"Conservative Image as Entry Point"

Manuel Salchli about Switzerland's nation branding in China

Interview, Fabian Gull

Mr. Salchli, as the Pavilion Director and Deputy Commissioner General of the Swiss Pavilion at the Expo 2010 in Shanghai, your role is focused on Switzerland's nation branding institution, Presence Switzerland. What is Presence Switzerland's strategy in China?

We want to increase the knowledge about Switzerland among the Chinese target groups. Thus, we are running a campaign from 2007 to 2011 in China and closely work together with our institutional partners which are the Art Council, the Export and Investment agencies, Location Switzerland and Switzerland Tourism. Together with them, we run a program around the two major upcoming events – the Olympic Games in Beijing and the Expo 2010 in Shanghai.

Your superior target is to get more Chinese tourists to Switzerland.

Not only. Since our target is to increase Switzerland's market value in China, we are working with and for all sectors of the Swiss economy – not just the tourism industry. So we try to attract more tourists as well as to support the sale of Swiss products in China and to increase the sympathy of the Chinese audience towards Switzerland.

What's your budget for your China projects?

We have a budget of about 24 million Swiss Francs for the presence of Switzerland at the World Expo. This budget covers the construction and operation costs of the Pavilion as well as the communications over five years. As far as the content is concerned the budget of our partners and future partners can be added to ours, but I can't give you a global figure.

What resources - in terms of man-power - do you have to achieve your targets?

Very little (laughing). There are two full time employees working at the Swiss Embassy in Beijing and another three working full time on this project in Switzerland.

How do you measure the results of your campaigns?

We do this through various means. For example, we analyze the number and the quality of articles written about Switzerland in China. So from 2007 onwards, we expect a significant increase of newspaper articles and media reports.

Are you also doing surveys?

Yes. We have conducted a big image survey in 2006 before we started our campaign.

What did you find out?

Firstly, I am happy to report that the image of Switzerland in China is excellent!

Switzerland enjoys the best image of all benchmark countries that we have

selected. The country always ranks on top - first or second to be precise. This was the main finding. We have conducted this survey also in the US, UK, Spain, Germany, France etc. Another interesting finding is also that the results we got in China do not differ so much from what we found in the other countries. But there is also a lack of information in China. Switzerland is still considered as a country where milk and honey flows. But we are not considered as being very innovative which of course doesn't reflect the reality at all.
We don't know yet if we are going to verify the results of our campaign with another survey, since this will be also a question of budget. But we are definitely going to conduct surveys among the visitors of the Swiss Pavilion.

Does this excellent image mean less work for Presence Switzerland in China?
Not really, no (laughing), because this positive image is mainly based on our beautiful landscape and a kind of "fairy tale" and "Heidi land" perception of Switzerland. In general the competition is getting stiffer since a lot of countries are investing more and more money in nation branding and trying to improve their images. We want Switzerland to be perceived as what it is today and not what it used to be one hundred years ago. Our mission is to fill this information gap. So as you can see, there is plenty of work to do for us.

According to your own survey, Switzerland is in China mainly associated with beautiful landscapes. But isn't this exactly the way Switzerland is going to be presented at the Swiss Pavilion? Very traditional, conservative, with a meadow on top, chair lift and a movie showing the beauty of the Swiss Alps. Aren't you rather backing the existing image up instead of changing it?

No, we don't think so. But you are totally right, we will be talking about our beautiful landscapes, our lakes, rivers and mountains. But actually, our intention is - and this has been proven very successful at the last World Expo in Japan - to get the Chinese there where they already know us! And from

this entry point we will take them and provide them with additional information. The exposition at the Pavilion will be about what Switzerland is undertaking to protect the beautiful nature and how we are coping with the increasing amount of traffic and garbage. You can see, behind the entry point with beautiful landscape we are talking about innovative solutions which contribute to a sustainable development of our cities and people.

