

China's online public diplomacy in Africa: structure, audiences and messages

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Building Images: Exploring 21st Century Sino-African dynamics
through cultural exchange, media representation, and translation

Nottingham | 14 January 2016

Outline

- Public diplomacy 2.0
- China's public diplomacy
 - Overview of activities
 - Africa as China's public diplomacy sandbox
- China's Online PD in Africa
 - Structure
 - Audience
 - Messages

Public diplomacy

«a government's process of communication with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies»

(Tuch 1990: 3)

Listening

Advocacy

Cultural Diplomacy

Exchange Diplomacy

International Broadcasting

Mediated Public Diplomacy

«[S]horter term and more targeted efforts using mass communication (including the internet) to increase support of a country's specific foreign policies among audiences beyond that country's borders»

(Entman 2008: 88)

Online public diplomacy

- Uses a variety of tools to reach global audiences (websites, social media, PR campaigns...).
- Allows to move away from a “monologue” approach to public diplomacy and have some sort of “dialogue” with targeted audiences.

China's public diplomacy

- China has a long history of state-sponsored engagement with foreign audiences (particularly in Africa).
 - Artistic troupes
 - Political exchanges
 - Medical expertise
 - Radio broadcasts [Radio Peking]
 - Magazines and book publishing...

China's (New) Public Diplomacy

- In its quest for a bigger role as a great power, China has revamped its public diplomacy and fully adopted the concept of “soft power” (*ruan shili*), which it has been struggling to harness
 - It has implemented new public diplomacy tools;
 - It has expanded its mediated public diplomacy;
 - It has begun to explore online platforms.

China's Online Public Diplomacy



The image shows a screenshot of the Facebook page for 'Xi's US Visit'. The page features a cover photo of Chinese President Xi Jinping speaking, with the hashtag #XiUSAVisit overlaid. The page name is 'Xi's US Visit' and it is categorized as a 'Comunitat'. The page has 1,109,562 likes and a post from September 30, 2015, announcing that the page has added 3 new photos. The post text reads: 'Xi's UN visit breathes new life into int'l ties' and 'Chinese President Xi Jinping's first appearance at the UN headquarters breathed new life into the development of international relations. Besides a'.

Xi's US Visit

#XiUSAVisit

2015 XI's US VISIT

Xi's US Visit 

Comunitat

M'agrada Comparteix

Cronologia About Fotos M'agrada Videos

Agrada a 1.109.562 persones

Convoca amistats a la pàgina

Xi's US Visit ha afegit 3 new photos.
30 / setembre / 2015 · 

Xi's UN visit breathes new life into int'l ties

Chinese President Xi Jinping's first appearance at the UN headquarters
breathed new life into the development of international relations. Besides a

Africa as sandbox

1. What is the structure of Chinese media online presence in Africa?
2. What are the goals of CCTV-Africa's online media presence?
3. How are CCTV-Africa's online messages produced?
4. Who is CCTV-Africa's audience online?
5. What are CCTV-Africa's messages online?

Africa as sandbox

- Africa concentrates the largest number of Chinese media ventures overseas:
 - CRI opened a local FM station in Nairobi;
 - China Daily has an African edition;
 - CCTV has its own broadcast centre in Nairobi;
 - Xinhua has more correspondents than any other organisation;
- China has ‘experimented’ in Africa
 - Online – several projects have been launched

Structure

	Xinhua	CCTV-Africa	China Daily	CRI
Website	X	cctv-africa.com cntv/cctvafrica lloveafrica.com	✓	✓ (Swahili, Hausa)
Facebook	✓ (Swahili)	✓	X	✓ (Swahili)
Twitter	✓ (Swahili)	✓	X	X
Google Plus	✓	✓	X	X
Instagram	X	✓	X	X

Structure



**FORUM ON
CHINA-AFRICA
COOPERATION**
JOHANNESBURG DEC. 2015

**CCTV
AFRICA**

TÍTOLS	SEGUINT	SEGLIDORS	AGRADAMENTS	LLISTES
32,2m	478	36m	28	1

[Seguint](#)

