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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**The Importance of Emotion in Public Relations Leadership: A Case Study of Queen Elizabeth II's Christmas Address**

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**| ABSTRACT**

Traditional public relations research, constrained by a rationalist paradigm, has not clearly demonstrated the existence and role of emotional factors. Queen Elizabeth II's Christmas addresses, however, provide a model for emotional mobilization in the public relations process. Based on the emotional shift in public relations, this study uses a grounded approach to analyze the texts of Queen Elizabeth II's Christmas speeches from 2011 to 2021, exploring how the Queen mobilizes collective emotions and constructs a connection between the British Royal Family and the public through her Christmas addresses. The study finds that the Queen manages positive and negative emotions at the emotional groundwork level, balances the positions of the Royal Family and the public at the content subject level, cultivates trust through emotional narratives, and calls for community cohesion and collective value identification at the outcome-oriented level. These three levels are progressively progressive and mutually supportive. From a theoretical perspective, this study attempts to propose an implementation process for the continuous infusion and reinforcement of emotion in public relations behavior; from an applied perspective, it aims to highlight the importance of emotional factors in public relations research and provide new approaches for organizational managers to optimize emotional public relations.

**| KEYWORDS**

Public relations; Queen Elizabeth II; grounded studies; emotional mobilization

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**I. Introduction**

From Queen Elizabeth II's first annual Christmas address (Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech) on December 25, 1957, until her death in September 2022, the Queen's Christmas speech was a significant royal ceremony in the eyes of the British public. Even after the 2020 speech was leaked on a streaming platform, most Britons still eagerly awaited the Queen's address. The speech's enduring themes of "love, peace, and hope" served as a public relations bridge for the British Royal Family to build a shared space of meaning with the public through emotional appeal. Current public relations research is largely dominated by the "myth of rational management," resulting in a relative lack of emotional research within public relations due to a lack of an emotional perspective. However, many rational organizational strategies are actually based on a high degree of emotional pursuit; much of the rationality we describe is emotional, and distinguishing between rationality and emotion is a flawed dichotomy (Fineman, 1996). Dasborough points out that leadership in public relations is essentially an emotional process, where leaders express emotion and attempt to evoke empathy among organizational members (Dasborough, 2002). The Queen's Christmas address is a prime example of emotional public relations; Queen Elizabeth II uses emotionally charged textual discourse to summarize the important events of the past year in Britain, offering spiritual comfort to the British people.

Based on the emotional perspective in public relations, this study focuses on the Queen's Christmas addresses from 2011 to 2021. Using a grounded methodology, it analyzes the emotional mobilization methods and public relations objectives employed

by the Queen in her speeches, attempting to summarize a process model of emotional factors in public relations to demonstrate the important role of emotional relationships in public relations leadership.

## **II. Literature Review**

### **(I) Research on the British Royal Family**

The British Royal Family is one of the oldest existing royal families, existing as a unifying symbol of the British constitutional monarchy. Scholars have studied the British Royal Family from multiple perspectives. Clancy, starting with the media rituals, revisited Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953, arguing that the mediated intimacy fostered by television encouraged the public to actively participate in royal ceremonies as "royal publics." However, she also proposed the concept of "counterpublics," suggesting that viewers' feelings about the coronation were not homogeneous (Clancy, 2019). Widholm and Becker compared two royal weddings in Britain and Sweden, arguing that television made the public perceive their relationship with the royal wedding as close and tangible, allowing them to feel the physical existence of the event. However, at the same time, the distance was also removed by the screen, becoming unreachable, creating an "illusion of intimacy" (Widholm & Becker, 2015). Jordan, drawing on collective memory theory, points out that the British monarchy relies on memory products such as documentaries to connect with the public and ensure authority. Unlike other studies that focus on retrospective memory, photographs originally kept in the Royal Archives travel from the private to the public sphere, creating new memories for the public during nostalgia—these are called prospective memories. Documentaries not only produce memories about the past but also memories about the future (Jordan, 2019). Some scholars have critically analyzed media coverage of Prince William's state visits to Australia and New Zealand, pointing out that the British monarchy's production and consumption of media coverage legitimized the British monarchy's survival in colonial countries like Australia. The media's tendency to portray the sacred charisma of the royal family obscures the colonial history of Britain's race and power in these countries (Randell-Moon, 2017).