You are focusing on "sustainability", but at the same time you are undertaking huge efforts to build up a temporary installation like the Pavilion. This does not seem sustainable at all and sounds almost ironic.
I agree with you that the concept of an Expo as such cannot be sustainable by definition. Countries are constructing buildings which will be there for only six months. But the hopes of the organizers and participants are that the Pavilions from all over the world can give inputs for sustainable development of our cities. We for instance put our efforts in a sustainable dismantling with a facade which is partially biodegradable. We attempt to recycle most parts of the Pavilion.

What is the Pavilion going to offer to the Swiss business community?
I am not exaggerating by saying that we offer the business community a historically unique platform and the opportunity to use this platform for different functions. We will provide the Swiss business community with VIP facilities, presentation and conference facilities including a lounge, and a restaurant/bar. There will also be a special room for the exchange with the Chinese and international audience. And, very important, we will offer tailor-made visits to other pavilions for our partners so they will benefit from an easy access to other pavilions without having to queue up everywhere.

Are you still looking for sponsors?
Yes we are. We have found Nestlé and Holcim as the main sponsors of our campaign with the elements "House of Switzerland", "Swiss Pavilion" at the Expo, and all events related to the program. Now our next focus will be on finding specific partners for the pavilion. Therefore, we will start another round of selling by the end of March this year where we aim to identify and find more partners who provide us with any kind of support and materials. Companies like Kaba, Securitas or Sika Sarnafil already proposed to offer their services and support us. We are also looking for pavilions sponsors that will be given the right to use our facilities.

What will be the highlights for the visitors?
One of the highlights will definitely be the ride on the chair lift. But also the pavilion as such with its very daring and bold shape will be a highlight when you see the installation with its very interesting facade with what looks like a curtain from afar. Not to mention the big format movie! The Expo 2010 in Shanghai will be the biggest of all world expositions ever and promises to attract the most visitors.

What are the next steps?
We are currently intensively working on making the content of the exposition more concrete. The architects are working on the final drawings. The target is to submit an execution project to the Expo by summer this year. Once approved, we will make a tender offer for a general contractor who will build the pavilion. The construction should start by fall this year, but our top priority here in Berne is concentrated on the successful operation of the House of Switzerland at the Olympic Games in Beijing.

“以保守形象作为切入点”

Manuel Salchli把瑞士的国家形象引入中国

记者：Fabian Gull

Salchli先生，作为上海2010年世博会瑞士展团团长兼副总专员，您主要负责瑞士的民族品牌机构——瑞士国家形象委员会（Presence Switzerland）。瑞士国家形象委员会在中国制定了怎样的战略？

我们希望增进中国目标群体对瑞士的了解。因此，我们计划于2007年至2011年期间在中国开展一系列推广活动，并与我们的机构合作伙伴艺术理事会(Art Council)、出口与投资代理机构(Export and Investment agencies)、瑞士投资促进局(Location Switzerland)以及瑞士国家旅游局Switzerland Tourism)密切合作，围绕未来两大盛事——北京奥运会和2010年上海世博会共同开展项目。

您的首要目标是为瑞士带去更多的中国游客。

不仅如此，由于我们的目标是增加瑞士在中国的市场价值，因此，我们目前正与瑞士经济体系中的各个部门（不仅是旅游业）通力合作。因此，我们希望在吸引更多游客的同时，为瑞士产品在中国的销售提供支持，并进一步增进中国受众对瑞士的关注。

贵机构中国项目的预算情况如何？

我们的世博会预算约为2,400万瑞士法郎。该预算涵盖了展团建造与运营成本，以及五年的通信成本。若情况允许，我们合作伙伴和未来合作伙伴的预算也可加入到我们的预算中，但我无法提供全球数据。

