Public Engagement Model to Analyze Digital Diplomacy on Twitter: A Social Media Analytics Framework

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Social media's pervasiveness has created new demands for openness, transparency, real-time communication, and public engagement in diplomacy. In this study, we analyze public engagement strategies for diplomacy on Twitter that were employed by a German ambassador. By applying a text analytics approach, we explored the ambassador's tweets' core themes, how people reacted to those tweets, and what type of topics received higher engagement for 2 years. Eight themes emerged from our analysis of the tweets: democracy, politics and law; society and culture; conflict and violence; personality; environment and health; economic and social development; personal life; and embassy affairs. By analyzing the tweets' content, we present a public engagement model (PEM) for social media communication by highlighting 3 key factors that promote online public engagement: self-disclosure, positive attitude, and inquisitiveness. Results suggest that over 2 years, the German ambassador was a highly engaging personality in Pakistan, with

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around 4,369 interactions and highlighted positive diplomatic communication on Twitter. Tweets were positive, courteous, respectful, personalized, interactive, and direct.

Most communication campaigns strive to achieve favorable effects on their publics. Such desirable outcomes may include creating awareness about products, services, and policies, in addition to engendering positive opinions and behaviors (Dozier & Ehling, 1992). Social media provides even greater avenues to connect with the public. Its pervasiveness has created new demands for openness, transparency, real-time communication, and public engagement, especially for diplomatic communication.

A growing number of diplomats use Twitter to communicate daily with global audiences and their counterparts (Duncombe, 2017), thus reducing the gap between individuals and government representatives. The affordances of Twitter make the network unique for various purposes, such as political engagement and discussions (Ahmad, Alvi, & Ittefaq, 2019; Schroeder, 2018; Vergeer, 2017), and enabling two-way communication (Choi, 2015). In an age of abundant misinformation and fake news (Khan & Idris, 2019), diplomats or representatives of a country take a direct role in being active on online social networking sites to further their countries' official narratives. This Internet-based people-centric engagement is starkly different from the more centralized and closed diplomacy of the past (Cull, 2010).

Politicians, government officials, diplomatic missions, embassies, and ambassadors are increasingly active on social platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Weibo, and YouTube (Dodd & Collins, 2017; Jiang, 2016; Strauß, Kruikemeier, van der Meulen, & van Noort, 2015). Most notable of such Twitter interactions were the ones surrounding the former U.S. President Donald Trump, which has often been seen as inappropriate for American digital diplomacy. The Chinese state news agency Xinhua reacted to Trump's negative tweets by stating that "addiction to Twitter diplomacy is unwise" (Huang, 2017, p. 1). We cannot thus underestimate the positive and negative power of such social platforms. Although Twitter is an essential tool for digital diplomacy, research about how ambassadors engage in public diplomacy via social media in the Global South is scarce. Some studies have shown that Western embassies have not effectively used social media for diplomacy and seldom engage in direct interactive communication (Strauß et al., 2015).

In this study, we reveal how the German Ambassador to Pakistan, Martin Kobler, communicated via Twitter for diplomacy that led to public engagement. Ambassador Kobler served in Pakistan between 2017 and 2019, was very visible in traditional (television and newspapers) and social media, and had more than 200,000 real Twitter followers. A large Pakistani English language daily, *Dawn*, stated that "German ambassador tweets his way to the hearts of Pakistanis" ("This Isn't Goodbye," 2019, p. 1). In an interview with *Global Village Space* magazine, he said that he had used Twitter before for political messages, but here in Pakistan, he did it differently (Minhas, 2018).

Ambassador Kobler had not only attracted considerable media attention, but the effects of his interactions on Twitter have also even been visible offline. For example, he has engaged the Pakistani

community in real-life activities such as planting trees, recycling trash, and holding social gatherings. Especially for a country like Pakistan which has received negative media portrayal in the Western press for security issues over the past two decades (Shabbir, 2012), such bold and open engagement (online and offline) of an ambassador from a major European country is unprecedented and has been received with great enthusiasm.

Over the years, social media use has been increasing in Pakistan. Users, particularly the younger ones, are actively engaging online and interacting with personalities and brands (Ida & Saud, 2020). Twitter is among the top 10 most used social and mobile networks in Pakistan, and most of the country's Internet and social media users are between the ages of 18 and 34 years (Kemp, 2019).

Based on an understanding of digital public diplomacy, we propose the public engagement model (PEM) to analyze the public engagement strategies on Twitter that were employed by the German ambassador. By applying a text analytics approach, we analyzed the core themes of Ambassador Kobler's tweets, how people reacted to those tweets, and what kind of topics received higher engagement over two years. Through this study, we enrich the public engagement scholarship by highlighting three significant factors in the proposed PEM that promote online public engagement: self-disclosure, positive attitude, and inquisitiveness.

Literature Review

Pakistan is a developing country with a population of about 220 million (Plecher, 2020). As of January 2020, Pakistan had an Internet penetration rate of 35%, with its Internet users standing at 76.38 million and 37 million social media users (Hootsuite, 2020). The increased use of social media networks among the Pakistani population represents the social networking sites' significant influence on society. Some research on social media use in Pakistan has delved into areas such as health communication (Ittefaq & Iqbal, 2018), political participation (Ahmad et al., 2019; Ittefaq, 2019), advocacy and charity (Khan, Zaher, & Gao, 2018), and tourism (Hussain, Chen, & Nurunnabi, 2019). However, digital diplomacy research has a noticeable gap in understanding digital engagement, especially from a social media analytics perspective, especially in a developing country like Pakistan. Compared with traditional research methods, social media analytics research helps better understand audience behavior through deeper and often hidden insights through an analysis of Internet data.

