

# Comparison of Differences Between China and the United Nations in the Global Anti-Epidemic Creative Propaganda and Calls

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Major public health events are fierce with extremely fast spread, which endanger life. The recall and research of visual creative propaganda for public health events will help clarify the special role and effective communication methods of creative propaganda under emergencies, and point out the direction for creative propaganda in the face of public health events in the future. **Methods:** Based on the global anti-epidemic creative propaganda collection activities sponsored by China and the United Nations, the differences and advantages of the two are analyzed, concluded, and summarized in detail from the background mission, nature of the collection, participants, propaganda content, work form, and communication thinking. **Conclusion:** China's anti-epidemic creative collection has a great advantage in response speed and the number of works, and it cleanses people's hearts in spreading hope and paying tribute. In addition, the United Nations is worth learning from in terms of communication thinking and communication media and scope. Although the global design community is not on the front line of fighting the epidemic, it still uses the wisdom of design to disseminate and share scientific and beneficial public health information, hoping to save more people's lives and health.

*Keywords:* China, the United Nations, the globe, anti-epidemic, creative propaganda, posters, dissemination, differences

## I. INTRODUCTION

The mission of visual communication is to attract people's attention through glamorous visual images to spread cultural connotations. From the relief celebrating the victory of Assyria in BC to the Bayeux Tapestry of the Battle of Hastings in the 11th century to the conscription advertisement of Uncle Sam in the United States during World War II, for thousands of years, creative and vivid visual images have been the recorder and disseminator of news, new ideas, and political views. The COVID-19 is the sixth "public health event of international concern" announced by the WHO since 2009, and it is also the most widespread global pandemic that humans have encountered in the past 100 years. It seriously threatens the safety and health of the people of the world. As the country that was the first to suffer the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic, China was at a loss for the sudden unknown and urgent death threats [1]. In the face of crises, government departments intervened through administrative means, health departments used medical treatments, and commercial organizations ensured the supply of living materials through logistics connections. All walks of

life have taken up their own missions and united to fight the epidemic. The Chinese design industry also fulfilled its mission in the first time and launched various anti-epidemic creative publicity collection activities to fight the epidemic with art.

## II. THE ANTI-EPIDEMIC PROPAGANDA MISSION OF CHINESE CREATIVE PEOPLE

### A. "Spreading hope" in the early stage of the epidemic

In January 2020, China's biggest challenge facing the COVID-19 epidemic is unknown! At that time, the Chinese had only one wish for the sudden epidemic, which was to live. What is the source of infection? When was patient 0 discovered? How does the virus spread? How to avoid infection? How to take quarantine measures? How many people are infected now? How many new cases are there today? Can people still have dinner together during the New Year? Are there masks and alcohol? Is there anything to eat at home? How to become a volunteer? Where to donate... At the beginning of the epidemic, these questions may be 100,000 whys that haunt every Chinese. Panic, helplessness, anxiety, and grief are the emotions of

most people. In response to these pessimistic sentiments, Chinese creative men, including major cultural institutions, design associations, and art universities have taken action, launching more than 20 online collections of anti-epidemic propaganda of different scales across the globe, across the country, and from various provinces. For example, the "Unity is Strength and Fighting the Epidemic — Collection of Special Publicity Posters by the Chinese Artists Association" initiated by the Chinese Artists Association, the "'We Are Together' 2020 Fighting 'COVID-19' Global Poster Design Public Welfare Collection" initiated by Beijing Design Society and Beijing International Design Week, and "'Wuhan Shall Fight the Epidemic' WUHAN WE CAN 2020 Fighting the 'COVID-19' Public Welfare Publicity Design Global Collection Activities" and so on. It calls on creative people across the country to use visual images and visual creativity to dispel rumors and inspire everyone's determination and will to overcome the epidemic. And they printed these posters and posted them in major hospitals and places where COVID-19 patients are concentrated, bringing confidence and hope to the people, and gathering a stronger spiritual power for the fight against the epidemic.