In public relations research, Benoit focuses on the British Royal Family's public relations efforts after Princess Diana's death. The Queen employed two main image restoration strategies—"denying media accusations" and "supporting the Royal Family's position"—and two secondary strategies—"repudiation" and "diverting public attention"—to effectively weather the public relations crisis (Benoit, 1999). Parmelee uses Goffman's self-presentation theory to qualitatively examine how the British Royal Family portrays its image through its Instagram account. The main content presented includes: the Queen's leadership image, commemorating the past and the work of Royal Family members. The Royal Family's use of social media represents the fusion of a century-old monarchy and popular culture (Parmelee, 2023). These studies show that current academic research primarily focuses on media as a medium, studying the Royal Family's image in documentaries, media reports, and social media, while research on the British Royal Family's self-released public relations content, such as speeches, is relatively limited.

### **(II) Exploring Emotion in Public Relations: The Neglected Emotional Factor**

Since the 1980s, the "myth of rational management" has prevailed in the public relations industry. Organizational managers have been defined as efficient processors of ideas, knowledge, information, and problems. In functionalist terms, emotion has been seen as an obstacle to rational action (Putnam, 1993). Van Ruler points out that the main issue of academic focus is the rational-intelligence or knowledge model of public relations, while the industry has tended towards the emotion-intelligence model. A split has emerged between the rational professional discourse of public relations theory and the emphasis on intuition and interpersonal relationships in public relations practice (Ruler, 2005).

Fineman views emotion as a competitive advantage in organizational management. Emotional competence includes "personal involvement," "sensitivity to the emotions of others," and "sensitivity to values." The ability to touch emotions can "create a positive atmosphere" or "attract the interest of others." Business ethics can also be examined through the lens of emotion. Emotional ethics encourages managers to be more ethical and less harmful in business, and to assess the risk consequences of decisions and ethical dilemmas (Fineman, 1997).

Bolton and Boyd summarize two approaches to emotional public relations: one is demonstrative emotional management, such as employees providing smiling service to reassure customers; the other is prescriptive emotional management, which involves internalizing company prescriptive values, thereby making their emotions more genuine (Bolton & Boyd, 2003). Wang Yue analyzes the application of the emotional law in the public relations process through a "naming-management-communication-mobilization" strategic framework. This involves using symbolic symbols with shared meaning to name the company image to evoke public emotions, regulating and managing public emotions, communicating based on the principle of "not what to say, but how to say it," and finally transforming the previously laid emotions and opinions into action. Furthermore, in a post-truth world where "emotion outweighs reason," public relations entities can also refer to Professor Zou Zhendong's "weak communication" theory from Xiamen University to gain emotional advantage through appropriate displays of weakness (Wang Yue, 2023). The importance of emotion can be glimpsed from the dialogue-based public relations concept proposed by Kent and

Taylor. Dialogue-based public relations involves shared experiences, co-existence, and mutual benefit among stakeholders, requiring the capacity for empathy and love. One of the principles of dialogue-based public relations is "empathy," which includes three dimensions: support, public orientation, and affirmation (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Chen Xianhong incorporated positive psychology into public relations, proposing the concept of "positive public relations." He emphasizes that the content of communication between organizations and the public is a progressive continuum from information flow to cultural flow to emotional flow; the deeper the communication reaches the emotional level, the more positive the public relations behavior. Furthermore, the more pronounced the positive personality traits of the public relations agent, the deeper the public's perception (Chen Xianhong, 2020).

## II. Research Design and Data Analysis

This study selected the transcripts of Queen Elizabeth II's Christmas speeches from 2011 to 2021 (a total of 11 years) as research data. Grounded analysis was employed, with the texts encoded using NVivo 12 software.

Grounded theory is a spiral-like process in which theoretical concepts emerge from detailed data through inductive reasoning and comparative analysis (Wang Xiling, 2004). Glaser and Strauss proposed this generative rather than confirmatory research model in 1967. Grounded theory has subsequently spawned three schools of thought: the early, flourishing classic model of "open coding—selective coding—theoretical coding"; the more systematic procedural model of "open coding—axial coding—selective coding"; and the constructivist model of "initial coding—focused coding" within a fluid framework (Wu Suran, 2020). This study adopts the more practical procedural grounded theory, summarizing initial categories, refining main categories, and then exploring the relationships between categories to develop a narrative.