Goals

«I don't think it necessarily came out much from Beijing but more from a local understanding. CCTV Africa had been around for 3 years and they knew to reach African audiences, they had to do it digitally. They had to get their social media strategy sorted. None of this stuff exists in Beijing. They couldn't get any guy from Beijing and they didn't know who to go to and they didn't know how to start»

Interview, Nairobi 2 March 2015

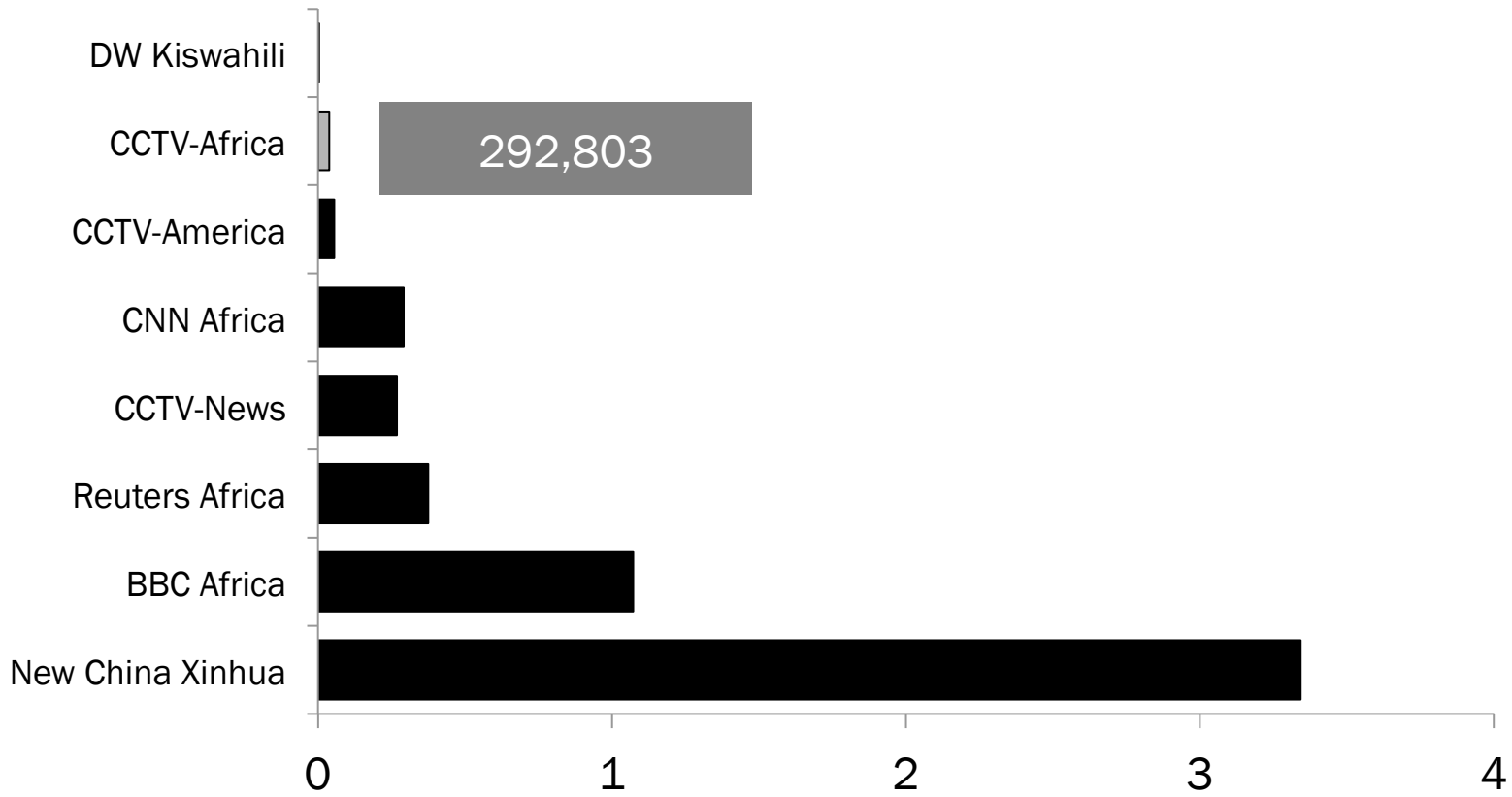
Goals

«To promote CCTV Africa. It's not easy actually to access our TV channel in every country. But now Internet is more accessible. So we want to show our presence in those areas also. (...). [T]hat's why our new bureau chief is really stressing this digital department strategy. Even in Beijing, in the headquarters, they have established digital department. Not only in CCTV news but also the the Chinese channels.»