Public Diplomacy on Social Media

Public diplomacy scholarship has attracted researchers' attention worldwide (Sevin, Metzgar, & Hayden, 2019). Initially, scholars focused on the relationship of governments with a foreign audience (Melissen, 2005). However, public diplomacy also involves the participation of nonstate actors and the use of "intermestic" (international-domestic) strategies, and the promotion of ideas to pursue foreign policy goals (Martínez Pantoja, 2018, p. 245). Such diplomacy is increasingly taking place on digital platforms.

Public diplomacy in an online social setting can be viewed as digital diplomacy, which is the use of the Internet for diplomatic purposes (Su & Xu, 2015). Social media use in public diplomacy is referred to as

new public diplomacy (Gilboa, 2015). Digital diplomacy offers several benefits in the form of cost-effectiveness, interaction with stakeholders, and communication at a global level (Duncombe, 2018).

Digital diplomacy engenders transparency, democracy, and public engagement (Sotiriu, 2015). In some ways, public diplomacy is intertwined with nation branding, whereby communication by government representatives and ambassadors shapes common perceptions about their respective countries. Through nation-branding, a country's image and reputation can be enhanced for the international audience (Fan, 2010); and online identity can be branded to create a positive image (Kaneva, 2011). Social media affords the opportunity for countries and their representatives to project their "soft power," which has been defined as the "ability to influence the behavior of others to get the outcome one wants" (Nye, 2004, p. 2).

Diplomats disseminate information, express opinions, and even emotions to achieve the development of diplomacy (Su & Xu, 2015). By posting messages on Twitter, diplomats seek to influence the public, educate them, build bridges, and foster goodwill in the host country. In this manner, diplomats have become enablers of relationship building between countries (Tam, 2018).

Over the years, scholars have highlighted some crucial factors that define diplomatic communication (Šimunjak & Caliandro, 2019). Traditionally, diplomatic communication should be respectful and courteous (Jönsson & Hall, 2005); positive and constructive (Strauß et al., 2015); ambiguous so as to be indirect and not taking sides (Jönsson & Hall, 2005); and balanced and moderate (Nick, 2001). We contend that social media retains the same guidelines for diplomatic communication while adding the element of interactivity and engagement with domestic and foreign publics. Social media diplomacy requires engagement at a more personalized level (Šimunjak & Caliandro, 2019) by relying on images and videos in addition to textual information. Most importantly, such engagement is forthright, connecting everyday individuals to important personalities such as politicians and diplomats.

Public Engagement for Twitter Diplomacy

Various scholars have discussed engagement as social engagement, civic engagement, digital engagement, and public engagement (Johnston & Taylor, 2018). Engagement has been understood as "the intensity of an individual's participation in and connection with an organization's offerings or organization's activities" (Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2012, p. 127). It is "a dynamic multidimensional relational concept featuring psychological and behavioral attributes of connection, interaction, participation, and involvement" (Johnston, 2018, p. 19).

Engagement has been viewed as part of a dialogue (Taylor & Kent, 2014) and a process of involving the public (Devin & Lane, 2014). Based on Watkins' (2017) assertions, we contend that engagement should be conceptualized beyond two-way symmetrical communication that does not necessarily require a response from the organization, "but the opportunity for the public to have a voice" (p. 165). That voice manifests itself in various ways; through the social media actions of liking (favoriting on Twitter) and sharing (retweeting on Twitter), also viewed as elements of active engagement. Therefore, a more comprehensive view of digital engagement encompasses both one-way and more interactive two-way communication on social media surrounding actions beyond comments or replies. For example, Khan (2017) viewed user

engagement on social media as either passive (viewing, reading) or active (liking, commenting). We also view engagement as a psychological and a behavioral concept that can be both active and passive, and thus define online user engagement as a spectrum of involvement with content that is mostly passive, becoming active through the acts of liking, commenting, and sharing.

Social media enables dynamic possibilities of engagement, thus providing a unique platform that has enhanced traditional diplomacy's function (Hocking & Melissen, 2015). Diplomats and government representatives are increasingly visible on social media, advancing national interests. Such use of social media in general and Twitter in particular for public diplomacy has somewhat redefined the role of diplomats as public relations practitioners in a global arena (Fitzpatrick, Fullerton, & Kendrick, 2013). Diplomats are now at the forefront of public diplomacy on social media, and the focus is now on measuring such digital communication (Sevin et al., 2019). Through social media, the public diplomacy of today is quick, interactive, and direct. Strauß and associates (2015) identified six communication strategies in digital diplomacy: interactive communication, personalized communication, use of sentiment, relevant information, transparent communication, and networking. According to Tam (2018), online networks create engagement and build relationships in which interpersonal approaches to relationship management have been fruitful in gaining trust and nurture relationships between foreign diplomats and the local public.

Popular among politicians, government representatives, and ambassadors, Twitter allows its users to actively engage with content via favorites (likes), replies (comments), and retweets (shares). Usually employed for broadcasting information, Twitter also offers value by allowing the opportunity to discuss, inform, and advance policy agendas for governments through two-way communication, thus building relationships (Sundstrom & Levenshus, 2017). Such dialogic communication has also been found to significantly impact organizations' public engagement (Wang & Yang, 2020).

In this study, we are interested in understanding the factors that lead to engagement on social media. Khan (2017) employed the uses and gratifications framework by concentrating on audience perceptions to explain the motivating factors such as entertainment, information seeking, and social interaction that can lead to user engagement on YouTube. In this study, we extend that work and focus on the social media content to understand factors that lead to higher public engagement on Twitter for diplomatic communication.

Factors such as trust, satisfaction, positive word of mouth, and loyalty are some of the antecedents of engagement (Kang, 2014). Others have outlined the role of relationship-building as an essential component of engagement on social media (Kodish & Pettegrew, 2008). Furthermore, factors that can build online relationships and engender engagement are self-disclosure and humor (Imlawi & Gregg, 2014). Positivity is also an essential factor in promoting social media engagement (Strauß et al., 2015). Dodd and Collins (2017) suggest public relations engaging message strategies for public diplomacy that consists of appealing to emotions, involving particular points of view, and calling to action.