(a) Open coding. Open coding involves researchers setting aside their personal opinions and compiling a sufficiently saturated set of initial concepts from the original data, then categorizing them into different initial categories. In this study, a total of 69 initial concepts (a1-a69) and 11 initial categories (A1-A12) were extracted, as detailed in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Categorization of Open Coding

Initial Category	Initial Concepts
A1 Positive Emotions in Positive Situations	a1 happiness; a2 hope; a3 cheer; a4 joyful; a5 courage
A2 Negative Emotions in Positive Situations	a6 hard time; a7 lost loved; a8 arm forces
A3 Positive Emotions in Negative Situations	a9 new dawn; a10 enduring hope in unpredictable times; a12 remarkable resilience; a13 prayers and thoughts
A4 Expressing Care for the People	a14 the privilege of meeting survivors; a15 remember who never returned; a16 earthquakes, cyclones and floods; a17 remaining veterans
A5 Encouraging People's Sense of Self-Belief	a18 risen magnificently to challenges; a19 proud and moved; a20 say thank you for; a21 owe a debt of gratitude; a22 been struck by a sense of purpose to issues; a23 remember all those on duty; a24 show extraordinary bravery and resilience; a25 the dedication of the highly skilled doctors; a26 ordinary people doing extraordinary things; a27 inspired by athletes; a28 unsung heroes
A6 Mentions of Royal Life	a29 when I first set eyes on him; a30 supported by Camilla and Catherine; a31 welcome four more this year; a32 My father served in the Royal Navy; a33 two weddings and two babies and another child expected; a34 70th birthday of the Prince of Wales
A7 Myth Management	a35 Jesus; a36 christ; a37 The Bible; a38 the Gospel of John; a39 shepherd; a40 Christian faith; a41 carol; a42 forgiveness and reconciliation
A8 Highlighting Important Events	a43 International Nurses' Day; a44 appalling attacks in London and Manchester; a45 the Grenfell Tower fire; a46 the Commonwealth Games; a47 the Second World War; a48 Christmas truce; a49 London Summer Olympics

A9 Looking Back and Expecting the Future	a50 Coronation Day sixty years earlier; a51 through this lens of history view today's conflicts; a52 chilly Christmas Eve in 1914; a53 Sixty years ago today; a54 look ahead; a55 looking forward to a busy 2016; a56 a better, more peaceful world
A10 Calling for Community Cohesion	a57 like-minded; a58 promote peace and unity; a59 bring people together; a60 the Commonwealth; a61 bridging these differences; a62 Scotland referendum
A11 Value Appeal	a63 put past differences behind; a64 spirit of friendship and reconciliation; a65 treating people with respect; a66 take a deep breath to find courage; a67 bring love and happiness into lives; a68 quiet personal reflection; a69 saving ourselves from recklessness and greed

(II) Axial coding The main task of axial coding is to discover the organic connections between the initial categories and to cluster the initial categories into main categories around the research question. This study obtained four main categories: managing positive and negative emotions, balancing the positions of the public and the royal family, cultivating trust through emotional narratives, and guiding behavioral tendencies, as shown in Table 3.

Table 2: Main categories formed by axial coding and their connotations

Main category	initial category	category connotation
B1 Managing Positive and Negative Emotions	A1 Positive Emotions in Positive Situations	Evoking positive emotions in a festive atmosphere
	A2 Negative Emotions in Positive Situations	Evoking negative emotions in a festive atmosphere
	A3 Positive Emotions in Negative Situations	Evoking positive emotions in a negative social context
B2 Balancing the positions of the public and the monarchy	A4 Expressing concern for the public	Standing on the side of the public and showing concern for their lives
	A5 Encouraging the public's sense of self-confidence	Praising the efforts and contributions of various groups
	A6 Mentioning royal life	Introducing the basic living conditions of the royal family
B3 Emotional Narratives Cultivate Trust	A7 Myth Management	Appealing to Religious Myths Provides Guidance
	A8 Highlighting Important Events	Emphasizing Important Events Constructs Collective Memory
	A9 Tracing Back and Expecting the Future	Recalling the Past or Yearning for the Future
B4 Guiding Behavioral Tendencies	A10 Summoning Community Cohesion	Maintaining Solidarity Among Commonwealth Members
	A11 Calling for Values	Promoting Positive Values Through Command-Based Approach

(III) Selective Coding Selective coding, also known as core-based coding, refers to the systematic analysis of existing categories to integrate them into a core category. This core category is overarching, concisely encompassing the remaining research findings within the theoretical model. In this study, the core category is behavioral tendency guidance, developing a storyline that connects the structural system of the four main categories.