Interview, 10 November 2015

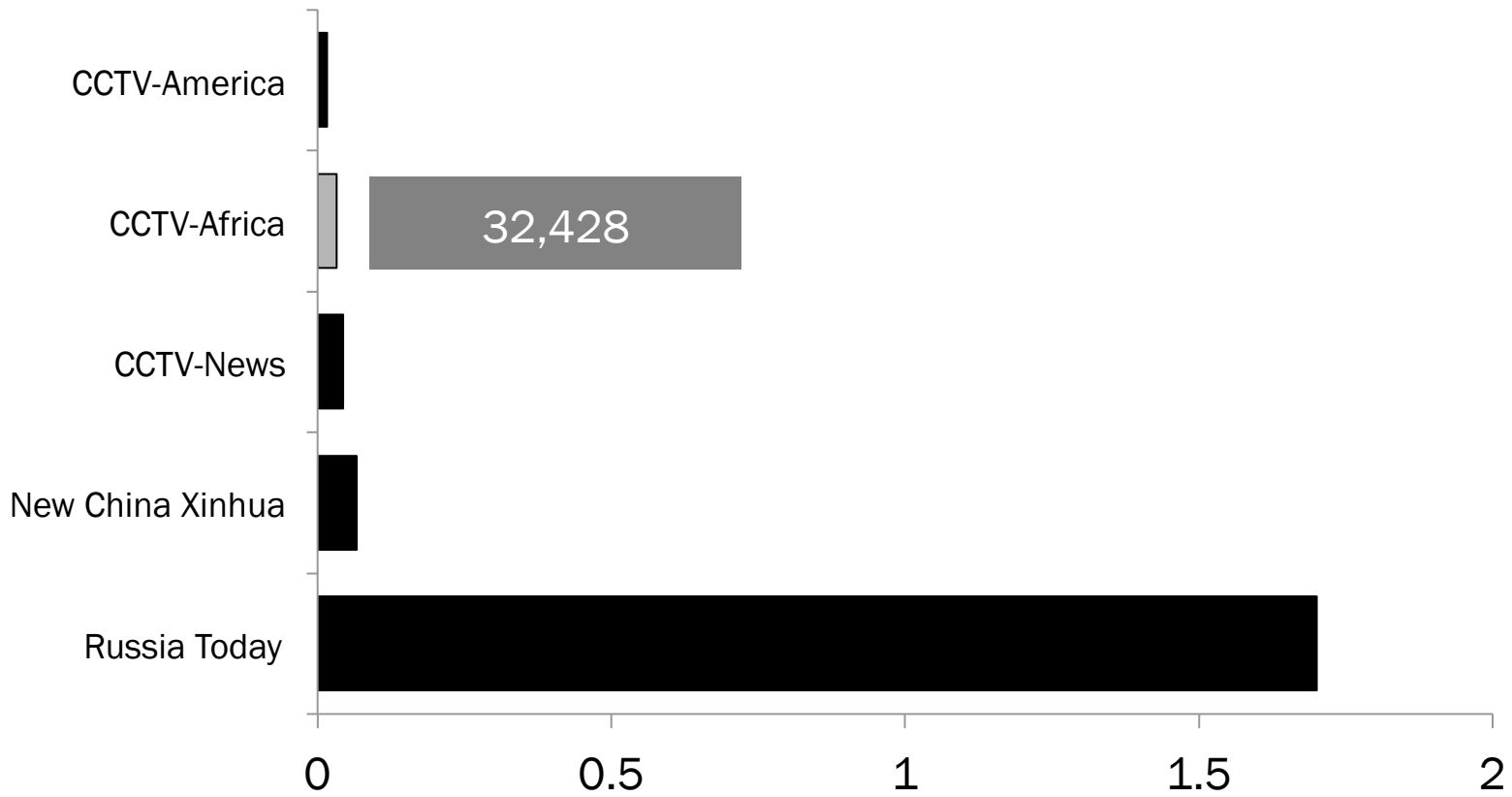
Audience

Twitter Followers (in millions)



