

Blending the Professional and the Personal.

How Personalization affects the Public's Response

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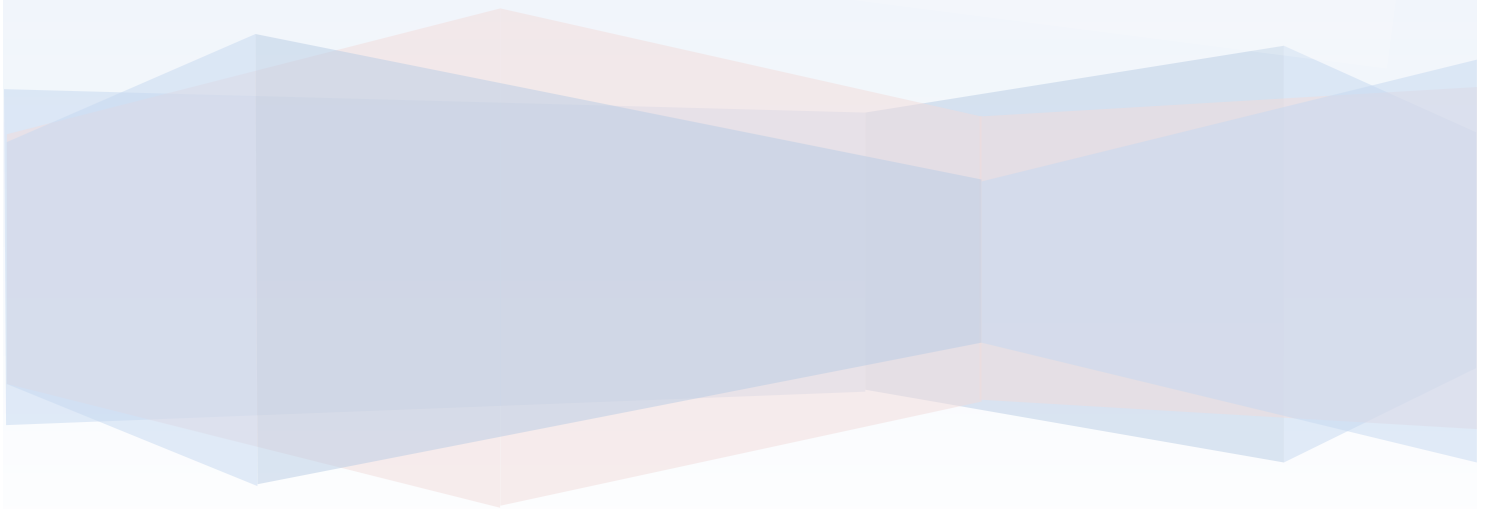
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Abstract

The first decades of the 21st century have been characterized by the immense expansion of the Internet and its users. This immense expansion has connected people all over the globe through social networking sites. Social networking sites have provided diplomats the opportunity to contact their audience directly, without the interference of traditional media channels. The audience's response to diplomatic messages on social networking sites is crucial for diplomats as diplomats try to influence their audience and monitor potential changes throughout society. Previous research has concentrated on the audience's response to the use of social networking sites by politicians. This research, in contrast, has focused on the impact of diplomatic messages; focusing in particular on the effects that personalisation of messages has on the audience's response. In this research I argue that personalisation of messages has a positive effect on the response received by the diplomat's audience. This positive effect of personalisation is the result of a more 'personal' and 'face to face' exchange. I compare the audience's response to personalised and non-personalised messages on Twitter of the US ambassador to the UK, Matthew Barzun. The data suggests that tweets containing forms of personalisation receive a better response compared to non-personalised tweets, and difference in response also exists between the different forms of personalisation.

Table of Contents

<i>Introduction.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Social Networking Sites as Generator of Soft Power.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>The Audience's Response.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Personalization.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Twitter.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Research Design and Methodology.....</i>	<i>11-18</i>
<i>Case Selection.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Operationalization of Variables.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Data Collection.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Independent T-Test, ANOVA and Variables</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Findings.....</i>	<i>18-21</i>
<i>Difference in Response: Likes & Response Tone Score.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Difference in Response: Forms of Personalization.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Discussion.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Literature.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Codebook.....</i>	<i>27</i>

Introduction

The field of diplomacy has not let the growing importance of social networking sites (SNSs) go unnoticed. In 2015, 2.3 billion people worldwide had an account connected to a form of social media (Statista, 2016). These networks range from the biggest social media platform, Facebook, to the biggest micro blogging platform, Twitter and others like Sina Weibo, a form of Twitter for the Chinese public as numerous western social media platforms are banned in China. The enormous growth of these social media networks provides a platform for head of states, ministers, ministries, embassies and diplomats to reach out to their audience in a more direct way, instead of communicating with their audience through old traditional media channels such as television, newspapers and other media sources. Social networking sites provide a more direct form of communication, without a middleman. Before the use of social media, diplomats and politicians had to pass through a middleman to communicate with their audience. For diplomats this was even more difficult than for politicians, as diplomats had to go through foreign media channels to communicate with their audience. With the rise of social networking sites, diplomats and politicians are able to communicate directly at a low cost and effort (Waters & Williams, 2011).

