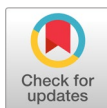



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- Author (s):** Raheel Anwar¹, Noshina Saleem², and Hanan Ahmad Mian²
- Affiliation (s):** ¹Government Graduate College for Boys, Township, Lahore, Pakistan
²University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan
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Digital Diplomacy Through Twitter: Comparing Diplomatic Strategies of International and Pakistani Embassies

Raheel Anwar^{1*}, Noshina Saleem², and Hanan Ahmad Mian²

¹Department of Mass Communication and Media Studies, Government Graduate College for Boys, Township, Lahore, Pakistan

²School of Communication Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract

Digital diplomacy has transformed the diplomatic strategies of embassies, facilitating their online agenda-setting, presence expansion and visibility, directly engaging them with foreign audiences. This paper compares the digital diplomatic strategies of Pakistani embassies on Twitter with those of China, Russia, the UK, and the US, focusing on their agenda-setting, presence expansion, and engagement and conversation generation. The "Three-Dimensional Model" of Bjola and Jiang (2015) serves as a theoretical framework for analyzing the role of social media in digital diplomacy. A quantitative content analysis was conducted to assess the Twitter agendas of these embassies between January 1 and December 31, 2022, and to code retweets, hashtags, and targeted audiences for presence expansion. An online survey was also conducted among their Twitter followers (comprising 480 participants) to compare engagement and conversation generation. According to the findings, these embassies tweet about international advocacy and tributes to manage their Twitter agenda for global and ambassadorial interests. However, for shared interests, Pakistani embassies tend to highlight the flood crisis, while international embassies focus more on cultural aspects. Pakistani embassies outperformed their international counterparts on Twitter by expanding their online presence through targeted strategies, and international embassies lagged behind. With a slight edge and a minor difference for international embassies, these embassies have engaged and generated conversations with their Twitter followers almost to the same extent. By comparing international and domestic embassies, this study may strengthen bilateral ties, advance public diplomacy through better use of social media, and enhance strategy. It may demonstrate how embassies influence participation, manipulate Twitter's system to gain prominence, and impact public opinion. The study may also assess the narrative power of local

*Corresponding Author: raheelanwar18@gmail.com

embassies and the impact of foreign influence on public opinion, thereby assisting academics and policymakers in enhancing Pakistan's global diplomatic status.

Keywords: agenda-setting, conversation generation, digital diplomacy, embassies, engagement, online expansion, public diplomacy, Twitter

Introduction

Social media consumption has increased in the current technological era. Digital platforms have replaced traditional communication methods. With this altered digital culture, diplomatic tendencies also went digital, and the rise of "Digital Diplomacy," a sophisticated kind of public diplomacy, marked the start of a diplomatic revolution (Ross, [2011](#); Syed & Alvi, [2021](#)). The use of the Internet to discuss foreign policy issues is known as "digital diplomacy" (Adesina, [2016](#)). In actuality, it is traditional diplomacy on a new platform. We may listen, publish, interact with, and assess in novel and fascinating ways on the Internet. In addition to creating and disseminating their own public diplomacy materials to other users, non-state actors, and individuals, users can now communicate directly with local, national, and international authorities (Duncombe, [2019](#)).

The digital age has also brought about a digital transformation of diplomatic and ambassadorial players, particularly embassies, to enhance their efficacy and global reach. These embassies prioritized digital networks for digital diplomacy and social media platforms, including Twitter. Twitter is a social networking platform that diplomats can utilize to engage with or influence the public, much like other social media contexts (Surowiec & Long, [2020](#)). According to Urcan ([2021](#)), Twitter has developed into a diplomatic barometer, a tool for assessing and predicting global affairs. This was the case for Twitter, which fosters constructive dialogue between civil society and diplomats, enhancing their ability to gather information and anticipate, evaluate, oversee, and react to events (Giulio Terzi, as cited in Nantongo, [2019](#)). Embassies are more capable of implementing diplomatic plans due to their improved relationships with foreign governments, the general public, and other stakeholder groups, as well as their presence on social media platforms like Twitter. The four primary themes that Manor and Crilley ([2019](#)) emphasized for this transformation are the notion of "listening" to the digital public, which leads to public-centric diplomacy, the mediatization of diplomats and Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs),

and the relationship between digital activities and the achievement of fine public diplomacy goals (Manor & Crilley, [2019](#)).

Digital diplomacy enables embassies to determine which topics to discuss with their online audience. It enables actors to establish agendas online through various digital platforms (Zhang & Ong'ong'a, [2022](#)). Diplomatic organizations can influence the subjects that their target audience finds fascinating by frequently discussing specific issues or events on social media. Digital platforms enable the management of bilateral ties between a specific foreign state and other nations, extending the reach of diplomatic presence beyond time and space (Bali et al., [2018](#); Zhang & Ong'ong'a, [2022](#)). Messages in aggressive information campaigns could be heard if these large social media platforms are used effectively. Therefore, if someone wants to build and sustain relationships with a digital audience, boosting one's online presence is crucial. They can reach a wider audience and build massive networks with improved communication. The most important component of digital diplomacy is interacting with the online public (Zhang & Ong'ong'a, [2022](#)). Digital diplomacy facilitates two-way dialogues, engagement, and conversation between the governing and governed (public) in contrast to one-way communication. This promotes bilateral relations, cooperation, mutual linkages, and internal relational harmony. It is possible to establish and initiate communication with this online audience through digital diplomacy. Social media thus makes it possible for people to communicate with each other in both directions. When done properly, this communication promotes teamwork. By commenting, editing, redistributing, and trading messages, the digital society actively interacts with message authors and is no longer a prolonged monologue (Manor & Crilley, [2019](#)).

Pakistan's traditional diplomatic techniques have also been impacted by the growing influence of social media, which is increasingly affecting public diplomacy. Due to PTI's ambition to establish a digital media arm for social media defense, the Strategic Communication Division (SCD) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in Pakistan also incorporates this inclination towards public diplomacy in digital arenas. Thus, diplomatic procedures are being progressively digitalized here in an effort to use contemporary technology to reach a worldwide audience (Akbar, [2023](#)). Meanwhile, scholars such as Akram ([2021](#)) and Asim et al. ([2023](#)) are starting to acknowledge Pakistan's need for digital diplomacy in light of the

rapidly changing global digital landscape. in light of this digitization, whereby digital diplomacy has impacted traditional public diplomacy and provided opportunities for embassies to set their online agendas, to expand presence and visibility, and to engage and generate conversation with worldwide audiences; it is essential to investigate how local embassies use social media, particularly Twitter, to further their diplomatic goals and to compare them with some globally developed nations like China, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. To a certain extent, earlier studies also demonstrated the eagerness of scholars to investigate the concept of digital diplomacy in relation to Pakistan. However, no comparison study has been conducted that investigates how embassies utilize digital diplomacy on Twitter to establish online agendas, enhance their presence, and foster engagement and conversations. This area requires further research because it presents a significant research gap. Therefore, taking into account the "Three-Dimensional Model" of Bjola and Jiang (2015), which consists of agenda-setting, presence expansion, engagement, and conversation generation, the study suggests the following goals in order to characterize and assess the influence of social media on public diplomacy:

1. To investigate the Twitter agenda of international (China, Russia, UK, & USA) and Pakistani embassies on Twitter.
2. To visualize the online presence expansion and visibility of international (China, Russia, UK, & USA) and Pakistani embassies on Twitter.
3. To inspect the engagement and conversation generation of international (China, Russia, UK, & USA) and Pakistani embassies with followers on Twitter.