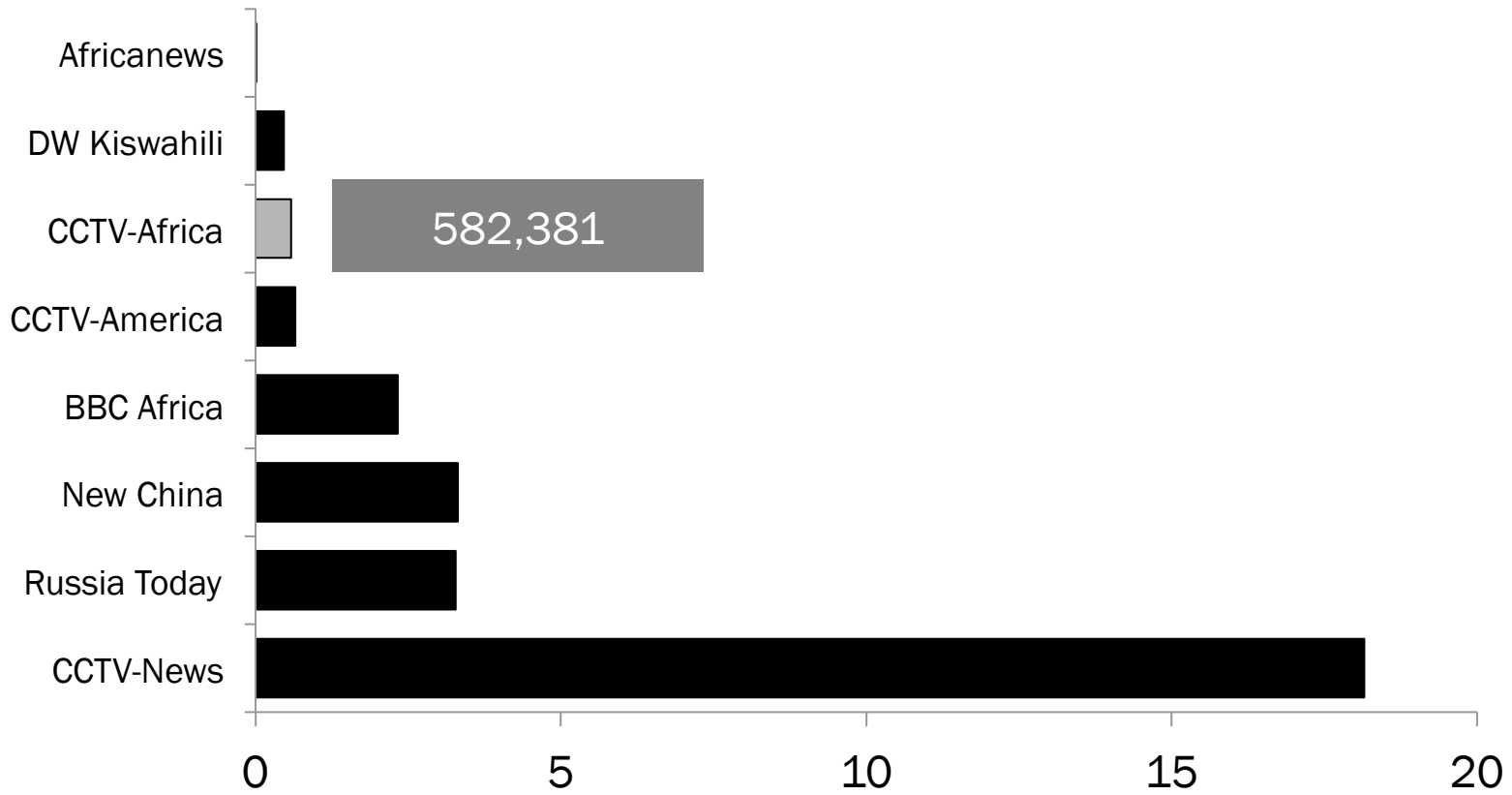
Audience

YouTube Followers (in millions)