Twitter has become the norm as the microblog platform worldwide, with over 300 million users worldwide (<http://www.statista.com/statistics/282087/number-of-monthly-active-twitter-users/>). The growth and potential of the microblog network has not passed unnoticed by state officials. A survey from the Digital Policy Council (2012) shows an impressive growth in the presence of head of states on Twitter. In 2012, 123 head of states, which are recognized by the UN, had an official Twitter account. This is close to a 100 per cent increase from 2011, when *only* 69 head of states had an official Twitter account. Especially in Western democracies, the use of Twitter by state officials and diplomats has become the norm. In Europe, 100 per cent of governments had a Twitter presence in 2013 (Tutt, 2013). The United States has an active Twitter presence in over 90 different states (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ode/socialmedia>). The immense growth of the use of Twitter by state officials and diplomats has inspired this research to focus on the strategic use of this communication tool by diplomats.

Since the millennium, more and more time has been dedicated towards research on the role that social network sites play in our daily life. As social network sites are a

relatively new phenomenon for politicians and diplomats, most learning has been done by trial and error (Bjola & Holmes, 2015). Through failures and misconduct on social networking sites by politicians and diplomats, lessons were learned on how to behave on social mediums, in which mistakes are irreversible. Diplomats and politicians that have proven to be successful on social networking sites on the other hand have set the groundwork for researchers to look into the different effects messages have on the response from the audience.

Although the use of social media has become ever more important for politicians and diplomats, little research has been done on how politicians or diplomats can adapt their messages on social media to maximize their impact on the audience. By examining when and how the audience responds positively to diplomatic messages on Twitter, I will try to make a contribution to the empirical literature on the use of social media by diplomats.

Diplomats communicate continuously with the media to inform their audience, the state's residents. Whilst communicating, cultural- and language-barriers should be taken into account. Communication between diplomats and a foreign audience is complicated by cultural-barriers. Cultures are reflected in values, standards and practices. These values and standards are difficult to change and are entrenched in our societies (David & Fahey, 2000, 115). To optimize their contact with their audience, diplomats are likely to make use of communication strategies. This research will focus on whether these strategies affect the public's response.

Personalization of messages on social media networks is one of the crucial steps that diplomats have to take to reach out in a constructive way with their audience. The growing importance of personalization falls within a broader trend in politics, in which individuals play an ever-bigger role. Van Aelst (2012, 205) argues that a shift has taken place in Western democracies, from party to candidate-centered politics. This trend, in which individuals play a more centralized role, has also reached the diplomatic field. Personalization of political actors across all forms of media has become crucial for the audience to build a cognitive relation with the content of the message (Lee & Oh, 2012, 935). Besides, personalization helps to create a more vivid, face to face like conversation (Lee & Oh, 2012, 935).

Clearly visible on social networking sites, is the rise of individual Twitter accounts of diplomats. More and more often, ambassadors and other diplomats make

use of their own personal Twitter accounts to connect with their audience, instead of using an official Twitter account of the embassy. To connect in the most constructive way with their audience, diplomats make use of the same strategies that politicians have been using on Twitter: personalization. Research done by Lee and Oh (2012), indicated a positive effect to the use of personalization by politicians during election campaigns. The same effect has yet to be found within the diplomatic field.

RQ: Does personalization of diplomatic messages on Twitter affect the response of the public?

Social Networking Sites as Generator of Soft Power

Social media sites have grown exponentially and now provide governments with a game-changing tool to influence foreign public in a manner that suits its national interest. This is visible through the reach of The State Department's social media channels, that influences 8 million people directly (Hanson 2012b, 17). States all over the globe have noticed the growing importance and influence that a presence on social media can provide. This growing influence of social media in international politics goes hand in hand with the spread of soft power. Joseph Nye conceptualized soft power as, "the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment" (Nye, 2008, 94). The Cold War, a critical juncture, resulted in states preferring the use of soft power instead of persuading other states by military or economic coercion (Nye, 1990, 176).

Public diplomacy plays a crucial role in this new era, in which soft power is of greater importance. Diplomats communicate in strategic and direct manners with the general public. This shift, from back-room negotiations to direct-communication with the general public is key for public diplomacy (Bjola & Holmes, 2015, 36). Diplomats seek to influence the public's opinion, well knowing that this may have an impact on foreign policies in the future.

