



The Media Maze: Navigating China's Post-WTO Landscape

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Who are China's Media ?

State-owned

National

Provincial

Internal Circulation – 'nei bu' / 'bao mi'

Private / enterprise investment

China's Media



China's Media Environment

- 500,000 'working journalists'
- 11,000 publications (over 2,000 newspapers, 9,000 periodicals), 1,200 radio stations, more than 50 TV stations, numerous websites
- 37 million newspapers were printed in China last year
- Most government - run with close connections to authorities, some 'independent'
- Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou are central and regional opinion leaders /influencers – media is fragmented
- Grey areas – journalism vs.advertising – increased competition among media
- PR = 'propaganda' / 'guanxi'

Post - WTO Media Environment

- ✦ **Media are more critical and mature, some are ‘investigative’**
- ✦ **Quality of publications varies**
- ✦ **Still much ‘copy and paste’ articles - mostly regional, smaller publications**
- ✦ **Many media and journalists have their own agendas**
- ✦ **Tough competition among media – sensationalism sells, bolsters ad revenue**
- ✦ **Commercialization**

Post - WTO Media Environment

- ★ **Press get involved in issues – act as intermediaries and judges**
- ★ **Media policies evolving – from this year: re-assessment tests required, licenses to work = intend more central government control of content and approach – in reality ???**
- ★ **Pre - Olympic PR and Image Campaign – accentuate positive developments, downplay negative topics or issues**
- ★ **Central Government promotes Chinese mainstream media – Xinhua, People's Daily - as reporting the fair and unbiased truth**
- ★ **Foreign Press – some perceived as on a 'witch hunt' to give China bad press**

Panda 'Perceptions'



What's News ?

- **State and Official visits – domestic and foreign**
- **Official meetings/ plenums/sessions - 16th Party Congress**
- **Participation in an event of an official or celebrity**
- **International Relations – government-to-government, policies**
- **Topics of national importance or focus - economy, consumer rights, women, environmental, health and local issues**
- **Regional or Provincial Issues – more and more coverage**
- **FDI and foreign companies doing business in China**
- **News with an agenda – ‘created’ – targeted issues, companies or countries**

Effective Media Engagement

**Communications as STRATEGIC TOOL –
not DAMAGE CONTROL MECHANISM**

**Integrate communications into business
strategies**

**Support and visibility of top management –
engage media**

Media as ALLY



– not ENEMY



Relationship Management

☀ **IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE ...**

IT'S LABOUR INTENSIVE

IT'S TARGETED

IT'S DYNAMIC and UNPREDICTABLE

IT'S ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY

... and SHOULD BE FUN

Building Media Partnerships

- ✦ **The 'what's in it for me' element**
- ✦ **Identify key partners**
- ✦ **Ask for advice / be a good listener**
- ✦ **Language skills for direct dialogue**
- ✦ **Sincerity is important**
- ✦ **Consistent contact**
- ✦ **Have fun**

The SARS Debacle

4 April, 2003 – China Daily Headlines:

“ Zhang: Life is as normal

Health Minister say Guangdong may not be origin of fatal disease

6 April, 2003 - PLA Doctor Jiang Yanyong writes letter to international media accusing PRC government of lying about extent of SARS crisis

20 April, 2003 – Chinese government admits SARS information cover-up

16 May, 2003 – Dr. Jiang Yanyong acknowledged as whistleblower by state media – seen as ‘hero’ by the press

End May – Media’s status elevated – TEMPORARILY ?

Lessons Learned ?

International community demands accountability – problem is NOT ‘internal’ Chinese affair, but has global impact

Double-standards do not fly – mixed blessing of aspiring to join rest of the world – WTO, Olympics

Chinese public increasingly does not accept government ‘white-wash’ – demand to be kept accurately informed

Swift action required to contain damage

Order of the day - TRANSPARENCY

Look to China’s next PR crisis

Is the present trend becoming policy or is this case a ‘one-off’ ?



Thank You !

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