We believe that a further factor leading to higher levels of digital engagement is in social media posts that ask a question and summon curiosity. We term this factor as inquisitiveness. Building on these

factors, we propose the PEM comprising self-disclosure, positive attitude, and inquisitiveness factors. Major postulates of the PEM for public communication are discussed below.

Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure is defined as "any message about the self that the person communicates to another" (Wheeless & Grotz, 1976, p. 338). In offline contexts, self-disclosure has been shown to offer various benefits in terms of higher satisfaction, trust, and solidarity (Martin & Anderson, 1995). It offers the potential to improve relationships. Especially in the context of social media, self-disclosure stimulates feedback (Imlawi & Gregg, 2014).

Positive Attitude

A positive attitude is a desirable trait in public relations (Kang, 2014). The positive orientation of Twitter posts can further attract positive reactions from users. Research has shown that positive interactions with online entities can lead to a more positive attitude and greater or higher user engagement. Thus, it is expected that a positive attitude reflected in social media posts can further promote positive active engagement from users.

Inquisitiveness

Inquisitiveness has been defined as "examination or investigation" or curiosity ("Curious," 2020). Inquisitiveness implies a presence of interest, inquiry, search, and probing behavior reflected in the wording of the tweets or social media posts. While research in this area is scant, anecdotal evidence suggests that questions effectively drive action and help gain attention (Smarty, 2020). On seeking a post phrased as a question, users may be instinctively inclined to find an answer (Lammon, 2020). In diplomatic communication, we noticed evidence of tweets by the German ambassador that asked users a question or elicited an opinion. Such inquisitive posts have the potential to spur a conversation.

Therefore, we would like to study how the inquisitive nature of Twitter posts could lead to higher public engagement. Figure 1 depicts the proposed digital engagement model for public communication. Self-disclosure, positive attitude, and inquisitiveness serve as antecedents for digital engagement on Twitter.
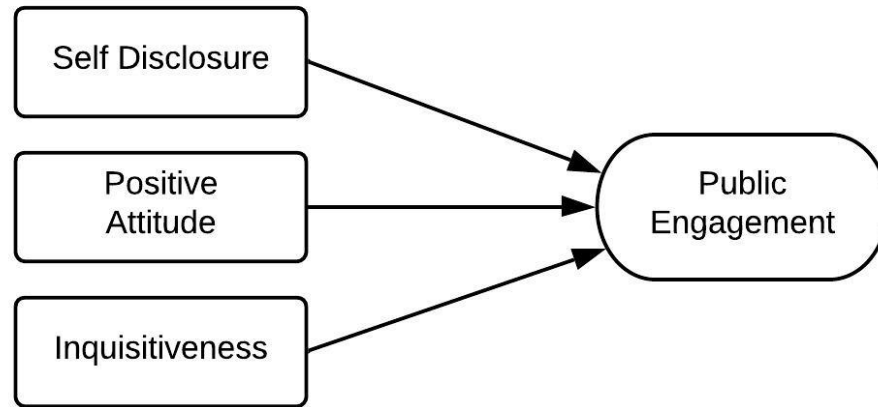
Figure 1. Public engagement model (PEM).

In light of the proposed PEM for diplomatic communication, we pose the following research questions:

RQ1:   What type of tweets were posted by the ambassador for public diplomacy?

RQ2:   Which tweets in terms of self-disclosure, positive attitude, and inquisitiveness, elicited the highest level of public engagement?

RQ3:   Does the sentiment expressed within the tweets have any impact on the level of public engagement?

Method

As per the standard social media analytics research technique, we engaged in data "discovery, collection, preparation, and analysis" (Stieglitz, Mirbabaie, Ross, & Neuberger, 2018, p. 157) to address our research questions. The study effectively relies on text analytics to better understand the German ambassador's digital diplomacy in Pakistan.

Data Collection and Cleaning

To collect the Twitter interactions and overall content surrounding Ambassador Kobler, a Search API-based network analysis tool, NodeXL (Social Media Research Foundation; embedded in Microsoft Excel 2016), was employed. NodeXL allows for data collection directly from Twitter based on search terms. Our search parameters were defined by the official Twitter handle of Ambassador Martin Kobler: @KoblerInPak. The automatically gathered tweets included original tweets, replies, mentions, and retweets from August 2017 to March 2019 (*N* = 4,369). Only the original tweets in English by Ambassador Kobler were included in our analysis. We excluded data comprising tweets that were in the Urdu language (the national language

of Pakistan), German language, duplicate tweets, mentions, retweets, and spam. Urdu language tweets were excluded because they were translations of the English tweets posted by the ambassador's account and that we wanted to avoid overpopulating the sample with similar messages. A few German tweets were also excluded, as they did not seem to address the Pakistani Twitter audience. As a result, we were left with $n = 778$ original tweets from Ambassador Kobler.

Data Analysis

We employed a text analytics method to analyze a corpus of text-based social media data to unearth insights in the data. To answer our varied research questions, we use a combination of tools to extract, analyze, and visualize our unstructured Twitter data. These tools include NVivo, Voyant-tools, and Microsoft Excel. For the textual analysis, we first sifted tweets to find inquisitive (curiosity or inquiring) messages, which were identified by the "?" symbol (Alyami & Toze, 2014). To unearth a positive attitude (see Figure 1 for PEM), we employed SentiStrength, a free opinion mining program, to conduct a sentiment analysis of tweets. Providing a comprehensive approach to classify social texts, SentiStrength handles various linguistic features and offers reliable results across various social media domains (Thelwall, 2017). SentiStrength features simultaneous estimation of both positive and negative sentiment strength for informational texts. We applied a dual 5-point scheme for classifying tweets: a score from -5 (very negative) to $+5$ (very strong positivity).