The importance of this form of power has only increased with the growth of technology. Digital diplomacy is seen as the digital form of public diplomacy, connecting diplomats with the general public through digital means. The exponential growth of social media has brought the opportunity for diplomats to communicate with previously unimaginable audiences through digital channels (Bjola & Holmes, 2015, 39). Diplomats

practice a form of knowledge management through digital channels. Cull argues that diplomats practice a form of knowledge management through digital channels by “Influencing foreign publics through the capturing, developing and sharing of information without interference from the old vertical process by which information flowed down from traditional sources of media authority” (2013, 136). These traditional sources of media, state led television or newspapers, can be seen as gatekeepers, that could possibly interfere or manipulate the original message (Hanson 2012b, 17). Russia’s media channel RT is a great example of such a gatekeeper. Numerous times Russia’s media channels, which have a close tie to the government, manipulated information or misinformed their audience in respect to European or US foreign policy (Lipman, 2009). Bypassing these gatekeepers is critical for public diplomacy strategies to work.

This ability, to influence foreign public directly through the Internet, provides a whole new dimension to public diplomacy: digital diplomacy. By utilizing ICTs or digital diplomacy strategies, government officials are able to produce and disseminate knowledge that helps to further state interests (Bjola & Holmes 2015, 18). Social media have proven to be tools of immeasurable value for MFAs and diplomats to communicate with their audience directly, without interference of state led media. Former US ambassador to Russia, Michael McFaul, has been successful in providing a counter narrative to Russian state lead media through his microblog on Twitter (Bjola & Holmes 2015, 43). When Obama refused to meet with Putin at the UN General Assembly in New York after the “News of the Week show” on Russian TV compared the US president to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, McFaul Tweeted: “Putin’s television compares Obama to ISIS leader but Russians wonder why Obama is not so eager to meet Putin at UNGA”.

The Audience's Response

The digital aspect of diplomacy changed the way states practice diplomacy in a tremendous manner. As discussed above, diplomacy changed from back room negotiations to openly communicating with, and trying to influence, the public. The public's response to digital diplomacy plays a crucial, and often neglected, role. A diplomat argues that Twitter is "more about listening than talking" (Bjola & Holmes, 2015, 27). Response is crucial for diplomats, as the response to digital diplomacy is a good representation of public opinion. By analysing the response to diplomatic messages, diplomats are able to listen how various constituencies feel about particular issues and monitor potential changes throughout society (Bjola & Holmes, 2015, 27). Tom Fletcher elaborates on the importance of monitoring foreign public opinion through the use of digital diplomacy: "Would we have been better prepared for the Arab spring if we had discovered the hashtag #Tahrir earlier?" (*The Economist*, 2012). By keeping track of the public's opinion, influencing them becomes easier for diplomats.

Any form of digital diplomacy seeks to maximize the positive response to diplomatic messages. A positive response to diplomatic messages indicates that the audience is in agreement with the diplomat, whilst negative response is more likely to indicate a disagreement between the diplomat and the public. Although previous research has been done already on the use of social media networks by politicians and diplomats, little time has been dedicated in the search to what causes the public to react in either *positive* or *negative* manner.

A possible explanation for positive response is what psychologists call: *confirmation bias*. Confirmation bias indicates our human tendency to search and approve information that confirms our existing opinions, and avoid information that counters it (Festinger, 1962). As a result, when the content in a message is similar to that of the respondent's beliefs, the response is more likely to be positive. For digital diplomacy to influence the public opinion, influence has to be exerted over the non like-minded public, making confirmation bias of little use for diplomats, as non like-minded people are more likely to avoid the diplomat's messages. This study will focus on the influence that personalization of diplomatic messages has on the public's response.

Personalization

Personalization is the shift that has taken place in the media landscape, which causes the focus to lie on the individual instead of political party or organization (Van Aelst et al, 2012, p. 206). Personalization, and thus the shift that has taken place, is the result of technological advancements. With the invention of television, Internet, and the visual nature of these mediums, the focus on personalities and the personal lives of these individuals has risen (Peri, 2004). This growing demand for personalized relations with politicians and diplomats has put the use of social media in the heart of political and diplomatic organizations (Bennett & Segerberg, 2011, 771). As politicians and diplomats communicate directly with the public through social networking sites, the focus on the individual is likely to grow even further.

Personalization has been conceptualized in diverse manners in the theoretical literature. Although conceptualizations differ throughout the literature, most of them include the shift that has taken place in the public's interest from institutions and parties to individual competence and private life (Kruikemeier et al, 2013, 54). As the conceptualizations vary greatly in the theoretical literature, I will use a broad conceptualization including various aspects of personalization, which are discussed below. Personalization includes *privatization*, *illustrative cases*, *first person addressing* and *encouraging the public to remember similar experiences*.

Privatization indicates a blur, through which less and less distinction is made between the personal life and professional occupation of an individual. This form of personalization has been referred to in various different ways in the literature of personalization. (Van Aelst et al, 2012) make use of the term *privatization*, (Van Zoonen, 1991) refers to this phenomenon as *intimization* and (Langer, 2010) calls it *politicization of the private persona*.