Table 3: Main Category Relationship Diagram

	Typical Relationship Structure	Path Implications
Emotional Preparation	Managing Positive and Negative Emotions → Emotional Public Relations Leadership	The Queen of England skillfully balanced positive and negative emotions to prepare the audience emotionally.
Main Content	Balancing the Public and Royal Family's Positions → Emotional PR Leadership	The Queen of England spoke on behalf of both the public and the Royal Family in her Christmas address.
	Cultivating Trust Through Emotional Narrative → Emotional PR Leadership	The Queen of England gained public trust through a narrative approach in her Christmas address.
Results-oriented	Behavioral tendency guidance → Emotional public relations leadership	Queen of England's call for national and public action

Based on the storyline developed using selective coding, a public relations process model for the Queen's Christmas address was derived, as shown in Figure 1. The Queen first "manages positive and negative emotions," laying the groundwork for public sentiment at a subconscious level. Secondly, in setting the main content, she constructs public perception of the British Royal Family by "balancing the positions of the public and the Royal Family" and "cultivating trust through emotional narratives," thus shaping an emotional bond and identification between the Royal Family and the British people. Finally, she guides "behavioral tendency guidance," calling for unity among Commonwealth countries and the practice of positive values by the British people at the action level.

#### IV. Research Findings and Discussion

##### (I) Managing Positive and Negative Emotions: The "Language-Perception" Link Promotes Emotional Recovery

Emotional transmission refers to the transmission, contagion, and sharing of emotions and their accompanying information among individuals or groups (Zhao Yunze, 2020). Emotions have physiological mobilization and psychological arousal functions. The Queen of England creates specific emotional information environments in specific situations to adjust the public's emotional experience. Based on grounded research, emotional information in the Queen's Christmas address appears in three situations: positive emotions in positive situations, positive emotions in negative situations, and negative emotions in positive situations.

"Positive emotions in positive situations" and "positive emotions in negative situations" align with traditional emotion research concepts, suggesting that highlighting optimism in positive situations and transforming negative emotions into optimistic emotions in negative situations can promote positive perception in the audience, thus aiding in emotional adjustment and recovery. Positive scenarios frequently appearing in Queen Elizabeth II's speeches include Christmas celebrations, the Commonwealth Games, and the 2012 London Olympics. For example, in her 2020 Christmas address, Queen Elizabeth II began by saying, "Every year we light the way for Christmas, and the light not only enhances the festive atmosphere but also creates hope." Regarding the Commonwealth Games, the Queen stated, "The baton is now being passed around the Commonwealth, and its destination is Birmingham, a beacon of hope." Negative scenarios in the Queen's speeches include the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire, and the 2011 Welsh mining disaster. During the pandemic lockdown, the Queen said, "Although this year has separated us from one another, in many ways it has brought us closer together," transforming the pain of physical separation into the comfort of mutual support.

Thus, we can see that the Queen uses her choice of words to reinforce positive emotions and downplay negative ones, subconsciously laying the groundwork for public sentiment. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis suggests that language and thought processes are inseparable. Replacing thought patterns with emotions is also feasible. The "language-perception link" indicates that conceptual knowledge composed of emotional words influences the initial encoding of emotional perception (Maria, 2012). Language can trigger the transformation between emotions and behaviors. Researchers have found in experiments linking vocabulary with facial expressions that happiness can be transformed into a smile, anger into a scream, and sadness into crying. Furthermore, when the number of emotional words decreases, emotional behaviors also decline (Barrett, 2006). Therefore, emotional words can subtly provide context for emotional perception and thus activate emotional behaviors. As shown in Figure 2, the word cloud of the Christmas message reveals that the Queen of England used high-frequency emotional words including "love," "happiness," "hope," and "family." These positive emotional words not only shape the positive emotional perception of the British public but also lay the groundwork for beneficial emotional behaviors.



references to the British public, the Queen expresses praise and encouragement, as seen in her 2016 Christmas message: "Volunteers, community workers, and friendly neighbors—they are unsung heroes, their silent dedication making them stand out." This reveals that the Queen's emotional public relations strategy involves two aspects: firstly, revealing the royal family's life from a royal perspective, bringing the previously unseen royal sphere to the forefront—what Meyrowitz calls the "middle stage"; and secondly, expressing care and respect for the people through comforting and encouraging words, thereby strengthening the emotional connection between the British royal family and the public.

