



More than a Smile

Volunteers as the *New* model citizens



Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek



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Research Theme

Visible images the organizers sought to promote were a happy, bright and confident China, yet, underneath these visible images lie a strong sense of fear, fear of losing 'face' and being ashamed

Beijing Olympic Volunteer Program

1. A Key program put forward by BOCOG
2. Temporality: active & non-stop promotion
3. Spatiality: Omnipresent in Beijing and in the media
4. Media attention

Beijing Olympic Volunteer Program

- Promotion target: all citizens
- Actual Selection: only a few
- Different types of volunteers

Corpus

1. Manual for Beijing Olympic Volunteers (MBOV)
2. Posters
3. Volunteers' training materials found on website of BOCOG
4. Interviews with Volunteers

More than a Smile

Visible glory versus *Invisible*
national humiliation and shame

Smile

Promoting a happy, bright and
confident China

Smile

Smile as central theme for the volunteers' program

- Volunteers' Smile Beijing's Image
- Smiling Beijing Campaign
- Smile Campaign
- Wearing the Smile wristband campaign

Smile



Smile



1. On Glory and Dream

(In)visibility of a century of national
humiliation

China's 100 years of Olympics Dream



“Modern China, a product of 5,000 years of civilization and history, with her spirit of hard work and perseverance, finally shook hands with the Olympic Games on this day (the day the PRC won the right to host the Olympic Games, July 13, 2001), fulfilling the great dream of the Chinese people.”

Manual for Beijing Olympic Volunteers, p.69

On Glory and Dream

- ‘Dream’
 - “Start of the Dream”
 - “Dreams Keep Rising”
 - “Dreams Come True”
- The Past – ‘humiliation-free’
 - Ruins of Yuanmingyuan
 - HK
 - Qingdao

2. On Hosting a Great Olympics

A Desire for 'Face'

Desire for 'Face'

- 'Mianzi' is authority, status, honor and prestige in front of the people
- 'Mianzi' is translated into legitimacy and high morals enabling elites to rule

Desire for 'Face'

“China’s successful bid for the 2008 Olympics has given the country the international prestige it has been seeking in recent years.”

“The dynamic growth of Beijing reflects that of China as a whole.”

<http://www.beijing2008.cn/volunteers/training/material/others/n214067484.shtml>

Desire for 'Face'

C: What do you think of China?

W1: China is a fascinating country. It has a lot to offer the world.

W2: I don't know a lot about China yet, but I'm eager to learn.

C: What do you think of the Chinese?

W1: Chinese are very hospitable and kind-hearted.

W2: Chinese value family and education more than Americans.

<http://www.beijing2008.cn/volunteers/training/material/others/n214067474.shtml>

Desire for 'Face'



Beijing uses smile to welcome
the world
The world uses smile to return
Beijing

Poster displayed in subway

3. On 'Not-to-lose-face'

Invisibility of 'Shame'

“We have to have a good Olympics, otherwise not only will our generation lose face, but also our ancestors”

Wang Qishan, mayor of Beijing



‘Not-to-lose-face’

- Losing face → “a blemish on the character of individual, excites a great deal of comment” (Hu 1976)
- Losing face – shame
- Collective consequences

Disciplining Tools

Learning to be ashamed

Examples

Chewing with Your Mouth Open

This is the opposite of western culture. The Chinese appreciate that you make noise while eating. Westerners feel that this is disgusting and shows a complete lack of manners. Chew with your mouth shut!

<http://www.beijing2008.cn/volunteers/training/material/others/n214067479.shtml>

Passing Gas/Belching/Burping

This is considered rude in any situation. If you do need to pass gas, excuse yourself and go to the bathroom. Of course sometimes this is out of your control. If you accidentally pass gas loudly in front of others, you need to say, “excuse me” and quickly start talking about something to distract the people around you. DO NOT discuss any details about your gas, or any bodily function at the table!

<http://www.beijing2008.cn/volunteers/training/material/others/n214067479.shtml>

Not-to-do

“low-class and boorish”, “rough”, “cocky and impolite”, “underbred”, “too easy-going”, “careless”, “offensive”, “frivolous”, “stiff”, “strained”

Conclusion

“These were truly exceptional
Games”

Jacques Rogge, IOC president

“无与伦比”

'Un-comparable'

Olympic Spectacle

Visible and Positive at a glance...

Reflections

1. Power is not top-town, nor oppressive
2. Volunteers acted as vehicle of power
 - Self-discipline & internationalization of discourses
 - Volunteer experiences offered new windows and new opportunities to connect with the outside world

More research...

- To what extent can such state orchestrated media spectacle in which volunteers are trained to become and embody the new and proud face of the nation, be used and appropriated by the volunteers to explore and to invent new modes of being?
- What are the potential moments of resistance within the volunteer program?

Question & Answer

Thank you!