On the basis of the theoretical frameworks and anticipated objectives of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What were the agendas of the tweets (shared, global, and ambassadorial interests) from international (China, Russia, UK, & USA) and Pakistani embassies on Twitter in 2022?
2. To what extent did the international (China, Russia, UK, & USA) and Pakistani embassies succeed in boosting their online presence through their Twitter activities for diplomacy in 2022?

3. To what extent did the tweets from the international (China, Russia, UK, & USA) and Pakistani embassies engage and generate conversation with their followers?

This study presents a novel comparison of the use of social media by global and Pakistani embassies in diplomacy. It enriches the growing literature on digital diplomacy by examining how embassies set agendas, expand online presence, and engage global audiences. Empirically, it addresses a gap in understanding public diplomacy under digital constraints, particularly in developing contexts such as Pakistan. The findings can guide embassies in emerging nations on how to improve digital engagement by learning from global diplomatic practices. Additionally, it sheds light on how embassies in Pakistan are incorporating technology to involve the public in diplomatic efforts.

Literature Review

Digital diplomacy, the use of digital platforms by governments and diplomatic players to promote foreign policy goals and engage international audiences, emerged from the significant expansion of public diplomacy facilitated by the introduction of digital media (Larbi, [2023](#); Ross, [2011](#); Waithaka, [2018](#)).

Digital technologies have been increasingly adopted by embassies in an effort to modernize diplomatic operations, enhance outreach, and promote engagement (Manor & Holmes, [2018](#); Luqiu et al., [2020](#)). For example, the Palestinian Embassy's Hebrew-language Facebook campaign encouraged communication and peace narratives with Israelis (Manor & Holmes, [2018](#)). Similarly, Luqiu et al. ([2020](#)) found that in China's controlled media environment, where regular posts were more important than geopolitical standing, embassy activity on Weibo experienced significant growth. Diplomatic Techniques Specific to Platforms: When comparing Central and Eastern European (CEE) and Western embassies on Twitter, Dodd et al. ([2017](#)) found that CEE embassies prioritized cultural messaging, whereas Western embassies prioritized lobbying, with both listening strategies underutilized. The Swedish Embassy in Bucharest was commended by Anton and Lăcătuș ([2022](#)) for its public-centric and dialogically engaged approach, which effectively established digital interactions through Facebook. Case Studies by Country and Strategic Methods. Ifran et al. ([2023](#)) emphasized Indonesia's active "Twiplomacy," noting that embassies

outperformed ambassadors in terms of engagement and follower count. Diplomacy in Culture and Soft Power In their analysis of digital public diplomacy through websites, Kos-Stanišić and Car ([2021](#)) discovered that Brazilian embassies prioritized films, whereas Indian embassies prioritized yoga. Both, however, did a worse job of capturing the attention of European audiences. On the other hand, according to Akman et al. ([2023](#)), the Turkish Embassy in Bishkek was unable to utilize Facebook effectively to gain more diplomatic influence.

Twitter has become an essential tool for digital diplomacy, as it enables governments and audiences worldwide to communicate directly and in real-time. Academics have examined its strategic application in many geopolitical settings. According to Huang and Wang ([2019a](#), [2019b](#)), China employs "timid polyphony" to strike a balance between situational autonomy and party control, starting with allies and utilizing Twitter for controlled yet adaptable diplomacy. Similarly, Tseng ([2023](#)) examined China's network-centric diplomacy in Germany, highlighting that China's "othering" policy resulted in discrepancies between official communications and local media representations. Qatar dominated in terms of tweet volume and interaction with non-GCC governments, according to Al-Mansouri et al. ([2021](#)) study of Twitter activity among GCC nations during the 2017 crisis, which revealed a range of diplomatic approaches. Disparities in US embassy Twitter usage were identified by Sobel et al. ([2016](#)), raising concerns about the platform's role in public diplomacy and suggesting that it may reflect regional tensions and diplomatic priorities. When Strauß et al. ([2015](#)) examined Twitter usage by Western embassies in the GCC, they discovered little audience engagement. To enhance communication tactics, they suggested a specific structure that includes transparency, personalization, and interactivity. Hoffmann ([2015](#)) emphasized Twitter's contribution to the nuclear talks between the United States and Iran, demonstrating how it enabled diplomatic signaling in situations where more conventional channels were limited. Abunahel ([2025](#)) examined Israel's three official Twitter accounts and found that each had a distinct diplomatic purpose, utilizing hashtags, mentions, and flags to humanize its global image and counter criticism. Firrone ([2023](#)) found that more democratic states actively engaged with their followers in 730 tweets from 17 states. Security and international collaboration were key concerns, and photos were often utilized in tweets concerning sensitive topics.

For diplomatic objectives, creating a digital diplomatic agenda entail improving online visibility and encouraging participation. In her study of India's digital diplomacy in South Asia, Garud (2022) polled 387 followers and examined 6,000 tweets. Although there was not total congruence, she discovered that follower interests and Indian foreign policy aims were in line, indicating an agenda-building influence. By examining digital diplomacy on Sina Weibo, Bjola and Holmes (2015) propose a framework that encompasses agenda-setting, presence growth, engagement, and conversation generation. They emphasized the need for strategic and comprehensive social media use, arguing that the spread of knowledge outweighed audience contact. Kampf et al. (2015) investigated Twitter and Facebook use among the MFAs of 11 nations. To improve public contact, their findings, which revealed a lack of dialogic communication, recommended that diplomats receive training in social media engagement. Bali et al. (2018) examined how the US Consulate in Erbil and the KRG Representation in Washington used Facebook. They discovered that the United States made better use of the platform for participation and agenda-setting, underscoring the influence of social media on public opinion and diplomatic relations. Zhang and Ong'ong'a (2022) examined 1,200 Facebook posts from BBC Africa and CGTN Africa. Both used social media to promote African values and engage audiences, though CGTN lacked dialogic interaction. The study highlights the media's role in digital diplomacy, focusing on agenda-setting and public engagement. According to Kediehor's (2021) assessment, Nigeria's digital diplomacy is crisis-driven and reactive. Ambassadors' non-strategic usage of social media highlights the necessity of intentional digital involvement to improve international diplomatic ties.

With its digital diplomatic projects, Pakistan is demonstrating its attempts to employ digital technologies for diplomacy and international relations. In the rapidly changing technology age, scholars such as Akram (2021), Asim et al. (2023), Gull et al. (2020), Kayani and ur Rehman (2022), Syed and Alvi (2021), and Zubair et al. (2020) have acknowledged the importance of digital diplomacy for Pakistan. The literature highlights Pakistan's evolving digital diplomacy, with an increasing emphasis on incorporating social media into diplomatic outreach. Khalid et al. (2023) explored how Pakistani talk show hosts perceive Twiplomacy through interviews with ten prime-time anchors. Twitter was seen as a fast, direct communication tool, with former Prime Minister Imran Khan praised for

using it skillfully. The study encouraged politicians and the Foreign Office to use Twitter more frequently. Habibullah et al. (2022) analyzed 490 tweets from five Pakistani embassies. While embassies were active, they mainly employed one-way communication. Only one was engaged in limited dialogic interaction, with most lacking real-time engagement and minimal foreign follower presence. The Twitter activity of the German ambassador in Pakistan was investigated by Khan et al. (2021). They discovered effective interaction through subjects such as democracy, society, and culture, utilizing social media analytics. The ambassador demonstrated effective digital diplomacy by engaging with thousands of people through self-disclosure, positivity, and respect. Ittefaq (2019) examined how India and Pakistan use Twitter and Facebook for public diplomacy. He discovered minimal reciprocal communication from both nations. Pakistan's military public relations departments were more active than its ministries, but India's foreign office was more structured online. Despite their limited public participation, both countries recognized the potential of social media.

