

Have Americans really "experienced China"?

Ding Chen Jie

Forbeschina.com

February 17, 2011

<http://www.forbeschina.com/review/201102/0007517.shtml>

China's PR video has been played a total of 8,400 times in the one month since its launch at New York's Times Square. How do Americans view this frequently replayed "China Feast/Banquet"? Forbeschina.com recently interviewed Ms. Bridget Uebel from Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP's Hong Kong office and partners Josh Galper and Adam Goldberg of the Washington DC office.

January 17, 2011, local time, "China's National Promotional Video – The People Edition" officially lit up in "China Red" at the Times Square, playing 15 times every hour, 300 times a day simultaneously on 6 digital displays. As of February 14th, China's National promotional video has played approximately 8,400 times. On the side of the screen playing the video, an eye-catching title, "Experience China" is written in English.

59 prominent Chinese representing the arts, technology, athletics, finance, philosophy/ideology, business and various other sectors appear in order in the video, including Tan Xun, Yuan Longping, Yang Liwei, Yao Ming and Deng Yaping. This promotional video has also been broadcasted by American cable news network CNN, sparking strong responses from abroad.

Many people believe that, for a long time now, the US Congress has not been sending any friendly messages in its appraisal of China. On one hand, they are continuously pressured by interest groups, however on the other hand, China too has not demonstrated great effort in its own lobbying/outreach work. Two days ago, Forbeschina.com interviewed Ms. Bridget Uebel from Orrick's Hong Kong office and partners Josh Galper and Adam Goldberg from the Washington DC office regarding the public response to the continuous broadcast of China's National PR video at Times Square.

Their response: "From ideological differences during the Cold War to the gradual shift towards today's economic competition, China's international status has risen rapidly. At the same time, however many Americans believe that China has taken away job opportunities from the U.S. There is still friction between the two countries on intellectual property, patents and other issues, as well as M&A and debate in foreign markets."

"This is a very smart and effective approach. We know that people's response is generally positive". On one hand, "The rich content of the video allows the average American to view China from more than a single perspective, they now have a greater understanding of what the Chinese people are thinking about, what they are doing and how they are living their lives."

On the other hand, China has the largest user base for mobile phones and the internet; the world's fastest growing auto market; the world's most visible OEM factory; the world's fastest growing affluent population. "You can say that the video allows Americans to understand how Chinese entrepreneurs continuously fight for their rights, marking a place on the global commercial platform. We feel that the promotional video has strengthened the relationship between the countries, to some extent effectively filling in blank gaps in understanding and acting as a bridge."

"In addition to the promotional video, further cultural exchange will build greater trust between the people of the two countries. Currently, Sino-US close communication and cooperation can already be found within many sectors at all levels, including the sharing of educational resources between universities and frequent contact between businesses. At the same time, there are opportunities for further cooperation in other sectors including renewable energy and technological innovations. A shared point that applies to both China and the US relates to the many young people who appeared in the video. They are the future of the country.

However, we cannot deny that, "This is only the first step. To a certain extent, it [the advertising campaign] can offset some of the negative views coming from Capitol Hill and Wall Street, however we believe that the best approach is for China to make the video more individualized and localized/pertinent to the general population.

Josh Galper and Adam Goldberg described that in New York, when people walk by Times Square, they mostly see celebrities [in advertising]. "This is helpful in their discussion of brands from China, celebrities and major events that are happening now. A normal American may say, "Oh! I know that person, and that person..." "But, they won't recognize everyone, which is why it's important for the average American to be able to see familiar celebrities as well as more faces of ordinary Chinese individuals."