Similar to this research, is the research done by Lee and Oh on the use of personalization by politicians and the audience's response to it. Lee and Oh set up a hypothesis to test the effects of personalization on the audience's response. Firstly, Lee and Oh argue that the use of *illustrative cases* is more likely to generate the public's attention and affection than blunt statistical information. By creating individual cases with specific episodic details, the audience is more likely to create a bond with the content (Lee & Oh, 2012). Personalized messages might be successful in generating the

public's interest as they create the illusion of intimacy, similar to *parasocial interaction (PSI)*, whereas the audience creates a type of friendship with media personalities. The results supported the hypothesis, stating that personalized messages facilitated more thorough cognitive processing than depersonalized messages (Lee & Oh, 2012, 939).

Besides the research done by Lee & Oh, other researchers have argued possible forms and effects of personalization. Warnick et al argue that the use of *first person addressing* in messages has a positive effect on the audience's response to the content (2005).

Encouraging the public to remember similar experiences is the last form of personalization in our conceptualization. By addressing people directly, the audience is encouraged to remember analogous experiences and thus are more likely to build a cognitive bond with the content (Warnick et al, 2005).

Generally speaking, these tactics of personalization on social media have a positive effect because they create a more 'personal' and 'face to face' exchange. This feeling of face-to-face conversation depends on numerous factors; familiarity with the medium, group identities and relational contexts (Lee & Oh, 2012, 935). The 'personal' and 'face-to-face' exchange creates a stronger perception of social presence (Kruikemeier et al, 2013, 55). As the audience experiences messages containing forms of personalization as more realistic and more personal, the response on these messages is likely to be positive compared to non-personalized messages.

Hypothesis: Tweets of official diplomatic accounts are more likely to evoke a positive response from a foreign audience, if a form of personalization is imposed in the Tweet.

Twitter

Twitter has become the most important social networking site for politicians and diplomats. The largest microblog network has grown to an immense popularity within ministries of foreign affairs and embassies all along the globe. Beijing remains the only G20 government without official representation on Twitter and of the 193 UN member countries, 86 per cent had a Twitter representation on March 2015 (Burson & Marsteller, 2015). Twitter is also the social media network where diplomats and ministries of foreign affairs are the most active on. This great activity on the social

medium is possibly the result of the time efficient characteristics of the medium. As messages are restricted to 140-characters, messages tend to be brief and straight to the point. These short bursts of information through the social networking site is what makes Twitter the most cost effective social medium for politicians and diplomats.

Twitter provides several mechanisms for its users to provide their opinion on one other's tweet. Retweeting is one of the most used mechanisms on Twitter, through which a user is able to repost another user's official original tweet without alteration and with a link to the original source. Besides basic retweeting, users are also capable of reposting another user's official original message with the option to add or delete parts of the original tweet; modified retweeting (Tromble, 2016). There are two different forms of direct contacting another user. Firstly users are able to @-mention another user on Twitter. This could be by mentioning another user within your own tweet. By @-replying, a user responds directly to one other's tweet (Tromble, 2016). The network also provides a "like" function. Similar to the Facebook 'like' function, it serves to support/approve or agree with a certain tweet. By liking a tweet, the tweet is directly saved under the category 'likes' of the user's homepage on Twitter.

Research Design and Methodology

Case Selection

The majority of studies on the use of social media by state's representatives have focussed on domestic politicians and their audience's response. As a result, this study will focus on state representatives abroad and the response of their audience. The US has a clear advance on the use digital communication compared to other states. The biggest social networking sites were set up in the US, giving its population a head start on the use of these channels over the rest of the world. Besides being the 'home base' of the biggest social networking sites, the US, and specifically Secretary Clinton, were pioneers in implementing social media strategies (Bjola & Holmes, 2015, 39). As presented earlier, the US has an official Twitter presence in over 90 states worldwide. The overwhelming presence of the US on Twitter and the advantage of analysing a Twitter account that provides no language barrier were crucial for case selection.

A second important issue, when selecting a case for this research, was to make sure there was enough response to the diplomat's tweets. A lack of response to diplomatic tweets would stand in the way of significant results in the analysis.

Although practically every US diplomat has a Twitter account nowadays, they vary in the activity on the medium. To test the hypothesis this research will focus on Matthew Barzun (@MatthewBarzun), active US ambassador to the United Kingdom. Matthew Barzun falls into the 'active' US diplomats on Twitter, as he tweets on a regular basis, with at least 2 or 3 tweets a day. With more than 14 thousand followers, Barzun has a broad audience to influence. This broad audience also ensures that enough response will be available for research purposes. Barzun seems well accustomed with mixing the personal with the professional. On April 19th, 2016, Barzun tweets on his son's passion for the game of baseball. This tweet was highlighted by the Twitter account @GreatGovTweets, as 39th most engaging Tweet from the U.S government Twitter accounts on that day (<https://shiningsea.measuredvoice.com>). Besides his affinity to blend the personal and the professional, Barzun also tweets in less personalized fashion: "Milestone reached yesterday – detainee population at Guantanamo Bay now under 100. More to go." (15/01/2016). This variety in the use of personalization gives us the opportunity to analyse response to personalized and non-personalized messages with all the other variables; amount of followers (to a certain degree), diplomat and cultural differences staying the same. His active use of the social network and his variety in the use of personalization in his tweets make ambassador Barzun a perfect fit for this research.