The literature indicates a shift away from conventional diplomacy and toward modern digital strategies, with Twitter and other platforms playing a crucial role in facilitating immediate international engagement. Digital diplomacy increases the effectiveness of embassies and MFAs by promoting engagement, easing strategic agenda-setting, and expanding their global reach. Pakistan's diplomatic efforts are rapidly incorporating digital means. Although there are still obstacles to overcome, no study exists that compares the diplomatic strategies of international and Pakistani embassies on Twitter, specifically in terms of their agenda-setting, presence expansion, engagement, and conversation generation. This study may provide significant insights into the methods and techniques employed by other nations and how effectively they engage their audiences.

Theoretical Model

Bjola and Jiang (2015) proposed the "Three-Dimensional Model" to describe and evaluate the impact of social media on public diplomacy. These three features—agenda-setting, presence expansion, engagement, and conversation generation—essentially capture the role of social media in digital diplomacy, a modern form of public diplomacy. Three of this model's dimensions would be taken into account and used for this study as follows:

Agenda-Setting

Social media serves to draw attention to significant issues by establishing an agenda and informing the audience of where they should concentrate their attention. To persuade viewers that a certain piece of information is the most crucial, the media gives it the greatest weight possible. Establishing the agenda is based on the duty of media ownership and those in charge of media strategy to select and discuss particular topics to anticipate the effects on the intended audience. (Weaver, [2007](#)).

In convincing a foreign audience to view the information as highly relevant, digital diplomats set an agenda for foreign publics and draw their attention to specific pieces of information that encompass important themes, issues, and various societal opportunities. In the course of conducting digital diplomacy on Twitter, embassies also often develop customized Twitter agendas for their followers to highlight the topics and issues that require attention.

Presence Expansion

Since diplomats must always speak up, expanding one's presence is a basic requirement for both traditional and public diplomacy (Goof, [2013](#)). If a government wants to establish good relations with a foreign audience, it must first be "out there" in the right public arena. The public diplomatic approach will fail without enough exposure, even though diplomatic presence does not always translate into a better reputation or more favorable opinions.

Developing an online presence may be even more crucial for ambassadors who wish to be heard in the digital era. According to Wichowski ([2013](#)), ambassadors' credibility and reputation will suffer if they are unable to stay current with the rapidly changing digital landscape. Not only would their message be ignored, but they would also lose out to competing information efforts. The ability of embassies to enhance their online visibility and presence on Twitter ultimately strengthens their digital diplomacy efforts among international authorities, the public, and non-governmental organizations, thereby fortifying ties and partnerships that further national goals and interests.

Engagement and Conversation Generation

Audience participation is one of the most highly regarded features of

new public diplomacy (Pamment, [2013](#)). More than ever, communication, not monologue, must be the foundation of public diplomacy. It must encourage cooperation, and facilitate two-way or multidirectional communication between the parties (Cowan et al., [2008](#)).

Social media has a lot to offer in this area due to its interactive features, which can promote continuous dialogue between ambassadors and viewers abroad. Two-way communication can help diplomats refocus on their goals, decrease misinformation, and improve mutual understanding. Social media can achieve the purpose of public diplomacy in a different way than traditional means due to its unique features. In digital diplomacy, Twitter offers embassies the opportunity to engage in a two-way, multidirectional conversation with the global public, comprising diverse stakeholders. This interactive communication on Twitter significantly raises the chances of engaging a sizable target audience. It facilitates constant communication between embassies and the global public, enabling them to adjust their messaging in response to audience feedback.

These three mutually exclusive dimensions of social media, as proposed by Bjola and Jiang ([2015](#)), offer a comprehensive and reliable model for assessing digital diplomacy on social media. In their study of digital diplomacy strategies employed by the US Embassy in Beijing, the Japanese Embassy, and the European Union Delegation on the Chinese microblogging site Sina Weibo, Bjola and Holmes ([2015](#)) utilized this concept. Zhang and Ong'ong'a ([2022](#)) however, employed the same concepts to examine the use of social media in the context of digital diplomacy by CGTN Africa and BBC Africa. Similarly, Bali et al. ([2018](#)) used it to ascertain how the US Consulate General in Erbil and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Representation in Washington have utilized Facebook as a tool for public diplomacy. This "Three-dimensional model" is also applicable in comparison of digital diplomacy on Twitter by international and Pakistani embassies. These embassies typically utilize Twitter to establish an online agenda around specific topics and events, such as common local, societal, and global challenges, as part of their digital diplomacy efforts. After establishing a proper agenda, these embassies are better equipped to enhance their online presence and visibility through Twitter. They can advance their online agendas and reach a larger audience globally through the distinctive characteristics of Twitter, such as retweets, mentions, or hashtagging. With a pre-defined online agenda and a

significant presence on Twitter, these embassies can build and initiate interactions with their followers. Their digital diplomacy approach enables two-way talks, interaction, and communication, rather than one-way communication. Therefore, this model, with its three dimensions, acts as a structure to facilitate the three research questions asked.

Research Methodology

Quantitative content analysis was performed to assess the Twitter agendas of international (China, Russia, UK, & USA) and Pakistani embassies, and to determine the number of retweets, hashtags, and the target audience for both groups of embassies' presence expansion. First, the official Twitter handles of the international embassies with which Pakistan has close diplomatic ties (including China, Russia, the UK, & USA) were nominated. Pakistani embassies in these states were nominated, using usernames, profile photographs, and the gray checkmark, which Twitter (2023) uses to validate accounts associated with the government. Third-party tools such as Vicinitas (<https://www.vicinitas.io/free-tools/download-user-tweets>) or Twitter's API were used to gather tweets. All tweets from the designated international and Pakistani embassies between January 1 and December 31, 2022, were included in the purposive sample approach. This timeline aligns with the accessibility of data and the study's objective of investigating agenda-setting and digital diplomacy. Urdu- tweets, meaningless or media-only postings, duplicate retweets, and tweets in other non-English languages that lacked contextual relevance were all eliminated from the sampled tweets as part of the cleaning and preprocessing procedure.

The agendas of the tweets were sorted into three main categories based on their interests, and each category was further subdivided into sub-categories. A: "Tweets based on shared interests": these elements include those integrated interests that could be advantageous to Pakistani and foreign embassies. For them, they might be multiparty, cooperative jobs (1. education, 2. cultural outlook, 3. media prospects, 4. development projects, 5. health sector, 6. business cooperation, 7. economic reforms, 8. sports' events, 9. flood, 10. social issues). B: "Tweets based on global interests": broad issues or concerns that are significant on a worldwide scale and have a significant impact. The entire world community genuinely shares them (1. climate cooperation, 2. Covid-19, 3. human rights, 4. law and security situation, 5. women empowerment, 6. international perspective). C: "Tweets based on ambassadorial interests": a wide range of matters relating

to ambassadors, high commissioners, delegates, and embassies (1. embassies' updates, 2. ambassadors' engagements, 3. home country promotion, 4. appreciation and tribute, 5. in memorial, 6. special events, 7. bilateral relations). For presence expansion and visibility, the possible coded indicators included retweets, use of hashtags, and the target audience includes a specific group of people to whom a tweet is intended to appeal or reach (1. domestic audience, 2. host country audience, 3. both (home and host country's audience), 4. global audience). In order to gather and code the data, a coding sheet was also created. This coding sheet was created in Microsoft Excel, as the web tweet downloader provided the tweets in MS Excel files. The data collected through content analysis were nominal in nature; therefore, findings were derived from frequencies and percentages.