Using NVivo, we conducted a systematic in-depth thematic analysis of tweets. We followed the thematic analysis steps as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). We coded the entire clean data set in discussion with the co-authors. Disagreements were discussed and resolved, leading to 100% agreement. The data was then entered in Microsoft Excel, sorted, and grouped by themes and subthemes. The themes and subthemes were mutually exclusive. We employed Voyant-tools.org, a free, Web-based text-analytics tool where users can visually understand the text to visualize the tweet data. Using Excel, we also sorted tweets with the highest engagement level in terms of favorites, retweets, and replies.

Results

Thematic Analysis

To answer our first research question (RQ1), we used NVivo and conducted a systematic in-depth thematic analysis of tweets. We have found interesting and relevant themes for Pakistani society. In total, eight prominent themes emerged from the data analysis. As the Appendix Table A1 shows, eight primary and 29 subthemes emerged from data through analysis. These themes are discussed in further detail in the following paragraphs.

Democracy, Politics, and Law

This theme included tweets that referred to democracy, elections, voting and the importance of democratic institutions in Pakistan and Germany. The subthemes have great significance to Pakistan because, during 2018, general elections were held in Pakistan, and the German ambassador encouraged

people to cast their votes to strengthen the democratic process in the country. Besides, Pakistan is a country that has been severely affected by war in neighboring Afghanistan in the country's West and the unceasing conflict over disputed Jammu and Kashmir with its neighbor India in the East. Since peace is the only way forward for economic prosperity, the longing for peace by average Pakistani Twitter users is evident from the engagement with tweets about stability, economic growth, and peace.

Society and Culture

The most common theme emerging from the tweets data we found was about society and culture. In this theme, most tweets were about Pakistani and German cultures, such as food, clothing, and tourism. In tourism-related tweets, we found pictures and videos posted with certain hashtags. Tweets were published during this time to present Pakistani culture, local food, famous places, mangoes, and cherry fruits, cultural events, cricket as sport, different seasons, and the beauty of all regions of Pakistan.

Conflict and Violence

By condemning violence, Ambassador Kobler highlighted the importance of peace in the region. He condemned every terror act and violence in his tweets. Pakistan is in a state of war since September 2001. Since then, Pakistan has been a victim that suffered economic losses worth billions of dollars and about 70,000 lives (including government officials, law enforcement, and many civilians). The content in this theme includes the condemnation of these attacks on Pakistan, Afghanistan, and outside. The subthemes mostly included mention of Afghanistan (where most of the violence is still taking place) and Pakistan (that has recovered from the period of turmoil). In this theme, we found hashtags such as #Afghanistan and #terrorismNeverWins.

Personalities

Remembering national heroes represents that those values and traditions have historical importance. Through tweets about influential Pakistani personalities such as Pakistan's father of the nation, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Ambassador Kobler demonstrated respect for the Pakistani Twitter followers and the broader nation by showing understanding and appreciation for its history. Another prominent personality Dr. Ruth Pfau, a German–Pakistani Catholic nun and physician, devoted almost 55 years of her life to fighting leprosy in Pakistan. Such tweets about historical figures attracted positive feelings and an emotional appeal.

Environment and Health

In many tweets, Ambassador Kobler emphasized environmental and health issues facing the country. Moreover, his focus was also on these issues having a global impact (such as climate change). By celebrating Earth Day, he made people feel that climate change is a global challenge also affecting Pakistan. Tweets that discourage plastic use and motivate groups of people to go hiking imply online and offline engagement. Such was the positive appeal of those messages that recently, the capital city Islamabad outlawed the use of plastic bags (due to their role in causing plastic pollution). It may be argued that

Ambassador Kobler may have contributed toward raising awareness about this environmental issue. This serves as a classic example of how online awareness can translate into offline action.

Economic and Social Development

At various instances, Ambassador Kobler tweeted in appreciation of the tree-plantation or afforestation campaigns spearheaded by the Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan's government. This tree-plantation initiative reflects his passion for giving prominence to environmental initiatives that can help combat global warming. Ambassador Kobler had also been tweeting about Pakistan's economic issues and various positive developments in the export sector. He had been asking questions to engender engagement in multiple instances and inquire about what the general Pakistani public was thinking. Such messages indicated inquisitiveness and that he is interested in people's opinions and used these questions to engage them in a two-way conversation.

Personal Life

His idea of sharing personal life was noted in the tweets. We consider sharing of personal tweets as being indicative of self-disclosure in the PEM. Morning walks, talking about his age, visiting hospitals, and encouraging staff members to help poor and needy people were beyond diplomatic duties. Still, Ambassador Kobler performed those activities to engage the Pakistani community via Twitter. Talking publicly about his morning walks and mentioning his age tended to remind people of the importance of exercise in an individuals' life. Most of these tweets helped make a meaningful connection with the community through digital media.

Embassy Affairs

After society and culture, embassy affairs included the most discussed topics among Ambassador Kobler's tweets. In the subthemes, we found that Ambassador Kobler talked about visas and information, vacant positions, interactions with students in live sessions on Facebook, and meeting with students from marginalized or lesser developed regions of Pakistan. Countering disinformation regarding visa agents and fake visa appointments were top tweets during this period. Even in this theme, we found inquisitive tweets asking the followers questions about what they want to talk about.