Dialogic Public Relations, as an ideal paradigm of modern public relations, practices equality as a crucial principle. Martin Buber views the "I-It" relationship as an experiential, instrumental one, while considering the "I-Thou" relationship as an equal and pure intersubjective relationship (Martin Buber, 1992). The research revealed that the number of self-disclosures from the royal family's perspective was roughly equal to the number of expressions of care and encouragement from the public's perspective. However, the author argues that beneath this apparent balance between the royal and public stances lies a hidden construction of unequal power relations.

While the Queen does present aspects of royal life, these are largely superficial accounts of her father's naval career, Prince Philip's noble character, her grandchildren's grand weddings, and the harmonious relationships among royal family members. This obscures what the audience is more interested in, and avoids addressing negative events such as Prince Andrew's sex scandal in 2019, Prince Philip's car accident, and Prince Harry and his wife's departure from the royal family in 2020. Meyrowitz's "middle platform" was intended as a tool to bridge the gap of authority in a media-saturated context, but the Queen's idyllic portrayal of her family reveals not genuine private behavior, but a deliberately crafted image of a noble elite. The self-disclosure strategy fails to integrate the British royal family with the lives of ordinary people; instead, it isolates her from her own role and reshapes her authority.

Language consists of a signifier and a signified. The signifier relies on the principle of similarity to find the chain of signifieds it refers to. Self-identity isolation can lead to a lack of similarity between subject and object and a lack of commonality in discourse. Audiences may be unable to correctly decode the "signifier-signified" relationship chain of a personal narrative, resulting in misinterpretation (Li Jinying, 2018). The elite aristocratic image cultivated by the British royal family and the royal scandals portrayed by the media create a sense of disconnect in the British public's interpretation. Between "perfection" and "imperfection," royal members lack realistic, flesh-and-blood transitional roles. The more they conceal their identity, the more they may arouse audience curiosity and distorted imaginations about royal identity. Therefore, the British public's identity regarding royal members is distorted due to a lack of commonality.

Self-disclosure strategies do not necessarily require a direct response to negative scandals, but rather a condensed presentation of one's authentic self-life to the audience. In 1969, the BBC produced a documentary series, *\*The Royal Family\**, which followed the British Royal Family and documented their daily lives, including the Queen's busy schedule and group vacations. Although the series was banned shortly afterward, the portrayal of the Royal Family members as relatable individuals who also experienced fatigue and laughter resonated with the public. By effectively constructing a transitional "middle ground" image, the public's shift from the "front stage" to the "backstage" did not feel jarring.

Not only did the British public's perception of the Royal Family's identity suffer from a bias, but the Royal Family's perception of the public's identity also remained skewed. Queen Elizabeth II used two different contexts to describe the lives of the people: one, the Royal Family's concern for the people during times of disaster; and two, encouragement of the public's sense of self-confidence in ordinary life. Queen Elizabeth II's discourse on public concern is confined to two specific systems. Whether it's her Christmas address after the devastating floods in Australia in 2011, where she stated, "We have witnessed firsthand the impact of natural disasters on some of the flood-ravaged areas, where many lost their lives and livelihoods in January," or her statement after the Manchester terrorist attacks in 2017, where she said, "A few days after the bombings, I had the privilege of visiting young survivors and their families," the symbolic elements of "terrorist attacks," "hurricanes," "bereaved families," and "displacement" anchor the public as vulnerable individuals in need of care, victims of numerous disasters. Conversely, in a context aimed at encouraging public confidence, the Queen's praise and encouragement of volunteers, caregivers, athletes, and medical workers, while mitigating the power dynamics of "superior-inferior" relationships in disaster contexts, still positions the Royal Family as the giver of care and praise. Those being thanked are often seen as "soldiers, doctors, volunteers," and other professions with a spirit of dedication. The fixed roles of the public in her speeches lack real-world representativeness, preventing most audience members from identifying with these roles.

### **(III) Myth Management, Highlighting Key Events, and Retrospective Expectations: Persuasive Narratives Shape Emotional Communities**

"Narrative" refers to a textual representation within a defined temporal and spatial framework, possessing an identifiable structure and explicitly or implicitly conveying information about the themes, events, and characters (Kreuter et al., 2007). Stories incorporate actions and metaphors into a causal chain, building social connections between the reader and the social groups represented by the characters, thus serving as a subtle form of persuasion to evoke empathy and compassion (Dal Cin, Zanna, & Fong, 2004). In her Christmas address, the Queen of England constructed three narrative approaches to engage the audience in a public relations persuasion context, weaving emotional identification and cultivating trust: myth management, highlighting key events, and retrospective observation and expectation.