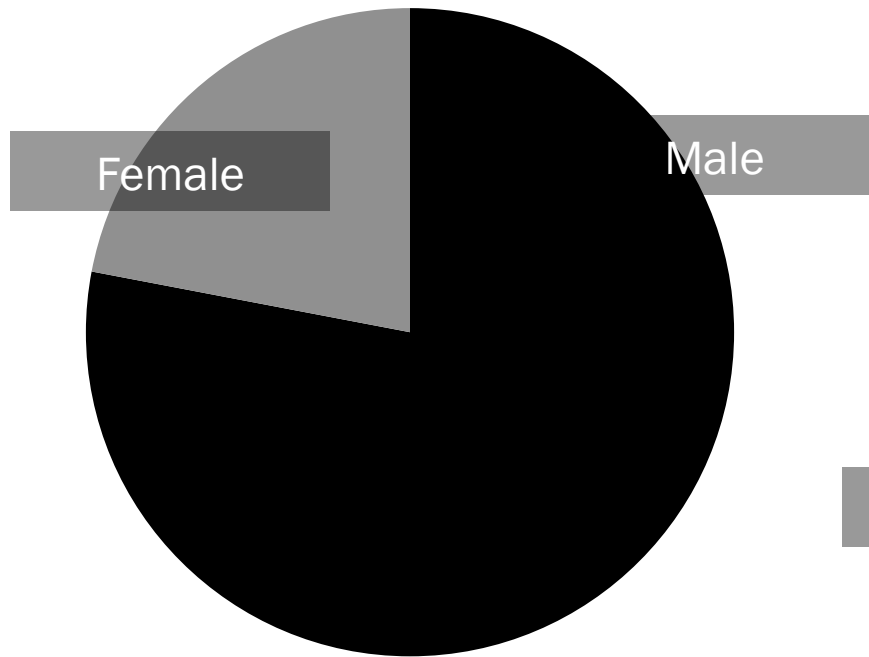
Audience

Facebook Likes (in millions)