Textual and Sentiment Analysis

Our sentiment analysis revealed that a majority of tweets by Ambassador Kobler had a positive sentiment. One hundred and forty-six tweets were neutral, and only 139 tweets contained words that gave the tweets a negative sentiment. Figure 2 depicts the overall sentiment polarity summary in tweets by Ambassador Kobler. It can therefore be concluded that Ambassador Kobler had an overwhelmingly positive attitude. In answering RQ2, as per our PEM (see Figure 1), a positive attitude was one of the factors that lead to public engagement.
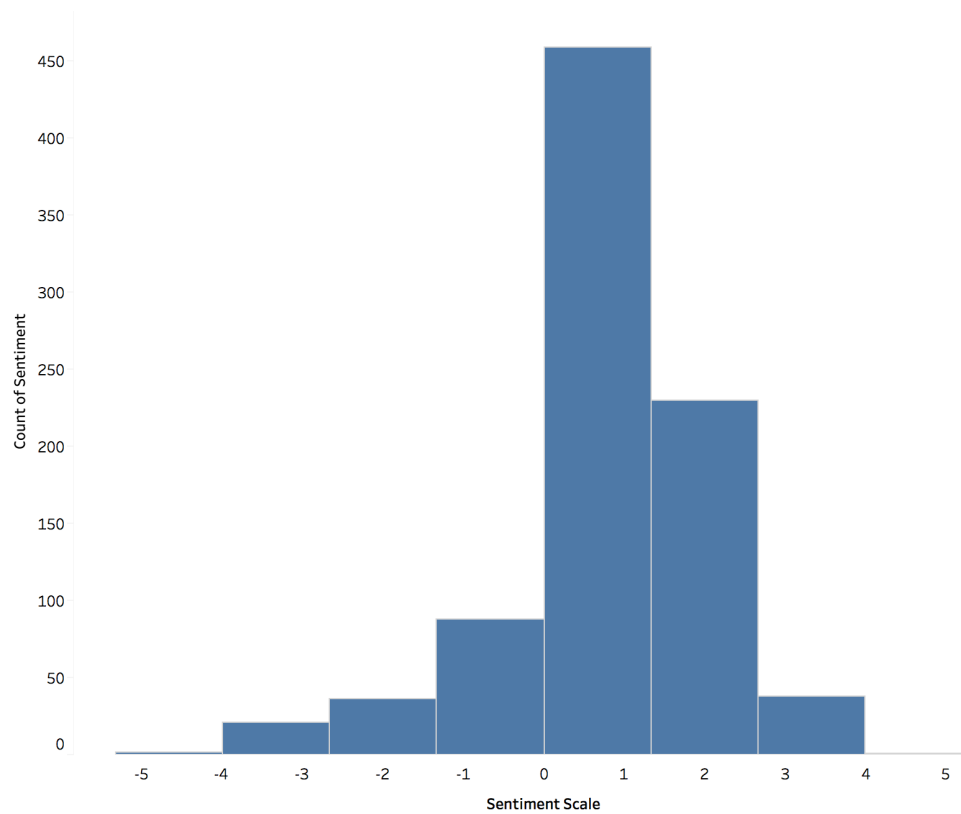
Figure 2. Sentiment polarity summary.

Engagement Analysis

Having identified the themes emerging from the Twitter data set for Ambassador Kobler, we also wanted to know how engagement manifested itself. An engagement analysis also helps us answer RQ2. Table 1 depicts the tweets with images that attracted the highest engagement level in terms of favorites, retweets, and replies. Some examples of these tweets can be found in the Appendix.

Table 1. The Highest Level of Engagement in Terms of Favorites, Retweets, and Replies.

Date	Tweets	Sentiment	Theme	Favorites	RTs	Replies
8/14/18	Pakistani Flags everywhere! Happy #IndependenceDay2018 to you and your families and friends!🎉🎊 (Kobler, 2018g)	+1	society and culture	18,684	4,761	1,000
1/26/19	uff,was a hard-choice day! wanted to buy a bicycle MADE IN PAKISTAN. first,it was hard to find one.All foreign made!! then finally found it in #rawalpindi. then get stuck between Sohrab or peco? Finally,bought this red one. Also has a horn 'i❤️my bike" what do u guys think of it? (Kobler, 2019a)	neutral	personal life	17,479	2,492	1,500
12/21/18	Chilly morning at isla airport, looking forward to receive my family from germany to celebrate christmas and end of the year. Want to show them #BeautifulPakistan, the country and friendly people. Wish you #JummahMubarak for you and your families! (Kobler, 2018j)	neutral	personal life	16,494	1,914	1,100
2/3/19	Here it is!! My pakistani bicycle is ready with amazing truck art. Haha, love it now more 😍. Rode it in the streets of Pindi. feels great! Horn also works, in case you are wondering😉 Let me know what do you think of colors? (Kobler, 2019b)	+2	personal life	15,671	2,425	1,300
3/3/19	Feel already sad going on retirement soon. What do you guys think? Shouldn't i prepare a back up plan after retirement and help with halwa production? 😂 Pic from 'Munawar Sohan halwa shop' near Lodhran, recently. (Kobler, 2019e)	−3	personal life	15,566	1,600	1,700
6/4/18	look how I went to pick up my wife at the airport!! I'm planning to show her beautiful #pakistan! what do you think about my pakistani shalwar kameez? do I blend in with the locals? (Kobler, 2018b)	+2	personal life	12,845	2,195	2,400
2/28/19	Arrived in #Dubai yday for a meeting with #German companies on investment opportunities in #Pakistan. How can i encourage them in this difficult moments? I join all those who call for de-escalation & for return of stability. The region needs peace & prosperity! (Kobler, 2019d)	neutral	embassy affairs	11,801	1,600	630
2/12/19	so, i need new clothes now. Can anybody guess why?? Well, i have gained the weight because i cannot resist Pakistani food like jalebi, naan, mutton, biryani & much more.. You guys are responsible for this!! 🙃 PS: pakistan's hospitality is just remarkable! (Kobler, 2019c)	neutral	personal life	11,702	1,700	740

