India's Digital Diaspora Diplomacy:
Operationalizing Collaborative Public Diplomacy Strategies for Social Media

Bhattiprolu Murti & R.S. Zaharna

Abstract
This study examines how India uses digital media to connect with its diaspora as part of its diaspora diplomacy. In order to analyze the strategy and its effectiveness, the study operationalized Cowan and Arsenault's (2008) theoretical framework of three layers of public diplomacy – monologue, dialogue and collaboration – by identifying corresponding layers of social media components. The study draws a more distinctive line between dialogue and collaboration in digital strategies: dialogic entail relationship-building and knowledge sharing, while collaboration creates ownership, relationship transformation and knowledge creation. This analytical lens was then applied specifically to assess the website of Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre, or OIFC, a joint venture between Indian government and the country's largest trade body, the Confederation of Indian Industry. The study found the OIFC website is geared heavily toward monologue form of communication, emphasizing dissemination of information over genuine dialogue or relationship building with diaspora.

Keywords
Diaspora diplomacy, digital media, social media, India, monologue, dialogue, collaboration.

Biography
Bhattiprolu Murti is a recent graduate of the M.A. in Public Communication program from the School of Communication, American University, Washington, D.C. A former Dow Jones Newswires editor, Bhatti works as a news analyst, and this paper is based on the thesis he wrote for his M.A. capstone project. That paper was adjudged as the Best Capstone of the program.

R.S. Zaharna is an associate professor of Strategic Communication at American University.

India's Diaspora Diplomacy:
Operationalizing Collaborative Public Diplomacy for Social Media

The importance of Diasporas has increased exponentially in the wake of a steep rise in global migration. At the last count in 2010, about 214 million had migrated from their homelands, up from 150 million in 2000 (International Organization of Migration, 2013). Diasporas are communities of migrants from a homeland living in one or many host countries (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2003).

The rise in global migration comes at a time when advances in communication technology have made it easier for diasporas to remain actively engaged with their homelands (Bravo, 2012). Diasporas play an important role in the development of their homelands through advocacy, remittances, philanthropy, skills transfer and business investment (Brinkerhoff, 2012). In recent times, India has made concerted efforts to engage with its 22 million strong diaspora spread over 205 countries (data from the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs website, 2013).

India took a number of steps that indicate a transformative change in the way it perceives and engages with its diaspora. In 2004, it launched a new ministry called the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs aimed at easing migrants' transition to India and to engage with them. In 2006, it created a new Public Diplomacy Division under its Ministry of External Affairs. The south Asian nation also boosted investment in communication technology, and invested heavily in social media (Hall, 2012; Suri, 2011). India revamped its government websites, realizing that some of those sites might be the first contact for diaspora looking to engage with India (Hall, 2012).

India also partnered with private industry to augment its outreach efforts. In 2007, India's Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, and a non-state entity, the Confederation of Indian Industry, the country's most powerful industry group, jointly launched the Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC, www.oifc.in). In contrast to other Indian government-related sites that focus on foreign publics, the OIFC site is one of the few websites that heavily targets the Indian diaspora community. The question is, how effective is the website for building and maintaining relations with its diaspora?

This study examines how India is using its digital media to engage with its diaspora as part of its public diplomacy outreach. Specifically, the study will look into the website of the OIFC initiative. While there has been an increase in diaspora public diplomacy and particularly the digital platforms that seek to engage diaspora, few studies provide assessment tools. In order to better understand how countries, including India, are using digital media in their diaspora public diplomacy efforts, this study operationalizes the three-layer public diplomacy framework proposed by Cowan and Arsenault (2008) for digital media strategies. Following this brief introduction, the literature review surveys scholarship how various countries, including India, are using digital media to engage with the diaspora.

Literature Review

Diaspora diplomacy is a relatively new phenomenon (Rana, 2013). Kishan Rana described diaspora diplomacy as "engaging a country's overseas community to contribute to building relationships with foreign countries" (2013, p. 70). Not all diaspora engagement with their homelands is necessarily be positive. Brinkerhoff

(2004) argues that in some situations of conflict, diasporas may raise funds to prolong disputes, even when their homelands are willing to negotiate. However, in general it is widely accepted that diasporas play a constructive role in national development. In addition to economic remissions, countries reach out to diaspora because of their potential political capital to help advance a country's agenda (Rana, 2013). Bravo (2012) says the economic clout of the diaspora played an important role in driving El Salvador and Costa Rice to engage in public diplomacy through the social media. Sheng (2007) says there is growing evidence of Chinese diaspora's influence on the country's politics and foreign policy. He says the digital media allow Chinese diaspora to set aside its ethnic differences to come together to reinforce the concept of "big family" in cyberspace, thereby contributing to Chinese nationalistic discourse (p. 641).