For engagement and conversation generation, an online survey was conducted among Twitter followers of international (China, Russia, UK, & USA) and Pakistani embassies. An online link of survey questionnaire was generated on google form that contained precise questions regarding demographic information of the Twitter followers of embassies, their Twitter usage, and engagement with embassies and conversation generation strategies used by embassies to engage with followers. These included indicators like liking, retweeting, replying, bookmarking, sharing the tweets, embassies crafting interesting and engaging tweets, followers participating in conversation generations, embassies offering constructive feedback on followers' responses, and followers participating in threads. For this purpose, a five-point Likert scale was used to collect responses from each embassy's Twitter followers, with options ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Almost always). Before being distributed to the target population, the survey was thoroughly tested internally to ensure that it contained no errors, inconsistencies, or ambiguous questions. For the pilot study, the followers of the embassies were randomly sent the survey link. Following their response, the required adjustments were made based on their input.

The survey population was comprised of Twitter followers of the identified embassies. They were split into two groups: (A) followers of international embassies in Pakistan (China, Russia, UK, & USA), and (B) followers of Pakistani embassies in the same nations. The sampling strategy was a two-step. To ensure equal participation, a quota of 60 responders per Embassy was established as the first step in a quota selection technique based on followers' affiliation with specific embassies, resulting in a total

sample size of 480 (240 from international embassies in Pakistan and 240 from Pakistani embassies abroad). The fair representativeness of the sampled respondents and their balanced participation were guaranteed and maintained by this set quota of 60 respondents from each of the eight embassies. After that, respondents within each quota were selected using a convenience sampling technique that prioritized accessibility. The survey link was distributed to the Twitter followers of the embassies through the researcher's own Twitter account via direct messages (DMs), survey tweets, mentioning followers in the tweets, using hashtags in the survey tweets, encouraging retweets, commenting in replies, and mentioning in comments. After being informed of the study's objectives, these respondents willingly agreed to participate. They were assured that their answers would remain confidential, that their identities would be kept anonymous, and that all information would be treated in confidence and used exclusively for research purposes. The responses from followers were regularly monitored, and those who left out information received reminders. It took approximately five to six months to reach the necessary sample size due to the delayed participation. The overall response rate was relatively low because of difficulties associated with online data collection and voluntary participation. The dependability and generalizability of the results were improved by this combined strategy, which struck a compromise between representativeness and practicality. With the mean scores of followers' responses, the difference between the two groups was calculated using an independent sample T-test.

Results and Discussion

The findings for RQ 1 implied that in 2022, the international embassies of China, Russia, UK, & USA in Pakistan had a shared interests-based Twitter agenda, which was mainly composed of 139 (20.4%) cultural outlooks (see Table 1). On the other hand, 486 (33.8%) Tweets on flood were used to complete the agenda for shared interests on Twitter by Pakistani embassies abroad during the same time period (see Table 2).

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages for Agenda of the Tweets Based on Shared Interests by International Embassies in Pakistan

Twitter Handle of International Embassies	Agenda of the Tweets Based on Shared Interests																			
	Education		Cultural Outlook		Media Prospects		Development/ Technology		Health Sector		Business		Economic Reforms		Sports Events		Flood		Social Issues	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
China in Pak	4	2.70	7	4.70	5	3.30	64	42.70	2	1.30	17	11.30	2	1.30	11	7.30	29	19.3	9	6.00
Russia in Pak	5	4.90	53	51.5	21	20.40	8	7.80	1	1.00	3	2.90	2	1.90	4	3.90	0	0.00	6	5.80
UK in Pak	30	15.1	21	10.6	14	7.00	4	2.00	7	3.50	10	5.00	10	5.00	45	22.6	37	18.6	21	10.6
USA in Pak	51	22.3	58	25.3	12	5.20	11	4.80	8	3.50	32	14.00	5	2.20	6	2.60	29	12.7	17	7.40
Total	90	13.2	139	20.4	52	7.60	87	12.80	18	2.60	62	9.10	19	2.80	66	9.70	95	14.0	53	7.80

Table 2

Frequencies and Percentages for Agenda of the Tweets Based on Shared Interests by Pakistani Embassies Abroad

Twitter Handle of Pakistani Embassies	Agenda of the Tweets Based on Shared Interests																			
	Education		Cultural Outlook		Media Prospects		Development/ Technology		Health Sector		Business		Economic Reforms		Sports Events		Flood		Social Issues	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Pak in China	2	1.90	33	30.60	3	2.80	23	21.30	2	1.90	11	10.20	2	1.90	12	11.10	18	16.70	2	1.90
Pak in Russia	2	3.60	13	23.20	5	8.90	4	7.10	0	0.00	5	8.90	3	5.40	1	1.80	22	39.30	1	1.80
Pak in UK	6	1.50	86	21.50	34	8.50	13	3.30	8	2.00	28	7.00	31	7.80	47	11.80	134	33.50	13	3.30
Pak in USA	46	5.30	127	14.60	80	9.20	22	2.50	35	4.00	125	14.30	79	9.10	15	1.70	313	35.90	30	3.40
Total	56	3.90	259	18.00	122	8.50	62	4.30	45	3.10	169	11.80	115	8.00	75	5.20	487	33.90	46	3.20

According to the facts, both embassies had distinctive twitter agendas based on shared interests. The international embassies in Pakistan have made cultural outreach a top priority, by promoting cultural exchange, festivals, artifacts, theater, performances, films, Islamic and religious history, hospitality, poetry, archeology, tourism, gastronomy, local talent, community events, and cultural music on Twitter. On Monday, December 26, 2022, the USA embassy in Pakistan tweeted for cultural outlook: "CDA Schofer visited the beautiful Rohtas Fort & Mann Singh Haveli, whose dome & decorative cupola base motifs were restored by the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation. This is just one of many examples of the excellent U.S.-Pakistan heritage preservation partnership! #PakUSAt75." As part of #PakUSAt75." The tweet highlights the importance of preserving the cultural heritage between the United States and Pakistan by mentioning CDA Schafer's visit to the Rohtas Fort and Mann Singh Haveli, which were restored by the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation, highlighting their strong diplomatic and historical ties. Similarly, on Wednesday, December 14, 2022, the Russian Embassy in Pakistan tweeted: "Dear friends! Today we are going to travel to the Republic of Khakassia. This area of Eastern Siberia is full of monuments to the cultural history bestowed upon the region by the people who have inhabited and traversed its steppes for 30,000 years. #RussiaNotes @mfa_OTD 19.11.1922RUethnographer, historian, and linguist Yuriy Knorozov was born. In 1952, he was the first in the world to decipher the script of Maya. Contributed to the application of math methods to deciphering ancient languages. Received state awards from the USSR, Guatemala, and Mexico." This tweet emphasizes Khakassia's 30,000-year-old Eastern Siberian heritage and its cultural and historical significance. It also honors the historian, linguist, and ethnographer Yuriy Knorozov (born 19.11.1922), who distinguished the USSR, Guatemala, and Mexico with his work deciphering the Maya script and applying mathematical techniques to ancient languages. Some observations about Russia.