*B. The epidemic has been brought under control, and people should "salute and be grateful"*

The entire Chinese people have been united unprecedentedly. Through effective administrative orders and the active prevention, control and treatment of military and civilian medical teams, the government has promptly contained the large-scale spread of the epidemic, and the number of new local cases has gradually dropped to single digits. At this time, the national sentiment eased slightly. The nationals turned from panic and anxiety to grateful thanks to the medical staff on the front line, encouraging patients who are still struggling with the disease to continue to persist, being excited that the country has found a way to effectively control the epidemic, and at the same time hoping to join a volunteer team to serve the disadvantaged people who need more help. The first stage of the creative mission "spreading hope" has already given people full confidence in overcoming the epidemic. At this time node, people need to release their accumulated love for the country, society, medical care, family and friends like a volcano. Therefore, many activities can be seen as follows: the "Temperature of the City of 'All the People of One Mind to Overcome Hard Times' — Call for Public Welfare Poster Exhibition Against "COVID-19" in 2020" initiated by the Zhejiang Artists Association, "Walking with Love · Fighting the Virus-2020 National 'Fighting Epidemic' Poster Design Competition" initiated by Beijing Academy of Visual Arts, and "Unity is Strength-2020 Fighting 'COVID-19' International Public Welfare Poster Design Invitation

Exhibition" initiated by China Advertising Association and Liaoning Advertising Association. These works sounded in time, responded to the needs of the people, encouraged the whole people to participate in the design, expressed the affection of love, spread the power of love, eulogized the typical deeds and representatives of fighting on the front line of the COVID-19 prevention and control, and reflected the touching story of unity, cooperation and support from all walks of life in society, which were embodied in the positive energy and spirit of the times that emerged in the fight against the epidemic.

*C. Unblocking the city with "normal prevention and control"*

After more than four months of fighting the epidemic, the number of new cases in China has dropped to zero. The eye of storm of the national epidemic, the first banned city and the last unblocked city — Wuhan, is fully unblocked. The national epidemic prevention and control has become normal, public places have been opened one after another, and people's work and life have gradually returned to normal. However, the epidemic situation abroad has become more and more serious. At this time, the threat China faces is to "prevent the importation of COVID-19 as well as the rebound of COVID-19 from within". Although scientific and effective isolation prevention and control have become more mature, with the increase in public gathering activities and the relaxation of the public's prevention and control mentality, there is an urgent need to consolidate and deepen the effectiveness of prevention and control. Recovering from such a major public health event, people need to sum up their experience and prepare psychologically for the next unpredictable disaster. So at this time node, people see the "2020 Special Design 'Design to Counteract Toxic Substances, Fighting Viruses with Love' Online Public Welfare Activities" initiated by the Design Capital — Promotion Center in Shanghai, "China, Korea, and Japan Cross-domain Anti-epidemic Green Design Activities" initiated by the China Guanghua Design Foundation and the School of Design of Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts, as well as the "Healing the World" global public welfare design activity initiated by IdN and China Designer Salon. It is hoped that designers will use innovative design concepts, publicize scientific knowledge of epidemic prevention, guide correct understanding, and check the known and unknown epidemics in advance, design ahead, reserve for later use, and promote social stability [2].

**III. THE MISSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS' GLOBAL ANTI-EPIDEMIC PROPAGANDA**

As the coordinator of consistent global action, the United Nations has always been committed to

maintaining world peace and security, and upholding the dignity and equality of human rights [3]. The COVID-19 epidemic is a war between mankind and the virus. It spreads to more than 100 countries and regions at an extremely fast rate. This crisis is spreading human suffering, affecting the global economy and subverting people's lives. In such a crisis, the United Nations and WHO jointly lead and coordinate the global health response to COVID-19. The first thing they face is how to make people around the world better protect themselves, especially the most vulnerable group of people—the elderly, those with underlying diseases, those without medical insurance, and those living on the margins of society. Many people feel anxious, hesitated, and confused. In addition to providing international guidance for governments to respond to the virus threat, the United Nations needs to coordinate all-weather international epidemic prevention operations. It is even more necessary to appeal to the people of all ethnic groups in the world to help each other, scientifically prevent and control, slow down the spread, prevent infection, and save lives.