The proliferation of digital technologies have facilitated communication between countries and their diaspora communication. Both use social media sites to engage with each other for a variety of reasons. Hiller and Franz (2004) say migrants use online network to develop new relationships in the host community; nourish old relationships in their homeland and rediscover lost ties in their homeland. Bernal (2006) and Graziano (2012) argue that social media play a cohesive role in bringing together diasporas from different parts of the world. Bravo (2012) explored how El Salvador employs an effective social media engagement strategy to build long-term relationship with its diaspora. Importantly, there is a growing realization among many countries that national image building should be an integral part of their foreign policies.

India, Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Diplomacy

India, with its 5,000-year-old history, has a wealth of soft power, including its diverse culture and democratic traditions (Thussu, 2014). However, for many years yet it didn't fully exploit its soft power to advance its foreign policy objectives. Hall (2012) argues that the India's renewed attention to public diplomacy has been fueled by its views of how China is using its soft power to exert its global influence. India is now attempting to make better use of its digital technology and soft power to influence and engage with its domestic and foreign publics (Hall, 2012). Hall (2012) identifies three key features that he says are hallmarks of India's "new public diplomacy" (p. 1090). First, India is actively looking for new audiences, including domestic populations in India and the diaspora in the West. Second, India seeks to inject transparency to its foreign policy-making process. Third, it wants to concentrate its efforts on new media sources relative to traditional media.

India set up its Public Diplomacy Division in 2006 but began its push into Web 2.0 in 2009 after its new chief, Navdeep Suri, took over the division in 2009. India launched its @IndianDiplomacy account on Twitter in July 2010, and soon followed it up with accounts in Facebook, YouTube and Blogspot using the same name. Suri (2011) identifies several initiatives that India took in the public diplomacy arena such. For instance, in 2010, it projected its soft power by organizing Indian film festivals in several countries, including Algeria, Mexico and Malaysia. Suri (2011) says India opened its "@Indiandiplomacy" Twitter account in July 2010, the first by any division of Government of India. Subsequently, the division debuted on Facebook, YouTube and Blogspot under the same name. Suri, who was the chief of the Public Diplomacy Division of India's Ministry of External

Affairs, says when the division launched its public diplomacy website on Oct. 20, 2010, it became the first government site in the country to use all of the Web 2.0 tools.

India's efforts to promote its soft power have been driven by perceptions within domestic policy makers that India has not sufficiently brought its soft power achievements to the public knowledge. To better disseminate the initiatives it has taken, India's public diplomacy efforts target both foreign publics and domestic publics (Hall, 2012). Suri (2011) too highlights the importance of more publicity of India's achievements to counter any negative discourse about the country.

Over the past several years, as India has boosted its public diplomacy efforts to foreign publics, it has also reached out more to its diaspora. This outreach to the diaspora underscores the increased importance of diaspora in fulfilling its foreign policy objectives. Several Indian politicians have publicly acknowledged that Indian diaspora living in the U.S. played a pivotal role in the Indo-U.S. 2005 nuclear agreement (Sasikumar, 2007). Griffen (2011) provides an example of how Indian officials used Twitter to provide real-time information to Indian officials about the situation during the 2011 Libyan crisis, providing an option for the Indian government to send a ferry to pick up the stranded people. In an effort to reach out to its diaspora, India has invested heavily in social media, opening Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Flickr accounts (Hall, 2012; Suri, 2011) and refreshed its government websites. Because these websites are points of first-contact for the government with the India diaspora it is important to assess their effectiveness. One possible lens for assessing these sites is the Cowan and Arsenault (2003) model.

Theoretical Framework

Cowan and Arsenault (2008) suggested that public diplomacy practitioners should think of public diplomacy in three layers: monologue or unidirectional information flow; dialogue or flow of information in multiple directions; and collaboration based on cooperation and partnership with targeted audiences. Each layer has its strengths, and practitioners must know when to use which one for effective outcomes. For instance, a well-crafted speech for monologue could evoke strong emotions; a thoughtful dialogue could lead to mutual understanding; and a productive collaboration could lead to lasting trust and respect (Cowan & Arsenault, 2008).

The three layers of public diplomacy can be enhanced by putting them into practice with new digital media, or the so-called Web 2.0 (Arsenault, 2009). Monologue, or one-way communication is used to either enhance their image or the credibility of messages. For the monologue layer, it appears that many countries continue to rely on read-only websites and other similar digital media resources in pursuit of their public diplomacy efforts. Sheng (2007) says the Chinese government has greatly expanded its virtual territory, including launching websites targeted at diasporas.