While managing their shared interest-based tweet agenda, Pakistani embassies abroad, however, emphasized flood-related projects. They tweeted about the flood situation in Pakistan, its damages, donations for it, flood aid to Pakistan, all reforms and measures, charity appeals, fund ratings, and donations. On Tuesday, August 2022, the Pakistani Embassy in China tweeted about the flood situation in Pakistan: "Chinese govt announced an additional assistance package of RMB 500 million for post-

flood reconstruction. This brings the total assistance to the Chinese RMB of 1 billion. A big thank you, China! A true affirmation of our iron-brotherhood indeed! @CMShehbaz @BBhuttoZardari @zlj517 @AmbNong." According to this Tweet, the Chinese government has pledged an extra RMB 500 million for Pakistan's post-flood rehabilitation, increasing the overall amount of Chinese aid to RMB 1 billion. In addition to flood aid, it highlights the strong "iron brotherhood" and friendship between China and Pakistan and gratitude for China. On Wednesday, December 21, 2022, the US-based Pakistani Embassy tweeted: "RT @PowerUSAID: Today Pakistani Foreign Minister @BBhuttoZardari & I discussed how communities impacted by Pakistan's recent floods are faring, the impacts of U.S. assistance in the immediate aftermath, & our work together to build resilience to prepare for future crises." This tweet centers on a discussion between USAID and Pakistan's foreign minister, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, over the impact of US assistance following the country's recent floods. It also emphasizes ongoing efforts to support affected communities and improve their resilience to future calamities.

Due to their similar tweeting agendas, the USA and Russian embassies in Pakistan likewise supported cultural outlooks with 58 (25.3%) and 53 (51.5%), respectively (see Table 1). However, the UK embassy in Pakistan maintained this agenda with 45 (22.6%) tweets about sports-related events, while the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan detailed its strategy for shared interests with 64 (42.7%) tweets on technology and development (see Table 1). On the other hand, the 2022 flood scenario in Pakistan was more prominent on the Twitter accounts of Pakistani embassies in the USA, UK, and Russia. Consequently, 22 (39.3%), 134 (33.5%), and 313 (35.9%) tweets about the flood situation in Pakistan were primarily reflected in their shared agenda of tweets (see Table 2). However, as Table 2, demonstrates, the Pakistani Embassy in China prioritized a cultural perspective in 33 (30.6%) tweets on its account this year, undervaluing other common interests in light of the shared agenda.

Table 3

Frequencies and Percentages for Agenda of the Tweets Based on Global Interests by International Embassies in Pakistan

Twitter Handle of International Embassies	Agenda of the Tweets Based on Global Interests											
	Climate Cooperation		Covid -19		Human Rights		Law & Security Situation		Women Empowerment		International Perspective	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
China in Pak	9	21.4	3	7.1	2	4.8	3	7.1	1	2.4	24	57.1
Russia in Pak	4	1.5	3	1.1	3	1.1	19	7.0	0	0.0	241	89.3
UK in Pak	32	15.3	8	3.8	28	13.4	20	9.6	26	12.4	95	45.5
USA in Pak	47	15.7	36	12.0	11	3.7	20	6.7	29	9.7	157	52.3
Total	92	11.2	50	6.1	44	5.4	62	7.6	56	6.8	517	63.0

Table 4

Frequencies and Percentages for Agenda of the Tweets Based on Global Interests by Pakistani Embassies Abroad

Twitter Handle of Pakistani Embassies	Agenda of the Tweets Based on Global Interests											
	Climate Cooperation		Covid -19		Human Rights		Law & Security Situation		Women Empowerment		International Perspective	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Pak in China	6	14.6	1	2.4	1	2.4	6	14.6	1	2.4	26	63.4
Pak in Russia	2	2.0	0	0.0	1	1.0	4	4.0	0	0.0	93	93.0
Pak in UK	115	17.2	12	1.8	36	5.4	33	4.9	7	1.0	466	69.7
Pak in USA	137	31.6	19	4.4	15	3.5	42	9.7	23	5.3	197	45.5
Total	260	20.9	32	2.6	53	4.3	85	6.8	31	2.5	782	62.9

To encourage cross-cultural understanding and connections based on shared interests, the data suggest that foreign embassies in Pakistan actively promoted cultural components. Cultural values shape soft power, which allows control through seduction rather than coercion (Lahren et al., [2023](#); Surma, [2014](#)). Melissen and de Keulenaar ([2017](#)) emphasize how digital technology may be used to engage with people and culture, assisting embassies in their efforts to promote their cultures. However, due to their shared interest-based tweet objective, Pakistani embassies overseas were more considerate, encouraging a deeper understanding of the devastating flood disasters in Pakistan. They exhibit their unwavering dedication to using digital diplomacy to address the country's pressing problems. Digital diplomacy fosters collaborations to address global concerns while promoting national interests, increases public trust, and averts crises (Pipchenko & Moskalenko, [2017](#)). Rashica ([2018](#)) also emphasizes the value of digital tools in disaster response, utilizing connective technologies to enhance communication and collaboration during times of crisis.

For the agenda of the tweets induced from global interests, with 517 (63.0%) and 782 (62.9%) tweets, respectively, the international (China, Russia, UK, & USA) and Pakistani embassies in these countries in 2022 primarily valued international perspectives on their Twitter accounts (see Table 3 and Table 4).

The findings denote that both embassies maintained an international perspective as the major focus of their global interest-based Twitter agenda. International embassies have posted more content about international perspectives; both groups were alert in bringing attention to international relations, foreign policy priorities, diplomacy with different countries, issues like Afghanistan, the war crises in Ukraine and Russia, Iran, Palestine, India, and Kashmir, peacekeeping efforts for them, international organizational summits, conferences, or meetings. On Thursday, October 27, 2022, the Pakistani Embassy in China tweeted from a global standpoint: "RT @OIC_OCI: As October 27, 2022, marks the completion of 75 years of the occupation of the #Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and #Kashmir, the #OIC General Secretariat reiterates its full solidarity with the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their quest for the right to self-determination." This tweet reveals that seventy-five years after the occupation of the region started, on October 27, 2022, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) tweeted again that it sympathized with the people of Jammu and

Kashmir. It emphasizes support for Kashmiris' right to self-determination. On Friday, December 16, 2022, the Russian Embassy in Pakistan tweeted: "RT @RussiaUN: #Kuzmin: This year's results of the vote on a resolution on combating the glorification of Nazism are simply shocking. For the first time in the UN history, former Axis powers voted against a document condemning Nazism and confirming the inviolability of the results of #WorldWarII." Russia's UN envoy tweeted that the outcome of the vote on a resolution opposing the exaltation of Nazism was alarming. It highlights the fact that former Axis nations voted against a resolution denouncing Nazism and certifying the conclusion of World War II for the first time in UN history.

The Chinese Embassy in Pakistan has 24 (57.1%), the Russian Embassy has 241 (89.3%), the UK embassy has 95 (45.5%), and the USA embassy has 157 (52.3%) tweets that highlight international perspectives in an effort to set agendas for global interests (see Table 3). The Pakistani Embassy in China, with 24 (57.1%), the Pakistani Embassy in Russia, with 93 (93%), the Pakistani Embassy in the UK, with 466 (69.7%), and the Pakistani Embassy in USA, with 197 (45.5%) tweets, all highlighted international perspectives on their respective Twitter accounts while considering the agenda of the tweets based on global interests (see Table 4).

According to the investigation, Pakistani and international embassies work diligently to maintain and strengthen their position in international affairs by adeptly managing their foreign policy in line with global interests. Rashica (2018) agreed that digital diplomacy significantly contributes to the state's foreign policy goals, expands global alignment, and fortifies the state's international relations activity more quickly and effectively. Similar to this, studies by Larbi (2023), Tassilova et al. (2018), Tanko and Dogara (2023), and Surma (2014) demonstrate that, within the framework of contemporary international relations, diplomatic organizations are rapidly utilizing digital platforms to enhance their foreign policy.