Operationalization of Variables

Personalization serves as our independent variable in our research. Measuring our independent variable brings with it several problems. Personalization can be operationalized in several manners. I will be measuring personalization of tweets by searching for several characteristics. These requirements are the result of numerous studies on personalization, and their effects have been discussed earlier. Tweets that are categorized as 'personalized' need to have at least one of the four requirements.

The first element is addressing the public in first person. Typically for addressing in first person is the use the use of "I" or "we", through which the audience is able to see

from the point of view of the narrator. An example of the use of first person addressing is Barzun's tweet on the 12th of August 2015:

@MatthewBarzun: "So, tomorrow, we're planning to embrace two British strengths 1- Cricket. 2- Smiling in the face of adversity".

The second element that indicates that a form of personalization has been used is if there is any form of encouraging the audience to remember similar past experiences. An example of encouraging the public to remember similar past experiences is a tweet, also on 12th of August 2015:

@MatthewBarzun: "If you grew-up in the 80's you'll remember these - Introduced today in 81 - The 1st PC, made in America."

The third element that would indicate a personalized form in the Tweet is the use of illustrative individual cases. Matthew's tweet on 21st of January 2016 is an example of a message containing an illustrative individual case:

@MatthewBarzun: "John Newman - Worked @USinUK from '38 to early 80s & knew JFK as an intern. Flew w/ @RoyalAirForce in WW2."

The last element that is characteristic for personalized messages is any form of privatization. The use of privatization in a message indicates any content in regards to the person's family, past life & upbringing, leisure time or love life.

@MatthewBarzun: "My youngest loves the UK but also maintains his American passions. His #44 a nod to a shrewd left-hander. #ObamaInUK".

Further explanation on these elements can be found in the codebook, attached at the end of this research. The requirements in the codebook will indicate whether the Twitter message of the diplomat or embassy used personalization in their tweet.

Our dependent variable in this research is the audience's response. Twitter offers us several tools to measure people's response. Most important for determining our dependent variable is a form of content analysis. The most obvious manner to measure the public's response is by analysing the @-replies to diplomatic tweets. By analysing the @-replies to the diplomatic tweets, we can classify each response as 'positive', 'neutral', or 'negative'. A response tone score will be calculated for every tweet. A

negative response will affect the score by reducing it with (-1), a positive response on the other hand, will positively affect the score by (+1) and finally, a neutral response (0) will neither have a positive or negative effect on the final response tone score. Critique on the United States or the ambassador directly is seen as a 'negative' response, while compliments obviously indicate a positive response to the message. Tweets by the account @GreatGovTweets, that congratulate state department Twitter accounts on popular tweets were regarded as a "neutral" responses, as the account does not represent the diplomat's audience and its response is solely based on the popularity of a Tweet and not its content. Twitter account @_R_S_S_, on the other hand, replies to basically each tweet sent by the ambassador in a negative way. As this account also replies numerous times, these responses could undermine generalization towards our population. As a result tweets by this singular account have not been collected.

Further explanation on how these categories were coded can be found in the codebook attached. Barzun sent out a tweet on April 23 2016, referring to a discourse of Obama in London on the topic of the "special relationship" between both states:

*"@MatthewBarzun: The next generation of the Special Relationship are all set.
#ObamaInUK"*

The tweet received 11 replies, varying from negative, neutral and positive responses. A response by @myamigocouk is an example of a negative response towards Matthew's tweets, negatively affecting the response tone score (-1). A tweet by @francesemma on the other hand, represents a typical positive response, indicating a positive (+1) score. Finally, @AndySchapiro's response indicates a neutral response, not affecting the final response tone score.

@myamigocouk: "@MatthewBarzun Special relationship, don't make me laugh. Back of the queue for trade deal. Who needs backstabbing friends?"

@francesemma: "@MatthewBarzun Thank you so much for such an incredible, inspiring day - I'm already making plans for new projects. V.proud to be a #YLUK"

@AndySchapiro: "@MatthewBarzun "Are"? Have you gone native now?:-)"

By categorizing each response as positive, neutral or negative I was able to calculate the tone of the response for the original tweet. In total, 5 tweets were categorized as positive (+5), 3 tweets as negative (-3) and 2 as neutral. As a result the tone of the response for Matthew's original tweet is (2), indicating that its audience received the tweet in fairly positive way. One reply was not weighed in, in the calculation of the response tone, as it was presented in a foreign language and translation through websites could distort the original message, making the analysis biased.

For each Tweet a response tone score was set up. This response tone score was calculated by dividing the total response: in our example (2), by the amount of replies that were taken into consideration for the original score (10). As a result, Matthew's tweet on the 23th of April 2016 has a total response score of 0,2. 0,2 can be considered a slightly positive result in the response tone scale. A response tone score can be between -1, the lowest score, and +1, the highest score.