Under such a major crisis, the United Nations issued a public brief report "GLOBAL CALL TO CREATIVES: An Open Brief from the United Nations" to creative people around the world for the first time. They hope to find a series of novel and innovative creative solutions for designers, opinion leaders, brand owners, and community groups, and translate the scientific epidemic prevention information provided by WHO into different languages and different cultures through creative images to cover audiences of different ages, regions and languages, so that these information can effectively reach communities, platforms and everyone. And people can act in unity to prevent the spread of misinformation [4].

#### **IV. DIFFERENCES IN ANTI-EPIDEMIC PROPAGANDA BETWEEN CHINA AND THE UNITED NATIONS**

##### *A. The difference between the nature of the sponsor and the participants*

China's anti-epidemic creative publicity calls are mostly organized by professional/industry associations, design agencies, and colleges and universities. Most of these organizations are non-profit social welfare organizations with strong industry attributes and have high authority in the professional field. They focus on social education, publish academic opinions, and urge peers to update their skills. The call and collection initiated by them can attract a wide range of local design professionals to actively participate in anti-epidemic propaganda. However, it is also because of their professional barriers that other professionals such as opinion leaders, advertisers, community groups and

other professionals have no corresponding information channels to understand the content of the event and participate in it. While as an intergovernmental international organization composed of sovereign states, the United Nations is responsible for maintaining the peace and equality of all mankind, and playing the role of international leadership and guidance in this global fight against the epidemic. Therefore, the target audience of this event is not only professional groups, but more comprehensive "pan-creative people", such as Ogilvy, W+K, TBWA, Leo Burnett, BBDO and other top advertising agencies, as well as international brands such as Spotify, Benz, Nike and so on [5], which makes his event participants more diverse and can collect more diverse creative works, so as to better help audiences of different languages, different cultures and different ages to obtain useful scientific anti-epidemic information.

##### *B. The difference in propaganda content*

The purpose of visual communication is to spread cultural connotations. [6] But at the beginning of the epidemic, everyone knew nothing about this super virus and was helpless. In the first stage of China's anti-epidemic propaganda, it started more from encouraging confidence, spreading hope and other emotional resonance, such as working as one, assistance from all directions, mission of love, determination and will, the most beautiful retrograde, and the power of China and so on. In the second and third stages of the gradual improvement, in addition to the existing spreading of hope, the anti-epidemic and hygiene connotations such as saluting heroes, spreading kindness and love, scientific prevention and control, and effective isolation have been added. For this reason, a small-scale questionnaire survey of about 300 target audiences was conducted in early March. It was found that 74.22% of the people wanted to see "scientific knowledge of epidemic prevention", while "eulogizing the anti-epidemic spirit" ranked second with 60.44%. The United Nations' information of calling for was released on March 27, at the beginning of the third stage of China's fight against the epidemic. In his creative brief report, he clarified the six most important key areas in the current epidemic situation, and briefly analyzed each aspect according to the specific measures provided by WHO for epidemic prevention, including: personal hygiene, social distancing, know the symptoms, kindness contagion, myth busting, do more, and donate. In the fine sorted requirements of each aspect, WHO listed specific measures for epidemic prevention. For example, there are four specific measures in the Mini Brief of personal hygiene: washing hands, reducing face contact, respiratory hygiene, and staying at home. It also provides a number of communication cases that have been put in the media and have reference value, such as "#SafeHands Challenge", "Sing along hand wash", "Wash your lyrics infographic", etc.[7]. Such detailed, sufficient, and well-founded briefings are very

helpful for creatives to scientifically and accurately carry out targeted anti-epidemic creations, and also enable audiences to obtain more comprehensive, detailed and novel anti-epidemic information.