Though India is a late entrant to public diplomacy, it understands the need to enhance its image through one-way communication channels. In 2002, India launched its most visible advertising campaign, called Incredible India, in a bid to promote the country as a tourist destination. Some believe the one-way communication plan has been a success, raising India's profile as a desirable tourist destination (Kerrigan, Shivanadam & Hede, 2012; and Suri, 2011). In recent times, the Public Diplomacy Division of India's Ministry of External Affairs has made

some advances, posting on its website text and video files of topmost news from India that can be downloaded and used freely (Public Diplomacy Division [PDD], 2013).

In turning to the dialogue layer, advances in communication technologies, including social media technologies, now provide greater opportunities for national governments to engage in dialogue with their diasporas. For instance, El Salvador's Ministry of Foreign Affairs uses its website, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to engage in two-way communication with its diaspora (Bravo, 2012). India's Public Diplomacy Division understands the importance of dialogue, noting on its website that public diplomacy "goes beyond unidirectional communication; it is also about listening to a range of actors. Successful public diplomacy involves an active engagement with the public in a manner that builds, over a period of time, a relationship of trust and credibility." In September 2011, it launched a contest called "India is" global video challenge (http://www.youtube.com/realindiais). The government invited people from across the world to create a three-minute video about India based on their perceptions and experiences. The competition received 245 entries from 40 countries, out which seven short films were declared winners.

Cowan and Arsenault (2008) argue that the third layer of public diplomacy, collaboration, provides the strongest opportunity for relationship building. According to them, collaboration between national governments and foreign publics strengthens trust and credibility, which is sustained even if policies aren't popular.

In the digital media, online collaboration replicates face-to-face interaction. For instance, several national governments have established a presence in Second Life, a three-dimensional online virtual world to reach out to the foreign publics

(Arsenault, 2009). Brain circulation is another example of collaborative cooperation between nations and diasporas. Brain circulation is a mechanism of cooperation in which highly skilled people who left their native countries can contribute for the development of their homelands – while they are still in their host countries (Pellegrino, 2002). In other words, talent goes out of the homeland but knowledge circulates back to the homeland, ensuring a win-win situation for the host country as well as for the country that lost the talent.

Studies show that China (Sheng, 2007), Costa Rica (Bravo, 2012) and India (2011) all use brain circulation in varying degrees in their collaborative efforts. Bravo (2012) says Costa Rica successfully created an online network of Costa Rican scientists living within and outside the country. The aim of the social media engagement in the project with the scientists was not aimed at preventing brain drain – or loss of skilled human power – but is aimed at for mutual advancement. Collaboration can also be seen in Brinkerhoff's (2004, 2005) studies in Afghanistan and Egypt, respectively. She says diasporas of the two countries used online social media interaction and supplemented it with offline official support from local government officials.

Although the layers of Cowan and Arsenault (2008) PD model provide insight in how some countries are using social media to engage with foreign publics, few studies focus on diaspora engagement, including specifically on India diaspora. This study seeks to fill that gap by using the three-layered model to analyze the digital strategies that India is using as part of its diaspora diplomacy.

Methodology

This paper uses a case study to examine how India conducts its public diplomacy, using a frontline website of an Indian public-private partnership targeted to its diaspora. Yin (1989) defines case study as an empirical research in which a phenomenon is studied within its real-life context. The case study approach also provides a wealth of details and information about the research topic (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

The website of Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC), www.oifc.in, was selected as the specific case study. The OIFC, with its headquarters Gurgaon, Haryana, near New Delhi, was set up in 2007 with the aim of expanding economic engagement between Indian diaspora and India. In addition to containing rich detail for the case study method, the OIFC was selected for several reasons related to India's goal of engaging its diaspora. First, a review of Indian government-associated sites suggests that the OIFC site showcases the best effort of a state and non-state public diplomacy partnership. Second, while other Indian government-related sites such as its Public Diplomacy Division focus on foreign publics, the OIFC site appears to be the only website that is heavily targeted to diasporic audiences. Third, the OIFC site incorporates multiple and varied forms of digital platforms which was important for analyzing the three-layered dimensions of the Cowan and Arsenault's (2008) framework.

An analysis of a frontline website of an Indian government venture to see if it adheres to best practices in social media will help provide a snapshot of India's digital communication efforts. Though a website is not intrinsically a social media space, it can include social media elements such as live chat or spaces where the diaspora and state officials can share content (Bravo, 2012).