For the ambassadorial interest, the main agenda of the tweets in 2022 was appreciation and tribute, with 255 (28%) and 727 (31.8%) tweets from the Pakistani embassies abroad and the international (China, Russia, UK, & USA) embassies operating in Pakistan (see Table 5 and Table 6).

Table 5

Frequencies and Percentages for Agenda of the Tweets Based on Ambassadorial Interests by International Embassies in Pakistan

Twitter Handle of international embassies	Agenda of the Tweets Based on Ambassadorial Interests													
	Embassies' Update		Ambassadors' Engagement		Home Country Promotion		Appreciation/ Tribute		In Memoriam		Special Events		Bilateral Relations	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
China in Pak	2	1.4	8	5.6	33	22.9	64	44.4	9	6.3	14	9.7	14	9.7
Russia in Pak	16	9.7	11	6.7	57	34.5	37	22.4	11	6.7	22	13.3	11	6.7
UK in Pak	29	9.3	20	6.4	66	21.1	89	28.4	43	13.7	30	9.6	36	11.5
USA in Pak	47	16.2	26	9.0	67	23.1	65	22.4	32	11.0	28	9.7	25	8.6
Total	94	10.3	65	7.1	223	24.5	255	28.0	95	10.4	94	10.3	86	9.4

Table 6

Frequencies and Percentages for Agenda of the Tweets Based on Ambassadorial Interests by Pakistani Embassies Abroad

Twitter Handle of Pakistani Embassies	Agenda of the Tweets Based on Ambassadorial Interests													
	Embassies' Update		Ambassadors' Engagement		Home Country Promotion		Appreciation/ Tribute		In Memoriam		Special Events		Bilateral Relations	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Pak in China	9	5.6	7	4.3	28	17.4	52	32.3	22	13.7	19	11.8	24	14.9
Pak in Russia	17	12.8	4	3.0	23	17.3	45	33.8	22	16.5	13	9.8	9	6.8
Pak in UK	14	1.7	23	2.8	185	22.8	335	41.2	120	14.8	74	9.1	62	7.6
Pak in USA	25	2.1	99	8.4	291	24.7	295	25.1	195	16.6	111	9.4	160	13.6
Total	65	2.8	133	5.8	527	23.1	727	31.8	359	15.7	217	9.5	255	11.2

The results showed that both embassies emphasized gratitude and homage for their ambassadorial interests-based tweet agenda. The prominent location of Pakistani embassies meant that they were there to congratulate, honor, and applaud particular employees on the accomplishment of significant projects, winning teams and players, singers, mountaineers, and award winners. In their tweets, they also express gratitude and anticipation, as well as their best wishes for ambassadors and other states on their anniversaries, birthdays, and other significant occasions and celebrations. On Sunday, December 25, 2022, the US embassy in Pakistan posted a tweet in gratitude and remembrance: "Happy Quaid-e-Azam Day! On this special day, American diplomats from the US Mission pay tribute to Muhammad Ali Jinnah PK, the founder of Pakistan, by sharing his words on the importance of inclusion and religious freedom. #Quaid #QuaideAzam #MuhammadAliJinnah." On Quaid-e-Azam Day, the US Mission to Pakistan pays tribute to Pakistan's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in this tweet. It highlights Jinnah's lessons on inclusivity and religious freedom, and American ambassadors also value his legacy. On Tuesday, May 24, 2022, the Pakistani Embassy in the USA tweeted: "RT @Masood_Khan: Congratulated, in a virtual meeting, Ali Sajjad Taj @alisajjadtaj, on becoming Mayor of Artesia, CA., the first Pakistani-American to assume this position. The role of the Pak diaspora and business opportunities were discussed. <https://t.co/kZ0iiuMU>." Ambassador Masood Khan congratulates Ali Sajjad Taj on becoming the first Pakistani-American to hold the position of mayor of Artesia, California, in this tweet. The virtual conversation also touched on business opportunities and the significance of the Pakistani diaspora.

The Chinese and UK embassies in Pakistan likewise showed greater concern for gratitude and homage in their agenda-setting of ambassadorial concerns, with 64 (44.4%) and 89 (28.0%) tweets, respectively (see Table 5). In contrast, Russian and US embassies in Pakistan focused on promoting their home countries in their 57 (34.4%) and 67 (23.1%) tweets, respectively, while disregarding other ambassadorial interests in their pursuit of the same agenda-setting through tweeting (see Table 5). In contrast, there were 52 (32.3%) tweets about appreciation and tribute from the Pakistani Embassy in China, 45 (33.8%) from the Pakistani Embassy in Russia, 335 (41.2%) from the Pakistani Embassy in the UK, and 295 (25.1%) from the Pakistani Embassy in the USA. These tweets prioritized ambassadorial interests over other interests (see Table 6).

To provide the host audience with a positive, encouraging, and motivating gesture, the investigation found that Pakistani and international embassies emphasize gratitude and homage for the ambassadorial-based agenda of the tweets. They conveyed gratitude, encouragement, and hope through this agenda. Trust, satisfaction, positive word of mouth, and loyalty are some of the key antecedents of engagement (Kang, [2014](#)). Furthermore, positivity is essential for promoting social media engagement (Strauß et al., [2015](#)). Both sides' embassies were promoting goodwill, strengthening diplomatic relations, and establishing a solid online presence.

The results of these agenda-setting studies lend credence to the first dimension of the three-dimensional model that Bjola and Holmes ([2015](#)) proposed. This element highlights how digital diplomats focus on specific facts and create agendas for their intended audience (Bali et al., [2018](#); Pamment, [2013](#); Zhang & Ong'ong'a, [2022](#)). To influence policy deliberations, impact public discourse, and align narratives with their national interests, Pakistani and foreign embassies utilize Twitter to set agendas. They highlight cultural issues, global concerns, crises, appreciation, and tribute, and they draw attention to specific topics (Entman, [1993](#)). This strategy helps to shape public opinion, foster bilateral relationships, enhance soft power, and promote effective communication with regional audiences. Through their first dimension of agenda-setting, Bjola and Jiang ([2015](#)) emphasize the strategic significance of digital platforms for diplomatic missions, highlighting the need for a multifaceted approach to effectively utilize social media in engaging audiences and promoting diplomatic objectives.

The extent of increase in Pakistani and international embassies' online presence on Twitter is determined by an average measure of the normalized values of key indicators (tweets, retweets, followers, followings, hashtags, and intended audience). The findings for RQ2 indicate that the average presence growth score for Pakistani embassies was 1.73, higher than the average for international embassies, which was 1.44 (see Tables 7 and 8). This indicates that, compared to foreign embassies, Pakistani embassies were generally more active on Twitter in 2022. The 0.28 difference between the Pakistani embassies overseas and the foreign embassies indicates that the Pakistani embassies overseas did better overall across the presence expansion metrics. Stronger efforts for particular presence expansion and visibility indicators are the cause of this higher grade.