Besides the response tone score, this research will make use of the *like* function on Twitter to measure the response. By using the *like* function a user is able to, similar as Facebook, express their positive feeling towards a tweet. The more likes a tweet receives, the better the public is responding to it. All in all, the more is better, when analysing tweets by counting the amount of likes it received. Measuring likes is different from the response tone in the sense that it is not possible to express negatively or neutral towards a tweet; you either *like* a tweet, or you don't. A tweet that receives 5 likes is appreciated less by the audience than one with 20 likes.

Data Collection

Data collection began by determining which Twitter accounts to focus this research on. As discussed earlier, the official Twitter account of the US ambassador to the UK was chosen for the purpose of this research. After determining which Twitter account to follow, a timeframe for data collection had to be chosen. For generalizability purposes, I chose to collect as many tweets as possible and analyse them. Although Barzun's Twitter page launched in March 2013, the oldest tweets available on his page are from July 2015. As a result, the data collected and analysed in this research dates from July 15th 2015 to April 28th 2016. The decision to collect the most recent data available for analysis was

influenced by several factors. The amount of followers plays a significant role when analysing public response. Response is expected to be greater when a message reaches a wider public. As the amount of followers on Barzun's Twitter grows, the amount response grows with it, and the clearer the final results will be. The decision to collect the most recent data was also the result of the fast changing conventions and practices on Twitter. As functions on Twitter and trends change rapidly, collecting the most recent data helps to reflect the most recent patterns.

Using Web Scraper, provided by Martins Balodis, as a Google Chrome extension, the data was collected (<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/web-scraper/jnhgnonknehpejjnehehllkliplmbmhn>). This specific extension provides the opportunity to collect data automatically from sites. The process of data scraping starts by selecting which variables the scraper should search for. By selecting the tweets, the programme will collect all tweets and provide the option to open the data in an Excel document. The programme further offers the option to collect date, username, retweets, likes and links in one single document. The replies were collected manually by opening each tweet and categorized as positive, neutral or negative.

By scraping the ambassador's Twitter page a total amount of 764 tweets were collected. The Web Scraper also collects retweets by the user that is being analysed. These retweets were disregarded in this research, as they are not tweets sent out by the ambassador directly. It is not possible to decide whether response to retweets by the ambassador is directed at the ambassador or at the person who sent the original tweet. As a result this research focussed on all tweets sent out by ambassador Barzun, from July 15th 2015 and April 28th 2016.

Of the 764 tweets collected, 408 tweets were the ambassador's own tweets. A total of 7 tweets were not taken into consideration during analysis. 6 of them were from Obama's visit to the UK in April 2016. The president's visit, during the anniversary of the Queen, generated waves on the Ambassador's Twitter page. These 6 tweets received likes in such greater proportions than the rest of the tweets that were scraped, that they would skew the results. Besides Obama's visit, another tweet was not taken into consideration. A tweet by Ambassador Barzun on the 8th of January 2016, in which he referred to all the cities and villages that he had visited within the United Kingdom. A stream of followers recommended places for the ambassador to visit following this tweet, generating over 60 replies.

With the use of the codebook, a total of 121 tweets (29,7%) were categorized as personalized and 287 (70,3%) as non-personalized. These 121 personalized tweets were then categorized in the four different categories of personalization mentioned earlier: *encouraging the audience to remember past experiences, the use of exemplars, first person addressing* and *privatization*. These tweets were categorized to compare their impact on the response.

Independent T-Test, ANOVA and Variables

Two independent sample T-Tests are used to analyse the impact of personalization of Twitter messages on the response. An independent sample T-Test determines whether there is a statistically significant difference between means of two different groups. To determine whether personalization of messages affects the response two different T-Tests were carried out. The first T-Test determined if there was a significant difference in the amount of likes personalized and non-personalized messages received. The second T-Test determined whether there is a significant difference in the response tone score in personalized and non-personalized messages. If the tests indicate a significant difference in the means of both groups we can reject the null hypothesis: $H_0: U_1=U_2$. If the T-Test returns with a significant difference of means between both groups, the alternative hypothesis is supported: $H_1: U_1 \neq U_2$.

H₀: Personalized and non-personalized messages of official diplomatic Twitter accounts have equal responses.

H₁: Tweets of official diplomatic accounts are more likely to evoke a positive response from a foreign audience, if a form of personalization is imposed in the Tweet.

The hypothesis is tested by the measurement of our two different variables: *amount of likes* and *tone*. The *amount of likes* is a count variable, indicating that values measured can be integer non-negative values, with no meaning on an arbitrary scale. *Tone* is the average tone of replies towards the original tweet, the values for this variable lay between -1 (perfectly negative) and +1 (perfectly positive).

Besides the T-Test, that was run to analyse the difference in means in response of personalized and non-personalized messages, two different ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) tests were set up. ANOVA's are used to analyse the differences of means in more than two different groups. For our research two ANOVA's were used to analyse the difference in means of response between the different forms of personalization: *encouraging the audience to remember past experiences, exemplars, first person addressing* and *privatization*. The response was measured by the same variables mentioned above: *amount of likes* and *tone*.