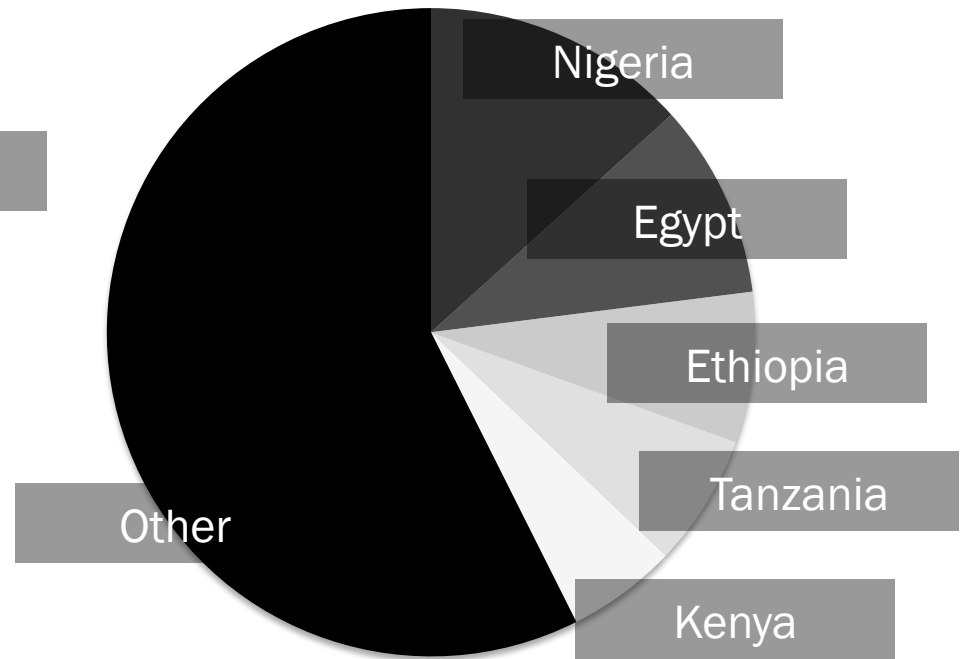


Audience

Gender

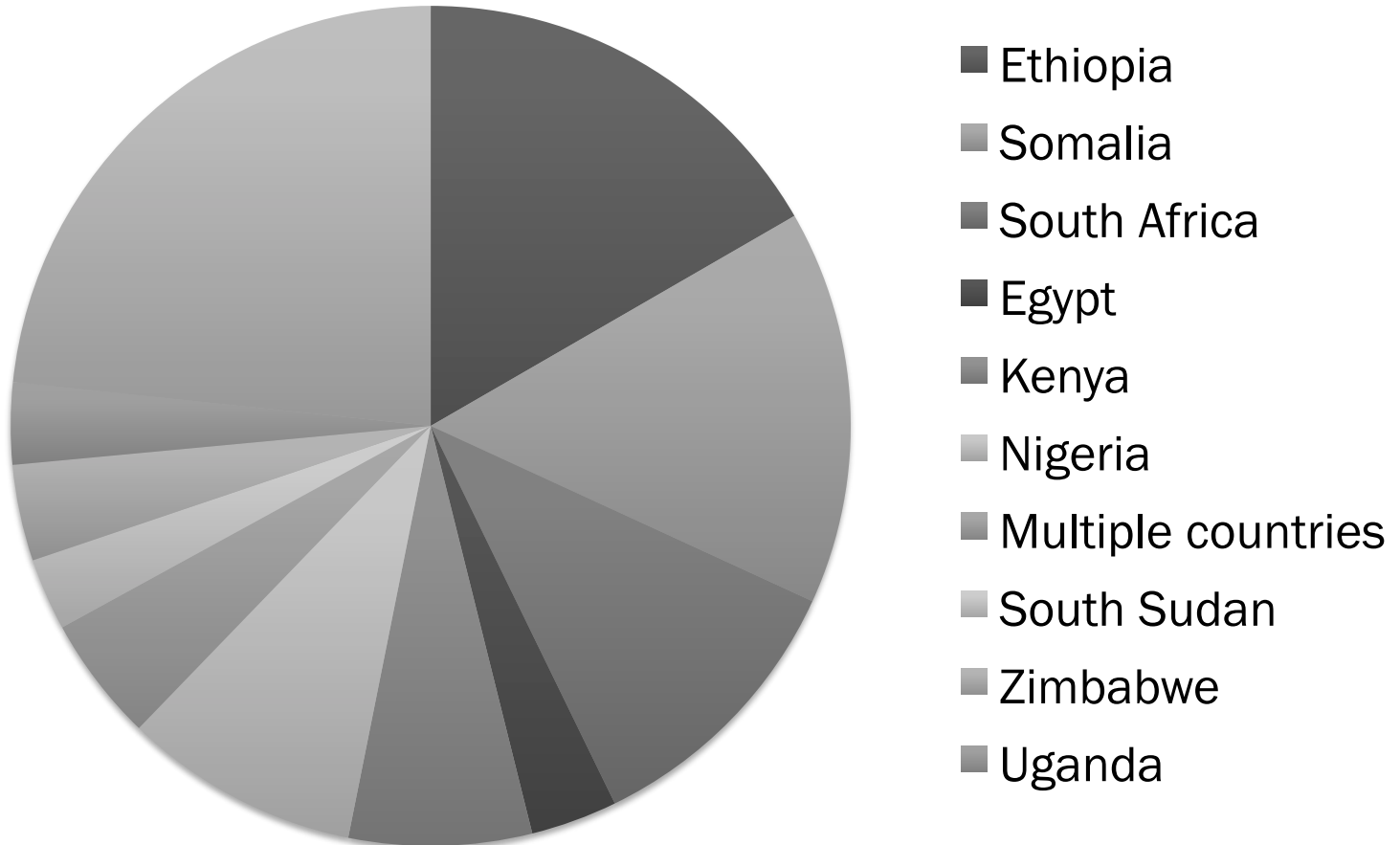


Nationality



Messages - YouTube

Country

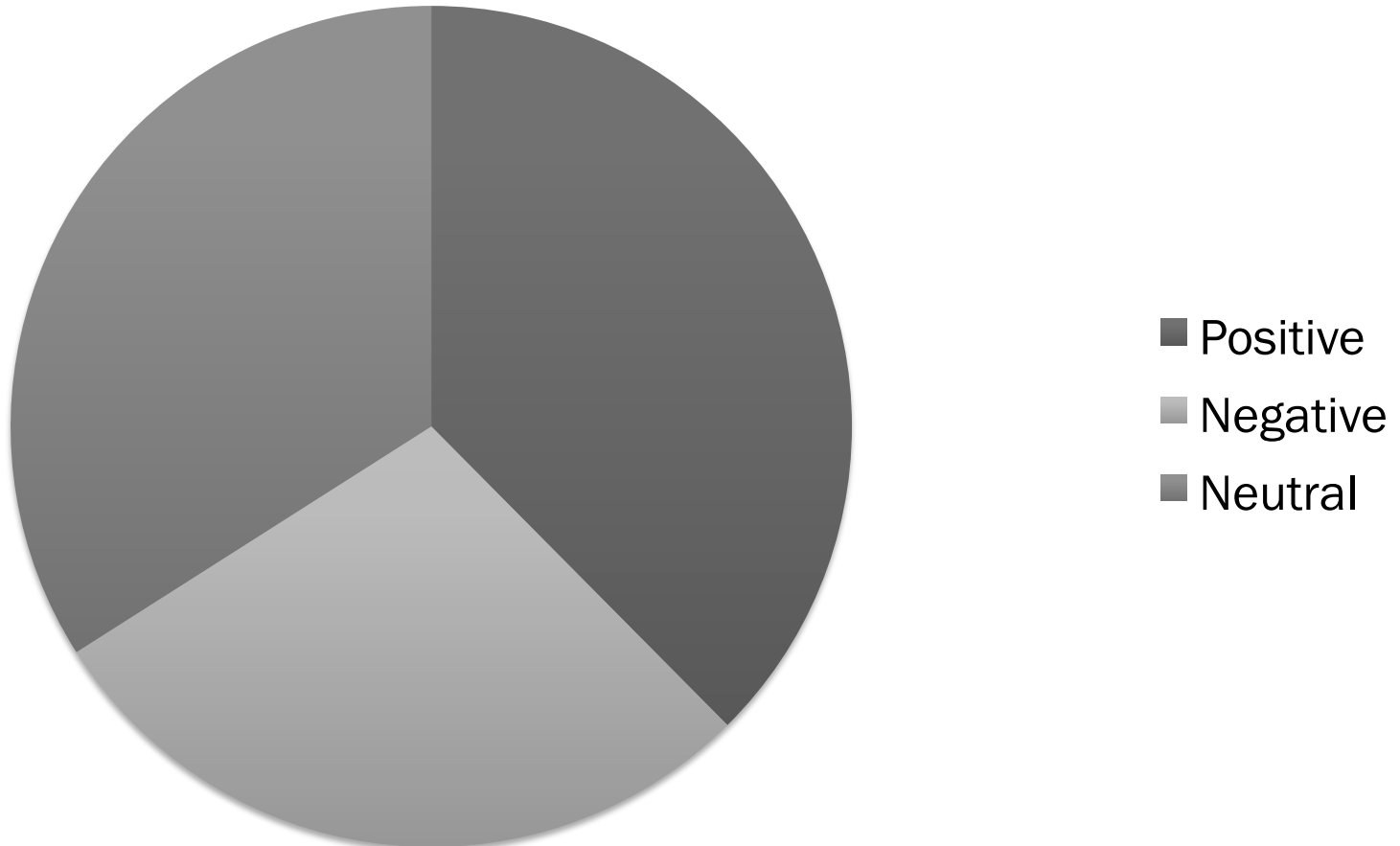


Messages - YouTube

Topic	Count	Percentage
Security and terror	92	16,8%
Politics and diplomcy	84	15,4%
Economy	85	15,5%
Sports	49	9,0%
Infrastructure Building	40	7,3%
Culture & Entertainment	37	6,8%
Social issues	36	6,6%
Immigration	29	5,3%
Oddities and human interest	18	3,3%
Health (Diseases)	14	2,6%
Environment	14	2,6%
Technology	10	1,8%
Religion	9	1,6%
Accidents and Crime	6	1,1%
Other	24	4,4%

Messages - YouTube

Tone | Nature of news content



Messages - YouTube



Exclusive video footage on the Westgate attack

CCTV Africa
Subscribe 32,687
+ Add to Share More

5,344,103



2-year-old DJ AJ is a viral phenomenon

CCTV Africa
Subscribe 32,687
+ Add to Share More

544,069

1,064 129



Faces of Africa : The Hyena Men

CCTV Africa