Operationalizing the Three-Layers of PD for Digital Strategies

In order to analyze the OCIC website, the method sought to operationalize the three layers of Cowan and Arsenault's (2008) theoretical framework – monologue, dialogue and collaboration – by identifying corresponding social media components.

Monologue

The first layer, monologic communication, allows for very little or limited ability for audience participation. For instance, electronic newsletters do not allow users to alter their content. According to Cowan and Arsenault (2008), the fundamental function is to convey an idea or perspective to the audience. In other words, one-way communication can be considered to involve knowledge transfer. Examples of monologic communication in digital media:

1. Speeches

2. Newspaper articles/Online magazine

3. Press releases

4. Factsheets and brochures

5. Quick Response, or QR, codes

6. Videos, or vodcast

7. Audio postings, or podcast

Though largely informational, these monologic communication channels, may sometimes use a combination of Web 2.0 features (Arsenault, 2009). For instance, an online magazine will have space for readers to write back with comments.

Dialogue

The dialogic component of Cowan and Arsenault's (2008) theoretical is based on two-way or multi-directional communication. Taylor, Kent and White (2001) say the most important feature of a dialogic website is the inclusion of interactivity. Sites that include dialogic loops offer visitors a mechanism to respond. Taylor, Kent and White (2001) say that to be a truly dialogic website, the organization must follow through with the two-way conversation by responding to the comments from visitors. Kent and Taylor (1998) say dialogue should not be the means to an end but should be seen as the end in itself, with the aim of forming a relationship. Moreover, Cowan and Arsenault (2008) say dialogue should primarily be seen as a method for improving relationships, not necessarily for reaching an agreement or winning a debate. The two scholars say the basis for such a relationship is in listening, ensuring that the public knows its voice is being heard and that they have a voice. This study suggests that another way to look at dialogic communication is to see it as a mechanism for knowledge sharing. Examples of dialogic communication in digital media are:

1. Live chats

2. Surveys

3. Facebook

4. Twitter

5. LinkedIn

6. Comments/Feedback

7. Skype, which allows audio, video and instant messaging options

Collaboration

According to Cowan and Arsenault (2008), collaboration as part of public diplomacy may refer to joint projects or achievements of common outcomes, with participation of people from different countries. The digital media component of collaboration can typically be identified by looking for evidence of diaspora-homeland participation in projects in homelands. These projects could involve intangible projects such as joint creation of a microfinance model or tangible outcomes such as production of a solar microwave.

While both dialogue and collaboration focus on relationship building, Cowan and Arsenault's study does not sufficiently distinguish between dialogue and collaboration in a social media setting. For example, in a hypothetical scenario, two participants from different countries share ideas and information on a social media site for an easily identifiable goal – writing a music piece. After a period of dialogue one person withdraws and the remaining person uses the ideas gleaned from the discussion, and improvises on it to create the music piece, retaining sole ownership.

Collaborative digital initiatives have several features that can extend dialogical strategies beyond relationship-building and knowledge sharing. First is ownership. Fisher (2013) argued that ownership is one of the important factors that influence collaborative public diplomacy. This research posits that for genuine collaboration to take place, joint ownership of the end product or project is necessary. In other words, the two parties must actively participate and influence the production process, while retaining equal ownership.

Second is knowledge creation. Zaharna (2013, 2014) highlighted the importance of new knowledge and innovation as distinctive features of

collaboration. The parties do not simply exchange information, they generate knowledge. This study believes that "new knowledge" that resulted from the association should form the basis of recognizing a project as collaboration in an online environment.

Third is relationship transformation. Cowan and Arsenault (2008) argued that collaboration could result in more lasting relationships, with participants "forever bound" by their common experience (p. 21). This research posits that relationships, however strong, could dissipate over time, hence an effective measurement of collaborative project is "relationship transformation." They each have produced new knowledge that neither could have produced alone or separately. That awareness of their contribution to the project, the joint ownership and new knowledge that has been created has pushed the relationship to a new level, not binding the participants, but "transforming" them forever.

An example of evidence of collaboration on a website is the presence of three-dimensional virtual worlds such as Second Life (Arsenault, 2009). In Second Life, users create avatars for online interaction that includes replicating real-life cultures, customs and real estate. All dimensions of face-to-face interaction in a real world are now replicated in a virtual world (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009). A variation of this collaborative effort is brain circulation. Costa Rica's online network of scientists, the Ticotal, allows scientists in Costa Rica to collaborate with diaspora scientists, while they are still in their host countries.

The next section uses these social media data from the OIFC website were tabulated in the results section to analyze the site.