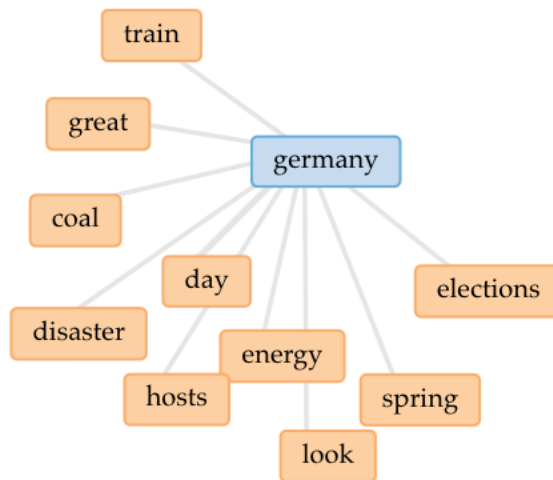| 7/29/18	WOW 😍 finally the wait is over. I love my new foxy with the #truckart design! such an amazing combination of a german car and a pakistani design!! Isn't it beautiful?? What do you think? (Kobler, 2018e)	+1	personal life	10,956	1,900	887
8/27/18	Welcome back to all those who performed #hajj. May all your prayers will be heard! (Kobler, 2018i)	+1	society and culture	10,629	1,300	149

The engagement analysis shows that the most engaging tweets were relevant to all themes, which we found in the thematic analysis. For instance, the most engaging tweet was about Pakistan's Independence Day. Similarly, personal news (self-disclosure), like buying a new bicycle and asking questions about what people think about the new bike, garnered high engagement. From the personal news perspective, Ambassador Kobler posted a picture wearing Pakistani cultural clothes to wait for his wife on Christmas at the airport, reflecting his empathy for the local culture. Engagement is also through the topic of food, such as posting pictures of food and asking for retirement plans to work in the food industry. The most common engagement strategy was tweeting with a picture and asking questions and other people's opinions about different topics such as food, clothing, and investment of German companies in Pakistan. Most of the top engaging tweets happen to have an element of inquisitiveness. As shown in Table 1, Ambassador Kobler's tweets contain a question mark to elicit opinions and replies from his Twitter followers.

Joking about his weight gain and putting the blame on Pakistani food was another aspect of the engagement. Such messages also point to the known culture of hospitality of the Pakistani people. We also found high engagement in themes regarding culture and society, showing similar results. Sharing his new car color and congratulating people who came back from performing Hajj showed respect for local customs and religious values. He realized the importance of Hajj in Islam and to Pakistani society and used these occasions to engage with the Pakistani community made him the most beloved and engaged ambassador in the diplomatic history of Pakistan–German relations.

As per the PEM, all three factors (self-disclosure, positive attitude, and inquisitiveness) are found to be contributing factors to public engagement. It is notable that while a positive attitude may usually attract higher engagement levels, there may be instances where a negative tweet may also entice greater or higher engagement. According to our analysis, among the top 10 most engaging tweets, only one reflected an overall negative sentiment of −3. This tweet was coded negative by SentiStrength due to the presence of words "sad" and "retirement" (Kobler, 2019e). However, the tweet also included positive elements of humor and Pakistani culture. It can thus be argued that under some circumstances, a somewhat negative tweet may also attract engagement.

A textual analysis of the Twitter data set in Voyant-tools revealed that there were 1,120 words with hashtags and 462 unique words within those hashtags. As depicted in the word cloud in Figure 3, the most frequent hashtags in the data set were #Pakistan (172), #Germany (53), #Lahore (39), #Pakistani (22), and #Karachi (19). For general words, *great* (171), *Pakistan* (211), *Pakistani* (58), *Germany* (88), *German*

(78), *women* (47), *embassy* (45), *Lahore* (44), *beautiful* (38), *congratulations* (26), *impressed* (25), *remember* (24), f*amilies* (33), and *family* (28).

Figure 3. Word cloud depicting the most frequently used words in the data set.

Terms were investigated in greater detail. In Voyant-tools, we also analyzed the tweets to find "collocates," which are words related to one another with a frequency greater than chance (Miller, 2018, p. 175). A word size indicates its frequency, and the lines indicate the connections that are connected in a way that is greater than chance. As depicted in Figure 4a, for the word *Germany*, we can see that Ambassador Kobler had tweeted about Germany with word associations related to elections, the weather there, about a disaster, and coal as energy. Tweets posted with the word *Germany* were mostly positive associations or collocates.

Figure 4b depicts the collocates for the word *Pakistan* that Ambassador Kobler tweeted. In line with our thematic analysis, the word associations also reveal the kind of words Ambassador Kobler used to tweet about Pakistan. These were mostly about the economic situation, sports (cricket), people, women, environment (water), and words of praise (good, thanks, etc.). This also reveals that the ambassador's choice of words was positive, thankful, admiring, congratulating, and immensely likable. This may explain the high level of engagement elicited through Twitter interactions with the ambassador.

Figure 4a. Collocates for Germany.   **Figure 4b. Collocates for Pakistan.**

Further analysis in Voyant-tools also revealed that the word *Pakistan* was most mentioned (211 times), followed by *great* (171 times), *Germany* (88 times), *German* (78 times), and so on. For our clean corpus of tweets by Ambassador Kobler, the average number of words per sentence was 14.3. By looking at the figures, it becomes easy to understand at a glance what major words were associated with the keywords (such as the country).

Discussion

In this study, we first identified the antecedents of digital engagement on social media for public diplomatic communication. We proposed a model for public engagement (PEM). Next, we unearthed the main themes that the German Ambassador to Pakistan has used on Twitter as part of a digital engagement strategy. The first identified theme is democracy, politics, and law. This is a central theme for an embassy due to the different operations that it conducts. Cornut (2015) analyzed the three social roles characteristic of diplomats' political work in an embassy, and these include producing knowledge, representing their country, and serving as a bureaucrat of a hierarchical institution. As such, the inclusion of democracy, politics, and law in the Twitter discussion is part of the German ambassador's diplomatic work. Furthermore, the subthemes of peace, refugees, elections, justice, and human rights signal the ambassador's efforts to promote democracy and a stronger bilateral relationship between Germany and Pakistan. These themes encourage engagement because they involve particular points of view and calls to explicit action, such as voting.