Subscribe 32,687
+ Add to Share More

501,444

1,239 269



Meet South Africa's youngest millionaire only at 23

CCTV Africa
Subscribe 32,687
+ Add to Share More

351,104

1,323 67

14,693,472 views

Messages – On Twitter

1.	#XiJinping	188
2.	#Africa	90
3.	#Nigeria	65
4.	#SouthAfrica	65
5.	#XiUSAVisit	62
6.	#Kenya	60
7.	#XiUKVisit	56
8.	#BusinessNews	53
9.	#BurkinaFaso	45
10.	#Egypt	42
11.	#Burundi	40
12.	#GlobalBusiness	37
13.	#BREAKING	36
14.	#FOCAC	36
15.	#tanzaniadecides	34
16.	#China	33
17.	#Coted	33
18.	#Zimbabwe	32
19.	#Mali	29
20.	#SportsNews	26

Messages – On Twitter



Messages – On Twitter

- CCTV Africa retweets (12%) a lot more than would be expected – Sometimes from those media houses from which it is “expected” to offer an alternative view.
- Mostly for promotional purposes: announcing what is coming up and breaking news (2%).

Final ideas

- **Lack of a clear strategy** - China's online presence is rather chaotic, without a clear vision or strategy and, like other public diplomacy dimensions under-resourced and under-skilled.
- **Lack of dialogue** - Despite being one of its core reasons to be, China's online public diplomacy lacks feedback channels and audience engagement.
- **Lack of narrative** - Online, China offers its own take on China-related issues, but hardly deviates from existing narratives on Africa-related topics.

Final ideas

- **Lack of appeal** - Despite the renewed efforts, polls do not show improvements in global attitudes towards China.
- **Lack of control** - There is a mismatch between official messages and strategies, and actual messages and actions.
- **Lack of capacity** - China is seeking short term results with long term strategies.

Final Thoughts



Xi Jinping's first Weibo
message
26 December 2015

Final Thoughts



The East African, 11
October 2014

Thank you.

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