.

For Indonesia, the national image conveyed through embassy social media appears not as a single, unified "national selfie", but as a set of "multiple exposures" that vary with platforms and audiences. Whether this pattern generalizes to other states and diplomatic contexts awaits further comparative research.

Limitations

The sample is confined to one pair of embassy accounts from a single country, and the generalizability of the findings awaits testing in more national contexts. The analysis covers only

post texts, leaving visual frames in images and videos uncoded. The absence of engagement metrics and operator interviews means that explanations of strategic motivations remain inferential. Future research could incorporate engagement indicators and visual content analysis, combine interview data, and extend the sample to more hedging states, so as to test whether "multiple exposures" is a general pattern of middle-power digital diplomacy.

Data availability

The datasets and materials generated and analysed during the current study are available in the Zenodo repository at https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23613383. The repository includes: (1) raw data; (2) coding results, including the cleaned dataset with coded variables for all 888 posts; (3) coding manuals with operational definitions and boundary cases; (4) materials for reliability and validity tests; (5) Python scripts for data collection; and (6) Python scripts for statistical analysis. A README file describes the structure and contents of the repository, and a complete list of URLs for all sampled posts is provided. Due to platform terms of service and potential copyright restrictions, the full raw text of posts is not included in the public repository; however, all post texts were publicly accessible at the time of data collection and remain accessible via the provided URLs. Additional materials are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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