Myth management, appealing to religion, aligns perfectly with the historical context of Christmas as the birth of Jesus. Durkheim's view of religion posits that religion is inherently social, and that religious rituals must evoke, maintain, or reconstruct the psychological state of the group (Durkheim, 2011). Queen Elizabeth II's Christmas address touches upon the birth of Jesus ("His birth symbolizes a new chapter; the hymn's lines 'Hope for all ages, sorrow for all, this night is focused on you'") and his suffering ("He experienced hardship and persecution, but Jesus' great love and example inspire me through good times and bad"). This goes beyond simply reminding us of the original scope of religion; it also relies on the collective viewing of rituals to maintain values centered on harmony, understanding, and love.

Durkheim distinguishes between "passive worship" and "active worship." Passive worship separates the sacred from the mundane, employing taboos and restraint to prevent anything in mundane life from being confused with religion. Active worship, on the other hand, transcends these boundaries, gradually drawing worshippers into the sacred through periodic rituals (Durkheim, 2011). Queen Elizabeth II's Christmas address is essentially a form of active worship. Christian doctrines such as "light illuminates darkness, but darkness cannot obscure the light" evoke pleasant emotions in the audience, allowing them to forget reality and immerse themselves in a purely free religious world through entertainment. The purpose of active worship is to revive the essence of collective consciousness; the mythology of the group is its community's belief system. Through the Christmas address ritual, people periodically renew their own and the emotions of the unified community, ultimately constructing a psychological tendency towards a shared belief.

In her speech, Queen Elizabeth II revisited important events in British history, recalling key moments such as the 2017 Manchester terrorist attacks, the 1914 Christmas Truce between German and British forces, and the 2012 London Olympics. Compared to informational narratives, narratives of historical events require less cognitive work from the reader, yet leave a deeper impression (Lang, 1989). Stories are a fundamental way for people to integrate real-world knowledge and experience, including how to understand social problems, their causes, and solutions (Wyer, 2014). In her remarks on the London and Manchester terrorist attacks, the Queen stated, "I have a particularly deep affection for Manchester and London; both cities have displayed unique personalities in the fight against terrorism, shining brightly over the past 12 months." The British Royal Family, as the leading voice in these speeches, has become a standard-bearer for establishing forms and traditions (Williams, 2008). Raymond Williams refers to this distilled social experience as a "structure of feeling," elevating the Manchester attacks from a social accident to a significant social event within the Queen's narrative, thus imbuing a particular period with unique meaning.

Raymond Williams uses the Victorian era as an example, where the poverty, sin, and societal decay of society were used by writers such as Dickens and Emily Brontë to imbue the era with a "structure of feeling" and semantic imagery. Queen Elizabeth II uses positive and uplifting language to document the changing times she has witnessed in Britain, including the warmth of the 1914 Christmas Truce, the celebrations of the Apollo moon landing, and the sporting summer of the London Olympics. She reminds the public that a harmonious and vibrant emotional structure has reshaped British history and its contemporary character.

Queen Elizabeth II also reflects on her personal history and looks to the future from her own perspective. In 2017, she recalled her first televised Christmas address 60 years prior, calling it "a milestone." In her 2013 speech, she mentioned her coronation at Westminster Abbey 60 years earlier, where she pledged to serve the people. This reflection on decades of the past subtly suggests the length of her reign, as seen in her 2021 statement, "In six weeks I will be inaugurating my Platinum Year, and I hope this will be an opportunity to express gratitude for the tremendous changes that have taken place over the past seventy years in science, society, and culture," thus establishing herself as a national icon witnessing Britain's transformation. Durkheim explained totems as a manifestation of society's moral authority and power over individuals, a way in which collective consciousness influences individual consciousness (Durkheim, 2011). The public's acceptance and obedience extend not only to the Queen herself, but also to the entire historical order she symbolizes and the transcendent power behind her. Queen Elizabeth II then went on to express her hopes for the future: "We should examine contradictions and conflicts through the lens of history,

thereby injecting hope into tomorrow." The Queen, as the protector of the nation, constructed a shared vision of a peaceful and prosperous future for the British people.

#### **(IV) Guiding Behavioral Tendencies: Macro-level National and Micro-level Individual Value Cohesion**

Looking at the Christmas address, it's clear that after the public relations strategies of emotional build-up, subject-specific stance guidance, and emotional narrative, the Queen's speech ultimately aimed at: the macro-level construction of the Commonwealth community and the micro-level identification of individual values among the people.

