Chapter 4

Bridging Cultural Dimensions and Corporate Social Responsibility Communication

ABSTRACT

The relation between culture and CSR communication has been explored often in several fields of study (e.g., international management, marketing, organisation, communication). In order to show the role played by culture as an antecedent of CSR, many academics focus on national and regional cultural differences in CSR communication. Furthermore, they highlight that cultural values have to be the basis on which businesses and CSR strategies are developed, as they allow organisations to arrange long-term sustainable relationships with all relevant stakeholders. Starting from these considerations, this chapter presents a literature review illustrating the different approaches that link CSR and CSR communication (and other related fields) to culture and cultural dimensions. The chapter briefly explores several sides of the argument, presenting theoretical and practical implications that arise while analysing the areas of ethics and sustainability in a cultural perspective. Finally, the chapter recommends areas for further discussion and research on the relation of culture and CSR from the perspective of online communication.

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters, an explanation and definition of culture and organisational culture were offered. Now, in order to set the basis for the development of the rest of the book and of the empirical research, the connection between ethics and culture (cultural dimensions) is examined.
Culture expresses moral and ethical aspects that guide behaviours and the way individuals interact within a society (McRobbie, 2018; Schein, 1990, 2010). Generations transmit cultural features, and for this reason those features become shared rules that a particular society accepts and considers norms, useful for directing the course of everyday life (Johnson, 2018; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Mosse, 2018; Surber, 2018).

Along with myths, archetypes, traditions and rituals, culture functions as a means of easily understanding what is right and morally accepted in a community, to give members of the group a sense of commitment and protection. Without these important structured elements, living in a society would be impossible and would create uncertainty in its population (Barker, Ingersoll, & Teal, 2014; Schein, 1996).

Inside a company is the same need to belong to a community. Here, culture can be defined not as something that an organisation has, but as something an organisation is (Jin, Drozdenko, & DeLoughy, 2013). However, it is important to add that culture could also be viewed as what a company has (e.g., human resources, skills).

In brief, from the company’s perspective, culture plays a guiding role that aids stakeholders in knowing which actions align with the corporate personality (Brinkman, 1999; Cacioppe, 1998). Connected with the idea of sharing intents (Ghobadian & O’Regan, 2002; McDermott & Stock, 1999) it is useful to apply it to solving managerial issues, and it is specific to each specific business (Sadri & Lees, 2001; Silvester, Anderson, & Patterson, 1999).

These unique characteristics of organisational culture emphasise that the cultural values can exist only if they are accepted by the majority of corporate members (Cray & Mallory, 1998; Rowden, 2002), and that cultural features can also help in strengthening organisational behaviour patterns (Juechter, Fisher, & Alford, 1998; Ogbor, 2001).

Moreover, national culture and organisational culture both have the power to affect the definition of what is moral and ethical in a certain group (Pohl, 2006). In fact, ethics participates in what culture is (Visser & Tolhurst, 2017). This implies that employees and individuals belonging to different groups and organisations can consider other cultures unethical and immoral. For this reason, the concept is often the basis for the definition of ethnocentrism and drives country-of-origin evaluations (Sinclair, 1993).

Similarly, the existing link between ethics and organisational culture pushes companies to create and communicate how they put this strong connection into practise. Many organisations actually present in their orientations, and particularly in vision and mission statements, explicit references to social and
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