Results

The Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre unveiled its website in the same year the organization was launched, in 2007 (*Times of India*, 2007). The state and non-state joint venture sought to pool the resources of both the partners in a bid to expand Indian diaspora's economic engagement with its homeland. The governing council is made up of members drawn from the Indian government, Indian industry and members of Indian diaspora.

The site http://www.oifc.in/ is information rich, with details about OIFC, investing in India, networking resources, frequently asked questions and answers. The "home page" has links to at least four other social media sites. The site has Indian stock market information, an exchange rate converter, news updates focused on business, finance and immigration. A quick response, or QR, code for reading on mobile devices, which was available in 2013, does not appear now. The home page has several tabs, including on doing business in India and various sectors in India where opportunities for investment and collaboration exist. The site's contents were analyzed by the operationalized digital strategies corresponding to the three-layer model proposed by Cowan and Arsenault (2008).

Monologue

The website shows heavy evidence of one-way communication layer. It has a newsroom with press releases, diaspora news and media kit with information that can be downloaded by visitors to the site. The press releases (http://www.oifc.in/Newsroom/Press-Releases) cover a gamut of financial and business information that could be of interest to the diaspora. For example, the press release from Feb. 23, 2013, links to an article from *Chandrajit Banerjee*, the

chief of Confederation of Indian Industry. In that piece he urges the Indian government to introduce in its budget a bill to increase transparency in real estate deals to protect diaspora. The article was written five days before the Indian finance minister presented the budget for 2013-2014 in the Indian Parliament, indicating the owners of the site understand the timeliness of providing information.

In 2013, the site had a tab for "diaspora," which now has been removed, with the diaspora information now clubbed under the original "resources" tab. "Facts on diaspora" provides general information such as its numbers and its dispersion. The site notes that about 950,000 unique visitors visited the site since its launch in 2007 (as of April 17, 2013). As of that date, people from 189 countries were registered on the site.

The diaspora tab also provides details of investment opportunities that are available only to persons of Indian origin and certain other diaspora members. It outlines which sectors these diaspora members may invest and how they can repatriate their earnings, for instance from investments in real estate (http://www.oifc.in/investment-real-estate-overview).

The site, which showed evidence of customization of digital information in the form of a QR code in 2013, does not carry that anymore. Arsenault (2009) says public diplomacy experts must create more than one digital channel to reach out to the targeted populations to better disseminate information.

Dialogue

The OIFC's website included dialogic elements that facilitate two-way communication with Indian diaspora. These elements include "ask an expert" section, and links to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube accounts. The

Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/OIFC.IN) is informative, updated regularly and includes photographs to attract visitors, and interactive features such as polls and quizzes to engage them, so visitors spend more time on the page. For example, on its Facebook page, the OIFC conducted an interactive quiz "Know your India Quotient" and announced the results earlier this month, which led to 186 "Likes" as of April 23, 2013. Overall, the Facebook page had garnered 92, 953 Likes as of that date. This study chose a random time, April 1 and April 23, 2013, to analyze the postings. It found that though most of the postings by OIFC elicited cumulatively thousands of Likes, but very few comments. The OIFC doesn't appear to have posted any follow-up comments.

The site's Twitter link (https://twitter.com/@OIFCIndia) shows that from April 1 to April 23, 2013, the OIFC tweeted 23 times, averaging one tweet a day. There were four "retweets" and one tweet marked as "favorite" for that period, indicating practically little engagement with the publics. There were 681 followers as of May 1, 2013.

Under its "Ask an expert" section (http://www.oifc.in/ask-an-expert), the OIFC uses two-way communication channel to link visitors to its website to various partners. Out of a total of 28 states and seven Union Territories (or federal territories) in India, 12 states had agreed to provide state-specific investment information for diaspora members as of April 2013.

Collaboration

The OIFC site shows evidence of brain circulation efforts. Twelve states in India now partner with OIFC in offering services to diaspora to help them set up projects in those states. Diaspora members can collaborate in sectors such as

infrastructure, agriculture and energy. A document

(http://www.oifc.in/Uploads/MediaTypes/Documents/RFP-for-oifc-website-

management.pdf) on the site says as of April 2013, the OIFC has promoted more

than 1,000 state-level public-private partnerships. In addition, the OIFC's home

page has a link to a site called Global INK

(http://moia.gov.in/services.aspx?id1=289&idp=289&mainid=196), a network that

draws on the expertise and knowledge of the Indian diaspora and foreign publics in

areas such as environment, healthcare and science technology, without the need for

bringing the experts back to India. Both of these are examples of the collaborative

layer, the third layer suggested by Cowan and Arsenault (2008).