As mentioned in the Results section, society and culture emerged as a dominant theme generating about 37% of the tweets. These topics have been engaging because they generated comments, retweets, and replies. Western embassies typically engage in informational public relations message strategies, promoting cultural resources and achievements (Dodd & Collins, 2017). These authors analyzed the

importance of cultural diplomacy approaches and the frequently employed strategies, but did not identify the themes used. Similarly, Su and Xu (2015) report U.S. culture and society as half of the contents of microblogs in China. Zhong and Lu (2013) also found "American politics and society" (p. 545) as a topic that engages by generating comments and reposting. Thus, this study identifies the themes used by Ambassador Kobler as art and architecture, food, religion, tourism, sports, and events. We recognize the use of these themes to project a positive image of Pakistan and promote tourism. Additionally, these themes appeal to emotions, which are a manifestation of an engagement strategy.

Another theme is conflict and violence. Digital diplomacy requires the necessary skills to be implemented effectively, including understanding conflict and developing networks to solve problems jointly (Hocking & Melissen, 2015). In his tweets, Ambassador Kobler supported the efforts of Pakistani security forces in eradicating terrorism. His tweets reflected sympathy for the victims of violence in neighboring Afghanistan. To engage audiences, the use of hashtags and the subthemes of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and outside Afghanistan–Pakistan helps create awareness about the issue.

The mention of personalities is another theme to engage audiences on Twitter. Ambassador Kobler refers to important persons to the life of Pakistan who might be considered heroes. The use of national personalities and heroes is part of a narrative identity that contributes to nation branding (Dinnie, 2015) and may also create high levels of engagement and discussion, such as the example of the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative in the UK. (Hocking & Melissen, 2015). In this study, Ambassador Kobler's tweets on admiring and remembering influential personalities emphasize Pakistani society's positive elements and create considerable engagement with the Pakistani audience.

Another important theme is the environment and health. One of the major concerns nowadays at a global level is the environment. Using subthemes such as plastic pollution, safety, health, rain, and the environment, along with actual action such as collecting plastic bottles, makes an engagement strategy that invites Twitter followers to take action for the planet. For example, Su and Xu (2015) identified that the U.S. embassy to China proactively engages when microblogging messages are related to hot issues of the moment, such as environmental protection, and commented in the media of the host country. Similarly, Zhong and Lu (2013) identified environment/energy/technology as a core message used in microblogs by embassies.

Economic and social development is another theme that is also a part of the activities of ambassadorial work. Embassies usually provide relevant information and appropriate content to stakeholders by covering economic topics in their tweets, hence aligning their interests with their stakeholders (Strauß et al., 2015). By using the issues of gender equality, education, entrepreneurship, agriculture, and energy, the ambassador makes sure to appeal to stakeholders interested in Pakistan's economic development and disseminate information related to the status of businesses in the country.

Another theme to engage in on Twitter is personal life. Strauß and colleagues (2015) argue that personalized communication highlighting personal aspects is an effective communication strategy for digital diplomacy; their study found that embassies rarely use personalized tweets. However, in the case of Ambassador Kobler, the use of personal life in tweets has been very effective in attracting maximum

engagement. Self-disclosure builds online relationships, attracts interactivity, and engagement (Imlawi & Gregg, 2014). By experiencing the country's landmarks, visiting hospitals, and enjoying the beauty of Pakistan, Ambassador Kobler appeals to the locals who have been in similar places or have had the same experiences. In public diplomacy, cultural functions and the transmission of messages related to lifestyles, artistic attainments, and economic systems are considered engaging and persuasive tactics (Signitzer & Coombs, 1992). Part of such a strategy is acknowledging local people's work and encouraging others to do similar activities. Moreover, self-disclosure stood out as a significant contributing factor in promoting public engagement.

The second-most tweeted theme is related to embassy affairs. As a representative of their countries, ambassadors have to deal with different consular work and networking. This theme generated 149 tweets related to Germany, visas, jobs, and ambassadorial interactions. Furthermore, by announcing vacancies in the embassy, tweets were appealing and positive. Similarly, Su and Xu (2015) reported the activities of the U.S. embassy, including the working agenda of the ambassador and cultural activities organized by the embassy, as one of the main microblog contents of the U.S. embassy in China. It is irrefutable that many modern diplomats are using Twitter as a strategic channel for engagement. However, the embassy affairs still have to be conducted by the ambassador as representative of his country.

Conclusion and Implications

Statecraft in the 21st century is challenging in various ways, but social media open new arenas for governments to directly engage audiences. Ambassador Kobler's public diplomacy with the Pakistani public through Twitter presents a classic case of how high levels of engagement can be elicited through foreign audiences using social media messaging that is open, direct, positive, and inquisitive. In a developing country, social media messaging for public diplomacy by an ambassador, among other themes, can be centered on topics such as democracy, politics, and law; personal life; economic development; environment and health; and society and culture. The German ambassador's main themes on Twitter are centered on building goodwill between countries and can be adapted and used as a part of a digital engagement strategy for diplomatic communication in other countries. Just as these themes are relevant in a developing country such as Pakistan, state representatives in other countries can rely on social media messaging that is engaging and builds positive goodwill between nations.

Despite Germany and Pakistan having diverse culture, society, and foreign policy, Ambassador Kobler became one of the most beloved ambassadors to Pakistan. He achieved high engagement levels on Twitter with 4,369 interactions and posted 778 original tweets, retweets, and pictures, posing questions to the locals, and using hashtags to cover important topics. He also responded to questions and mentions, enabling two-way communication with his audience, portraying a positive image of Pakistan, and encouraging the two countries to build closer ties. The main engaging topic was society and culture, which highlighted Pakistani food, traditional Pakistani clothing, and iconic places such as Lahore, Gilgit Baltistan, and Multan.