Table 7

Normalized Values of Presence Expansion Indicators for International Embassies' Twitter handles in Pakistan

Twitter Handles of International Embassies	Normalized Values of Presence Expansion Indicators						Average
	Tweets	Retweets	Followers	Followings	Hashtags	Intended Audience	
China in Pak	0.18	0.49	0.25	0.08	0.19	0.25	0.24
Russia in Pak	0.3	0	0.03	0.15	0.49	0.16	0.18
UK in Pak	0.46	0	0.16	0.19	0.53	0.22	0.26
USA in Pak	0.54	1	0.8	0.84	0.54	0.79	0.75
Total	1.48	1.49	1.24	1.26	1.75	1.43	1.44

Table 8

Normalized Values of Presence Expansion Indicators for Pakistani Embassies' Twitter handles Abroad

Twitter Handles of Pakistani Embassies	Normalized Values of Presence Expansion Indicators						Average
	Tweets	Retweets	Followers	Followings	Hashtags	Intended Audience	
Pak in China	0.08	1	0.18	0.12	0.04	0.33	0.29
Pak in Russia	0	0.13	0.08	0.72	0.17	0.27	0.22
Pak in the UK	0.77	0.32	0.23	0.43	0.88	0.46	0.51
Pak in the USA	1	0.3	0.71	0.52	1	0.63	0.69
Total	1.85	1.75	1.2	1.79	2.09	1.70	1.73

In particular, Pakistani embassies in China, Russia, and the UK had average presence expansion ratings of 0.29, 0.22, and 0.51, respectively. These values were significantly higher than those of the Chinese, Russian, and UK embassies in Pakistan, which were 0.24, 0.18, and 0.26, respectively (refer to Table 7 and Table 8). These particular presence growth scores also suggest that in 2022, overseas Pakistani embassies were successful in increasing their online visibility through their Twitter activity. In contrast to the Pakistani Embassy in the same state, which received a score of 0.69, only the USA Embassy in Pakistan maintained a better average presence growth score of 0.75 (see Table 7 and Table 8).

According to Tables 9 and 10, the results indicate that there are significantly more tweets from Pakistani embassies overseas (4962, or 67.3%) than from international embassies operating in Pakistan (2414, or 32.7%). This implies that embassies representing Pakistan abroad should have a more varied and active social media presence. The content strategies of Pakistani and international embassies also differed significantly. For example, the number of hashtags used by Pakistani embassies abroad was 5653 (70.4%), whereas the number used by international embassies in Pakistan was 2380 (29.6%). This suggests that Pakistani embassies may have utilized hashtags for specific campaigns and events to enhance visibility and engagement with their target audience. The use of hashtags indicates that a communication is associated with a specific topic (a larger online discussion/trend; Lovejoy et al., [2012](#)). The Pakistani Embassy in the USA, for instance, used a total of "6 #tags" in their tweet on Wednesday, December 21, 2022.: "RT @GNPPakistan: #NEWS | US, Pakistan discuss resilient reconstruction in Pakistan <https://t.co/tzv97Rltgi> #GNP #BilawalBhuttoZardari #America #US #Pakistan @BBhuttoZardari @ForeignOfficePk @ACSouthAsia @AtlanticCouncil @UzairYounus @PakinUSA @Masood_Khan @usembislamabad @epwing_official"

Table 9

Frequencies and Percentages of Presence Expansion Indicators for International Embassies' Twitter handles in Pakistan

Twitter Handles of International Embassies	Presence Expansion Indicators									
	Tweets		Retweets		Followers		Followings		Hashtags	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
China in Pak	336	13.91	16792	33.45	161800	20.5	192	6.23	263	11.05
Russia in Pak	538	22.28	9524	18.97	16700	2.11	379	12.31	668	28.06
UK in Pak	721	29.86	1620	3.22	101500	12.88	477	15.49	722	30.33
USA in Pak	819	33.92	22255	44.34	507800	64.45	2030	65.95	727	30.54
Total	2414	100	50191	100	787800	100	3078	100	2380	100

Table 10

Frequencies and Percentages of Presence Expansion Indicators for Pakistani Embassies' Twitter handles Abroad

Twitter Handles of Pakistani Embassies	Presence Expansion Indicators									
	Tweets		Retweets		Followers		Followings		Hashtags	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Pak in China	310	6.24	6041	57.02	12100	15.06	68	2.76	125	2.21
Pak in Russia	289	5.8	805	7.59	5610	6.98	107	4.35	452	7.99
Pak in UK	1881	37.90	1907	18	15400	19.17	767	31.24	2368	41.88
Pak in USA	2482	50.02	1841	17.37	47200	58.77	1513	61.62	2708	47.90
Total	4962	100	10594	100	80310	100	2455	100	5653	100

Table 11

Frequencies and Percentages for Targeted Audience on Twitter by International Embassies in Pakistan

Twitter handle of International Embassies	Targeted Audience							
	Domestic		Host		Domestic/Host		Global	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
China in Pak	34	10.1	136	40.5	132	39.3	34	10.1
Russia in Pak	197	36.6	26	4.8	21	3.9	294	54.6
UK in Pak	119	16.5	206	28.6	201	27.9	195	27.0
USA in Pak	144	17.6	310	37.9	145	17.7	220	26.9
Total	494	20.5	678	28.1	499	20.7	743	30.8

Table 12

Frequencies and Percentages for Targeted Audience on Twitter by Pakistani Embassies Abroad

Twitter Handle of Pakistani Embassies	Targeted Audience							
	Domestic		Host		Domestic/Host		Global	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Pak in China	86	27.7	50	16.1	127	41.0	47	15.2
Pak in Russia	80	27.7	20	6.9	35	12.1	154	53.3
Pak in UK	656	34.9	128	6.8	254	13.5	843	44.8
Pak in USA	956	38.5	181	7.3	775	31.2	570	23.0
Total	1778	35.8	379	7.6	1191	24.0	1614	32.5

Similarly, when compared to international embassies with lower reach of 494 (20.5%), 499 (20.7%), and 743 (30.8%) to the same audience, Pakistani embassies operating overseas via tweets had greater online reach by catering to the home, both (home and host audience), and global audience with 1778 (35.8%), 1191 (24.0%), and 1614 (32.5%) (see Table 11 and Table 12). "Think Diplomats can no longer be certain that their thoughts will not be revealed to the audiences they have never targeted" is stated by Rashica (2018) as a key tactic for comprehending different social media audiences. The combination of these metrics—tweets, hashtags, and target audience—has improved the online visibility and presence of Pakistani embassies overseas.

In contrast, these indicators helped to decrease the expansion and visibility of international embassies in Pakistan on Twitter, despite their

active participation in the online community. These embassies had 50191 (82.6%) retweets, which was higher than the 10594 (17.4%) retweets for Pakistani embassies overseas (see Table 9 and Table 10). This may suggest that international embassies prioritized audience engagement over merely updating their audiences with tweet content. Additionally, they had more Twitter followers (787800, 90.7%) and followers (3078, 55.6%) than Pakistani embassies overseas (80310, 9.3%) and 2455, 44.4%), respectively (see Table 9 and Table 10). This suggests that they were more active in following other accounts to broaden their network and establish connections. According to Huang ([2020](#)), the extensive network of followers in the global political arena emphasizes the significance of SNS diplomacy membership.

Accounts with large followings on social networks have greater influence potential (Wu et al., [2011](#)). Thus, follower/following patterns can be recognized as a form of relative presence in online diplomatic networks (Manor & Crilley, [2019](#)). As seen in Table 11 and Table 12, they were able to capture a larger percentage of host audiences (678, 28.1%) compared to 379 (7.6%) from Pakistani embassies overseas. Social media-savvy diplomats may expect to gain more recognition from international audiences (Sotiriu, [2015](#)).

The second dimension of the three-dimensional model proposed by Bjola and Jiang ([2015](#)) is supported by these presence expansion indicators. This dimension highlights the widespread use of social media by embassies for diplomatic purposes and the situation-specific variations in the effectiveness of presence expansion metrics. The use of Twitter diplomacy by embassies to try to increase their online presence was also supported by Ifran et al. ([2023](#)). The commitment of Pakistani and foreign embassies to efficient diplomatic communication in both domestic and international contexts is demonstrated by their use of Twitter to engage with a range of audiences. Building a following online has become increasingly dependent on enhancing one's online presence, and the improper use of these technologies undermines an organization's credibility and authority (Bjola & Holmes, [2015](#)). Based on the results, it can be concluded that constant interaction with all important indicators is essential to enhancing the growth of embassies' online presence for diplomatic purposes.

