Linking East with West:
Websites as a Public Relations Tool for American and Chinese Banks
Operating in a Culturally-Evolving Chinese Society

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(ABSTRACT)

In this thesis, three websites are explored in-depth and serve as a case study for an intercultural comparison of websites as public relations tools. The websites of Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), Shanghai Pudong Development Bank (SPDB), and Citibank were evaluated for this specific study because they represent three models of current banks operating in a culturally-evolving Chinese society. The two-way symmetrical model of public relations and the personal influence model have provided basic framework for this thesis. To establish the two-way symmetrical public relations via the website, these three banks employ different public relations strategies due to the different organizational structure and operating systems. In addition, culture has played an important role for banks to build relationships with their various publics. Specifically, Confucian ideology, the foundation for Chinese culture, provides insights for this thesis. To cater to the publics, ICBC adhered more strictly to Chinese culture norms, while SPDB’s website is a reflection of a hybrid of Western and Chinese culture. Moreover, although Citibank does not make many efforts to culturally cater to its Chinese publics, Citibank successfully built its reputation and image through building a business-oriented and expert website.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor Dr. John Tedesco for offering his expertise especially in the area of public relations and international communications. I am grateful for his constant detailed and considerate attention and guidance given to this thesis during the past year. I would also like to thank Dr. Rachel Holloway and Dr. James Dubinsky for serving on my committee and offering their help in accomplishing this thesis. Thanks also to Dr. Matthew McAllister for providing insights to this thesis.
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