The Commonwealth of Nations consists mostly of former British colonies and protectorates. The Queen likened it to a "family," stating, "A family is not necessarily blood relatives; it also involves communities, organizations, or groups. The Commonwealth is a family of 53 countries, sharing a common belief, values, and goals." The Christmas address repeatedly mentioned the Commonwealth and related matters, and in five out of the eleven years of research, the Commonwealth Games were mentioned. Queen Elizabeth II's emphasis on unity within the Commonwealth is rooted in the context of real conflicts: Scotland held an independence referendum in 2014, attempting to secede from British rule; and after the 2016 Brexit referendum, Prime Minister Theresa May developed a "Global Britain" policy to address post-Brexit political and economic issues in the UK. Queen Elizabeth II praised the Commonwealth for "living in harmony and ready to support one another in times of crisis," using positive psychology to remind the public to view and evaluate the Commonwealth organization positively, triggering positive emotions towards Commonwealth countries. Her favorable public relations rhetoric also reminded Commonwealth countries like Australia and Canada of Britain's friendly attitude, prompting them to take action at a higher level as advocated by the Queen, such as "past tensions have evolved into deep friendship through grief and forgiveness," thereby resolving internal conflicts within the community and transforming the unity of the Commonwealth into a "self-fulfilling prophecy."

Regarding the transmission of values to the British public, the Queen aimed to cultivate "sentimental citizens," that is, to reawaken the neglected emotional orientation in the construction of democratic citizenship, recognizing that citizens possess both rational judgment and emotional thinking, with emotions even having the function of enhancing rationality (Marcus, 2002). Queen Elizabeth II used a call to action to unify the values of the people. She emphasized that "the road is never smooth, but harmony and understanding can overcome differences," stressing that mutual understanding fosters common ground. She encouraged people to explore and take on challenges by saying, "Take a deep breath to show courage and strength; the word 'inspire' literally means 'inhale'." She further emphasized the theme of "love" by stating, "Not everyone can achieve great things, but everyone can do small things with love," calling on the public to engage in social practice guided by love, using emotional power to drive social progress and even democracy.

These examples of the Queen's appeal to the public's values demonstrate that Queen Elizabeth II's speeches used a warm and sincere "inspirational" style to expound on life's philosophy, easing the pressure and conflict in the public's spiritual world. Some scholars have termed the aesthetic implications of this style of language "kitsch." While Greenberg describes kitsch as negative vulgarity, Kundera argues that translating kitsch as "clumsy art" is a misinterpretation; kitsch is something that human nature cannot avoid, and all positive ethical sentiments can be considered kitsch. The role of kitsch is to elevate the ethics of love to a value, replacing the clarity of rational laws with the ambiguity of the feeling of love, thereby shifting the standard of truth from external laws to internal ethics (Wang Kai, 2017). When the Queen of England repeatedly reiterates "love," "happiness," and "good deeds," she constructs the righteousness of the ethics of love with kitsch discourse, not by using rigorous logic to prove its correctness, but by using the infectiousness of kitsch to mobilize public emotions and identification.

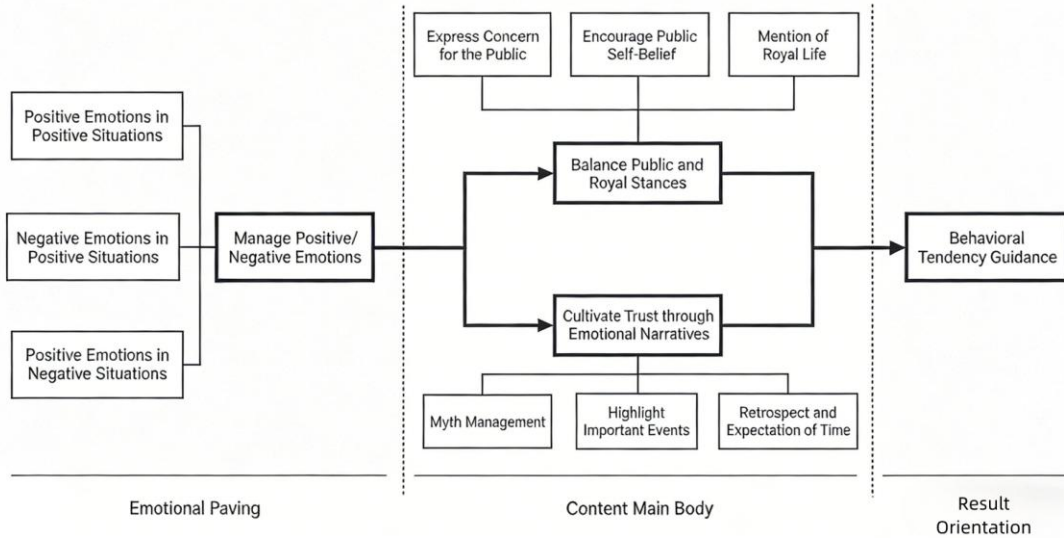


Figure 2: The emotional public relations process of the Queen's Christmas address