Findings

Difference in Response: Likes & Response Tone Score

The first T-Test indicated that personalized messages had a mean of 10,28 likes, whilst non-personalized messages had a mean of 8,59 likes (Table 1). This difference indicates an advantage of personalized tweets of 1,69 likes over non-personalized tweets. Although a difference of means was present in the T-Test, it was not significant at the level of 0,05. The level of significance that is chosen, that has to be reached to reject a null hypothesis, is arbitrary. Researchers often choose 0,05 as this indicates a 5 per cent chance of error in the results presented. When an analysis returns with significance beneath the level of 0,01, researchers speak of a highly significant result. The T-Test in table 1 indicates a significant difference in means between non-personalized and personalized messages at a level of 0,193, which is not significant enough to reject the null hypothesis.

Message type	N	Mean of likes
<i>Non-Personalized messages</i>	271	8,59
<i>Personalized messages</i>	120	10,28

Table 1: T-Test: Difference in means of likes received at a significance level of 0,193.

The second T-Test conducted analysed the means of the response tone score of personalized and non-personalized messages. The mean of the response tone score for personalized messages is 0,3555, whilst non-personalized messages have a mean of 0,1333 (Table 2). Personalized tweets received better response compared to non-personalized messages. This difference of 0,2222 on a scale of -1 to 1 represents a bigger

difference in means compared to the difference in likes. The difference in means can be characterized as significant as the result is significant at a 0,04 level.

On the basis of these findings we are able to reinforce our alternative hypothesis. Although the difference in means encountered in the first T-Test is not statistically significant, a positive difference in means is found in the direction of personalization. This positive influence of personalization of messages on the response is strengthened by the T-Test on response tone score. Taking both T-Tests in consideration we are able to reject the null-hypothesis and reinforce our alternative hypothesis that personalization of diplomatic tweets has a positive impact on the response.

Message type	N	Mean of response tone score	Standard Deviation
<i>Non-Personalized messages</i>	127	0,1333	0,7600
Personalized messages	64	0,3556	0,6686

Table 2: T-Test Difference in means of response tone score at Significance of 0,040

Findings

Difference in Response: Forms of Personalization

Table 3 presents the data from the first ANOVA test, in which the amount of likes different forms of personalization receive are compared. Comparing the means of the different categories indicates an advantage of encouragement of the public to remember past experiences over the three other categories. Although encouragement to remember past experiences provided more likes than the other three categories of personalization, our ANOVA presented a difference in means on a significance level of 0,434. The lack of significant difference is the result of the lack of cases in category 1, merely 5 cases, and a high standard deviation for category 4, in comparison with the other four categories. As a result we cannot assume a significant difference between the four categories in amount of likes received. The Post-Hoc test in Table 4 indicates no significant difference between the four categories.

	N (cases)	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
1 (Encouraging the audience to remember past experiences)	5	6	20	13,80	5,805
2 (Exemplars)	19	0	22	8,16	7,274
3 (First Person addressing)	48	0	48	9,21	7,607
4 (Privatization)	48	0	72	11,38	14,282

Table 3: ANOVA: Amount of likes each form of personalization receives. Significant difference of means at a level of 0,434.

(Types of Personalization) - (Types of personalization)	Mean Difference	Sig.
Encouraging audience to remember past - Exemplars	5,642	1,000
Encouraging audience to remember past - Privatization	1,967	1,000
Exemplars – First person addressing	-1,050	1,000
Exemplars - Privatization	-3,675	1,000
First person addressing – Encouraging the audience to remember past	-4,592	1,000
Privatization – First person addressing	2,625	1,000

Table 4: Post Hoc Test: Difference in mean of likes received between each form of personalization and significance.

A second ANOVA and Post-Hoc test were set up to analyse the difference in response tone score between the four different categories (Table 5 & 6). The ANOVA test for the different personalization categories and their response tone score indicates a significant difference between the four groups at the significance level of 0,021. As a result we can assume difference between the personalization categories and their response tone score at the significance level of 0,05. A Post-Hoc test is used in combination with the ANOVA test, to analyse to indicate between which categories this significant difference exists.

The Post-Hoc test in table 6 indicates a significant difference between category 3 (*First person addressing*) and 4 (*Privatization*). Privatization has a mean score of 0,574 and first person addressing of 0,047. A better response to tweets can be expected when a form of privatization is used compared to addressing people in the first person. The difference between means of category 1 (*encouraging the audience to remember past experiences*) and category 3 (*first person addressing*) is greater than the difference between category 3 and 4. Although the difference is greater, the difference of means is

not significant at the 0,05 level. This lack of significance is the result of the few cases in category 1.

	N (cases)	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
1 (Encouraging the audience to remember past experiences)	3	0,500	1,000	0,722	0,255
2 (Exemplars)	6	0,000	1,000	0,278	0,443
3 (First Person addressing)	24	-1,000	1,000	0,047	0,769
4 (Privatization)	31	-1,000	1,000	0,574	0,555

Table 5: ANOVA: Response tone score for each form of personalization. Significant difference of means at a level of 0,020.