According to the results of RQ: 3, the average mean score for engagement and conversation generation of foreign embassies in Pakistan

is 2.5144, while the average mean score for Pakistani embassies overseas is 2.4991 (see Table 13), demonstrating that their level of engagement and the conversation generation tend to be closer to 3 = Sometimes. The fact that the two groups' average engagement is nearly the same indicates that, on average, their levels of engagement are fairly comparable.

Table 13

Mean Scores for Engagement and Conversation Generation with the Twitter Followers of International and Pakistani Embassies

Engagement conversation generation			Engagement & Conversation Generation		
Twitter Followers of International Embassies	Engagement & Conversation Generation		Twitter Followers of Pakistani Embassies	Engagement & Conversation Generation	
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>
China in Pak	60	2.46	Pak in China	60	2.55
Russia in Pak	60	2.53	Pak in Russia	60	2.54
UK in Pak	60	2.54	Pak in the UK	60	2.40
USA in Pak	60	2.52	Pak in the USA	60	2.50
Average Mean	240	2.51	Average Mean	240	2.50

We moved forward with the assumed row for equal variances as Levene's test revealed no discernible difference in variances. There is not much of a difference between the two group means, as indicated by the *t*-value of 0.465, which is quite near 0. 0.642 is the *p*-value (Sig.). According to Table 14, a *p*-value > 0.05 (in this case, 0.642) indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the means of the two groups (overseas Pakistani embassies and international embassies in Pakistan).

Table 14

Independent Samples t-Test Comparing Engagement and Conversation Generation of International and Pakistani Embassies on Twitter

<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> value
.465	478	0.642

Although the difference is not particularly great, the slightly higher ratings (mean) of foreign embassies in Pakistan imply that they may be marginally more successful than Pakistani embassies abroad in engaging and striking up conversations with their Twitter followers. Consequently, the third element of the three-dimensional model proposed by Bjola and Holmes (2015) is validated, highlighting how social media enables

embassies to interact with online audiences and initiate dialogues—two essential components of contemporary public diplomacy (Pamment, [2013](#)). The findings align with those of Anton and Lăcătuș ([2022](#)), Bjola and Holmes ([2015](#)), and Manor ([2016](#)), who emphasized the importance of two-way communication and engagement with international audiences using a variety of diplomacy-related technologies. The results, however, differ from those of Akbar ([2023](#)), Huang and Wang ([2021](#)), Kampf et al. ([2015](#)), and Strauß et al. ([2015](#)), who concluded that there was little interaction between diplomatic organizations and their internet audience. Through Twitter, embassies have enhanced public diplomacy with their followers, increased their impact, and strengthened bilateral ties through engagement and conversation creation. By fostering trust, employing soft power, and promoting citizen diplomacy, it also enhances the effectiveness of digital diplomacy. Manor and Bjola ([2021](#)) have emphasized the significance of diplomatic institutions adapting to and effectively engaging with the digital context, as failing to do so may result in alienation from digital audiences. The current analysis highlights the research gap and challenges the approaches currently used to assess engagement and conversation production (Bali et al., [2018](#); Bjola & Jiang, [2015](#); Zhang & Ong'ong'a, [2022](#)). Their primary objective was to gauge engagement by tallying likes, retweets, and replies. Huang ([2020](#)) also suggested that experts should consider factors beyond the mere number of retweets and comments when evaluating people's online participation in the diplomatic sphere and its impact. Therefore, this study employs a survey-based methodology, asking direct questions of embassy followers to conduct a more thorough examination of engagement and conversation generation, providing a deeper insight into audience interactions and perceptions than previous research, which mainly used tweet analytics.

Conclusion

The role of social media in digital diplomacy is important to consider, as digitalization is bringing individuals from all over the world together. What is the relationship between them both? More precisely, how does social media, especially Twitter, affect diplomacy? Bjola and Holmes ([2015](#)) developed a three-dimensional model that provided insight into how international and Pakistani embassies utilized Twitter as a digital platform to set agendas in digital diplomacy. These agendas are influenced by ambassadorial, global, and shared interests and are ultimately engaging for

their target audience. Due to their increased presence and visibility on Twitter, they were better equipped to execute diplomatic strategies and engage in digital diplomacy. Building and maintaining relationships with a digital audience requires increasing one's online presence. Furthermore, digital diplomacy facilitates easier engagement, communication, and two-way conversations with embassies' Twitter followers, promoting bilateral partnerships, cooperation, connections, and internal harmony.

Apart from contending with other prominent global powers (China, Russia, UK, & USA), Pakistan's digital diplomacy has undergone substantial enhancements, and departs from the findings of previous studies. With the digitization of the nation's diplomatic services, Pakistani embassies overseas have been able to use Twitter to interact in real-time, promote their country's interests, and respond quickly to global events. According to global trends in digital diplomacy, Pakistani embassies can now enhance cross-cultural communication, promote transparency, and convey their policy agendas to a larger audience. Therefore, national and international organizations encourage the use of digital channels, such as Twitter, in addition to traditional public diplomacy, to define goals, foster online growth, and engage with audiences worldwide. However, the goals and purposes of diplomacy have not changed, despite the digitization of communication channels.

This study may have a significant impact on digital diplomacy and international relations. By contrasting domestic and foreign embassies, embassies may be able to better their strategy, establish bilateral relationships, and engage in social media more successfully, all of which could enhance public diplomacy. The results may demonstrate how embassies influence audience participation, exploit Twitter's algorithm to gain prominence, and engage in public discourse. It could also help assess how competitive home embassies are at influencing narratives and identifying potential foreign effects on public opinion. Lastly, the study may provide valuable recommendations to academics and decision-makers who aim to strategically utilize social media to enhance Pakistan's international diplomatic profile.

The difficulties observed during data collection prompted the researcher to make certain methodological changes. When this study was in process, Twitter was still using its old name. Despite its subsequent rebranding as "X," the researcher has maintained its previous name throughout the

investigation. It was no longer feasible to track the quantity of first replies, replies inside replies, bookmarks, and shares for every tweet due to X's new regulations. The researcher modified the methods in light of these constraints. He chose to ask followers targeted questions regarding their degree of participation in conversations and engagement rather than directly calculating these engagement measures. While considering the limitations of this study, future researchers might examine other digital platforms where diplomatic methods are understood, such as Facebook, Instagram, and others, specifically with regard to Pakistan. They may choose to include additional foreign embassies, such as those from different Asian, European, and American nations, in addition to these already selected ones. Similarly, other Pakistani embassies overseas can be preferred by future scholars. Deviating from Online surveys and content analysis, case studies, discourse analysis, in-depth interviews, participant observations, and focus groups can also be used in future studies to examine digital diplomacy practices from the viewpoints of diplomatic missions and the general public. The study is complicated by the online survey replies from the embassies' Twitter followers, but it can be expanded in the future to include the general public. On the other hand, it is possible to examine their initial responses, which manifested as comments or replies to the embassies' tweets. Other characteristics that could be confounding factors in this study, such as agenda-setting, presence expansion, engagement and conversation generation, and the social influence of the embassies, can be evaluated by future researchers.

Author Contribution

Raheel Anwar: conceptualization, methodology, data curation, formal analysis, writing-initial draft. **Noshina Saleem:** supervision, project administration, writing – review & editing, validation. **Hanan Ahmad:** supervision, writing – review & editing, validation.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

Data supporting the findings of this study will be made available by the corresponding author upon request.

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