Many would view Ambassador Kobler as a charismatic personality. He used themes that touched his Pakistani audience's hearts and minds on Twitter, appealing to emotions involving particular points of

view and calling to action either explicitly or implicitly, creating a successful digital engagement strategy. Overall, this research offers an empirical analysis of the actual usage and themes of engagement that led an ambassador to have over 200,000 followers on Twitter, demonstrating that Twitter is an imperative tool of digital diplomacy.

The study has various strengths: It identifies the drivers of public engagement, provides a guideline for diplomatic communication that engages the public, and the research can be useful and applied beyond public diplomacy in other domains. Nevertheless, the study has its limitations. Our focus was on active engagement only. Future research can employ novel techniques to study passive engagement, which usually forms the bulk of social media engagement (Khan, 2017). Moreover, a comparison of diplomatic communication via social media of other ambassadors can also help expand knowledge in this interesting domain. Considering the significance of the PEM, future research can also parse out the contributing factors using different research methods for various social platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. For example, research scholars can also delve into social network analysis technique to explain the structure of the network and investigate the linkages among different actors.

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        MADE IN PAKISTAN. First, it was hard to find one. All foreign made!! Then finally found it in
        #Rawalpindi. Then get stuck between Sohrab or peco? Finally, bought this red one. Also has a
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        in case you are wondering😉 Let me know what do you think of colors? [Tweet]. Retrieved from
        https://twitter.com/koblerinpak/status/1091925629640024065

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        Well, I have gained the weight because I cannot resist Pakistani food like jalebi, naan, mutton,
        biryani & much more. You guys are responsible for this!! 😊 P.S.: Pakistan's hospitality is
        just remarkable! [Tweet]. Retrieved from
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        companies on investment opportunities in #Pakistan. How can I encourage them in this difficult
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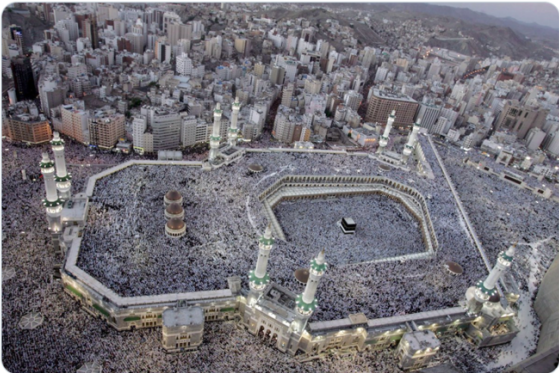
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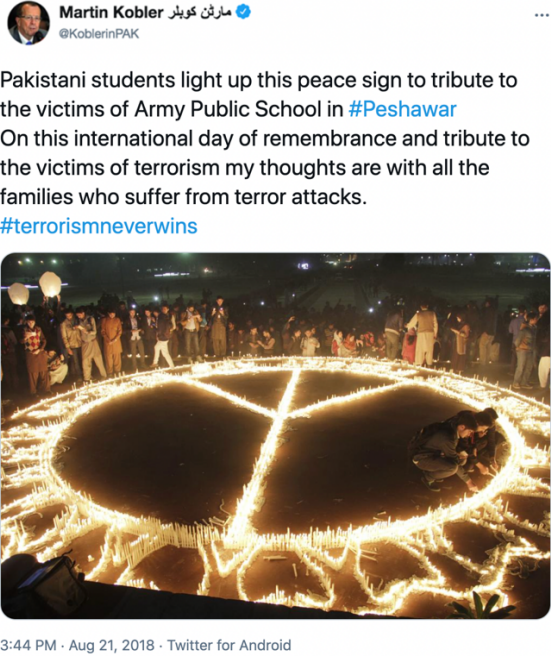
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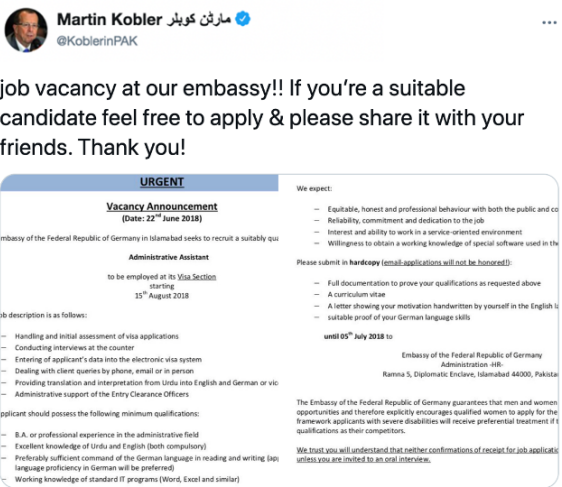
Appendix

Table A1. Overview of Themes, Subthemes, and Sample Tweets.

Theme	Subthemes	Tweet illustration
A. Democracy, Politics, and Law (65) 8.4%	A1. Peace A2. Refugees A3. Elections A4. Justice & Human Rights	 (Kobler, 2018f)
B. Society and Culture (287) 36.9%	B1. Art & Architecture B2. Food B3. Religion B4. Tourism B5. Sports B6. Events	 (Kobler, 2018i)

C. Conflict and Violence (37) 4.8%	C.1 Pakistan C.2 Afghanistan C3: Outside Af-Pak	 (Kobler, 2018h)
D. Personalities (48) 6.2%	D1. Admiring D2. Remembering	 (Kobler, 2018d)

E. Environment and Health (90) 11.4%	E1. Plastic Pollution E2. Safety E3. Health E4. Rains/Water E5. Environment	 (Kobler, 2018a)
F. Economic and Social Development (69) 8.9%	F1. Gender Equality F2. Education F3. Entrepreneurship F4. Agriculture F5. Energy	 (Kobler, 2017)

G. Personal Life (33) 4.2%		(Kobler, 2019c)
H. Embassy Affairs (149) 19.2%	H1. Germany H2. Visas & Information H3. Jobs H4. Ambassador Interactions	(Kobler, 2018c)