(Types of Personalization) - (Types of personalization)	Mean Difference	Sig.
Encouraging audience to remember past - Exemplars	0,444	1,000
Encouraging audience to remember past - Privatization	0,148	1,000
Exemplars – First person addressing	0,231	1,000
Exemplars - Privatization	-0,296	1,000
First person addressing – Encouraging the audience to remember past	-0,675	0,518
Privatization – First person addressing	0,527	0,020

Table 6: Post Hoc Test: Difference in response tone score between each form of personalization and significance.

Discussion

On the whole, the analysed data suggests that personalized messages on Twitter receive a better response compared to non-personalized messages. Ambassador Barzun's non-personalized tweets received a lower amount of likes and scored worse on the response tone score compared to personalized messages. Although the data indicates a better response to personalized messages, most diplomats tweet in non-personalized styles. Ambassador Barzun is well known for blending the personal and the professional on Twitter. Although the ambassador is well known for his personal touch in tweets, a small 29,7% of his tweets actually consists of forms of personalization, the majority (70,3%) being non-personalized tweets.

Previous research on the effects of personalizing messages on social media has mainly focused on politicians instead of diplomats. Little time and effort has been dedicated towards research on the use of social media by diplomats. Diplomats, in contrast to politicians, mainly dedicate their messages at a foreign public, invoking cultural differences. This research focussed mainly on the effects of personalization on creating a more vivid conversation between diplomats and audience. Personalization has proven to be effective in improving the audience's response to diplomatic messages on Twitter. Improving the audience's response is crucial for diplomats as the audience is more likely to build a cognitive bond with the content.

Besides the significant advantage of personalized messages over non-personalized messages, the data also provides reasons to believe that different impacts on the response also exists within the different categories of personalization. Our first ANOVA test indicated no significant difference between the different categories in regards to the amount of likes received. A second ANOVA indicated a significant difference between messages that contained *first person addressing* and forms of *privatization*. Messages, which used forms of *privatization*, received a more positive response. The significant better response towards messages containing aspects of Barzun's private life is in line with the broader trend, in which a greater emphasis lies on the personal life of individuals.

Analyses through the comparison of amount of likes received by different messages provided little significant results; lack of significance in the independent T-Test and lack of significance in the ANOVA. A possible explanation for the difficulty the like variable provides is the fact that people are only capable of expressing a positive feeling towards a tweet through the like function. In comparison, our response tone score provides the opportunity for the public to express positive, neutral and negative feelings towards the original message. As a result, it is possible to measure difference through the response tone score more effectively than through the like variable. This greater capability to measure difference of response through the response tone score makes it a successful variable.

In a broader sense, this research has emphasized the positive effect that personalisation of messages has on the response to digital diplomacy. As technology develops, the connectivity between diplomats and their audience is likely to grow even further. What used to be a field surrounded by back room negotiations has swiftly

turned into a field in which diplomats themselves reach out to foreign audiences through social media. The growing connectivity and interest in the personal life of individuals is the basis for the success of diplomatic messages containing forms of personalisation. With both connectivity and the interest in the personal life of individuals growing, diplomats are likely to pursue strategies of personalisation in their communication.

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Codebook

- **Personalized message**

- Enter either “yes” or “no”
 - This field regards the personalization of a tweet of a diplomatic Twitter account of Twitter account of an embassy
 - Requirements for [Yes]
 - - Usage of first person in the message.
 - Addressing people directly & encouraging them to remember similar past experiences
 - Illustrative individual cases (exemplars)
 - Privatization
 - Coverage of family
 - Past life and upbringing
 - Leisure time (hobbies and vacation)
 - Love life
 - Examples
 - (Diplomat in question is Matthew Barzun)
 - Matthew Barzun: “I’m from the MTV generation and Prince ruled it. What a loss and what memories...”
 - [Yes] -> privatization -> past life and upbringing
 - Matthew Barzun: “ Investment in advanced capabilities keeps the U.S. & UK leading on global security”
 - [No]
 - Matthew Barzun: “ I’ve met with & listened to the hopes & concerns of 14,000 UK students. Will share findings w/ @POTUS this week. ”
 - [Yes] -> usage of first person in the message.

- **Tone**

- Enter either “positive”, “negative”, or “neutral”
 - This field regards the tone of a tweet replying towards the diplomatic Twitter account.
 - Examples
 - “@MatthewBarzun @foreignoffice a load of pretentious toss. The USA is a negative influence for world peace” -> Tone = Negative -> direct critic at diplomat and or the US.
 - “@MatthewBarzun @UKinUSA I wonder what he’d have to say about the prospect of a Trump presidency!” -> Tone = Neutral -> no critic or praising
 - “@MatthewBarzun @tamerra_nikol this is so nice!!!” -> Tone = Positive -> praising the ambassador’s tweet.