The collaborative projects on the Global Ink website, as of 2013, were by

invitation only. Visitors could register at the site but site owners invite selected

people. However, this research evaluated the "discussion forum," a two-way

communication channel, on the Global Ink website. As of April 23, 2013, there

were four categories for discussion: Environment, Healthcare, Innovations, and

Science and Technology. Of those, two categories showed evidence of activity.

There were a total of four threads from Sept. 27, 2012, to Feb. 4, 2013, with three

of the threads initiated by the same person on the same day, Feb. 4. The threads had

not elicited any response as of the study date.

Table 1: Digital Media Components

Digital media components of Cowan and Arsenault's (2008) three-layers of public diplomacy:

Three Layers of Public Diplomacy	Digital component	OIFC website
Monologue:	Posted press releases	Yes, newsroom site with press releases

• One-way communication • No implied relationship • Knowledge transfer • Little scope for change in content	Newsletters/brochures	Yes, IndiaConnect, a monthly newsletter on the current investment opportunities and trends in India
	Podcast (audio)	No
	Vodcast (video)	No
	QR (Quick Response) codes – for mobile platforms	Yes
	News update (tie-up with Indian newspaper Economic Times)	Yes
	Events/Announcements	Yes
Dialogue: • Two- or multi-directional communication • Knowledge sharing • Relationship building	Survey	Yes
	Live chat	Yes
	Ask the expert	Yes
	Contact us	Yes
	Facebook	Yes
	Twitter	Yes
	LinkedIn	Yes
	Comments/Feedback	Yes
Collaboration • Two- or multi-directional communication (inherent) • Project ownership • Knowledge generation • Relationship transformation	3D virtual world (e.g. Second Life)	No
	Brain circulation	Yes. OIFC network groups https://www/globalink.in/

Section V: Discussion & Conclusion

As can be seen from application of the operationalized Cowan and Arsenault (2008) model for digital strategies, the OIFC site fits into that narrative of monologic, or one-way communication. The website is heavily geared toward disseminating information to the diaspora through newsletters, press releases, brochures and publications. Newsletters, for instance, provide news and business that could potentially be of interest to the diasporas, such as immigration, visas, taxes, and financial information.

Cowan and Arsenault (2008) argue that dialogic communication often times is a better option to improve relationships. In the context of India, there are few studies that examine India's dialogic communication efforts. Hall's (2012) research focuses on India's one-way communication efforts, while Suri (2011) concentrates on India's image-building efforts. The OIFC's website incorporates elements of dialogic communication but it does not show evidence of genuine two-way conversation. Moreover, the quality of relationship with readers in communication is often more important than the quantity of readers. It is in here that the OIFC exhibits its shortcomings. OIFC's Facebook page, for instance, indicates that "Likes" outnumber comments by a massive margin in the study timeframe, indicating that readers are endorsing what are they are seeing but are not motivated sufficiently to leave comments. As a result, there is little incentive for the people behind the OIFC Facebook to post follow-up comments or engage sufficiently with the visitors. Hence, the interaction is not geared toward two-way communication but the means to an undefined goal. This strategy is in contrast to Arsenault's

(2009) argument that "the benefits of dialogue are most pronounced when communicative interaction is the goal, not a means to an end" (p. 147).

Two-way engagement also appears to be weak on various discussion forums of the OIFC site and at the collaborative site, Global INK, as of May 2013. Some of the topics have no postings, and even if there are postings, discussions or comments are rare. Madhur Kotoky, writer for the well-known Public Diplomacy Blog, wonders whether any "discussions [are] happening in the forum" (personal communication, April 23, 2013). The core of India's efforts is apparently aimed at providing information rather taking a relational approach in public diplomacy. Relational approach involves the ability to listen to what the publics have to offer, engage with them to identify mutual interests and develop confidence-building measures to further strengthen relations (Zaharna, Arsenault & Fisher, 2013).

The roots of this hesitation to engage in genuine two-way communication could perhaps lie in the bureaucratic set up of India. Guidelines issued to Indian officials handling social media postings are that the postings should be non-political, with the intent of using various social media sites as tools to deploy Indian soft power (Suri in Griffen, 2011). That suggests the bureaucratic-heavy Indian government believes that an external authority can only bring about changes within the targeted publics.