贵机构拥有哪些资源（人力资源）来实现这些目标？

很少（笑）。目前在北京的瑞士大使馆有2名全职员工，而在瑞士有3名全职员工为该项目工作。

贵机构如何评估推广活动的成果？

我们通过多种方式进行评估。例如，我们分析中国境内有关瑞士的文章数量和质量。自2007年起，我们预计报纸发文与媒体报道将会显著增加。

贵机构是否也开展过调查？

是的。在开展推广活动之前，我们在2006年开展了一次大型形象调查。

调查结果如何？

首先，我很高兴地告诉大家，瑞士在中国有着极好的形象！瑞士在我们所选择的所有基准国家中有着最好的印象。排名一贯靠前，不是第一就是第二。这是主要发现。我们在美国、英国、西班牙、德国、法国等国也开展了这一调查。有趣的是，我们在中国获得的调查结果与其他国家的调查结果并没有多大不同。然而，中国在一定程度上对瑞士还缺乏了解。瑞士仍旧被认为是一个生产牛奶和蜂蜜的国家，而非具有创新实力的国家，这显然与事实大相径庭。由于存在预算问题，我们目前并未确定是否将会开展另一项调查以核对推广活动所获得的结果。但毋庸置疑的是，我们将在瑞士展团的参观者中开展调查。

这一良好的形象是否意味着瑞士国家形象委员会在中国工作量的减少？

并非如此（笑），因为这一积极的形象主要基于我们国家的秀丽风光，以及人们对瑞士“童话”和“海蒂村庄”(Heidi land)的认识。由于很多国家将更多的资金投资于推广民族品牌的活动以提高国家形象，因此总体而言竞争异常激烈。我们希望中国受众能够了解瑞士的现状，而非100年前的状况。我们的使命在于填补这一信息鸿沟。因此，我们任重而道远。

根据你们自己的调查，中国对瑞士的印象主要是秀丽的风光。但这不正是瑞士将在瑞士展台向人们展示的内容吗？格局传统而保守：草地、高空缆车，加上展示瑞士阿尔卑斯山风景的影片，让人感觉是在支持中国对瑞士的现有印象而不是改变这一印象。

不，我们并不这么认为。从某种角度来说你的观点是正确的，我们的确展示我们美丽的风光、湖泊、河流与山脉。但实际上，我们旨在向中国受众展示他们已经了解的瑞士！（这一点在日本举办的上届世博会上已取得了成功）。

通过这一切入点，我们将为受众提供更多信息。展台的展示将围绕瑞士如何保护大自然以及如何处理与日俱增的交通和垃圾问题。在美丽风光这一切入点背后，我们所探讨的是能够为城市和居民提供可持续发展的创新解决方案。

贵机构关注“可持续发展”，但同时也在构建类似展台的临时建筑。这看似并不具可持续性，听起来甚至略带讽刺意味。

世博会的概念无法在定义上实现可持续性，这点我表示认同。各个国家所建造的建筑物仅保存短短的6个月。然而，组织者和参与方的建筑理念在于使展台能够融入城市的可持续发展中。例如，我们的展台表面可部分进行生物降解。此外，我们也尽力回收大部分展台部件。

展团将为瑞士商界带来哪些收益？

毫不夸张的说，我们为瑞士商界提供了前所未有的平台与机遇，商家可使用这一平台实现不同的功能。我们将为瑞士商界提供VIP设施——演讲和会议设施（包括休息室和餐厅/酒吧）。此外，还将另辟一室，专门用于与中国和国际受众进行交流。至关重要的是，我们将为我们的合作伙伴提供访问其他展台的特别访问权，从而能够便捷地访问其他展台而无须排队。

贵机构是否仍在寻找赞助商？

是的。我们已找到雀巢和霍尔希姆(Holcim)担任“瑞士居”(House of Switzerland)、世博会“瑞士展台”以及项目相关活动的主要赞助商。我们的下一步工作是为展台找到特别合作伙伴。因此，我们将在今年3月底开始新一轮的销售活动，旨在识别并找到更多为我们提供各类支持和材料的合作伙伴。Kaba、Securitas或Sika Sarnafil等公司也已提议为我们提供服务和支持。此外，我们还在寻找有权使用我们设施的展台赞助商。

今后的举措有哪些？

我们目前正紧锣密鼓地开展工作，力求使展会内容更为充实。建筑师们正在孜孜不倦地设计最终图纸。我们的目标是在今年夏天之前向世博会提交一个执行计划。一经批准，我们将举行展台建筑的总承包商招标活动。建造应于今年秋天开始，但我们目前在伯尔尼的首要任务是确保瑞士屋在北京奥运会上的成功运营。

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