### *C. The difference in the form of works*

The epidemic in China is coming quickly and violently. At the beginning, there were new recognitions and changes almost every day, leaving very limited time for creatives. It can be seen from the information collected in China that, as a whole, it uses posters- the most direct and fastest design form in the field of visual communication, as its creative carrier, and its manifestations are mostly concentrated in artistic illustrations, comics, font design, and graphic creativity. In the third stage, creative forms such as dynamic posters, H5, and infographics can also be gradually seen. In the questionnaire survey, it was found that 43.1% of people have developed a certain degree of visual immunity to the "anti-epidemic posters", expressing that they do not want to see it or do not care. The United Nation's creative collection has lasted more than two months, and some wonderful anti-epidemic ideas have emerged in the early stage, so they have left relatively sufficient time for creators to brainstorm. Many multi-media, multi-carrier and multi-form creative works can also be found from the submitted projects [8], such as broadcasting, short videos, TV commercials, online marketing, marketing activities, etc. Through their novel and unique visual form language, they not only greatly attract the attention of the public in fighting the epidemic, but also enrich the public's awareness of fighting the epidemic. At the same time, they also help illiteracies and ethnic minorities to understand the meaning of information, and this group of people is the most difficult to be reached and the most in need of help in the world [9]. This is very important and rare and commendable.

### *D. The difference in communication thinking*

In the era of national media, each region has its own unique cultural communication channels. Through the questionnaire survey, it's found that 80% of people in China saw anti-epidemic propaganda through WeChat official accounts, 68.44% through MicroBlog, and 46.67% through NewsAggreg App. Because of such user habits, most of China's anti-epidemic publicity collection and subsequent visual communication are released through WeChat official accounts, and then shared and reposted to MicroBlog or other news and social platforms. But WeChat official accounts have special barriers-they can only push news to fans who have already followed the official accounts, and can't open to all people for reading [10]. And most of China's collections are submitted by creators to designated mailboxes, which are then reviewed and screened by the organizer for unified release. Its timeliness,

flexibility, accuracy, and coverage will all be weakened, which is not conducive to timely dissemination and push to the wider general public. However, China's anti-epidemic propaganda also has its innovative and precise aspects. It posted some of these excellent posters in mobile cabin hospitals and other medical facilities, and delivered them to the target audience more accurately. The United Nations' anti-epidemic propaganda media is more in line with the social tools used in Western society, such as Twitter, Instagram and so on. The advantage of this type of social media is that it is oriented to users on all platforms and can use @ and # to create hotspots and topics, helping people find corresponding content on the platform more quickly and forming a nationwide open dissemination aggregation. Those who respond to the United Nations' call, in addition to routine uploading to the designated submission mailbox, also need to publish their work to the whole people on the creator's personal social media. This form of dissemination forms two complementary levels of dissemination. The first level is the authoritative release of the United Nations official platform for the selection of the best, and the second level makes full use of the national autonomy, participation flexibility and extensive dissemination in the era of national media [11]. Only by calling on and uniting a wider range of participants can scientific epidemic prevention information be disseminated to more people so as to expand to the audience that the country has not yet covered. In the global virus crisis, public health information must be spread to every corner of the world and resonate in every language and culture to effectively prevent the spread of the virus.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

The United Nations says that creative people have "the power to change the world". Throughout history, visual communication has always been one of the key ways to disseminate and record information. In this COVID-19 epidemic that has swept the world, Chinese creative people have spoken quickly. According to incomplete statistics, China collected more than 200,000 anti-epidemic poster works within one month, which were fully and continuously disseminated on major social platforms. The United Nations has also contributed to this anti-epidemic propaganda with the call of a global perspective and more accurate and comprehensive nationwide communication. Although the design community is not on the front line of the fight against the epidemic, it still uses the wisdom of design to spread and share beneficial scientific public health information, hoping to save more people's lives and health. The virus has spread steadily around the world, and the COVID-19 may never disappear. Human society will face the responsibility of fighting the epidemic for a long time. As a creative person, it's

necessary to take social responsibility as his/her responsibility throughout his/her lives, and always seek to use his/her professional knowledge to care for society and serve mankind.

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