

Public and Corporate Diplomacy Research

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Abstract:

This edited volume aims to introduce current empirical studies that apply different research methods in the field of public and corporate diplomacy and discuss their advantages and limitations.

The practice of public diplomacy refers to the efforts of a country and its actors to create and maintain relationships with publics in home and host countries to advance policies and actions, aiming to maintain a good country image (Ingenhoff & Chariatte, 2020; Melissen & Wang, 2019). The strategic communication of nation states is therefore not limited to governmental actors, but includes various sub-state and corporates. For instance, we can observe how corporations take a stand on societal issues and get involved as non-state actors in the diplomatic discourse, generally defined as “Corporate Diplomacy” (White, 2020).

Most scholars have discussed the phenomenon on a theoretical basis, while the empirical research and measurement of the phenomenon do not get full academic attention. Questions such as what corporate diplomacy activities look like and how they can serve the country's reputation are highly relevant. As Westerman-Behaylo and colleagues (2015, p. 400) highlight, there is a need for “empirical research to explore to what degree and in which situations corporations play a diplomatic, positive role in foreign relations, as well as when they do not”. The focus of this book on empirical studies aims at understanding the advantages and limitations of different research methods to highlight different aspects of public diplomacy activities. Yet Public diplomacy research today is limited to certain methods and often fails to combine different research approaches. Thus, contemporary public diplomacy research is heavily based on quantitative research, while qualitative procedures are missing despite their importance for discovering new practices, especially in the intercultural context (Arcenaux & Bier, 2021). Also the digitization and the rise of new communication platforms highlight the need for new methodologies. Platforms such as Instagram or Tiktok, which are increasingly used by companies, offer more visuals, which require a different analytical approach than text. Despite the growing amount of information today, many public diplomacy researchers tend to apply traditional methods and not always take advantage of the availability of big data.

The book aims to present different methodologies and to show their advantages and limitations for public and corporate diplomacy research. Further, the importance and possibilities of using mixed method approaches will be discussed. The book will be a valuable resource for scholars, students and practitioners interested in how to measure public diplomacy activities.