Yet such control may be the opposite of what is needed for collaborative public diplomacy. According to Fisher (2013), the idea of an all-powerful external authority greatly underestimates the power of people within the targeted publics. Fisher says future public diplomats will have to grapple with the challenge of how to influence people through collaboration. Fisher suggests public diplomats should identify key focal points where groups of people aggregate, and use facilitative

tools to collaborate with each other. The aim is not to tell the publics what needs to be done but to identify how to collaborate with these groups in a manner that provides the greatest benefit to them, according to Fisher (2013). Zaharna (2014) argues that when the targeted publics are motivated to become stakeholders, they acquire the feeling of ownership of the project and rededicate themselves with greater enthusiasm, further strengthening the relationship.
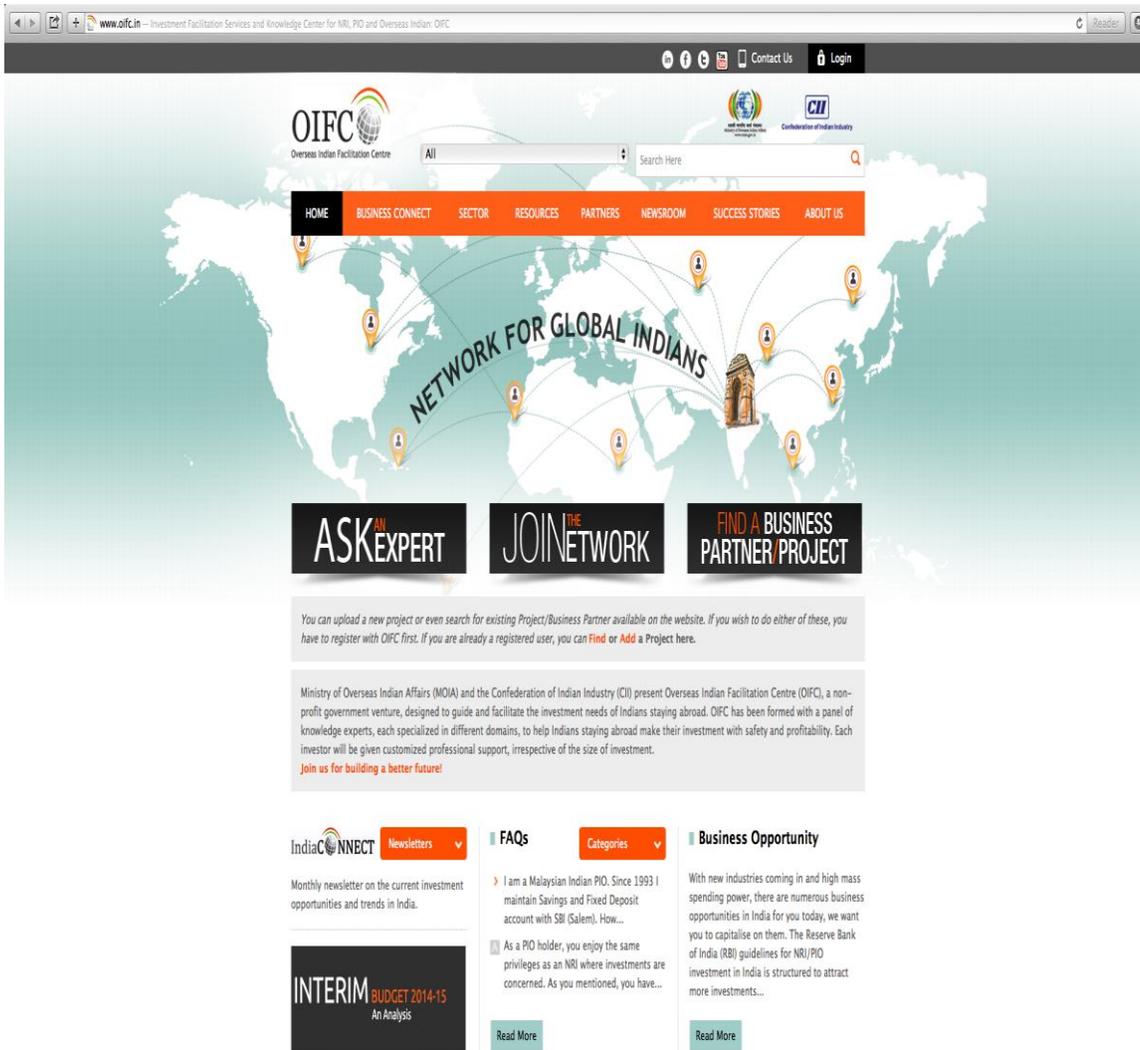
India potentially needs to redefine its social media strategy, so it can reach those people who it believes can best project India's interests and move from dialogic to collaborative communication. Brinkerhoff's (2004, 2005) studies in Afghanistan and Egypt, respectively, show that collaborative efforts of diasporas can yield positive results in their homelands. In India, collaborative efforts by OIFC seem to have yielded results, with more than 1,000 projects in 12 states in India that are partnering with OIFC.