## V. Conclusions and Reflections

### (I) Conclusions of this Study

First, Queen Elizabeth II uses her annual Christmas address to engage in emotional public relations with the British people, leveraging the power of emotion to strengthen the emotional connection between the Royal Family and the public. The outcome of the speech leads to the cohesion of the Commonwealth at the international level and the recognition of public values at the domestic level. Queen Elizabeth II employs three strategies to achieve this outcome:

Firstly, managing positive and negative emotions. Positive emotional words in the speech trigger the "language-perception" link, transforming optimistic words into positive behavior, while reminders of negative aspects encourage emotional social sharing among the public to release negative emotions. Secondly, balancing the positions of the public and the Royal Family. The Queen discloses her private life from the perspective of the Royal Family, while expressing sympathy, support, and encouragement from the perspective of the public, striving to create a space of equal understanding between the two sides. Finally, emotional narratives are used, employing three narrative forms—appealing to religious mythology, collective events that reconstruct the emotional structure of the British public, and tracing the past while looking forward to the future—to persuade the public and consolidate the authority of the Royal Family. This leads to the conclusion that the basic framework of the Queen's emotional public relations can be summarized as "emotional groundwork – subject balance/content narrative – outcome orientation," with these three levels mutually reinforcing each other to support the rich emotional content of her Christmas address, thereby mobilizing the audience's shared understanding and value identification.

Secondly, based on the above research, a critical perspective reveals a power imbalance in the Queen's apparent balance between the public and the royal family's stance. While the Queen attempts to partially reveal royal life and appease or encourage the public to achieve a more approachable effect, her disclosures of royal daily life are highly performative, and the presented image even contradicts some media reports. Furthermore, the Queen's perception of the public confines them to the framework of the weak, with the Queen as the dominant giver of care and compassion. It can be said that the Queen has transferred the inertia of the perfect and superior lifestyle of the royal aristocracy from historical narratives to the internet age. However, in modern life where power distances are narrowing, if negative events occur within the British royal family, this elite performance style is deconstructed and interpreted confrontationally by the public. To assist the Royal Family in crisis public relations, the British Royal Family can cultivate a realistic persona that bridges the gap between its public image and its private sphere, allowing the public to understand that members of the Royal Family are not infallible and that the Royal Family can maintain a respectable image by avoiding direct confrontation with crisis events.

## (II) Contributions and Limitations of this Study This study makes three main contributions.

First, it conducts a grounded study of the Queen's Christmas addresses from 2011 to 2021, constructing a framework for the Queen's emotional public relations efforts from the perspectives of managing positive and negative emotions, balancing the positions of the public and the Royal Family, and cultivating trust through emotional narratives. Second, the researchers point out blind spots and elitist tendencies in the Queen's portrayal of the Royal Family and the public, and propose optimization measures for building a transitional image to align with the ideal paradigm of equal dialogue public relations. Finally, the study promotes awareness of emotional public relations, offering new insights and methodologies on how organizations can use emotional soft language to shape leadership, cultivate positive relationships and an equal structure with employees and the public. Public relations research needs an "emotional turn," creating a space for inclusive, equal, and understanding dialogue between subjects, centered on deep, emotional connections.

This study also has the following limitations: It only selected speeches from the last 10 years for its Christmas addresses, failing to conduct a full-sample survey of the Queen's first Christmas address in 1957. Therefore, it is difficult to conduct a holistic and diachronic study of the Queen's emotional public relations within the historical context of the past 60 years. Further quantitative methods of sentiment analysis could be introduced to examine the specific emotional categories conveyed by the Queen, allowing for a more detailed analysis of the proportions of positive and negative emotions and their overall impact. The Queen's emotional public relations can be approached from the perspective of female leadership, exploring the crucial role of female leaders in the public relations process in greater depth.

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