Finally, this study has sought to distinguish between dialogical and collaborative strategies for digital media. Both are two-way and easily distinguished from one-way monological communication. However, dialogic features knowledge sharing and relationship-building, while collaborative features project ownership, which leads to knowledge creation and relationship transformation.

India could gain from a frank assessment of the country's dialogic engagement with its diaspora. As Cowan and Arsenault (2008) note, evidence that a nation allows dissension could be one of the most effective tools in the public diplomacy toolkit. India could consider encouraging genuine two-way dialogue with a focus on collaborative efforts in ways that benefit the publics because it

would help bring in sync the country's public diplomacy efforts and its democratic

principles.

Screenshot of OIFC in 2014

Screenshot of OIFC in 2013

References

Arsenault, A. (2009). Public Diplomacy 2.0 (Eds.), In *Toward a New Public Diplomacy: Redirecting U.S. Foreign Policy* (135-153). New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Bravo, V. (2012). Engaging the Diaspora: El Salvador and Costa Rica's Use of Social Media to Connect with their Diaspora Communities in the United States. *Global Media Journal*, Fall, 1-19.

Brinkerhoff, J. M. (2012). Creating an Enabling Environment for Diasporas' Participation in Homeland Development. *International Migration*, *50*(1), 75–95.

Brinkerhoff, J. M. (2004). Digital Diasporas and International Development: Afghan-Americans and the Reconstruction of Afghanistan. *Public Administration and Development*, *24*, 397-413.

Brinkerhoff, J. M. (2005). Digital Diaspora and Governance in Semi-Authoritarian States: The Case of the Egyptian Copts. *Public Administration and Development, 25*, 193-204.

Cowan, G., and Arsenault, A. (2008). Moving from Monologue to Dialogue to Collaboration: The Three Layers of Public Diplomacy. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616, 10-30.

Fisher, A. (2013). Collaborative Public Diplomacy. (Palgrave).

International Organization for Migration (2013). Facts and figures. http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/about-migration/facts--figures-1.html. Accessed April 29, 2013.

Kaplan, A.M., Haenlein, M., (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, *53*(1), 59–68.

Kerrigan, F., Shivanandan, J., & Hede, A. M. (2012). Nation Branding A Critical Appraisal of Incredible India. *Journal of Macromarketing*, *32*(3), 319-327.

Kent, M.L., Taylor, M. (1998). Building dialogic relationships through the World Wide Web. *Public Relations Review 24* (3), 321-334

Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (2013). http://moia.gov.in/writereaddata/pdf/NRISPIOS-Data%2815-06-12%29new.pdf. Accessed on May 3, 2013.

Rana, K. (2013). Diaspora Diplomacy and Public Diplomacy. In Zaharna, R. S., Arsenault, A., & Fisher, A. (Eds.) *Relational, Networked, and Collaborative Approaches to Public Diplomacy: The Connective Mindset* (pp. 70-84). New York: Routledge.

Sasikumar, K. (2007) India's Emergence as a "Responsible" Nuclear Power. *International Journal*, *62*(4), India Emerging: Strength and Challenge (Autumn), 825-844.

Suri, N. (2011). Public Diplomacy in India's Foreign Policy. *Strategic Analysis*, *35*(2), 297-303.

Taylor, M., Kent, M.L., & White, W.J. (2001). How activist organizations are using the Internet to build relationships. *Public Relations Review*, *27*(3), 263-284.

Thussu, D. K. (2014). Communicating India's Soft Power: Buddha to Bollywood. (Palgrave).

Times of India, May 27, 2007. NRIs Just Click to Access India. http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/NRIs-now-just-click-to-access-India/articleshow/2080144.cms? Accessed on April 18, 2013.

Wimmer, D. R, Dominick, R. J. (2011). Qualitative Research Methods. Mass Media Research: An Introduction. 9th Ed., 114-154.

Yin, R. (1989). Case study research (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Zaharna, R. S., Arsenault, A., & Fisher, A. (2013). Introduction. In Zaharna, R. S., Arsenault, A., & Fisher, A. (Eds.) *Relational, Networked, and Collaborative Approaches to Public Diplomacy: The Connective Mindset* (1-14). New York: Routledge.

Zaharna, R. S. (2014). China's Confucius Institutes: Understanding the Relational Structure and Relational Dynamics of Network Collaboration. In Jain Wang (Ed.) *China's Rising Soft Power: The Confucius Institutes* (forthcoming).